

Enriching Speaking and Writing Skills through Bio-sketch

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 13 March 2019

Keywords

Bio-sketch, Engagement,
Communication, Writing, Speaking

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on bio-sketch as a tool to enrich speaking and writing skills for the first generation regional medium students. It was an attempt to improve student motivation, build confidence and overcome fear to actively participate in classroom discussion. The key focus of the research was to arouse an interest and ensure that the learners enthusiastically participated in the English language classrooms. The result was satisfactory in enhancing not only the language skills of the learners but also in facilitating self-analysis.

1. Objectives of the Study

The general objectives of this study aimed at improving the speaking and writing skills of the learners. It also facilitated self analysis.

The specific objectives of this study was to ensure that the learners were able to answer questions on themselves and use appropriate words to describe their character. The outcome of this study focused on presenting the bio-sketch on the stage. The students were also given a chance to write a paragraph on themselves using the template given for bio-sketch.

2. Participants and Duration

All the first year students of Holy Cross College, (Autonomous) Tiruchirappalli with regional medium as their background were selected to work on their bio-sketch over a period of 4 months (4 hours per class). The total strength of the students were 700. This was done as a part of General English Language Lab classes.

3. Research Design

The present research has been designed to find how bio-sketch enriches the learners speaking and writing skills by allowing themselves to perform an interesting self-analysis. During this activity every individual was given a set of questions (Annexure A) as handouts and were asked to answer them. They were given hints to write the most appropriate answer to the questions asked. The worksheets used are:

Annexure A: Set of questions for guided writing of Bio-Sketch

Annexure B: Template to draft the Bio-Sketch with accuracy

Annexure I: A list of character traits

Annexure II: A list of hobbies

4. Methodology

During the allotted language lab hour, a batch of 25- 30 regional medium students were given a briefing on bio-sketch.

A bio-sketch is a short paragraph on oneself. It includes brief aspects of a person's background, characters, interests, achievements and aspirations. The inputs also facilitated the need to know simple structures to answer questions related to the self. The template given was exclusively designed for students as a means to teach them self-introduction. This was adopted from the book Create to Communicate – Art Activities for the English as a Foreign Language Classroom, published by Office of English Language Programs 2013.

The learners were asked to read the questions once. The 13 questions in the worksheet were discussed among the target group. Following this, the students were given time to answer the questions. Questions such as *What is the meaning of your name?* caught the attention of the learners and a few felt that the need to go home to find out the interesting history behind their names. A list of character traits and hobbies were shared with the students to expose them to new vocabulary for answering questions such as *Write any three good qualities about yourself?/ Write at least one quality each that you have learnt from your mother and father./What is your hobby?* The annexures (I & II) provided a great insight for the learners with the set of new words to be explored with the help of the teacher present. The students also tried a hand to creatively present the bio- sketch graphically.

Using the template given (Annexure B) the students were given time to draft the bio-sketch. The sentences given were of great help to the regional medium students as they found it difficult to frame the answers. Following this the learners were asked to convert the same into a paragraph. This allowed to work on their writing skill as well. After necessary corrections, the students presented the bio-sketch orally.

5. Evaluation

Learners were evaluated for speaking and writing. During individual speaking evaluation, basic techniques of speaking such as stress, pause, tone and intonation were taught through incidental corrections. The students were allowed to use mic for their presentation and they learnt to handle the device

professionally. Pronunciation was the key focus and students were eager to correct themselves.

On evaluating the paragraph that was written, it was identified that the students found it easier to frame the sentences with the given template.

6. Findings

- Intrinsic factors such as fear, lack of motivation, hesitation were the major hindrances for regional medium students to come out of their comfort zones.
- Regional medium students found it extremely difficult to cope up with English and hence experience inferiority complex to express themselves in the target language.
- The step by step process-oriented research design along with the template shared for bio- sketch facilitated guided writing and speaking which allowed the students to speak with confidence.

(Annexure A) Bio-Sketch

I. Using all the questions given below, creatively outline a bio-sketch for yourself.

- a. What is your name?
- b. What is the meaning of your name?
- c. What are the names of your parents?
- d. What is their **occupation**?
- e. Write at least one quality each that you have learnt from your mother and father.
- f. Do you have **siblings**? What do you like in them?
- g. Write any three good **qualities** about yourself.
- h. Name at least one quality in you that you want to change.
- i. What is your **hobby**?
- j. Who is your **role model**?
- k. What do you **admire** in that person?
- l. What will you be ten years from now? What would you like to contribute to the **society**?

Materials adapted from *Create to Communicate- Art Activities for the English as a Foreign Language classroom*, Pub. By Office of English Language Programs, 2013.

