Open Resources For English Language Teaching

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Supporting Teachers For Quality Education

**Module 6
Communicative Grammar**

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Module 6 – Communicative Grammar

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Acknowledgements

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About this module manual

Module 6 — Communicative Grammar for Language Proficiency has been produced by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). All module manuals produced by Commonwealth of Learning are structured in the same way, as outlined below.

How this module manual is structured

The module overview

The module overview gives you a general introduction to the module. It will help you determine:

- if the module is suitable for you,
- what you need to know,
- what you should expect from the module, and
- how much time you will need to invest to complete the module.

The overview also provides guidance on:

- study skills,
- where to get help,
- module assignments and assessments, and
- activities and units.

We strongly recommend that you read the overview *carefully* before starting your study.

The module content

The module is broken down into units. Each unit comprises:

- an introduction to the unit content,
- unit objectives,
- unit learning outcomes,
- new terminology,
- core content of the unit with a variety of learning activities,
- a unit summary,
- assignments and/or assessments, as applicable, and
- answers to assignments and/or assessments, as applicable.

Resources

For those interested in learning more on this subject, please see the list of additional resources at the end of each unit of this module. These may be books, articles, websites or audio/video files that can assist in the teaching of the unit and so on.

Your comments

After you have completed **Module 6 — Communicative Grammar**, we would appreciate your taking a few moments to give us your feedback on any aspect of this module. Your feedback might include comments on:

- Module content and structure.
- Module reading materials and resources.
- Module assignments.
- Module assessments.
- Module duration.
- Teacher support (assigned tutors, technical help, etc.).

Your constructive feedback will help to improve and enhance this module.

Module overview

Welcome to Module 6 — Communicative Grammar

The ability to communicate effectively in any situation involves the skills of listening and responding appropriately to messages. It also includes the ability to perform language functions effectively. This is often referred to as **communicative competence**. People with good communication skills have a better chance of success in both the workplace and life in general. As language teachers, we must be proficient in oral and written communication, as very often we are the only role models for our students. This module on communicative grammar seeks to equip you with strategies and activities to develop communicative competence in your students, which can be defined as **language use for meaningful communication marked by fluency, as well as grammatical appropriateness**.

Is this module for you?

This module is intended for teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) at the Junior Secondary School (JSS) level.

Module objectives

The objectives of this module are to:

Objectives

- enable you to develop your students' grammatical competence,
- enable you to teach language functions using relevant structures and vocabulary,
- help you equip your students with appropriate language expressions to communicate effectively in both oral and written contexts, and
- give you strategies to make the teaching of grammar interesting and meaningful across disciplines at the JSS level.

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Module outcomes

Upon completion of **Module 6 — Communicative Grammar** you will be able to:

Outcomes

- teach communicative grammar using a variety of strategies,
- use grammar to develop your students' communicative competence,
- help your students perform various language functions effectively, and
- encourage the teaching of grammar across the curriculum.

Time frame

How long?

You will need approximately 15 weeks to finish this module — eight weeks for formal study and seven weeks for self-directed study — to complete all the activities recommended.

This is a distance learning programme, thus the time frame is flexible and largely self-directed.

Study skills

Study skills

As an adult learner your approach to learning will be different from that of your school days: you will choose what you want to study, you will have professional and/or personal motivation for doing so and you will most likely be fitting your study activities around other professional or domestic responsibilities.

Essentially you will be taking control of your learning environment. As a consequence, you will need to consider performance issues related to time management, goal setting, stress management, etc. Perhaps you will also need to reacquaint yourself with such things as essay planning, coping with exams and using the Web as a learning resource.

Your most significant considerations will be *time* and *space*; that is, the time you dedicate to your learning and the environment in which you engage in that learning.

We recommend that you take time now — before starting your self-directed study — to familiarise yourself with these issues. There are a number of excellent resources on the Web. For example:

- http://www.how-to-study.com/

  The "How to Study" website is dedicated to study skills resources. You will find links for tips on study preparation (a list of nine essentials for a good study place), taking notes, strategies for reading textbooks, using reference sources and coping with test anxiety.

- http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/stdyhlp.html

  This is the website of Virginia Tech's Division of Student Affairs. You will find links to tips on time scheduling (including one called "Where Does Time Go?"), a study skill checklist, basic concentration techniques, how to take control of your study environment, note taking, how to read essays for analysis and tips on developing memory skills ("Remembering").

- http://www.howtostudy.org/resources.php

  Another "How to Study" website with useful links to learning about time management, efficient reading, questioning/listening/observing skills, getting the most out of putting your knowledge into practice, memory building, staying motivated and developing a learning plan.

The above links are our suggestions to start you on your way. At the time of writing these Web links were active. If you want to look for more go to www.google.com and type "self-study basics," "self-study tips," "self-study skills" or a similar combination.

Need help?

Help

Contact your Google Group support email, SMS number or your tutor.

Group email: orelt_tutors@googlegroups.com

Assessment

Assessment

- Each unit of this module consists of a self-assessment activity. The assessments are for self-development purposes and need not be submitted to anybody. The goal of the module is to develop your teaching-learning skills, not to test you.

- Assessment is also meant to encourage you to think about and devise some innovative teaching practices that could make your teaching more exciting and relevant to your students.

- All assessments are to be completed at the end of every unit. You may cross-check your answers with your colleagues.

Getting around this module manual

Margin icons

While working through this module manual you will notice the frequent use of margin icons. These icons serve to "signpost" a particular piece of text, a new task or change in activity; they have been included to help you to find your way around this module manual.

A complete icon set is shown below. We suggest that you familiarise yourself with the icons and their meanings before starting your study.

Activity	**Assessment**	**Assignment**	**Case study**
Outcomes	**Summary**	**Objectives**	**Feedback**
Terminology	**Reading**	**Reflection**	**Study skills**
Help	**Time**	**Audio**	**Video**

Unit 1: Communicating Effectively

Introduction

Very often our understanding of grammar is limited to the rules of sentence formation, which are taught through classroom exercises involving the transformation of isolated (and unrelated) sentences from one grammatical category to another. For example, we are all familiar with exercises that require the students to changes sentences from active to passive voice and vice versa. Exercises such as these at best make students remember the rule, but do not give any practice in using that grammatical form meaningfully for real communication. As language teachers, our objective is not to teach the content found in grammar books (i.e., the rules), but to enable students to use appropriate vocabulary and structures in meaningful communicative contexts. This unit will focus on familiarising you with **communicative grammar** and activities that deal with developing **grammatical competence**.

Unit outcomes

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Outcomes

- help your students engage in informal conversational English for real-life communicative purposes,

- involve your students in activities that encourage them to speak about themselves, their daily routines and their future plans, and

- help your students perform certain language functions using appropriate grammar and vocabulary.

Terminology

Terminology

Communicative grammar:	This is the grammar of utterances — that is, words that we actually use in communicative situations, rather than the sentence grammar that discusses the rules of correct use. Communicative grammar teaches students to use the language appropriately in meaningful situations to perform functions such as accepting or rejecting an invitation, or providing and getting information, and is built around topics rather than grammar rules.
Communicative strategies:	These are the skills that speakers use to communicate their feelings effectively so that the

attention of the listener is drawn to the meaning the speaker wishes to convey through the utterances, rather than the grammatical form. Communicative strategies also include the ability of people to *respond* appropriately in conversation, whether the situation is formal (classrooms, meetings, ceremonies) or informal (parties, family events, festivals).

Slow colloquial: This is a deliberate and simplified form of English used with non-native speakers to help them understand what is being said.

Teacher support information

As English teachers, we need to engage students in using English for meaningful activities where they have an opportunity to communicate for a real purpose. These are similar to the purposes for which they use their home language, except that the situations in which they need to use English may be different. In other words, students should be involved in situations where they need to speak or write in English to fulfil a communicative need such as getting information, seeking clarification, asking for permission, requesting a classmate to lend a pen and so on. In engaging students in communicative tasks, however, remember that second-language learners of English almost always have problems with certain grammatical structures, depending on both their home languages and their school backgrounds. If you can identify these problems as you engage your students in classroom activities, you can design remedial exercises to help them address their errors.

Lack of confidence and fear of committing errors in front of others are other issues that you may have to cope with. If you create a relaxed atmosphere and group the students appropriately, even the shy ones will begin to speak.

In the initial stage, with slower learners, you may have to deliberately go **slow colloquial** to ensure that even the weakest students can follow what you are saying. It also helps if you group students in such a way as to let them learn from one another.

Case study

Case study

Miss Monica Smith, a JSS teacher in Nepal, found that when a famous mountaineer visited the school and asked her 14-year-old students about their future plans, they avoided looking at the guest and kept quiet. Later she asked them why they had behaved like that, especially because only the previous week they had had a similar conversation in their activities class. Very shyly, one student told her that they did not feel confident about conversing with such famous people in English. Another added that they did not know how to begin or respond in a conversation.

Monica discussed this problem with her colleague Mr Thapa from the Counselling office. They decided to hold proficiency sessions for an hour every day after school, for about a month. With the children sitting comfortably in a circle around them, Monica and Mr Thapa conducted a conversation on a particular profession every day. The students were asked to listen carefully and then do some written exercises based on the conversation. In the first week, the students were asked only to listen and complete the worksheets so that they began to understand English spoken at normal conversational speed, and also to pick up words related to various professions.

In the second week, Monica handed around worksheets containing conversations about professions, which the students, sitting in groups of four, had to fill in. Each group then had to select two members to do a role play on the script. After every presentation, the teachers and other students would comment on how it could be improved. By the third week, Monica and Mr Thapa were including students in their own conversation. They would call out names randomly, and the student would have to join the conversation at that point.

After a month of such intense practice, Monica called in another guest and had her students interact with her. This time, the students were warm and confident, and had many things to discuss with the guest, who was very impressed. The principal decided to include such proficiency classes in the curriculum from that academic session onwards. What was interesting was that Monica and Mr Thapa did not use any grammatical terminology in their class — they simply familiarised the students with the appropriate structures through practice.

Points to ponder

1 Do your students face similar problems in interacting with people in English?
2 What strategies do you use with your students to encourage them to converse in English?

Activities

Activity 1: Asking for and giving information: Talking about professions

Activity 1

This activity should familiarise your students with the grammatical structures used to ask for and give information in authentic (real-life) situations. One such situation is talking about professions and jobs. For this activity, follow the steps below. Remember to share with the students the explanations given (e.g., the definition of **regular activities**) at each point. Ask them to note down two sentences about their parents' professions. (For example: *My father is an engineer with the Public Works department./My mother works as a doctor in Fortis hospital.*) Each student should then share the information with a partner. Ask them to use the following pattern (you can write this sample structure on the board):

a What does your father/mother do?

b My father/mother is a teacher. He/she works at Nairobi High School.

Ask the students, working in pairs, to make a list of **three** professions that interest them. Have the pairs team up into groups of four then ask each other about their chosen professions. The students should use the following structures when they talk (this dialogue cue can be written either on the board or on paper handouts):

a What would you like to do/be when you finish your studies?

b I'd like to be a _____, because _____.

Have your students listen to the audio recording in **Resource 1: Exchanging information** and answer these questions:

a What is Nicholas planning to do when he finishes college?

b What are the two reasons why Maria has decided not to become a doctor?

c Working with a partner, write down two things you could suggest to Maria to make her want to study medicine in your country.

d Between Nicholas and Maria, who is giving their information more clearly? Listen to the dialogue once again and fill in the blanks in the sentences below:

   i Nicholas and Maria are meeting after _____ years.

   ii Nicholas will join _____ after college.

   iii Maria always had a _____ dream.

   iv A medical degree can be very _____.

   v As a girl, Maria is expected to stay _____ and _____ after marriage.

Activity 2: Building students' exchanges around everyday events

Activity 2

Encouraging students to talk about familiar situations, such as events and interactions at school, at home and in society, is an effective way of developing their fluency and grammatical competence. **Activity 2** gives you a set of steps you can use to build up a situation based on everyday activities. This activity will give your students practice in the use of the **simple present tense** and **adverbs of frequency**. For this activity, take the students through the steps described in **Resource 2: Working with everyday events**.

Activity 3: Describing a process

Activity 3

A common function of language is describing a process; that is, how something works. *Process* description is different from *static* description; the former means describing how something works, while the latter refers to describing an object, a person or an event.

