

Oral Presentations in the ESL Classroom Using a Technique Similar to Speed Dating

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Introduction

You may have heard of speed dating. It involves getting together 10 (or more) men and women and providing them with an opportunity to talk to each other, one-on-one, for five minutes each. I modified this dating technique to make classroom presentations provide more practice with oral language while making them less threatening for students.

Procedure

What you do is you have students prepare a five-minute oral presentation, based on a topic of your choice. I call these "Speed Demos" with my students. Next, they present it five times to five different people in the class. They conduct their five-minute oral presentation, and then they listen to their partner present for five minutes. After that, they rotate to another person. I like to set up a list with names along with partners so that everyone knows whom they will be presenting for, but you may prefer to have them rotate on their own – especially if you can set up the classroom with desks in an outer circle and an inner circle to facilitate rotations. I also use a timer set to five minutes to ensure that everyone gets his or her allotted amount of time to present.

My Experience

Students respond positively to the format because they do not feel too overwhelmed having to present in front of an entire class, and they comment that by the fifth presentation they feel much more comfortable and fluent. They also remark that having to listen to five presentations one-on-one keeps them focused, as opposed to hearing a series of presentations from every student in the class.

Last, I use an invitation (to make the idea enticing) with the following information to go over with the students while I verbally explain the "Speed Demos". You can bring food as well to make the atmosphere more relaxed.

Invitation Components

"Speed Demos"

Location:

Date:

Time:

Directions:

1. You get five minutes to demonstrate (tell) your exciting information.
2. Next, you listen for five minutes.
3. Then, you switch to your next partner and repeat (demo for five, listen for five).

Names:

1. (Insert each student's name here.)
- 2.

- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

You may have to change the numbers depending on how many students you have in your class.

*Don't forget: five minutes for each group

Groups Talking:

Round 1

- 1 – 6
- 2 – 7
- 3 – 8
- 4 – 9
- 5 – 10

Round 2

- 1 – 10
- 2 – 6
- 3 – 7
- 4 – 8
- 5 – 9

Round 3

- 1 – 9
- 2 – 10
- 3 – 6
- 4 – 7
- 5 – 8

Round 4

- 1 – 8
- 2 – 9
- 3 – 10
- 4 – 6
- 5 – 7

Round 5

- 1 – 7
- 2 – 8
- 3 – 9
- 4 – 10
- 5 – 6

Conclusion

Discussing the topic of speed dating sparks an immediate interest in students. When I explain how we will do “Speed Demos”, they find it appealing and become very engaged. I have now done it several times with different groups. Afterwards, I have them reflect

on the experience and what they learned. I have received positive feedback only. I hope you have success with “Speed Demos” and find it as rewarding as I have.

References

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