



Oxford**basics**

# Introduction to Teaching English

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

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## 2.1 The structure of a language lesson

### Introduction

Learners need to hear or read the language they are learning. This is sometimes called **input**.

A teacher's job is to provide this input, help learners understand it, and to give them practice in using it.

#### 1 Input

A teacher should choose examples of the language that are appropriate for the learners. At any level it is important for the teacher to consider what language the learners may know already and what language is new.

#### 2 Understanding

Learners need help to understand language that they have not met before. The teacher can provide an explanation, demonstrate the meaning with pictures or mime, or help learners to work out the meaning for themselves.

As well as understanding meaning, learners also need to understand how words, structures, and expressions are formed. They need to understand, for example, that adverbs like *slowly* are formed by adding *-ly* to the adjective and that other adverbs like *quickly* can also be formed in the same way. They need to understand, for example, that a structure like *If it rains tomorrow I'll stay at home* is formed by using the present tense in the 'If' half of the sentence and 'will' in the other half, and that they can use the same pattern to make other meanings, such as, *If it's sunny tomorrow, I'll go to the beach*. They need to understand, for example, that the expression *How about ...?* is followed by the *-ing* form of the verb and they can use the same pattern to make many sentences, for example, *How about going for a walk?*

#### 3 Practice

There is a step between understanding what something means and how it is formed, and being able to use it. This step is *practice*, and teachers need to give learners practice using new language so that they become confident and develop the ability to speak or write in a way that other people can understand. This means helping learners put sentences together, pronounce words and phrases correctly, use the right word or structure to fit the situation, and express themselves.

In the next section we will look in more detail at these three points and how to break them down into smaller steps. These steps are called the *stages* of a lesson.

## The stages of a lesson

There are many ways to plan a lesson and in this section we are going to look at one example, a lesson on asking for directions. More examples of lessons will be given later on in the book, in Sample lessons 1–16, found in Unit 2 and Unit 3.

### Before the lesson

Before the lesson it is important to consider what language the students know (**assumed knowledge**) and what will be new. In this example lesson, the teacher knows that the students have already been taught town places such as *library, museum, swimming pool, crossroads, traffic lights*, and so he will use this vocabulary in the lesson. He also knows that they have been taught *Where is ...?* for example, *Where is the post office?* and that they can give simple answers like *Opposite the library*. He knows that they have been taught the present simple, for example *I go to school by bus*. He knows that they have been taught to make questions with *Do you ...?* and *How ...?*, for example, *Do you go to school by bus?* or *How do you go to school?* He will be able to use all of this language in the lesson without explaining it. It is only the new language that he will need to explain and practise. The new language is the **target language**: the focus of the lesson. In this lesson, the target language is the question, *How do you get to ...?* and the answers, *Go straight on, turn left/right, take the ... road on the left/right*.

### Input

#### Lead-in

At the beginning of a lesson, it is important to get the learners' attention and stimulate their interest and curiosity. Beginning by asking students questions, instead of telling them things, is one good way. Encouraging students to predict what is going to come is another. For example, the teacher could begin a lesson on asking for directions by showing a picture of someone looking at a map in a city street and asking, *What's he doing? What's he going to do next?*

It is also important to set the scene for the reading or listening input. In this lesson, the teacher plans to use a short dialogue where someone asks for directions. But before this he needs to make sure that the learners understand the **context**: the situation, who the speakers are, and what the relationship is between them. In this lesson, the context is a lost tourist asking a stranger for directions. The teacher can use a picture to create the context, and ask the students, *Where do you think he wants to go?* so that they predict what he will say. This will help them understand the dialogue when they hear it.



## 2.1 The structure of a language lesson

### *Introduce target language*

When the learners have understood the context, the teacher is ready to do a **presentation** of the target language. In this lesson, the target language is introduced in a listening task, which the teacher has on a cassette or CD (if this equipment is not available, he can act out the conversation):

TOURIST *Excuse me. Can you help me?*

WOMAN *Yes ...*

TOURIST *How do I get to the museum?*

WOMAN *The museum ... OK ... Go straight on. Turn left at the lights.*

TOURIST *Turn left at the traffic lights?*

WOMAN *Yes, then take the first road on the right. The museum is opposite the library.*

TOURIST *Thank you.*

It helps if the learners have a question or an activity to help them to focus their listening. The first time they listen, the teacher can use the same question as when he set the context (*Where does the tourist want to go?*), so that the students can check if they were right. The second time they listen, the teacher gives them a map marked with the museum and the place where the tourist and woman are standing. As they listen, they draw in the route or follow it with their fingers. Finally, the students are given the **transcript** (a written version of the listening text) so that they can follow the conversation as they listen.

### **Understanding**

#### *Checking comprehension*

The teacher then gives the learners some questions about the conversation to check whether they have understood, for example, *Do you turn left or right at the traffic lights?* The learners listen and try to answer the questions. The teacher then draws the map on the board and asks a learner to draw in the route to the museum, while the other learners check that it is correct.

#### *Language focus/focus on form*

The teacher needs to make sure the learners know which language to focus on. In this case, they need to focus on *How do you get to ...?* and the answers, *Go straight on, turn left/right, take the ... road on the left/right.*

The teacher can explain the meaning of *How do I get to ...?* using the picture of the tourist, saying *Where is the museum? He doesn't know. He can ask, 'Where is the museum?' or 'How do I get to the museum?'*

## The structure of a language lesson 2.1

Learners may need more help with the meaning of the directions. The teacher can demonstrate these using simple blackboard diagrams.

The learners also need to understand how the structures are formed: they need to understand that *How do I get to ...?* can be followed by *the + noun*, and that this pattern can be used to make different meanings. Clarifying this for learners is called **focus on form**. One way of highlighting form is in a **substitution table**.

How do I get to	the museum?
	the sports centre?
	the library?

Substitution tables can also be used for the directions:

Go	straight on			
Turn	left	at the	traffic lights	
	right		crossroads	
			roundabout	
Take	the	first	road on the	left
		second		right

Knowing the rule and understanding how a complete sentence is put together means that learners can then go on and create their own sentences.

### Practice

#### *Practise the language*

At this point the learners need a chance to try the language out for themselves. This can be done in various ways. In this lesson the teacher begins with a **drill**, where the target language is repeated a number of times, to give the learners practice in pronouncing it. When the class repeats it together, it is a **choral drill**, and when the teacher changes an element of the sentence, as in the example below, it is a **substitution drill**.

TEACHER	<i>How do I get to the ...?</i> [teacher shows a flashcard of library]
CLASS	<i>How do I get to the library?</i> [teacher shows a flashcard of swimming pool]
CLASS	<i>How do I get to the swimming pool?</i>

Then the teacher provides a **controlled practice** activity: this is an activity with a narrow language focus, meaning that the learners will need to use the new language when doing the activity. The controlled practice activity in this lesson is a role play. The teacher turns the classroom into a town centre, using the aisles between the desks as

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## 2.1 The structure of a language lesson

'streets' and labelling desks with cards saying 'museum', 'library', etc. One learner comes to the front of the room and asks for directions, and the class gives them. The learner follows the directions, turning left and right down the 'streets'.

The learners then practise in pairs, using the map on the board with places labelled.

Notice how the students become more independent from the teacher as the practice activities progress. In the drill, the teacher directs what the students will say and how they say it. He can hear what the learners say and can give help and correct errors immediately. In the second activity, the learners have more choice about what to say, but the teacher can still hear everything they say and can help with errors and difficulties. In the third activity, the learners work in pairs and the teacher cannot hear what everyone is saying, though he can move round the classroom and listen to one pair at a time.

The teacher might decide that the learners would benefit from doing all three activities, the drill, the role play, and the pair work, or he might decide to go straight to the pair work from the drill. This will depend on how much help and support he thinks the students need from him before they are ready to work on their own.

There are many different activities for practising language: these are just three examples.

### *Feedback*

During and after the practice stage the teacher also has a chance to provide feedback to learners. He can help them with their pronunciation and can correct errors. If the learners are really struggling, he can go back to an earlier stage and focus on the language again, explaining meaning and form, and then give more practice. In the whole-class activities, like the first two, he can hear everything the learners are saying and can help them directly. In the third activity he can listen in on the pairs and make a note of anything that the learners are struggling with or saying incorrectly. If many learners are struggling with the target language, the teacher may decide to stop the activity briefly and explain the language point again and check that the learners can produce it. If learners' errors are less important, the teacher can make a note of them and deal with them after the activity.

In general it is better to try to get learners to identify their errors and correct them themselves. The teacher can choose to do this in many ways, for example, by using finger correction. If the learners are saying *Turn right at crossroads* he can hold up five fingers and point to each finger in turn saying *Turn right at ...* When he gets to the fourth



finger he can pause and hold it, waiting for the learner to supply the right word. If the learner supplies *crossroads* the teacher can simply shake his head, point to the last finger, say *crossroads* and return to the fourth finger.