When describing people, for example, we consider two things: their physical appearance and their personality. To describe how something works, however, we not only have to describe the appearance of the objects needed for the process to work, we also have to give a step-by-

step account of how to make the thing work. For example, to describe the process of making a cup of tea, we need to list the *ingredients* needed, the *tools* required and the *steps* that will result in getting a hot cup of tea. As you are aware, process description uses particular kinds of sentence structure and specialised vocabulary. For example, we can use the following styles to describe the process of making a cup of tea:

1. *First we must boil a cup of water in a pot. While the water is boiling, we must take a teacup and add a spoonful of sugar to it. Then we must take…*
2. *First boil a cup of water in a pot. While the water is boiling, take a teacup and add a spoonful of sugar to it. Then take…*

In the first style, we use statements with **modal verbs**, while in the second we use **directives**. When we teach students to describe a process, we are giving them practice in using specific grammatical structures and vocabulary to communicate in a real-life situation. In short, we are teaching them **communicative grammar.**

For this activity, first have the students brainstorm on the kinds of things they can do by themselves — *prepare food* (an omelette, soup, a meal, etc.), *practise origami* (paper designs), *mend* (replace a burst tyre), or *operate something* (sending a text message on a mobile phone) and so on.

Ask one student to describe a process, and have the other students give feedback on the description: whether all the steps were mentioned, the ingredients or tools included, etc. Have a short discussion on how the description could have been improved.

Then give the students, working in groups, three sets of sample descriptions like those in **Resource 3a**. Ask them to select the best one, and to say what makes it good. During the feedback session, bring to their notice the merits of the best description.

To have them practise process description, give them a guided task to do in pairs, such as the one given in **Resource 3b**. Have them peer correct under your supervision. During the feedback session, alert them to the specific structures and vocabulary used.

Ask the students, working in groups, to describe a process from a list of choices (you can decide what your students will be capable of/interested in describing, and make your list). Have a group representative present their description in class, and edit the draft according to suggestions given by you and the other students.

Unit summary

Summary

In this unit we looked at how to teach communicative grammar effectively focusing on the functions and social contexts that students are likely to find themselves in. In authentic communication situations, people are less self-conscious, and so can focus more on expressing themselves meaningfully. In such situations, mastering grammar rules is not the objective, and hence the structures used are likely to become absorbed more quickly. The activities described above should inspire you to design your own communicative grammar exercises.

Reflections

Reflection

- Do you think your students will enjoy doing the activities in this unit?
- What other topics from real-life situations can you turn into suitable classroom activities?
- Do you think it would be a good idea to ask students for such topics? What benefits and problems do you foresee?

Assessment

Assessment

- The strategies used in this unit to practise grammar are not found in traditional grammar practice books. Which of these approaches are you and your students more comfortable with: learning grammar through rules, or practising grammar through classroom activities? Find out what your colleagues think about this.

Resources

Resource 1: Exchanging information

Resource 1

Transcript

Schoolmates Nicholas and Maria meet by chance at a popular café in the city after several years.

Maria:	Oh... hi! Aren't you Nicholas?
Nicholas:	Yeah. It's Maria, isn't it? My goodness, you've changed so much I wouldn't have recognised you! It's been... say... five years, right?
Maria:	Mmm... So what are you doing these days?
Nicholas:	Studying for my degree in architecture. I'm planning to join my father's firm after college. What about you? Still following your doctor dream?
Maria:	Oh no... I gave that up!
Nicholas:	Really? But I remember you always announcing how you'd become a doctor and serve the poor...
Maria:	Forget it... let's go and have a drink... Come on, I'll treat you to a large chocolate shake!
Nicholas:	Maria, what's wrong?

Maria:	Nothing much... Dad lost his business and I lost my chance... a medical degree is so very expensive here... and that's only the first reason...
Nicholas:	What's the second?
Maria:	My family wants me to get married and not waste five years studying for a degree I won't need.
Nicholas:	That's terrible! Come to my country... things are much better there... and you can still study medicine....

Video

Resource files

See enclosed in the DVD a video recording of the activity:

- Scripts\Module6\Unit1\Activity1\Resource1\Video\Exchanging_Information. mp4

Audio

If you have trouble playing the video, you can have your students listen to the audio recording (below) of the same conversation:

- Scripts\Module6\Unit1\Activity1\Resource1\Audio\Exchanging_Information. mp3

Resource 2: Working with everyday events

Resource 2

Worksheet

a Look at these activities. Which of these do you do regularly?
   i   swim
   ii watch English movies
   iii eat Chinese food
   iv listen to music
   v   wake up at 6:00 a.m.
   vi take a bath with warm water
   vii wear Western outfits
   viii go for a walk

b Which of the above activities do you do?
   i   every day
   ii once a week
   iii every evening
   iv only at night
   v   sometimes

c Activities that are repeated very often are called **regular activities**. Share one of your regular activities with a partner. For example:
   I wear Western outfits once a week for my salsa class.

d Now look at the table below. Complete the table with *two* things that your work partner does.

Column 1	Column 2
every morning	1. *Make breakfast* 2.
twice a day	1. 2.
only on holidays	1. 2.
every year	1. 2.
very rarely	1. 2.

Grammar points:

i To talk about events that happen regularly, we use the **simple present** tense.

ii We also use expressions like *every morning, twice a week*, *sometimes* and so on. These are called **frequency expressions** because they describe something that happens at regular intervals of time.

e Read the passage below. It describes how Reena spends her time every week. After you have read it, discuss it with a partner and write a similar paragraph using the information from the table above.

Reena wakes up at 5:30 every morning. She listens to her favourite hymns on CD for two hours every day, and prays two times a day. Every afternoon she jogs a kilometre in the park, and takes a hot shower. She swims once a week in the pool on the terrace. On Sundays she cooks a special dinner for her family. Reena attends parties on weekends, and dresses in Western outfits for these parties.

Resource 3a: Process description: How to send an email

Resource 3a

Description 1

To send an email, we must go to the main display page of the computer, which is called the Desktop. Then we must click on the Browser icon — the symbol that helps us connect to the Internet. When we are connected, we must type the address of the email service provider (Gmail/Rediffmail/Hotmail/In.com, etc.). Once the homepage of the email provider is displayed, we must type our username and password in the space provided, and click on the Login button. When our Inbox is displayed, we must select Compose Mail and click on it. This will take us

to the page where we can type our email. On that page, we must type or select the email address of the recipient, write the Subject and then type our message in the space provided. The format of the email is like a letter, except that we do not have a place to sign. Once our email is ready, we must click on the Send button. Our email will immediately be sent to the receiver. This is how we send an email.

Description 2

To send an email, go to the main display page of the computer, which is called the Desktop. Then click on the Browser icon — the symbol that will help you connect to the Internet. When you are connected, type the address of the email service provider (Gmail/Rediffmail/Hotmail/In.com, etc.) When the homepage of the email provider is displayed, type your username and password in the space provided, and click on the Login button. When the Inbox is displayed, select Compose Mail and click on it. This will take you to the page where you can type your email. On that page, type or select the email address of the recipient, write the Subject, and then type your message in the space provided. The format of the email is like a letter, except that you do not have to sign it. Once your email is ready, click on the Send button. Your email will immediately be sent to the receiver. This is how you send an email.

Description 3

Sending an email is so easy! You can do it in a jiffy! All you need to do is connect to the Internet. Then get on to the homepage of your email service provider (Gmail/Rediffmail/Hotmail/In.com, etc.), and log in by keying in your username and password. This will take you straight to your Inbox. Click on Compose Mail and type or select the email address of the recipient. Write the subject and type in the email in the space provided. Write your mail the same way you'd write a normal letter, except that you don't put your signature on an email. When it's done, click on the Send button. Your email will be sent to the receiver right away! This is how you send an email.

Resource 3b: Process description: Wrapping a gift

Resource 3b

Worksheet

My friend Anita wants to learn how to wrap a gift. I want to help her. Complete my description of gift-wrapping process, filling in the blanks with the appropriate words.

To wrap a gift, we need _____. For the wrapping, first we must put the gift in a cardboard box and fix the lid tightly with sticky tape. Then we must take a sheet of _____ matching the size of the gift. Taking care to keep the paper straight, we must wrap it around _____, and fix it on the box with _____. Once the broad sides of the gift have been wrapped, we must start tucking in _____. When the wrapping is done, we can decorate it with _____. Then _____ fix a card on it to _____. Our wrapping is now _____.

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Teacher question and answer

Feedback

Question: How can I use a communicative approach to teach grammar, which is presented only as grammatical structures in the syllabus?

Answer: The current research shows some positive effects of the direct teaching of grammar. Communicative grammar approaches do not entirely abandon grammar; they only insist that it be taught in the context of meaningful communication. They also suggest that **fluency** should come before **grammatical accuracy**. In the classroom, you could get around this problem by using **communicative methodology** to teach the grammatical points.

Unit 2: Grammar for Social Skills

Introduction

As we are all aware, English is widely used as a medium of communication between both native speakers and people from different language backgrounds. JSS students need to learn English not just for academic success, but also to help them build better social and workplace relationships. This unit contains strategies to help your students use the appropriate grammatical structures in their social interactions.

Unit outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will:

Outcomes

- know ways of having students perform language functions related to fostering social relationships, with appropriate examples, and
- be able to make your students aware of different grammatical structures for expressing politeness in English.

Terminology

Terminology

Language functions:	The various uses of language. For example, inviting, appreciating, requesting, commanding, offering help, etc. Each of these has certain grammatical and vocabulary choices.
Structures:	This is the short expression for grammatical structures or patterns, constructions or simply word classes required for constructing accurate sentences.

Teacher support information

As an English teacher, you should be aware that different structures are used to express degrees of politeness in English. For example, *Could you...* is more polite than *Can you...* when making a request.

In this unit, you must make your students aware of these differences so that they can perform language **functions** such as **accepting** and **rejecting** invitations appropriately. This will help them express themselves better in

social interactions, from interactions in the classroom to exchanges outside school.

Case study

Case study

Ms Joan Davis, a JSS English teacher, was very excited about the Teachers' Day celebrations that the students had organised. There would be no classes that day, and the students had put together a cultural show for all the teachers. Ms Davis was happy for another reason: she had a lot of assignments to mark. She informed the students that she would be in her room marking assignments, and instructed them to call her when they were ready to begin the show.

At the appointed time, two senior students came round and announced to her, "Okay, we are ready. Come on."

Ms Davis was both amused and disappointed by their words. She knew they meant well and had simply not realised that their words sounded very impolite. She also knew that the problem was because nobody had taught them about politeness strategies in school. Instead of admonishing them, she decided to think of ways of making them practise grammatical structures for politeness. She drew up a few lesson plans that included exercises to practise language functions such as inviting politely, making a polite request, turning down an offer politely and so on. She discussed them with the principal, who thought they were a great idea, and suggested she invite other teachers to watch, so that they could do the same in their own classes.

Over the next two weeks, Ms Davis held a series of interesting sessions in which students used role play and other techniques to practise conversations using polite forms. Later, other teachers worked with their own students, and by the end of the year, Ms Davis was pleased to see the students interacting more politely in English with teachers, parents, guardians and visitors.

Points to ponder

1 Do you think it is really necessary to teach students how to speak politely? After all, they can learn on their own or from their teachers and others in social gatherings.

2 Can you think of a way in which you could incorporate/include activities to practise politeness in your own classes? Do you think you could manage to do so within your allotted teaching time?

Activities

Activity 1: Using modals for polite requests

Activity 1

This activity is designed to make students aware that English requests can be made more (or less) polite by using different modal verbs, or changing the tense of a modal verb. Because the students will practise functional grammar (the structures necessary to perform language functions) in this activity, they need to use these structures themselves.

The first step is to test their existing knowledge about requests in English. On slips of paper, write a situation where a request would be required (asking for a glass of water, borrowing a pen, running an errand, etc.). Put the students into groups of four or five, ask them to pick a slip of paper and have them use the phrase on it to write a request. In the feedback session, use their responses to collect a sample of different structures (*Please give me a glass of water/Can I borrow your pen?* etc.). Put these on the board (correcting any grammatical mistakes).

Next, show the students these structures in appropriate contexts. For this, distribute the exercise in **Resource 1a** to each group and tell them to complete the dialogue using expressions from the list on the board. Each group can then do a role play with their dialogue.

