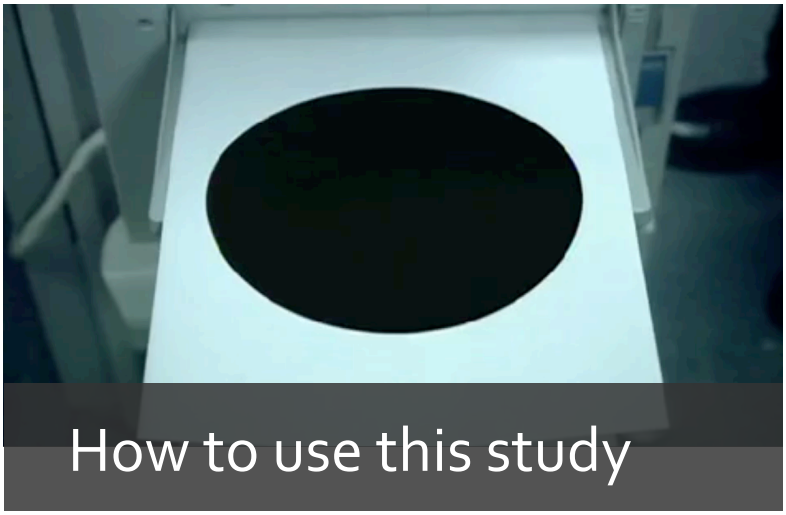
The Black Hole

2008 · Dir. Phil Sansom and Olly Williams

STUDY PACK



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How to use this study

Target group

The present study packed is designed for language teachers of a general English course for adult learners of English as a foreign or second language of a proficiency level of B1 (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CEFR).

Beliefs about language learning and teaching

This study pack is based on a communicative, learner-centred curriculum. Language, according to a communicative approach to language learning, is based on communication; language learning is in this context the negotiation of meaning. In other words, language learning is assumed to be an inductive process evoked by activities of problem solving and discovery by the learner. Thus, learning processes are dependent on the learner's individual effort as well as collaboration with other learners. Learners become responsible for their own learning process, shifting the focus away from the teacher to the learners themselves. The activities in this study pack are designed to encourage collaboration, decision-making and risk taking in order to develop learners' meta-cognitive and critical thinking skills. Linguistic aims (such as the use of a certain tense) are integrated in the communicative activities.

Organisation of the study pack

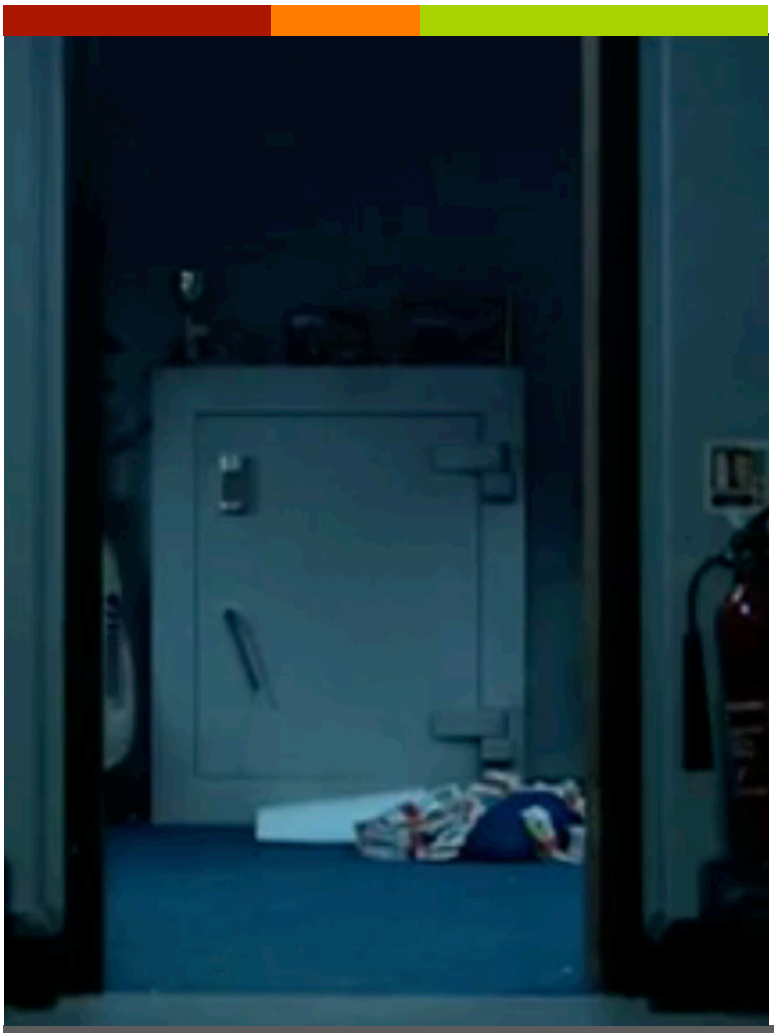
The activities within this study pack are in chronological order, distinguishing between activities to be carried out before the viewing of *The Black Hole*, during the viewing and after the viewing. The activities are interlinked on several levels. The content of the activities builds logically onto each other, with later activities recycling language items or content of previous activities. The activities gradually progress regarding their level of restrictiveness from more restricted to less restricted. In the same way, the activities become progressively more personalised. The grade to which students will be required to work collaboratively will increase in the same way. Thus, students will be slowly led towards taking more responsibility for their own learning and to develop an appreciation of their peers' contribution to their own language learning.