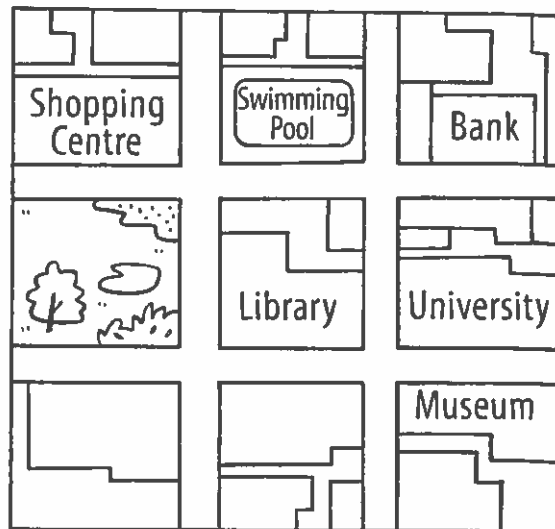
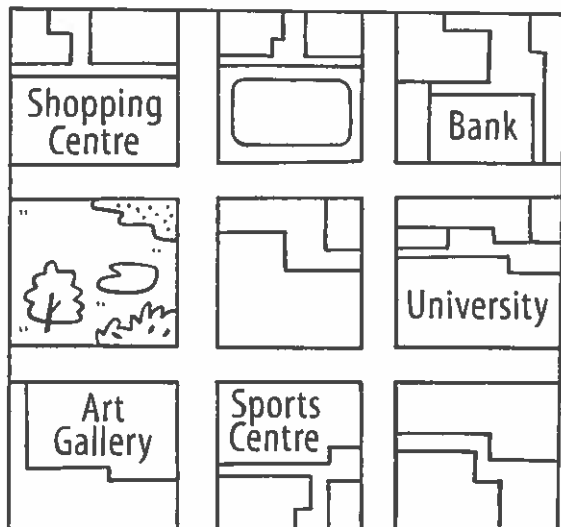
Another way of helping learners to correct their own errors is to write the incorrect sentence on the board and ask them what is wrong. This method should be used anonymously only, as you do not want to embarrass your students and stop them from contributing.

#### *Use the new language*

A final practice activity can give the learners a chance to see if they can use the target language to achieve a goal: this is known as **production**, or **free practice**. In this case the goal is to ask for directions, to give directions clearly, and to understand directions well enough to know where to go. Here is an example of an activity which challenges the learners to use the language in this way: the teacher divides the class into pairs: A and B. He gives A and B maps of the same town centre, but A has different places marked on his map from B:

A has to ask B for directions to the library, the museum, and the swimming pool. B has to ask A for directions to the sports centre, the park, and the art gallery. Each learner must follow the other's directions to mark the place on the map. This kind of activity, where learners have to get information from each other in order to complete the task, is called an **information gap activity**, and is very useful in language teaching, as it gives each learner a real need to communicate. To give this information, each learner will need to use the target language.

## 2.1 The structure of a language lesson



### Consolidation

All the language in this lesson so far has been oral — speaking and listening. It can help learners to spend some time writing, either in the lesson or for homework. Writing is a slower, more reflective activity than speaking and gives learners more time to think about the language they need to express themselves. It also helps to fix the language in the learners' minds: this is called **consolidation**. A writing task to consolidate this target language could be: *Imagine you have invited someone to your house. Your friend has not come to your house before. Write a note or an email giving your friend directions to find your house.*

### Different lesson structures

Teachers have a lot of choices when they plan their lessons. The above example is only one way of structuring a lesson.

It follows a model known as **Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP)**: during the presentation, the teacher presents (introduces) the target language, setting it in a real world context so that the learners can see how and when it is used. Often the teacher will finish a presentation with a focus on form. Then in the practice phase, the learners are given activities to focus on the target language, and finally, in the production phase, the learners are given speaking activities which give them the opportunity to use the target language in a more natural, realistic way.

## The structure of a language lesson 2.1

In the **task-based learning** (TBL) model, the focus is on a task that the learners do while the teacher monitors their performance and assesses what language they need. Then the teacher introduces the language that the learners need, before giving them a task similar to the first one for them to practise it. The idea behind this model is that the first task will both encourage the learners to stretch their language to cope with new situations and will make them aware of their need for new language.

There is also the **test-teach-test** model, which has a similar order to TBL, as the lesson begins with an activity (test). The learners do this and then the teacher introduces the new language and practises it with them (teach). Finally, the learners do another task in pairs or groups (test). This model is similar to TBL in that the presentation stage comes after an activity or task, but differs in that in TBL, the language focus activity is based on whatever the learners need there and then: the language content is not decided in advance. In test-teach-test lessons, however, the teacher has decided in advance what new language he will introduce.

Individual lessons can vary from these three basic structures. Sometimes, for example, a teacher will need to introduce a lot of new language in one lesson, and may choose to divide it into two sets to present and practise separately before moving on to the production phase. Similarly, a grammar revision lesson could consist of a series of different practice activities. Even in a PPP lesson, if the learners are having difficulty at the production stage, the teacher may decide to present and practise the language again.

Whichever way a lesson is structured, it will be some combination of the stages we have looked at in this unit.

In sections 2.2–2.5 you will see examples of these different ways of structuring a lesson.

## 2.2 Focus on grammar

### About grammar

#### Word order, word combinations, and word forms

Grammar is a description of the language system — it shows us how we order words in sentences, how we combine them and how we change the form of words to change their meaning.

In order to write the sentence:

He has a long holiday in July.

you would need to understand the system for ordering, combining, and changing words.

#### Word order

You would need to understand that the elements of a sentence come in a particular order:

Subject	Verb	Object	Adverbial phrase
He	has	a long holiday	in July

Individual words also come in a particular order:

The adjective *long* comes before the noun *holiday*, and the preposition *in* comes before the noun *July*.

#### Word combinations

Words can be combined with some words but not with others. You would need to know that we can say *a long holiday* not *a large holiday* or *a big holiday*. Similarly, we can say *in July* not *on July* or *at July*. This word-combining feature of language is called **collocation**.

#### Word forms

You would need to know that the verb *to have* changes to *has* with *he* or *she*. If you were asked to change the sentence to the past you would need to know that you change the word *has* to *had*.

If you have learnt English as a foreign language you will have learnt how to order, combine, and change words to make grammatically correct sentences. If English is your first language you will know instinctively how to do this, but you may not have explicit knowledge of the grammar system. There is not enough space to give a comprehensive introduction to grammar here, so you will need to do some further reading. Some grammar books are recommended in Further reading. But as a starting point, to help you approach a grammar book, here is a brief introduction to some ways of describing language.

**Elements of a sentence**

We can describe language in terms of elements of a sentence, for example:

Subject	Verb	Object
The dog	chased	the cat

The word order in a sentence in English is subject, verb, object: first: the **subject** (agent, or doer, of the action), second: the **verb** (the action), and third: the **object** (person or thing the action is done to). Other languages may have a different word order (for example, the word order in Japanese is subject, object, verb).

In a longer sentence there may be other sentence-elements, such as an adverbial phrase:

Subject	Verb	Object	Adverbial phrase
The dog	chased	the cat	up a tree

The adverbial phrase tells us a bit more about where, when, or how the action happened.

Some verbs, like *be* or *seem*, do not have an object. They have what is called a 'complement'.

The complement can tell us something about the subject:

Subject	Verb	Complement
I	am	happy

**Parts of speech**

Another good starting point is to know the names of the 'parts of speech'.

- **nouns** car, moon, computer ...
- **adjectives** small, excited, old ...
- **articles** a, an, the
- **determiners** some, many, this, that ...
- **pronouns** I, you, his, them ...
- **verbs** go, come, eat, speak ...
- **adverbs** quickly, slowly ...
- **conjunctions** and, but, although ...
- **prepositions** of, in, with, near, on ...

A grammar book is usually organized into sections corresponding to these parts of speech. Each part of speech can be subdivided into different types. For example, under 'pronouns' you will find subject pronouns (*I, you, he, she, we, you, they*) and object pronouns (*me, you, him, her, us, you, them*). Different types of words will have a different set of conventions about how they can be used. For example, we can say: *The dog chased her* but not *The dog chased she*. There is a Grammar

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### Focus on grammar

terminology appendix at the back of the book which gives a very basic introduction to some of the important categories of the parts of speech and what they are called. This guide to terminology should help you to approach a grammar book.

### How to help learners with grammar

#### Teaching form

You will need to know grammatical terminology, but do you need to teach it to your students? In general it is best to avoid complicated grammatical terms, particularly with lower level students, though sometimes it is necessary. In general, it is easier for students to grasp a new structure if the language is presented visually, for example in a table, rather than analysed and described using grammatical terminology. A table makes it clear what the structure is and how it can be used to make other sentences:

I			
He	was	reading a book	
She		eating spaghetti	
You		watching a horror movie	
We	were		
They			
		when	the lights went out the telephone rang there was a knock on the door

Telling the students only: *The past continuous is made up of the past form of the verb BE with the present participle*, is far more difficult to understand. There is an example of visual presentation of grammar in Sample lesson 1 (page 23).

You do not always have to explain grammar rules to students. Often they can work them out for themselves, though you will probably need to give them some help by giving them a task, such as a chart to fill in or questions to answer to guide them towards 'discovering the rule'. There is an example of this in Sample lesson 2 (page 28).

#### Teaching meaning

So far we have looked at grammatical form — the correct ways of using word order and changing grammatical form. This is a vital part of grammar teaching but it is just as important to teach what structures mean and how they are used.

You should always introduce a new grammar structure in a meaningful context. This context should make the meaning of the new structure clear and show how it is used in real life. You will see in Sample lessons 1 and 2 how this is done, in these cases using drama and a reading text. The reading text in Sample lesson 2 is a questionnaire and it contains a number of examples of the new

language which the learners can read in a context which will help them understand its meaning. In the drama context in Sample lesson 1, the teacher does not begin by presenting the learners with examples of the new language, but instead uses questions to try to get the learners to produce the target language themselves. This process is called **eliciting**. If the learners make mistakes, the teacher can take what they say and **recast** it (say it again but without the error) so that the students hear a correct version of the new language.

