

## Who can you trust?

**Level:** Intermediate upwards

**Timing:** 90 minutes plus

**Material needed:** One copy of the student worksheets and Vocabulary record per student

**Group size:** Any

### Overview

This lesson plan for both pre-experience and in-work business students is based around an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* Issue 3/2010. The article is written by an American career coach and asks the question, 'Who can you trust?'

It talks about practices and methods used by police and in business to tell when someone is lying. However, it also warns us that excessive vigilance can make us suspicious and cynical.

The tasks in the student worksheets will encourage the students not only to learn and use new business vocabulary and related functional language but also to develop and practise (new) skills that could be useful in business situations, such as interviews, meetings, presentations, etc.

The teacher's notes provide suggestions for teaching and learning strategies, as well as ideas on how to present the tasks in the classroom, any necessary answer keys, extension tasks and lesson plans.

### Introduction

Is it possible to really know whether your boss or a colleague is telling 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'? This article offers suggestions as to what clues to look for; clues which might help you decide whether someone is telling the truth or a lie.

### Warmer

Introduce the topic by getting the students to talk for one or two minutes, in pairs or small groups, about these two questions. Be sensitive to the fact that the second question asks the students to give potentially very personal answers – if you think this could be a problem for your class, adapt it or leave it out completely. For teaching and learning strategies on personalizing tasks, see the 'Teaching and learning strategy' box.

As a follow-on question, you could ask anyone who has children how easy it is to tell if their children are not

telling the truth. Ask for examples.

#### Key:

*In the story, Pinocchio's nose grew when he told a lie. This made it easy for everyone to know exactly when he wasn't telling the truth.*

#### Teaching and learning strategy: Personalization

*"When you personalize language, you use it to talk about your knowledge, experience and feelings. ... It is good preparation for the kind of situations of genuine language use that learners may encounter outside the classroom."*

**Scott Thornbury**, *An A-Z of ELT* (Macmillan Books for Teachers, 2006)

The more personal the language use is, the more likely the students will be able to remember it and use it in the future. Personalization tasks are often well placed towards the end of a lesson, after input (such as pre-teaching vocabulary, reading a text, answering comprehension questions, etc.). However, Thornbury warns that, *"Personalization is not without risks, though. Teachers need to be sensitive ... and should be authentic in the way they respond to learners' personalizations"*.

In addition to this, teachers should be listening for the content of what the students are saying and not just listening to the vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc.

Part 2 of the discussion in task 6 gives the students a chance to make the task more personal and therefore relevant to them and their (working) lives.

### Scanning for content

The students should look at the list of headings and quickly match them to the paragraphs (5-8) in the article. Students could do this task alone or in pairs.

#### Key:

5. Watch the eyes and forehead
6. Look for changes in a person's behaviour
7. Watch for quick, stop-start emotions
8. Ask again

### Language

The students should find the words and phrases in the article. The paragraph numbers and the numbers of words required are given to help them.

#### Key:

- |                 |                         |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. your fault   | 7. monotonously         |
| 2. raise        | 8. phoney               |
| 3. or the like  | 9. face-saving lie      |
| 4. lie detector | 10. excessive vigilance |
| 5. pursed lips  | 11. suspicious          |
| 6. discrepancy  | 12. mercy               |

## Who can you trust?

### Fact finding

The students should try to pull the main facts out of the article and add them to the mind map. This will help them prepare for task 5, as well as check their comprehension of the article. Students may wish to add further ideas of their own to the mind map. These can be shared with the class.

#### Key:

*Two obvious signs of lying:*

- *pursed lips*
- *crossed arms*

*Eleven less obvious signs of lying:*

- *eye movement*
- *discrepancy between what the eyes and the mouth show (e.g. a smile, but tense eyes)*
- *monotonous and slow speech*
- *lack of eye contact*
- *turning away*
- *crossed legs*
- *still hands*
- *breathing quickly*
- *stiffening*
- *displaying a nervous habit (e.g. touching his/her face)*
- *quick emotional changes*

### Simulation

If you are unable to divide your class into groups of three, this task will work equally well with some students working in pairs or groups of four.

