IT05.- Identification and Description of Components.

Caso práctico

This is Leire. She is doing a b-learning course on System Adminstration. She is aware of the difficult times we are living but still, she thinks this course will enable her to get a job soon. Meanwhile she keeps working part-time in a shop.

Leire knows that due to the employment situation she might have to go abroad and English can be necessary when applying for some positions. Therefore, she is very keen on learning as much English as she can. Who knows? She might need to explain anything related in English.

In this unit we will focus on how to describe products or services; we will also learn to give brief explanations of how a computer, programme, application, ... work and finally we will look at the importance of advertising material when trying to sell a company's products or when looking for specific information on the Internet.

1.- Introduction.

Situation

How can we explain in English the kind of products that are made in the company we work for? This is our main objective here. You can be speaking in front of a group of people or talking face to face with a customer. In both cases you will have to be prepared.

Leire has imagined herself in a similar situation...

When we are having a one-to-one conversation and we want to describe our company and the products it sells or the services it provides we can begin by asking and answering a few simple questions. Have a look at this web site and do the exercises it suggests at the bottom of the page ("When you are finished with this lesson go to the *Describing Products and Services Activity*").

Conversation examples and pair drills *(link: http://www.businessenglishebook.com/business-english-lessons-activities/describing-products-and-services-lesson/)*

However when we are talking to a group of people there is a number of factors we must consider; for instance, the purpose of the presentation, the type of audience we are going to have, whether visuals will be needed and the general tone required (more or less formal). Presenting the company or its products the right way is important. Watch the following video carefully and answer the questions in the following exercise:

Basic Sales Process - How to Sell Your Product or Service

(link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKBYyyvkBAY)
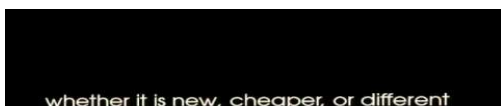
Resumen textual alternativo *(link: IT05_CONT_R20_Presentations.html)*

Solved exercise

Comprehension questions:

1. What does planning lead to?
2. Which are the 4 basics in the sales process?
3. What do features and benefits arouse?
4. What does the close of a sale represent?

Check the meaning of the following in *businessdictionary.com*:

1. What is the meaning of "features"?
2. What is the meaning of "benefits"?

Further knowledge

Here is a couple of links that will give you a better idea of how to improve your communication skills in English. The first one is more general and the second one focuses on Power Point presentations. Have a good look at them and try to put some of the advice into practice the next time you have to deliver a speech in front of people.

Tips for presentations and speeches *(link: http://www.eslcafe.com/idea/index.cgi?display:1081228943-40631.txt)*

Effective presentations *(link: https://www.siam.org/meetings/guidelines/tips.php)*

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1.1.- Features and Performance.

Situation

Giving specific information about a service or product is vital. Leire knows which are the most important features when selling a computer. Luckily, the terms and measures used in these descriptions are quite universal.

Have a look at the different ways you can ask about specifications:

Functionality:

What are you going to use it for?
Which is going to be its main function?

Speed (performance):

What type of microprocessor does it have?
What speed does the microprocessor have?
How fast can the microprocessor go?
How much RAM does it have?

Size and Shape:

What type of computer do you want? Laptop, tablet, netbook, desktop?
How wide does the monitor have to be? / What monitor width would you like?

Further knowledge

When you hear about inches, GHz, RAM or GB you may not be sure how much that is or what it is. Click on the following link and find out some more.

The Components of the System Unit *(link: http://web.cs.unlv.edu/harkanso/cs115/files/02%20-%20Components%20of%20the%20System%20Unit.pdf)*

Computer case *(link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer_case)*

Self assessment

Functionality, microprocessor, memory size, and other features are important when we need to describe a computer. This link gives you information about two laptop models. Look at the features of the Lenovo ThinkPad W530 and complete the table.

Laptop comparison *(link: https://www.cnet.com/products/lenovo-thinkpad-w530/specs/)*

Display size		

Processor Type				
Hard Drive				

A piece of advice
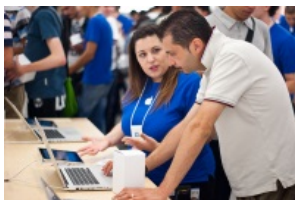
See these web pages to know which aspects you should bear in mind when buying a computer.