Evaluating

When you have created a context and introduced the target language you will have to check that your students understand how it is used, which you can do by asking **concept questions** (questions that focus on how the target language is used). There are examples of concept questions in Sample lesson 1. You may also have to clarify or give explanations of what a structure means and how it is used, which you can do verbally or visually. In Sample lesson 1 the teacher uses a diagram called a timeline to clarify meaning and to explain how the structure is used.

### Practising and using the language

Practice activities help students to remember the new language and to become more accurate and more fluent in using it. There are many activities that you can use to practise the language. The practise and 'use the language' activities in the sample lessons in this book include questionnaires, written exercises, miming and matching games, drills, drama, and a written description.

In planning practice activities for your lesson, you need to have a balance between activities which improve **accuracy** (getting the grammatical form right) and **fluency** (communicating a message). Speaking activities such as drills, **gap fills**, or matching tasks, focus on accuracy. Others, such as information gap activities, discussion, and drama activities focus on fluency.

In writing activities, accuracy-focused activities include gap fill or matching exercises, and fluency-focused activities include short descriptions or stories. There are examples of these in Sample lessons 1 and 2.

It is important to vary the activities you use for presentation and practice activities — don't always begin with a reading text or always use drills for controlled practice. The number and type of activities you choose should be based on what kind of practice your learners need and how much practice you think they need. A weak class may need simpler practice activities or a greater number of practice activities, whereas a more confident class may be ready to move on to the production stage after a much shorter amount of practice.

# 2.2

## Focus on grammar

### How to select grammar items

#### Grammar items

In most cases you will be working with a book, or a school, or national **syllabus** where the grammar items are selected and ordered for you. In most syllabuses grammar items are carefully **graded**, meaning that simpler structures (for example, *This is my sister*) come before more complex ones (for example, *Not having seen him for five years, I was very surprised to bump into him again*).

However, learners often take time to process language they have been taught before they can start using it fluently and accurately, so you will need to **recycle** the grammar you have taught. You can choose items to teach or practise again:

- For revision
- For error correction and remedial work
- Because a grammar item is too big to be covered all at once: more complex items will need to be taught in small steps.

#### The structure of a grammar lesson

The two lessons that follow have a PPP structure (see Unit 2.1 page 16) but even when two lessons follow a similar order, there is room for a lot of variety in activities and techniques.

#### Sample lessons: focus on grammar

	Sample lesson 1	Sample lesson 2
Lesson structure	PPP	PPP
Language focus	Concept questions Timeline diagram	Students work out meaning themselves from context
Teaching focus	Eliciting language from students to guide them towards the target language	Encouraging students to work out the rule for themselves
Materials	Flashcards Jigsaw sentence slips	'Find someone who' slips Group questionnaire
Presenting the target language	Dramatized situation	Reading text with task
Practice activities	Drill Matching game Mime and guess game	Writing sentences about themselves Writing a questionnaire
Producing the target language	Drama activity Memory game	Using the questionnaires from the practice phase
Consolidation	Writing an account of a scene	Using a questionnaire the learners have written



## 2.2 Sample lesson 1

LEVEL	Pre-intermediate
LANGUAGE	Past continuous and past simple The past continuous gives the background to an event, for example: <b>I was looking for my pet hamster, when X came in.</b>
ASSUMED KNOWLEDGE	Present continuous, simple past
RESOURCES	Board, flashcards (Stages 2 and 6), handout slips with two halves of sentences (Stage 7)
PREPARATION	Draw the flashcards (Stages 2 and 6) and make the handout slips (Stage 7)
TIME GUIDE	45 minutes

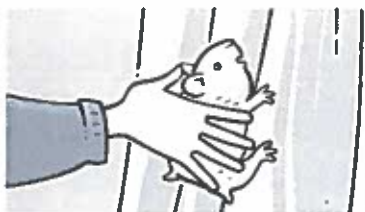
### Lead-in

- 1 Ask one student to leave the class. Tell him he will get a surprise when he gets back.

#### Comment

This creates a mystery which will engage the learners' attention.

- 2 Create the context: tell the rest of the class to imagine they are a (big) family. They have lost their pet hamster (use the flashcard in case this is a new word) and are looking for it everywhere. Get them to begin miming looking for the hamster. Then ask the student to come back in.



#### Comment

This is a fun way to introduce the language point that gets all the learners actively involved and provides a clear and dramatic context for an interrupted action. Other possible contexts could be: at a party when X arrives; doing housework when X comes round; watching a horror movie when the lights went out.

### Introduce target language

- 3 Ask the student, *What were they doing when you came in?* Get him/her to guess. As he/she guesses, recast his/her language, for example:

S *They looked for something.*

T Yes ... *they were looking for something. What were they looking for?*  
*Can you guess?*

#### Comment

This way of introducing the language by asking questions is a very natural way of introducing language and keeps the learners more involved than if you simply tell them the new language.

## 2.2 Focus on grammar

### Check comprehension

- 4 Start writing on the board the sentence: *We were looking for a hamster when X came in*, asking the class to give you the words to make up the sentence. As the words are given, write them up in the appropriate place until the class have constructed your sentence together.

#### Comment

This way of drawing out the information from your students is called eliciting. It is useful for seeing how much the students know collectively, and for keeping them involved in the presentation of new language.

Underline '*We were looking for a hamster*'. Ask the class, *Did this take a long time?* Underline '*X came in*'. Ask the same question. Write 'long' above '*We were looking for a hamster*' and 'short' above '*X came in*'.

#### Comment

This type of question is called a concept question. It checks that learners have understood the main idea behind the structure you are teaching, in this case that it is used to describe a long action interrupted by a shorter one.

You can illustrate the concept of how these verb tenses are used by drawing a timeline on the board: draw a long horizontal line on the board labelled 'PAST', 'NOW', and 'FUTURE'. Draw a wiggly line on top, starting at a point in the past and continuing towards 'NOW'. Now draw an arrow pointing down at the end of the wiggly line. Ask the class what the wiggly line shows ('We were looking': the long action) and what the arrow shows ('when X came in': the short action which interrupted it).



Ask the class what represents 'We were looking' (the long wiggly line), and what represents 'X came in' (the arrow).

#### Comment

Using a timeline on the board is a useful way of illustrating the concept behind many other verb tense combinations too. Look out for timelines in course books and other materials.

### Language focus

- 5 Draw a substitution table on the board (you may need to remind your learners that the singular 'you' form is the same as the plural).

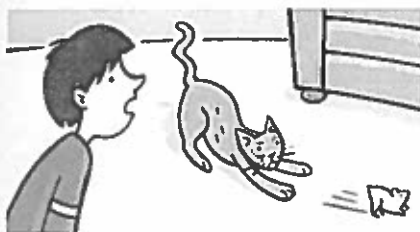
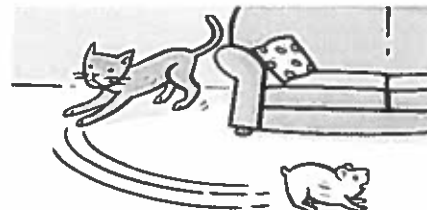
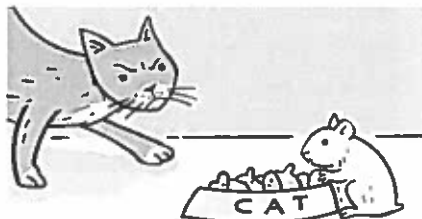
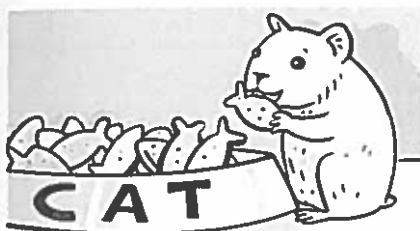
I				
He	was			
She		looking for the hamster	when	X came in
You				
We	were			
They				

**Comment**

A substitution table like this makes the pattern very clear to the learners. The highlights draw their attention to the word forms used.

**Check comprehension**

- 6 Show the class the first flashcard and ask them what the hamster was doing. Ask them what they think happened next. Show the second flashcard and ask them to make a sentence using '...-ing ... when ...' Repeat with the other pairs of cards.



Think about how the flashcards will be interpreted, and what sentences you are likely to be given.

**Comment**

This activity gives the learners a chance to consolidate their understanding of how the was/were ...-ing ... when ... pattern is used and how to form more sentences using the pattern with new vocabulary. It develops the context from the introduction — and satisfies learners' curiosity! — showing how the 'story' finished.

# 2.2

## Focus on grammar

### Practise the language

- 7 Hand out the slips of paper. Each slip has one half of a sentence. Tell the class that they have to stand up and try to find the person with the other half of their sentence. If you think your learners will have trouble with the words, draw snake, bee, fly, spider on the board first. You can mime 'swallow' if they do not know it.

I was walking in the country

when I saw a snake

I was working in the garden

when I saw a lot of bees

I was drinking a cup of tea

when I swallowed a fly

I was having a shower

when I noticed a big spider

#### Comment

The answers to this activity are not fixed—the learners should have fun discussing which answers are possible and do not need to take it too seriously. It gives them a further opportunity to practise using the new language in a controlled way.

- 8 When the learners have found their 'other halves', ask them to sit together and prepare a mime of their sentence. Give them a few minutes to prepare. Put the learners in small groups and then tell the pairs to perform their mimes for the group. The rest of the group should guess what happened and make a sentence using, *was/were ... -ing ... when ...*

#### Comment

This activity gives the learners an opportunity to use the language to create more new sentences. The activity is fairly controlled; learners can check if their sentences are correct themselves by looking at the slips of paper.

### Use the language

- 9 Divide learners into two groups. Tell each group they were all in a street when a spaceship landed and two aliens got out. The people in the street should all be doing different things: shopping, drinking coffee, waiting for a bus, etc. Give them some time to prepare their scene for the other group. The other group should watch and try to notice what everyone is doing. Then get them to work in small groups to try to remember what everyone was doing.

