

Powers in the East

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 article from *Business Spotlight* Issue 1/2013. The article is a conversation between two businessmen, one from Japan, the other from China, who talk about the economic challenges Japan and China are facing and dealing with. The article contains a fair amount of economic and financial language. The emphasis of this lesson plan is on both asking and answering questions, as well as on building vocabulary.

The tasks in the worksheets encourage the students to learn and use new business vocabulary and functional language, and also to practise useful business skills such as asking and answering questions.

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 and extension tasks (for in class or as homework).

Key words

Students match the key words from the article with their definitions then look for those key words in the article to read them in context. In doing this, they will get a rough idea of what the article is about.

Key:

1. property bubble; 2. demographics; 3. budget deficit;
4. the elderly; 5. domestic market; 6. commodity producers;
7. accommodative; 8. surplus; 9. assets; 10. subsidies;
11. state sector; 12. urbanization; 13. rural

Teaching and learning strategy: Opposites

One way of learning lexical items such as those in this task, and expanding what students already know, is to talk about opposites. In order to know what the opposite of a lexical item is, you have to first understand what the key word or expression means.

Extension task

Ask students to come up with the opposites of the following key words from Task 1:
deficit, the elderly, domestic market, surplus, state sector, urbanization, rural

Key:

deficit ≠ surplus; the elderly ≠ the young; domestic market ≠ overseas market; surplus ≠ deficit / lack; state sector ≠ private sector; urbanization ≠ ruralization; rural ≠ urban

Questions

The questions have been removed from the conversation between Yoshida and Wang. The students' task is to find out where the questions belong and write them back into the article. Provide extra help for lower-level students by telling them that the set of questions in the left-hand column were asked by Wang and the set in the right-hand column were asked by Yoshida.

Key a:

1. *What is your biggest challenge now? (Wang)*
2. *... do you think China will be able to continue its current growth rate of 8-9%? (Yoshida)*
3. *What policies do you think we need to prevent this impact on economic growth? (Wang)*
4. *Your government has announced reforms to social security, hasn't it? (Wang)*
5. *... why do Japanese firms have difficulty selling products like cars and mobile phones in China? (Yoshida)*
6. *But China is huge, so consumer demand is surely very high, isn't it? (Yoshida)*
7. *Can China learn something from this? (Wang)*
8. *What does it include? (Yoshida)*
9. *What are your views on these reform plans? (Yoshida)*
10. *... how did Japan move from a manufacturing economy to a more innovative economy? (Wang)*

In part *b* of this task, students make a note of what language the two men use to signal that they are asking a question.

Key b:

- *Tell me*
- *I have a question for you*

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Understanding the article

Using the templates given for four model questions, ask the students to write some comprehension questions for each other about the content of the article. If possible, they should write at least six questions. They can change the format of the questions to give them more freedom, depending on their personal style and their level of English. The task can be done in pairs or small groups. Once the questions have been written (and corrected where necessary), the students should swap them with other pairs or small groups of students. They should write answers to the other students' questions and then pass their answers back to be 'marked'.

Note: The students will need to understand the article before they can write questions about it. Therefore, the task of writing these questions is a comprehension exercise too.

Multi-word expressions

This second vocabulary task looks at multi-word expressions; eight are three-word expressions, two are compound nouns.

This task is divided into three parts. In part *a*, the students put the words into the correct order to make multi-word expressions from the article, adding hyphens when necessary. You could make the task slightly easier by telling them that two of the expressions need hyphens.

Part *b* asks the students to talk about how the expressions were used in the article.

Part *c* encourages the students to use some of the expressions in a personalization exercise in which they use the expressions to construct sentences that are relevant to their own country or company.

Key:

1. social security reform; 2. current growth rate; 3. shrinking labour force; 4. raise consumption tax; 5. personal-care robots; 6. strong domestic consumption; 7. tighter monetary policies; 8. high-quality products; 9. improving existing products; 10. added brand value

Further questions

The students think of and write down other questions that they would like to ask Wang / Yoshida. This task can be done individually, in pairs or in groups.

