

INSTANT LESSONS
BOTH IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM – Lesson II

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Introduction

English-To-Go (<http://www.english-to-go.com>) is a New Zealand-based Internet publisher of educational materials for use online and in hard copy form. There are two primary web-sites: <http://www.english-to-go.com> and <http://www.selfaccess.com> - a self-study site for students.

Through English-to-go, photocopiable ‘Instant Lessons’ based on Reuters news stories, complete with the articles, pre-reading, reading, grammar, post-reading exercises, teachers' notes and answer keys are provided each week. Every lesson has at least nine exercises and most lessons are available in both HTML and Adobe Acrobat format. Each lesson is added to a database of lessons, which can be searched by level, subject or skills. The database currently has more than 700 lessons from elementary level to advanced.

Many of the lessons also have interactive exercises attached to them. These online activities for students are linked directly to the Instant Lessons. Grammar points are either extended, material recycled or students can practise reading and listening using material on the same topics as those which have been taught in class. Teachers can choose specific exercises for students to do, either in a computer lab or as homework exercises. The activities are fun and rewarding, and teachers are easily able to control the exercises students are to do.

The following link <http://www.selfaccess.com/iatefl> will take you to a page where photocopiable materials, comprehensive teachers’ notes, and answer key and on-line exercises have been provided.

Below is an account of how one teacher has used these materials with an Upper-Intermediate General English class.

24-hour plane delay

Level: Upper Intermediate

Time: 90 minutes

Aims:

- to enable students to listen for specific information
- to enable students to scan for specific information
- to practise using adverbials of time
- to practise using the verb “spend” + prepositions
- to elicit information and retell events through dialogue
- to practise first-person narrative writing

Preparation:

Print lesson and photocopy.

Procedure

This lesson was used with a General English class, and related to a unit on travel.

With Pre-Reading Activity A: Dictation, students need to understand this first excerpt is an imaginary diary entry written by the young boy in the article who smuggled his pet squirrel onto a plane bound for Cyprus, with disastrous repercussions.

When I woke up I remembered that tomorrow we're flying to Cyprus for Dad's new job. And today I have to give Nutkin to my cousin because we can't take him to Cyprus. I felt really sad. Mum and Dad have promised that I can get a new pet when I get there but I want Nutkin.

I was about to put him in his cage and take him over to my cousin's place when I suddenly decided to take Nutkin to Cyprus. I thought for a long time about how to hide him and finally I came up with a plan.

The dictation exercise is a form of introduction to the main reading. Students were given the word “Cyprus” before they wrote down the short text that was read out three times at normal speed. Learners were later asked if knew any further information on Cyprus. The following link may be of help: http://www.geographyiq.com/countries/cy/Cyprus_map_flag_geography.htm.

The following links may also be useful. In the second exercise, Pre-Reading Activity B: ‘Have a Guess’, students are asked “Who or what is Nutkin?” The name was taken from a story “The Tale Of Squirrel Nutkin” by Beatrix Potter- <http://wiredforbooks.org/kids/beatrix/sn1.htm>. The reading activities required students to be clear about what a squirrel is and the following links have clear pictures: <http://hotcakencyclopedia.com/Animals/image.Squirrel.photo.jpeg> or <http://www.naturalsciences.org/funstuff/ncsymbols/mammal.html>.

The Reading Activities required students to extract specific information from a newspaper article to complete the gaps in a diary entry, and a number of comprehension questions. Students also worked in pairs to discuss the meaning of phrases from the article and completed some language activities using adverbial phrases of time.

To finish this part of the lesson, learners worked in pairs to complete Post Reading Activity A and write and perform dialogues in pairs, referring back to the article for ideas and vocabulary.

Boy: Dad, there's something I have to tell you.

Parent: What is it? What's wrong?

Boy: You know how I wanted to bring Nutkin to Cyprus with us and you wouldn't let me?

Parent: Yes? Well? I'm sorry about that but we explained to you why we couldn't bring him with us.

Boy: Yes, I know. But I decided I really wanted to bring Nutkin with me so I

Parent: What?

Boy: Yes, and I brought him onto the plane.

Parent: And where is he now?

Boy: He's

Parent: Is that why?

Boy: Yes, they're all looking for him at the moment.

Parent: You mean

Boy: Yes, a flight attendant saw him running away.

Parent: O.K. If they realize you did it, they'll be

Now I want you to pretend that you Do you understand?

Boy: Yes

After finishing the dialogues, the class moved on to a computer lab. Students logged on to this site, <http://www.instantworkbook.com>, using a username and password that was valid for five days. This password allowed students to view only those exercises selected by the teacher – in this instance the 8 exercises linked to the “24-hour-hour Plane Delay” lesson.

Online Activities

Students were first asked to complete two listening activities – a short-answer exercise and an open cloze. This particular listening was the dictation text students had first heard as an introduction in the classroom. However, this time, the students were exposed to a different speaker, a young boy. Students had control over how many times they heard the text. In the first exercise, students also had clues for the answers. (For example, if they clicked on the [?] button for the first question, a clue “The day after today.” appeared.)

In the second exercise, students were presented with 4 possible answers for each gap and had to listen for specific items. Many students felt more confident after recycling the listening in this way, as dictation exercises can prove challenging for some. A third vocabulary exercise was also completed.

Students were placed in pairs and asked to look back at Activity E: Grammar from the lesson they had done in class which focused on the verb “spend” and collocations; “*we spent the next 24 hours looking for it*”. This was quickly completed and checked with plenary feedback. Students remained in their pairs and each pair worked together at one computer. This was done to increase peer interaction and led to much discussion before choices were selected. Students then completed the 5-word ordering exercises that used the grammar point from the language section, the verb “spend” and collocations.

For the remainder of the session and homework, students wrote a diary entry for the young boy after he had collected ‘Nutkin’. The written work was printed and saved onto a disk to allow for peer correction the following day.

Conclusion

The diary entry, writing and dialogue activities in this lesson worked very well. As many of the ideas were recycled throughout the lesson, the less able students demonstrated that they were capable of confidently producing some very pleasing results. Students really enjoyed the opportunity to work with the listening text again in the computer lab and seemed delighted when they found that the recording was of a young boy.