Computer features (I) *(link: http://www.wikihow.com/Buy-a-New-Computer)*

Computer features (II) *(link: http://www.techradar.com/news/computing/best-computer-how-to-choose-the-right-one-935053)*

1.2.- Comparisons.

Situation

We live in a consumer society and advertising keep reminding us that this or that service is nicer, cheaper and sometimes they even try to persuade us that it will make us happier.

Comparison is part of our lives and we may use it whenever we want to talk about the services our company offers and we want to make it clear that ours is better; more reasonably priced or use the latest technological advances.

Let's have a look at some basic rules...

In English we use "more" or the suffix "-er" whenever we want to compare two things. As a general rule we will use "more" when the adjective has got two or more syllables and the suffix "-er" added to the adjective when it has got one syllable or the adjective ends in -y.

For example:

Your car is more expensive than my car
My car is older than your car
Your jacket is prettier than mine.

If we want to make the superlative, we will use "the most" when the adjective has got two or more syllables or the suffix "-est" added to the adjective when it has got one syllable or the adjective ends in –y.

For example:

It is the most expensive car in the market
It is the cheapest car in the shop
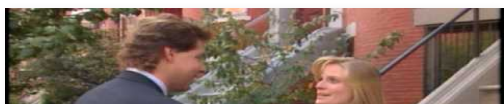*It is the prettiest jacket I have ever seen*

We mustn't forget about irregular adjectives, which don't follow the rule for comparatives or superlatives; for example:

Good/ better/ the best
Bad/ worse/ the worst

Self assessment

You are going to watch a video where they talk about different products. Listen carefully and complete the missing information:

(link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQP0gtMEO_Q)

Resumen textual alternativo *(link: IT05_CONT_R21_Comparisons.html)*

-Watch part 1 (at the shop) and give the comparative and superlative of the following adjectives:

small			
good			

-Watch part 2 of the video where a roving reporter asks about *Presto* products. Give the comparative of the following:

Laundry detergent / Clothes

good	
bright	
clean	

Cereal

good	
crispy	
crunchy	
delicious	

Shampoo / Hair

soft	
clean	
manageable	

Mouth wash

fresh	

Autoevaluación

-Watch part 3 (at the hotel) and say whether the following are TRUE or FALSE:

1.-They are drinking *Presto* instant coffee.

○ True ○ False

2.-The woman says that the flavour is not richer and stronger than what you usually find in instant coffee.

○ True ○ False

You should know

If you need more practice on comparatives and superlatives it is a good idea to do some revision exercises now. Use *New English File Pre-intermediate*, File 4 for revising.

Comparatives and superlatives *(link: http://elt.oup.com/student/englishfile/preint/a_grammar/?cc=global&selLanguage=en)*

Further knowledge

Whenever we want to modify a comparative, we do it by introducing another word before it. For intstance, we can say that *X is slightly better than Y*.
You can practise on the following webpage.

Modifying comparatives *(link: https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/es/quick-grammar/comparing-and-contrasting-modifying-comparatives)*

1.3.- Use or function.

Look at some of the structures we can use in order to express the use or function of a given tool or machine:

It's used to… (infinitive)
The F5 button is used to refresh the web page.
It's used for… (-ing) / (noun)
The F5 button is used for refreshing the web page.
The function of… is to… (infinitive)
The function of the F5 button is to refresh the web page.
It enables/allows you to… (infinitive)
The F5 button allows you to refresh the web page.
It's useful if you want to… (infinitive)
The F5 button is useful if you want to refresh the web page.

Ejercicio resuelto

Rewrite this sentence in as many ways as you can:

Computers are used to process information

1. *Computers are used for…*
2. *The function of computers…*
3. *Computers enable/allow you…*
4. *Computers are useful if you want…*

Self assessment

There are different types of information you will need to provide in order to describe products in English. If everybody is familiar with the product, all you may have to talk about is technical specifications. On the other hand, if the product is new to the customer, for instance, you will be expected to describe its use or function as well.

