

Are you a learner of the future?

A speaking lesson by Lindsay Clandfield

- Level:** pre-intermediate students and higher
Aim: students talk about possible future developments in education and decide whether or not they are already a 'learner of the future'.
Language: *used to*; future forms (*going to*, *will*)

Stage 1

Write the following words across the top of the board: *music, television and film, travel, work*. Tell the class that today you will be looking at how things have changed as a result of technology. Write the following on the board:

Thirty years ago, people used to listen to music vinyl records on record players. Now, they listen to music on tiny MP3 players.

Elicit other examples of how technology has changed music (e.g. downloading music, music videos, CDs, electronic music etc). After a few examples, rub out part of the sentence so that it now reads.

Thirty years ago, people used to ... Now they ...

Put students in pairs. Ask them to make similar sentences about the other areas you've written on the board. Feedback answers.

Optional language focus

If you wanted to, at this point, you could point out that the structure *used to* + verb means that something happened regularly in the past. It's worth mentioning that the present equivalent of *used to* is the present simple, and not *use to* (so they can't say *Thirty years people used to watch videos and now they use to watch DVDs.*)

Stage 2

Now write the word *learning* on the board. Ask students to do the same for this word. Give them a couple of minutes to think of some ideas, then elicit different suggestions from the class. Try to turn this part into a conversation between you and the class, by responding to what they tell you and involving others (e.g. ask *What do you think of what (student's name) said?*)

Stage 3

Explain that at a recent international conference for English teachers there was a panel on *The learner of the future*. Ask students to speculate about what they think people said there.

Stage 4

Distribute the worksheet. Ask students to work individually and do part one of the worksheet. Clarify any vocabulary that they are not familiar with. When they finish, tell them to compare their results with a partner. Who uses more technology in their lives?

Stage 5

Now tell the students to organize themselves into groups of three or four. Each group should nominate a secretary. The secretary reads out the first comment on part two of the worksheet and invites others to say how much they agree or disagree with the it. The secretary must then record a number from 1 to 5 for the group's opinion. Do an example with one group so that everyone understands the activity.

Stage 6

Groups discuss the quotes. At this point, circulate and make notes of language use and errors. Listen out especially for problems with future forms.

Stage 7

Do feedback on the exercise. What do the groups think? Are they 'learners of the future'?

Language focus

Using any notes you've made during stage 6, you could quickly recap the following rules about *will* and *going to*.

***Will* and *going to* are used for predictions about the future. *Going to* is often used for a prediction when we see from the present situation what is going to happen in the future. *Going to* is a little more informal than *will*.**

Stage 8 (optional homework)

Here are two ideas for homework, to follow up on this subject.

1. If possible, ask students to read more about this subject on the Internet and report back at the next class. Give them the following link:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/radio/specials/1720_ten_years/page9.shtml This contains an article about the future of learning English.

2. Tell students to write a composition on the subject 'Are you a learner of the future?' They could use the article above as part of their research.