Role-play

Put the students in groups of four and ask them to decide how they would answer the questions on behalf of their country and its industry. When they have made notes, get them to work in pairs and interview each other, asking and answering the questions they have practised, as well as spontaneously adding anything else that may seem relevant / appropriate to the conversation.

Discussion

Staying in their groups of four, ask students to choose one of the world leaders from the list and decide how they would answer the questions about their country's economy. Alternatively, they could choose the leader of their own country if she / he is not represented here. Then, get them to share their ideas with the rest of the class. As a general knowledge pre-task, you could ask them to tell you which country each of the named leaders is from. The names of current world leaders can be found here: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/world-leaders-1/index.html>

Key:

Angela Merkel – Germany; Barack Obama – US; David Cameron – UK; Vladimir Putin – Russia; Kim Jong-un – North Korea; Jacob Zuma – South Africa

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.

Related topics on onestopenglish

For follow-up lessons on the same or related topics go to the following lesson plans in the Business section on onestopenglish:

Business Spotlight: The Golden State?

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/the-golden-state/551672.article>

Business tasks: Great expectations

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/great-expectations/550766.article>

You may also find topical and relevant *Guardian* news lessons here on onestopenglish:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/skills/news-lessons/>

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1 Key words

Write the key words and expressions from the article next to their definitions. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

accommodative	assets	budget deficit	commodity producers
demographics	domestic market	surplus	rural subsidies
state sector	property bubble	the elderly	urbanization

1. this describes the fast increase in the price of housing and commercial buildings until it reaches a certain level and then the price decreases _____
2. the particular features of a population, for example people's age or race

3. a financial situation that occurs when a company or country has more money going out than coming in

4. old people _____
5. the trade and business that is carried out within the country _____
6. the people and companies who make things that can be bought and sold, especially a basic food product or fuel _____
7. obliging, helpful, easy to deal with _____
8. an amount of money or goods that is left because a country or business has more than it needs

9. something such as money or property that a person, country or company owns

10. money that a government or another organization pays to help to reduce the cost of a product or service or to help people who are in financial difficulties _____
11. the industries and services that are supported by tax money and controlled by the government of a country or area (US English) _____
12. the process by which towns and cities grow bigger and more and more people go to live in them

13. relating to parts of a country that are not near cities _____

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2 Questions

a. Read the article and write the questions below onto the lines marked 1-10 in the article so that the answers that follow them make sense. Note that the questions are not in the correct order!

Can China learn something from this?

... how did Japan move from a manufacturing economy to a more innovative economy?

What policies do you think we need to prevent this impact on economic growth?

What is your biggest challenge now?

Your government has announced reforms to social security, hasn't it?

What are your views on these reform plans?