2. Tell  
with  
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3

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- 1 Two people were waiting for a bus ...
- 2 Yes and Pierre was eating ... an ice-cream.

Circulate to listen to what they are saying. Make notes of any problems or errors and deal with these in feedback immediately after this activity.

**Consolidation**

- 10** Get learners to write an account of the scene they watched, for example, *It was a sunny Saturday afternoon and the street was full of people. Two girls were looking in a shop window ...*, etc. They can continue the story in any way they like.

**Comment**

This activity gets the students to use the language more freely and to put it together with language they already know. They will use the language both in speaking—as they discuss what they remember about the scene—and in writing. Writing gives the students more time to think about the language and will help to consolidate what they have learnt.

## 2.2 Sample lesson 2

LEVEL	Lower intermediate																				
LANGUAGE	Superlative adjectives ( <i>adjective + est; most + adjective</i> ): <table border="0"> <tr><td>big</td><td><i>biggest</i></td></tr> <tr><td>sad</td><td><i>saddest</i></td></tr> <tr><td>young</td><td><i>youngest</i></td></tr> <tr><td>old</td><td><i>oldest</i></td></tr> <tr><td>early</td><td><i>earliest</i></td></tr> <tr><td>easy</td><td><i>easiest</i></td></tr> <tr><td>careful</td><td><i>most careful</i></td></tr> <tr><td>boring</td><td><i>most boring</i></td></tr> <tr><td>interesting</td><td><i>most interesting</i></td></tr> <tr><td>difficult</td><td><i>most difficult</i></td></tr> </table>	big	<i>biggest</i>	sad	<i>saddest</i>	young	<i>youngest</i>	old	<i>oldest</i>	early	<i>earliest</i>	easy	<i>easiest</i>	careful	<i>most careful</i>	boring	<i>most boring</i>	interesting	<i>most interesting</i>	difficult	<i>most difficult</i>
big	<i>biggest</i>																				
sad	<i>saddest</i>																				
young	<i>youngest</i>																				
old	<i>oldest</i>																				
early	<i>earliest</i>																				
easy	<i>easiest</i>																				
careful	<i>most careful</i>																				
boring	<i>most boring</i>																				
interesting	<i>most interesting</i>																				
difficult	<i>most difficult</i>																				
ASSUMED KNOWLEDGE	Comparative adjectives (for example, <i>bigger, sadder</i> , etc), present perfect for life experiences.																				
RESOURCES	'Find someone who' slips, group questionnaire																				
PREPARATION	Prepare the 'Find someone who' slips (see Stage 1) and the questionnaire (see Stage 2).																				
TIME GUIDE	40 minutes																				

### Lead-in

- 1 Hand out slips of paper to half the class. Each slip has a 'Find someone who' instruction on it, using a comparative adjective, for the students to compare themselves with each other:

Find someone who is taller than you and sit next to them.

Find someone who has bigger feet than you and sit next to them.

Find someone who has more careful handwriting than you and sit next to them.

Ask these students to get up and go round the class asking questions till they find the person and then sit next to them.

#### Comment

This activity starts the lesson in a lively and enjoyable way. It also reminds the learners what they know about comparatives, which will help them understand today's lesson on superlatives. A quick revision activity is a good way to start a lesson, particularly if it is done in an enjoyable format like this game.

**Introduce target language**

- 2** Put learners in groups of 6–8. Give each group a questionnaire. In your group, who:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • has the <i>smallest</i> feet          | • has the <i>biggest</i> hands         |
| • is the <i>youngest</i>                | • has the most interesting hobby       |
| • has the most careful handwriting      | • takes the <i>earliest</i> train      |
| • has the <i>worst</i> journey to class | • has the <i>best</i> idea for a party |

Ask them to read the questionnaire and to work out the answers for their group. Go round while they are doing this, listening to them and helping with any problems.

**Comment**

Relating language to students' personal lives makes a motivating and interesting context. This questionnaire introduces the new language in written form. The students will know the adjectives *big*, *good* and their comparative forms *bigger*, *better* already so it should not be hard for them to work out the meaning of the new language for themselves.

**Check comprehension**

- 3** When they have finished, check they have understood by asking each group to give you one fact about their 'records'.

*T So, tell me one thing you found out.*

*S Angelika has the most brothers and sisters! Seven!*

**Comment**

This activity has two functions: it will show you whether students have understood well enough to begin to use the new language themselves. It also 'rounds off' the group work and brings the class back together as a whole, ready for the next activity.

**Language focus**

- 4** Put up the adjectives in the left-hand column (see LANGUAGE). Then ask what the difference is between the four groups of adjectives. If they need help, tell them to think of the number of syllables in each word.



# 2.2

## Focus on grammar

- 5 Put the class into pairs. Write *biggest* at the top of the right-hand column. Ask the learners to fill in the rest of the column. Check the answers when they have finished.

### Comment

Learners can fill in some words from the words in the questionnaire. They can try to work out the others themselves.

- 6 Tell the pairs to look at the first two groups again and decide how they could divide them into two more groups.
- 7 Ask pairs at random how they have divided the words and what reason they have. Ask them if they can think of a 'rule' for each group.

Group 1: One-syllable adjectives, e.g. *young* and *old*, add *-est*; *sad* and *big* end in **vowel + consonant** so the last consonant is doubled.

Group 2: Two-syllable adjectives ending in *y*, e.g. *happy* and *funny*, the *y* changes to *i* before *-est*.

Group 3: The majority of two-syllable adjectives (except those ending in *-y*) take *most* (for example, *most careful*; *most boring*) but some can have either form, (for example, *quieter/more quiet*).

Group 4: Adjectives with more than two syllables take *most* (for example, *most interesting*; *most difficult*)

- 8 Ask them to look at their questionnaire. Are there any adjectives that make a fifth group? Group 5: irregular adjectives: *good/best*; *bad/worst*.

### Comment

Changing word endings to form the superlative is quite complicated. It involves a set of rules related to the number of syllables and the spelling of the adjectives. If they are given some examples and guided through the process by the teacher, the learners can work out the rules for themselves. Discovering grammar in this way, rather than being given information is a way of making learning more memorable.

### Practise the language

- 9 Write up the following adjectives:

nice      bad      pretty      good      thin  
beautiful      exciting      interesting      famous      happy

Get learners to work in pairs to discuss how to make the superlatives. Go through in class when they have finished: write up the words and ask learners to make a sentence about themselves using the words, for example: *I think Japanese food is the nicest.*



**Comment**

This activity gets learners to apply the rules they worked out in the previous activity and gives you the chance to check that they have understood correctly.

**Use the language****10** Write on the board:

What is the *best book you've ever read*? Why?

Collect answers from different learners. Then get the learners to make five more questions in this pattern:

What is the \_\_\_\_\_ you've ever \_\_\_\_\_? Why?

Go round to deal with problems and give help if needed.

**Comment**

This activity is fairly controlled. It focuses on accuracy: learners have time to think about the adjectives they are going to use and to get the form right. However there is also an element of creativity: learners can choose what questions they will write. This makes the activity more interesting.

- 11** When they are ready, put learners in pairs to ask and answer each other's questions. Circulate to listen to what the learners are saying, and to help if necessary. Make a note of errors so you can go through them later.

**Comment**

This activity gives the learners the opportunity to use the new language more freely. As they answer each other's questions, they will end up discussing their experiences. In this way the new language will be integrated with language they already have.

**Consolidation**

- 12** Ask the students to write a report on their partner's choices.

## 2.3 Focus on functions

### About functions

A **function** is the communicative purpose of a piece of language. For example, the purpose of this piece of language *Could you close the window, please?* is making a polite request. Here are some more examples:

Inviting	<i>Would you like to come round for supper?</i>
Suggesting	<i>Let's have a game of chess.</i>
Agreeing	<i>That's right!</i>
Giving opinions	<i>I think that's great.</i>
Greeting	<i>Hello!</i>

Functions are directly useful — if your learners can make a request using *Could I/you (+ infinitive)?* for example, they can ask for a train ticket, order a meal, ask someone for directions, ask a friend for help with a problem, and so on.

There are various ways of expressing a function. These variations are called **exponents**. For example, the function of requesting includes the following exponents:

*Can you open the window?*  
*Could you open the window, please?*  
*Would you mind opening the window?*

Each exponent provides a frame for building new sentences. For example:

Could you	close	the door,	please?
	pass	the salt,	
	let	me know,	

One grammatical form can have several functions, for example, the modal verb *can* is used for the following functions:

Ability	<i>I can swim.</i>
Requests	<i>Can you turn off the television, please?</i>
Permission	<i>Can I smoke here?</i>
Possibility	<i>It can be rainy at this time of year.</i>

Functional language is often a fixed expression or 'chunk', for example:

*Never mind.*  
*It doesn't matter.*  
*Of course.*  
*Excuse me.*

In these cases, the words in the chunk do not change and the learners can memorize the chunk in the same way as an item of vocabulary.

Social functions, such as inviting, requesting, etc., occur as an exchange between two (or more) people, for example:

A *Would you like to come round for supper?*

B *I'd love to.*

A *Could you open this for me?*

B *Yes, of course.*

It is important that learners can take part in both parts of the exchange, i.e. asking questions and answering. They can do this in class in pair work and role play activities. They need to be aware that the response is not always a straightforward *Yes* or *No*. For example, when we respond negatively to an invitation, we use, *I'd love to, but ...* or, *I'm sorry, but ...*, because a direct negative response might appear impolite.

