

## DESIGNING ACTIVITIES FOR EFL WITH DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

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### Summary

Designing the activity portfolio, I found various activities that can be implemented in different age groups and levels. Nowadays, oral skills play a crucial role in the academic learning process but not in all classes. Teachers can manage to create or employ communicative activities, thinking that students will be passive. This is why our national school's students can only speak basic English, such as greeting and introducing themselves. Researching different activities, I concluded that it is better to elicit communicative activities as they will help the student boost their English and express their ideas.

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In EFL and ESL classes, there are many students and limited time at schools, especially which leads to express ideas and discussions during the class to a minimum. Goh (2007) admits that during EFL classes, four skills should be developed. This is the reason why I tried to cover almost four skills in modifying the activities. Goh (2007) believes that giving a sharp time limit to students to complete the given oral tasks increases the work quality as the students will focus mainly on the work but not on the distractive items. Following his thoughts, I tried to give appropriate time to make students stay focused on the tasks.

Designing activity portfolio activities such as *Make a perfect story*, *Find if you can*, *Gone with wind memories* were chosen for the different age groups and pre-intermediate and intermediate level students in ESL and EFL classrooms. The communicative approach stands as a priority in these activities and students work collaboratively in groups or pairs as it helps to interact and develop speaking skills.

In choosing the first activity, originally named *Information Gap*, I followed Richards (2006) words, who said that the students by practicing the language forms, can quickly learn the language and enhance authentic communication without any effort. Furthermore, the information gap is the most relevant activity where one of the students possess information while another does not.

In the original version, students work in pairs to complete the task and are given 15 minutes. Student A has a picture to describe and Student B has to draw what he hears simultaneously. In this activity, three skills, such as listening, speaking and writing, are used. I added one more skill to be used here in the modified version- reading and changed the task. The modified version is designed for intermediate and above level for all age group students and named *Make a perfect story*. There students will have two versions of one story where each of the stories' information is omitted in different places, but they will complete each other if to finish the task. This activity enhances speaking skills as students ask questions if they do not understand any expression or word. So, the gap in stories will help communicate with

each other and find the meaning of the story itself. To assess students' comprehension, the teacher will use constructive feedback that he should prepare and provide to students to correct their mistakes in the future.

The next activity originally was named *Objectified* where students were asked to write definitions to different words they can see in the book and give explanations to them as much as they can. Their writing is considered to be the prior one. Ishihara & Cohen (2010) believes that second language learners should have an opportunity to communicate during the classes and verbally explain their ideas. Following his ideas, I decided to modify this activity into a Communicative one naming it *Find if you can*. This activity focuses on expanding the vocabulary range and having enough skill to explain one's thoughts and opinions and enhance grammar structure. This activity can be implemented in different age groups with intermediate level students and the target skill that will be enhanced is speaking. There, students are allowed to use the only L2 to express their ideas. They will be given a video to watch and choose as many items as they can to describe. The explanation should be given with words followed by body language or mimics. As the main target is to speak, students will have the opportunity to boost their vocabulary knowledge by expressing definitions only in the target language. This activity helps enhance speaking skills and reinforce self-esteem and confidence as the students will speak in front of the class, which will precisely be the basis for their future oral speeches. I tried to modify this activity as much as possible and make it more interactive to speak English without any hesitation and fear.

The third activity original version is *Memorable events*, where students focus on fluency. The main target here is to talk, to exchange recent memories of the past week. As Parrish (2004) emphasizes, teaching speaking should be fluency to enhance student's interaction in informal daily talks. I modified this activity, making it not only oral but also implemented writing skills. I changed the name to *Gone with wind memories* and the target level is pre-intermediate and above, whereas students can vary in age groups. There, students will be able to construct sentences, improve speaking and writing skills, and correct themselves by telling the story to the partner. Students will have the opportunity to share one of the favorite events in their lives and draw associated pictures to it. The teacher here acts as a monitor and motivator, whereas students will share memories with several partners. After they have shared, students will be asked to write a short story about the most memorable event they have heard from the other students. Furthermore, after this process, they will have a chance to share this story with the whole class using body language and intonation. This activity is recommended to implement in IELTS courses and classrooms to develop and speaking skills. To evaluate students, the teacher should give written feedback to the stories and according to the students' performance.

All in all, I can say that designing an Activity Portfolio was not an easy process as I had to think and organize all aspects of the language so the student could shape the language from every perspective. Nevertheless, step by step, I concluded that this process helped me understand what it is to be a competent teacher and proud of my future Profession.

## ACTIVITY 1

**Name:** Information gap

**Author:** Natali Hess

**Original Version:** This activity is designed for pair work where students share the information to complete the task. The allocated time is 15 minutes. One of the students in pairs has to explain a picture prepared beforehand by the teacher and the other should draw on the white paper what he understands. This activity used skills such as listening, speaking, and writing. The teacher should pre-teach relevant vocabulary, grammar, and collocations. Students should listen carefully during the explanatory part, draw what they hear, try to be quick, do not hesitate in what they listen and produce it right away, and use their background knowledge.

