

Cambridge Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults

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CLASS LEVEL: Pre-intermediate	LESSON LENGTH: 60 minutes	MATERIALS (Book & Page Nos.): Cutting Edge Pre-Intermediate p. 60, OHP

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

The composition of this class is changing constantly and attendance is very unpredictable. Therefore, it is still difficult to say much about class dynamics. Nevertheless, students do work quite nicely together and there have been no problems in this regard. It is a multi-cultural group with students from Spain, Turkey, France, Libya, Japan and China. Age ranges from 22 to 29. Most students are instrumentally motivated and need English for either their studies or their work, with one notable exception, Ryota. Most of the students are here to improve their English and will return after their courses, except one who lives and works in the UK (Tina) and one who wants to stay longer and study her (Fares). What I can say from my two lessons in which I taught these students is that most students seem to have a relatively good passive knowledge and even attempt to explain, for example, different tense usage but cannot put it into practice¹. However, when guided and prompted and given appropriate tasks, they are quick to remember (or learn) and accurate in using the language. Other areas students need help with is range of vocabulary and listening skills (though understanding the teacher and their peers is generally not a problem). Their writing skills seem to vary considerably, some being almost at intermediate level. Spelling does not seem to be a major problem, although it is difficult to say from the one written sample I have obtained from them. L1 interference does not seem to play a huge role in their mistakes.

In this course, they are following the Life Lines pre-intermediate course book with a balance of inductive and deductive approach to grammar teaching. Very useful for this level is also the grammar section at the back of the book (good for students with intrapersonal intelligence who like to learn by themselves) and the tapescript (very useful for practising intonation and weak forms, which is important at this level).

Name	Nationality	Age	Profiles
Tina	Chinese	29	Has lived in Bournemouth for a year and is staying for five years. She worked as a nurse in China. When she came here, she did not speak any English. Works in a care home for elderly people. Is integratively as well as instrumentally motivated. Says English is very important for her work and for life (She wants to integrate). Also mentions that she likes talking to people, and I have been able to observe that she really seeks every opportunity to chat with peers as well as teachers. She needs to speak with the elderly people, and as they are often very sensitive, she needs and wants to learn to speak with them patiently and in a polite and supportive manners. In general, her pronunciation is good but she has problems with some sounds, e.g. Turkish [tɛ:kis]. Her spelling is quite good. She mentions "words" and grammar as the most difficult thing for her in English.

¹ Alfred North Whitehead (1939) calls the inability to transfer or activate the "learned" into practice "The Inert Knowledge Problem" and according to Pit Corder (1981) this is the systematic stage.

Ezgi	Turkish	24	<p>Is a mathematics teacher. Needs English for her job and also wants to learn it for travelling. Mainly instrumentally motivated. Has been here for five weeks and is planning to stay for six months. Wants to improve her pronunciation and her speaking and writing skills. Mentioned spelling, speaking and reading as the most difficult areas, followed by pronunciation, grammar, writing and understanding spoken English. It seems to me that she has quite a good passive knowledge but gives the impression of being shy and lacks confidence in speaking but participates in excursions and other activities to improve. Needs positive feedback and encouragement. Being able to do activities in the classroom successfully makes her feel happy and gives her the feeling she can cope. At the moment, pair and small group activities seem to suit her best. Unfortunately, she still does not speak much and spends most of her free time with Turkish friends speaking Turkish. She says at home, she usually stays in her room except for meals during which she does not speak much with her host family. I do not know how she is in her other classes but in the lessons with me and even when I try to chat in English with her during the breaks, she does not speak or if so than in Turkish. Therefore, she has, unfortunately, not improved her speaking skills. I cannot say anything about other areas at the moment.</p>
Fehamet	Turkish	29	<p>Is an office worker in a textile company. Needs English for her job and for travelling. Instrumentally motivated. She wants to take the TOEFL because it is a question of prestige in her company. The company also pays a higher salary according to the points achieved on the test. Studied English at school in Turkey and took private lessons several times a week before she came here. Was elementary level when she arrived and is now pre-intermediate. Could not speak a complete sentence when she arrived but has improved greatly since then. Has been here for five weeks and is planning to stay for at least six months (if necessary for a year). Is afraid of not being able to speak fluently and being embarrassed when she goes back. Wants to improve in all areas and skills with a special emphasis on pronunciation. Mentioned pronunciation, speaking and understanding cassettes and TV as most difficult, followed by reading, writing and remembering words. Mentioned spelling and understanding the teacher as easy. Is an outgoing, positively inquisitive learner. Is success-driven. Success makes her want to study even harder and any mistakes or errors make her sad. Studies a lot re-writing her notes from the lesson. Takes her lessons and studies very seriously. She makes use of the multi-media centre frequently and tries not to miss any free lessons. Participates in excursions and speaks to students from different countries. Has many qualities of a good learner, like taking responsibility for her learning, but puts a lot of pressure on herself which might hinder her learning. Another factor that might raise her affective filter is that she is very homesick. This is her first time abroad and she does not want to stay. She is also a person who needs a good rapport with her teachers and a lot of encouraging words. A pat on the shoulder and a "well-done" from the teacher makes her happy and work harder. Not being able to make other friends, she spends a lot of her free time with other Turkish students and , unfortunately, they speak Turkish with each other.</p>