The students should write their questions before starting the role play. This will enable you to check the language they use. The questions should be simple ones that any other student is able to answer, such as 'Where do you work?', 'What's your mother's first name?', etc. as the point of this exercise is not to get information, but to try to discover how easy or difficult it is to judge when someone is lying. The students should also know that when they are the interviewee they must answer approximately half the questions with a lie.

The assessor should take notes. Their notes should not only be about the answers, but also about the body language and tone of voice used by the interviewee.

### Discussion

Have a two-part follow-on discussion after task 5.

In part 1 of the discussion, students should give feedback on how they felt during the simulation.

In part 2, they should think how what they have read about in the article and tried out in task 5 could be useful in their work and professional lives.

### Vocabulary record

Here, students should be encouraged to record all the new and useful vocabulary they have learned during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

### More on related topics

To take this topic a step further, you could follow this up with a previous lesson in the *Business Spotlight* series on onestopenglish:

Business Spotlight: Is it ever ok to lie in a job interview?  
<http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?catid=60069&docid=550182>

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### Introduction

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### 1 Warmer

What happened to the fairytale character Pinocchio when he told a lie?

Do you have anybody who you can really trust?

- a. at work      b. in your personal life

### 2 Scanning for content

These four tips are also the headings of paragraphs 5-8 of the article. Scan the article to find out where they belong and write them into the gaps at the top of each paragraph.

- Ask again
- Look for changes in a person's behaviour
- Watch for quick, stop-start emotions
- Watch the eyes and forehead

### 3 Language

Find the words and expressions in the article. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

1. the fact of you being responsible for a bad or unpleasant situation \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2, 2 words)
2. an increase in your salary or wages (para 3, 1 word) \_\_\_\_\_
3. a phrase that means *or something similar* \_\_\_\_\_ (para 3, 3 words)
4. a piece of equipment used for checking whether someone is telling the truth \_\_\_\_\_ (para 4, 2 words)
5. lips that are pressed together and outwards because you are angry or are thinking \_\_\_\_\_ (para 5, 2 words)
6. a difference between things that should be the same \_\_\_\_\_ (para 5, 1 word)
7. in a boring, unpleasant and repetitive way \_\_\_\_\_ (para 6, 1 word)
8. not real and intended to trick people \_\_\_\_\_ (para 7, 1 word)
9. an untruth that is told in order to stop people losing respect for you \_\_\_\_\_ (para 9, 3 words)
10. the act of watching a person or situation too closely \_\_\_\_\_ (para 10, 2 words)
11. believing that someone has probably done something wrong \_\_\_\_\_ (para 10, 1 word)
12. the act of forgiving someone or not treating them severely \_\_\_\_\_ (para 10, 1 word)

## Who can you trust?

### Who can you trust?

by Marty Nemko

- 1 How can you be sure someone can be trusted? Is the answer more complicated than, "Trust Allah, but tie your camel tight"? In deciding who to trust and when, you might want to keep an eye on at least the key people in your life.
- 2 How often does your colleague say something that is not in his self-interest, drawing attention to an error that nobody would otherwise notice? For example, "Mary, this wasn't your fault. The information I gave you was incorrect." The greater the price the person pays for his honesty, the more you can trust him the next time.
- 3 How accurate have the promises been? For example, "I'll call you tomorrow," "I'll have it done by Monday," or "I'll get you a raise soon." It doesn't really matter if the person made a mistake or was lying. What counts is: how well has he/she kept past promises? How accurate have his/her predictions been, whether they involved the company's future, the quality of a product, or the like?
- 4 Unfortunately, past results don't always predict future performance, but you can learn to become a human lie detector. The police have developed a number of techniques to judge the truth of a person's statements, so remember the following rules:
- 5 Most good liars have long learned to control the obvious signs of lying: pursed lips, crossed arms, etc. It's harder to control one's eyes and forehead. So, watch a person's eyes when he's saying something that's unquestionably factual. Later, when he's saying something you're not so sure of, do his eyes move somewhere else? Also, look for a discrepancy between the mouth and the eyes: after all, the person might be smiling but have tense-looking eyes and forehead.
- 6 Notice if, when making a potentially dishonest or incorrect statement, a person's voice or body language changes. Examples: someone might start speaking more slowly and



