

CENTRAL ASIAN TEENS TALK

SUGGESTIONS FOR PLANNING LESSONS

The materials from *Central Asian Teens Talk* can be used in different ways to meet your needs and the needs of your students. Unlike textbooks that say, “Do page one; next do page two,” these materials can be used in many ways, and only you, the teacher, know which purposes will be most useful to you and your students.

You might use these materials in your school, or you might use them as content for an afterschool program or English language club. You might decide to use just one interview as a supplement to your class textbook and focus on one skill, such as listening or writing, or you might decide to use one interview as the basis of three or four sessions and practice multiple skills. You might decide to use an interview to introduce a unit on a particular topic, such as clothing or outdoor sports. You might use an interview (or two) to begin a project-based learning experience in which your students create their own videos and write discussion questions.

You are the person who can best choose how to use these materials. You will write your own lesson plans. We hope, however, that the following section on how to write a lesson plan will be useful if you do not already have a lot of experience in planning your own lessons.

HOW TO WRITE A LESSON PLAN

First, think about the needs of your students.

You are the world’s greatest expert on the needs of your students. You know their age, their interests, and their English language skill level. You know their families, their community, their school, and their culture. Perhaps most importantly, you know their individual differences. No textbook writer, materials developer, or teaching expert knows the interests and needs of your students in the way that you do. You are the expert in your classroom. Plan your lessons with the needs of your students in mind and keep your lessons student-centered.

As you begin planning, choose the skill you want to focus on in this lesson. Your students will probably use several skills as they work, but it’s good to have one skill as your primary focus. Think about how your students will be able to show, to themselves and to you, that they have increased their skill. This will become the learning outcome (sometimes called the objective) of your lesson. Because language learning is not simple, it may take more

than one day's lesson to achieve the learning outcome, but you should be able to state your outcome/objective for the lesson (or unit, or week) as something that students will be able to do. For example, your outcome/objective might be one of the following:

At the end of this lesson (or week, or unit),

Students will be able to summarize the interview orally to another student.

Students will be able to hold a five-minute small group conversation about (topic).

Students will be able to write a paragraph about (topic).

Second, choose materials to help your students meet your objective for the lesson.

The interviews in *Central Asian Teens Talk* have different styles, different lengths, and different topics. The speakers have different personalities and speak in different ways. You know your students. Choose an interview that will be interesting for your students and neither too difficult or too easy for them. If an interview is too long for your student's skill level, choose to use just part of it in one lesson. You can use the rest of the interview in a second lesson.

Because the *Central Asian Teens Talk* materials can be used to work on multiple skills, you might want to plan two or three lessons using one interview. If your students especially need practice with listening, the first lesson could focus on listening, a second lesson focus on discussion, and a third lesson focus on writing. If, instead, your students especially need practice with reading, you could read the text together in the first lesson and listen to the recording after students understand the text. Later lessons could focus on discussion, writing, or on a specific grammar point, such as the grammar of reported speech ("Ulugbek said that. . .").

Third, plan the steps in your lesson.

There are several models for lesson plans, but one way of organizing that is adaptable for lessons on many skills and topics, including *Central Asian Teens Talk* interviews, follows a pattern of:

- a. a warmer
- b. a language sample in context
- c. comprehension help
- d. input from teacher
- e. production with support from teacher and peers
- f. independent production

As you plan each of these steps in your lesson, think about the kinds of help (often called *scaffolding*) that your students will need in order to be successful. For example, if you are using a reading or a video, you should first introduce the general topic because this kind of introduction helps activate your students' background knowledge on the topic and makes reading or listening easier. When you are using *Central Asian Teens Talk*, giving your students the names of the students in the interview before they listen will make the listening task a little easier. You may want to teach some vocabulary items before your students listen to or read an interview. Perhaps your students need to listen to very short sections (ten or fifteen seconds) rather than a two-minute interview. Your goal in any lesson is to provide support that makes the learning task "easy but not too easy" so that students both feel success and increase their skills. As their language levels increase, students will be ready for more difficult tasks. You will continue to give support (*scaffolding*), but the help your students need will change.

