

ESL Lesson Plan on Motivation

This ESL lesson plan would be appropriate for high intermediate or advanced ESL or EFL or ESP- business classes. It is both a reading and listening lesson, with partner or class discussion. After watching the video and reading its transcript, students take a 12-question comprehension test designed as preparation for academic test-taking (SAT, TOEFL, IELTS, etc.) The lesson will take 1 ½ to 2+ hours, and needs little advance prep—but you should watch the TED talk first!

Warm-up (10 min.)

Have students complete a quick survey to start thinking about motivation. (You could write it on the board for students to answer, or duplicate this handout (<http://www.englishhints.com/support-files/what-motivates-you.pdf>) – which also includes the vocabulary matching for Practice 1 below.) I'd recommend making it anonymous: tell them they don't have to share their results, just think about the questions.

What motivates you?

1. If someone in your family needs your help for several hours of hard work, which of these reasons would make you most likely to help?

- A. I would help because they are my family and I love them.
- B. If I help them, they will help me when I need it.
- C. If I don't, it will strain family relations or make them angry.
- D. If I don't, they will criticize me to other family members.

2. What can your boss offer you if he needs you to work extra carefully or extra long hours?

- A. Extra pay
- B. Job security
- C. Future promotion to a higher position
- D. Appreciation, respect, and the chance to help our company do better
- E. A threat: it will hurt your position in the company if you don't (or you might be fired)

3. What are you willing to spend a large amount of money to buy?

- A. Things that will help my family
- B. Things that will keep my family and home safe
- C. Things that will make life more comfortable
- D. Things that make life more enjoyable
- E. Things that will save us money or are priced very well (big sales or discounts, etc.)

Introduction (5-10 min.)

Tell a personal story about motivation: some experience or opportunity which impelled you to get outside your comfort zone. (Think of a travel adventure, family emergency, or opportunity that involved some risk. What moved you to make the choices you did?) Talk about some motivations that are stronger than money.

Presentation 1 (5-10 min.)

Present vocabulary on the board, asking if students can explain it or give examples, then correcting or adding to their comments.

Vocabulary you might want to teach and practice includes: approach, attach, autonomy (used 10x), extrinsic, incentive (as well as incentivize), intrinsic, mismatch, motivation (and motivators), norms, performance (used 8x) Reward/s was used 21x, so is important to teach if your students might not know it. Also possible if your students want/need a lot of vocabulary or know some of the above: aberration or robust—used one time each, and candle, used 13x. (You might bring one to class as a demo, since it's not a really common item anymore.)

Vocabulary Practice (10-20 min.)

Student pairs match vocabulary with definitions (the second half of the warm-up handout; cut apart if you only want one half.) Go over the matches as a class.

Encourage partner discussion of what are the most useful incentives, based on the survey and their experiences. You could also do this as a “think pair share,” with student pairs taking turns volunteering their answers and the teacher recording the incentives on the board, then possibly asking the students to decide which are intrinsic incentives and which are extrinsic.

Presentation 2 (5 min.)

Introduce the TED talk on motivation. (http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation.html.) You might want to mention that a lot of his humor is understated or “tongue in cheek” (expressing or exaggerating common ideas he doesn't believe, and that his audience knows he doesn't believe, to make fun of the ideas.) People laugh because they recognize the stereotypes he doesn't believe, but jokes about: the idea that being a lawyer is not a socially-approved occupation, or that “Americans don't believe in philosophy.” He discusses law school because he wants to prove his “case” or main point about what really motivates people.

Listening and Reading Practice (30-40 min.; the video itself is 18+)

The speech moves quickly, although most of the vocabulary is common. If your class has better reading than listening skills, you might have them read the script first. (However, watching it first is more motivating. Hearing the laughter and seeing his enthusiasm may encourage them to read more attentively to understand what's going on.)

If I had a mixed level class (intermediate to advanced—I wouldn't use this for even high beginners), I think I would **show the first third of the talk** then pause the video and have students read the transcript that far. (This would be the part in which he explains that he wants to make a case, gives the candle problem, and then asks and answers whether incentives helped or hurt performance using the candle, through the mismatch paragraph ending "Let me show you what I mean" at 5:52 of the 18+ minute talk.) After they read, you might check comprehension and answer any questions before showing and then having them read the rest of the video.

Evaluation (15-20 min.)

Have students complete the comprehension test. (<http://www.englishhints.com/support-files/comp-test-on-talk-on-motivation.pdf>). I would introduce it not as a test for this class, but as practice for academic tests they will need to take (SAT, TOEFL, IELTS), or just a chance to test how well they understood the main points of Pink's talk.

Go over test together. Discuss any surprises.

Application (5 min.)

Ask students to notice (or write in journals if they do them) examples of ads and the motives they appeal to: the various incentives they offer to motivate purchases.