

A brighter, cleaner and faster future by Sam Lanchbury

Age: Teenagers / Adults
Level: Advanced (C1)
Time: 60 minutes
Objective: to review features of the continuous aspect; to learn about a new technological development in transportation and discuss its potential impact on the modern world
Key skills: reading, listening, speaking
Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student; a projector and access to YouTube (optional)

Procedure

Lead-in

This section introduces the context of the lesson. If you don't have access to the internet and a projector, you could give students the URL and they could watch the video on their smartphones. Or you can simply skip task 2 on the worksheet – although you could ask students to predict futuristic forms of transport or reference examples from film and TV.

1. Students work in pairs or small groups to answer the questions. Students feed back some answers in open class.
2. Tell students that they are going to watch a video about a new technological development that may change their lives. They must decide what it is from the clip. It's important to ask students who are familiar with the concept not to reveal anything right now.
3. Watch the video clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pP3uMDhH1A>
4. Students discuss their ideas in pairs. Encourage students to use modal verbs of speculation, such as *might*, *could*, *must*. As feedback, write some of the ideas on the board as a prediction task for the reading.

Reading

This text is designed to be both interesting and provide exemplars of the target grammar and vocabulary. Take time over any ideas or discussion points that arise directly from the text since these discussions can be the most rewarding and productive.

5. Students read the text about Hyperloop to find out if any of their predictions were correct.
6. Students answer the questions in task 4 without referring back to the text. They then check back for anything they've missed.
7. Students feed back responses in open class.

Key:

1. *It is a new mode of transport, which will propel passengers down a low-pressure, frictionless tube to their destination.;*
2. *founder of Hyperloop;*
3. *Travel will be much quicker.;*
4. *It will reduce the negative impact of urban dwelling, such as overcrowding and pollution.*

8. You could show stronger (or more interested) students the following short video, which shows how the system and stations will function.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=7A7GsAPR3J0

Grammar focus

This part should be revision for advanced level students but be ready to give other examples of the less common structures. There is no controlled practice here as such but lots is available in teacher books and photocopiable resources. Students will have an opportunity to practise the structures in the speaking section at the end of the worksheet.

9. Students find examples of each form in task 5 in the text.

Key (possible answers):

- a. *this will soon be a reality; Hyperloop will revolutionize the way we live;*
- b. *you will be travelling; seven billion of the world's inhabitants will be living in cities;*
- c. *UCLA are doing live testing; we are heading towards a brighter, cleaner, and significantly faster future;*
- d. *UCLA have been drawing up plans; similar ideas have been sitting around;*
- e. *plans ... are being made*

10. Students match the grammatical forms from task 5 with their function.

Key:

1. b; 2. c; 3. a; 4. d; 5. e

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Vocabulary

11. Students find the vocabulary to match the definitions in the text. Put any additional vocabulary onto the board.

Key:

1. *urban dwelling*
2. *drawing up*
3. *urbanization*
4. *overcrowding*
5. *revolutionize*
6. *founder*
7. *inhabitants*
8. *heading towards*
9. *the not-too-distant future*
10. *propel*

Speaking

In this section, students answer questions designed to encourage the use of the target grammar and recycle the vocabulary from the reading text.

12. Students work in small groups to discuss the questions. Offer vocabulary where helpful. Feedback can be in the form of follow-up open-class discussion and delayed correction.

Extension – writing

In class or for homework, ask students to write a similar text about another futuristic mode of transport. Alternatively, they can write a text from the perspective of when a now commonplace mode of transport, such as the Segway or train, was first proposed.

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1. Work with a partner. Answer the following questions.
 - How do you get to class?
 - How long does it take you?
 - What would make your journey more comfortable?
 - When was the last time you went on a long journey?
 - How comfortable was it?
 - How could your experience have been improved?
 - What is the most interesting form of transport you have used?
2. Watch a short video about a revolutionary technological development and answer the questions with a partner.
 - What is it?
 - How do you think it works?
3. Read the following text to find out what the development is. Were you and your partner correct?

In the mid-eighteenth century, people thought it was impossible to travel at 31kph, the speed of one of the world's first regular train routes but were soon proven wrong. How would you feel if I told you that, in the not-too-distant future, you will be travelling at speeds of up to 1,220kph? Unbelievable, isn't it? Well, this will soon be a reality according to Elon Musk, founder of SpaceX, PayPal, Tesla Motors and now Hyperloop Technologies. Hyperloop Technologies, in conjunction with UCLA (the University of California, Los Angeles), have been drawing up plans for a Hyperloop test track in Texas since early 2015, although similar ideas have been sitting around for centuries.

The idea of Hyperloop is to propel passengers down a low-pressure, frictionless tube to their destination, thereby reducing travel times dramatically. In fact, a journey of several hours could be reduced to as little as 30 minutes. With increasing urbanization, it is believed that around seven billion of the world's inhabitants will be living in cities by the year 2050. Elon Musk claims that Hyperloop will revolutionize the way we live by reducing the negative impact of urban dwelling, such as overcrowding and pollution. However, at the moment, UCLA are doing live testing on the much less risky cargo transportation version, with the passenger version some way off. Even so, plans for Hyperloops connecting major cities around the globe are being made as we speak. It looks like we're heading towards a brighter, cleaner and significantly faster future.

4. Answer the following questions about the text in pairs.
 - a. What is Hyperloop and how does it work?
 - b. Who is Elon Musk?
 - c. What is the main advantage of Hyperloop for the passenger?
 - d. What modern-day problems will it help solve?
 - e. Do you think it represents a step forward?
 - f. Would you travel by Hyperloop?
5. Find examples of the following grammatical forms in the text.
 - a. the simple future
 - b. the future continuous
 - c. the present continuous

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- d. the present perfect continuous
 - e. the present continuous passive
6. Match the grammatical forms with the functions below.
- a. to describe something that will be in progress
 - b. to show a temporary situation
 - c. to predict a future action or state
 - d. to emphasize duration
 - e. to describe an incomplete action
7. Find words or phrases in the text to match the definitions.
- a. living in a city
 - b. preparing and writing
 - c. the process by which towns and cities grow bigger and more and more people go to live in them
 - d. too many people in one place
 - e. completely change
 - f. someone who starts something
 - g. people living somewhere
 - h. moving in the direction of
 - i. quite soon
 - j. move or push someone forward
8. Answer the following questions in pairs.
- a. Do you know anyone who is the founder of a company or organization? How did they do it?
 - b. How many inhabitants are there in your town or city? Is this figure increasing or decreasing?
 - c. Are there any areas of dense urbanization where you live?
 - d. Are there any problems associated with urban dwelling, such as overcrowding and pollution, where you live? What is being done to help alleviate the symptoms? For example, car-free days.
 - e. What other changes in the way we live do you expect to see in the not-too-distant future?
 - f. How will your life be different in ten years' time? Will you be doing a different job or living somewhere new?
 - g. What other inventions might have revolutionized people's lives by the year 2050?
 - h. Do you think we are heading towards a brighter and cleaner future?