- a. **The warmer.** (This is sometimes called a *hook* or a *lead-in*.) When class begins, students may still be thinking about their history or math class or about a conversation with friends in their first language. They need something that will help them "turn on" their English skills and create interest in the day's topic. Use the first few minutes of class for a warmer. This might be a low-stress question related to the day's topic, a survey of student opinions on the topic, or a quick contest or game. (For example: Which pair of students can list the most words related to today's topic in three minutes?).
- b. **A sample of English language used in context.** This might be a few sentences, or it might be much longer. It could be a written text, a video, or an audio recording. If you are using *Central Asian Teens Talk*, it will be either the video or the text of the interview. The important point is that this sample of English shows students a model of the kind of English that the lesson will focus on. It is usually helpful to watch a video once just to get the gist (basic meaning) of the interview and then to watch it a second time for more understanding.
- c. **Comprehension help and clarification.** The teacher answers students' questions and asks questions to assess students' understanding of the sample, and makes sure that students understand at least the basic meaning. Students may then want to read or listen to the sample again.
- d. **Focused input from the teacher.** In this part of the lesson, the teacher provides helpful information about organization, grammar structures, pronunciation, vocabulary, or anything else that will help students achieve the objective of the lesson.

- e. **Production and interaction with support from the teacher and from peers.** In this part of the lesson, students speak, write, or hold discussions, while working alone, in pairs, or in small groups. For example, if the objective is to be able to summarize an interview orally, students might prepare notes and, if needed, ask the teacher or a peer for help with vocabulary. If the objective of the lesson is to be able to write a paragraph, students might brainstorm ideas for their paragraph, write a first draft, and get suggestions from a peer for improving the paragraph. The teacher remains available to give help when needed and continually assesses whether students need more instruction and/or more practice before they will be able to show that they have achieved the objective of the lesson.
- f. **Freer or independent production.** This is the true goal of any lesson. The objective of the lesson said that students would be able to do something specific. When students are able to do that “something” (write a paragraph, give an oral summary, hold a small group discussion, etc.) independently or with only a little help, both teacher and students can celebrate success.

Fourth, plan your assessment strategies.

We often think of assessment only as tests, but good teaching includes many forms of assessment. As you plan a lesson, include your strategies for assessing whether or not your students have achieved the lesson objective. There are in general two kinds of assessment. The first is *summative* (final) assessment. In a summative assessment, students are usually assigned final grades for a lesson, unit, or course. The grade may be assigned to a final product, such as a written assignment or oral report, or come from a final test.

The second kind of assessment is *formative* assessment. Formative assessment is very important for good teaching but unfortunately is often ignored by teachers. Formative assessment helps us shape or “form” our lessons while we are teaching. Formative assessment gathers information so that the teacher can decide whether or not the students need more explanation, more scaffolding, or more practice before moving on to the next lesson or part of a lesson. For example, while students are working in small groups, the teacher may walk around the room and listen quietly to what the students are saying, checking for problems or errors that need explanation. Many teachers use *exit tickets* for formative assessment. The teacher asks a question that requires students to use a skill from the lesson. Students write their answer on a slip of paper and turn it in to the teacher before exiting the class. The teacher reads the responses to check whether or not students have mastered that skill. Whatever strategies you choose, make sure that you are looking for your students’ successes and needs as you move through a lesson.

Students should be helped to do formative self-assessment too. Students can study more successfully if they know exactly what they need to be able to do at the end of a lesson or unit. One simple way to encourage self-assessment is to give students a short checklist of “I can” statements based on the objective of the lesson and ask them to choose one of three responses:

- a. I can do it.
- b. I can do it with some help.
- c. I can’t do it.

Teaching students how to do self-assessment gives them skills and encouragement for becoming independent learners. It also helps students prepare for summative assessments and may raise their scores on important tests.

FIRST SAMPLE LESSON PLAN USING CENTRAL ASIAN TEENS TALK

Objective: Students will be able to describe orally a place in their region that other people would enjoy visiting.

Materials: The interview with Amir.

Warmer: The teacher announces a vocabulary contest. Working in pairs, students compete to see which team can create the longest list of adjectives to describe a beautiful place in nature in three minutes. As teams read their lists, everyone crosses out any words that are repeated on another list. The winner is the pair with the most words that no other team used.

English used in context: The teacher shows the video once. Students listen and do not take notes. The teacher asks, “What is something you noticed and understood in the video?” After two to five students respond, the teacher plays the video again. Students may make notes if they wish.

