



A bit of a conditionals review - David Petrie



Aims:

- To raise learner awareness of the main uses of conditional structures
- To raise learner awareness of the structure of first, second and third conditionals



Materials:

- Copies of Handout #01 – one per four students, chopped up by section.
- A controlled practice form based task, possibly from your coursebook?



Timings:

Depending on what you choose to leave in or leave out – anywhere between 50 – 90 minutes.



Procedure:

Lead in: Anywhere but here...

As part of a general “welcome to the lesson” chat... ask some of the students if they really want to be here right now. Tell them that if you could be anywhere, you’d like to be on a sun lounger, reading your book with a beer, by a nice beach somewhere sunny. (or skiing down a mountainside or so on...). Then say, but honestly if you weren’t here right now, you’d probably be having your dinner at home, watching TV or chatting on facebook.

On the board write the stems:

What I’d probably be doing...

If I could be doing anything...

In groups of three, ask the learners to discuss where they’d really be / where they’d like to be if not in the room. Get some feedback – the most interesting response, the most boring response, the weirdest etc.

Dictation: (the beginnings of looking at meaning & use)

Dictate the following stems. Learners write them down.

- (1) If the government were to lower interest rates...
- (2) If I got my dream job...
- (3) If you like Jazz...
- (4) If I hadn’t met...
- (5) If you’d just listen for a minute...
- (6) If I had more money...
- (7) If I miss my ride home...
- (8) If I’d been born 50 years ago...
- (9) I’d appreciate it if...
- (10) If it wasn’t for the internet...
- (11) If I were you...

Learners then complete the stems in anyway they see fit. Learners can collaborate if they wish to, but it is essentially a personalising task and their own responses will be more meaningful!

While learners are doing this, divide the board into eleven numbered sections or boxes. As you monitor, select any nice examples and ask the learner concerned to write it in the correspondingly numbered box on the board.

Language analysis:

By this stage, you should have twelve nice learner generated example sentences for the different conditional forms. In their groups of three (or pairs), ask the learners to categorise the different examples according to conditional form: first / second / third / mixed.



With any luck, it should break down like this:

FIRST: (3) & (7) SECOND: (1), (2), (6) & (10). THIRD: (4) & (8) MIXED: (5), (9), (10), (11) & (12).

Learners can now look at the function or use of the relevant conditional structures.

First: probable future / recommendation

Second: vaguely possibly future / imaginary present situations

Third: imaginary past situations (with either present or past result)

Mixed: it gets a bit tricky here, so we'll break it down by example: (5) criticism / strongly worded request, (9) polite / formal request (11) kind of second conditional, but the function is more for giving advice.

FOCUS ON FORM:

With the examples still on the board, the learners should be able to deduce the form of the different conditional structures:

First: IF/UNLESS + present (continuous) – WILL MAY MIGHT +infinitive

Second: IF/UNLESS + past (continuous) – WOULD COULD MIGHT + infinitive

Third: IF/UNLESS + past perfect (continuous) – WOULD COULD MIGHT + present perfect (continuous)

Mixed: demonstrate the form from the examples.

Controlled Practice: (still focusing on that form....)

If you want to check whether your learners have got the structure / form under control, then there's probably somewhere in your coursebook that relates to this area that has some fascinating practice tasks. For copyright reasons these cannot be reproduced but here are some page references that might be handy:

First Certificate Expert – page 124. Complete CAE – page 110. Advanced Expert CAE – page 83. Proficiency Masterclass – page 56. (These are not recommendations – just books that happened to be at hand at the time of writing!)

Alternatively, source some practice tasks from your level appropriate grammar reference book – Murphy is always good for that kind of thing.

Productive Practice Tasks:

It might be worth ascertaining prior to this stage, which aspects your learners need to focus on most. It is difficult to provide a single activity that allows learners to practice / produce all conditional forms in a single sitting (so to speak) because of the different uses involved.

Penny Ur (Grammar Practice Activities, CUP, 1988) suggests that "Chains of Events" can be used to do this.

Basically, Student A frames a conditional. Student B takes the result of A's condition and uses it to form a further conditional. EG: "A": If I won the lottery I'd buy a new car. "B": If I bought a new car I'd buy a Ferrari. "C": If I bought a Ferrari I'd drive it too fast. And so on. This can either be done verbally or written. You could increase the challenge by having more than one starting point in the room.

Penny Ur also suggests "Justifying Actions", though this relates more to the second conditional. Learners can create a set of ten situations (e.g. why might you steal a car? Why might you take all your clothes off in public?) and they then ask each other these questions, their partner(s) having to come up with reasons to do the things suggested. This might well find favour with younger classes!

The other obvious situation for conditional use is that of a negotiation. You could ask the learners to create their own negotiation role play – i.e. describe a situation, identify the characters involved and their different goals.

Alternatively, there is a (slightly limited) role play here:

http://eslsite.com/rd/Business_English/negotiation_role_play.html

Four further Role play situations are given on Handout #01: these are not mine, but come from:

<http://mec.univ.szczecin.pl/joomla/index.php?option=com>



Handout #01: taken from: <http://mec.univ.szczecin.pl/joomla/index.php?option=com>

Negotiation Role Play #1

Roman wants to start a nightclub in an old warehouse near the edge of a residential area with several apartment buildings. Roman has purchased the property and has all of the necessary permits to begin construction on his nightclub. The representative of the residents of the apartments is concerned that a nightclub will play loud music and the patrons of the nightclub might drink too much and become a nuisance in the neighbourhood. Roman arranges a meeting with the representative of the residents of the apartments to negotiate terms of an agreement so that he can build his nightclub without causing problems with the residents.

Role Play Assignments: Roman / Mr. or Ms. Dudchenko

Negotiation Role Play #2

Isabella has worked as the executive assistant to Martina for ten years. Isabella has worked overtime on many occasions when Martina had special projects to complete. Martina has not given Isabella a raise in her salary for three years and Isabella is thinking about looking for a new position which could pay her more money. Martina is concerned about losing Isabella to another employer but is worried that her own company has not made a profit in the last two years. Isabella and Martina sit down in the conference room to negotiate a possible raise in salary for Isabella.

Role Play Assignments: Isabella / Martina

Negotiation Role Play #3

Elizabeth and Enrique have been married for eight years and have two children, Elsa age 5 and Daniel age 3. They are not getting along because Elizabeth works during the day time hours and Enrique works the night shift at his factory. They decide to separate to determine if they might need to get a divorce. They need to negotiate a child custody arrangement and determine which of them should pay for the rent on the apartment, the two car payments, the two credit card payments to Discover and MasterCard. Elizabeth and Enrique meet to negotiate a separation arrangement without lawyers because they know that if they hire lawyers the cost would be too great.

Role Play Assignments: Elizabeth / Enrique

Negotiation Role Play #4

Katrina and Alexandra are partners in a women's clothing boutique. The boutique has done extremely well because it is located near the university in the town where the two women live. Katrina goes to market and purchases the clothes and Alexandra is in charge of managing the employees and all other business arrangements. After three years in the partnership, Katrina believes that Alexandra is not a good manager and believes that she has made some bad business decisions like signing a long term lease at their current location for a sum that is excessive for the area in which their store is located. Katrina wants to dissolve the partnership or buyout Alexandra's partnership interest. Alexandra loves the store and selling women's clothing so she is not interested in selling her interest. Katrina and Alexandra decide to discuss the issues between them and attempt to negotiate some sort of arrangement between them.

Role Play Assignments: .Katrina / Alexandra