

Cambridge Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults

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| NAME: Nergiz Kern | DATE: 16 th Oct 2007 | ASSIGNMENT: Language Skills 1 - Writing |
| CLASS LEVEL: Upper-Intermediate | LESSON LENGTH: 60 min | MATERIALS (Book & Page Nos.): Cutting Edge Upp.-Int. WB p. 61, Objective First Certificate p. 31, English File Upp.-Int. p. 145 |

CLASS PROFILE (general description of type of class & group dynamics)

The class has changed considerably in composition. However, it is a still multi-cultural group with students from seven different countries. They are all adults who either study at university or work. Most of them are attending other general or business English courses in the morning and some are preparing for the FEC exam. Their motivations and reasons for studying are quite divers as well as their previous learning backgrounds. Most of them have spent considerable time studying and learning English formally as well as informally. Several students have been in the UK for a longer period of time varying from several months to two years. Some have moved to the UK or would like to stay and live here, but most of them are only here to improve their English.

Although they have not been together for long, group dynamics are good and the students, with maybe one exception, participate willingly in the lessons and interact with each other in a friendly way. They are motivated, eager to speak and also take risks in using new language which are good learner characteristics. Although these are free lessons, in addition to their paid lessons in the morning, they work seriously and seem to want to get the most out of them.

In this course, they have been following the Cutting Edge upper-intermediate course-book. Some of them are strong upper-intermediate and a few are at the lower end of the level but have had no problems so far coping with the tasks. This is their last week with our group of teachers.

| Name | Nationality | Age | Profiles |
|---------|-------------|-----|---|
| Daniela | Slovakia | 25 | Has been learning English for 7 years. She has been living and working in the UK for two years. Integratively motivated . Outspoken but gives the impression of not being very interested in the lessons. Participates only if asked to do so and even then only reluctantly although she seems to have quite a good level of English. When eliciting vocabulary she is quick to answer and can provide synonyms and definitions. She seems to be more interested in social English. |
| Daniela | Korean | 36 | Has been learning English for about 20 years. Has been a teacher. Instrumentally motivated. Needs English for her job as a travel agent. Wants to take the FCE. Highly motivated. Has a strong desire to master English and puts a lot of effort into learning it. She wants to improve all four skills as well as her grammar, knowledge of vocabulary and pronunciation. Self-confident, active, interested and inquisitive learner. Positively curious and interested in learning about other people and cultures. She seems to have interpersonal intelligence. |

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| Maritza | Peruvian | 30 | Has lived in the UK for 6 months. Is doing her Master's degree. She is a teacher. Instrumentally as well as integratively motivated. Needs English to finish her Master's degree. Has an English boyfriend. Wants to improve pronunciation and knowledge of vocabulary. Seems to me strong in all four skills. Self-confident in the classroom. Has probably a naturalist intelligence (Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory). |
| Marta | Polish | 24 | Has been learning English for 11 years. Has an MSc in Chemical Technology. Mainly instrumentally motivated. Needs English for business meetings and attending conferences. Wants to improve all her skills plus grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation and become a fluent speaker. A quiet and concentrated learner. Finding the level of the class a bit difficult, she tried out an intermediate class, but came back. Part of the reason is class dynamics – she feels better in this class which will hopefully lower her affective filter and help her be more confident and improve. At the moment she benefits a lot more from pair or small group work which gives her more time to think and respond. |
| Saba | Iraqi | | Lived in Sweden for 15 years and moved to UK two months ago. Finished high-school in Sweden and went to university for one month (Pharmaceutics). Wants to study medicine. This year she wants to prepare for it (especially language-wise). Has been learning English for 9 years. A quiet learner. Does not say much if not asked directly but has to say a lot if she gets the opportunity. Pair/small group work suits her learning style (intrapersonal?) Seems to be the weakest regarding her level in the class. |
| Keiichi | Japan | | Has been in in the UK for 18 months to improve his English. Is doing a Master's course at the University. Is a business man and is taking business English lessons in the morning. Instrumentally motivated. His focus is on improving his oral skills and, therefore, puts emphasis on being corrected when he makes mistakes. Improving his “practical” listening skills is another priority. With practical he probably means authentic, real-life listening which he needs in business meetings as well as at university. He comes across very mature and as a serious learner, but friendly and supportive to his peers. He likes to communicate with people, stating his opinion clearly but also listening politely to what others have to say. He, therefore, seems to have good interpersonal intelligence. His pronunciation is quite good. I have not been able to detect any specific problems so far. To further improve his speaking and listening skills, he is attending conversation evenings offered by the school, where they have the opportunity to chat with local people. This means he takes on responsibility for his learning which is a sign of a good learner. Judging from a writing sample of his and his speaking, his grammar is quite accurate. He uses a good range of expressions (e.g. I am keen <i>to + base form</i>) |

