

## A Class in Conversation

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This is an experience from teaching a lesson from a class 6 English textbook which I tried to connect with their day to day experiences. Through this chapter children were able to express their thoughts freely and also learnt to frame dialogues which would help them in different kind of situations. It also aided peer learning as every child participated and listened to each other's presentation. It gave the children enough confidence to present the activity in the school assembly.

I started my first class by writing the topic *-Conversation-* on the board and then asked the students to read the word. Most of them were able to read it as we have done some oral dialogue presentation in Class 5. I asked them what this word means.

Children said to talk, to discuss, to express, to do meeting, to convey message etc. Then my next question was what kind of conversations have you heard in your daily life?

Then children started sharing their experiences of conversation and we drew up a list:

Mother and child

Doctor and nurse

Principal and teacher

Student and student

These, and many other, examples came from students.

I was able to introduce my real teaching and told them that I would give them some topics and they had to create the dialogues. They could present the conversations in English, Hindi or both. The exchanges were between:

Doctor- nurse

Teacher- student

Two cricketers

Father/mother- child

Bus driver- conductor

Bookseller - student

Two friends

Postman and a member of the public

Two villagers

Cleaner didi and student

I divided the class into groups of two and gave them ten minutes to discuss and present their 'conversation'. The first dialogue went like this:

Student - I want a book.

Bookseller- which book?

S- English book.

B- Here it is.

S-What's the price?

B- One hundred and fifty rupees.

S-Price less karo

B- Ok- give me one hundred and thirty rupees.

S- Thank you

Then S-3 and S-4 came and presented their dialogues. Other students came in turn and presented their dialogues of teacher and student and made others laugh by their actions.

Some students were left and so I told them we would continue the activity tomorrow.

The next day I started the class with the conversation dialogues of students who were left yesterday. Today some of them did their presentation of dialogues in Hindi, some bilingually. So everybody got chance to present their dialogues.

Then we discussed how different kinds of conversations are helpful if we know a particular language. Then we are always comfortable in conveying our messages. Children also shared their experiences of daily life. In this way the class was over. On seeing the excitement and interest of students for the topic I was thinking how to carry it forward in a more interesting way where I could get the students even more involved. So their learning inspired me to think the next day plan to be more different and interactive. I planned some questions which they could use in their daily life. The questions were:

Where are you going?

What are you doing?

Where do you live?



What did you eat at breakfast?  
 Are you not feeling well?  
 Have you washed your hands?  
 What did you eat for lunch?  
 Have you done your homework?  
 Can I help you?  
 Which game do you like?  
 Will you play with me?  
 What did you eat for dinner?

I planned to give these questions to groups of five students each with two questions and they had to create the dialogues in English and present in written form in a chart. The groups had all three grades so that there could be peer learning.

I entered the class and explained the activity and gave them a marker pen, chart paper and their topic.

I explained how these two questions are linked with each other and how they could be used to create dialogues by using either friends' or relatives' names For example:

Which game do you like?  
 Will you play with me?

I had given them about 15 minutes to discuss the topics in their groups and then present it on their charts. To my surprise two groups finished within the given time and their dialogues were wonderful. I will share one group presentation. Their questions were

What did you eat for lunch?  
 Are you not feeling well?

Two students prepared the dialogues to create their own conversation.

Rani- Hello Raju

Raju- Hello Rani

Rani-How are you?

Raju- Oh what did you eat in lunch today

Rani- I ate potato and chapati. Are you not well? Do you have a stomach ache?

Raju-Yes Rani, I am just going to the doctor.

Rani- Take care! Bye Raju.

Raju- Bye, Rani.

In this way children were able to construct dialogues and have opportunities for speaking as well as in writing. While working in groups for writing the dialogues, the children were helping each other for correcting the spellings. So everybody in the group learned to express their thoughts in a written form also. So a class of conversation had helped the students to converse in a language in which some of them hesitate to speak and write, but while working in groups they were able to forget their diffidence and speak. As a teacher I found the chance of using a textbook lesson very challenging and rewarding and enjoyed it as much as the children did.

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