

IES "FRAY PEDRO DE URBINA"

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GRUPO DE TRABAJO DE LA SECCIÓN BILINGÜE

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A PROPOSAL FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASS (Jesús Ignacio del Pozo Vicario)

Writing has always been one of the skills favoured in the English lessons and it still is an everyday activity in English lessons. Students write about their hobbies, their favourite sports, their routines, their classmates, their pets, etc. Everything seems to be appropriate to write some lines in their notebooks.

What I wanted to propose here is a mixture of writing and speaking which can be used in the lower level of ESO (1st and 2nd years). One of the topics we study throughout the academic year in this level is past experiences. We normally introduce the Simple Past, past time expressions and we start writing about what we did yesterday or last week. Another popular topic is famous people: the students read about a famous inventor, musician, sports star, etc and then they are asked to choose a famous person of their own choice and write a biography. That is precisely what I wanted to propose here but with a slightly different twist.

1. My grandmother

It is a writing and speaking activity. The students will carry out a bit of research about a woman in their families, that person can be their grandmother or another female relative. As I have said before, the students usually read and write about popular or famous characters; with this activity we want them to find out somebody in their families they are proud of, a woman who deserves attention, a woman who was able to overcome difficulties and find her own way in

life.... Probably, that woman is not a known, important person but sure she is someone they admire and they look up to. We want the students to share that with their classmates.

March and the international day of working women can be a perfect occasion for this activity. Sometimes the activities we do are detached from the students' personal experience. If we ask them to write about their grandmothers, many of them will find something memorable in their grandmother's life, something appealing and interesting that they will be ready to share with the group.

OBJECTIVE: The objective of this activity is to improve our students' writing and speaking competence but connecting the topic of the past to their own personal lives. At the same time we want to pay attention to normal people in their personal lives, specifically women and how, in their own personal way, they have become heroes. It is a way to make them aware of women's role in their families and in our society.

LEVEL: It can be used with 1º and 2º ESO. It is an age in which they are ready to talk about their families, they are not usually afraid of talking in public or ashamed. Sometimes they can be shy but they are usually proud of their families.

RESOURCES: We will need a computer in the classroom and a projector in case the students make a presentation with the photographs and main facts.

HOW TO DO IT: After explaining how to write about past experiences using the past tenses and past time expressions, we usually read or watch short biographies. Then the students are asked to investigate about a woman in their family. They will have to find the main facts in that person's life, it is also convenient to find out photos to illustrate the biography and maybe some personal items to present to the class and which will help to set the context. Possibly our students' grandmothers were part of that generation of women who started to work outside the home and who had a professional career, others may have an adventurous life or simply had to make a living overcoming hardships, immigration...

Once they have found out everything they want to write, they elaborate their “grandmother’s biography” and they illustrate it with the photos they have brought. The stage of production can be done at home or at school so that they can solve any difficulties they may have with the teacher. The teacher can monitor the writing process helping with vocabulary, layout, paragraph structure, etc.

The final stage would be the oral presentation to the class: each student will present their work orally, showing and explaining the photos and/or items and the main achievements of the woman in their families. After that all the biographies are exhibited on the notice boards for everybody to see.