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| Ivan | Spanish | Has had English lessons on an off. Started learning again when he decided to do a tourism course. He wants to have a job where he can speak English. mentioning receptionist in a hotel or something similar. He is a bit shy in the classroom maybe due to the fact that he is weaker than most of the others. His pronunciation is all right. He has a Spanish accent but he is not difficult to understand. His use of grammar in his writing is good. He uses a range of tenses and structures accurately and also uses some good informal expressions (I felt like doing). On the other hand he also makes quite a lot of mistakes which show that he is still in the process of learning. One major problem seems to be L1 interference with articles , capitalisation of nationality adjectives, and words that are the same but spelled differently (I continued to the english classes; ... as the english; recep cion ist). |
| Raquel | Spanish | Has been here for 4 weeks. Came to the UK to improve her English which she will need for her future job. Studies tourism at the university in Madrid. Worked as a waitress in Cambridge two years ago. Likes travelling and learning about different cultures. Instrumentally as well as intrinsically motivated. Has not mentioned any specific areas or skills she wants to improve on but in her future job she will need all for skills. She is trying to use new language she has learned in previous classes. Although at the moment inaccurately (e.g. Apart of all, ...), these are in a way positive mistakes which show the learning process she is in. This also means that she is taking risks which is a good learner characteristic. Her grammar is quite good and she uses a range of tenses and structures appropriately in writing. Some minor spelling mistakes (waitress) which could be due to L1 interference, Spanish being a phonetic language or to interlanguage problems (overgeneralising). She has some pronunciation problems, especially with specific sounds (successful [sək 'seksfəl], mature [mə 'ʃu:ʊə]), but her accent does normally not impede understanding as she stresses the words correctly. Also, with some help she can produce these sounds. |

NEEDS OF THE GROUP

The students in this group have already a good level of English using a range of tenses, structures and vocabulary. They are often quite accurate but sometimes still in the process of learning and make typical intralanguage problems like overgeneralising rules of spelling. Looking at their written work, one other major problem seems to be appropriacy of language usages (informal where it should be formal). Using inappropriate language can be much more of a hindrance to getting their message across or sounding professional than wrong grammar. If we also take into consideration that most of these students will use written English in their future jobs, I believe it is essential to make them aware of the differences between formal and informal use of English and thus help them write better letters.

Some of the students are preparing to take exams like the FCE, where in one obligatory part (Part 2) they have to write transactional formal and informal letters. Therefore, they need to know about the conventions of these.

MAIN AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To make students aware of different conventions of formal and informal letters
- To develop students formal letter writing skills
- To provide practice in writing formal letters of complaint

- To teach students formulaic phrases and expressions used in formal letters
- To teach typical organisation of a formal letter of complaint

SUBSIDIARY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To foster collaborative working of students in order to increase their self-reliance in the editing process

TIMETABLE FIT

This week students will have several grammar lessons. My intention is to balance this off with some skills work, specifically writing skills. This will also give them a chance to practise some of the grammar points raised in the other lessons. In this lesson, students will only be able to write a first draft and get some written and oral peer feedback. In their next lesson with me, I am planning to give students their drafts with the added comments by me. They will then rewrite their letters and the final versions will be presented for everybody to read and comment on.

