Topic: Talking About the Future - a one-hour revision lesson

Aims

- To help students talk about the future

- To review 4 ways to talk about the future

- To help students choose the most appropriate future tense

- To develop students' communication skills

Level: B1

Introduction
In this simple lesson you will allow students chance to speak freely about different aspects of their future life while guiding them (with their help) to the best available grammar forms in order to do so. It is intended as a revision hour, maybe useful ahead of a programme of study involving the future forms in which you introduce new language beyond that they will have learned at A2.

Materials and Preparation
You will need some strips of paper with future functions on, ideally with some blu tac on the reverse. See Stage 2.
You can also make copies of the grammar auction worksheet or choose your own items, see Stage 5.

Procedure
Stage 1

Open discussion

Put students in pairs, and direct their attention to the board where they will read the following:

Talk for a minute about each of the following:

- *Your arrangements for this evening*

- *Your intentions for the rest of the year*

- *Your predictions for the planet for 2020*

By means of a gesture get them to start. I don't offer the slightest insight into what I want nor expect from them. I don't interject nor correct (unless they're well off track), I just want them to talk. By this level they have already met all the tenses we are going to be using, so there will be no actual *teaching*, but as very often they misuse the forms to some considerable degree, there will be plenty of opportunity for revision.

Stage 2

Matching functions to grammar

As they are talking, I quickly draw a simple diagram on the board representing the four main forms of the future that B1 students are familiar with, thus:

Present Simple	Going to + infinitive
Present Continuous	Will + infinitive

Without drawing reference to the previous activity, I draw their attention to this table and then hand them, in their pairs, a set of situations/functions each on separate strips of paper with blu tac on the reverse. Their job now is to pair the situations/functions to one of the grammar forms and they do so physically, by coming to the board and sticking them on.

The situations are usually along these lines (with suggested answers in case the ambiguity of the English future tenses has extended to teachers too ☺). Be sure to mix the order, and give all of them to each pair.

Timetabled events, e.g. TV programme or train departure	*PS*
Personal arrangements	*PC*
Predictions (when you can see the evidence)	*GT*
Predictions (based on no evidence)	*W*
General future intentions (not arranged)	*GT*
Decisions made at the time of speaking	*W*
Promises	*W*
Decisions already made	*GT*
Offers, refusals	*W*

You may choose not to include all of these, or add more.

Have students come and stick the situations on the board in the right box (or the wrong box).

When the board is full, ask the class to correct, by moving any misplaced items, and then let them study it for a few moments. Deal with questions as they arise, but don't ask any yourself.

Stage 3

An improved version of Stage 1

Now, without any further input from you, change the original pairs and tell students that they are going to repeat Stage 1, but this time using the correct (or should I say, *recommended*?) grammar forms. They should tell their new partner what they told the first one but this time, where it's a personal arrangement, they should now be using the present continuous. Any prediction for 2020 could surely not be based on evidence, so they need to be using *will*.

While they do it this time, I monitor and correct.

Stage 4

Group feedback

At this point, perhaps another ten minutes later, I bring the class together and we talk about what's been said, in the third person. One of the pair will tell the class what their partner said after prompting from me, for example I might ask, *"and what are Aizhan's arrangements for this evening, Erik?"* to which Erik would hopefully reply somewhere along the lines of *"she's eating out with some friends this evening."*

I never know whether to correct people when they say, *"she's going to eat out this evening"* because as such, it's not wrong, but still lies contrary to the focus of this lesson. I suppose there's no exact science in this regard, and although I generally suggest the modification to the present continuous, it pays to play it by ear.

After this group discussion, which can last up to fifteen minutes (especially if we develop the prediction section), we are ready to focus a little more on the technicalities of the grammar, but still without involving formal study.

Stage 5

Grammar Auction

There are variations on the game and some of them are less teacher-centred than my approach. I'll offer you the basic version and invite you to adapt it to suit.

1. Put students into groups of three or four. I'd say a maximum of six groups is best, although when I played it with seven it went OK, so see how it feels in your classroom.

2. Introduce the idea of an auction, including teaching words such as *auction, item, lot, bid*. If you have the internet in your classroom, you could find a clip of an auction on YouTube to show them to make sure they've got the idea.

3. Tell them they are going to attend an auction and bid for items. The items are English sentences to talk about the future. Make it very clear to them that they must ONLY bid for sentences that they think are grammatically correct. (The winners are those who buy the most correct sentences. In the event of a tie, the victory is determined by who has most money left.)

4. Hand out the lists of sentences, below (or write your own) and ask the students to study them to decide which are correct, i.e. which they want to buy, and why they are right or wrong (although you don't ask them for this during the auction itself. Nor should you confirm or deny if they are right at this stage, wait until later). Do not let them broadcast their choices or share answers with other teams.

5. Allocate $10,000 to each team. Before bidding starts, remind them (you may need to) that they should not attempt to buy sentences they believe to be incorrect. Add that they can only increase bids in $500 increments, or they will try to bid single dollars which is pointless.

6. Take your copy of the sentences and cut them up. These then become individual items which you take in random order.

7. Begin the bidding. I'm no auctioneer but the more spirit you put into this, the better it will go. Start each item at $500 and take it from there. Remember to deduct money from the starting total after each sale.

8. When all the sentences have been sold, ask each group to count their sentences and then they can be checked.

I check by asking the group with least to start. They read the sentences in turn, and I write them on the board. Then I ask everybody if they are correct, and as a group we discuss the grammar and the reasons for using it.

This is where I become more the traditional teacher, explaining anything where necessary. However I have always found that for a relatively strong group who only need reminding of the correct forms, this lesson is a very good way to tidy up the basic future tenses.

When this is over, you will see who has won. I don't always do this, but a bit of chocolate is a nice reward for their endeavours, and obviously they are encouraged to share it out.

See suggested 'Items' below.

(Brief note: Although according to the grammar some of the sentences above could be considered incorrect, they may pass as correct depending on modern English usage. This has to be the teacher's decision. I'm not a total purist, but I see the value in grammar and therefore ***I'm never smoking again***, although acceptable, would be better replaced with ***I'm never going to smoke again*** in that it is an intention and not a personal arrangement. The case continues...)

To finish the lesson, I ask them quite interestedly what they are doing that evening. And they almost always tell me correctly.

Grammar Auction

1. I'm going to eat at my friends' house this evening.

2. Look at that man on the roof. He'll fall!

3. These black clouds tell me it's going to rain.

4. The train will leave at seven o'clock.

5. Next Sunday I will play golf with Bill Clinton.

6. Italy will win the World Cup in 2014.

7. I'm washing my hair tonight.

8. This year I'm going to read more.

9. What will you do tonight?

10. I'm never smoking again.

11. I go to university next year.