Anglès tècnic

CFGM.IEA.M13/0.12

Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament d'Ensenyament

ioc
institut obert
de catalunya

Introduction

Welcome to the course *Anglès tècnic*. We hope that the present material is useful for you. As it is designed as a distance learning course, it includes tips and suggestions to help you learn the language on your own, as well as the syntactical and lexical contents that you will need to use English in your job and in your daily life. Nowadays English is very important. A good knowledge of the language may have a positive influence on your personal success, your career training, your chances of promotion and possibly on a successful job search.

This course has been designed for students and professionals in the field of Electronics who need to improve their English skills to use them professionally and at home. Students need to have at least a lower-intermediate level of the language to do this course appropriately. However, low-level students, or even students with absolutely no level of the language, will have a number of resources in the website to help them understand the contents of the course.

The present material will give you the theoretical knowledge (grammar and vocabulary) that you need to communicate in English effectively. The texts at the beginning of each section will offer a good opportunity to check and practise your reading comprehension and pick up some technical words referring to your professional field. On the other hand, you will also get some advice on the appropriate techniques that you can use in your study of the language. The other language skills, like writing, listening and speaking, are practised through a variety of activities available for you in the school website and in the web material.

The contents are divided into three units, and each unit is divided into three sections, which together cover the different aspects of the English language. Each section begins with a text about the corresponding topic. Next, you will find information about several linguistic aspects as, for example, grammar, vocabulary, language functions and phonetics. You will also find advice and ideas on how to develop the different skills implied in the learning of a language, like writing, translating and summarizing a text as well as some study techniques which you can use in your autonomous study of English.

The unit called 'Learning English' is about learning a language and especially about the attitude that you should take in order to make your study more useful. It is also about some aspects which are not often considered in an English course, but which are very important when using the language, especially at work. We are going to learn that not all the communication is carried out through the use of the oral language, but also through an important type of communication which does not use words to transmit a message. An example of this type of communication is the body language, which is important because it helps us interpret an oral message or to conceal messages which we do not want to transmit. You will also learn about the differences between Anglo-Saxon and Latin countries in relation to such aspects as behaviour or the use of language. This knowledge will allow you to deal with foreign people more effectively.

The unit called 'Home electronics', as you can see in the title, deals with different applications of electronics in the house. The text includes information and terminology that might be useful in your current studies. You will read about the enormous change that the digital technology has brought to our daily lives and about the most basic applications of electricity in a house. Finally, in this unit you will also find a very specific example of the use of home electronics.

The unit called 'Domestic robotics' will introduce you into the world of what is also called *domotics* or *home automation*. This refers to the systems that allow different utilities of a house to work automatically. This is the reason why sometimes we also speak of *smart homes*. In this unit, you will read about an example of domestic robotics which contributes to the protection of the house and of the people that live in it. We also deal with another example of domestic robotics. 'HVAC' stands for 'Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning' and refers to the different systems that contribute to the comfort of people at home.

When you start the study of a unit in the course, the first thing that you should do is to look at the contents page of the corresponding unit in the textbook to get an idea of what you will have to study in that unit. The book is not actually designed as a study book, but rather as a manual where you can check only what you need to solve a specific activity. You won't probably need to read the majority of the sections to complete the course, but they are available for you in case you need them for anything. Use a dictionary or an automatic translator if you have problems with the language, but make the effort of understanding the text even if you do not know all the words. To check if you understand the topics, you can do the web activities and exercises. When you do your activities, go back to the book frequently to look up the information that you need. In case of doubts with the contents of this course, check the complementary resources that you will find in the class website or ask your teacher or your classmates.

We hope that you find this textbook useful in the study of module 'Anglès tècnic' and that it can help you in your learning of the English language.

Learning objectives

By the end of the credit you should be able to:

1. Understand oral messages in standard language both in daily life situations and in the professional field of the electrical installations as well as analize the general meaning of a message and relate it to the corresponding language resources.

2. Understand simple written texts related to the field of electrical installations and analize the contents comprehensively.

3. Emit clear, well-organized oral messages frequently used in companies of the field of electrical installations and take an active part in professional conversations.

4. Write simple texts in standard language as normally used in the field of electrical installations and use the appropriate resources for each situation.

5. Show the appropriate attitude and behaviour in communicative situations as established by international conventions.

Contents

Anglès tècnic

Unit 1

Learning English

1. Studying a language

2. Non-verbal communication

3. Cultural differences

Unit 2

Home electronics

1. Digital electronics

2. Electrical installations

3. Television installations

Unit 3

Domestic robotics

1. Domestic robotics

2. Alarm systems

3. HVAC systems

Learning English

Carles Mora Queralt i Begonya Enguix Grau

Anglès tècnic

Contents

Introduction

Studying a language is not a simple task. A language is a complex system which implies the correct use of four skills (*reading*, *writing*, *listening* and *speaking*). Apart from that, in order to speak a language correctly we also need to learn a lot of new words (*vocabulary*) as well as the rules which are applied to the construction of sentences (*syntax*, sometimes also called *grammar*). In this course, you are going to learn English, which, unlike Spanish, Catalan or French, is a Germanic language. This means that the vocabulary and syntactical rules are quite different from those of the Romanic languages like Catalan, for example. You will find, however, that the English rules are much more simple than those of Catalan or Spanish. You will also discover that many English words are easily recognized in your own language because of their common origin.

