A SERIOUS ISSUE –
EXPLORING GLOBAL AGEING
WITH A LOWER-LEVEL LANGUAGE CLASS
by Felicity McCardle **and** Rachel Ellis
Rachel.ellis@english-to-go.com

Introduction

Finding suitable discussion and reading material for lower-level adult students can be a challenge. Students are intellectually capable of dealing with sophisticated themes but many published materials on suitable topics often have vocabulary and structures that are too advanced linguistically for lower level language learners.

In the following lesson students focus on the theme of ageing and what will happen to people around the world fifty years from now as ageing populations in many countries increase. Students are presented with an authentic news article and reading activities in a series of achievable steps that enable the students to gain a thorough understanding of the article and issue.

This lesson plan uses a printable lesson and an online worksheet from English-To-Go (http://www.english-to-go.com), an Internet publisher with two primary web sites: an online, ever-growing textbook for teachers providing photocopiable lessons based on Reuters news articles and http://www.selfaccess.com/ - a self-study site for students with grammar, listening, reading and writing exercises.

Procedure

Level: Pre-Intermediate

Time: 95 minutes

Aims:

- To practise scanning, reading for specific information, evaluating information and reconstructing a text.
- To practise agreeing and disagreeing and expressing opinions.
- To construct sentences expressing future wishes and hopes in speaking and writing.
- To provide opportunities for meaningful communication.
- To learn vocabulary related to ageing.

Preparation

The following link http://www.selfaccess.com/iateflwill take you to a page where photocopiable materials, comprehensive teachers' notes and answer key and on-line exercises have been provided. Print and then photocopy sufficient copies of the English-to-go.com instant lesson, "Global Ageing", for each student to have a copy. If planning to do the online component, organize access to computer terminals.

This class activity is divided into three stages:

1. Preparation for Reading
Students are pre-taught some key vocabulary from the featured text such as *discrimination, legislation, worsening, poverty* and *explosion.* Themes from the featured text are explored in discussion and vocabulary activities.
2. Reading Activities
Students use different reading activities to understand and interpret the featured text. The reading has been divided into 3 parts and then a final exercise is given for overall gist.
3. Extension Activities
Students build upon what they have learnt from the article in speaking, grammar practice, online reading activities and writing activities.

Procedure:

1. Preparation for Reading (20 minutes)

Introduce the theme of ageing by placing an assortment of magazine photos of elderly people in different situations. Note any words the photographs elicit from students on the board.

Students then read a series of statements about the future of the elderly in both rich and poor countries and in groups are asked to say whether they agree or disagree with each statement or are unsure. Some discussion language prompts "*I don't think so because…/ Why do you think….?* could be provided as an aid.

> a. In poor countries older people are often poor and lonely.

> b. In rich countries older people are often poor and lonely.

c. In some countries people believe that an older person's family has to take care of him / her.

d. In the next 50 years the number of older people in the world will double.

e. In 50 years' time there will be equal numbers of older and younger people in the world.

f. A rich country will have lots of problems if it has many older people.

g. A poor country will have lots of problems if it has many older people.

A representative from each group then shares one or two of their answers with the class. Students are given vocabulary items from the featured text and match them with their meanings as another lead-in activity and opportunity for pre-teaching of relevant lexical items.

Words	**Meanings**
discrimination	*being poor*
legislation	*treating someone or a group badly or unfairly*
worsening	*laws*
poverty	*getting worse, not better*

II. Reading Activities (30 minutes)

Students scan the first part of the article to complete a table of information that answers "Who?, What?, Where?, When?" questions.

The next reading activity requires students to complete a short summary of the second part of the article and for the third part of the article students explore meaning by answering true or false questions.

The final reading comprehension exercise asks students to look at the complete article and examine meaning by matching information to make some questions and answers.

D: Checking Your Understanding

1. The number of older people will grow very quickly in many countries. What does Annan want poor countries to do?

2. What will happen in many countries when the population of older people is much larger?

3. The number of older people will quadruple. Has this happened before?

4. What does the report "State of the World's Older People" look at?

5. What is happening to some African countries? What effect does that have on old people?

a. It examines the lives of old people in different countries.

b. There will be a lot of problems.

c. They must get ready for this.

d. Their economies are getting weaker, not stronger. This causes problems for old people in those countries.

e. No it hasn't. It's the first time in history.

Students use their own understanding and knowledge in answering some extension questions such as *"There has been a belief that... 'the families will take care of them (older people) ... But now that's just not the case.'*

This acts as a natural lead in for the grammar point introduced in the lesson: rules for the verb pattern used with 'hope', 'expect', 'want' and 'would like'. Write two or three sample statements about future expectations and ageing using this pattern.

I would like to have lots of grandchildren.

When I'm older, I expect to live in a retirement village.

I hope to spend time fishing when I'm 70 years old.

When I retire, I'd like to buy a camper van and travel.

Students then complete a number of sentences using prompts provided and work in pairs. They initially use the sentence prompts to answer the questions orally before working alone and write their statements.

III. Extension Activities (20 minutes)

Students answer some discussion questions looking at whose responsibility it is to look after the elderly, what poor countries can do to prepare for an ageing population and what they expect will happen to them when they are old.

> *Whose responsibility is it to look after older people, the government's, or the older person's family? Why?*
>
> *How can poor countries get ready for the increase in older people?"*

This is done in pairs and students play particular roles when discussing these questions: (for example, a government minister, an elderly person with children, a single professional woman in her twenties whose parents are elderly etc). A plenary discussion can then take place. This is especially valuable if you have students from different countries or of different ages and backgrounds. Notes are made on the board and students copy these as a form of scaffolding for their writing exercise in the computer lab.

Then students adjourn to computer terminals. Assist students in logging in to the activity from http://www.selfaccess.com/iatefl. Explain they are going to be working with a second article on the same topic as they have just read. Students are presented with parts of text and must choose the order in which they go to reconstruct the text. Students work in pairs - two students per one computer. This is to increase peer interaction and discussion before choices are selected. It also prevents students from "clicking" through the text.

Following this, ask students to write a poem called **"When I'm 64 or more …".**
Each line begins with the structures examined in class in either the positive or negative form; *I hope to …, I wouldn't like to …,* and incorporates their notes from the extension activity. These can be formatted to be displayed on A4 size posters.

Conclusion

The themes and ideas presented in the lesson are sophisticated, but the preparation for reading and reading activities allow students to build upon and consolidate their understanding of the

text. This prepares them for further discussion and writing. Students review their understanding of the lesson's structures, ideas and vocabulary in the online extension activity and poem. They feel excited and satisfied at the end of this knowing that they have mastered an authentic article with a sophisticated theme and produced something to be displayed on a classroom wall or on the Web.