The language we use depends on the situation and on the person we are talking to. We use different language to talk to a friend, a stranger, a waiter, a member of the family, and so on. We are more informal with people we know well and more formal with people we don't know. Look at this example, where the speaker is requesting that someone closes the door:

INFORMAL: Father to son *Door!*

FORMAL: To a stranger *Could you possibly close the door, please?*

Learners need to learn what language is appropriate in different situations and to have practice in choosing and using it.

## How to help learners with functions

### Introducing functions

Social functions occur naturally in conversation, so one of the best ways of introducing them is in a conversation. There are different ways of doing this. In the 'Asking for directions' lesson described in 2.1, the teacher used a taped dialogue. In Sample lesson 3 the teacher gets the learners to have a group discussion, then elicits from them what language they used for suggestions and builds on this by adding some new language for suggestions. In Sample lesson 4 the teacher has a real-life conversation with the learners, asking them to tidy up the classroom.

## 2.3

### Focus on functions

#### Functions and grammar

Because different exponents involve different grammatical forms, you have to be careful to show the learners clearly how the different forms are used to avoid confusion. Sample lesson 3 gives an example of this.

#### Functions and appropriacy

You can help clarify for your learners which exponents are more polite by presenting the different expressions with a 'cline' to show the degree of politeness (a list of exponents, with the most polite at the top), and by having a class discussion to match appropriate expressions to situations. Sample lesson 4 gives examples of both of these.

#### Practising functions

Learners need to practise both sides of social exchanges, so pair work, role play, and simulation are especially important practice activities. **Pair work** involves two learners practising both sides of a short exchange. **Role play** involves a pair or group imagining they are characters in a particular situation, for example, one friend inviting another to dinner, a customer complaining to a shop assistant, or a family giving opinions about which television programme to watch. A **simulation** is a role play where the whole classroom becomes an imaginary place, for example, a town centre where lost tourists ask inhabitants for directions, a row of shops where 'customers' buy things from 'assistants', or a restaurant where 'diners' order meals from 'waiters'. There are examples of all these activities in the lessons in this unit.

#### Written consolidation

Functional language can be written as well as spoken, though it can sometimes be more formal in writing. You can help to consolidate oral practice by getting learners to write realistic notes and letters. There are examples of how you can do this in Sample lessons 3 and 4.

#### Selecting functions

The functions you teach will need to be suitable for your learners' level and needs. A group of beginners planning a tourist visit to an English-speaking country will need functions such as *asking the way*, *asking for things in shops*, *ordering a meal*, and *booking a hotel room* expressed in very simple language. An advanced group of learners hoping to study in an English-speaking country will need functions necessary for academic study, such as *giving opinions*, *presenting an argument*, etc.

In a general English course, a cyclical approach is the best to use for teaching functions. This means that functions are taught more than once at different levels, using simpler language for the lower levels and gradually adding in more complex structures. So beginners might have a lesson on requests where they learnt *Can you ...?*. At pre-intermediate they might add *Could you ...?* and *Could you possibly ...?* and by intermediate they might add *Would you mind ....-ing?*

### The structure of a functions lesson

Sample lesson 4 is organized like the others we have looked at so far, following a PPP model, but Sample lesson 3 begins with a speaking activity before introducing the new language. This is because it is a test-teach-test lesson. The lesson begins with an activity which requires the new language (test). The learners complete this as best they can and then the teacher introduces the new language and practises it with them (teach). Finally the learners do another speaking task in pairs or groups (test). The idea behind this way of organizing a lesson is that the first speaking activity will encourage learners to stretch the language they have to cope with new situations, and that it will make them aware of their need for the new language.

#### Sample lessons: focus on functions

	Sample lesson 3	Sample lesson 4
<b>Lesson structure</b>	Test-teach-test	PPP
<b>Language focus</b>	Making and responding to suggestions	Making requests
<b>Teaching focus</b>	How to teach the different exponents of a function	How to teach appropriacy
<b>Materials</b>	Virtually no materials	Realia (classroom objects), flashcards, role cards
<b>Presenting the target language</b>	Teacher elicits language	Teacher uses classroom situation to introduce new language in context
<b>Practice activities</b>	Teacher-students question and answer 'Open pair' practice	Teacher-students discussion on appropriate language Whole class simulation
<b>Producing the target language</b>	Group discussion	Pair work Role play
<b>Consolidation</b>	Short notes and replies	Request letters and replies

## 2.3 Sample lesson 3

LEVEL	Lower intermediate
LANGUAGE	Making and reacting to suggestions: How/What about going for a picnic? Great! Good idea. Thanks, I'd love to. That's a good idea, but ... Sounds good, but ... I'd like to, but ...
ASSUMED KNOWLEDGE	Vocabulary for leisure activities Possibly some expressions for suggestions, for example, <i>Let's ... / Shall we ... ?</i>
RESOURCES	Board, eight word/punctuation cards: <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 10px; margin: 2px;">How about</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 10px; margin: 2px;">going</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 10px; margin: 2px;">to the beach</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 10px; margin: 2px;">?</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 10px; margin: 2px;">Let's</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 10px; margin: 2px;">go</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 10px; margin: 2px;">for a walk</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 10px; margin: 2px;">.</div> </div>
PREPARATION	Make the cards
TIME GUIDE	40 minutes

### Lead-in

- 1 Tell the class that it's going to be warm and sunny at the weekend. Ask what sort of things they like doing outside at the weekend and put their suggestions in a list in the centre of the board. You can use a substitution table like this:

Outdoor activities		
go	for a	walk swim drive picnic
	to the	beach park
		fishing cycling

#### Comment

Asking learners about their personal preferences is a good way to introduce a topic and get the learners interested. It also provides the basis for the speaking activity in Stage 2.

.....

**Use the language**

- 2** Put the learners into groups of three or four and ask them to talk about and decide what they are going to do at the weekend, using the ideas on the board. They should find a total of four activities to do together: one in the morning and one in the afternoon on each day. As the groups talk, walk round the class and write down the language they are using to make suggestions.

**Comment**

In this lesson the learners do a speaking activity before any new language is introduced. There are two main reasons for this:

- 1 It gives them an opportunity to use the language they already have. At this level learners may already be able to use some words and phrases to make suggestions. There needs to be a balance between teaching learners to use new language and giving them the chance to use the language that they already know.
- 2 It gives the teacher a chance to find out what language the learners can use. The teacher can use this information to make decisions about what language to introduce later on.

.....

**Language focus**

- 3** When the groups have finished, ask them what they are going to do. Then ask them if they can remember any words or phrases they used to suggest something. Add any appropriate ideas to the board, on the left-hand side, for example, *Let's .../Shall we ...?* etc.

*Making suggestions*

*Outdoor activities*

Let's ... Shall we ...?	go	for a	walk swim drive picnic
		to the	beach park
		fishing cycling	

**Comment**

Stage 3 helps the learners to think about language they already know and can use. Talking about this as a class also allows the learners to learn from each other. Now you can go on to introduce new language.

.....

**Introduce the language**

- 4** Put up a new speech bubble with *How about ...?* and ask the class if they know how they should change the verb ending (Answer: add *-ing*). Do the same with *What about ...?*



## 2.3

### Focus on functions

#### Comment

The most important feature of functional language is that we use it to do things with the language and to interact with other people. At the same time, we also need to make sure that the learners can put functional language together using the correct grammatical forms, for example, to use *-ing* endings or not.

Rub out the word *go* from the phrases on the board. Add *go* or *going* to the phrases for making suggestions on the board so that the learners can see how to make sentences.

#### Making suggestions

Let's *go* ...  
Shall we *go* ...?

How about *going* ...?  
What about *going* ...?

#### Outdoor activities

for a

walk  
swim  
drive  
picnic

to the

beach  
park

fishing  
cycling

Ask eight learners to come to the front, and give them each a word card. Get them to hold the card up so that the class can see it. Then ask them to sort themselves out into two sentences.



#### Comment

This 'human grammar' is a good visual way of demonstrating sentence structure to the learners.



- 5** Ask the class how we can respond to a suggestion and put up some examples on the board, for example:

Making suggestions	Outdoor activities		Responding	
Let's <b>go</b> ... Shall we <b>go</b> ...?	for a	walk swim drive picnic	YES	Great! Good idea! I'd love to!
How about <b>going</b> ...? What about <b>going</b> ...?	to the	beach	NO	Sounds good, but ... That's a good idea, but ... I'd like to, but ...
	fishing cycling			

Ask the class why we don't just say *No* (Answer: this would not be polite).

**Comment**

You do not need to break these phrases down to teach the grammar: they can be learnt as set expressions or 'chunks' of language.

**Check comprehension**

- 6** Make suggestions to individual learners and encourage them to respond using different expressions, for example:

TEACHER *Kurt, how about going for a picnic?*

KURT *Great! Where? The beach?*

TEACHER *Sounds good.*

TEACHER *Kyoko, how about going for a swim?*

KURT *That's a good idea, but ... the water is very cold.*

**Practise the language**

- 7** Ask individual learners to make suggestions to other learners across the class, for example:

PIERRE *Kyung Ae, how about going for a drive in my car with me?*

KYUNG AE *I'd like to, but ... er ... I have to wash my hair.*

**Comment**

This kind of practice between two learners across the class, with the rest of the class listening, is a kind of pair work called open pair practice. It is a good way of giving realistic practice while allowing you to listen and correct mistakes or explain misunderstandings before freer practice. It makes a good basis for work later in groups or 'closed pairs', i.e. the whole class working in pairs.