Once the students have practised using some expressions for polite requests, they can learn to differentiate sentences according to the degree of politeness. Give them the requests in the short exchanges listed in **Resource 1b** and ask them, in their groups, to grade them according to which request they think is more polite. Point out that requests can be made by using the polite form of modal verbs. For example:

Could you bring me a pen, please?
Would you mind closing the door, please?

are more polite than

Can you bring me a pen, please?/Please bring me a pen.
Can you close the door, please?/Please close the door.

Activity 2: Accepting and declining invitations: Using contracted forms

Activity 2

The language used in the classroom is usually restricted to questions, answers and discussions related to the lesson — the story, poem, play or essay — that students are expected to read. As a result, students end up learning to speak in a formal way. In fact, we actually discourage students from replying in half sentences or with a simple Yes/No and instruct them to "speak in full sentences." As students will need to use English in "real life" after they leave school, we need to help them learn and use the grammatical forms of oral communication.

One such grammatical form is **contracted forms** (of modal verbs and *not*), such as *isn't, can't, wouldn't, I'll* and so on, which we frequently use in oral

communication situations. A real-life situation in which these structures are used is **accepting and declining invitations.** This activity is therefore intended to give students practice in using contracted forms appropriately when dealing with invitations.

First, you should find out how familiar your students are with informal/oral language expressions. For this you will need to provide them with samples of language used for different functions such as invitations, requests, apologies and so on. Divide the students into small groups and ask them to match a set of situations (below) with their corresponding spoken invitations played out on audio/video (see **Resource 2** for samples). This will test their existing knowledge of language functions, and motivate them as they embark on their task. Remember not to give them the answers as they listen/watch!

Situations:

Agreeing, congratulating, apologising, disagreeing, requesting

To extend the task one step further, you can give the students a jigsaw puzzle task on invitations. Prepare a set of expressions (or use the samples given in **Resource 3**) that include comments from different exchanges on invitations. The students' task is to rearrange the pieces to make meaningful conversation exchanges. After they have finished, play the video/audio in **Resource 3a** and let them check if they put the sentences in the correct sequence. To add some complexity to the task, you could add some formal expressions (that contain full sentences instead of utterances with contracted forms) so that they have to do two tasks: *select* the appropriate expressions and *rearrange* them. After the students have finished the task, play the audio/video version in **Resource 3b** and allow them to correct their versions if necessary.

To make the students focus on the grammar point, give them conversation cards on which the exchanges have been written in two formats: one with the contracted forms and the other with the more formal sentences. Pick out one sentence from each comparable conversation exchange and put them on the board. For example:

1a *I'm not sure I'll be able to attend.*
1b *I am not sure I will be able to attend.*

Draw their attention to the structural differences: ask them what is different, and have them notice that both (**1a** and **1b)** are correct, but that **1a** is more appropriate as **it sounds more natural.** Highlight the fact that in natural conversations people use short cuts such as contracted forms, do not repeat entire questions when responding, and add expressions such as *thank you, I'm sorry, I'm afraid* and so on to sound more polite.

Now that the students have had some practice with these structures, ask for volunteers to do role plays based on the exchanges. They can watch the videos or listen to the audios of the same conversations for rehearsal, and then act out the situations. Make sure that they use the contracted forms they encountered in the tasks. The role play will not only give them confidence, it will also help them practise using the grammatical forms in a natural context. A few more examples of language functions are given in **Resource 4**.

Activity 3: Giving a description: Subject and object relative clauses

Activity 3

In social situations, we often find ourselves introducing people to one another, referring to past events, or describing things, other people or events. One strategy we use to refer to or describe things, events and people is called **relativisation** — that is, showing the relationship of one thing to another. In this activity, students will engage in an activity that will help them practise relative clauses, clauses that begin with a relative pronoun such as *who, which* or *that.*

This activity has two parts. In the first part, the students see a set of pictures of people and places, and then have to complete a narrative (a story) using the relative clauses that they hear you use to describe the pictures. In the second part, the students have to guess and complete the storyline using relative clauses. For the first part, you can either use the storyline given in **Resource 5**, or narrate an event familiar to you with pictures related to it. The students complete the activity only after they have gone through the discussion and had some practice in the use of relative clauses. For the activity:

- Tell the students that they will hear about a foreign student called Jennifer's experience of spending some time in their city, and will see some photographs she took during her stay here.

- Display the photographs on a board or project them on a screen. For each picture, give an explanatory sentence using a relative clause (see **Resource 5**). Put these sentences on the screen, write them on the board or ask the students to write down the sentences as they hear them. These sample sentences will help them to complete a similar task in part 2.

- For the next part of the activity, put the students in groups and have them complete a similar exercise with a fresh set of pictures. You can follow the same steps as you did in part 1. This time, ask a member of each group to imagine the photographs are theirs and to describe them using relative clauses. Then each group should write a narrative (i.e., build a story about their group member's imaginary experiences) using the pictures as reference. The groups should then present their stories, and the class can decide which is the most interesting.

Unit summary

Summary

In this unit we looked at how social activities use specific language functions, and what grammatical structures (formal and informal) are appropriate for use in these social activities. As English is increasingly being used for interaction in official as well as social settings, students need the skills to communicate effectively in different contexts, such as formal (interview boards, academic presentations), semi-formal (group discussions, class debates) and informal (parties, hotels, exhibitions) situations. It is important to remember here that students can gain confidence in using English effortlessly only when they *listen to* authentic

samples of language used, and *practise* using the appropriate forms *themselves*. In this unit, therefore, the students need enough opportunities to use the various language functions in the classroom with their peers. Participatory techniques such as pair and group work, role play and discussion serve two purposes: they allow students to feel less self-conscious, and help the teacher to involve the whole class in meaningful language activities.

Reflections

Reflection

- Having taken your students through the activities in this unit, would you agree that it is important for students to practise using informal forms of grammatical structures themselves?

- Using pair work and group work may require good class management skills. Do you think your management skills are well developed? What problems do you think less prepared teachers might encounter?

Assessment

Assessment

- Select two or three language functions that your students have to perform in English in your social context, and develop similar activities around them to practise. Keep a record of which activity was successful, and which needs modifications. Also note how your students benefitted from such practice.

Resources

Resource 1a: Modals for polite requests

Resource 1a

Here is a conversation between two classmates, Mike and Sally, who have been asked to work together on a class project. In the conversation you will find them making requests for things they need to work on a clay model of the Earth. Discuss and complete the dialogue with your group. Remember to make the dialogue sound like real conversation. Also remember to make the requests very polite. When you are ready, choose two people to act out the conversation before the class.

Sally:	Hi, Mike. I'm *so* happy we're working on this project together! I just loved your model of the Moon last term!
Mike:	I'm glad we're a team, Sally. I think we'll have a great time together working on this. Can I sit down here?

Sally:	Of course! Could you pass me my bag, please? I'd like to show you something. It's a step-by-step process for making clay models that I found on the Internet.
Mike:	Sounds interesting! I've got a few ideas myself…
Sally:	Okay, then shall we do it like this? We can discuss our ideas first, and then see if the instructions for the model I've got will help us.
Mike:	All right. But please give me a copy of your paper on the model — I'd like to look at it carefully at home tonight.
Sally:	Sure! Just remind me after school today.
Mike:	
Sally:	
Mike:	
Sally:	
Mike:	
Sally:	
Mike:	
Sally:	
Mike:	

Resource 1b: Degrees of politeness

Look at the expressions below. They are all polite requests, but one of each pair is more polite than the other. Discuss with a partner and say which sentence is more polite.

Please bring me a pen.	Can you bring me a pen, please?
	Could you bring me a pen, please?
Please close the door.	Can you close the door, please?
	Would you mind closing the door, please?

Resource 2a: Language functions: Contracted forms

Resource 2a

Transcripts

Invitations

Jenny:	Hi, Jeremy! Long time, huh? What brings you here?
Jeremy:	How have you been, Jenny? You're right... it's really been a long time since we got together! Which is precisely why I'm here. You remember Susan from our tennis club?
Jenny:	Susan White? What about her?
Jeremy:	Well... Susan and I got engaged last week, and we're organising a small get-together for our old friends on Christmas Eve.
Jenny:	That's wonderful! Just tell me the time and place, and I'll be there!

Requests

Jeremy:	Uh, Jenny... could you do me a favour, please?
Jenny:	Of course... as long as you're not going to borrow money from me!
Jeremy:	Oh no, it's nothing like that! I was wondering if you could help me choose a wedding ring for Susan...
Jenny:	Are you sure Susan would like that?
Jeremy:	Well, it was HER idea in the first place!

Apologies

Jenny:	Uh, Jeremy, do you have a minute? I'm afraid it's important!
Jeremy:	Sure, Jenny. What is it?
Jenny:	It's a little bit embarrassing, but there's something I need to tell you right now.
Jeremy:	Go on...
Jenny:	I'm afraid I made a big mistake. I blurted out to Susan that you failed your A-levels the first time. I… I'm truly sorry. I didn't mean to let it slip... it just came out when we were remembering our exam experience in Mr Smith's classes... I just hope this doesn't become an issue between the two of you... I'll never forgive myself if Susan thinks you deliberately kept it from her...

Congratulating

Jenny:	Susan, Jeremy... I'm SO happy for you two! Congratulations! You make a great couple! This is really a fairy tale wedding, isn't it? SO where are you guys heading off for your honeymoon?
Susan/Jeremy:	Thanks, Jenny!
Susan:	We're sailing down the Nile next week. We'll leave for Africa tonight and tour a bit of the Northern countries first!
Jenny:	Wow! That's wonderful! Best wishes for your honeymoon, too, then!
Jeremy:	Thanks, Jenny... You're a dear!

Disagreeing

Jenny:	By the way, Susan, I think you should wear pink more often — baby pink — that's YOUR colour!
Susan:	Oh no, Jenny! I HATE pink! Especially baby pink! Nobody takes me seriously when I'm in pink! It's as if people refuse to believe I've grown up!
Jenny:	I certainly don't agree! I think you look innocent, not childish in pink! And with your brown curls, you really look like an angel!
Susan:	You're wrong, Jenny! I don't look like an angel — I look like an angel's assistant in pink — all brown curls, brown eyes and dainty pink! In fact, Jeremy teases me no end about my pink bedroom slippers!
Jenny:	I'm afraid I still think you look great in pink, Susan, and if Jeremy doesn't think so he's a fool!

Video

Resource files

See in the enclosed DVD a video recording of the activities:

- Scripts\Module6\Unit2\Activity2\Resource2\Video\Invitations.mp4
- Scripts\Module6\Unit2\Activity2\Resource2\Video\Requests.mp4
- Scripts\Module6\Unit2\Activity2\Resource2\Video\Apologies.mp4
- Scripts\Module6\Unit2\Activity2\Resource2\Video\Congratulating.mp4
- Scripts\Module6\Unit2\Activity2\Resource2\Video\Disagreeing.mp4

Audio

If you have trouble playing the video, you can have your students listen to the audio recording (below) of the same conversation:

- Scripts\Module6\Unit2\Activity2\Resource2\Audio\Invitations.mp3
- Scripts\Module6\Unit2\Activity2\Resource2\Audio\Requests.mp3
- Scripts\Module6\Unit2\Activity2\Resource2\Audio\Apologies.mp3
- Scripts\Module6\Unit2\Activity2\Resource2\Audio\Congratulating.mp3
- Scripts\Module6\Unit2\Activity2\Resource2\Audio\Disagreeing.mp3

Resource 2b: Matching task on invitations

Resource 2b

Invitation to...	Text of invitation
River cruise	I would like to invite you and your family to my son's wedding reception on Sunday, 26 December, at the Mayfair Hotel. The reception is at 9:00 p.m., and will be followed by a fireworks show at the riverside.
Dinner	Hey, guys, how about the four of us meeting in the cafeteria at noon tomorrow? It's been ages since we met, and I really need to share my good news with you!
Broadway play	Linda, are you free this Friday evening? I thought it would be nice to take the evening cruise down the Thames together!
Wedding	Jenny, I've got two tickets for Broadway next Saturday. *Vampire's Boots* is playing and I'd love to watch it with you.
Share good news	We'd be delighted to have your and Lincoln's company at dinner at our bungalow tomorrow night. Please join us for cocktails at 8:00 p.m.

