

What's been changed?

Present perfect passive group speaking activity

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Overview: Aim and target language

This is an integrated skills activity with an emphasis on speaking practice using the Present Perfect Simple Passive (vs Active) in a very active, functional and *fun* way.

Level: Intermediate +

Time: Approximately 30 minutes

10 – 15 minutes for explaining the activity and student preparation plus 20+ minutes for the group speaking part of activity.

Requirements:

Do this activity immediately after, or as a later review of, any formal lesson covering Passive form. It would be helpful if the lesson covered Perfect Passive form. As this item is not commonly covered (at least in my experience) the students should at least have a good grasp of the essential function of Present Perfect Simple function and form.

You'll need access to some place that is separated from the main lesson room, e.g. a second room or hallway; a group of students will have to be separated from the rest during part of the activity.

You should also conduct the activity in a room that has plenty of objects that can be re-arranged. If your surroundings are bare, bring several items as indicated in the sample lexis for step 1 below.

Procedure:

You can warm the students up by asking them if they think they could be good detectives and what skills a good detective should have (*observation*).

- 1 Tell the students to work in pairs and make a list of as many objects in the room as possible in 1 minute. After a minute, elicit vocabulary in open feedback and write up any words that are new to other pairs.

Depending on how much vocabulary was generated, you may want/need to go around the room pointing at any objects the students didn't identify and elicit/teach this vocabulary: "*What do we call this/these...; What's this... in English?*"

In any case, encourage collocation to facilitate later usage for the activity by eliciting the verbs we use with these objects: "*What do we do (demonstrate action) to the lights? That's right, switch them on and off.*"

Do this step fairly quickly, generating just enough vocabulary to fuel the activity, otherwise it will get too 'heavy' with new vocabulary, killing the momentum in the set-up phase and distracting from the target language later on. Make sure students write down any new vocabulary.

Sample lexis: verb + object

switch on / off + the lights / television

move + table / chair / rubbish bin or wastebasket / clothes ...

open / close + the window / cabinet or cupboard / book / box

wipe or erase + the board

write / draw + on the board

unplug / plug in + the television / cassette or DVD player

put away + pens / pencils / notebooks / books...

turn over + notebooks / books

- 2 Divide the students in two (more or less) equal groups: A and B.
Write up on the board and tell the students that this activity is called *"What's been changed?"*

Tell the students to memorize the position and state of everything in the room (allow 2 minutes).

Tell the students that group A is going to leave the room for 5 minutes, and during that time group B will change things in the room. To ensure respect for the students, tell the group B students that they can move group A students' possessions, but cannot go into or remove anything from them, e.g. bags, pockets, etc.

When the students in group A come back, they will have to identify what's been changed.

- 3 Just before beginning the activity, emphasize the purpose of the activity and target language by eliciting (with stronger classes) or providing an example answer sentence for the question.
Write up the example: *"The lights have been switched off."*

Elicit why we use this form and not the active (= *the change is more important than who has made it / we don't know precisely who has made the change*).

You may also wish to elicit why Perfect tense is used here (depending on how familiar the students are with it and whether it has been covered in Passive form).

= *We're talking about the present result of change some time before now / past actions.*

Emphasize to the group A students that they have to use this structure when identifying the changes and explain the scoring system. You may also want to set a time limit for this part of the activity: 15 – 20 minutes, depending on the number of students.

Scoring:

Each student in group A who uses the target structure to identify a change gets **1 point**.

If the student identifies an actual change, they get **an additional 1 point**.

Points are not awarded to students who don't use the target structure correctly, on the other hand any other student who catches an error and corrects it gets the point. This encourages attentiveness and greater participation by all the students.

The student with the most points after the time limit / all changes have been identified wins.

Further notes and example dialogue

When you take group A students out of the main room, tell them to use the 5 minutes to discuss and compare everything they remember about the room. If you have monolingual students, they'll obviously have to be motivated to do this in English. In best case scenarios, I've come back after 5 minutes to find the students had drawn a map on the board and labeled everything in English!

Once group A is out of the room, tell group B they should change at least 2 things for as many students as are in group A. This will give any weaker or quieter students in group A more opportunities to participate.

You can determine the grouping to suit your students, but I've found that it's better to put more weak and quiet students in group A as it pushes them more, and reduces the chance of stronger students dominating the activity.

The group B students should also make a list of the changes they made. When group A returns and begins identifying changes, the students in group B must listen carefully and confirm or deny the changes using the Active structure.

With especially strong students, you may want to encourage autonomy by letting them score the group A students during the speaking phase.

In any case, the dialogue (and scoring) should go something like this:

Student A1: *"A-ha! The lights have been switched off.*

Student B: *"That's right. They've been switched off."* (student A1 = 2 points)

Student A2: *"And you moved the dictionary."*

Student A1: *"No, you're supposed to say 'the dictionary has been moved.' "*

Student B: *"No, it hasn't been moved."* (Student A2 = 0 pt, Student A1 = 1 pt)

I've had great success with this activity. Students can get surprisingly competitive in each group that is challenging or being challenged. I've had group B students be very creative with the changes they make, which further pushes the vocabulary and (spontaneous) language.