

(9) TRUTH AND LIES

How to get them to listen when you introduce yourself

Activity	Introducing yourself to a new class. A listening and speaking activity.
Timing	10 minutes
Material	Prepare your self-introduction. It is not easy to lie and sound convincing. Some things should be improbable. Prepare the sentence stems – see below.

Introduction

Meeting a new class is part and parcel of the teacher's working life. For some standard phrases that teachers use in this situation, see p.13.

You can turn yourself introduction into an enjoyable, communicative task simply by lying to your students. There's no better way to establish trust! Try it!

Procedure

- Step 1. Say hello, good morning/afternoon, etc., to your new class.
- Step 2. When you have finished with the et ceteras, and it's time to introduce yourself, tell them that you going to tell them a few things about yourself, but that not everything you say will be true.
- Step 3. Tell them about where you are from, when you moved here, where and what you studied, how many cars, pets, boy/girlfriends, guns, grand/children, books. you have. Tell them what genres of films, books, music you like. Tell them about the competitions you've won – chess, sporting, mathematics, gardening, cooking. Tell them something about your love of English and of teaching. Tell them anything you like but keep it professional and respectful of the culture.

Note: Do not let the students take notes while you are speaking.

- Step 4. When you have finished, ask the students to work in small groups to

discuss what they do and do not believe. And why. For example, *he/she is too short to play basketball. He/she is too young to have grandchildren. If he/she studied philosophy and Russian, why would they be an English teacher?*

- Step 5. While the students are discussing what they believe and don't believe, provide some sentence stems on the board so that they can frame their answers. See below.
- Step 6. After a few minutes, tell the students that they should use the sentence stems when they are giving their answers. Talk them through them.
- Step 7. After a few more minutes, ask for some comments from the students. This provokes a discussion: you can ask, **who else** believes, *doesn't believe ...*, etc. *Why?* And then it is important to tell the students the truth about each aspect they raise. This lays foundations for the trust that is essential in the communicative language classroom.

By the end of this activity, the students will have learnt about you, met and talked to each other, listened closely, learnt some sentence stems, observed an aspect of your teaching, combined guesswork and logic, and had fun. This is a good start to a course.

Some sentence stems

- It's probably true that ...
- We (seriously) doubt that ...
- We find it difficult to believe that ...
- Did you really ...?
- It's not possible that you ...
- Did you say, ...?
- We think that you ...
- I hope it's true that you ...
- We happen to know that you ...
- It's obvious that you are/n't ...

Follow up

If the class is newly formed and the students do not know each other, you can give them ten minutes to talk in their groups, introducing themselves with things that are true and false.

Application

When you tell students that some of the things you are about to say are not true, they listen attentively because they know that they will have to sort fact from fiction. You can therefore use this technique, from time to time, when providing students with information about a topic.