Speaking and writing in *Eyes Open*

Speaking and writing use vocabulary and grammar that learners have already internalised, or are in the process of internalising. They both allow the writer or speaker to be creative, but often use formulaic phrases and expressions such as functional language, which can become automated and prepare the listener to expect predictable content. However, although similar in that they are both productive skills, in many ways speaking and writing are very different and need a different pedagogical approach.

Writing

Writing is a skill that students often find difficult, even in their L1. It involves thinking about vocabulary, grammar, spelling and sentence structure, as well as how to organise content, and of course register is important too.

How does Eyes Open help students improve their writing skills?

Motivation through real life tasks

It helps a writer to have an idea of who the reader is (as opposed to the teacher!) and what the purpose of the writing is. In real-life tasks this is easier to see.

Genre (type of text) is important here too, so in *Eyes Open* a range of appropriate text types have been selected, using the CEFR for guidance, and the type of text is always indicated for students. Genre tells us what kind of language is used, be it set formulae or functional language, vocabulary, and formal or informal register, all related to the purpose of the text and its expected content. On each writing page the *Useful language* box focuses learners on an integral aspect of that type of test. The *Eyes Open* syllabus has been carefully planned across the four levels to deal with a range of relevant language issues related to the different genres.

The writing page starts with a **model text**. This serves to show students what kind of text they are aiming for. It is also designed to focus attention on how the useful language is used in the text, which allows for a process of noticing and discovery learning. This useful language often includes appropriate functional expressions. Writing in one's own language is a process involving planning, drafting and redrafting, and checking for mistakes. Within this process you have time to think, look things up and so on. The way writing is dealt with in *Eyes Open* encourages learners to follow the same process. The workbook then provides more work on the same genre, with another model text and exercises which recycle and extend the highlighted features from the SB, before suggesting another title for further practice.

TIPS:

- With some genres, get students to predict what they expect to find in the model text.
- As well as focusing on the Useful language, ask students to underline phrases in the model they could use for their own text.
- Brainstorm ideas and do the planning stage in pairs. The drafting can also be done collectively.
- Write the SB text in class and the WB pages individually for homework.
- Get students to use the checklist on each other's work to raise their awareness. Then allow students to write a final draft.
- Using a digital device for writing makes the whole process easier and more like the modern world, and so is more motivating.

Speaking

Speaking is challenging, and can be daunting (it involves thinking and speaking at the same time, and listening and responding to someone else). Teenagers may lack confidence or feel embarrassed when speaking English. *Eyes Open* takes a **step-by-step approach**, where students are provided with sufficient **support** and a structure to enable them first to practice in a controlled way but later to create their own conversations. As with writing, speaking can involve set phrases or functional language used in context particular genre. The more these phrases can be practised and memorised, the easier creating a new conversation will be. This is known as automatisation. To try and mirror speaking outside a classroom, there is no written preparation. Instead, *Eyes Open* starts with a model conversation in a clear, **real life context**, to motivate students and highlight useful language. Students **listen first** to answer a simple question designed to focus on content rather than language. The focus then shifts to the useful language, which may be complete fixed phrases or functional exponents to begin a sentence. Students use these to complete the conversation and listen again to check. They then read the model conversation in pairs, and often do a follow up exercise using some of the useful language as well, in order to give them confidence and prepare them for developing their own conversation, either by adapting the model (at lower levels) or by creating their own. In both cases prompts are provided, and students are encouraged to use the phrases from the useful language box in their own conversations.

TIPS:

- Students can read the model conversation several times, after they have done this once or twice, encourage one of them to read and the other to respond from memory. Then they swap, and finally they see if they can both remember the conversation.
- Use the model and audio to concentrate on pronunciation, drilling at natural speed. Students can look for features of speech (eg. words being joined together, or sounds disappearing in connected speech).
- Get students to "act" the model conversations in character. This helps lessen embarrassment, and can be fun.
- Encourage students to do the final task several times with different partners.

Your turn

Throughout the SB there are *Your turn* sections on every page (except the Speaking and Writing sections). These are included to practice writing and speaking - the writing stage often helps to scaffold a subsequent speaking activity - linked with new vocabulary and grammar, or listening and reading. Students are encouraged to actively use new language in a **personalisation activity.** This approach has been shown to help learners activate and relate new language to their own lives, i.e. in a relevant and familiar context.

TIPS:

- In class, students can compare what they have written in the Student's Book or the Workbook for homework. They could then tell the class if they are "similar or different".
- Doing the speaking activities in pairs or small groups makes them feel more confident. After this "rehearsal" they could be asked about what they said in an open class report back stage.
- Turn sentences into questions as the basis of a class "survey" in a milling activity.