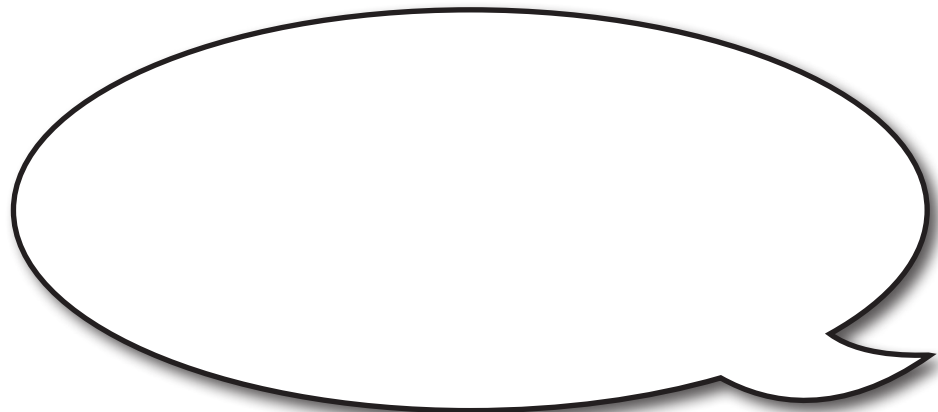
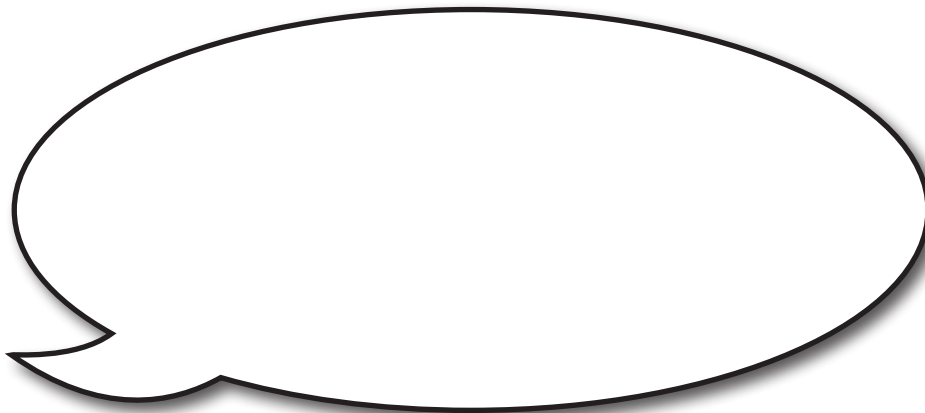
What does it include?

... do you think China will be able to continue its current growth rate of 8-9%?

But China is huge, so consumer demand is surely very high, isn't it?

... why do Japanese firms have difficulty selling products like cars and mobile phones in China?

b. Which two phrases do the two men use to signal to the other that they are going to ask a question and that they would like an answer? Write them in the speech bubbles.



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by Vicki Sussens

Far-Eastern neighbours China and Japan are facing different economic problems. Vicki Sussens listens to a discussion between two economic experts from these countries.



“Our fast growth has not resulted in increased domestic demand”

QINWEI WANG
China economist, Capital Economics, London

QINWEI WANG: Hi, Ken. I think China can learn a lot from Japan. (1) _____

KENICHIRO YOSHIDA: Deflation, which followed the collapse of the property bubble in the 1990s and from which Japan has never really recovered. It means we cannot expect wages to rise, so people are saving rather than spending. Investment is slow and the economy has lost its dynamism. So we need to rebuild confidence in the future, and especially, we need social security reform. Tell me (2) _____

WANG: Probably not, because the gain from earlier reforms is weakening, and because of our ageing population. In the past decades, the increase in the labour force helped GDP to grow, but in the next 20 years, we expect these demographics to have a negative impact. You also have an ageing society. (3) _____

YOSHIDA: There are three problems caused by an ageing society. One is the shrinking labour force. The second is the increase in the budget deficit and, finally, it causes people

to worry about the future and become conservative. This last point is very important. But I don't think the impact on economic growth is as great as people think. A reduction in productivity has much more impact on growth.

WANG: (4) _____

YOSHIDA: Yes. To pay for this, it wants to raise consumption tax. But to solve the demographic problem, we need two other measures: to increase the participation of the elderly in the labour force, especially so that they can give back to society their knowledge and skills, and to develop new products and services for this market. Japan is already developing personal-care robots for the elderly, which could be sold not only in the domestic market but also in China. Actually, I have a question for you: (5) _____

WANG: Demand for finished products is not high in China because it has a strong manufacturing sector itself. We now mostly import half-finished products from Japan and Taiwan to make finished products. By the way, this is one reason why China is not an economic threat to Japan. In fact, the whole of South East Asia is very connected, especially China, Japan, Taiwan and Korea, which, together, form a manufacturing chain. Another reason for low demand for finished products is a structural problem in the economy: weak domestic consumer demand. We need urgently to move income to households to increase consumption.