Learning how to speak a language correctly is very important for an effective communicative process, but language is not the only means of communication. There are other ways of transmitting a message which do not use sounds. This type of communication is generally called 'non-verbal communication' and it includes such things as gestures, face expressions, body language or physical surroundings, among many others. All these aspects are very important in certain contexts (at work, for example), so it is a very good idea to learn the basic rules that are used in non-verbal communication.

When we study a foreign language, like English, there is another aspect that we must consider. In spite of the phenomenon of globalization, people from other countries and, of course, from other cultures have a different set of values and apply different rules of behaviour in their communication with other people. For this reason, what is usually considered appropriate in Spain (like blowing your nose in public) is not appropriate in Japan, for example. Therefore, it is very important to understand the cultural differences with other countries in order to avoid embarrasing situations and increase our value in international relationships.

The unit called 'Learning English' explains the different aspects that we must consider in order to acquire a comprehensive knowledge of English. The most important of all, of course, is learning the language as correctly as possible, but non-verbal communication and the cultural differences with the English-speaking people are also important.

The unit is divided into three sections, each with a similar structure. In the section called 'Studying a language', you will learn the best techniques and the right attitude to learn English, especially in a distance course like the present one. In the grammar section, you will study the auxiliary verbs "to be" (Cat: ser, estar), "to have" (Cat: haver) and "to do", which has no translation because in Catalan and Spanish it is not used as an auxiliary verb. These verbs are very important in all the languages because they have a very basic meaning and, therefore, they are

very frequently used. Apart from that, the auxiliary verbs are also used to form other verb tenses, like the continuous, the perfect of the passive tenses. In this section, you will also learn about the English nouns, whose characteristics are a little different from the nouns in Catalan or Spanish, especially when we speak of "countable " and "uncountable" nouns. We will also pay special attention to a type of nouns called "false friends", which usually cause lexical mistakes. Finally, you will learn how to translate a text correctly and how to use reference material such as dictionaries and automatic translators.

The section called 'Non-verbal communication' is precisely about the topic described in the title. You will read a text with a description and examples of this type of communication. In the grammar section, you will learn about the formation and the uses of the present tenses, whereas the vocabulary explains the frequency adverbs, which are commonly used with the present simple. On the other hand, this section also includes information about the writing skills. You will learn how to use connectors and punctuation to give coherence to a text, and how to write a good summary by identifying the main ideas and the secondary ideas in a written text.

The text in the section 'Cultural differences' explains some examples of different behaviour in the Anglo-Saxon and the Latin cultures. You will also find a brief summary of the English phonetics, where you will learn the characteristics of vowel and consonant sounds, as well as the English diphthongs. This will help you with your pronunciation and in your oral activities. You will also learn about the different ways of expressing your likes, your dislikes and your preferences. The grammar in this section is about the basic sentence structures of the English language. In the vocabulary, you will learn the characteristics of the English adjectives and how to use the comparative and superlative forms to compare things and people.

Learning objectives

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

1. Understand oral messages in standard language both in daily life situations and in the professional field of the electrical installations, as well as analize the general meaning of a message and relate it to the corresponding language resources.

- Arrange the elements that make up a message.

- Identify the main idea in a message.

- Be conscious of the importance of understanding the main ideas in a message even if you do not understand all the elements that compose the message.

- Get specific information in messages about usual aspects of the everyday and professional life.

- Identify the main ideas in a well-structured speech in standard language about well-known aspects and transmitted in the media.

2. Understand simple written texts related to the field of electrical installations and analize the contents comprehensively.

- Choose reference material and technical dictionaries.

- Read simple texts in standard language.

- Translate a text in standard language by using reference materials, if necessary.

- Interpret the general meaning of a message.

- Relate the text to its corresponding context.

- Identify the terminology used in a message.

- Interpret technical manuals.

3. Produce clear, well-organized oral messages frequently used in companies of the field of electrical installations and take an active part in professional conversations.

- Express the tasks which you have to carry out in your job.

- Communicate by using formulas, connectors and strategies used in the interaction with other people.

- Describe and arrange a task in a sequence.

4. Write simple texts in standard language as normally used in the field of electrical installations and use the appropriate resources for each situation.

- Write short texts referring to everyday and/or professional aspects.

- Summarize texts related to your job.

- Organize the information in a coherent way.

- Apply the appropriate rules and specific vocabulary when filling in documents.

5. Show the appropriate attitude and behaviour in communicative situations as established by international conventions.

- Define the most distinctive aspects of the customs of English-speaking communities.

