

Introduction: The pedagogical philosophy behind Fortune

Researchers, teachers, and—most importantly—students are increasingly calling for more use of video in teaching. Films can be motivating and engaging, they reach beyond the classroom context, and they also provide essential oral language input. However, the teacher’s options are usually either to show full-length commercial films with no particular learning focus, or to opt for corny language learning videos. This isn’t what students want.

In developing *Fortune*, our objective at Chasing Time English has been to create an exciting video series that stands on its own as entertainment and that is supported with original, pedagogically-sound learning tasks. An award-winning video production team worked alongside qualified and experienced teachers to create the series in two versions with modified dialogue: the lower Blue level (approximating CEFR level A2) and the higher Gold level (approximating CEFR level B2).

The six episodes are accompanied by lessons in four parts: a vocabulary preview, a grammar focus, an interactional (pragmatics) focus, and extension activities. The two weightiest sections are the grammatical and interactional sections, each of which should provide a minimum of 1½ to 2 hours of classtime per level, per episode.

In the videos, we have opted for a fairly neutral US accent and this is represented in the phonemic script provided in the vocabulary section, as well. After toying with the idea of presenting both standard U.S. and British pronunciation, we elected to provide a single representation that we trust will be widely comprehensible.

Each lesson has between six to eight vocabulary items that represent key words and phrases from the episodes. These were selected to help learners understand and articulate aspects of the narrative; in adopting this approach, we have made some concessions from our starting point of choosing high-frequency items. Each word or phrase is categorised by word class or phrase type, a common pronunciation is given in phonemic script, and an example sentence is provided. The teacher’s book includes a definition but it will often be more useful to encourage students to use a good bilingual dictionary. In all cases, the meaning and word class chosen is the one most relevant to the episode.

The focus for each grammar section is based on items drawn from the appropriate CEFR level description. Their occurrences in the episodes are not, however, overdone: they occur only where they seem most appropriate. Consequently, it may be that in each episode there are only two or three uses of the grammar point, but further uses are presented in the teaching materials. The general approach to grammar is to present a structure, its meaning and use most relevant to the student level, and then to focus on accuracy in form (including noticing and correcting errors), and then to provide controlled and freer practice. The teacher notes explain why certain answers are acceptable or not acceptable.

It is also worth mentioning that, where appropriate, we have consciously chosen to avoid creating the impression that there is necessarily a single right answer. This has been a rather unfortunate outcome of many pedagogical approaches, and it gives many students the false impression that simple binaries exist, such as *either* past simple or present perfect being correct but not both. Where relevant, the teachers' notes specify some of these options, but others may be possible. We hope too that this may prevent some unnecessary agonizing by teachers!

The interactional sections draw heavily on ideas from research in both Conversation Analysis and Pragmatics. In particular, these lessons draw attention to how to achieve some of those social actions (such as apologizing, offering, taking leave) that are crucial for building and maintaining relationships and generally functioning in society. The focus is particularly on sequences of talk rather than individual sentences or turns. Key scenes from the episodes are used as a starting point for student reflection and discussion, and the supplementary videos demonstrate how such actions are carried out in daily life. We have drawn on the research literature to craft scenarios that illustrate authentic aspects of everyday interaction.

One of the challenges when dealing with socio-pragmatics is that speech is highly sensitive to context and also responsive to variations in speaker style that may be attributable to variations in gender, class, ethnicity, power and regional speech patterns. Thus what may feel appropriate to a native speaker from New York may feel rather inappropriate or unnatural to a native speaker from rural Ireland. What we have attempted to do, therefore, is to provide models that we expect will provide reasonably wide coverage across contexts, while erring on the side of more polite forms. Consequently, while the lessons on requests (for example) will be overly wordy for use in a busy New York street, they are designed to be suitable across a wide range of other international contexts.

We are also very aware that a great deal of interaction occurs through the use of English as a lingua franca, where the interactional norms that hold between native speakers may not apply in the same ways. While this is an important fact to acknowledge, the focus in *Fortune* is on models that do prepare learners for interactions with native speakers, knowing that many native English speakers may be relatively unskilled at cross-cultural communication, and can be harsh judges when their expectations are breached.

Finally, in parts of the script, we have tried to stay reasonably true to spoken language. This has resulted in some features that may be unfamiliar to those who are accustomed to the norms of formal written English, such as sentences beginning with 'and' or 'but', and in some cases minor sentences (sentences without a finite verb such as, "Just a minute"). Our justification, of course, is that *Fortune* is focused primarily on oral language.

This teacher's guide contains everything you need to use *Fortune* in class including suggestions on how to go through the student books, answer keys, and ideas for extending the activities. We hope your students will enjoy studying with *Fortune* as much as we enjoyed making it.