“Japan can learn to take risks from Chinese companies”

KENICHIRO YOSHIDA
chief representative,
London Office, Mizuho
Research Institute, Japan

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YOSHIDA: (6) _____

WANG: Actually, consumption as a share of GDP has kept falling in the last decade and is now only about one third of the economy. Our fast-growing economy has not resulted in increased domestic consumer demand. As a result, it has benefited commodity producers rather than consumer-goods producers, and this is going to be a problem in the future. Japan was successful in supporting strong domestic consumption in the 1970s and 1980s. (7) _____

YOSHIDA: Well, domestic demand was mainly increased under pressure from the US through the Bank of Japan's accommodative monetary policy. The bank lowered the interest rate to encourage borrowing and, therefore, spending. But this led to the property bubble. So the Bank of Japan should have had much tighter monetary policies — something I think China has learned from. But China also needs to invest its surplus in real assets, which will spread employment. But your government has a plan to promote income redistribution. (8) _____

WANG: Providing a better social-security system, such as pensions, unemployment subsidies and medical treatment, and through public spending, transferring money to poorer households. There are also plans to reform the state sector, which enjoys cheap capital, cheap land and other indirect subsidies. Moving money from the state to the private sector could help close the income gap.

YOSHIDA: (9) _____

WANG: Actually, I am not optimistic. Plans for these reforms began in 2004, and while the government says they'll be passed soon, they'll face a lot of opposition. They'll hurt the state sector and senior members of this sector are also senior members of the Party and of the government. Tell me, (10) _____

YOSHIDA: During the 1980s, our main aim was to catch up to and do better than the US, so we worked hard to create better cars, TVs and electronic products. What was innovative was that we produced high-quality products at low cost. And we were very good at improving existing products. But this is not innovation. Although it is easy to catch up with existing technology, creating something new is much more difficult. What we need now is to create added brand value, much like Volkswagen is doing. Japan can also learn to take risks from Chinese companies, which are highly motivated.

WANG: Ken, how did Japan promote urbanization without creating a huge income gap? Many developing countries have not managed this. A typical problem is labour leaving rural areas for the fast-growing cities.

YOSHIDA: Well, in the 1960s, about 40% of our population lived in city areas. As the cities grew, this created an income gap. So, in 1972, Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka began to invest heavily in rural areas. But while this helped close the gap, it also slowed growth because it reduced the number of workers going to the cities, weakening industries there. Before the 1970s, growth was above ten per cent and then it sank to five or six per cent. So what China can learn from this is to raise the average income but to keep investing in cities. Well, it was really interesting talking to you, Qinwei.

WANG: You, too, Ken. Goodbye!

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3 Understanding the article

Write at least six questions about the content of the article. Then, give them to your partner or another group of students to answer. Use the four example structures below to help you.

- What, according to _____ (name) is the reason for _____?
- What does _____ (name) say about _____?
- What does _____ (country) need to do about _____?
- What, according to _____ (name) is the answer to _____?

4 Multi-word expressions

a. Put these words into the correct order to make multi-word expressions from the article. Add hyphens where necessary.

1. reform security social
2. current rate growth
3. force labour shrinking
4. consumption raise tax
5. robots personal care
6. strong consumption domestic
7. policy tighter monetary
8. products quality high
9. products existing improving
10. brand added value

b. Talk about how the expressions were used in the article.

c. Use some of the expressions to talk about your own country or company.

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5 Further questions

Re-read the questions in the article that are listed in Task 2. Write other questions that you would like Yoshida and Wang to answer about their countries, and their economic policies and challenges.

6 Role-play

Imagine you are answering the questions in Task 2 and Task 5 on behalf of your country and its industry. What would your answers be?

7 Discussion

Choose one of the world leaders listed below. How do you think they would answer the questions from the previous tasks?

- Angela Merkel
- Barak Obama
- David Cameron
- Vladimir Putin
- Kim Jong-un
- Jacob Zuma

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Vocabulary record: Powers in the East

verb	noun	adjective (+ opposite)	adverb (+ opposite)
increase			
	benefit		
		accommodative	
			structurally

Vocabulary record

