Introduction

First Choice is an innovative and learner-centred adult education coursebook series which is informed by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF) and best practice in modern language teaching and learning. Teachers who have already used First Choice A1 will be familiar with the way the coursebook captures learners’ imagination and motivates them. First Choice A2 provides the natural progression for learners who want to take their English further: the coursebook will enable students to acquire the competences described in the CEF Level A2.

First Choice A2, in keeping with the A1 coursebook, is shaped by a number of key concepts which can be summarized as follows:

- Successful language learning takes place when language teaching engages with learners’ real-life experiences and interests. The coursebook is designed to engage the concerns of adult learners and make learning English genuinely interesting.

- The emphasis of language teaching should be on putting language into action in classroom scenarios which are as close to real-life situations as possible. First Choice A2 affords learners frequent opportunities to mobilize language in realistic tasks which are close to their hearts as adult learners.

- While the important elements of traditional language teaching – grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation – are present throughout First Choice, the book’s action-orientated approach emphasizes the need for language to be selected on the basis of its communicative usefulness to learners. This means that certain grammar structures are prioritised over others and the coursebook’s grammar progression pays particular attention to high-frequency structures which learners will be repeatedly called upon to use in real life.

Learner autonomy

In keeping with the CEF, First Choice gives learner autonomy a central position in its overall conception. Learners who take a large hand in organizing their own learning are more likely to succeed in acquiring English. The coursebook encourages learners to set personal learning goals and assess their own progress. This is reflected in the range, variety and focus of activities of First Choice. From the outset, First Choice also encourages learners to develop their own effective learning strategies. The CEF’s key instruments for developing learner autonomy – namely, the self-assessment checklists and dossier – are part of the fabric of First Choice in the form of Can you do this in English? and the Dossier suggestions in the regular Magazine section. In addition, the Portfolio section at the back of the book and the three Quick Checks provide learners with further important self-assessment tools.

Task-based approach

Task-based approaches are based on the frequently made observation that language acquisition is often assisted by the use of language in realistic situations. A task might be described as a classroom activity which demands that learners use language to achieve a certain end, whether that is designing a menu for a wedding celebration or making a complaint about poor customer service. In contrast to standard language exercises, which require students to reproduce a given structure, the emphasis of a task is the use of language to achieve an end result rather than as an end in itself.

First Choice uses a task-based approach to afford learners frequent opportunities to put English into practical use. The coursebook does not use one regimented approach in its task-based phases. However, the task cycle adopted by the book can be broadly described in the following terms.

Tasks are designed to mobilize the language of the unit they appear in. They are pre-ambled by a series of exercises which feed in the language that students will need to complete the Task. Learners will often be encouraged to think critically about such language; for example, through the use of sorting activities. They are also frequently warmed-up for a Task by a Pre-task activity. Tasks themselves often invite peer correction and self-evaluation. The language acquired through the completion of a Task is consolidated further by the Post-tasks provided in this teaching guide.
Scenarios

One addition to the task cycle in the A2 coursebook is the Scenarios which present useful language for specific social situations (asking someone a favour, making a complaint, etc.) and offer learners the chance to use this language. Here, phrases are introduced in a model conversation, usually presented as a listening exercise, and learners are asked to sort the phrases paying attention to their function and how they fit into the typical structure of such a conversation. The Scenarios also highlight the cultural nuances present in the structure of such conversations; for instance, drawing attention to the need for background information before a favour is asked. Finally, with the help of the Scenario box, learners are given the opportunity to use the language in a concluding role-play.

Authentic English

First Choice has been shaped by learners’ desire to be taught authentic, and not textbook, English. The coursebook presents English as it is actually spoken and reflects the way that people from different socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds use the language. Attention is also given to the variety of accents with which English is spoken. Learners’ acquisition of authentic English is further assisted by the proactive correction of mistakes frequently made by Germans (Please instead of You’re welcome) on the sticky notes.

The emphasis on authentic English is reflected in the choice of structures present in the coursebook. Learners will not only be assisted in acquiring English which is ‘real’, but English which is also truly communicative, through the presentation of structures such as short answers (Yes, I have), phrases which express empathy and interest (Really? How awful! What did you do?) and discourse markers (Oh, well, erm).