**Modified version:**

**Name:** Make a perfect story.

**Target group:** Students can be all age groups as far as they have the appropriate English level.

**Level:** This activity is devoted to B1/B2 learners.

**Target skills:** During this activity, students will use four skills such as listening, reading, speaking and writing.

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Objectives**

The activity's objectives are that SWBAT develop speaking skills, listen to the partner, enhance critical thinking, and improve writing and reading skills. As an approach employed in a particular activity, the Communicative approach is considered the priority there.

**Teacher instructions and student directions**

The teacher should omit not similar words (different), e.g., in the first variant, the instructor can remove nouns or verbs and in the second version, it may erase the plot's name collocations explain that students should work in pairs. Moreover, give a sharp time limit (10 minutes), so the students do not have time for extra conversation not related to the topics.

As the students' directions here, we can say that each student should simultaneously read and ask questions if he/she has gaps in their stories, try to ask as much as possible, write down the words you hear as correctly as possible, and follow the time limit. Students should be divided into pairs and given variations of the story each. In this activity, the interaction between students is tight, and it helps to enhance speaking skills, which is considered the main target of this activity. Students have to read and fill in the missing parts by asking questions from each other as each of them have different gaps and at the same time should write the answers.

**Assessment**

In the assessment part, the teacher should prepare and give constructive feedback so that students may improve their future errors.

**ACTIVITY 2**

**Name:** Objectified

**Author:** Natali Hess

**Original version:** In this activity, students should write on the sheet of paper the names of different objects they see in the book and explain them in written form. They may use their imagination and may provide as many definitions as possible to identify what the thing is.

**Modified version:**

**Name:** Find if you can

**Target group:** This activity may be demonstrated in the classroom with different age groups.

**Level:** The level of students is required to be intermediate.

**Target skills:** Activity focuses mainly on speaking.

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Objectives**

Students will be able to use the vocabulary range to describe objects, express their opinions, give a meaningful description of the items, use their background knowledge, and enhance grammar.

### Teacher instruction and student directions

Teachers should explain that this activity involves using only the target language and creating this atmosphere by engaging students to express their second language ideas. Moreover, the teacher should encourage students to speak even if they get stuck or produce incorrect grammar structure. The teacher's support plays a crucial role in this activity.

Students will watch a video about the supermarket items that can be bought for one dollar (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2vpDWS5ky4>), making some notes choosing what object they may tell and explain to the audience (e.g., shampoo, soap, dishwashing gel). They should pick as many items as possible and try to describe them with definitions, using their body language, mimics so the students could spotlight what the speaker wants them to deliver (e.g., it is a liquid to wash one's hair-shampoo). There the students are requested to speak. The students are allowed and required to use the L2, generate explanations and possible definitions, try to communicate and deliver the information in a meaningful way, not to be afraid that they may speak in the wrong way. In the modified version, the activity is changed to communicative activity and is more interactive. (This activity can be modified according to the level by simplifying or making it more complicated. As its content is mainly about enhancing speaking skills, this activity may be used in a speaking course.)

### Assessment

At the end of the lesson, the students will be provided with corrective feedback and assessed due to their performance and active participation.

## ACTIVITY 3

### Name: Memorable moments

### Author: Natali Hess

**Original version:** Initially, this activity is designed for practicing fluency and implementing it at all levels. The teacher lets students have a free lesson by giving them a task to remember the best moments during the past few weeks and exchange information with a partner. At the end of the lesson, several students may share the most memorable event they heard from their partner with the class.

### Modified version:

**Name:** Gone with wind memories.

**Target group:** Teachers may use this activity in school classrooms and educational centers with all age groups.

**Level:** It is recommended to implement this activity in pre-intermediate and intermediate levels.

**Target skills:** The skills such as speaking and writing and listening, will be integrated by being involved in this process.

**Time:** 40 minutes

### Objectives

The students will be able to construct sentences, develop speaking and writing skills, listen to the partner, enhance grammar, vocabulary usage, and make self-correction by retelling the story to different people. In this activity, students will have a chance to speak about the favorable event they ever had in their life by drawing a relevant picture or associate item.

### Teacher instruction and student directions

The teacher will first explain the procedure: first, students should consider and brainstorm about the best event in their lives. Then students should exchange a story with several partners turn by turn. During this time, the teacher observes students and motivates them to talk. After the whole class listens to the story, they should write a report about the story they remembered best. Next, the class is allowed to retell the story orally by using gestures and intonations. It is recommended to implement this activity in speaking courses, especially in IELTS courses. As it is a more student-centered activity, the Communicative approach will be appropriate here.

Students will have time to prepare for the speech and tell about it to at least three partners. Students will have the opportunity to enhance their speaking and writing skills. Then students should write about a story they heard and submit it to the teacher. After this process, each of them may tell about the most interesting one to the audience.

### Assessment

At the end of the lesson, the teacher will give feedback and assess students according to their performance.

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