

# Using Poster Presentations with ESL Students

Mark Firth

f1markfirth ([at]) yahoo ([dot]) com ([dot]) au

Keisen University, Tokyo Nodai University, Obirin University (Japan)

Here is a way to organize students to make and present effective poster presentations on their chosen topics in groups.

## Background

After a couple of semesters trying to find ways to have students speak about topics that they generate themselves I came up with the poster presentation method as described below. This particularly works well when you have students of different majors in the class as you will find a good range of topics. Alternatively, if all students have the same major you get excellent depth and detail.

## Advantages

The advantages of these poster presentations include:

- lots of out of class researching and use of class time for collaboration in groups;
- little or no reading of notes in the presentation;
- and, highly motivated students working towards a final goal.

The project based approach allows for a lot of one-on-one contact time with each student because preparation for each topic takes half a semester to complete and I can visit students individually during the preparation and practice stages. Finally, the fact that there is an individual as well as a team score is very fair and students really appreciate this.

I usually also make a listening notebook that students have to complete while they listen to each presentation. After they have heard some 10 groups of pairs they submit to me the listening notebook for assessment worth five percent of their grade. This really solved the problem of students not paying attention after their own presentations were done.

## Procedure

1. Make one copy of the assignment sheet and an assessment sheet for each student.
2. Put students into groups of two or three.
3. Have students brainstorm twenty odd possible topics according to the theme and list them all up on the blackboard.
4. Get a leader for each group to write their names next to the topic that they would like to study (only one group can do any one topic this way).
5. Have students brainstorm everything they know about their topics.
6. Hand out the assignment sheet and read through together.
7. Get students to research the topic out of class and design posters in class in groups.
8. Have students write their speeches in simple words using the key words and sections on the paper.
9. Coach students in their verbal and non-verbal communication.
10. On presentation day, put posters up around the room with two groups at each station (you will need tape or magnets for this).
11. Have students present to each other, complete listening sheets if you wish, and rotate.

As the students rotate around the room, their presentation progressively improves because they are presenting numerous times. While they rotate, I also move around and assess the students myself on the assessment sheet below.

## Notes

I also book a computer room a couple of times for students to do research and type up their poster headings etc. in very large font.

I vary the topics according to the university I am working at but the procedure and format stays the same.

Teachers can make their own assessment rubrics according to the criteria they wish. I usually put two rubrics on one page – one for the individual score and one for the team score. Remember to give it at the beginning so that students understand how they will be assessed.

## Assignment Sheet

This semester we will be focussing more on your researching, discussion and presentation skills. There will be two main thematic units of study, these are:

- Unit 1. Health – diseases and disorders.
- Unit 2. Social issues abroad.

For each unit theme, you will be required to research a topic **IN PAIRS** which interests you both. You will make a poster showing your research, and make a small group presentation at the end of each unit.

### Assignment 1 – Diseases and Disorders – Poster Presentation Guidelines

#### Goals:

1. To encourage you to consider and learn about various health problems that exist.
2. To use a broad theme of study to improve English research, speaking and listening skills.

Within the general topic of health you will be required to research and present on one specific type of disease or disorder. Your poster should include the following sub-headings and information (other sub-headings are acceptable also):

- **Definition/s:** This should include various forms and degrees of severity of the disease.
- **Rationale:** Why did you chose this topic to research and why it is important to know more about it.
- **Treatments:** Conventional and alternative medicines if applicable. Side affects of treatments.
- **General Information:** Who is at risk by age, location, health ... Use large photos, pictures and graphs where necessary.
- **Societies and organizations:** Groups of people who are involved in the prevention and cure of the disease/disorder.

### Assignment 2 – A Social Problem Abroad – Poster Presentation Guidelines

#### Goals:

1. To encourage you to consider and learn about the social problems that people or communities overseas may face.
2. To use a broad theme of study to improve English research, speaking and listening skills.

In assignment 2 you will be required to research and present on a social issue/problem that affects people in another country/other countries but is not a major problem in Japan. Your poster should include the following sub-headings and information (other sub-headings are acceptable also):

- **Definition/s:** Define all the relevant terms to the social issue.
- **Rationale:** Why did you chose this topic to research and why it is important to know more about it.

#### General Information:

- Who is affected by age, location, community, culture, belief ...
- The extent of the problem
- History of the problem

- Photos, pictures, graphs ...
- Societies and organizations: Groups of people who are involved in helping those affected by the issue.

\* All written information should be typed (very large, Times New Roman font) and put on to the poster – Key points only, no sentences. Color is encouraged for pictures, graphs etc. Props are also helpful. Be creative.

## Conclusion

I particularly enjoy listening to presentations on topics I personally have little knowledge about. The high level of motivation as students are really engaged in their work is always a rewarding and satisfying experience for the students and myself.

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