Resource 3a: Jigsaw puzzle task

Resource 3a

Here are comments from a conversation about an invitation. The conversation is between two friends, Jeremy and Richard. Jeremy is inviting Richard to a party. Arrange the comments in the form of a conversation, with Jeremy and Richard speaking in turns. After you have finished, your teacher will play the audio tape for you. Do you have the comments in the correct order?

1 I'm having a small party for the old gang this weekend.

2 Okay, you do that. And be at my place at eight sharp.

3 Will you be in town then?

4 I'm not sure.

5 The truth is, though, I'd love to squeeze out of it.

6 Let me see if I can find someone to stand in for me... Maybe I can cook up some excuse and wriggle out of it.

7 I've been invited to a play by my boss, and you know bosses — they don't like being stood up!

8 And guess what? Blake and Robert are also around. Haven't we been planning this for years now? We never seem to be able to get the gang together!

9 I'm SO tempted... Wonder if I can get my colleague Sheila to take Mr Gower to the play. She's wonderful company, and quite attractive. I'm sure the boss won't mind the least bit!

10 DO try — it'll be a shame to catch up on old times without you — everyone will be really mad if you can't make it!

Here's the beginning of the conversation:

Jeremy: I'm arranging a small party for a group of close friends this weekend. _____?

Richard: I'm not sure. _____!

Resource 3b: Jigsaw task on invitations (informal version)

Resource 3b

Transcript

Jeremy:	Hey Richard.
Richard:	Hey Jeremy.
Jeremy:	I'm having a party for the old gang this weekend. Will you be in town then?
Richard:	I'm not sure. I've been invited to a play by my boss, and you know bosses — they don't like being stood up!
Jeremy:	True...
Richard:	The truth is, though, I'd love to squeeze out of it. Let me see if I can find someone to stand in for me... Maybe I can cook up some excuse and wriggle out of it.
Jeremy:	DO try. It'll be a shame to catch up on old times without you — everyone will be really mad if you can't make it!
Richard:	I'll try, I WILL!
Jeremy:	And guess what? Blake and Robert are also around. Haven't we been planning this for years now? We never seem to be able to get the gang together!
Richard:	I'm SO tempted... I wonder if I can get my colleague Sheila to take Mr Gower to the play. She's wonderful company, and quite attractive. I'm sure the boss won't mind the least bit!
Jeremy:	Okay, you do that. And be at my place at eight sharp!

Resource files

See in the enclosed DVD a video recording of the activity:

Video

- Scripts\Module6\Unit2\Activity2\Resource3a\Video\Informal.mp4

If you have trouble playing the video, you can have your students listen to the audio recording (below) of the same conversation:

- Scripts\Module6\Unit 2\Activity 2\Resource 3a\Audio\Informal.wav

Audio

Resource 3c: Jigsaw task on invitations (formal version)

Resource 3c

Jeremy:	Hey Richard.
Richard:	Hey Jeremy.
Jeremy:	I am arranging a small party for a group of close friends this weekend. Will you be in town then?
Richard:	I am not sure I will be able to attend. I have been invited to a play by my boss, and you know bosses — they do not like to be disappointed.
Jeremy:	True…
Richard:	However, I would love to excuse myself from it. Let me see if I can find someone to take my place... Maybe I can think of a good excuse to back out of the programme.
Jeremy:	DO try to be there. It will be a shame to catch up on old times without you — everyone will be really disappointed if you cannot make it!
Richard:	I will try, I WILL!
Jeremy:	And guess what? Blake and Robert are also here. Have we not been planning this meeting for years now? We never seem to be able to get the whole group together!
Richard:	I am SO tempted to attend the party... I wonder if I can convince my colleague Sheila to take Mr Gower to the play. She is wonderful company, and quite an attractive person. I am sure the boss will not be disappointed.
Jeremy:	Okay, please do that. And do be at my place at 8:00 p.m. positively.

Video

Resource files

See in the enclosed DVD a video recording of the activity:

▪ Scripts\Module6\Unit 2\Activity 2\Resource 3b\Video\Formal.mp4

If you have trouble playing the video, you can have your students listen to the audio recording (below) of the same conversation:

▪ Scripts\Module6\Unit 2\Activity 2\Resource 3b\Audio\Formal.mp3

Audio

Resource 4: Additional information on language functions

Resource 4

Functions

a *Making requests*
   i *Can/could you... (please)?*

    ii   *Can/could I... please?*

    iii *Would you mind... please?*

    iv *Would it be all right if I...?*

    v   *I wonder whether you/I could... please do me a favour by...*

b *Offering help*

    i   *May I (help you)?*

    ii   *Would you like some help with that...?*

    iii *If you like, I could...*

    iv *What can I do for you?*

    v   *Is there anything you'd like me to help out with?*

    vi *I'll do it for you, if you want me to.*

c *Accepting an invitation or offer of help*

    i   *How nice, I look forward to it.*

    ii   *Yes, indeed. I'll ask for Mum's permission and then let you know.*

    iii *Of course, I'll be glad to.*

    iv *How nice, I'd appreciate that.*

    v   *Yes, please. I was just about to ask you.*

    vi *Yes, indeed. I can't move/lift/push, etc., it alone.*

d *Declining an invitation*

    i   *Thank you, but I'm sorry, I'll be too busy to come.*

    ii   *Thank you very much, but I have something important to do on that day.*

    iii *Sorry, that's the day we're travelling home for...*

    iv *Well, I would have liked to come, but my hands are full.*

Resource 5: Giving a description: Relative clauses

Resource 5

Part 1

Jennifer Stewart spent a month in our city living with a family as part of a students' exchange programme. Here are some moments of her stay that she captured on camera. Let's find out what she thinks of our city and its people.

This is a photo of....

… the family with whom I stayed.

….the place they took me to visit one weekend.

…the other foreign visitor whom I met at a party.

…the school that I went to for three weeks.

...the church that was built 300 years ago.

...the boy who lived in the flat opposite.

(Artist: Ashutosh Borthakur, Department of Linguistics, Gauhati University.)

Now let's read what she said about our city in an email she sent recently. Fill in the gaps in her story with the information from the photos above. The

clauses she has used are called **relative clauses**, and she uses them to refer to the people and places she wants to describe.

Description:

I had a wonderful time in your city, and I especially liked _____, because they treated me like their own daughter. I made friends with _____, and they took me out every weekend, except one. On the last weekend, my hosts took me sightseeing. The place_____ was just a two-hour drive away, but it was such a refreshing change from the hustle and bustle of the city! During the weekdays I had to study, and _____ allowed me to borrow as many books I wanted from its library. But it's not that I got bored with such a hectic schedule; I had a good time learning about the city and its history. And I was not the only strange face in this school. I became friends with an American guy, _____. The party where I met this guy was a traditional affair, and it was interesting to join people in singing and dancing around the bonfire. I really enjoyed my time here, and I will always cherish the time I spent here with you.

Teacher question and answer

☺

Feedback

Question: How do I engage my students in these communicative activities without disturbing the neighbouring classes?

Answer: It might help if you discuss your plans with your colleagues and ask for their co-operation. You could warn them about the possibility of extra noise, and apologise beforehand. You should also ask for your students' co-operation, and make them understand that they have a responsibility to keep the noise level low. Students usually respond well when teachers make them feel they are part of a "grand plan," so you could make them treat these classes as a special experience. It might also be a good idea to discuss this issue with your principal so that you have his or her support.

Unit 3: Grammar Games for Fun

Introduction

This unit contains some activities that show that learning grammar in class can be fun. If the focus in the grammar class is not on routine discussion of grammatical rules and categories, and the students are engaged instead in real-world fun tasks, they will begin to realise how their grammar skills can develop in interesting ways. This will motivate them to participate actively in class, which in turn promotes language development. This unit focuses on three grammar games. You can find more in any of the good practical activity books developed by ELT specialists and published by Cambridge University Press, Routledge, Oxford University Press and others.

Unit outcomes

Outcomes

By the end of this unit, your students should have enjoyed the experience of playing grammar games. They should be able to:

▪ practise several grammatical structures through fun-filled activities,

▪ realise that grammar can be developed without memorising lists of rules, and

▪ use grammatical English words and sentences while performing language activities for grammar practice.

Terminology

Terminology

Grammar games: Language activities that engage students in learning the meaningful use of grammatical categories and structures.

TESSA: This stands for **Teacher Education for Sub-Saharan Africa**, an association of about a dozen African countries providing online professional development materials for English, Science, Mathematics, etc.

Teacher support information

To become fluent and confident users of English in both academic and non-academic situations, students need to use English for communicative purposes in the classroom. Grammatical appropriateness is one of the prerequisites of language proficiency, and an effective way to develop students' grammatical competence is by presenting them with challenges (quizzes, questionnaires, tasks with time limits, etc.) in the classroom. We should therefore remember that the idea is to have the students interact as much as possible, so that they can enjoy using language spontaneously.

Case study

Case study

Mr Azubuike teaches English to 15-year-olds at Capital Secondary School in Accra. The students come from many language backgrounds, some of which use grammatical classes very differently from English. For example, one language makes no distinction in the use of pronouns for male and female, singular and plural, animate or inanimate, human and non-human. That is, the same single pronoun (equivalent to **he** or **she** in English) is used for all of the above, and some of the languages merely use additional words to clarify the intended targets. Mr Azubuike's students naturally had problems making all the fine distinctions that English and some other languages make in their pronouns. He decided to share his students' problems with Mrs Udoh who had taught similar students in the past five years. She came across the materials provided online for teachers by Teacher Education for Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) and the British Council English Language Teaching group. She found very useful hints on how best to present English pronouns to ESL students. Both sources suggested using stick sketches, demonstrations before the class using boys and girls, objects and games to illustrate the distinctions that English pronouns make. She has been using these practical techniques successfully in her classes for some time. Mr Azubuike, could not access the materials online, so he decided to visit Mrs Udoh's next three classes to observe how she actually taught pronouns. He was pleased to see her using a variety of techniques, grammar games and real-life activities in a very lively class. He is now much more confident about teaching English pronouns.

Points to ponder

1 In what ways can students be made aware of the differences in grammar between their first language and English?

2 How important is it to speak and write grammatically? Do students learn through games and fun?

Activities

Activity 1: Playing with phrasal verbs

Activity 1

This activity should help students practise the use of **phrasal verbs**. It is a pairing game. Students are divided into two groups called **Verbs** and **Prepositions**, and then have to find partners to form phrasal verbs. The game ends with the partners making sentences with the phrasal verbs.

To prepare for the activity, on page-sized placards, write down, in large letters, the verbs and prepositions from the lists below:

Verbs: go, get, bring, give, look, turn, pick, put, let, take, fill, break, clear, speak, show, try, cut, keep, cross

Prepositions: in, out, up, down, on, off, back, around, away, along, through, about, for, after

Announce to the students that they will play a game called **Phrasal Partners.** The objective of the game is to team the verbs with the appropriate prepositions to form phrasal verbs, and then to use them in sentences.

First, the students should divide themselves into the two groups — **Verbs** and **Prepositions**. Then a member of each group quickly collects the words representing their group (**Verbs** or **Prepositions**).

Next, each Verb has to find a matching Preposition. The pair then run to the board and write their pair name there (e.g., *look for, go through, bring up*). If two Verbs want the same partner (e.g., *off* for *put off/show off*), the pair that can think of a grammatical sentence with that Preposition first gets to keep the partner.

Each group then has to make and say aloud a sentence to illustrate their partnership (e.g., *My grandfather **looked after** me when my parents went on a holiday/My friends did not **turn up** for my birthday party because they had exams*). (See **Resource 1** for phrasal verbs from the list used in sentences in a passage.)

If time permits, the groups can now swap round and play again. The Verb and Preposition with the most sentences win the game.

Activity 2: Who's won the lottery?: The question quiz

Activity 2

In this activity students have an opportunity to practise using polarity-type questions to seek information, using several tense forms. This is a guessing game in which students have to guess the name of one of their classmates who has "won a lottery." The game involves students asking polarity questions (i.e., questions that get the response Yes/No) to discover information about the lottery winner. The challenge is to find the answer by only asking the Yes/No questions. The activity will help students practise interrogative structures in a real-life context.