Aims of this study pack

After completion of all activities of the study pack, student will have

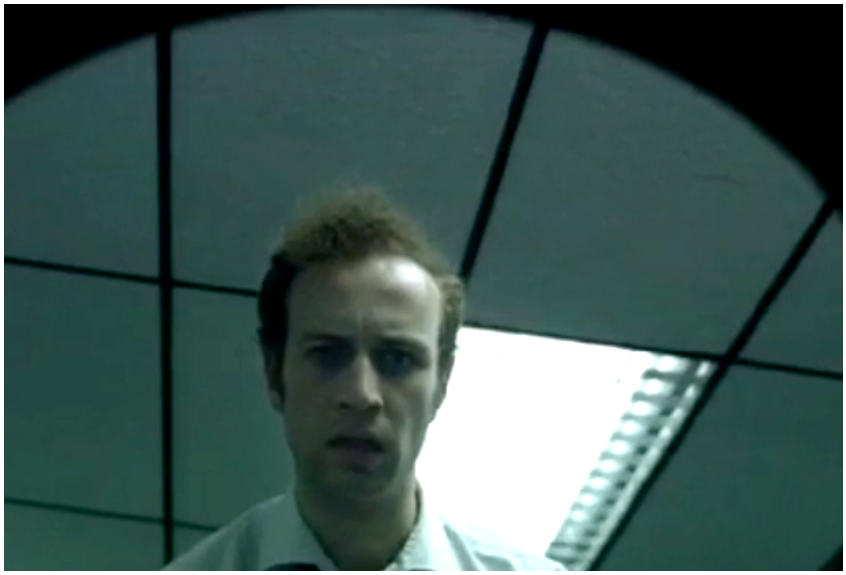
- developed all four skills (speaking, reading, writing and listening) with the aid of audiovisual materials
- improved their spoken fluency through the active participation in communicative tasks with their peers
- become more aware of their listening and speaking in general and be able to identify the specific areas in which improvement is needed
- increased their responsibility for the management of their own learning in order to be able to learn how to improve their language skills more autonomously
- developed confidence in their ability to communicate in English
- developed an appreciation of their peers' contribution to the language learning process through collaborative activities
- improved their interpersonal skills (collaborative decision making) by participating in collaborative learning tasks
- increased their understanding of film as a medium of communication
- gained the ability to plan and carry out a group project using creativity, IT, research, and film editing skills
- improved their ability to think and respond creatively





Synopsis

The Black Hole is a two and a half minute short film directed by Philip Sansom and Olly Williams. It tells the story of a tired and frustrated office worker struggling to do a photocopying job. When he discovers a black hole in the machine he finds better things to do.



Overview

Directed and written by:	Philip Sansom Olly Williams
Producer:	Ben Sullivan
Director of photography:	Will Bex
Art director:	Diamond Dogs
Sound:	Finch Judges
Editing:	Phil Sansom
Starring:	Napoleon Ryan
Genre:	Drama
Runtime:	2:35 mins.
Certification:	UK: PG
Production Company:	HIS Films
Distributor:	Future Shorts UK

Pre-viewing activities



Activity 1: Prediction task

- **Focus:** warmer, generate interest in topic
- **Interaction:** pairs
- **Materials:** board, board pens

- **Procedure**

The teacher writes the short film title *The Black Hole* on the board and asks students to guess what this film might be about. Students work in pairs with a time limit of two minutes. The teacher writes the students' suggestions on the board (one per pair) in the form of key words.