Read the passage below carefully and fill in the gaps with the following words: *devices, slots, sheets, height, width, on, in, dimensions.*

When describing products in English there are different types of information that you will provide:

Product Dimensions

Product dimensions describe the physical characteristics including size and weight. These dimensions are generally included on a technical specification sheet and will include:

[_____] length [_____] and weight.

Technical Specifications

Here is an introduction to some of the more common technical specifications categories that you will find on product descriptions for computers:

Size and weight - [_____]

Connections and expansion - the [_____] used to make connections on a computer such as Ethernet port, audio in/out, USB, etc.

Communications - the means with which the computer connects to the internet or other [_____] including: Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, Ethernet

Audio - Descriptions of audio equipment such as: speakers, microphone, headphone, etc.

Product Uses and Features

Product uses and features is certainly the most important information for most consumers interested [____] buying a product. Any marketing product description usually focuses heavily [____] these types of features. Generally, the type of language used for product uses and features uses many more adjectives than product dimensions or technical specification [_____].

2.- Describing how a computer works.

Situation

How does a computer work? How do the programmes respond?
So far in the unit we have looked at some structures used to describe the main features of computers. Now we will put the theory into practice.
Leire likes the idea of using English at work. She is looking forward to having foreign customers in order to explain the main features, programmes, … is familiar with.

Read the following paragraph and try to identify at least one example of the following:

The first conditional, the imperative, by + gerund.

How does a DVD player work?
If you want to see a film, you have to turn the player on, insert a DVD in the player and press the play button on the remote control. If you want to select a particular scene, choose the one you need by going into the main menu.

Yes, you are right; here are some answers you may have given:

Zero conditional:

If you want to see a film, you have to turn the player on
If you want to select a particular scene, choose the one you need

Exercise *(link: http://www.englishgrammarsecrets.com/type0/menu.php)*

The imperative:

…insert a DVD in the player
…press the play button
…choose the one you need

Exercise *(link: http://www.englishgrammarsecrets.com/imperative/menu.php)*

By + gerund

…choose the one you need by going into the main menu

Exercise *(link: http://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/exercises/structures/gerund_prepositions.htm)*

You should know

Computers are a common gadget in our everyday lives. Click on the following link to know the basics of computers.

How Do Computers Work? *(link: http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0774696.html)*

There are various types of computers. Depending on the use you want to give it you will choose one type or another. Click on this link for a brief summary of types of computers and features.

Types of computers *(link: http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~fgandon/lecture/uk1999/computers_types/)*

Self assessment

Read the paragraph below and fill in the gaps. Here are the words:

bus, central, device (3), digital, electronic, execute, hardware, input, mass, memory, output, perform, processing, programmed, responds, retrieve, software, storage, store, unit.

A computer is a machine that can be [＿＿＿＿] to manipulate symbols. Its principal characteristics are:

- It [＿＿＿＿] to a specific set of instructions in a well-defined manner.
- It can [＿＿＿＿] a prerecorded list of instructions (a program).
- It can quickly [＿＿＿] and [＿＿＿＿] large amounts of data.

Therefore computers can [＿＿＿＿] complex and repetitive procedures quickly, precisely and reliably. Modern computers are [＿＿＿＿] and [＿＿＿＿]. The actual machinery (wires, transistors, and circuits) is called [＿＿＿＿]; the instructions and data are called [＿＿＿＿]. All general-purpose computers require the following hardware components:

- [＿＿] [＿＿＿] [＿＿] : The heart of the computer, this is the component that actually executes instructions organized in programs (software) which tell the computer what to do.
- [＿＿＿] : Enables a computer to store, at least temporarily, data, programs, and intermediate results.
- [＿] [＿＿＿] [＿＿] : Allows a computer to permanently retain large amounts of data and programs between jobs. Common mass storage devices include disk drives and tape drives.
- [＿＿] [＿＿] : Usually a keyboard and mouse, the input device is the conduit through which data and instructions enter a computer.
- [＿＿] [＿＿] : A display screen, printer, or other device that lets you see what the computer has accomplished.

In addition to these components, many others make it possible for the basic components to work together efficiently. For example, every computer requires a [＿＿] that transmits data from one part of the computer to another.