Learners’ expectation to be taught authentic English is reflected throughout the book in other ways as well. First Choice repeatedly offers students language which is natural and appropriate for a variety of real-life situations whether they are making a telephone call, booking a room in a hotel or seeking help in the event of an emergency.

The need for useful, real-life language is often given priority over a strict grammar progression. This means that, on occasion, students will learn new grammatical structures embedded in lexical chunks, i.e. phrases, without first scrutinizing the grammar rules involved. Throughout First Choice such lexical chunks are presented in clearly comprehensible contexts, assisting understanding. The ever-present Useful language boxes will assist students further by setting out phrases clearly without concentrating on the structures contained within them.

Grammar

The task-based elements of First Choice are backed up throughout the book by solid grammar teaching. Grammar elements in First Choice have been selected according to their communicative usefulness for learners: that is, structures which assist most in communication are given priority. To assist understanding and learning, students are encouraged to deduce grammar rules for themselves with the help of structured guidance notes. After being introduced in Grammar boxes and practised, grammar structures are revised and recycled as the book progresses. Learners are assisted in recalling the grammar they have already learned by the Remember boxes which appear whenever needed for communicative purposes in an activity. A thorough grammar appendix at the back of the book rounds off the grammar teaching offered by First Choice.

While the book provides ample grammar exercises, grammatical structures are often presented embedded in lexical chunks. Students are encouraged to learn these and given ample opportunity to practise how to use them in true-to-life Role-plays and Tasks. The emphasis First Choice is firmly on learners being able to use the language creatively rather than on being able to describe it grammatically.
Special Focus

While providing an in-depth course in general English, *First Choice A2* also pays attention to the two ways that English is most frequently used by Germans at work: telephoning and socializing with English-speaking business partners. The two *Special Focus* sections which are given over to these areas of English are additions to the *First Choice* recipe. They acknowledge that learners who are primarily motivated to learn English for personal purposes will occasionally have to use it in a work setting. In both *Special Focus* sections, target phrases are presented as lexical chunks: students are offered the opportunity to listen to, read, sort, evaluate and practise these phrases in role-plays. Each *Special Focus* represents in miniature the task-based approach of the coursebook.

The *First Choice A2* story

Teachers and students who have used *First Choice A1* will already be familiar with the storyline which runs through the coursebook: the tale of personal involvement between the book’s two main characters. Ben and Tara appear once more as the central characters in A2: however, on this occasion, they are involved in an interesting and exciting crime story fresh instalments of which are presented in the form of a reading and listening exercise in the *Magazine* sections at the end of each unit. Learners get a chance to check their understanding of the developing storyline by completing the comprehension questions at the end of each *Magazine*. What is on offer here is a compelling reader within the coursebook which will further heighten learners’ enjoyment of *First Choice*. On the other hand, the story is an optional element of the book which can be overlooked by teachers and students without undermining the effectiveness of the course.
Introduction

As teachers and teacher trainers, our aim while writing this book was to make it as easy to follow and user-friendly as possible. This Teaching Guide therefore contains keys to all the unit exercises, useful back-up information and grammar explanations as well as extra teaching material and tips for the language classroom. We have suggested a variety of teaching methods, from the tried and tested to the innovative, thus catering for a variety of different teaching and learning styles.

Photocopiable activities as well as ideas for simple games and extra activities require minimal preparation and materials, thus helping to reduce your workload. While not all our suggestions can be suitable for all groups or every teacher, the activities are flexible enough to be adapted to your personal teaching style.

Learning by doing and life-long learning are fundamental concepts in today’s language classroom, not only for your students, but also for you as a teacher. Regular evaluation and reflection on your everyday teaching practice can help you to develop as a teacher and to incorporate new teaching ideas in a way that harmonizes with your own personal teaching style.

Ten Questions & Ten Suggestions

A choice of practical teaching tips for adult language classes working with First Choice A2:

1. How to cope with your nervousness at the beginning of the first lessons?

In spite of their motivation to learn, some of the students might feel a bit nervous, too. After all, they have gone ‘back to school’, which they may have mixed feelings about: memories of strict teachers, tests and examinations, bad marks and failures may cast a shadow over their first English lesson in your course.

