Selfies: a Fast Track to Boost Students’ Motivation.

Handout for EL Fellow Mathilde Verillaud’s presentation

I. What is a Selfie? What does it mean to our students?

Tool of the Y generation – helps students learn about themselves - helps teachers connect to their students by facilitating this self-discovery process and speaking their visual language

II. Critical thinking and creative skills in a selfie?

Preparatory Work:

- Introduce photography vocabulary (subject, background, foreground, perspective, close-up, far view) and tips (the rule of thirds, angles, perspective)
- Show famous “selfies” (examples shown: Weegee, Ansel Adams, Richard Avedon) and have the students discuss their impressions of the photographers from their self-portraits.
- Brainstorm with your students the infinite possibilities to tell about themselves with a selfie (What do they want to show? What makes them unique? What do they own that reflects who they are? Which environment reflects their personality? etc).

III. Practical activities with selfies

1) Higher order ranking questions that require learners to describe (“What do you see?”), analyze (“What is going on? What is this person thinking? What happened right before the photograph was taken?”), compare (“How is this self-portrait different from that one?”), infer (“Why did someone take that photograph?”), create (“Write a news story that might be used with this photograph.”).

2) Gallery walk: an exhibition in the classroom. Each team has a different colored pen. The class has 10 minutes to go from photo to photo and write descriptive sentences under as many photos as possible. The group with the most correct descriptive statements wins. In a second round, groups can correct the statements (peer corrections).

3) Description games: One student orally describes a picture for one minute to his/her partner. The other student then repeats the description using the picture as an aid for recall. Variation: while one student orally describes the picture, the other student says the same thing in a different tense, or in the negative, or transforms statements into questions etc.

4) Photo Stories. All students complete the following steps: pick one photo; write a quote about the person in the photo; pass the photo to your left; write a quote about the person in the photo that was just passed to you; pass the photo to your left; write a paragraph about the photo that you have in front of you (include both quotes into your narrative).

5) Let’s draw: two volunteers leave the classroom for a minute. The rest of the class, divided into two teams, is given the same photograph. Each team has to orally
describe the photograph the most accurately possible to their volunteer. The volunteers draw following the oral description. The drawing closest to the photo wins.

6) Writing activities: a descriptive text, a dialogue, a poem (bio poem activity), a short story, a facebook comment, letters, a memory from your past, a haiku, an acronym poem. Everything can be shared on a blog or wiki.

One example of bio poem template:

___________________________________________________________(your first name)
Is ________________________________ (four adjectives that describe you)
Sibling of ________________________________ (or Son or Daughter of)
Lover of ________________________________ (three people or things you love)
Who feels_____________________________ (three feelings you have and when they are felt)
Who gives ______________________________ (three things you have)
Who fears ______________________________ (three things you fear)
Who would like to see___________________ (three things you would like to see)
Who lives______________________________ (the town or a brief description of where you live)

Interactive Photography websites:

1) http://www.fotobabble.com/ allows you to upload your photo and record your voice up to 1 min. You can then share your “fotobabble” on social media and by email with a link.

2) http://www.flickr.com/ is a great site to share your students’ work (albums can be classified, private or public, and there is a “comment” option for each photo.)

3) http://picasa.google.com.ar/ is very similar to flickr, except that you will need a gmail email account to create a Picasa account.

4) http://www.fotolog.com/ is a very useful tool to create a photography blog with students. One photo can be uploaded every day, and a text can accompany the photo.

5) Pic-Lits (www.piclits.com): drag and drop key words on to photographs. As of now, photographs cannot be uploaded so students will work with photographs from the site collection.

Websites about photography:

  Great photography tips for self-portraits
  Famous Photographers' self-portraits.

Blog of the Photo-Writing Club project 2011:  
http://gongdaepc.livejournal.com/ This blog is an example of what has been done by students with photography and creative writing.

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