PERSONAL TEACHING AIMS

- To develop my classroom management skills
- To pace the lesson appropriately in order to give students enough time for the tasks but also finish in time.

ASSUMPTIONS

- Students will have read and written informal and formal letters in English before.
- Students know some of the differences between formal and informal written language.
- They know the grammar that will come up in these kinds of letters (various tenses, modals used for politeness, passive voice)
- They know most of the vocabulary dealing with travelling
- Students have basic knowledge of the Windows system and the Word software and have written letters on computers before.

LANGUAGE SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

to have leg room (collocation)

[■] [■]
in-flight entertainment (n) (collocation)
inflight (AE) eɪ ə

[■]
overbooked (past participle – adj.)
 ʊ

[■]
 lost luggage (n) (UNC)

^ I
 claim luggage (BE)/ baggage (AE, used at airports)
 æ I

the aisle (n)
 aɪ

[■]
 refreshments (n, pl) = food and drink

■ eʃ ə
 vital (adj.) = absolutely necessary
 aɪ

[■]
 refund (n) = compensation (n) = give money back
 i: ʌ

| ANTICIPATED PROBLEMS (language errors / management / materials) | SOLUTIONS |
|---|---|
| Language problems <u>Pronunciation:</u> luggage aisle Countability: luggage (UNC) Varieties of English: luggage (BE) / baggage (AE) — at the airport usually <i>baggage</i> | Point out stress, write difficult sounds in phonemic script Explain that luggage and baggage are uncountable Point out |
| Transition from classroom to Computer room may take time Computers might be down Students might not be able to find the software or the file | Inform them in advance. Give clear short instructions Check computer room before the lesson and make sure computers are switched on and the word file is open |
| I might have to write something for everybody to see but there is no board in the PC room | If available bring a flip chart into the computer room or take some A3 paper with me |
| Students might not know what to complain about or it may take time to come up with ideas | Prepare a list with possible problems |
| Students might take too long to write their letter | Prepare carefully for the task, give models, and set time limit Have students write on the computer Monitor and help students when they get stuck |

COMMENTARY (500 words maximum)

We need to teach our students writing skills, as we cannot assume that they are competent writers in their first language. And even if they were, they cannot always transfer their L1 knowledge to English as the conventions can differ (Hedge: 2005). Furthermore, the students' L1 might not necessarily make such a distinction between formal and informal language as English does.

I have chosen formal letters of complaint because I think it is, unfortunately, a very common form of letter, that people have to write, whether as private people or employees in an institution. In addition to that, it is especially important to use appropriate language, as it is a sensitive area.

I have also tried to choose a topic which I believe all students can relate to and have experience in some way. I know from my own experience as a learner, that students are often asked to write about something they do not know much about and cannot relate to, which is not only demotivating but is a double challenge as well. In real life we do not normally write a letter about something which has no relevance for us or about which we do not know anything. More importantly, students should, in my believe, whenever possible, be asked to write something in English which they might have to write in English in their real-life as well. Nowadays, that we can book flights on-line, we often fly with foreign airlines and have to contact them directly when we have problems.

Learning how to write formal letters can be very motivating for students because a lot of formulaic language is used and the variety is relatively limited making the task accomplishable even for weaker students. As we know, success also "breeds" success, which we call resultative motivation — motivation that results from L2 learning.

In order for a writing task to be motivating and realistic it should not be written only for the teacher to mark it (Hedge: 2005) but should have a real purpose. Therefore, I included the stage in my lesson plan where

students read each others letters and comment on them. Peer response “has the advantage of encouraging students to work collaboratively” and “gets around the problem of students reacting too passively to teacher responses” (Harmer: 2005). The letters and other students' suggestions will be written directly on the Computer for the same reason of being as realistic as possible with the side effect of being more time-efficient and legible.

The best way of teaching about a genre is exposing students to models. However, in order to avoid the danger of being too prescriptive, we should normally expose students to a variety of examples of this genre. In my lesson, however, I have consciously chosen to present only one good model, as my main intention for this lesson is to make them aware of differences between formal and informal letters and the correct tone. I also do not want to overburden them with too much information in one lesson.

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