

Personal Profile Building Exercises for ESL/EFL Students

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Introduction

Getting students to remember or recite from memory what they have learned can be a challenge for many EFL teachers. The majority of learned language, no matter how well prepared the lesson is or how good the teacher is, seems to end up in the dark recesses of students' minds. Perhaps this is because the focal point of each lesson is constantly changing to keep in sync with textbook units or a standardized curriculum. These time and schedule constraints lessen the chance for review of previously learned topics.

Over the years I have observed many EFL teachers teaching their students how to say simple things concerning their personal information such as their name, age and some other information describing them. I also included this kind of language training when I began my career as an EFL teacher. This self introduction practice has prompted me to develop an exercise I call the "personal profile building exercise". The target age group for this exercise is primarily young learners (K-6) but it can be useful in secondary level English classes as well.

The purpose of this article is to share this idea with others who might be interested in including it in their EFL teaching curriculums. At best, it will provide a visual reference for teachers in the area of teaching how to develop a multi-leveled personal profile or a self-introduction. It may be especially useful for teachers who are new to the EFL teaching world or for those who are trying to solidify a personal teaching style. This is a language learning exercise that can be constantly reviewed and recited in the classroom thus reducing the chance of forgetting. Although the ideas described in this article serve as a supplementary exercise to a main text or curriculum the teacher may be able to substitute each section as a lesson focal point from time to time.

An Overview of the Exercise

The lessons are designed to be sequential. Therefore, all previously learned points should be reviewed or recited with the current lesson being taught. For example, if the class is learning to say where they live they need to also say their name and age. Teachers should keep in mind the age and capabilities of their students when choosing what points to include. In my opinion, younger students, kindergarten to 2nd grade, should be able to recite their name, age and where they live (this will vary based on the skill level of the class.) by the end of their first year of English communication training. The following example shows what the student will be able to say about themselves after spending considerable time in the same English class.

"My name is Billy."

"My last name is Smith."

"I'm (I am) 8 years old."

"I live in Seattle."

"My address is 1425 Main Street."

"My telephone number is 253-8795."

"My birthday is July 24th."

"I go to Clover Elementary School."

The basic profile building exercise consists of eight simple lessons. They are as follows:

- Lesson 1- Saying one's name*
- Lesson 2- Saying one's age*
- Lesson 3- Saying where one lives*
- Lesson 4- Saying one's telephone number+
- Lesson 5- Saying one's birthday+
- Lesson 6- Saying one's last name+
- Lesson 7- Saying one's address~
- Lesson 8- Saying where one goes to school~

*- basic information

+ - intermediate information

~- advanced information

Conducting this Exercise

Incorporating this exercise into a lesson is quite simple. At first, teaching a lesson may take one period but after the overall meaning of each profile point is understood, reciting the learned language will take up less time.

The teacher should begin in the common manner by teaching target language and modeling it to the class. If the size of the class allows, the teacher can work with each student on proper pronunciation. Once the students can successfully say the target language the teacher can either choose to practice in pairs, small groups or large groups.

When all chosen profile points have been learned and the students have a good command of the target language the exercise can serve as a warm up to regular lessons.

Breakdown of Each Profile Point

The order shown at the beginning of this article is how I teach my students. The examples below give an illustrated look on what a teacher can do. Each section consists of the target profile point, the corresponding question, an exercise box to write the basic answer, e.g. name only, number (numeral or word), town name, etc. and a writing section to write the complete sentence (might be best for older students). What parts to teach and when to teach it is at the discretion of the teacher.

Lesson 1- Saying Your Name

My name is _____

Question: What's your name?

Exercise box- write first name

Writing section- My name is Joe.

Lesson 2- Saying Your Last Name

My last name is _____

Question: What's your last name?

Exercise box- write last name

Writing section- My last name is Smith.

Lesson 3- Saying Your Age

I'm ____ years old.

Question: How old are you?

Exercise box- write age (number or number word)

Writing section- I'm 10 years old.

Lesson 4- Saying Where You Live

I live in _____

Question: Where do you live?

Exercise box- write the name of your city

Writing section- I live in Tokyo.

Lesson 5- Saying Your Telephone Number

My telephone number is _____

Question: What's your telephone number?

Exercise box- write your telephone number

Writing section- My telephone number is 345-6789.

Lesson 6- Saying Your Birthday

My birthday is _____

Question: When is your birthday?

Exercise box- write your birthday

Writing section- My birthday is August 24th .

If the writing exercises are to be included, a worksheet needs to be prepared by the teacher. The worksheet is simple to prepare and includes two parts which the teacher can design with a computer. The first section is for writing the target profile point, i.e. name. There should be instructions, e.g. write your name, and a large box to write the profile target. The teacher may write the question over the box to clarify what's being written. From there, the teacher can help each student to write the correct word or phrase. The second section should include instructions, e.g. write the sentence, and a simple line to write the appropriate sentence. Learning how to ask a question related to one of the profile points should be taught at a later time or when the teacher feels the students are capable of learning it.

Again, repetition is the key to this exercise. When teaching a new portion of the exercise teachers need to make sure to have students practice previously learned profile points.

Example Lesson

Lesson topic 3- saying where one lives

First review the name and age part of the profile.

Introduce new profile building topic

Once the concept is understood have the students recite all three profile points one at a time and then all together.

Additions to the Profile Building Exercise for Older Students

Teachers who have students that have perfected their basic self introduction or students who are starting English conversation training at the higher grade levels may opt to include these additional profile points. Furthermore, expanding the profile to include other information such as likes, dislikes, interests, hobbies, etc. is possible, although I don't recommend it as the underlying goal of this exercise is to have the students recite personal information.

Add on 1- Saying Your Address

My address is _____

Question: What's your address?

Exercise box- write your address

Writing section- My address is 1234 Main Street.

Add on 2- Telling What School You Go To

I go to _____ Elementary School.

Question: Where do you go to school?

Writing section- I go to Washington Elementary School.

Conclusion

I have found this exercise to be quite useful as a lesson focus and a warm up session in both large and small classroom settings. It can be implemented at any level of English communication study, or any foreign language study for that matter, from preschool aged children to beginning adults; both large or small classroom settings. It is repetitive and it builds on itself as the school term progresses. By the end of any given school period the student will be able to describe themselves to the point where the teacher intended with confidence and with little need for prompting. Students and parents alike will see the progress and success in their foreign language studies.

Download the Template

- [Drakos-Worksheet_Template.doc](http://iteslj.org/Drakos-Worksheet_Template.doc)