Activity 2 will provide the students with sufficient information to self-evaluate their predictions.

Activity 2: Dictogloss

- **Focus:** listening for detail, note-taking, writing for accuracy
- **Interaction:** individual, groups
- **Materials:** text (synopsis of film, see page 4)

- **Procedure**

The teacher writes the word 'synopsis' on the board and elicits the meaning from the students. The teacher explains it (should the students be unfamiliar with the term) by using the synonym 'summary'.

The teacher informs students that they will be read a film synopsis and it is their task to just listen. The students will then be read the text again and the teacher asks them to take as many notes as possible (working individually). It is crucial that the teacher informs students that the text will be read out to them at a natural speed and that they will not be able to copy down every word. Following this the teacher instructs students to reconstruct the text of the synopsis by filling the gaps in their notes. The teacher should mention that they are not expected to reconstruct the text 'word for word', but show an ability to reconstruct its meaning. Students work in groups of four to complete this task. The teacher monitors this activity focussing on students' accuracy (writing: spelling, grammar) and provides support should students struggle to complete this task. Feedback on this task (on content) follows by students comparing their texts as a class.

The teacher then draws students' attention back to the predictions on the board (activity 1). Students are asked to vote on the prediction that is closest to the actual synopsis.

While viewing activities



Activity 3: Sequencing

- **Focus:** pre-teaching lexis, dictionary skills, viewing (gist)
- **Interaction:** group, individual
- **Materials:** board, board pens, dictionaries, short film *The Black Hole*

- **Procedure**

The teacher writes the following phrases scrambled on the board (in a random order):

frustrated and overtired worker · photocopier prints a black hole · cup of coffee disappears · discovers the possibilities · steals from vending machine · breaks into the office · gains access to the safe · gets greedy · trapped inside

The teacher asks students to look up unknown words in a dictionary (working in groups), and then elicits the meanings. Following this, students will watch the film, trying to rearrange the phrases into the correct order.

Activity 4: Observation activity

- **Focus:** forming questions (present simple), prepositions, viewing (detail)
- **Interaction:** group
- **Materials:** short film *The Black Hole*, board and board pens for scorekeeping

- **Procedure**

The teacher asks the students to note down details from the film (e.g. red fire extinguisher right next to office door, clock on wall: 3am, etcetera) while watching it. Following this, students work in groups and form five difficult questions for the other groups (the teacher monitors this for accuracy in spelling and grammar). The groups challenge each other by reading out one question to the opposing group who try to answer it. A group receives a point when the opposing team is unable to answer their question or when they answer a question correctly. The teacher keeps score on the board.

Activity 5: Stage directions

- **Focus:** imperative, prepositions, viewing (detail), verbs of movement, adjectives on mime
- **Interaction:** group
- **Materials:** short film *The Black Hole*

- **Procedure**

The teacher elicits the meaning of the 'stage directions' from students and elicits the appropriate grammatical form (imperative). The teacher models (or elicits) stage directions for the first fifteen seconds of the film.

Suggestion: Stand still and half close your eyes and groan. Press the button of the photocopier, then look up in a frustrated manner.

Students now work in groups, writing stage directions for the rest of the short film. Teacher monitors students' writing for appropriateness of lexis, spelling and grammar (imperative form).
The stage directions will be re-used in activity 10.

Post-viewing activities

Activity 6: Collaborative Writing Activity

- **Focus:** narrative tenses (simple past, past continuous, past perfect), active and passive voice
- **Interaction:** group
- **Materials:** none

- **Procedure**

Students work in groups of three, writing the frame of the film plot. The groups deal with different content, half of the groups dealing with what happened before, the other half with what happened afterwards. The teacher monitors for accuracy of language (written), paying particular attention to tense use.

Peer feedback on content: the teacher distributes all the pieces of writing to the class and the students walk around the classroom, reading all texts, deciding which one is the best 'before story' and which one is the best 'after story'.

These two stories will be re-used in activity 8.