Annexure B

II. Use the following template and with the answers to the previous questions draft the bio-sketch.

- a. I am
 - b. The meaning of my name is
 - c. My father's name is and my mother's name is
 - d. My father is a My mother is a
 - e. I've learnt to be..... from my mother and from my father.
 - f. I have (brothers/sisters). I like my brother for..... I like my sister for.....
 - g. My strengths are being,and.....
 - h. I want to work on my and become more
- (Use the opposite word for the **weakness** that you want to change. Ex. Lazy x Active)
- i. In my pastime, I like to do.....
 - j. My role-model is
- (Choose someone you really know in person or through reading)
- k. What I like in him/her is the quality of
 - l. Ten years from now I will be a
 - m. I would like to

- The questions in the template stirred personal feelings and long hours of reflection which the students expressed with enthusiasm as they were aware of how to answer the questions.

7. Result

Each learner has spoken in a different style from his/her perspective. The templates have generated ideas and even the learners from vernacular background have overcome stage fright and have spoken confidently. This has helped in improving the speaking and writing skills.

8. Recommendations of the Study

- The teacher should discuss the questions using handouts. Help the students to find / discuss in groups the meanings of new words introduced.
- Individually evaluate the bio- sketch presentation to assess the speaking and writing skills.

Occupation- job
Siblings- One's brother or sister
Qualities- character, trait, feature
Hobby- an activity done regularly in one's leisure time for pleasure, pastime
Role Model- a person looked up by others as an example to be followed
Admire- like, appreciate
Strengths-(here) good or positive qualities
Weakness-fault, flaw
Values-principles or standards of behaviour

ANNEXURE I – A List of Character Traits

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Active | 26. Genuine | 51. Prudent |
| 2. Authentic | 27. Helpful | 52. Problem solver |
| 3. Compassionate | 28. Honest | 53. Rational |
| 4. Concerned | 29. Humanistic | 54. Real |
| 5. Confident | 30. Imaginative | 55. Resourceful |
| 6. Conscientious | 31. Independent | 56. Reasonable |
| 7. Considerate | 32. Industrious | 57. Reflective |
| 8. Creative | 33. Inventive | 58. Reliable |
| 9. Curious | 34. Logical | 59. Self- confident |
| 10. Dedicated | 35. Loyal | 60. Self- reliable |
| 11. Determined | 36. Memorable | 61. Stable |
| 12. Devoted | 37. Motivated | 62. Supportive |
| 13. Disciplined | 38. Multi-tasking | 63. Systematic |
| 14. Distinct | 39. Natural | 64. Sensitive |
| 15. Economical | 40. Neat | 65. Sincere |
| 16. Energetic | 41. Noble | 66. Skillful |
| 17. Efficient | 42. Observant | 67. Smart |
| 18. Enterprising | 43. Optimistic | 68. Sociable |
| 19. Enthusiastic | 44. Organized | 69. Tireless |
| 20. Extroverted | 45. Original | 70. Tolerant |
| 21. Ethical | 46. Persistent | 71. Truthful |
| 22. Flexible | 47. Pleasant | 72. Trustworthy |
| 23. Friendly | 48. Pleasing | 73. Versatile |
| 24. Generous | 49. Positive | 74. Warm |
| 25. Gentle | 50. Practical | 75. Wonderful |

ANNEXURE II – A List of Hobbies

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|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Acting | 24. Drawing | 47. Puppetry |
| 2. Pet Raising | 25. Embroidery | 48. Quilling |
| 3. Archery | 26. Fishing | 49. Reading |
| 4. Bicycling | 27. Fish Keeping | 50. Rock / Pebble Collecting |
| 5. Bird watching | 28. Floral Arrangements | 51. Rubik's cube |
| 6. Blogging | 29. Gardening | 52. Scrapbooking |
| 7. Board Games | 30. Greeting Card Collecting | 53. Scrabble |
| 8. Button Collecting | 31. Kart Racing | 54. Sewing |
| 9. Baking Cakes | 32. Jewelry Making | 55. Singing |
| 10. Calligraphy | 33. Jigsaw Puzzles | 56. Skateboarding |
| 11. Camping | 34. Juggling | 57. Sketching |
| 12. Candle Making | 35. Knitting | 58. Soap Making |
| 13. Cartooning | 36. Listening to music | 59. Stamp Collecting |
| 14. Coin Collecting | 37. Nail Art | 60. Storytelling |
| 15. Collecting Artwork | 38. Origami | 61. Sudoku |
| 16. Coloring | 39. Painting | 62. Sky Watching |
| 17. Compose Music | 40. Paintball | 63. Traveling |
| 18. Crafts | 41. Papermaking | 64. Treasure Hunting |
| 19. Crocheting | 42. Paragliding | 65. Trekking |
| 20. Cross-Stitch | 43. Pencil Sketching | 66. Walking |
| 21. Crossword Puzzles | 44. Photography | 67. Wood Carving |
| 22. Dancing | 45. Playing Instruments | 68. Writing |
| 23. Digital Photography | 46. Pottery | |

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