

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

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Introduction

English-To-Go publishes both online, interactive educational materials for student use and photocopiable lessons for teachers to use in the classroom. There are two primary web sites: <http://www.english-to-go.com> and <http://www.selfaccess.com> - a self-study site for students. English-to-go.com produces new photocopiable 'Instant Lessons', 'Weekly Warmers', on-line 'Instant Workbooks' and an 'Anna Grammar' help page every week.

'Instant Lessons' are full lessons; complete with news articles, pre-reading, reading, grammar, post-reading exercises, teachers' notes and answer keys. Every lesson has at least nine exercises. Many of the lessons also have interactive 'Instant Workbooks' attached to them. These online activities for students are linked directly to the Instant Lessons. Grammar points are either extended, material recycled or students practise reading and listening using material on the same topics as those taught in class.

Weekly Warmers are short activities designed to stimulate and energise students. These can be used as lead-in activities, or fillers, and are sent in by teachers from around the globe as part of a competition to win a free 6-month subscription to English-to-go. 'Anna Grammar' provides help pages for teachers. Anna offers advice on some difficult grammar issues and answers a huge range of letters from perplexed teachers. Many of her replies also contain exercises.

Each Instant 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. The 'Weekly Warmers', 'Anna Grammars' and 'Instant Workbook' are also searchable.

The following link <http://www.selfaccess.com/iatefl> will take you to a page where a photocopiable 'Instant lesson' and on-line 'Instant Workbook' exercises have been provided.

Below is an account of how one teacher has used these particular materials with an Advanced Business English class.

The Business of First Impressions

Level: Advanced

Time: 90 minutes

Aims:

- to introduce students to a variety of business settings
- to discuss suitable business attire
- to practise using conditional sentences
- to enable students to scan for specific information
- to practise writing a business email

Preparation

Print the lesson and photocopy it. The email text in the Teachers' Notes also needs to be copied so there is one for each pair of students. Cut the email texts into strips.

Procedure

This lesson was used with an Upper Intermediate to Advanced English Business class. The students were from predominantly Asian backgrounds. The topic of the lesson is first impressions and looks at business meetings; what to wear and not wear, and also how to behave. It is based around the following newspaper article:

Away on Business - One strike, and you're out!

NEW YORK Thu Feb 28 (Reuters) - You have 10 seconds; no more than 90. That's how long it takes to form a first impression, which for business travelers can ultimately sink or seal a deal.

In Pre-Reading Activity A: "What Would You Do?" students are presented with the following situation:

Imagine that you are a salesperson for a company selling machine parts. Your company is hoping to make a large sale to another company and you are going to meet a senior executive from that

company for the first time next week. The company's offices are in your city and you will be meeting the executive there. You both speak the same language. You have a week to prepare for this important meeting. At the meeting you want to persuade the executive that your product is the best on the market.

They are then asked to consider a variety of issues including the following:

1. What kind of research or reading would you do before the meeting?
2. How else would you prepare for the meeting?
3. What things would you do on the day of the meeting?

Following this, they are asked to rank items in a list in terms of importance. For example:

- Ø Having the correct attire.
- Ø Having the right demeanour.
- Ø Looking as attractive as possible.
- Ø Bringing the right things with you to the meeting.
- Ø Saying the right greeting and farewell.

Following the ranking exercise, a number of possible settings for different types of business meetings are given and students are asked to match clothing and situations.

Before the Reading Activities, learners read a number of statements, such as "*You do not need to wear a tie in Brazil when you are doing business*", and asked to state whether these are True or False.

In Reading activity A: Understanding the Headline, students read only the heading and first paragraph of the newspaper article to ensure they understand the analogy with baseball.

In Reading Activity B: Finding Ideas, students were asked to re-examine the ideas from the Pre-Reading Activity B: True or False, and find the paragraphs where they were mentioned in the article. For example: *Idea a. - paragraph 6*

As they were interested and involved with the topic, students first completed Activity D: Thinking Carefully before the language and writing activities. During the activity, students also raised a number of other issues, such as the appropriate colour of clothing for meetings. Interestingly enough, the class felt that red skirts on women would be inappropriate as they saw red as a dominant, aggressive colour. Black was also seen as a bad colour to wear, because it

could be perceived as depressing. It was deemed that men should wear "boring" coloured suits, such as navy blue or grey, but they should also wear "interesting ties" to show they had personality. Vertical stripes were fine in shirts but horizontal stripes were to be avoided, and there was a class vote on whether perfume or aftershave should be worn. The outcome was "no". The issue of footwear raised a great deal of interest and it was mentioned that in Japan you should wear brand new shoes. People felt you could tell a lot about a person by their footwear and so a class check of footwear was carried out.

To finish this part of the lesson, learners worked in pairs to complete Post Reading Activity C: Language, which focused on conditional sentences. This was done in pairs and although some found it challenging, all pairs completed it successfully.

After finishing this part of the language section, 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 the three grammar exercises linked to "The Business of First Impressions" Instant Lesson.

Online Activities

Students were asked to complete three grammar activities – all focused on conditional sentences. The first two were directly linked to the business topic and the third was more generally on the use of the conditional. The third grammar exercise was given as homework and students were also asked to print out this exercise and highlight the answers before handing it in at the beginning of the next class.

In the computer lab, students were placed in pairs – two students per one computer. This was done to increase peer interaction and led to much discussion before choices were selected. It also prevents students from "clicking" through exercises.

After completing the second grammar exercise in which students had to choose the correct conditional sentence that matched each business situation, students were presented with the cut up text of a business email and asked to order it. This email then functioned as a model.

Date: Fri, 21 Mar 2003 17:14:14 +1200
From: Tom Barrett <tom.b@english-to-go.com>
Subject: Meeting Next Week
To: John Brown <johnbr@st.luc.co.aus>

Hi John,

It was good to talk to you on Wednesday.

Just to confirm I'll see you at 3 p.m. next Tuesday at your office. I'll bring the software demos. I think you'll be especially interested in seeing "Office Independent" - our new bookkeeping program.

I'm sure you'll enjoy the test match this weekend. I still think Australia is on top. England will have a real job battling their way out of this one!

I'm off home now. I hope the rest of your week went well. See you next week.

Cheers,

Bill

The ordering exercise was completed in pairs and then each student was asked to write their own email for the remainder of the session and, if necessary, as homework.

A: Writing An E-mail

Imagine you are a sales executive and you need to write an e-mail to confirm meeting arrangements. On Wednesday you phoned John Brown, an executive working for a publishing company, St. Lucia Press. You arranged to meet him next week at his office to show him your company's latest software. It is now Friday afternoon and you are e-mailing him to remind him of the arrangement to meet.

The email was printed and saved onto a disk to allow for peer correction in the following class.

Conclusion

Students really enjoyed the discussions that ensued from this lesson. They all had something to say and many interesting ideas were raised. The grammar exercises proved great revision and reinforcement on the use of conditionals.