

1. Evolving English

This week's lesson is about the continuous evolution of the English language, focusing particularly on the creation of new words and expressions and on the way the pronunciation of some words can change over time.

Level

Advanced (equivalent to CEF level C1)

How to use the lesson

1. Ask your students in what ways, if any, they think languages evolve. Can they describe any recent or ongoing changes in their own language? (Focus on new words/expressions and on changing pronunciation, if the students mention them, as these are the main topics of the text.) Can they think of any examples of changes that have become accepted but were once regarded as mistakes? What changes in the English language are they aware of? Do they know any words or expressions in English that did not exist until recently?
2. Divide the students into pairs, then hand out Worksheet A and give them sufficient time to read through it. Encourage them to look up new vocabulary.
3. Keeping the students in their pairs, hand out Worksheet B and ask them to complete the crossword. When everyone has finished, check answers in open class.
4. Ask the students to turn over their copies of Worksheets A and B, and their glossaries. Keeping the students in their pairs, hand out Worksheet C, which contains the text from Worksheet A but with one mistake on each line, which they have to identify and correct. Point out that the mistakes are all grammatical or lexical, and that no correction requires them to write more than one additional word.
5. Check answers in open class. If you wish, you could also hand out Worksheet E, which contains the text with all the necessary corrections highlighted in bold.
6. Keeping students in their pairs, tell them that for the final exercise they are going to look at a list of words/expressions in English, with explanations of their meanings. Some are genuine recent additions to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and some have been made up. The students are going to have to guess which is which and then "bet" anything from 10 to 50 points on their guesses.
7. Give each pair a copy of Worksheet D and ask them to read and discuss the words/expressions and their definitions. In the first column after the statement, they should write *R* (real) or *F* (fictitious). In the second column, they have to write the number of points they are willing to bet on their answer (10 points if they are forced to guess, going up to 50 if they are very confident about the answer).
8. After the pairs have given their answers, it's time to score. Each pair calls out their answer and how many points they have bet. If they have answered correctly, students enter their points in the final column (points won). If they have answered incorrectly, they should enter their points in the third column (points lost). At the end, students subtract the total of the third column from the total of the fourth column to give the total number of points they have won. The pair with the most points wins.

Answers:

Exercise 1

1. enthusiastic 2. stalk 3. uptalk 4. rhyme 5. cold 6. adults 7. shift
8. abbreviation 9. evolving 10. suddenly

If the sentences have been completed correctly, *staycation* will read from top to bottom. (You might want to point out that the word is informal, and that those who use it often do so in a not entirely serious way, feeling it is a little contrived.)

Exercise 2

See Worksheet E.

Exercise 3

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

2. Related websites

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

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5220090>

A National Public Radio broadcast (February 16, 2006) about the current changes in pronunciation American English is undergoing, with transcript. Challenging for Advanced level.

<http://washingtonexaminer.com/blogs/opinion-zone/2011/03/oxford-english-dictionary-s-new-entries-are-totally-bloggable>

A *Washington Examiner* opinion-piece article (March 25, 2011) about new slang words recently added to the *OED*. Challenging for Advanced level.

<http://www.oed.com/>

The *Oxford English Dictionary* online. Although you must be a paid subscriber to freely search its entries, the website contains plenty of interesting public articles on the history of the *OED*, new English words, English dialects, changing English over time, etc. Accessible to Advanced level.