Activity 7: Interviews

- **Focus:** simple past, past continuous (questions and open answers), speaking
- **Interaction:** pairs
- **Materials:** none



- **Procedure**

The class will be divided into two groups: journalists and interviewees. The interviewees will be allocated specific roles (company manager, overtired worker (picture), the worker's wife, his co-workers, a psychologist, etc.). Each journalist has to prepare questions to ask the interviewees, each interviewee has to prepare a story/opinion. Students then mingle and interview each other. The journalists take notes on the content. The teacher monitors without disturbing the students' communication (unless required for successful task completion).

The information gained during this activity will be re-used in activity 8.

Activity 8: Writing a newspaper article

- **Focus:** writing, narrative tenses (see activity 6)
- **Interaction:** individual
- **Materials:** texts produced in activity 6, notes from activity 7

- **Procedure**

The students are asked to produce a newspaper article using the plot of the film as well as any information gained during activity six and seven. Students should share their notes with one another.

This piece of writing should be collected in and corrected by the teacher with particular focus on the grammar (narrative tenses).

Activity 9: Film funding (research activity)

- **Focus:** research skills (Internet), reading (gist), speaking (presentation skills)
- **Interaction:** pairs
- **Materials:** computer with internet per pair

- **Procedure**

Students are asked to find out how to get funding for the production of a short film.

The website http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/filmfundinformation can be provided should students fail to find information themselves. Students should find information on what they need to apply for film funding and prepare a short, formal presentation of their results.



Activity 10: Making your own short film

- **Focus:** personalisation of topic
- **Interaction:** groups
- **Materials:** computer with video editing software (such as Windows Movie Maker or Apple iMovie)

Task

Students will be asked to work in groups to produce their own short film. The short film will be an adaptation of *The Black Hole* and must not be longer than three minutes. Students adapt the plot by transferring it to a different

· time (e.g. 19th century Britain) or
· setting (e.g. breaking into a house)

The project will be broken down into different phases. Students will be required to work autonomously, the role of the teacher is to aid and offer guidance. The following guideline on 'How to make a film' (for the students) has been adapted from the UK Film Council website 'First Light'.

Pre-Production

The idea

Decide in which way you want to adapt the short film and then carry out some background research. For example, if you want to re-tell the story in 19th century Britain you need to know what a workplace looked like at the time, what types of clothes people would wear, etc.

The script

When writing your script you should consider three main points:
1. Structure:
Most films are based on a three 'act' structure as they have a beginning, middle and an end.
2. Characters:
You should think about what kind of people are in your film? What makes them do things?
3. Dialogue/Body language:
What will your characters say and how will they say it?

The storyboard

The storyboard is a plan of your film with drawings or photographs, which will help you to imagine how your finished film will look.
It may be useful to visit the location where you will shoot your film when you are making your storyboard to get a better idea of how you want your shots to look. A good storyboard will save your group time while filming.

Casting

The cast is the group of actors who star in your film. You need to find the best actor to play each character.

Pre-Production

Scheduling

Get organised! A schedule is a plan of what will take place at each stage of your production.
When scheduling always remember that things might not go according to plan. There could be bad weather or poor available light. So build extra time into your shooting plans for this.

Production

Direction

The Director chooses the right camera shots for the film. Visit the following website to find out more about directing:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/oneminutemovies/howto/direct.shtml

Camera

The camera is the main tool for shooting your film. Keep your camera steady! When using the camera without a tripod you will need to take steps to minimise shaking.

1. Keep your legs apart and elbows bent.
2. Lean against a wall, or car, or anything nearby if you can.
3. If it's a low shot, rest the camera on a sandbag or cushion.

For a moving shot, try using a wheelchair, skateboard or shopping trolley to get around. Putting your camera in a netted shopping bag can help to alleviate camera wobble.