First, announce to the class that one of them has just won a lottery. They will have to guess the name of the person by asking questions about him or her.

Divide the class into groups of five or six. Tell one member of each group (you can call him or her the Group Leader) the name of the classmate who is supposed to have won a lottery. The rules of the game are:

- Only the Group Leader knows the name of the "winner."

- Each group member has to ask the Group Leader a question to find out who the person is, and the Group Leader can only answer by saying *Yes* or *No*.

- The questions should be about the person's appearance.

- The questions should be in the format *Does he…/Is she* (e.g., *Does she have curly hair?/Is he tall?*).

- Each group member takes a turn to ask one question and try to guess the name. If they guess wrongly, the next group member asks another question, and so on until the group has guessed the correct name.

- Because this is only a game, and the whole class has to be involved, even the person whose name is being guessed should not know that he or she is the "winner." Only the Group Leaders will know, and they should not share the name with their group mates beforehand.

- The game ends when one of the groups guesses the name correctly.

A tip: When you choose your group leaders, be careful to choose students who are good observers and quick to take decisions, because when their group mates ask probing questions, they will have to quickly decide whether to answer *Yes* or *No*, and to resist the temptation to look at the person being described. Otherwise the game will soon be spoiled, and many students will not have the opportunity to practise the structures.

Activity 3: Delectable descriptions: Adjectives for fun

Activity 3

The objective of this grammar game is to describe something (an object or person) imaginatively, using interesting and unique **attributive adjectives**. The learning point here is **collocations of adjectives with nouns**, and the sequence of attributive adjectives in noun phrases.

First, have your students suggest a list of adjectives to describe qualities, and put them on the board. Then ask the students to describe each of their classmates with two adjectives from the list. For example, they could have *kind, gentle Sahil/active, smart Monica/short-tempered, impatient Sally* and so on. The students should then read out their descriptions to the class. You could even generate a humorous debate on whether the descriptions match the people. Make sure the students take it all in good humour — you could even allow some good-natured teasing.

Then announce that the class is going to play a game with adjectives. For the game, make up paper placards, each with a random word (written in large letters) like *tomato, duster, ladder, hourglass, tree, truck, pencil, flower, vase, football* (you can have three or four of the same, so that there's one for each student). Ask the students to choose a placard and pretend to be that

object. They then have to give themselves interesting names by adding **attributive adjectives** (that is, adjectives that come before the thing they are describing). They have to use at least three adjectives for their names. They can use alliterative adjectives to make their name more interesting (such as *I am Twisty, Tangy, Tasty Tomato/My name is Perfect, Polished, Perforated Pencil* and so on). Allow them to use a dictionary to choose the adjectives — the more interesting the better.

Now put the objects with the same names (all the *tomatoes, pencils,* etc.) in groups, and let them introduce themselves with their new names. This should generate a lot of laughter and fun. When all the students have introduced themselves, ask them to expand their introductions into a full sentence (for example, *I am Twisty, Tangy, Tasty Tomato and I work in the Department of Pulps and Slush*). Encourage them to be creative and funny, and to use their imagination to come up with unusual (even ridiculous) introductions like the example above. The objective of this exercise is to make students understand the **collocational possibilities** of adjectives with nouns (i.e., which adjectives can qualify which nouns), and also to help them practise the grammatical function of introducing oneself. (See **Resource 2** for some "delectable descriptions.")

Unit summary

Summary

This unit focused on how grammatical concepts can be practised with humour and fun in the classroom. The aim was to ensure that students do not view grammar as the memorisation of boring, repetitive rules. It also focused on specific language functions performed as part of social skills, and some grammatical categories appropriate to those functions. The activities in this unit are only sample exercises to give you ideas for similar activities for your students to enjoy doing in the class.

Reflections

Reflection

- Now that you have completed this unit, what did you find most useful?
- Are these activities appropriate for your students?
- If you were to modify them, which parts of the unit would you change to suit your context?

Assessment

Assessment

- ▪ Can you think of other grammatical areas that can be taught through games? Make an activity to teach **past tense** with the help of a language game like the ones described in this unit. Invite one or two colleagues to record how the class goes. Then write down your own experience of teaching students through a grammar game.

Resources

Resource 1: Phrasal verbs

Resource 1

Verb list: *go, get, bring, give, look, turn, pick, put, let, take, fill, break, clear, speak, show, try, cut, keep*

Prepositions list: *in, out, up, down, on, off, back, around, away, along, through, about, for, after*

Possible combinations:

GO*: go in, go out, go up, go down, go off, go around, go away, go along, go through, go about, go for, go after*

GET*: get in, get out (of), get up, get down, get on, get off, get back, get around, get away, get along (with), get through, get after*

LOOK*: look in, look out, look up (to), look down (upon), look on, look back, look around, look away, look through, look for, look after*

TAKE*: take in, take out, take up, take down, take on, take off, take back, take (someone) around, take away, take for, take after*

SPEAK*: speak out, speak up, speak on, speak about, speak for*

KEEP*: keep out, keep up, keep (something) down, keep on, keep off, keep back, keep away, keep (something) for*

Sample sentences in an English text:

When I reached the place, I **went in** *through the back door. There was a sign warning people to* **keep off** *the grass, so I had to* **get in** *through a small window someone had carelessly left open. I* **looked around** *and carefully* **took in** *the surroundings before I* **jumped into** *the room. "Who's there?* **Speak out***!" the butler shouted, obviously realising someone was in the room. Scared to death, I* **slid down** *the window,* **turned down** *the volume of my mobile phone,* **tried out** *a few yoga postures I'd learnt from a detective friend, and* **crept into** *the shadows before someone could* **come upon** *me and give me a rude shock!*

Resource 2: Delectable descriptions: Some illustrations

Resource 2

Figure 1: Twisty, Tangy, Tasty Tomato

Figure 2: Droopy, Drowsy, Dangerous Dog

Figure 3: Poor, Pensive, Powerful Pencil

Figure 4: Cute, Curious, Cautious Car

Teacher question and answer

Feedback

Question: When I engage my students in group activities in the class, it generates a lot of noise, which often provokes complaints from my principal and colleagues. The principal and the district English inspector even seem to believe that I am not teaching at all! What should I do?

Answer: You need the support of the school management and your colleagues for the kind of work you are doing. One way of garnering support is to invite your colleagues and the principal to one of your classes. You will then be able to show them some of the outcomes of your students' group activities and some individual output as evidence of your efforts. However, avoid a situation where your students' enthusiasm and enjoyment of what they are doing in groups distract other classes. Draw up some rules of engagement for your group activities and insist that they are strictly followed.

Unit 4: Grammar for Improving Composition Skills

Introduction

Grammar is central to good writing. Our mastery of grammatical categories and structures determines whether what we write is meaningful, logical and interesting to read. The message that we wish to convey through our written words will serve its purpose only if we shape it through the appropriate language. As we saw in **Unit 2** above, a sentence like *I would like to invite you to dinner* is meant for one audience and purpose, and *Why don't you guys join me for dinner?* is meant for another. The first sentence is a **statement** with a **modal verb**, and is meant as a **formal** invitation, while the second sentence, which uses an **interrogative form**, is also an invitation, but is meant as an **informal**, **spontaneous utterance**, addressed to close friends.

This unit presents ways in which grammatical structures convey different meanings in written compositions. It contains activities for practice in using simple, compound and complex sentences, sequencing of ideas in paragraphs through relative clauses and pronouns, use of grammatical connectors like conjunctions, and descriptive categories such as adjectives, to improve composition.

Unit outcomes

Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit you will be able to:

- explore different ways in which English grammar can be used for better writing,

- give your students practice in expressing themselves appropriately by helping them focus on the use of appropriate grammatical structure, and

- motivate your students to play grammar games to improve their language skills.

Terminology

Simple sentences:	Sentences with two essential parts: a **subject** and a **predicate** as in *A boy ate the mangoes* where *a boy* is the subject and *ate the mangoes* is the predicate.
Compound sentences:	These are sentences usually formed by combining two simple sentences with conjunctions such as *and* or *but*, as in *The man can beat the drum and his wife can sing.*
Complex sentences:	These are commonly formed by sentences with a main clause and a subordinate clause as in *I saw her* (main clause) *when she was running away* (subordinate clause).
Compound-complex sentences:	These are commonly formed by a combination of **simple**, **compound** and **complex sentences** with a series of subordinate clauses as in *The woman was clapping her hands* (**simple sentence**) *and her children were dancing beautifully* (**compound sentence**) *because they were very happy* (**complex sentence**).
Non-finite verbs:	Verbs with no subject, tense or number. They are **participial verbs** (i.e., verbs that end in *–ing* or *–ed* but are not denoting past/present/future tense) and do not use auxiliary verbs ("be" verbs or modals) to complete their meaning. For example: *Turning the handle, she opened the door*.
Conjunctions:	These are words used for joining other words or group of words in sentences (e.g., *and, but, or, neither… nor, either… or,* and so on).
Sentence linkers:	These are words that link sentences together (e.g., *therefore, consequently, furthermore, firstly, secondly* and so on).
Descriptive adjectives:	These are words and expressions that are used to describe a noun in a sentence. They can appear before the noun (attributive adjectives) — as in *a* **handsome** *boy, a* **beautiful** *girl* — or after it (predicative adjectives) — as in *The boy is* **handsome**.

| Connected writing: | Any piece of written text that is at least a paragraph long, and expresses an idea or a group of related ideas. |

Teacher support information

As teachers of English, we are all familiar with grammatical concepts, categories and structures, and have been teaching these to our students to improve their writing skills. However, we also know that even though we have taught our students about different types of sentences, use of pronouns and articles, active and passive voice and so on, we still find many errors in their written work. Somehow the grammatical concepts that we teach are not transferred to our students' compositions. One reason for this may be that students do not get enough practice in the *process* of writing, which requires careful attention to grammar, style and choice of words. In this unit, we will try to address some of these issues by helping you engage your students in writing activities that practise key grammatical categories.

Case study

Case study

Mrs Cecelia Wong is a teacher in a semi-urban secondary school. Her greatest problem was the nonchalant attitude of her JSS III students to grammar. They became so bored during grammar lessons that Mrs Wong had stopped teaching this component of English.

At an English Language teachers' conference, Mrs Wong mentioned this problem and discovered that many colleagues faced the same problem, no matter where they taught. The solution suggested to her was to show students how grammar operates in real and meaningful communicative situations. She decided that her approach to teaching grammar would have to change when she returned to her school. She realised that she would have to make grammar less abstract and more meaningful to real-life communication. Writing was her first target. She engaged her students in interesting tasks that helped them use specific grammatical categories in authentic and real-life situations. Mrs Wong carried out her own personal research on which grammatical categories her students needed to practise most, and set out to design simple and collaborative tasks on these. She had her students work in pairs and groups, and tried to relate their tasks to the grammar teaching points in their textbooks. To Mrs Wong's pleasant surprise, her students' attitude to grammar started to change. They now saw grammar lessons as interesting and meaningful. Above all, their use of grammar in their writing improved radically. Mrs Wong could see the value of re-directing the teaching of grammar towards better written English.

Points to ponder

1 What is your JSS students' attitude to grammar? Are they enthusiastic about grammar lessons? Why?

2 In your grammar classes, do you bring in examples from students' familiar contexts to illustrate a grammar rule or point? What advantages does such a strategy have over traditional strategies such as memorising grammar rules in isolation?

Activities

Activity 1: Effective writing: Using non-finite verbs in descriptive passages

Activity 1

In any piece of connected writing, we use several strategies to relate one idea to the next. Sometimes we like to give *a background, a reason, a consequence* or *additional information* to the idea we wish to express. The grammatical way of doing this is to use complex or compound sentences, and to join their ideas by special grammatical devices. In **Unit 2** we discussed one such category: **relative clauses**. In this unit, we will look at the uses of **non-finite** verb forms — verb forms that do not specify the **time** of an action or event. Non-finite verbs usually end in *–ing* or *–ed*, and are often found at the beginning of subordinate clauses.

