

e-lesson

Week starting: May 7, 2012

1. Language barriers

This week's lesson is about the teaching of foreign languages in schools in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Level

Upper intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level B2 and above)

How to use the lesson

1. Ask your students how long they have been learning English, and why they started in the first place. Do they know any native speakers of English who are learning another language? Do they think it is important for native speakers of English to be able to speak another language? Ask them to justify their answers.
2. Give your students sufficient time to read through 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. You might want to ask the students if they were surprised by any of the facts in the text, or to compare the statistics regarding foreign language-learning in American/British schools with the learning of English (or other foreign languages) in their country. (You might want to mention that in *private* schools a significantly higher proportion of pupils study a foreign language up to the age of 16 and beyond – but that only about 10% of young people attend private schools in both the US and UK.)
4. Divide the students into pairs and hand out Worksheet B. Ask them to work together to complete the comprehension questions in Exercise 1 and the true / false / doesn't say questions in Exercise 2.
5. Check answers in open class.
6. 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 with twelve incorrect words that the students have to identify and correct. The words containing the mistakes are all in bold, as are four other words that are correct. Point out that the mistakes are all grammatical or lexical, and that no correction requires them to write any additional words.
7. Check answers in open class.

Answers:

Exercise 1

1. Spanish
2. French
3. The fact that since 2004 it has not been obligatory in British schools to study a foreign language beyond the age of 14.
4. Recognition of China having become a major economic power.
5. The fact that a quarter of Americans *do* speak another language in addition to English.
6. (Students give their own opinions.)

Exercise 2

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

Exercise 3

1. Trilingual 3. punch 5. reality 6. tends 7. attitude 8. quarter 9. decreasing
12. statistics 13. Foremost 14. recognition 15. power 16. tripled

Words in bold that are correct: 2. Bilingual 4. serves 10. risen 11. Alarmed

2. Related websites

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

<http://nces.ed.gov/>

The National Center for Educational Statistics website gives “Fast Facts” and information about education in the US and links to the US Department of Education website. Challenging for Upper intermediate level.

<http://www.psmag.com/culture-society/u-s-students-hurting-in-foreign-languages-13529/>

From *Pacific Standard* magazine, an article (2010) on some of the reasons Americans have fallen behind in learning foreign languages. Challenging for Upper intermediate level.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/21/education/21chinese.html>

A *New York Times* article (2010) about the increasing popularity of Chinese-language teaching in US schools. Challenging for Upper intermediate level.