



## CAEPA Workshop Handout: Let Your Students Do the Talking

### Immigration Stories Preparation for Advanced Level

#### Background

Previous to this session, these ESL students have learned *Wh*/Information Questions. We have talked about collecting student immigration stories.

#### Objectives

- 1) To review *Wh* words
  - 2) To elicit questions created from *Wh* words.
  - 3) To encourage students volunteers
-  To tell their stories in the next class
  -  To ask questions of their classmates in the next class

#### Introduction (used with advanced students at Right to Read because of relevance to my experience and our student population)

Throughout my years of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to immigrants from all over the world, I have heard many stories—happy, sad, and extraordinary. All those stories have moved me so profoundly that I have wanted to tell them for some time now. While teaching a class one evening many years ago, I asked the students who they most admired. After each student had taken a turn, the students asked me who I most admired. I told them that they were my heroes, that I admired their courage in overcoming so many obstacles—like language and culture—that they encounter living in American society.

All of us who were born in this country are here because our parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents immigrated. I think some people have forgotten that. I want 1) to remind Americans of the basis for founding this country, that is, to create a nation where people are free from discrimination based on race, religion, or creed and where people have the opportunity to liberate themselves from the tyranny of poverty and 2) to inform the public of what we do at Right to Read, to let them know that our students work hard to learn English and to have a better life, just as our ancestors did when they immigrated to America.

When my grandparents came to this country in the early 1900s, most of the immigrants at that time came from southern and eastern Europe. My grandparents came from Poland, Hungary, and Austria, where times were difficult. There was not enough food. My grandparents, like the other immigrants of that era, came to America to achieve a better life. When they came here, they had to learn a new language and adapt to a new culture.

By the end of the 1900s, most immigrants were Latino and Asian, as is still true today. Some things have changed, but immigrants still come to this country for a better life, and they struggle to learn a new language and adapt to a new culture.

**Say to students: You all have stories about how you came to this country and your experience here. We would like to hear your stories. The next class we will videotape immigration stories of students who volunteer. We will need some students to ask questions, and some students to tell their stories. What do you want to know about their immigration experience?**

**Let's come up with some *Wh* questions to find out about their stories.**

**Elicit *Wh* words. Write them on board.**

**Elicit questions created from *Wh* words. Write them on board.**

### **Guided Practice**

**If students need guidance, provide an example.**

**Say to students: What question can we ask with *when*?**

**(If there is no response: When did you come to the U.S.?)**

**Once students hear this example, they generally will follow with more *Wh* questions. If students need more guidance, continue as in the example above for other *Wh* words.**

**Ask for volunteers to tell their stories in the next class, and ask for volunteers to ask questions of their classmates in the next class.**

### **Closing**

**Thank students for their help. Emphasize that we will only use stories of students who volunteer.**

## Immigration Stories Videotaping for Advanced Level

### Objectives

- 1) To review *Wh*/Information Questions
- 2) To elicit *Wh*/Information Questions from students
- 3) To film

- 🌐 Student Interviewers/Student Interviewees Guided by Teachers
- 🌐 Teacher Interviewers/Student Interviewees

### Introduction

Say to students: In our last class, we talked about the importance of immigration stories, and we talked about recording your stories today. Each of you has an immigration story. In some ways, all your stories are similar, but there are differences, too. We are very interested in your stories. We would like to hear them, and other teachers would like to hear them, too. Some Americans have forgotten how they got here and why. We are all in this country because someone in our family immigrated to be free of racial prejudice, or to practice religion freely, or to speak freely of their political beliefs, or to improve socioeconomic status. By telling your stories, you teach others about how hard you work to learn English, to adapt to American culture, and what you contribute to this country.

Do you remember the *Wh* questions you came up with in our last class? We can use *Wh* questions to tell your stories because *Wh* questions are also called information questions. What are the *Wh* words that we use for information questions?

(Write student responses on board.)

Say to students: Now that we have these *Wh* words, what questions can you make? If you want to know about another student's immigration story, what questions could you ask?

Answers will vary.

Some suggestions for other students:

- *When* did you come to the U.S.?
- *Why* did you come?
- *Who* did you come with?
- *Where* did you come to?
- *How* did you come, by bus, plane . . . ?

Write student questions on board.

Say to students: We need volunteers to ask questions, and we need other volunteers to answer questions.

## **Student Interviewers/Student Interviewees Guided by Teachers**

One student interviewer asks *Wh* question, and the interviewee answers. A second student asks a different *Wh* question of the same interviewee followed by the answer. This method continues until all students with questions have the opportunity to interview the interviewee. Once this process is complete, teachers follow up with additional questions, as described below.

## **Teacher Interviewers/Student Interviewees**

As the interviewee answers student interviewer questions, further questions will occur to teachers.

Some suggestions:

- What did you think the U.S. would be like?
- How is the U.S. similar to what you imagined it would be?
- How is the U.S. different from what you imagined it would be?
- What has been the most difficult part of being in the U.S.?
- What has been the best part of being in the U.S.?
- Do you have a dream?

For each student interviewed, the above steps should be repeated, so that each interviewee is first asked questions by students, followed by additional questions from teachers. It is likely that as one student is interviewed, other students will offer additional responses. It is important that this dialogue flows naturally as it evolves. In the past, students not initially volunteering to be interviewed have freely commented on their immigrant experiences once they heard other students respond.

## **Closing**

Thank students for their help and their stories.

## **Immigration Stories with Beginning/Intermediate Levels**

The method for collecting immigration stories with less advanced students would be the same. As much as we promote “English only” in our classrooms, our director and some students did serve as interpreters to collect immigration stories with lower level classes. Depending on your objectives, you may or may not choose to use translation. If you choose not to translate, you could change the language used for the advanced students to more basic vocabulary appropriate to lower level classes.

## **Applications**

Implementing lesson plans to collect immigration stories could be utilized

- to develop, ask, and answer *Wh* questions
- to build a sense of community within a class/program
- to inform the public of immigrant struggles to overcome linguistic/cultural obstacles
- to promote your program in the form of a book/video clips on a website