In this activity, your students will practise using non-finite verbs, focusing on the function they perform in subordinate clauses. Before you begin the activity, however, have a short class discussion on **auxiliary** and **main verbs**, which they will have already learned about in previous classes. Remind them that auxiliary verbs are also known as helping verbs, and are the various forms of the verbs *be*, *have* and *do* (*am, is, are, was, were, do, does, did, have, has, had* and so on). Also bring to their notice that these verbs tell us about the time and aspect of an action — whether something happened in the **past**, **present** or **future**, and whether the action was **continuous** (progressive aspect: continuous tense), **regular** (habitual) or **began in the past and ended in the present** (perfect aspect).

Then have them suggest some main verbs, and put up several sentences demonstrating tense and aspect (e.g., past continuous, present perfect). Ask them for the tense forms of such main verbs (past, present, future forms). Explain that such verbs, which give us information about the time and duration of an action, are called **finite** verbs.

Now put up a few **non-finite** verbs and draw the students' attention to the fact that although these are also main verbs, they do not have auxiliary or helping verbs with them. To illustrate the point, you can use a pair of sentences like:

I *turned* the lock and **walked** into the room.

Turning the lock, I **walked** into the room.

Show them how in the first sentence, the verbs *turned* and *walked* both show that the activity was completed in the past. In the second sentence,

however, only the verb *walked* tells us the time of the action. The verb *turning*, although ending in *–ing*, **by itself** does not give us any information about the time. For example, we could use the same verb *turning* to talk about the event happening at different times:

Turning the lock, I **walk** into the room.

Turning the lock, I **will walk** into the room.

Turning the lock, I **am walking** into the room.

Tell the students that such verbs are called **non-finite** verbs because they give us no definite information about the time and duration of an action. Illustrate this using several examples of non-finite verbs with *to* forms as well as *–ing* and *–ed* forms. For example:

Walking home from school, I met my friends *playing* in the park.

Swept away by the huge ocean waves, nothing remained of our village after the storm.

To walk home from school through the park takes us one whole hour.

Have the students listen to the audio tape of a conversation between a police officer investigating a robbery and some people he is interviewing (see **Resource 1**) and complete the exercise below.

Exercise:

Listen to the conversation between a police officer investigating a robbery and the people who live in the neighbouring apartments.

As you listen, note down the verbs you hear. Then sort the verbs into finite and non-finite. Now study the same conversation (on your worksheet) with a partner, and **say what information the non-finite verbs are giving**. For example, the first non-finite verb, *talking*, is giving us more information about the **behaviour** of the robbers.

When the students have finished the exercise, discuss how finite verbs give us information about the time, duration, etc., of an action, while non-finite verbs give us additional information about the action. For more practice, help them write a similar conversation using a mixture of finite and non-finite verbs.

Activity 2: Composing a story: The use of reported speech

Activity 2

As you are aware, students at the JSS level are regularly expected to narrate and report on events, whether real (e.g., a concert) or imaginary (e.g., a story). This kind of composition is expected to help students use English for longer exchanges, in both spoken and written forms. To help develop the students' ability to compose factual or fictional narratives relating to people and events, we need to engage them in meaningful activities where they practise using grammatical forms and structures relating to reporting.

In this activity, students will practise narrating an event/composing a story by reporting on conversations. This should give them practice in using **reported speech** in its appropriate tense forms and sentence patterns.

As a pre-task, play the dialogue in **Resource 2a** to your students, or read it out to them, and ask them to listen carefully, as they will have to report what they have heard. The dialogue is between two boys, Abdul and Robin.

Ask a student to report what Abdul asked Robin. You can prompt him or her by reporting the first sentence: *Abdul asked Robin whether he had done his maths homework.* You can ask different students, in turns, to report the next part of the dialogue. In case the students forget the conversation, play it to them again. After the students have reported on every sentence in the conversation, point out the grammatical changes that occur when we report someone else's words. (See **Resource 2b** for common changes.)

Now ask the students, working in pairs, to write their own dialogues for the conversation between Robin and Abdul. Ask some of them to *report* to the class what the boys are talking about. (As this is a preparatory activity, you do not need to ask every pair to report.) As the students speak, write their reported sentences (just one or two) on the board, and then ask them for the original dialogue. Put these on the board as well, and draw the students' attention to the grammatical differences between **direct** and **reported speech**. You can focus on the use of a **reporting verb**, the **change in tense**, the differences in **punctuation** and so on. This activity should help them understand the *function* of reported speech in an actual, real-life context.

For the main activity, have the students, working in the same pairs, compose a story about Robin and Abdul. Ask them to think first about *factual details* of their own lives, such as the name of their school, their class, the place they stay and so on. Then have them use their *imagination* to think of *fictional details*, such as why Abdul forgot his homework, and what would happen when the teacher found out, and so on. Remind them to think of an interesting *beginning* and *ending* for the story. Since this is an exercise in practising reported speech, instruct them to use reported speech instead of actual dialogue. For example, they could include a sentence like:

> *Just when he was about to enter through the school gates, Abdul realised he had forgotten his homework notebook. He rushed into the classroom to see if he could borrow anyone's homework. Relieved to see Robin, Abdul hurriedly asked Robin whether he had done his Maths homework…*

You can also ask them to illustrate their stories with pictures. Once the stories come in, you can put them on the display board in turns.

As a post-writing activity, ask your students to read English newspapers and magazines (one good magazine is *Reader's Digest*, which has a section on quotes) and note down the **quotable quotes** in their notebooks. The students should bring one of the quotes to the class every day, rewriting them in reported speech. Each student can contribute one quotable quote and its reported form for the bulletin board every day.

Activity 3: Describing events

Activity 3

In **Module 4 — Effective Writing**, one activity in **Unit 3** (**Activity 3: Communicating effectively: Writing a report**) was meant to develop students' report writing skills. In that activity, we discussed the **effect** on the **meaning** of a sentence when we replace active voice with passive voice. In this activity, we will practise using active and passive voice when **describing an event**. To prepare your students for this activity, you could take them through the strategies described in **Module 4** — putting comparable sentences in active and passive voice on the board, and asking your students to point out the grammatical differences. The discussion should focus on the fact that when the structure of the sentence changes from active to passive, the focus shifts from the *doer* of the action to the *action* itself.

For this activity, show students the video (**Resource 3a: Describing a cultural show)** or read out the transcript. Tell them to watch carefully and note down the following information in their notebooks:

1 The names of the people in the video
2 The number of cultural presentations described
3 The names of the presentations
4 The comments about each presentation

Now give them Samantha's description of the event (see **Resource 3b** for the audio file and transcript), and draw their attention to the fact that in this passage Samantha is commenting on the presenters. Focus on the sentences used to describe the presentations. They use the active voice, because Samantha is highlighting the performers.

The students should rewrite the description, but this time focusing on the *performance* rather than the performers. In other words, they have to change the sentences in the active voice to the passive voice, so that the attention shifts from the **person doing the action** to the **action itself**. For example:

> *Our college Dramatics Club had put together a cultural extravaganza for the Governor's visit, and it was a really unique experience.*

will become:

> *A cultural extravaganza was put together by our college Dramatics Club for the Governor's visit, and it was a really unique experience.*

Continue in this way until all the sentences in the active voice are in the passive voice. Remind the students that not *all* the sentences need to be changed, only those that describe the performances need to be rewritten.

When the students have completed the activity, have them compare their passage with the original one, noting how the focus of the description changes. You can end the activity by asking them about other situations where they would need to write descriptions in the passive voice (reporting a piece of news, giving an account of a treatment, etc.).

Unit summary

Summary

In this unit we looked at a few grammatical structures that perform important functions in written texts. We also discussed the differences in meaning and focus that arise when one grammatical structure is replaced by another. More importantly, we tried to show the students how a sound knowledge of grammar helps us compose written English texts and respond to events more appropriately. The unit also tried to familiarise students with the various functions performed by common grammatical structures such as active and passive voice, reported speech and relative clauses.

Reflections

Reflection

- As you worked through the unit, how did you find the organisation of the activities? Which activities did you find difficult to organise? How did you overcome these difficulties? What do you think could have been done better?

Assessment

Assessment

- How can we make grammar more interesting and useful for students? What kind of activities would give them a chance to practise using grammar appropriately in real-life situations?

- In what ways can we encourage peer activities in the class to develop grammatical skills? Do you think pair work and group work help students to practise their English language skills better?

Resources

Resource 1: A robbery investigation (transcript)

Resource 1

First Witness (Man):	Here **are** the police, finally! Wonder what **took** them so long to arrive?
Second Witness (Woman):	Well, I **saw** them **talking** to those three men over there!
Police Officer 1:	Excuse me, we'**ve** just **got** a complaint about a robbery here — **could** you **tell** us something more about it?

Man:	Well, I **was awakened** by a bell ringing. *Jumping* out of bed, I **rushed** out, *thinking* it was my doorbell. *Opening* the front door, I **was surprised** to see no one there.
Woman:	**Rushing out** almost at the same time, I **was shocked** to see the front door of the flat opposite ours ajar, the furniture *smashed* to bits, the crystal showpieces *broken*, and our neighbour *screaming* for help.
Police Officer 2:	Anything valuable stolen?
Woman:	Um… I'**m** not too sure, but the lady **was muttering** something about jewellery. People **walking up** the stairs **rushed** to her aid, but the robbers **had left** by then.
Police Officer 1:	The man **standing** outside the gate there — **is** he your security guard?
Man:	Who, Ricky? He'**s** the caretaker — he **would know** about anyone **leaving** the building in a hurry!
Police Officer 1:	Thanks, we'**ll talk** to him and **see** what we **can do.**

Resource file

See in the enclosed DVD an audio recording of the activity:

- Scripts\Module6\Unit4\Activity1\Resource1\Audio\A_Robbery_Inves tigation.mp3

Audio

Resource 2a: Reported speech (transcript)

Resource 2a

Abdul:	Have you finished your maths homework, Robin? I forgot to bring my homework notebook, and I know Mr Smith's going to order me out of the class!
Robin:	What's there to be so scared of, Abdul? Just copy down the homework from **my** notebook at lunch break and submit it!
Abdul:	But I don't have a notebook to copy it in…
Robin:	Wait, I've got an extra notebook for my project work. You can use that.
Abdul:	Thanks, Robin, you've saved my life!

Resource file

See in the enclosed DVD an audio recording of the activity:

- Scripts\Module6\Unit4\Activity2\Resource2a\Audio\Using_Reported_Speech .mp3

Audio

Resource 2b: Reported speech (table of common changes)

Resource 2b

Direct Speech		Indirect Speech
Here		There
These		Those
Now		Then
Today	changes to	That day
Tomorrow		The following day
Yesterday		The previous day
Will + main verb		Would + main verb
Main verb		Am/is/was/are/were + main verb (past participle)

Resource 3a: Describing a cultural show (transcript)

Resource 3a

Rodney:	Hi, Samantha! Where were you yesterday? We missed you at the rock show!
Samantha:	Oh, sorry, Rodney! Our college Dramatics Club had put together a cultural extravaganza for the Governor's visit, and it was a really unique experience.
Nikita:	So what happened there? Was it good?
Samantha:	It was terrific, Nikita! There were, let me see… seven presentations, including a solo performance by Jennifer White the country singer. Of course, the best performance was by our Dramatics Club. They put on a skit on our generation's obsession with our iPhones and iPads and what not, and it was hilarious!
Shalom:	We sure missed it, Sam! Why didn't you tell us about it?
Samantha:	I DID, Shalom! Last week… in the cafeteria, remember?
Shalom:	Yeah… you did, didn't you? And I clean forgot! So what else did you like?
Samantha:	I think the ballet from The Troupers was simply superb. The violin solo by our local maestro Mr Mogambo wasn't too bad either, though a bit too slow for the young crowd.
Rodney:	Okay… that makes it four so far. What were the other three shows?
Samantha:	Let me see… Umm… It started with an Indian classical dance recital by the Patil twins, Ruchika and Devika, which was actually very exotic and nice, and then there was one gymnastics show from a circus performer who danced with rings. The other item, I think, was the stand-up comedian Joe Pullman's gig, which I thought was boring and his jokes were in really bad taste. I think that was about all.