A piece of advice

As you can see in the previous paragraph, the missing words are either nouns or verbs.
Nouns are a part of speech typically denoting a person, place, thing, animal or idea. They are classified into: proper /common nouns, un/countable nouns, concrete/abstract nouns and collective nouns.

Nouns *(link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noun)*

A verb is a word that conveys an action, an occurrence or a state of being. In the usual description of English, the basic form, with or without the particle to, is the infinitive.
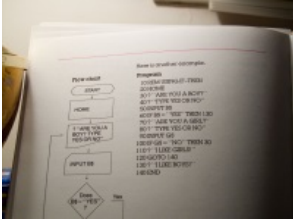
Verb *(link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verb)*

Further knowledge

The following article is about the uses, roles, influence, dis/advantages and importance of computers in daily life.

Computers *(link: http://www.buzzle.com/articles/computer-uses/)*

3.- Advertising material, manuals and brochures.

Situation

(link: IT05_CONT_R07_BookProgram.jpg)

Advertising campaigns, brochures and manuals are channels of information. The information can be on the Internet, printed on paper or both but we must learn to select the relevant parts when we read it.

Leire tries to be critical of all the information she gets from advertising and use it to her advantage.

What is advertising material? According to *www.businessdictionary.com* advertising material is "booklets, brochures, catalogs, audio tapes, video tapes, CDs, etc., designed to provide information, and stimulate interest, about a product or business."
Nowadays most of the information about companies and products is displayed on the Internet.

You should know

We can look at advertising from the point of view of a consumer or from the point of view of a business manager who wants the products of his company to become well known to potential buyers. Read the article on the following link carefully.

Why advertising is important for your business *(link: http://ezinearticles.com/?Why-Advertising-is-Important-For-Your-Business&id=2149907)*

Self assessment

Complete the following paragraph from the article above with these words:

failure, word, customers, brand, profit.

Businesses exist to sell products and services to the public for a [_____] . If the public does not know that your business exists, finding [_____] to make enough purchases for your business to survive will be a [_____] without some additional help. It is an important factor in business because it gets the [_____] out about your company and establishes a presence and a [_____] about what you are offering.

Further knowledge

This article describes the benefits that those companies that have their own website may get. Read it if you want to know more about the benefits of the web.

Benefits Of Having A Website *(link: http://smallbiztrends.com/2011/08/5-benefits-smb-website.html)*

Solved exercise

It is a fact that nowadays most businesses and organizations have their own webpage on the Internet. Have a look at a company's webpage in English and answer the following questions.

Company's profile *(link: http://www.ibm.com/us/en/)*

1.-Look at the top of the pag*e*:

1.1.- What are the services offered by IBM?
1.2.- What products does IBM have?

Quotation

Advertising is legalized lying.
H. G. Wells (1866-1946) British-born American Author.
Advertising is the greatest art form of the twentieth century.
Marshall Mcluhan (1911-1980) Canadian communications theorist and educator.

Anexo.- Licencia de Recursos.

Licencias de recursos utilizados en la Unidad de Trabajo.

Recurso (1)	Datos del recurso (1)	Recurso (2)	Datos de
	Autoría: Latinstock Licencia: Uso educativo para plataformas públicas de FpaD Procedencia: Latinstock \04\BRKHXP_ok		Autoría: o5com Licencia: CC BY 2.0 Procedencia: http://www.flickr.
	Autoría: Marc Ben Fatma Licencia: CC by-nc-nd Procedencia: https://www.flickr.com/photos/benymarc/5074234089/		Autoría: Camillo Miller Licencia: CC BY 2.0 Procedencia: http://www.flickr.com/photos/
	Autoría: Joe Wilcox Licencia: CC by-nc-sa Procedencia: https://www.flickr.com/photos/joewilcox/4140493542/		Autoría: Vince Welter Licencia: CC by-nc-sa Procedencia: https://www.flickr.com/photos
	Autoría: Steven Luscher Licencia: CC by-nc-sa Procedencia: https://www.flickr.com/photos/steveluscher/394265766		Autoría: Michael Kappel Licencia: CC by-nc Procedencia: https://www.flick e/6463151653/