

Innovation Nation

Topic

Inventions and the impact of new inventions on our lives

Aims

- To review vocabulary related to inventions
- To practise speaking skills, giving opinions
- To review comparatives
- To practise describing inventions

Age group

12 - adult

Level

B1/ B2

Time

60 – 90 minutes

Materials

1. Innovation Nation student worksheet
2. Internet links: http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/reports/archive/science_nature/inventions.shtml Best and worst inventions, according to Radio 4 listeners
<http://www.therichest.com/rich-list/nation/10-most-successful-inventions-from-the-dragons-den/?view=all-> article about the ten most successful new inventions from the Dragon's Den

Introduction

The amount of background you give and the depth of discussion depends on the level of your students. It could be useful to have dictionaries available (English-English) so you can check definitions and look at the language used to describe devices. An important point to make is that the British have a history of invention and work in engineering and research but their ideas are then better exploited by Japan and America. The pocket calculator in exercise 1 was invented in Britain but the Japan made versions which they marketed well and sold well. Britain was known in the 19th century as the birthplace of the industrial revolution and it is the innovation in science, technology and transport which powered the industrial development and the growth of the Empire.

- *Higher levels can look at the title and see if they can guess what the topic will be about. What does innovation mean? In what areas are the British or your host country innovative? Music and fashion are two areas of great innovation, and the British invented many of the sports we know today. Can your students think of any recent innovations?*
- *Lower levels and higher levels visual support will enhance this lesson. Diagrams of inventions from a Science and technology dictionary, textbook or pictorial reference book from a local library, on the net can be used to elicit descriptions based on the questions:*
 - *What is this invention?*
 - *How does it work?*
 - *Why was it an innovation?*
 - *When was it invented?*

Try to get pictures of the inventions for exercise 1.

Procedure

1. Task 1 – British Inventions	<p>Give pairs or small groups a few minutes to work this out. A process of elimination could also be used if you look at the dates and know the time when things were invented. As extra linguistic practice give each pair one invention to define/describe as if it is a new thing or ask pairs to look up the definitions in dictionaries. If students enjoy this task a follow up inventions quiz could be devised with students thinking of questions, not restricted to British inventions.</p> <p>Example:</p> <p><i>Who invented the electric guitar?</i></p>
2. Task 2 – Which came first?	<p>Pairs or small groups can do this and then, if a higher level, give them the question to discuss in groups and then hold a feedback session. With lower levels work on the question about society with the whole class to bring out the language of comparatives.</p> <p>Example: <i>The Wheel helped people travel faster and made work in the fields easier. Space probes keep us better informed about climate change and give us more control over our world and the world beyond</i></p>

3. Task 3 – Favourite inventions	<p>Pairs or groups can think of more examples and then get a show of hands from the class to see which is the most popular. The reasons for how much an invention is useful can help students cope with the next task and gives further practice in using comparatives. You could put up a list of comparatives for lower levels to use as prompts when they are thinking of reasons.</p> <p>You can note that some inventions were nominated to both categories : mobile phones and TV are loved and loathed depending on your attitude towards life. Encourage higher level students to reflect on why people might love / hate these inventions.</p> <p>Get feedback from the discussion questions.</p>
4. Task 4 – Innovation nation	<p>Run through the inventions quickly so they know what it is but do not try to go in to detail on every word. Pairs or groups can choose 3 finalists and then get examples from the class. A more fluent class will be encouraged to give their reasons and agree and disagree. The official finalists can be given after this and keep the winner secret until after they have nominated one.</p> <p><i>Winner: the collapsible kitchen bin</i></p> <p><i>Runners up: the nib-less pen and the mask-like swimming goggles</i></p>
5. Task 5 – Describe an invention	<p>This is suitable for intermediate students and above working in pairs or small groups. Using dictionaries to help is at your discretion – this is to help them with the follow up activity of writing a description of their own invention. Hold the guessing descriptions as a class game if students are good at it.</p>
6. Task 6 – Society and inventions	<p>This task is suitable for a whole class or group discussion format, depending on the size/ level of your class. If you ask students to work in groups, get some feedback at the end to compare ideas. Encourage students to justify their opinions.</p>
Task 7 - A new invention	<p>Put students into groups or pairs. They need to come up with a new invention. Some students may need help here but try to get them to focus on a problem or difficulty that could be solved with an invention – it doesn't have to be something realistic!</p> <p>Get them to make notes for each category (the language from Task 5 should help here. Students could optionally make a poster and draw a picture of their invention, and encourage them to come up with a name for it. Students can then present their ideas, either to other groups or to the whole class.</p> <p>If you want, you could take a vote on which is the best/ most original invention, but try to keep this light hearted!</p>

Contributed by

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