Video

Resource file

See in the enclosed DVD a video recording of the activity:

- Scripts\Module6\Unit4\Activity3\Resource3a\Video\Cultural_Show.mp4

Resource 3b: Describing a cultural show (active voice)

Resource 3b

Transcript

Our college Dramatics Club had put together a cultural extravaganza for the Governor's visit, and it was a really unique experience. Seven acts put on performances. Jennifer White, the country singer, sang her popular numbers. The Dramatics Club put up the best performance — a skit on our generation's obsession with our iPhones and iPads. Everyone enjoyed the skit. The ballet from The Troupers brought tears to everyone's eyes. However, the young crowd did not enjoy the violin solo by our local maestro Mr Mogambo. The Patil twins, Ruchika and Devika, started the evening with an Indian classical dance recital, which was very exotic and nice. A circus artist then performed a gymnastics show with rings. Joe Pullman, the stand-up comedian put on a boring gig. I thought his jokes were in really bad taste. I think that was about all.

Audio

Resource file

See in the enclosed DVD an audio recording of the activity:

- Scripts\Module6\Unit4\Activity3\Resource3b\Audio\Samanthas_Description.mp3

Teacher question and answer

Feedback

Question: What do I do with students in my class who cannot read or write English well? How much more explanation of grammatical terms can be given in a class?

Answer: This is a big problem for all ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students. In almost every class you will find that some students can use some grammar items correctly while others cannot. One way of handling learner differences is to design and administer tasks that have different degrees of complexity. For example, when you give a task on tenses, give easier exercises to the less proficient students and more complex exercises to those who are more proficient. This way every student in the class will be involved, and students will have an opportunity to develop at their own pace. Another strategy you could use is to

pair or group students who have poor grammar with students with stronger grammar skills. This will give the less proficient students a chance to learn from the better ones in an actual context. It does not help to teach and re-visit grammar items continually. It is better to use them spontaneously and in context.

Unit 5: Grammar across the Curriculum

Introduction

As teachers we would all agree that English is still very important for academic work: people use English to gather information and knowledge from books, the Internet and other information hubs; we use English to communicate in the workplace and English is still the most important means for access to higher education. Therefore, we need to teach our students how to use English *academically*; that is, for defining, comparing, arguing, reporting, describing, commenting, debating and so on. We know that success in all these academic functions requires mastery of specific grammatical structures and categories. In this unit, we will help you take your students through certain activities that should help them write better for academic purposes. This should improve students' reading and writing abilities across the curriculum.

Unit outcomes

Upon completion of this unit you will be able to:

Outcomes

1   familiarise your students with specific grammatical categories used in academic texts;
2   help your students use grammatical structures and categories for academic tasks such as describing, defining, comparing and contrasting;
3   help your students to compose scientific reports, using appropriate grammatical forms; and
4   assist your students in putting ideas together in summary writing and note taking, using the appropriate grammatical forms.

Teacher support information

By building on the students' prior knowledge of grammar, we can help them understand how to form grammatical structures that serve the specific academic function they need to perform. For example, they will be able to decide which structure to use to *define* a concept, how to *illustrate* a point with examples, how to describe the *cause* and *effect* of a scientific occurrence and so on. At the JSS level, students will already have learned about complex and compound sentence structures, various tense forms and other grammatical categories such as phrases and clauses. In this unit, we will try to use students' existing knowledge to help them use English appropriately for academic purposes.

Case study

Case study

At the JSS level, teachers usually put a lot of emphasis on teaching grammar by giving facts, defining grammatical terms and analysing sentences on the board — with little emphasis on using grammar in context. As a result, many students at this level cannot use the appropriate grammatical structures for real-life needs, such as asking for clarification of something in a History or Geography class, for example, or for summing up a group discussion, joining a discussion politely, preparing a scientific report using passive voice and so on. In other words, despite their many years of grammar lessons, students still have difficulties in reading their textbooks and responding to the information given there. Students usually memorise the information in content subject texts, such as Science and Social Studies. Many students also find the language of their textbooks difficult to understand — the structures and vocabulary are often far beyond their reading levels. The overall result is a poor performance in their final English Language examinations.

Mr Robinson, the principal of a college in Botswana, was so worried about this situation that he called a meeting of all the English teachers in the college. They came up with some good ideas to change things and set about putting them into action. First, they identified the students' proficiency levels through a simple grammar and usage test. Then they divided the students into advanced, intermediate and elementary groups according to their test scores. Next, they set aside two hours every week for proficiency development classes. The advanced group received a variety of literary texts to read — popular fiction, poetry, travelogues, biographies, etc. — for weekly reading and group discussion assignments. The intermediate group received simpler texts to read, and were made to practise using English through a set of standard communicative texts. The elementary group received a minimum of texts; their spoken proficiency was given more focus through speaking and listening activities. In addition, they had to work with textbooks that matched their level of competence. The overall result of these efforts and strategies was a marked improvement in the students' confidence and ability to communicate in English with minimum effort. Their grammar improved dramatically — thanks to the opportunities to use language in appropriate contexts and for appropriate functions. The principal encouraged the teachers to continue to use these strategies, which eventually translated into improved performance in English in all the public examinations.

Points to ponder

1 Do you think students' proficiency in English can improve by reading other subjects in English? Conversely, will students' ability to read and write well in English improve their performance in other subjects?

2 What about students who learn other subjects in their home language? Do you think students use the same learning skills for language subjects (such as English) and content subjects (such as Geography)?

Activities

Activity 1: The language of definitions: Using appropriate clauses

Activity 1

One of the most common uses of language in academic texts is **defining**. We come across definitions in almost all subjects: Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Geography, Economics and so on. Writing a definition is also the most common task given to students in these subjects. Knowing the grammatical structure of definitions is a useful language skill.

It is common to hear students complain that they understand a concept well, but cannot define it appropriately and so lose out on good grades. In this activity, students will practise the language of definition.

To test the students' ability to define, you can start with a pre-writing activity. Write the names of several objects or concepts that your students are familiar with on slips of paper then fold the papers. Ask the students, working in pairs, to pick a slip of paper and write a short definition of the word written on it. You should choose words across disciplines like *thermometer, earthquake, per capita income, ballad, parallelogram, bacteria, magma, fort,* etc. Give them five minutes and then ask them to read out their definitions. Put two or three good and bad definitions on the board, and point out what is good/bad about them, so that the students can see what makes a good definition. In the feedback session, focus on whether the definitions clearly say what the thing/concept is, what it does or is used for and whether there is an example provided where necessary. You can highlight the different ways of defining as illustrated in **Resource 1**.

Have your students notice the grammatical structure used in definition — **Main clause + subordinate relative clause.**

For example:

| **Main clause** | **+** | **Sub. relative clause** |

A thermometer is a medical device + *that is used to measure temperature, especially of air or in a person's body.*

To give the students more practice with the structure of definitions, you can have them do the following matching task. They can do this in pairs.

Term	Category	Use
Mitochondrion	is a hard transparent material	which causes a person to become unconscious for short periods or to move in a violent and uncontrolled way

Term	Category	Use
Alliteration	is a long or round piece found in the substance surrounding the nucleus of a cell	in which the initial consonant sound of words is repeated for poetic effect
Electroencephalograph (EEG)	is a condition of the brain	which is used to make windows, bottles and other objects
Epilepsy	is the growing of vegetables, fruits, and flowers	in which words with similar meanings are arranged in groups
Thesaurus	is a sound pattern	that records the electrical activity of the brain
Glass	is a machine	that produces energy for the cell by breaking down food
Horticulture	is a type of dictionary	for commercial use

Once the students have finished this exercise, have them sit in small groups to work out the definitions of a set of terms like those listed below. Remember that they are going to practise structures of definitions, so the expressions you give them need not be simple dictionary definitions. Also, let the groups come up with different definitions for the same expression. The important learning point here is whether they have been able to use the structure main clause + subordinate relative clause correctly.

Suggested list of terms: *A national holiday, harmful bacteria, a nature park, freedom, a mobile phone, examination phobia, racing cars, professional sports, global warming, a school project, etc.*

Activity 2: Grammatical forms in the language of science and technology

Activity 2

The language of science and technology includes specific vocabulary, grammatical word classes and structures. To help students recognise the special uses of language in science and technology textbooks, you can give them the following task.

Divide the students into groups of six, and give each group a chapter from a science/technology textbook. Their task is to try to find out the specific uses of language in scientific discussions. To make the activity interesting for the students, give each group member a specific designation and role to play. The group leader will be the **Discussion**

Director. Grammatical Structure Finders seek out the grammatical structures in the chapter. The **Word Class Investigators** find out the kinds of word classes used: nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. The **Vocabulary Enrichers** locate and analyse the technical terms in the texts according to their prefixes, suffixes and roots. The **Illustrators** look at the visual representations — diagrams, labels, tables, charts, graphs, etc. — to find out what is special about the language used there. The **Summarisers** prepare a brief summary of the aspects of the texts analysed and present it to the class. Some sample texts, and the kinds of structures found in them, are included in **Resource 2**. You can use these texts as an illustration.

Some of the aspects that should come up in the discussion are:

- The language of science and technology is straightforward and to the point.
- The language is impersonal; these texts rarely use personal pronouns like **I, he, she, we,** or contractions like **isn't, can't**.
- Many descriptive verbs are used, such as: **take off, construct, positioned, revolve, pierced, created, pumps**, etc**.**
- Many of the verbs carry verb particles as in: described **as**, interact **with**, consist **of**, related **to** and so on.
- Noun modifiers may be adjectives as well as other nouns (**flown** kites, **basic** principle, **water** pump, **water** engineer, etc.).
- Compound nouns are used (e.g., **waterpipe, pipeline, flood-track, flow-debris, blood pressure, ground water**).
- More passive than active sentences are found.
- The use of prefixes and suffixes is common. Prefixes as in: **un**-, **un**polluted; **non**-, **non**-living; **ex-**, **ex**cretion; and suffixes as in: **-tive**, produc**tive**; **-ory**, respirat**ory**.

After the students have finished their task, each group should summarise their discoveries and present them to the class. The class should offer comments and suggestions, and the groups can modify their findings in line with these.

If you would like to take this activity further and guide your students in writing a summary from their notes, you will find **Resource 4a** helpful. This resource gives tips on summary writing.

Your students can now be given some practice in using the language of science and technology. Give the groups **three expressions each** from the list (below) of fictitious scientific terms. Their task is to write a scientific description of each term. This includes defining the term using an appropriate grammatical structure, using prefixes or suffixes that describe the terms more clearly and illustrating the item with diagrams and labelling. These can then all be used to write a short description of the item. Allow the students to refer to a dictionary to find related words, be innovative and define or describe the term imaginatively. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers for this task as the words in the list are imaginary. The idea is simply to familiarise them with the language of science and technology.

LIST: *outstep, nasal mapping, eatopia, insectography, emailogy, mobilomania, computeritis, sensitiser, pressure clock, instomatic, stomachitis, fusion pump, bio-tyre, ventiladder, ear gloves*

Activity 3: Grammatical categories for comparing and contrasting

Activity 3

When we *compare* two things, persons or events, we usually look for *similarities*; when we *contrast*, we look for *differences*. Comparing and contrasting are common academic tasks that students have to perform as part of regular subject study. One of the easiest ways to compare and contrast is to make a table with the headings *Category 1/Category 2* or *Similarities/Differences*. But this kind of tabular presentation of information may not be appropriate for all study purposes. Students also need to learn how to express similarities and differences in written form.

This activity should help your students learn how to use the specific grammatical categories of comparing and contrasting, such as **coordinating** and **subordinating conjunctions** in **compound sentences**.

First, have your students listen to the audio/watch the video (see **Resource 3**) of two people describing two objects. Ask them to note carefully what is being described and what they notice about the things being described. Then play the file a second time, telling the students to confirm what they noted, and also to notice more carefully what is similar and what is different about the two objects. They should find at least three similarities and three differences.

Put the students' responses on the board point by point. You could draw a line down the middle of the board and show the similarities and differences in two columns. Take a point of similarity and a point of difference, and put up two sentences illustrating the structure, as in the sentence below. Then underline the conjunctions in each sentence. For example:

> **Similarity: *Both*** *the CD player and the MP4 player are small in size and can be carried around.*
>
> **Difference:** *The earplugs of the CD player are connected to the player with a wire **whereas** the earpieces of the MP4 player are wireless.*

Encourage the students to make more sentences in these patterns, using conjunctions like **and, but, whereas, while, also, on the other hand, in contrast, similarly**, etc. Draw their attention to the sentence structure of compound sentences:

> **Main clause + coordinating/subordinating conjunction + main clause**
>
> **Main clause:** *The earplugs of the CD player are connected to the player with a wire*
>
> **Subordinating conjunction:** *whereas*
>
> **Main clause:** *the earpieces of the MP4 player are wireless.*

After the students have practised using these structures, you can give them a similar task to do on their own, either in the class or as a homework assignment. To make their comparisons more interesting, they could illustrate the objects being compared. Some possible pairs of

comparable concepts are: **desktop computer/laptop computer, electric oven/microwave oven, film/play**, etc.