**Use the language**

- 8** Tell the class that you've just heard the weather forecast for the weekend and it has changed — it's going to rain on Sunday. Ask

## 2.3 Sample lesson 4

LEVEL Intermediate

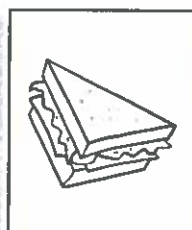
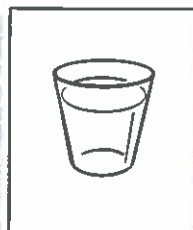
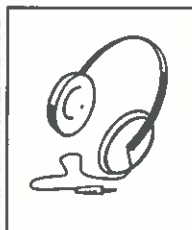
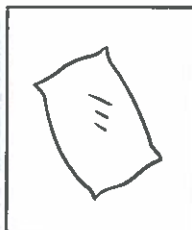
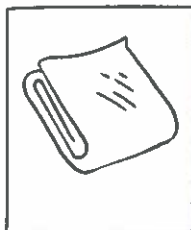
LANGUAGE Making and responding to requests:

Could you ...?

Of course or Sorry, I'm afraid I can't ...

ASSUMED KNOWLEDGE Can you ...? for requests

RESOURCES Board, role play cards, flashcards (see below)



PREPARATION 1 Make the flashcards above for stage 5. These should be big enough for the whole class to see.

2 Make these role play cards for each pair of students (see stage 7). If you have a large class and no copying facilities, you can put them on a large poster to stick on the board.

You are going on holiday. Ask a friend to look after your cat.

Dinner is nearly ready. Ask your son to set the table.

Your car has broken down. Ask a neighbour to give you a lift.

Tell your daughter to tidy her room.

Ask a friend to lend you a good book

You are going on holiday. Ask a neighbour to watch the house for you.

It's raining. Ask a colleague to lend you an umbrella.

You have a headache. Ask a colleague if they could give you an aspirin.

Your sister is going to the shops. Ask if she could get you some stamps.

You need change for the telephone. Ask a stranger to change a note.

TIME GUIDE 45 minutes

## 2.3

### Focus on functions

#### Lead-in

- 1 Prepare the classroom so that some things are in the wrong place (for example, books, chairs, etc.), some windows are open, and the board has writing on. When the learners come in, ask them what is different about the room.

##### Comment

Asking the learners to identify what has changed will engage their attention as they look around and try and spot the differences

#### Introduce the language

- 2 Ask the learners to help you put things back. Use some language that they know already, for example, *Can you ...?* Then add *Could you ...?* and *Could you possibly ...?*, being more polite for bigger requests. Small request: *Can you put the board rubber back, please?* But, big request: *Could you possibly pick up all those books?*

##### Comment

The new language is introduced in a very natural way in this context. If you begin with language the learners know already (*Can you ...?*), then it is easy to understand that *Could you ...?* is an alternative.

#### Language focus

- 3 Write up *Open the window* on the board. Ask the learners if this is polite. Ask if they know how to ask more politely. Write up suggestions in a cline, from impolite to polite, for example:

Open the window!

Can you open the window?



Could you open the window, please?

Could you possibly open the window, please?

Not polite



Very polite

##### Comment

In Sample lesson 3 there was not much difference in meaning between the various ways of making suggestions. Here there is an important difference: the level of politeness. An expression that is appropriate in one situation will not be appropriate in another. An important part of this lesson—and of many lessons on functions—will be getting the learners to decide what language is appropriate in different situations.

#### Check comprehension

- 4 Give the learners some example situations:

*Ask a friend to lend you a book.*

*Ask your teacher to lend you a book.*

*Ask a friend to lend you some money.*

*Ask your mother to lend you the car.*

Discuss what they would say: in general, politeness depends on **WHO** you are speaking to and **HOW BIG** the request.

### Practise the language

- 5 Tell the class *You are on a plane. Ask the flight attendant to get you some things.* Hold up the flashcards one at a time and ask what they are. Practise the pronunciation of the words. Hold up the first flashcard again and discuss how they could ask for it (*Could you get me a blanket?* or *Could you possibly get me a blanket?*). Practise pronunciation with them, showing how the words 'Could you' are run together to sound like /'kʊdʒə/.

#### Comment

This first practice activity focuses only on the language that is new in this lesson and gives a context for making polite requests. You need to decide how accurately your learners need to speak. If you insist on only very accurate pronunciation, they may lose motivation. However, if their pronunciation isn't clear, other people might not be able to understand.

Repeat with the other flashcards getting the class to ask you to get things. Reply as if you are the flight attendant, choosing *Of course*, for some requests, and *I'm sorry I'm afraid I can't — we haven't got any left*, for others (for example, headphones, meal, etc.). Put up some example replies.

*Of course!*

*Sorry, I'm afraid I can't.*

- 6 Now get students to arrange the classroom like a plane with rows of seats and aisles between them. (In a traditional classroom layout this will not involve rearrangement.) Tell the class to imagine they are on a plane and they need the flight attendant to get them something. Ask five or six learners to be flight attendants and to walk down the aisles answering passengers' requests.

#### Comment

This kind of role play where the classroom becomes a place like an aeroplane, a restaurant or a shopping centre is called a simulation. It is a good way of creating a realistic context for practising 'situational' language like ordering meals, buying food, or, in this case, in-flight requests.

### Use the language

- 7 Now put learners in pairs. Give each pair a set of role play cards (or use the poster you have made). Ask them to put them face down on the desk and to turn up one at a time. They should take it in turns to make the request and to reply.

## 2.3

### Focus on functions

#### Comment

Role play is an important part of practising functions as it gives the learners a chance to use the new language in a life-like situation. These short role plays give the learners a chance to apply what they have learnt to several different situations. Some of the situations demand very polite language (requests to a stranger, for example) and some need less formal language (requests to family). In this way students will practise choosing the most appropriate expressions.

#### Feedback

- 8 Go through the situations with the class, discussing what would be the appropriate language for each situation.

#### Consolidation

- 9 Ask learners to imagine they cannot come to class. Ask them to write two short notes, one to a friend and one to a teacher, asking them to do something (for example, give in homework, collect worksheets, etc.). Collect these in and give them out again to different learners. Ask them to write a short reply.

## 2.4 Focus on vocabulary

### About vocabulary

A vocabulary item, sometimes called a **lexical item**, can be:

- a single word, for example, *cat*, *table*
- two or three words that go together to make one meaning, for example, a noun like *washing machine* or a **phrasal verb** like *pass out* or *come up with*
- a multi-word phrase or chunk of language like *as a matter of fact*, *never mind*, *by the way*.

In each language learner's mind there is **productive vocabulary**: words that they are able to produce, themselves, for example, *shoes*, and there is **receptive vocabulary**: words that they understand but may never produce, for example, *afflict*. We all have a much bigger receptive vocabulary than a productive vocabulary.

Learners need to know:

- how a word is spelt
- how it is pronounced
- the meaning of the word
- what part of speech it is
- which words it is often used with (collocation)
- how the word is used: in what situations and contexts.

### Spelling and pronunciation

Spelling and pronunciation are not easy because there is no consistent one-to-one relationship between a sound and how it is spelt. For example, /aɪ/ can be spelt with an 'i' as in *mind* or a 'y' as in *my*. Learners need help understanding the various ways sounds can be represented. One way of doing this is to group words which have the same sounds and same spelling, for example:

/aɪ/    bicycle, climb, nine, five, white  
         try, my, cry,  
         high, flight

### Meaning

Some words refer to concrete things or actions, for example, *bus*, or *jump*. Other words refer to abstract concepts, for example, *beauty*, *existence*, *admire*.

It is important to teach words in context, because many words have different meanings when used in different situations, for example, *admit* can mean two very different things according to context: *He will admit to causing the accident* = confess; *This ticket will admit you to the concert* = allow you to go.



## 2.4 Focus on vocabulary

Words can have a literal meaning or a figurative meaning. In *We climbed a mountain*, the word 'mountain' refers to an actual mountain, but in *I've got a mountain of work to get through*, the word 'mountain' is used as an image of a huge pile of work. An **idiom** is a group of words which has a meaning different from the meaning of the individual words: for example, the question *Would you like a piece of cake?* refers to an actual slice of cake but the idiom *It was a piece of cake* simply means 'It was very easy'. **Idiomatic language** is common in conversational English.

We can often change the meanings of words by adding **affixes**. An affix is a group of letters added to a word, either at the beginning of the word (**prefixes**) or at the end of the word (**suffixes**) to change the meaning in some way. For example: the adjective *selfish* can be changed into its opposite by adding the prefix *un-*, or into a noun by adding the suffix *-ness*, or into an adverb by adding the suffix *-ly*: *unselfish*; *selfishness*; *selfishly*. It is important to teach which prefixes and suffixes can be used, for example, the negative prefix for *kind* is *un-*: *unkind*; but the negative prefix for *formal* is *in-*: *informal*. The noun suffix for the verb *collect* is *-ion*: *collection*, but for the verb *disappear* is *-ance*: *disappearance*.

### Parts of speech

Every word belongs to a category or part of speech, for example, a verb, an adjective, a noun, an adverb. Each category has grammar rules associated with it, for example, all adjectives come before a noun in a noun phrase as in *a beautiful day* and adverbs usually follow the verb they are describing as in *The examination went well*.

When we add a suffix we change the part of speech that the word belongs to and this will change how the word can be used, for example we could say, *she had a happy smile*, but *she smiled happily*.

### Collocation

Words are used together, in partnerships. This relationship between words is called collocation. For example, verbs collocating with *a party* include *have*, *go to*, *gatecrash*, and *throw* but not *make* or *do*.

