

WALL NEWSPAPERS  
An activity for secondary English students  
By michelle, September 2001

This is the presentation of a project designed for secondary English students and especially appropriate for the learning moments which precede the vacational period.

The general aim is that targeted groups create their own classroom wall newspaper or newsletter, relating English to communicative purposes. Whenever possible, an equally important general aim we could have the presentation of concepts such as press, mass media and investigative reporting (see Appendix).

The number of lessons devoted to this project will vary, depending on adaptation to the groups. And also on whether the aim is simple (doing a newspaper) or double (learning also some cultural contents).

The comprehensiveness of this activity lies in that students have a chance to:

- Learn cultural contents: about the media, especially about the press, or about the production of newsletters.
- Practise the grammatical and communicative contents learnt in class: from the use of tenses and the passive, for instance (see Worksheet), to selecting whatever is appropriate for a specific function or situation.
- Practise the procedural skills which facilitate intellectual work, like organising the contents and lay out of an article, a letter or an interview, doing surveys and arranging its results, classifying information, summarising, and so on.
- Develop creativity through creative writing or gathering ideas for the paper.
- Developing the positive attitudes which arise from group work or projects, like knowing that collaboration brings forth positive results and enjoyment. It is important, however, that the project allows a positive space for those who wish to contribute individually. After all, their contribution will be for the group as a whole and it will enhance personal development, too.

How all this is achieved will depend on the level and the characteristics of the group. Below is the project developed for a good 4<sup>th</sup> grade of CSE class, or for any of the Bachillerato or Vocational Training courses.

Rushed practical examples were hung on the walls of the 4<sup>th</sup> CSE classes in the Miguel Hernández School in Móstoles at the end of the 2000-2001 school year.

# A Wall Newspaper for 4<sup>th</sup> of CSE, Bachillerato and Vocational Training (continuation)

## Specific aims

1. Facilitate students use English to represent their world through the writing of different types of texts: ads, letters, reports, articles, interviews, games, cartoons, surveys and so on.
2. Make English an enjoyable school subject: working with and for classmates in a relaxed atmosphere, autonomy with a clear purpose, and freedom to express oneself build up for making those lessons enjoyable.
3. Promote group cohesion, with an emphasis on how to work together effectively and having a good time.
4. Introduce or follow-up on cultural or process issues. From knowledge on the nature and structure of newspapers to how to make a newsletter (structure and organization of tasks) or how to work in groups – assigning roles and tasks, deadlines, drafting agendas, minute-taking, facilitating meetings, coordination.

## Material

The basic material: about 4 or 5 metres of brown paper, markers (red, blue, green, black, at least), stapler, cellotape, a pair of scissors. Other: A tape-recorder to listen to music or tapes in English or to record interviews or surveys, paint, brushes, buckets, water, brochures, maps, school photos, magazines and newspapers to cut and paste... Material students bring.

## Process: The didactic moments (an example)

### 1. Teacher's input or presentation

The teacher poses the issue of newspapers for analysis. This can be done in a number of ways. The cheapest and less communicative: the teacher develops the subject. Less cheap and more educational: she introduces the subject and then hands out newspapers in English and Spanish for students to compare their structure and contents jotting down their observations. Another: Working on xeroxed adapted material (See Appendix for inspiration).

### Stating the objectives

Then the teacher expresses clearly what the aim of the project is and the options students have to achieve it.

## 2. Students' work: Practice and Socialization

- Individually, in pairs or in groups, students brainstorm about what their contribution(s) could be.  
The teacher acts as an encourager and resource person, showing them that they actually have several good resources: their imagination and knowledge, their text books, things around such as songs or slogans in English, etc.
- There are two options here:
- That part of the lesson is allotted to writing on the blackboard everybody's ideas and organizing them (consensus) to have a whole picture of the newspaper in advance. Thus repetition of items would be avoided and content diversity encouraged. Also, the lay-out of the complete work could also be drafted, ie where this goes and where that goes.
- See 3.
- Students start working on their contributions. They should be aware that first they should draft the contents and do the general layout of their own item.  
The teacher corrects mistakes in written texts, unless she or he realizes students can check them themselves by means of exchanging opinions or using books or notes...
- When items have been checked, students make a fair copy of their contributions. They should be encouraged to bring material if the school cannot provide any.
- As students prepare to glue their parts on the wall newspaper a consensus could be reached about the title of the paper. Some students could be in charge of drawing the title and writing contributors' names somewhere.

## Follow-up

A lecture should be devoted to students commenting their newspaper: their own contributions and other students' contributions. Discussion of issues may arise and it is a good chance to have them speak English. This could lead to discussions on the media or the press.

A classical follow-up would be having them make another newspaper the next term or school year. Or using exercises (see Worksheet on p. 10).