

8. Say it again, better



Tom Sherrington and Sara Stafford

What's the idea?

Teachers ask students to reframe answers using well-constructed sentences, technical vocabulary and more developed responses.

What does it mean?

'Say It Again, Better' gives students a chance to offer half-formed answers as they think aloud before getting them to finesse their response.

Every time a student answers a question verbally, and before they write anything down, ask them to re-form their response with greater depth and sophistication, or using more technical vocabulary. This simple literacy technique helps to improve the quality of pupils' initial response, and sets high expectations.

What are the implications for teachers?

Be patient; it will take time for students to develop fluency but as their vocabulary and understanding develops, so will their confidence.

Accept initial answers freely (you don't want to inhibit students) but then invite them to reframe the answer by saying, 'Ok, now say it again, better.'

Offer specific feedback; for example, say, 'Thanks, that's great. Now say it again, better. Try again, but make sure you add in X and link it to idea Y.' This gives them an opportunity to improve their response.

You might be tempted to ignore minor errors for the sake of pace, but don't. Highlight mistakes and model corrections.

Ensure that all students are actively listening so everyone benefits, for example, ask everyone to write down the reframed answer. Students

could also reform each other's responses, but always return to the original pupil to ensure they can confidently express their answer before moving on.

Formal speech modes

This technique can also be used to introduce students to formal speech modes or grammar, by encouraging them to consider what is appropriate for the context. While there is much debate around dialect and opportunity, some researchers argue that students who use accepted, formal language that is rich in technical content have an advantage in school and beyond; Doug Lemov calls this 'the language of opportunity'.

TOP TIP / Don't be afraid to ask the same student to reform their answer several times if necessary. Be relentless in sending out the message that you won't accept weak answers.

Want to know more?

Quigley, A. (2018) *Closing the Vocabulary Gap*. Routledge

Lemov, D. (2015) *Teach Like A Champion: 62 Techniques That Put Students On The Path To College*. Jossey-Bass. San Francisco, USA