To forestall and ease the nerves on both sides, consider the following points:

• The less teaching experience you have, the more detailed your preparations for the course start should be: take detailed notes. The At a glance summary in this Teaching Guide is a useful tool to remind you of the different steps to take. In the beginning you may even want to ‘rehearse your part’ once or twice before the lesson.
• Be in the classroom before your students, arrange chairs and desks so that students will be able to move around and talk to each other freely, frequently changing partners or forming groups for different activities. A traditional classroom layout, with pairs of desks and chairs all facing the teacher, is not supportive of that communicative structure. Playing some background music also helps to create a more relaxed atmosphere.
• Start the lesson with one or two icebreaking activities to get to know each other and to find out about your students’ prior knowledge and expectations rather than checking the students’ names with the class list or showering them with organizational matters.
• Finally, a rule of thumb: once you’ve had the first good laugh with each other, the tension starts fading away and you can get down to learning English together in a relaxed atmosphere.

2. What about using German in the English language classroom?

No German is used in the ten units of the First Choice A2 coursebook, which doesn’t prompt monolingual teaching in the classroom. There is of course no fixed rule for the amount of German teachers should use in
the classroom, but there is at least a rule of thumb: always use as much English as possible and no more German than necessary to enable communication. German can sometimes be used to save time, for instance when teaching the more complicated grammar issues or terminology, when describing the articulation of sounds or when clarifying instructions and parts of conversations and texts students are struggling with. However, some students might always ask for German translations or address you or other students in German. Also, when doing pair or group work, students often fall back into German. Then it’s time to keep calm, answer in simple English and hold up a big No German, please! sign to the class. If you overhear your students using German, ring a bell and hold up the sign thus reminding them in a friendly way to speak English again.

3. How far should learner autonomy go?
Learner autonomy is a very important aspect of modern language teaching. After all, it is for the students and their needs that the course is made. Explore their prior knowledge of English, their expectations and motivation to learn, help them to understand which type of learner they are and how they can best learn English, encourage them to express their needs and wishes, enable them to evaluate the progress they make, invite and give constant feedback on their learning process – and incorporate all this into your lesson plans and your way of teaching.

But, no matter how experienced a teacher you are, students expect you to be the ‘expert’ who they can rely on while learning English. Avoid questions such as Do you think you’ve understood this? Shall we do yet another exercise? or Would you like to do some homework on this topic? It’s your job to assess how much practice your students need until they command a certain language item. If your students still feel they want more, the Magazine section after each unit offers a lot of extra practice material and is a valuable tool for self-assessment.

Remember also that, the more convinced you are of a classroom activity you conduct with the class, the more successful it will be: getting up and milling around, kneeling on the floor making posters, working with different partners, chorusing and singing, lining up in the middle of the classroom – are all more likely to reach their aim if you give off the message I know that this is good for your language learning. In other words: show your competence and try to radiate positive authority.

4. How to “sell” group and pair work to your students?
Pair and group work have at least two obvious valuable potentials: students get a chance to speak English more frequently, and they feel less inhibited when speaking with just a few people listening. Pair and group work with changing partners offer even more advantages: students get used to listening and responding to different speakers, teachers can mix students of different proficiency levels at random or ‘blend’ them carefully, and, last but not least, varied activities to form pairs or groups and moving around in the class help to fight tiredness. So, if your students are complaining, explain this to them—and keep them awake with varied methods. Here are a few ideas for forming pairs or groups. Universal methods:

- Count how many students there are in the classroom (e.g. 12), divide the number by 2 (12:2 = 6), then students count round the class from 1 to 6, and the ONEs, TWOs, THREEs, etc. work together in pairs. Divide the number of students by 3 to get groups of 3, and by 4 for groups of 4.

- Something you could always have in your bag: a box with several sets of 2 to 4 look-alike buttons or board game pieces which are drawn by the students from the box to form pairs or groups – students with the same objects work together in a pair or group.

