

Would I lie to you? by Josh Taylor

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| Age: | Teenagers, adults |
| Level: | Intermediate + |
| Time: | up to 90 mins |
| Aim: | to get students to speak freely and enthusiastically, with some added practice of the second conditional |
| Key skills: | speaking, listening |
| Resources: | internet access (optional) |

Introduction

This lesson has been designed specifically for the very first class of a course. I have used this lesson plan many times now and not once has it failed to provoke a lively, stimulating and highly enjoyable first class for everyone involved. It is, however, imperative that the students have never met each other before, otherwise the main activity of the lesson plan will not work.

Procedure

1. Before the class starts, write a number of facts about yourself spread out across the board, but in a way that indicates that they are the answers to specific questions, for example, 'Yes, I have a cat. Her name is Meryl' (*Have you got any pets?*), or 'I would buy three Ferraris and a mansion with a swimming pool' (*What would you do/buy if you won the lottery?*). Vary the degree of complexity according to the level. However, one of the facts you choose to write about yourself **must** be untrue. I usually write about eight facts.
Note: The students will be answering these same questions later on in the lesson so ensure that they are easy to answer and not too intrusive.
2. Once the students have arrived, have sat down and you have introduced yourself, start by drawing their attention to the board. Explain that the information on the board is all about you (at this point do not mention that one of the answers is a lie) and that they must attempt to correctly guess the questions that match the answers on the board. Put the students in pairs or small groups and give them seven or eight minutes to do this.

3. Once they have finished, ask each group in turn for a question to one of the answers and ask them to write it above the answer (you can do this yourself if preferred but I find that students are always happy to come and write them on the board themselves). After each example, ask the other groups if they agree or if they have an alternative question.
Note: At this stage, you may want to extend the activity by only allowing the class to move on to the next answer if the grammar in each question is correct.
4. After each answer has been correctly matched with its question, you should explain to the students that one of the answers is untrue. Tell the groups to formulate more questions to find out which answer is untrue, for example *What type of Ferrari would you buy?* or even *How old is your cat and when's her birthday?* Give students five minutes to do this.
5. Encourage each group to ask you their questions. Obviously, you must answer truthfully except when asked about the fact that is a lie. Here, of course, you must lie, but whilst doing so, either rub your neck, cross your arms or perform some other gesture to subtly indicate that you are lying (other gestures include tapping your fingers, leaning back and looking at your watch).
6. When the students have run out of things to ask you, give them a couple of minutes to discuss in their groups which fact they think is a lie. Then, after asking each group for their opinion, spill the beans and tell them which fact is the lie. After the inevitable *Yes!*, *What!?* and *I told you so!* reactions, ask the students who correctly identified the lie (if there were any) if there were any signs or signals that indicated to them that you were lying. If any of the students successfully identified your subtle gesture then this should naturally lead into a discussion on body language that conveys that a person is lying. If the students failed to notice, then perhaps you could reiterate your untrue answer to the question and exaggerate one or two of these 'insincere' gestures, before asking the students again.
7. Instruct the students to discuss in their groups what typical gestures may indicate that a person is lying.

After five minutes, stop the group discussions and continue by conducting some class feedback.

Write some of their ideas on the board and ensure that every student understands each example.

At this stage, if you think there is enough time and you have access to the internet, you may want to extend the lesson by playing one of the following short video clips, which examine the common corporal gestures associated with lying:

For intermediate level, watch the video 'FBI Agent Explains How To Spot Liars':

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3PAW7zjgPw>
(Pre-teach: *shifty, pinpoint, window to the soul*)

For upper-intermediate / advanced levels, watch the video 'Body Language: Learn How to Spot a Liar & Avoid Getting Scammed':

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1bol0C7_FA
(Pre-teach: *dilate, constrict, squint, swindle, compelling*)

Note: If these links are broken, search for the video title using a search engine, e.g. Google.

After the students have watched the video clip, you can briefly discuss which of their ideas were mentioned and any others that weren't, before beginning the main stage of the lesson.

- Group the students into pairs (or small groups if the class is very large), and carefully explain that they are going to begin the next activity by introducing themselves to their partner(s) and truthfully tell some basic personal facts about themselves using the original questions from the first exercise as guidance. After each student has introduced themselves to their partner(s), they should then elect a 'liar', and work together to create a false identity for that student, based on answering the questions in the first activity, where everything but the name of the student should be a lie. Obviously, no pair / group must be able to hear any other pair / group during this stage of the activity, so it is advisable to have them work as far away from each other as possible! I often use the corridor or unused classrooms for this.

- As the students are working on their 'liar' profile, walk around and monitor all groups to ensure that all are getting on with the task correctly and clear up any problems / misunderstandings. Encourage the liars to try to remember their new personal details by heart as they will probably be fairly easy to spot if they use their notebooks as a constant source of reference!
- After about ten to fifteen minutes, call back all the groups and then explain that now they are each going to spend a limited amount of time with every other student, except their partner(s), and ask the same questions again whilst trying to determine which students are lying! I find that three minutes is about enough time for each interaction but you may want to alter this depending on the size of the class, or time remaining. Each time the allotted time is up (use a stopwatch or something similar), shout *Change!* and each student should move on to someone who he / she hasn't yet spoken to. Do this until all students have spoken to each other.
- The students should then regroup in the locations where they were originally working and discuss who they think the liars from the other groups are, based on the observations they have made. After five minutes, call all the students back into the classroom and, group by group, ask who they think the liars are, based on any giveaway gestures they observed, before the liars reveal themselves.
- By now, all the students except those who lied will have introduced themselves to everybody else in the class, so, to finish the lesson, it's a nice idea to have the liars come clean and spend a minute or two introducing themselves honestly!

Extension task

You could ask students to write a short account of the main activity, explaining which liars they thought were / weren't easy to spot and why. Students can then read out their work in groups in the following class (but without mentioning any names) as a 'guessing game' activity.