monotonously; lose eye contact; turn away or cross her legs; stop using his hands while talking; breathe more quickly; stiffen, or start a nervous habit such as touching her face. If you think that someone is lying, change the conversation to something clearly factual and see if he returns to his earlier style and seems glad to change the subject.

Real emotions typically build and fade slowly. Phoney ones often get turned on and off quickly.

Later in the conversation, ask the same question. Does the person give the same answer or have some details changed?

Just because you catch someone lying doesn't mean you should confront him. I usually remain silent when someone's face-saving lie won't cause problems now and is unlikely to result in more serious lies in the future.

Of course, we live in a world filled with lies and inaccuracies, but excessive vigilance can cost us too

much: it can make us suspicious and cynical. It may even prevent us from having close relationships. Moderate trustworthiness may be all we can reasonably expect. Perhaps the best balance can be found in my father's advice: "Respect, but suspect." I'd add, "and balance justice with mercy."

Marty Nemko is one of America's top career coaches. The author of *Cool Careers for Dummies*, he has been advising clients for more than 20 years. He is based in Oakland, California.

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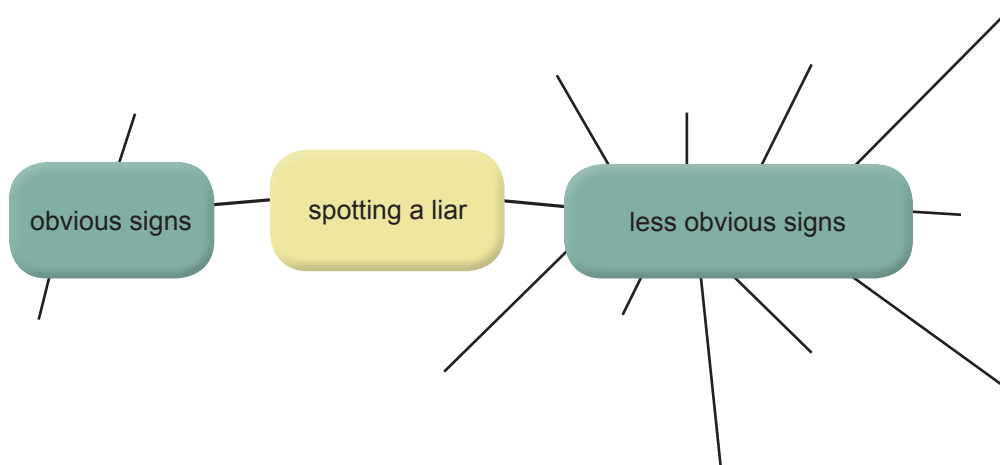
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## Who can you trust?

### 4 Fact finding

Find information in the article and add it to the mind map.



### 5 Simulation

Prepare ten questions for another student.

Work in groups of three: A, B and C. In this simulation there are three roles: interviewer, interviewee and assessor. Student A is the interviewer, Student B is the interviewee and Student C is the assessor.

Student A asks Student B the questions. Student B should answer at least five of the questions with a lie. During the interview, Student C should listen and watch closely and make notes. He/she should try to decide when Student B is lying. At the end of the interview, if Student C is unable to decide, he/she may ask three further questions.

Change roles and repeat the scenario.

### 6 Discussion

Have a follow-up discussion in two parts.

#### Part 1

How did you feel during task 5?

How did you feel after the task?

What was easier – lying or telling the truth?

How did you feel when you told a lie? Were you aware of any changes in your body language or in the tone of your voice?

#### Part 2

Who was the best liar?

Who was the best at spotting when someone was lying?

In which business situations do you think these skills could be useful for you?