- Topic-related methods: Each student A has a card with a gapped word from a current topic area, for example, _anc_k_, each student B has a card with the missing letters, here: p a e, all students mill around and find the letters fitting into their gapped words (here: pancake), proceed likewise with syllables (also suitable for forming groups), cut up compound nouns, phrasal verbs, irregular verb forms, etc.

- To form pairs, bring pictures of different objects from the topic the class is dealing with and cards with their names to the class, for example different dwellings: a romantic country cottage, a bungalow, a block of flats, a villa, a tent, a castle, a caravan, a detached house, a lighthouse, etc. A photo dictionary can be very helpful here. Distribute the pictures and captions at random and send students around in the classroom to find their counterparts. You can do the same with pairs of memory or torn holiday postcards.
5. How to keep students’ interest in what other students present?

Try to design pair/group work in such a way, that the rest of the class has something to listen to and to look at when the pairs/groups finally present their results: posters with all kinds of results such as word or phrase collections, tables, charts, drawings and sketches can be put up for the whole class to become involved in commenting on, discussing and evaluating them.

Also, try to get pairs to act out rather than just read out dialogues they have made up, and make these performances more lively and interesting by bringing some suitable props to the class, for example telephone receivers for exercise 5 in Special Focus 1.

In very large groups or if the pair/group work results don’t lend themselves to a ‘performance’ in class, students can report back to or exchange results with another group or pair. In this case, walk around monitoring the students’ work and collecting some ideas for a final round-up talk in class.

6. How to avoid students feeling embarrassed when speaking English in class?

To spare students this kind of embarrassment, it is a good idea to note down mistakes during an activity and to correct them later on ‘anonymously’ in class by saying e.g. You should have said … or It’s more polite to say … rather than Jenny, you said … This is not correct. It should be …

And, remember to give positive feedback as well: should you overhear a particularly well-done, imaginative or funny contribution from your students while they are working in pairs or groups, praise them for their contribution and encourage them to perform it again for the whole class.

When checking homework or other exercises in class, give students the chance to come up with answers they feel sure about. Say for example Who knows, what the answer in sentence 4 is? instead of Peter, what have you got in sentence 1, 2 or 3?

Enable weaker students or those who couldn’t do their homework to participate confidently as well by giving them some time to prepare one special answer. Say for example, Jana, would you look at sentence 10, please? We’ll discuss this in a minute.

7. How to correct written work in a way that really helps your students to avoid mistakes?

By the time learners have reached the A2 level they should be able to write short, simple texts such as simple personal letters, messages, notes and forms. The First Choice A2 coursebook provides a number of writing opportunities which help learners to reach this objective.

Whenever students do one of these writing tasks or other ones you set, or if they write something by themselves and ask you to read and correct it – give them carefully worded feedback on their work in order to show that you appreciate their efforts. Your corrections should above all help students to improve their English, but they should also develop their self-assessment abilities. For this double purpose try the following steps:

- At the beginning of a course, underline all errors and write the correct version or more suitable expressions next to them. It may also be necessary to remind students briefly of a grammar or spelling rule in order to prevent them from making the same or similar mistakes again. This should be done in German or in easily understandable English (e.g. he, she, it + verb + s).

- After some time ‘reduce’ your corrections to just underlining errors and writing tense, spelling, word order, etc. at the end of the respective line in the text, so that students can see where they have made a mistake and what kind of mistake it is, but have to correct them on their own. Some errors however need to be corrected in detail. This applies to grammatical structures or language items that haven’t been dealt with before.

- Still later, and in accordance with the progress your students have made, restrict your corrections to just underlining or circling errors without further commenting on them.

Using dictionaries, grammar books or their coursebooks students then try to analyse and correct their mistakes independently. Grammar items or vocabulary beyond the course syllabus should be excluded from this cut-down version of correcting written work.

At this stage, always offer your students the chance to double-check their self-corrected writings.
8. How to deal with students’ fears concerning listening exercises?