### Lexical sets and word fields

Vocabulary (lexis) is often taught in lexical sets or word fields. These are groups of words related by topic. A **lexical set** is a group of the same category of words, so for example, *table*, *chair*, *sofa*, and *bed* are all nouns belonging to the lexical set *furniture*; and *angry*, *happy*, *sad*, and *anxious* are all adjectives belonging to the lexical set *emotions*. A **word field** is wider than a lexical set and contains words and phrases loosely connected to a topic, so for example, the word field

*relationships* might include the lexical set *family members* (*mother, father, sister, etc.*) but also other words and phrases like *friendship, close, distant, marriage, divorce, to be in love with, to break up with, etc.*

### Register and appropriacy

Different words and phrases are used by different people, according to the situation and the relationship between the speakers. For example, the two phrases, *The concert was very enjoyable* and *The gig was awesome!* both have a similar meaning but *gig* and *awesome* are more likely to be used by younger people, while *concert* and *very enjoyable* are more likely to be used by older people. *Gig* and *awesome* are informal: they have a lower register than *concert* and *very enjoyable*. The term **register** is used to describe these differences in formality, and we talk about register as going from high' (formal language) to low (informal). Within lower register language is **colloquial** language, which is language used in conversation. Knowing which register to use in a situation is having an awareness of **appropriacy**. For example, ending an email to a work colleague with *Best wishes* would be appropriate because this is a formal ending, but to a close friend it would be inappropriate, as it is too polite.

## How to help learners with vocabulary

### Introducing and explaining vocabulary

Vocabulary can be presented in dialogues and reading passages where the new words appear in context and in combination with other words. You can also use pictures, mime, and **realia** (real objects) to introduce and explain the meanings of simple concrete nouns like *apple* or verbs like *swim*. With more abstract words you can explain meaning with:

- a definition: *poverty means you have very little money*
- an example: *furniture: beds, tables, and chairs are all furniture*
- a synonym: *spiteful means cruel, unkind*
- an antonym: *spiteful is the opposite of kind*
- related words: *tinkle and clatter are both noises. Tinkle is high, clatter is low: imagine you are washing up — the pans clatter, the glasses tinkle.*
- translation: *sometimes this is the quickest way to explain, but be careful — the translation might not be the exact meaning of the new word.*



## 2.4 Focus on vocabulary

### Helping learners record new words

Learners need to develop study skills such as:

#### *Recording new words*

It will help learners if they can record their new words in a vocabulary notebook or on small cards. Vocabulary notebooks can have pages divided down the centre with new words on one side and meanings on the other. Small cards can have the word on one side and the meaning on the other. Learners can record the meaning as a translation, or with a definition in English. Whichever way they choose, it is helpful if they record their new words in phrases or sentences that show how they are used.

#### *Organizing new words in lexical sets or word fields*

It will help learners if their words are recorded in groups of words related by topic. Two ways of doing this are demonstrated in Sample lessons 5 and 6, which use mind maps and labelled pictures.

### Helping learners remember new words

Simply recording words is not enough — learners need to spend time memorizing new vocabulary. They can do this by themselves out of class, but you can also give them help with memorization, through repetition and personalization. Repetition is effective — but it can be boring! You can help make it fun by turning it into a game, as in Sample lesson 5, which uses a memory game. Personalization involves the learners giving the new words some sort of personal association. Sample lesson 6 shows a 'personalizing' activity.

### Helping learners use new words

Once learners have had time to absorb the new vocabulary they can begin to use it communicatively. Words cannot be used in isolation: they have to be used in combination with other language. Sample lessons 5 and 6 show how new vocabulary can be integrated with language the learners already know to help them communicate.

### Recycling vocabulary

Remembering words is a long process; even if learners can remember and use new words by the end of a lesson, they may have forgotten them a week later. You will need to revise and recycle the new vocabulary to make sure they retain it.

Samp

Lesso

Langu

Teach

Mater

Prese

Recoi

Pract

Prodi

Cons

## How to select vocabulary

### Frequency

Some words are used more frequently than others, for example, words such as *eat* and *school* are used more often than words such as *distract* or *security*. It makes sense to teach the more frequent words earlier in a syllabus at lower levels. Most monolingual learners' dictionaries will give an indication of frequency.

### Word fields

Learning words that are grouped around a topic is easier and more meaningful for learners than learning lists of unconnected words, and gives learners a good basis for a conversation or discussion on that topic. Most teaching materials combine frequency and topic as a basis for choosing what vocabulary to teach.

## The structure of a vocabulary lesson

Lesson 5 focuses on concrete vocabulary that can be introduced in a direct way using physical objects, and this type of lexical set is easily taught using the PPP structure that we have seen before. In Lesson 6, however, the vocabulary is abstract and needs to be explained with simple definitions and examples. For this reason, some of the vocabulary is introduced at the beginning, and more is introduced later in the lesson, after some practice: the lesson uses two cycles of PPP to make it easier for the learners to handle so much new vocabulary.

### Sample lessons: focus on vocabulary

	Sample lesson 5	Sample lesson 6
<b>Lesson structure</b>	PPP	PPP (x 2)
<b>Language focus</b>	Concrete vocabulary: crockery and cutlery	Abstract vocabulary: adjectives for describing character
<b>Teaching focus</b>	How to teach a lexical set of concrete nouns	How to teach a lexical set of abstract adjectives
<b>Materials</b>	Realia Poster	Flashcards Word cards, photos, magazine pictures
<b>Presenting the target language</b>	Introduced and explained using physical objects	Explained with simple definitions and examples
<b>Recording the target language</b>	Labelling a picture	Making a mind map
<b>Practice activities</b>	Whole class memory games	Pair work discussion: describing photos
<b>Producing the target language</b>	Information gap: spot the difference	Pair work discussion
<b>Consolidation</b>	Write a description	Write a 'Lonely hearts' advertisement

## 2.4 Sample lesson 5

LEVEL Elementary

LANGUAGE Crockery and cutlery:

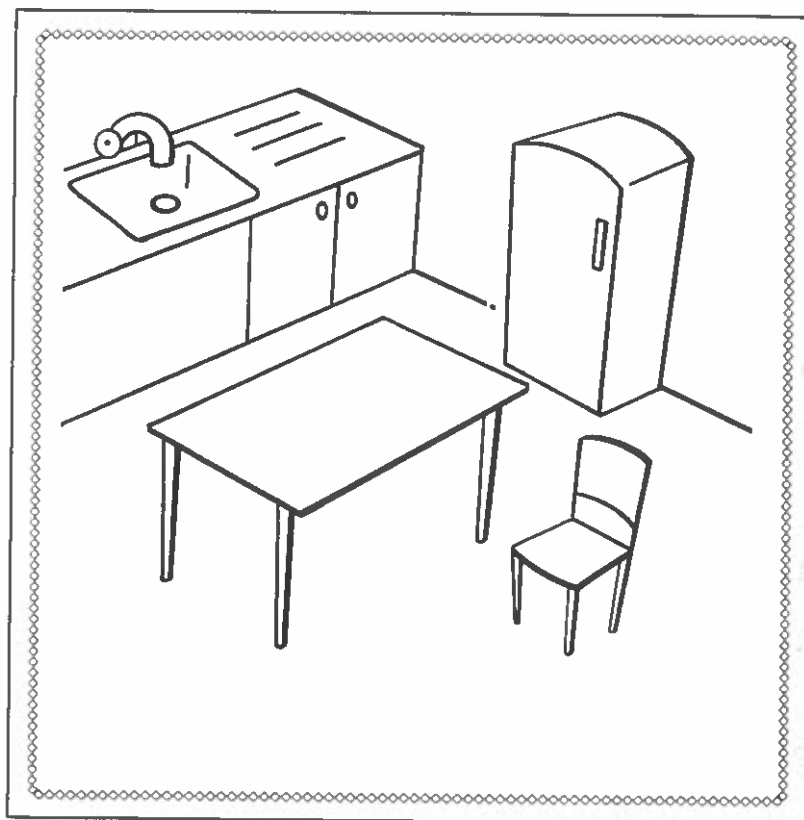
knife	fork
spoon	plate
cup	bowl
saucer	glass

ASSUMED KNOWLEDGE *There is/there are*

House and furniture, for example, *table, chair, cupboard, sink, fridge, floor*

Prepositions of place: *in, on, next to, on the left/right*

RESOURCES A selection of crockery and cutlery as above; table or desk, tablemat, tablecloth, tray, apron; poster of a kitchen



PREPARATION Collect the items together (see Stages 2–3), and make the poster, or be prepared to do blackboard drawings (see Stage 9). If you have copying facilities, you can copy the poster as a picture, one for each student.

TIME GUIDE 40 minutes

**Lead-in**

- 1 Arrange a table and two chairs at the front of the class and put the tablecloth and mat on it. Write the name of a restaurant on the board, for example, *The Pizza Palace*. Ask the class *Where are we?* Ask a volunteer student to come to the front and put on the apron. Ask *Who is she/he?* Teach *waiter/waitress* if the learners do not know it. Tell them this is a new waiter/waitress and that it's their first day at work.

**Comment**

Creating a context for introducing the new words will make a livelier lesson than if you simply held the items up and said the words. Another context could be: teaching a child to set the table, or asking someone to pass you items.