Fares	Libyan	24	Is staying here for three years and wants to study. Is learning English to take the IELETS in order to be able to go to university here. Is, therefore, instrumentally motivated. His reply to the question "What is difficult for you in English?" is 70 % grammar, 20 % pronunciation. His pronunciation is generally good. Seems to feel comfortable in the class and participates very actively in the lessons and interacts well with his peers. He is not afraid of speaking and speaks fluently. Has no problems understanding the teacher or his peers. He also seems to have a good passive knowledge of grammar and lexis for his level but cannot always put it into practice and also mixes up spoken and written English (* <u>coze</u> I <u>wanna to get</u> IELETS <u>to college</u>). In general, he is successful in doing the tasks in the lessons, and I would say that he can soon move to intermediate level.
Ryota	Japanese	22	Is staying here for five months. Says he is here to make friends and that he "needs" English for this purpose. Is integratively motivated. What he finds difficult is "pronunciation, * <u>conect_</u> speech, <u>to make</u> a <u>dairy</u> (?) and listening." He has problems with grammar and spelling. But he takes risks and attempts to use new language and structures (good learner characteristics) and speaks relatively fluently. In controlled and semi-controlled practice activities, he uses new grammar correctly. He also has no problem understanding the teacher or his peers. Therefore, I am convinced he will improve fast.
Severine	French	22	Is staying for six months (until April 08). English is a subject at her college and very important for her job. Is instrumentally motivated. Says that pronunciation and grammar are the most difficult areas for her in English. She is probably the strongest student in the class but is not confident when speaking. Maybe because she thinks her pronunciation is not good, which is actually not the case at all, as far as I have been able to observe so far. She interacts very well with her peers and her answers are usually correct. Judging from a writing sample, it seems that her writing skills are very good. There is only one mistake in word order or grammar (adj – adv) and one spelling mistake (*I need to speak very well english in my job).
David	Spanish	30	Is unemployed and is using the chance to learn English saying that he needs it for his job. For him speaking, pronunciation, reading textbooks and writing are the most important things to improve on. Finds reading and speaking the most difficult skills followed by grammar, writing and understanding spoken English. A quiet student. Needs time to think what to say. Therefore, benefits from pair and small group work or tasks which he can prepare and gets his own time to speak. Transfers spelling from Spanish for words that are similar (<u>ingilsh</u> , <u>comunicacion</u>). Now, that he knows the teachers and some of his peers better, he has become more talkative and daring. He participates more actively and tries out new language. He also notices interesting features of the language and asks many good questions and is eager to understand. I think now he really starts improving but, unfortunately, he has to leave soon.

NEEDS OF THE GROUP

As I mentioned before, with one exception, I do not know the students very well and it is, therefore, difficult to say anything about their specific needs besides what I have mentioned above. However, pre-intermediate classes tend to be of mixed ability, and this is also the case with these students. At this level, they need to review the structures and vocabulary they have learnt so far as well as increase their range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. The present perfect is a difficult tense in all three areas – form,

meaning and use. This can be related to students' interlanguage as well as L1 transfer. It cannot be taught in a few lessons and needs to be reviewed regularly. Students in this group have also asked for lessons about the present perfect. In order for real learning to take place, students also need to use the new language they have learnt.

Another problem students at this level have is with pronunciation. They tend to give equal stress to every word in a sentence including grammar words. This cannot only sound like poor English but can be a strain on the listeners and also impede understanding. Moreover, stressed and weak auxiliaries give a sentence a different meaning. Students need to be aware of this. Noticing differences in stress patterns will not only help students sound more natural and being understood better but also help improve their listening skills. In this lesson, I will not work specifically on pronunciation but will use the activity to assess their ability in this area in order to provide practice in another lesson.

Writing skills are another important area students need improving. This is confirmed by the writing samples I have obtained from the students (although these were sentence-based only).

Finally, students also need to become less teacher-dependent and learn to take responsibility for their learning in order to become better learners and move on to the next level. In addition to that, they also need to learn to reflect on their mistakes instead of simply being pointed out mistakes by the teacher.

MAIN AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To review the present perfect and help students notice the position of some typical time adverbials in a sentence.
- To provide practice with the present perfect using time adverbials correctly.

SUBSIDIARY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To provide students with practice in all four skills by doing a dictogloss activity.
- To develop communicative skills through collaborative reconstruction of a text
- To help students distinguish between grammar and content words and thus help improve their note-taking skills and become more autonomous learners.

