

MY PROFESSIONAL FAVOURITES (II)

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This time I would like to share with you some activities that you could use as oral warm-ups at the beginning of the lesson. It is often said that the students have concentration problems and these are sometimes connected with too frequent switches from one subject to another. The lesson is 45 minutes long, the break is 10-15 minutes and the students have to switch from one activity to another too abruptly. Usually the activities do not take more time than 3-5 minutes. Warm-up activities are used to ease the students' transition into a new subject. The activities could be adapted to the students' level.

What did you do during the weekend/yesterday after school

Materials: none

Level: Any

Procedure:

The teacher can ask the question and students answer the question one after another. The students can also speak about the topic in pairs and later on report back to the class about what they heard from their peer. The activity is an informal conversation that people often carry out in real life as well.

I know what my teacher has done

Materials: none

Level: Any

Procedure:

The teacher invites the students to ask as many questions about his/her yesterday afternoon or weekend as possible that they expect to get an answer "yes" to. After modelling the activity to the students they can repeat the procedure in pairs or in groups of 3-4.

A chain story

Materials: none

Level: Any

Procedure:

The teacher gives the students an opening sentence of a story, e.g.

Once upon the time there lived a king and a queen.

It was a gloomy and windy autumn night.

He stared at the dead body lying on the bright blue carpet.

Students take turns to add the next sentence to the story. If the activity does not go well, then one round is just enough. If the activity is successful then you can spend more time on it.

Discussion a la carte

Materials: a pre-prepared list of words

Level: Any

Procedure:

The teacher writes a list of words learnt over the past couple of lessons on the blackboard or overhead transparency. Then he/she asks the students to talk on a particular topic, e.g. school violence. While having the discussion/ conversation the students have to use the words from

the list. When the word has been used the teacher erases the word or marks it in some other way. Everyday life usually offers us plenty of topics to discuss.

Forced choices

Materials: none

Level: Any

Procedure:

The students are asked to stand up. The teacher gives the instruction: Everybody who is a cat-person – go to this corner. Everybody who is a dog-person – go to that corner. Students make their choice and go to the respective corner. There they discuss the reasons for their choice. Depending on the level of the students you can give them different choices, e.g.

Primary level

Spring – summer – autumn – winter (Which season do you like best? Why?)

Winter sports – summer sports (Which of the two do you like best? Why? Name some famous sportsmen.)

Birthdays in spring/summer/autumn/winter (What are the pluses and minuses of having a birthday in this season)

More advanced level

Choose between these and justify your choice:

Sea – river – ocean – pond

Star – the Sun – the Moon

Rectangle – triangle – circle – square

Yellow – green – blue – red

The biggest / smallest / most interesting, etc

Materials: none

Level: Any

Procedure:

The teacher asks the students one by one to talk about their longest trip, the biggest present they have ever got, the most interesting movie they have ever seen, the first school they attended, etc. The list of possibilities is practically endless here.

My day this far

Materials: none

Level: Any

Procedure:

Students talk in pairs about their school-day from getting up until this far.

Alphabetical order

Materials: none / wordcards with recently learnt words

Level: Any

Procedure:

- 1) The students are asked to line up according to the first letter of their first name or the first letter of their family name
- 2) The students are asked to write a recently learnt word on a piece of paper and then line up according to the alphabet
- 3) The teachers distributes wordcards with recently learnt words among the students, the students are asked to line up according to the alphabet

As a follow-up for the last two options the students can either translate the words into their mother tongue or make a sentence with a word themselves or do the same with the word of their partner, e.g. the first student translates/makes a sentence with the word of the last student in a row, the second student does it with the word of the first student and so on.

Short and simple activities like that will help the students to start the lesson in a tension-free way and they will be ready for serious work after that.

If you have used any other warm-up activities to begin your lessons with, you might send them to me: Piret Kartner@ut.ee, and I will find the way to share them with you and other teachers of English.