

Amazing apes

Level

Pre-intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level A2–B1 and above)

Comment

This lesson springs from new evidence which suggests that orang-utans are able to 'act' to convey different messages. This is surprising, given that acting is generally considered a human characteristic. Note that in terms of language, the last two paragraphs of the text are a little more challenging.

How to use the lesson

- 1 Before giving out the text, start the class with an anecdote: describe behaviour that you have witnessed on the part of a pet or domestic animal which struck you as 'human-like'. This could be a gesture, action, noise or even expression, eg a dog which might have had a 'sad face' when disappointed. Elicit other examples if students have ideas. Then put students in groups of three to brainstorm at least six differences between humans and animals (exercise 1), after eliciting an example to the board. Give students a time-limit for this activity. Hear some suggestions in feedback.
- 2 Give out the worksheet and ask students to work independently on exercise 2. Be prepared to clarify some words if necessary, eg *tool*, *emotion*, *shelter* and *mourn*. Let students compare answers in pairs. Take feedback – if they have interesting opinions and examples, then exploit this stage.
- 3 Ask students which animals are probably the closest to human beings and how. Elicit the words *ape* (see Glossary), *orang-utan* and other relevant words such as *chimpanzee* and *gorilla*. To elicit *orang-utan*, it might be engaging to try sketching a picture on the board, or simply have a picture prepared. Elicit what students know about orang-utans using these oral prompts: *what they look like*; *where they live (country and habitat)*; *what they eat*; *which dangers they face*. If you think students will be fairly knowledgeable, write these prompts on the board and let them first talk about it in pairs.
- 4 Students complete exercise 3. In feedback, pick up on the word *mime* and elicit what it means (see Glossary).
- 5 Students read to find out which of the points in exercise 2 are discussed in the text (exercise 4). This is a gist task so give students a time limit here.
- 6 Adapt the approach to exercise 5, depending on your students' level. If you have a strong group, then they may be able to tackle this exercise without even re-looking at the text. Alternatively, give them a few minutes to read the text without looking at the exercise, and then cover the text as a memory-test. In contrast, with a weaker group, let them read the text at the same time as completing the task.
- 7 Exercise 6 focuses on a mixture of phrasal verbs from the text. The sentences are not lifted verbatim from the text, but there are only minor differences in phrasing. Therefore, once students have finished and compared answers, if necessary they can check by referring back to the text. Ask students to record any of the phrasals that they like and may find useful, together with the example sentence.

Reading eLesson

Week starting 6 September 2010

- 8 Let students read the points in exercise 7 alone at first, before putting them into twos or threes to discuss their ideas. You may find it focuses students to encourage them to select just two of the points to discuss. Monitor and take notes of any content issues, as well as language ones (if appropriate for your group), for later feedback. For point 3, see *Related websites* for a video clip of a chimp mourning.

Answer key

1, 2 Students' own answers.

3 Orang-utans can act: they can communicate through mime (the research mentions that they used 18 different mimes).

4 a; c; f; h; k

5

- 1 Canadian
- 2 20
- 3 18
- 4 leaf
- 5 foot
- 6 coconut
- 7 communication

6

- 1 carried out
- 2 handed over
- 3 give up
- 4 acted out
- 5 putting on

7 Students' own answers.

Related websites

The following websites might be useful, for either yourself or your students.

http://www.sciencenews.org/view/generic/id/61991/title/Orangutans_can_mime_their_desires (includes coconut-opening clip)

<http://news.discovery.com/animals/orangutans-pantomime-charade.html>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2010/aug/11/orangutans-mime>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-10926301>

<http://news.sciencemag.org/sciencenow/2010/04/chimps-grieve-over-dead-relative.html> (see exercise 7, question 3)