**Introduce the language**

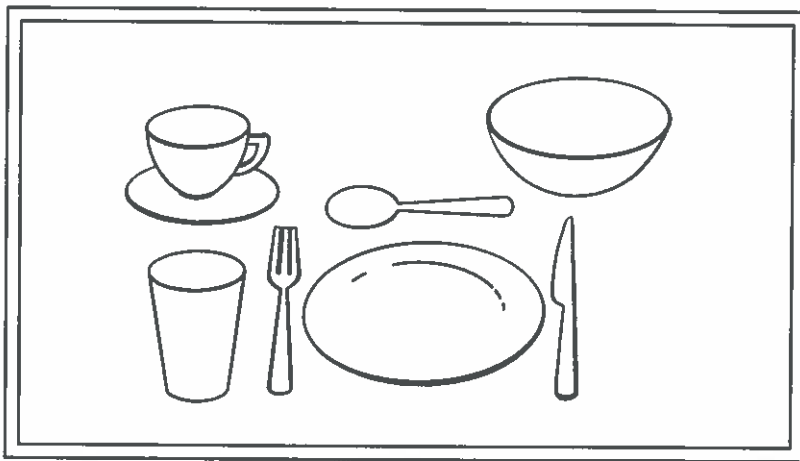
- 2 Tell the class you are the restaurant boss. You are going to teach the new waiter to set the restaurant table. Hand them a plate, saying, *Put the plate on the mat*. Continue handing over items and telling the 'waiter' where to put them, for example, *Put the knife on the right*. *Put the bowl on the plate*, etc. If they don't understand at first, show them with gestures.

**Comment**

Using real objects (realia) and actions makes the lesson more interesting and helps to make the new language memorable.

**Language focus**

- 3 Hold the items up and get the learners to repeat the words to practise pronunciation. Write the words in a list on one side of the board. When you write *knife*, show the learners that the 'k' is not pronounced by covering it up as you repeat the word.
- 4 Put up a simple picture of the table setting on the board.



**Comment**

The first activities asked the learners just to produce the new vocabulary. When the learners are confident with the new words, they can begin to use them in combination with other language, integrating them with language they already know.

**Use the language**

- 8 Put the poster on the board and get learners to copy it onto a piece of paper (or hand out copies to each student). Tell the learners that this is a kitchen after a party, and so it's messy. Get the learners to draw in crockery and cutlery items in different places in the room. Show them how to do this by drawing in a couple of examples on the poster. They can put the items anywhere they like. When they have finished, put them in pairs. Tell them not to show their pictures to each other; they should find the differences between their pictures. Put up speech bubbles as an example of what to say.

In my picture  
there is a spoon  
on the table.

In my picture  
there aren't any  
spoons – but there  
are two knives.

Go round listening to your learners as they do this and when they have finished, give feedback, putting up errors on the board and asking the class to correct them.

**Consolidation**

- 9 Ask learners to write a description of their picture. Collect in the descriptions and the pictures. Pin the pictures up round the room. Hand out the descriptions to the learners so each gets a new description. They should go round the room and try and find the picture that matches their description.

## 2.4 Sample lesson 6

LEVEL	Intermediate		
LANGUAGE	Adjectives for describing character		
	energetic	efficient	practical
	laid back	disorganized	dreamy
	selfish	sociable	funny
	unselfish	shy	serious
ASSUMED KNOWLEDGE	Some simple adjectives for character, for example, <i>nice, tidy, kind</i> , etc.		
RESOURCES	Board, flashcards, magazine pictures of men and women, word cards of the new adjectives		
PREPARATION	Make the flashcards (see Stage 1) and word cards (see Stage 3). Ask the class to bring photos of their family (see Stage 7). Collect magazine pictures of men and women, one for each pair (see Stage 10).		
TIME GUIDE	40 minutes		

### Lead-in

- 1 Show the class the flashcards of your family (these could be photos of your family, or pictures from a magazine). Ask them who they think the people are: your sister, your father, etc. Tell them the names, for example, Anne, John, Mary, Tony, and write them up on the board.

### Introduce the language

- 2 Put up the four flashcards. Tell them you are going to talk a bit about your family. They should listen and match names and pictures.





Talk about your family, for example,

*My brother John is the eldest. He's very energetic and efficient: he's a doctor, so he works long hours, but he has a lot of hobbies and is very busy all the time. He's very practical and good with his hands ... he's very different from my other brother. Tony's laid back and relaxed, loves films, books, theatre. He's very disorganized and untidy—a bit dreamy—not good with money! My sisters are very different too. Anne's very sociable, she loves people and parties. She's very funny—makes everyone laugh. She's got a strong personality—can be a bit selfish. Mary is just the opposite: she's very shy, quiet and serious, but she's a really nice person, kind and unselfish.*

**Comment**

This vocabulary is abstract and cannot be explained as easily as the vocabulary in Sample lesson 5. However, using a picture to give a general idea is a good starting point. As you talk, you can give examples which will help learners to understand the meaning of the new words, for example, *Anne is sociable—she loves people and parties.*

**Check comprehension**

- 3** Check whether the learners have matched flashcards and names correctly. Write the correct names under the flashcards. Give out the word cards to students around the class and tell them you'll repeat the description. They should come and put the card on the board under the right picture.

**Comment**

Matching words and pictures is a very useful exercise in vocabulary teaching: it encourages learners to guess the meaning of new words and helps you to check comprehension and explain words as you go through the answers.

**Language focus**

- 4** Ask learners to look at the lists of words under John and Tony and to match the opposites. Go through it with them. If learners do not know a word, explain in a simple way, for example, *efficient means you can do everything well and quickly*. Repeat with the words under Mary and Anne.

**Comment**

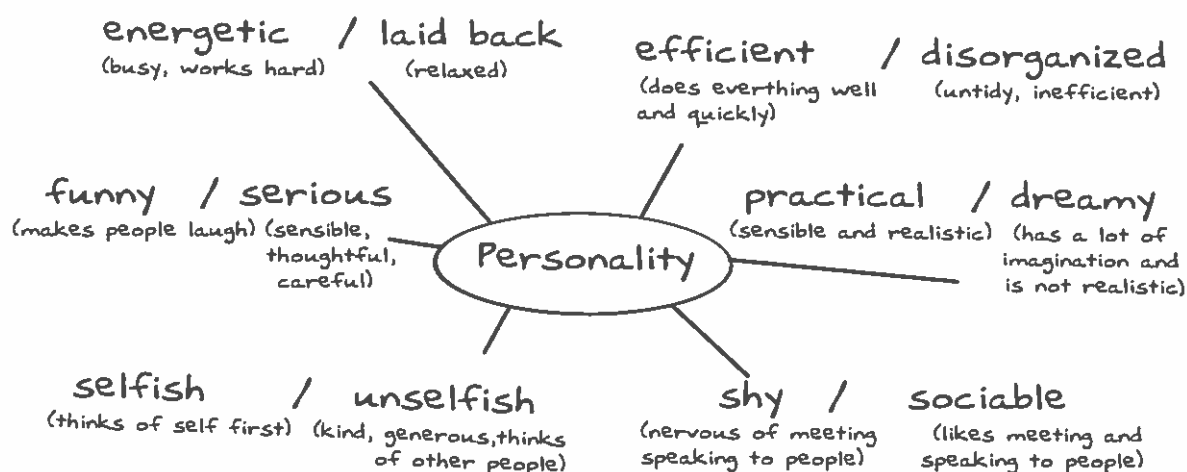
You cannot show the meaning of abstract words with pictures or realia. You will have to develop the skill of explaining simply. This means:

- using simple words
- using simple structures
- using examples.

## 2.4

### Focus on vocabulary

- 5 Get the class to practise saying the words. Make sure that they can say the words using the correct stress, i.e.  
energetic      efficient
- 6 Get learners to record the words in their vocabulary books. A mind map is a good way to record vocabulary. You can turn your board into a mind map so that they can copy it or you can get learners to make their own. If this seems too hard, you can give them part of the mind map, and get them to complete it.



#### Comment

When learners create a mind map of vocabulary they need to think how to organize the words into categories. This means they are processing the vocabulary—not just writing down the words but thinking about them which will help them to remember the words.

#### Practise the language

- 7 Ask students to look at their family photos and to think how they would describe their family members. Circulate as they do this and supply any more adjectives they need. Put students in pairs and ask them to describe their family photos to each other.

#### Comment

The pair work activity asks them to personalize the new words by relating them to their own lives. Personalization will create associations which help them memorize. The activity is in two stages. Learners need time to process new information before they can use it. This activity gives them time to recall new words and plan out how they can use them before they talk to their partner.



.....  
**Language focus**

- 8** When they have finished, ask learners to provide any more words they thought of. Add these to the mind map on the board, explaining the meaning for other learners if necessary. Ask for any more words they need and add these.

**Comment**

With beginners, you can be sure what vocabulary they know and what is new. With intermediate learners you are less sure: they come from different backgrounds and will know different vocabulary. An activity like this draws on the combined knowledge of the class to increase vocabulary.

.....  
**Practise the language**

- 9** Put learners in new pairs and get them to describe their family to their new partner. Circulate, to monitor and help if necessary.

**Comment**

Repeating an activity with some extra language input and a new partner can be very motivating for learners: it means they have extra time to think and have a chance to 'improve on' their first effort.

.....  
**Use the language**

- 10** Give out the magazine pictures of men and women, one per pair. Get the learners to discuss their picture — *What is he/she like?*

.....  
**Consolidation**

- 11** Put up a framework for a Lonely Hearts advert:

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ man/woman,  
aged \_\_\_\_\_, interested in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_,  
would like to meet \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ man/woman with  
similar interests.

Ask the pairs to write an advert for their picture. They should use the adjectives on the board to help them complete the framework. Give an example: *Young, energetic, sociable man, aged 26, interested in art and cinema, would like to meet intelligent, attractive woman with similar interests.* Collect in the adverts and pin them round the room. Get learners to go round in pairs to see if they can find a suitable match for their character. If this activity is not culturally appropriate for your learners, simply get them to write a description of their picture. Then number the pictures and pin them up round the room. Collect in the descriptions and give them out at random. Learners go round the room to find the picture they think matches their description.