Comprehension help and clarification: The teacher asks the class each of the questions that Amir answers in the video. Working in pairs, students write what they can remember of Amir’s answers. The teacher distributes copies of the text of the interview and plays the video again. Students read along as they listen to the video for the third time. Working in the same pairs, students note what they missed and what they remembered when they wrote Amir’s answers to the interview questions.

Focused input from the teacher: Amir does not use perfect textbook English at some small points. The teacher explains that this is normal when one is speaking a new language, points out these places and explains, if needed, the textbook form.

The teacher points out the three interview questions about places to visit in Kazakhstan, the places Amir has visited, and the reason he thinks it is good to visit new places. The teacher then asks students to think about how they might answer similar questions.

Production and interaction with support from the teacher and from peers: Students prepare to give a three-minute-long oral presentation on a place in their region that they recommend visiting. The presentation will include both a description of the place and reasons for visiting. Students prepare notes to use while speaking and get help from peers or the teacher as needed. The teacher moves around the room to assess learning and give help as needed.

Freer or independent production: Students give their oral presentations. Unless the class is small, presentations might be given in smaller groups of perhaps five or six students. Depending on time available, this may be done in the same class session or at the following one.

An alternative plan: This lesson could easily be changed to work on writing skills instead of oral description. The objective could be: Students will be able to write a well-organized paragraph describing a place in their region that other people would enjoy visiting.

SECOND SAMPLE LESSON PLAN USING CENTRAL ASIAN TEENS TALK

Objective: Working with others, students will be able to decide on a new facility that would benefit their community and explain why this facility is needed.

Materials: The interview with Ulugbek and Abai.

Warmer: Students will need to know the word *facility*, used as a concrete noun. To introduce this word, before class the teacher writes on slips of paper words for community facilities, such as *hospital*, *football field*, *tennis court*, *music hall*, *movie theater*, *ice-skating rink*, *park*, *flower garden*. A volunteer student chooses a slip of paper and draws on the board a picture of this facility. Classmates try to guess what the picture is of. When a student guesses correctly that student chooses a slip of paper and draws the next picture. At the end of the game, the teacher explains that all of these pictures are of things that can be called community facilities.

A sample of English language used in context: The teacher shows the video once. Students listen and do not take notes. The teacher asks, “What is something you noticed and understood in the video?” After two to five students respond, the teacher plays the video again. Students listen and write key words that they hear. The teacher asks what students noticed on this second listening. The teacher helps students “learn how to learn” by explaining that learning is a process, and partial understanding is a first step towards full understanding.

Comprehension help and clarification: The teacher distributes copies of the text of the interview and plays the video again. Students read along as they listen to the video for the third time. Reading while listening provides one kind of scaffolding. The teacher asks if students have questions about anything they heard and read. If there are questions, the teacher first offers an opportunity for another student to give clarification before answering the question. If the students don’t ask questions, the teacher asks simple comprehension questions to assess understanding. If this formative assessment reveals a need for a replay of the video, the teacher plays the video again.

Focused input from the teacher: The boys do not use perfect textbook English in a few places. The teacher explains that this is normal when one is speaking a new language and directs students’ attention to the place where Abai asks, “What do you like living in Kurshab, and if you have the opportunity, what household will you build there?” Together the students and teacher make this sentence into perfect textbook English. If students do not suggest it on their own, the teacher points out that the word *facility*, from the warmer, is better than *household* in this sentence.

Production and interaction with support from the teacher and from peers: The teacher divides the class into small groups and asks, “What new facility would you choose to build in our community?” Because group discussions are usually better if the participants create a product of some kind at the end of the discussion, such as a list, a report, or a summary, the teacher explains that each group must decide on a facility and prepare a five-minute presentation explaining why it should be developed. Each person in the group must participate in the presentation. Visual aids will be allowed.

Freer or independent production: Groups make their presentations to the class. The class votes on which presentation was the most effective. The teacher awards first and second place ribbon to the winners.

An alternative plan: This lesson could be made into a larger project using multiple skills. Instead of a five-minute presentation, each group could create a large poster display or a

PowerPoint presentation explaining the need for the new facility, the benefits, and the probable cost.