TIMETABLE FIT (previous & future work)

This is a free-standing experimental project in which I will try out a new technique. But it also links with my lesson last week, in which we looked at the forms of present perfect and past simple and contrasted the two tenses in the context of past experience. In this lesson, I will provide a review of last week's lesson and help expand students' knowledge of time phrases typically used with these two tenses and notice their word order. Also, next week, a colleague of mine will do another lesson on the present perfect which will review and build on my lessons.

PERSONAL TEACHING AIMS

- To engage students in an experiment and help them stay alert
- To make sure all students participate actively in the collaborative task and in the evaluation of the lesson
- To make students feel comfortable and relaxed in this probably unusual situation

ASSUMPTIONS

- Students do not know dictogloss / have never done a dictogloss
- Students know the present perfect and past simple and some of the time phrases
- Students know what a dictation normally is.
- Students have enough language and speaking skills to work together to reconstruct the "dictated" text.

LANGUAGE SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

Present Perfect Simple – to talk about past experience in an indefinite time

Affirmative:	I/She	have/has	+	verb (3 rd form)/past participle
Negative:	I	have not	+	verb (3 rd form) /past participle
Question:	Have	you	+	verb (3 rd form) /past participle

Word order: Position of some of the words commonly used with the Present Perfect. (e. g. already, (not) yet, just, still; ever, never)

I/She	have/has	(already) (just)	+	done my/her homework.
I/She	(still)	have/has (not)		+ done my/her homework (yet) .

Vocabulary I will pre-teach or elicit (from dictogloss text)

to move (v) – to go and live in another place

u:

to design (v), a design (n)

ɪ aɪ

popular (adj.) - a lot of people like it

ˈpɒjələ

sell – sold -sold (irregular)

copy – copies (pl. n) / to copy (v)

ˈkɒpi ˈkɒpi:z

rich (adj.) ≠ poor = has a lot of money

spend time (with/on/ verb + ing) / money (on)

ANTICIPATED PROBLEMS (language errors / management / materials)	SOLUTIONS
This is probably the first time students will do a dictogloss and it is also a new technique for me. Thus, I am not sure how the students will react to it, nor about my own ability to use it effectively.	I will introduce dictogloss briefly and explain what I hope it will help them with. I believe students should be informed why we are teaching something in a specific way or using a special technique. They will then be more willing to participate fully.
As it is a new technique for me and I do not know the class and their abilities well, timing is difficult and I might run out of time before doing the practice activity.	If the dictogloss stage and the analysis takes much longer, I will not go through all the reading material in the book but choose some good examples.
Even though I tried to make the tasks achievable and will guide students through the steps, they might still have problems reconstructing the task.	I will prepare some questions which are normally asked to check comprehension. I will write these on the board to help students to remember the content: <i>Where does he live now? What does he do? Is he rich? Why / Why not? Is he single? What does he do in his free time?</i>

COMMENTARY (500 words maximum)

In this lesson I want students only to notice the time adverbials and their position. I will not go into too much detail explaining and practising them. There will only be one controlled practice exercise. Next week, a colleague of mine will work on the present perfect again and students will see them again.

One advantage of dictogloss is that students practise all four skills. They first listen to the text, then write and edit their version for which they have to speak to each other, and, finally, read the original and compare their version with it. Students also have to focus on form and meaning in order to be able to reconstruct the text from memory.

Research suggests that noticing and reflecting on one's own language and comparing one's interlanguage² to the target language helps learning. This is, therefore, a characteristic of a good learner and should be fostered. Why at this level? Because it is important at pre-intermediate level to review grammar structures before fossilisation occurs and before students move on to learn new structures. Also, students need to be shown how to reflect on their own language and take responsibility for their learning in order to become more autonomous.

Why explain the method to students?

Students should know what is going on and that it is not an experiment on them. It is also not a test but a learning exercise. When students are informed where the teacher is headed or what he/she is doing they will understand and this helps learning. Also, having to guess what is going on in the classroom might give them a feeling of insecurity and tension, especially when a new activity is introduced. Dictogloss is actually a more powerful and helpful tool after students have got used to the procedure.

In order to help students with note-taking, I will suggest strategies³: I will write an example sentence on the board. Then, elicit which words would help to reconstruct the sentence. If they need help, I will first erase all content words and ask if the remaining (grammar) words help to reconstruct it. Then I will do the same by erasing the grammar words and leaving the content words.

In order for dictogloss texts to be meaningful and get students interested, choice of topic is important. The text is related to the grammar and content of my last present perfect lesson, in which we talked about past experience. Also, in order for grammar "to sink in" review is very important.

Constraints

Wajnryb suggest an estimated 90 – 105 minutes for all four stages. My lesson can only have a maximum length of 60 minutes, plus I will add a practice stage at the end. In addition to that, I will have to explain what dictogloss is and the procedure in order to prepare students for what is expected of them. Therefore, it is probable that I might run out of time. In this case, I will keep the reading stage short.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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2 Corder (1981)

3 Thornbury (1999)