Use Conversational Language

1. Focus

Explain Using Conversational Language in an Informational Report

Say: When we write an informational report, we want to share important, true information about our topic with readers. Even though we do not generally include personal opinions or use the first person in informational text, we can still establish our voice by inserting conversational language. The presence of a writer’s voice helps readers stay engaged and make connections to the topic. Today we’re going to look at examples of how a writer establishes a voice in an informational report so that you can use this tool in your own informational writing.

Model How Writers Use Conversational Language in an Informational Report

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Modeling Text

Read example 1. Say: I hear the writer’s voice in the phrases that evaluate or characterize the information: an incredible experiment and It dramatically changed everything. These phrases make it sound as though the writer is talking to me. This conversational language is right in the middle of a lot of strictly factual information about when and where the discovery happened and who made it. Those facts are necessary, but the conversational language helps readers stay engaged and interested in the topic.

Read example 2. Say: The sentence about the spoon is very conversational. By using the word let’s, the writer is directly addressing readers. As a reader, this helps keep me focused on the topic. I’m more likely to pay attention to someone having a conversation with me than I am to somebody who’s lecturing me. So I appreciate this use of the author’s voice.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Identify one aspect of voice as using conversational language in the middle of an informational report.
- Learn how to include voice by inserting conversational language in an information report.
- Discuss how to apply this strategy to their independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed

- Chart paper and markers
- Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling and practice texts onto chart paper prior to the mini-lessons.

1. In the mid-1960s, in a laboratory at the California Institute of Technology, Dr. Roger Sperry performed an incredible experiment. It dramatically changed everything scientists had known about the human brain.

2. Sperry flashed a picture of an object on the left side of the screen. Let’s say the object was a spoon. Sperry asked the man to describe what he saw.

3. What happened next was just as extraordinary. When Sperry asked the man to use his left hand to choose the object he saw from among several objects in front of him, the man grabbed the correct object.

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Informational Reports

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned that writers of informational reports can establish their voices in reports by including conversational language. Using a conversational voice can help hold readers’ attention. Readers may be more likely to listen to someone having a conversation with them than lecturing them. As you write your informational report, remember that you can include conversational language.

Ask students to identify sections of their informational reports in which they can strengthen the writer’s voice by using conversational language. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to read aloud sections of their informational reports in which they improved the writer’s voice by using conversational language.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
While other students collaborate on the partner activity or write independently, meet one on one with ELs to support developmentally appropriate skills based on their independent writing and language level.

Intermediate and Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during partner practice.

All Levels
If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: establish/establecer; information/la información; presence/la presencia.

2. Rehearse

Practice Using Conversational Language in an Informational Report

Display the practice text on chart paper or use the interactive whiteboard resources.

Physical exercise is important to a person’s overall health.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with partners to insert conversational language into this sentence to establish a writer’s voice. Students can change the existing sentence. They can also add additional text to add voice. They should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be able to explain how they established their voice by adding conversational language to an informational statement.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite pairs to read their sentences aloud and explain what they added to establish a writer’s voice. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write their own informational reports.

Read example 3. Say: The use of the word extraordinary is conversational and makes me pay attention to the writer. It sounds as though someone were telling me this in a conversation. I can see how a conversational voice helps report writers keep their readers’ attention.