Sound

Poor sound quality will ruin the audience's experience of watching your finished film so make sure you get it right. Visit the following website to find out more about sound:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/oneminutemovies/howto/sound.shtml

Post-Production

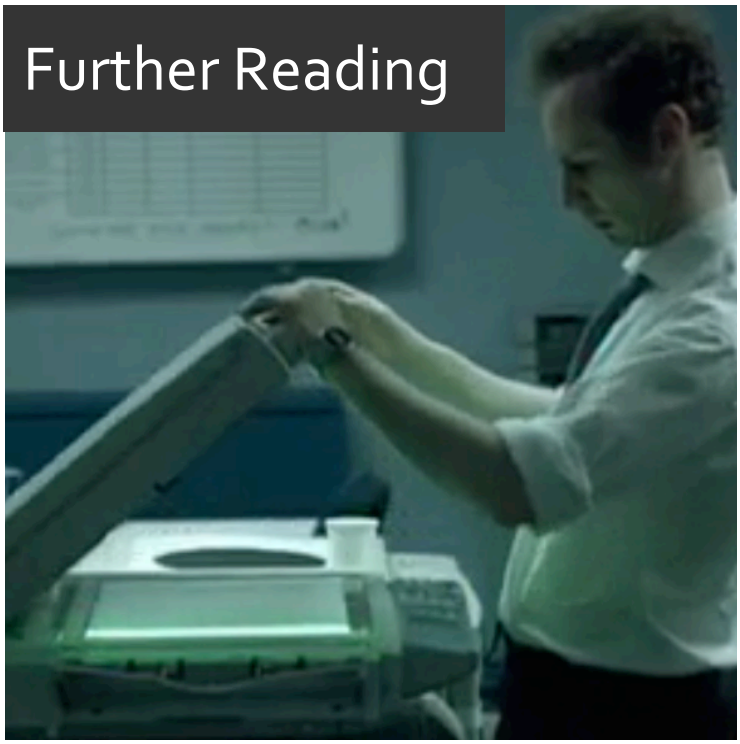
Editing

Changing from one shot to another can be done in three main ways:
Be creative and use your imagination when editing, you may want to think about the following:
1. Cut - Where the action swaps from one shot to another.
2. Dissolve - Where the action changes from one shot to another by a slow blend.
3. Fade - Where a shot appears or disappears slowly from or into a blank screen.
Always cut on an action, as this will connect your two shots. Try using a movement, such as a character putting on a hat or using a TV remote. When editing you need to get the pace or the speed of the film right. Make sure the action isn't too slow and boring or to fast and rushed.

Sound

Film editing software also allows you to use a soundtrack in your film. This can be a great tool to create the right mood.

Further Reading



● 'The Black Hole'

The short film 'The Black Hole' is currently accessible online on three webistes:

Sansom, P. and O. Williams (dir.) 2008. 'The Black Hole.' *BBC Filmnetwork.* Retrieved February 20, 2010 from http://www.bbc.co.uk/filmnetwork/films/p005yytg

---. *Virginmediashorts.* Retrieved February 20, 2010 from http://www.virginmediashorts.co.uk/films/past_entrants/the-black-hole

---. *Youtube*. Retrieved February 20, 2010 from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5_Msrdg3Hk

Detailed plot outline of the film written by the directors

Sansom, P. and O. Williams. 'Plot summary for *The Black Hole* (2008).' *Internet Movie Database*. Retrieved March 15, 2010 from http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1430144/plotsummary

Filmography of the directors

'About Diamond Dogs.' *HSI London*. Retrieved March 15, 2010 from http://www.hsilondon.co.uk/#/directors/commercial/diamond-dogs/

● Using Film in Class

Sherman, J. 2003. *Using authentic video in the language classroom.* Cambridge: CUP.

Stempleski, S. and P. Arcario (eds.) 1993. *Video in second language teaching: using selecting, and producing video for the classroom*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL Inc.

'Using film in the classroom.' *BFI Education*. Retrieved April 19, 2010 from http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching/witm/classroom.html

Websites giving guidance on making a movie

First Light. Retrieved April 23, 2010 from http://www.firstlightonline.co.uk/

'How to make a one-minute movie.' *BBC*. Retrieved 23 April, 2010 from http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/oneminutemovies/howto/

● Short films online

'BBC Film Network: showcasing new British filmmaking.' *BBC.* Retrieved April 24, 2010 from http://www.bbc.co.uk/filmnetwork/films/

'Futureshorts Channel.' *Youtube*. Retrieved April 26, 2010 from http://www.youtube.com/user/futureshorts

Virginmediashorts. Retrieved April 24, 2010 from http://www.virginmediashorts.co.uk

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All images contained in this publication are screenshots taken from the short film *The Black Hole* (2008) and used for education purpose only without claim of ownership.

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