FRIEDs: A Development Device

Levels
Intermediate +

Aims
Develop ideas in the prewriting, drafting, and revising stages of the writing process

Class Time
10–20 minutes

Resources
Chalkboard, overhead (OHP), or prepared handouts

Students are frequently frustrated when confronted with academic writing assignments. Not only must they contend with a variety of language demands, (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, audience, tone, orthography, discourse patterns), but they are all too often instructed to develop their ideas without further guidance as to what this entails. As students learn written English, they learn that writing less affords fewer opportunities to make mistakes. Thus, they begin to seek safe routes to completion of an assignment, routes they might not take in their L1s when they could allow their thoughts deeper and more fully developed consideration. English FRIEDs help students develop their initial and incomplete considerations.

Procedure

1. Write the acronym

   F
   R
   I
   E
   D

   vertically on the board or OHP. While writing, explain that this is a technique to develop ideas when students find themselves saying, "I don't know what else to say, and you're telling me to develop this." Continue to explain that this heuristic will help them over this common rough spot and may ease them into much wider consideration than a little list might otherwise seem to offer.
2. Explain the word that each letter stands for, beginning with the *F*.

   - *F stands for Facts*. These are pieces of information known to be true or proven. Frequently facts include numbers, such as dates,

34

statistics or other figures, such as amounts of money. But they can include any proven statement as well, such as *The earth is round, The sun rises*, or *This teacher is a tough grader*.

- *R stands for Reasons.* A brief warning should be issued here because reasons may also create a grammatical trap. Even though we use them every day, for example, *Because we think this way*, they may also cause fragments if left incomplete.
- *I stands for Incidents.* An incident is described as something that happened to you or someone you know. A major advantage of incidents is that they contain many rich details that the writers already know and can consequently use more readily in the written work. Usually of a narrative quality, incidents tend to be longer than the previous acronym items and can release or ease students away from the fear of more words equals more mistakes.
- *E stands for Examples.* Examples of examples may seem at first repetitious and redundant but because there are several types of examples, it is helpful to explain. Examples always follow words such as: *such as, for example, for instance*, and sometimes *like*, to create additional specific development of a general idea: *He likes Italian food, for example, spaghetti and lasagna*. Examples can also demonstrate a specific idea without the use of alerting terms, just as the example of key words above functions as an example.
- *D stands for Details.* Most commonly details may be defined as adjectives and adverbs that add the spice and color to an otherwise unfocused vision.

3. At this point, students usually begin to sort: Which are details and which are examples? It is thus necessary now to explain how the acronym works as a generating device: The FRIEDs create ways to grow but are not meant to function as labels. Each of the FRIEDs is meant to create a jumping-off point but does not exist in a separate cell, that is each one is not a discrete entity. Instead as a group they tend to overlap; for example, an incident can function as an example and be filled with facts, reasons and details. Therefore, if a student tries to deconstruct an essay to see how the FRIEDs are used, he may not be able to tell where one element starts and the other leaves

off. But that is acceptable since they are meant to generate specific development of student ideas.

4. Make students aware that they may pick and choose from the list, that not all will work (nor should they) for a given paper and certain audiences and purposes, but that they present choices in the form of a mnemonic, an easily accessible device.

Caveats and Options

1. The FRIEDs are certainly not meant to be an exhaustive way of looking at development but do offer a distinct advantage: ESL writing students, often for the first time, discover specificity as an obtainable goal. A barrier to more complex writing is removed when they have tangible tools.

2. Alert students to the following: Because academic writing all too often requires writing under time limitations, the FRIEDs function as a mnemonic device, an immediate check against panic because the items in this list are easily seized upon when students are under duress.

Appendix: Worksheet, Handout, Visuals

(Only necessary if no chalkboard is available.)
Sample student writing before FRIEDs:

I saw movie I like very much. It was about girl who did not have many friend. She met boy and become friend of him. They stay good friend. They did many thing together. However he die. Everyone were so sad. Her father could not help her.

An early assignment after presentation of the FRIEDs (and peer/teacher feedback):

Last Saturday, my cousin, Thuy, and I went to see a movie called *My Girl* at the Edwards Theater in Alhambra. The main character was a ten-year-old girl named Sam, who had no friends until she met Davey, a new boy in town. They shared a warm friendship and together they went fishing, swimming, and bicycling. They also shared their feelings about death.

Suddenly Davey died. No one could comfort Sam, even though her father, the mortician, and his girlfriend, the cosmetologist, tried. At last she discovered that her life had to continue although she missed her friend very much.

I enjoyed the movie because it reminded me that children also have deep feelings and they should not be ignored. I will try to be kinder to my younger sisters now. We can learn much from the movies.

Contributor

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