Listening to people talking without seeing their accompanying gestures and facial expressions and without having the chance to interrupt and to ask back is a challenge indeed! However, listening to recorded spoken language is a useful part of any language course as it ‘jogs’ the learners’ ears and brains for real-life situations and accustoms them to listening to different speakers with various accents and dialects. Explain this to your students and add that, if they wish to develop their listening skills, they should try and cope with texts containing at least 20% of unknown vocabulary. To help your learners to get better at listening, consider the following aspects:

- Always introduce the topic of the audio-material. Activate any prior knowledge the students may have of the topic through a pre-listening exercise or in a short conversation, perhaps using related visuals or objects.
- Help the class to anticipate what they are going to hear: Who are the speakers? What kind of text is it – an informal conversation, a phone call, an interview, service encounters in a shop or in a hotel, an airport announcement, etc?
- Make sure the associated instruction(s) and listening task(s) in the coursebook are clearly understood by everybody, and pre-teach vital new vocabulary.

Most of the listening exercises in the First Choice A2 coursebook involve exercises that train listening for detail or selective listening, as this is what learners are likely to need in their real lives. Before students do these specific exercises, first enable them to understand the gist of the recording by setting a general question about its main points, playing the recording a first time and discussing the answers to that question.

If you deal with the listening activities as suggested in the coursebook and the teaching guide, you will go through the steps mentioned above almost automatically, as they were all taken into consideration when planning the listening tasks.

9. How to support students to acquire new vocabulary?

At the beginning of a course, many students still ‘live off’ the vocabulary they remember from previous courses or their schooldays. But soon, there will be a point when they feel they have to expand their ‘vocabulary supplies’ in order to make some progress. At first some good news: in order to understand and cope with about 80% of everyday texts and situations, we just need to command about 0.25% of the 900,000 existing English words or phrases. Bad news: these are still around 2,500 words/phrases of which we aren’t able to remember more than 30 at a time and – we forget tremendously quickly what we have just learned: more than 50% within one hour after learning! To do something against this process of forgetting quickly and learning slowly, your learners might appreciate some tips:

- Don’t learn isolated words, learn them in contexts, e.g. take a day off, take one’s jacket off.
- Put together and learn new words in ‘word families’ or ‘word fields’ in which the single expressions are related by one topic, as e.g. health problems in Unit 9, exercise 10.
- Recap new language in various ways and find out how you can learn most successfully: put up sticky notes with new expressions all around your house or office and read them as often as you pass them. Put the ones you’ve already memorized lower down and leave the more difficult ones higher up.
- Write new words embedded in a context on small cards and their German translation on the back of the card, and keep the cards in your pocket in order to revise them whenever you have some minutes to spend.
- Recall new vocabulary while walking, jogging, cycling or working out at the gym; say expressions you want to learn aloud when you are alone or try to link them through a simple melody and sing them.
- Make posters with word collections such as word spiders, mind maps, etc. or drawings labelled with new vocabulary, e.g. the parts of a house (Unit 5) and hang them up in your surroundings and gradually add new words associated with the topic.
- Learn 15 or 20 minutes every day rather than two hours at a time, starting with the first revision as soon as possible after the course session and try to do the homework your teacher suggests – it will help you to revise the essentials.

The First Choice phrasebook is a vital help with all these learning tips offering words in context, example sentences, word fields and phrase boxes. And, it’s small enough to take it wherever students want to learn new vocabulary.
10. What about homework?

Please, do give your students homework. Even if you know that not all students will find the time to do their homework, offer some exercises they can do to revise the new language material for the next course sessions, see the *Magazine* pages at the end of each unit.

The *Magazine* sections at the end of each unit offer a variety of activities for students to do at home. The enclosed *Magazine* CD provides your students with extra listening material to train their listening skills at home. The frequent links to the *Magazine* section in this Teaching Guide help to find the right homework material and for more exercises, try the *First Choice* website/teacher’s pages.

The photocopiable homework sheet on page 11 tries to incorporate the recommended way of learning and revising: one long revision is less effective than short but frequent revisions. Make a copy for each student, enter the course dates, and at the end of each lesson set the homework split up into ‘easily digestible portions’ which students enter into their homework sheets.

Note that this sheet is designed for courses taking place once a week, so that it needs to be adapted for other course forms.
### Homework Sheet

<table>
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<th>Dates</th>
<th>1. the same day or the next day</th>
<th>2. the second day after the lesson</th>
<th>3. the fourth day after the lesson</th>
<th>4. the day before the next lesson</th>
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