Unit summary

Summary

In this unit you learned how to train your students to discover the importance of familiarising themselves with specific points of grammar across subjects and the different types of grammatical patterns in the various textbooks they have to study. More specifically, the unit focused on the language of science and technology and the way the grammatical forms are used to access the texts.

Reflections

Reflection

- Now that you have completed this unit, which aspects did you find interesting? Which aspects will be difficult to implement in an actual classroom situation?

- Do you think the activities in this unit will improve the grammatical skills of your students? How could the unit be improved?

Assessment

Assessment

- What other subjects can you think of to help your students notice and practise the grammatical structures of sentences? Try to create a similar activity with a Social Studies text. Note how different it is from a Science and Technology text.

Resources

Resource 1: Various kinds of definitions

Resource 1

1 Definition according to **category**:

   A parallelogram is a four-sided figure of which two sets of opposite sides are parallel and of equal length to each other.

   Magma is hot liquid rock that is found just below the surface of the Earth.

2 Definition according to **use/cause**:

   A thermometer is a medical device that is used to measure temperature, especially of air or a person's body.

   Per capita income is the money that is earned by one citizen in a country.

3 **Negative** definition:

A ballad is not a short poem composed to describe one event or feeling; it is a long poem that tells a story.

A fort is neither a civilian building nor an open space; it is a military building consisting of an area surrounded by a strong wall designed to defend it from attack.

Resource 2: Sample analysis of the grammar of science and technology texts

Resource 2

The two passages below are from Science and Technology texts. The grammatical structures used in such passages have been analysed to help you familiarise your students with such structures.

Passage 1

Living things are things that have life in them. They are classified into two major groups: plants and animals. The characteristics which they possess make them different from non-living things. Examples of living things are man, insect, bird, fish, toad, and lizard, while non-living things are salt, water, stone, chair and table.

An organism is said to be a living thing if it can carry out the functions of movement, respiration, nutrition, irritability, growth, excretion, reproduction and death. Organisms are able to move their whole body from one place to another in search of food or away from danger, but for plants, movement is done with certain parts of their body. Movements in plants are generally slow and towards gravity or water.

Respiration is the use of oxygen from air to break down food in the body cells to release energy. Energy released is used to carry out body activities such as growth, breathing, running, and movement. Living organisms make use of oxygen and give out carbon dioxide and water as waste product of respiration.

(Source: P. Adebayo-Begun, et al. (2008). *Integrated Science for Junior Secondary School.* Ibadan: University Press, PLC.)

Passage 2

Electrical energy is transmitted over a long distance into homes, public places, and industries, where it is transformed into heat energy, light energy or mechanical energy for performing various form of useful functions like cooking, lighting and moving machines parts. As discussed before, there is the need to determine the rate at which energy is being consumed. For example, the rate at which electrical energy is consumed by an electrical iron is significantly different from that of a TV set which in turn is different from that of a radio set. The rate at which electrical energy must be supplied to the pressing iron is much higher than the battery can cope with.
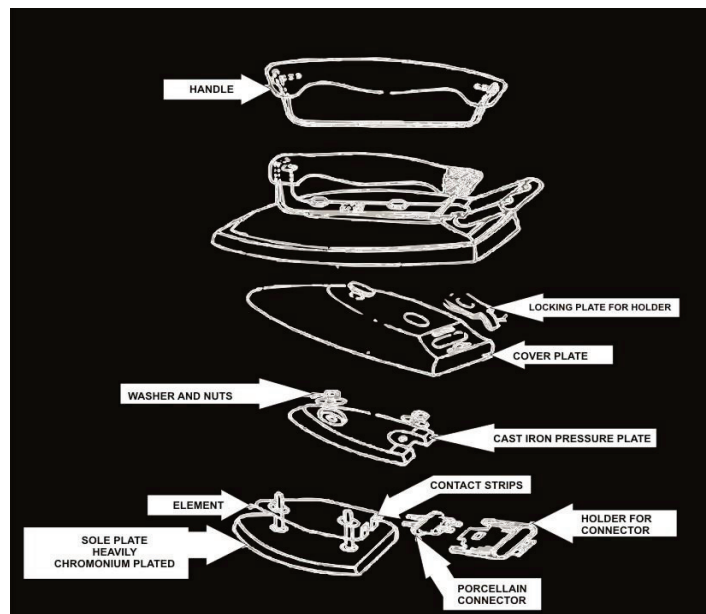
Thus it is important that we know the rate of energy consumption of an appliance. This is nothing more than its power consumption. Power is the rate at which work is done.

The electric iron, which is a heavy electricity power generator–device, is made up of nichrome element wound on mica-former and two heavy stainless steel plates in between which element is fixed. The weight of the steel-plates applies pressure which, the element coupled with the heat from the element, smoothens the clothes being ironed. An asbestos pad, a poor conductor of heat is, fitted to the upper steel plate to maximize the upward flow of heat from the element.

Before discussing power, which is a rate of energy consumption or generation, let us, first of all, discuss how energy is measured. A body at rest on the ground, a piece of block for instance, has what is called mass. Explained in a very simple terms, mass is a measure of the amount of matter or materials contained in a body. The mass of a piece of block makes it to have weight in a gravitational field. In other words, the weight of a piece of block is a measure of the gravitational force being exerted

on its mass. Gravitational force is a force which tends to pull all bodies towards the centre of the earth, that is, it is the force which ensures that the object thrown up comes down.

(O.A. Bamiro, A. Nurudeen and I.O. Akuru (2005). *Introductory Technology for Schools and Colleges,* second edition. Ibadan: Evans Brothers, Nigeria, Ltd.)

The two passages above, from JSS texts, illustrate the grammar of science and technology in the table below:

Use of declarative sentences (i.e., statements)	Movements in plants are generally slow and towards gravity and water.
	Living organisms make use of oxygen and give out carbon dioxide and water as waste products of respiration.
Use of subordinate relative clauses with *wh-* words	Electrical energy is transmitted over a long distance into homes, public places, and industries *where* it is transformed into heat energy, light energy or mechanical energy for performing various form of useful functions…
	The electric iron, *which* is a heavy electricity power generator-device, is made up of…
Less use of personal pronouns like *I, he, she, they*	**Electricity is transmitted over a long distance into homes** instead of **I/We/He transmits electricity over a long distance into homes**.
Definitions (usually with the verb *is/are*)	Living things **are** things that have life in them.
	Respiration **is** the use of oxygen from air to break down food in the body cells to release energy.
Descriptive adjectives, usually before the nouns	**Living** things: *living* modifies *things*
	Major groups: *major* modifies *groups*
	Body cells: *body* modifies *cells*
	Mechanical energy: *mechanical* modifies *energy*
	Electrical energy: *electrical* modifies *energy*
	Stainless steel plates: *stainless+ steel* modifies *plates*
More use of passive sentence structure than active to make the information more objective	Energy released **is used** to carry out body activities.
	There is need to determine the rate at which energy **is being consumed**.
	The rate at which electrical energy **is consumed** by an electrical iron is significantly different from that of a TV set.

Tighter sentence construction through contraction (that is, removing words that affect the meaning)	Energy released *instead of* Energy **that is** released. An asbestos pad, a poor conductor of heat, is fitted to the upper steel plate to maximize the upward flow of heat from the element. *instead of* An asbestos pad, **which is** a poor conductor of heat, is fitted to the upper steel plate to maximize the upward flow of heat from the element.
Listing of items	Examples of living things are *man, insect, bird, fish, toad, and lizard,* while non-living things are *salt, water, stone, chair* and *table*.
Word morphology (breaking a technical term into prefixes, suffixes and roots to determine the meaning)	Re-produc-tion Re-(=*again*)-produce (root=*bring to life*) Trans-mit-ted Trans-(=*across*) mit-(=*show*)-ed (verb-past) Consump-tion Consume (verb: root=*eat*) –tion (noun)

Resource 3: Comparing and contrasting

Resource 3

Speaker 1:

Are you familiar with this object? It is a portable music player, which plays music on compact discs (CDs). The player has two earplugs at the two ends of a wire that you can connect to the player and listen to music without disturbing anyone. You can simply pin the player on your shirt pocket, trousers band or belt with the clip attached, and carry it wherever you go. The player has a detachable battery that gives you four hours of playing time, and it comes with a charger that you can plug in and recharge at home. The player is also quite cheap — I bought mine for a hundred bucks! The size is also quite small — it looks like a round lunch box, and so it easily fits into my schoolbag.

Speaker 2:

This is an MP4 player. It looks like a small camera, doesn't it? That's because it has a screen — a liquid crystal display (LCD) screen which can not only show me the lyrics of the song I'm playing, it can also play the video recording of the song. It's an amazing gadget, and though this model is very expensive, I don't regret buying it one bit! It can store thousands of songs, so that I don't have to keep changing discs like the older players, and it has a

battery back-up of eight solid hours. Can you beat it!!?? I just need to recharge it like a mobile phone. It's also as small as a mobile, and quite similar in looks, so I can just put it in my pocket and carry it around. Also, it comes with a wireless earpiece, which is a tiny device that I can stick into my ear with the clip, and it stays out of sight, hidden by my hair. Why don't you buy one for yourself?

Video

Resource files

See in the enclosed DVD a video recording of the activities:

▪ Scripts\Module6\Unit5\Activity3\Resource3\Video\Comparing_and_Contrasting.mp4

If you have trouble playing the video, you can have your students listen to the audio recording (below) of the same conversation:

▪ Scripts\Module6\Unit5\Activity3\Resource3\Audio\Comparing_and_Contrasting.mp3

Audio

Resource 4a: Guide to summary writing

Resource 4a

1 First *skim* through the passage. Skimming is a reading skill that involves going over the passage quickly to get an overview or gist. Do not make any notes at this stage.

2 Now read the passage very carefully, and jot down the main points. A good way of organising important points is listing. Use different types of numerals (Arabic, Roman, etc.) for the main and subordinate points.

3 Practise using abbreviations and symbols instead of words to save time. For example, you could turn **point 2** into note form like this:

   i.   Rd pasg v carefl^y n jot dwn imp pts.

  ii.   Use list^g — diff types of nos. 4 main & sub pts

        a   Arabic: 1, 2, etc.

        b   Roman: i, ii, etc.

4 Or you could use something called **branching notes**. Put the title in a circle in the middle of a page, and put the main points in "branches"; that is, lines drawn from the circle in different directions. From each branch, you could also draw smaller branches to note sub-points. You will then know at a glance how many main points you need to record.

5 Turn the points into brief sentences by recording only the main ideas. Leave out words that do not add anything.

6 Use linkers and connectives such as *firstly, secondly, although, moreover* or *to sum up*, which act as "signposts" and will help you understand the summary better later. Read the summary over to check that you have sequenced the points in the right order, and to find any grammatical and spelling errors.

Resource 4b: Turning notes into essays

Resource 4b

Notes are not written in complete sentences or statements, and are not joined together in grammatical ways. When the time comes to turn your notes into an essay, you should:

- read all your notes until you fully understand them;

- turn all the words, expressions and parts of words and expressions into proper sentences;

- make sure all the abbreviations are written in full;

- look at the specific grammatical points (for example, pluralisation, subject-verb agreement, tense sequence, proper word order and accurate use of all parts of speech); and

- develop the essay so it has an introduction, main body and conclusion, and use topic sentences and supporting sentences properly, and with accurate spelling and appropriate grammar.

Teacher question and answer

Feedback

Question: Can an English teacher undertake the teaching of grammar across disciplines alone? How can the English teacher improve students' grammatical competence in other subject areas?

Answer: Improving students' proficiency in English in all subject areas is certainly not a task for the English teacher alone. The English language teacher and other subject teachers need to work together to complement one another's classroom activities. Perhaps the language activities could be centred on topics from other subject areas. This would encourage meaningful and contextual use of language across the curriculum, and improve students' communication skills.