

e-lesson

Week starting: August 30, 2010

1. Foreign languages

This week's lesson is based on a conversation between two Americans on the subject of foreign languages.

Level

Pre-intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level A2–B1 and above)

How to use the lesson

1. You could begin the lesson by asking the students to describe their experiences of learning English. When did they start? What do they find most difficult? What do they imagine would be the best or quickest way of further improving their English, and why? Which foreign languages do they think are most popular in the United States? If they had been born in an English-speaking country, do they imagine they would think it was important to learn other languages? Ask them to justify their answers.
2. Give your students five to ten minutes to read through the conversation on Worksheet A, encouraging them to look up new vocabulary. Tell them they are going to answer a series of questions on the text, but that they shouldn't write anything down at this stage.
3. Divide the students into pairs and hand out Worksheet B. Ask the students to work together to complete Exercises 1 and 2, in which they have to answer two different kinds of comprehension questions.
4. Check answers in open class. You could also ask the students if they identified with any of the experiences described by Kate or Alison.
5. Ask the students to put away Worksheets A and B or to temporarily hand them back to you. Then, keeping the students in pairs, hand out Worksheet C, which contains the text from Worksheet A, and give them another ten minutes for the fill-in-the-blanks exercise, in which they have to complete the missing words. If the students cannot remember what the words are, encourage them to try to figure them out from the context of the sentence. You might also want to point out that many of the words feature in the glossary (or, to make it more difficult, you could ask the students not to use their glossaries).
6. Check answers in open class.

Answers:

Exercise 1

1. D 2. T 3. F 4. D 5. F 6. D 7. D 8. T 9. D 10. F

Exercise 2

1. The surprise was that she was one of the best in the class, as she had thought most people would be above her level.
2. Around three months.
3. In the way that she has put “intermediate-level French” on her résumé but, in Kate’s opinion, might not even be able to count to twenty in French.
4. Her office co-workers.
5. Because, in the resorts where she stayed, most of the local people spoke some English.
6. No, she wasn’t being completely serious: Alison immediately said Kate was exaggerating, which Kate immediately confirmed (“I know”).
7. Presumably that she had to improve her Spanish so as to be able to communicate with her co-workers, or she would have been left in the embarrassing situation of not being able to talk to people at work (which might also have prevented her from doing her job).
8. To live in or near a country in which that language is spoken, and therefore be “surrounded” by it.

Exercise 3

1. evening class
2. conversation
3. online
4. level
5. order
6. ask for directions
7. exaggerating
8. résumé
9. talk
10. connection
11. point
12. surrounded
13. quickest
14. beginners
15. improve
16. co-workers
17. resorts
18. locals
19. effort
20. ashamed

2. Related websites

Send your students to these websites, or just take a look yourself.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/29/technology/personaltech/29basics.html>

A *New York Times* article (July, 2010) on some of the latest ways to practice learning a language online. Challenging for pre-intermediate level.

<http://www.pbs.org/speak/>

On the Public Broadcasting Service’s website, a fun and interesting collection of articles about American English: slang, regional differences, new words, etc. Accessible to pre-intermediate level.

http://www.vistawide.com/languages/why_languages.htm

An article containing ten good reasons to learn another language, with related links to language-learning tips and language resources. Challenging for pre-intermediate level.