- Describe the social conventions of your country.

- Identify the values and beliefs which are characteristic of English-speaking communities.

- Identify the social and professional aspects of your job in all types of oral and written messages.

- Apply the social conventions in English-speaking communities.

1. Studying a language

Let's put things straight from the beginning: learning a foreign language is not an easy task. It requires a great effort on the part of the student because learning a language means to develop certain skills and you can only develop a skill with time and constant practice. Learning a language does not mean to memorize a number of words and syntactical rules. You may learn many words and many syntactical rules in that way and in a relatively short time, but all this is useless if you cannot apply them to the expression and comprehension of the foreign language.

There are four skills that a learner must develop.These skills are: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening and speaking are two oral skills whereas reading and writing are written skills. On the other hand, listening and reading are passive skills, what means that they imply the comprehension of oral and written messages; speaking and writing are active skills, and this means that they imply the production of oral and written messages. Ideally, a learner must develop the four skills in the same degree, but it is very common that each student puts the emphasis on only two or even one of the four skills. Some will prefer to learn the written skills, but others may want to develop only the oral skills; some will learn the two active skills and others the two passive skills; some will even learn only reading, and others will only be interested in writing. It all depends on each other's personal circumstances, personal interests or personal abilities.

Although a good command of the four skills are very important in the learning of a language, the two written skills (reading and writing) should have a special interest for us. This is so because of the characteristics of this course. We should not forget that you are learning English in a distance course, and this makes the learning process different from a traditional face-to-face course. In spite of the growing technological tools available to the student, there are still some restrictions in the practice of the oral skills. However, this does not mean that you should not practise the oral skills. It only means that you should cover the areas which a distance course cannot reach with your personal practice and your personal work.

To learn English in a distance course, first of all you need to know how to use the material available for you. The basic material in this course is the textbook, which is divided into two parts: the written material and the web material. The written material is basically devoted to explain the theoretical knowledge that you need to apply in the practice of the four skills -especially the grammar-, but you will also find some advice to help you adopt the right attitude to learn the language. The web material is mostly composed of self-correcting activities and exercises directly related to the contents in the textbook. You can use this material to put your theoretical knowledge into practice and check whether you have acquired the necessary knowledge or you still need to learn it further.

Here is an important piece of advice for you: use the written material as a manual

rather than as a textbook. This means that you should not study all the contents of each unit, but only those which are required to do a certain exercise or activity. Most probably, you won't need to look up most of the information in the book, but it is there in case you need information about some specific task, as for example some advice on how to practice your speaking skills.

Apart from the course textbook, there are some complementary material which you will need to use in this course. For example, online or paper dictionaries, an automatic translator, a grammar reference book, websites and videos. All this material is easily available for you, and you can use it in your learning of English.

But apart from these external resources, when you learn a foreign language in a distance course, you must also have an appropriate attitude and adopt certain procedures that can make your learning easier. Without such attitude, the learning becomes very difficult. To begin with, you must be conscious of the limitations of a distance course in the practice of the four skills, especially the oral skills. Therefore, you must fill in the deficiency with some personal extra practice and try to speak and listen to the English language as much as you can. The same is true of the written skills, although the written material provided with the course is enough for your practice of reading and writing. As for the attitude, it is very important to be well-organised and devote at least one hour every day to the study of some point of the language. Don't forget that you are studying English in a distance course, so you need to be persistent in your work, have a lot of courage and never give up in spite of the difficulties that you may find. If you adopt this attitude, your success is practically guaranteed.

Here is then what studying a language means. Now you need to put everything into practice in the study of your English course. Good luck!

1.1 Grammar: the auxiliary verbs

The preposition "to" is added to the infinitive form of the verb.

There are three auxiliary verbs in the English language: "to be", "to have" and "to do". They are used in two different ways:

- As lexical verbs.

- As auxiliary verbs.

> **Lexical verbs** are those which have their own meaning. They include all the verbs, except auxiliary verbs and modal verbs.
> **Auxiliary verbs** are those which help other verbs to form certain tenses.

As a lexical verb, "to be" has the meaning of *ser* or *estar*, as in the following examples:

- I *am* a student (Cat: Jo *sóc* estudiant)

- He *is* at home (Cat: Ell *és* a casa)

- They *are* lost (Cat: Ells *estan* perduts)

As a lexical verb, "to have" means "tenir". In this case, it usually goes with the particle "got". For example:

- I *have got* a brother (Cat: Jo *tinc* un germà)

- A computer *has got* many advantages (Cat: Un ordinador *té* molts avantatges)

As a lexical verb, "to do" means "fer", as in these examples:

- I *do* the shopping (Cat: Jo *faig* la compra)

- He *does* exercise everyday (Cat: Ell *fa* exercici cada dia)

- What *are* you *doing*? (Cat: Què *estàs fent*?)

As an auxiliary verb, "to be" is used to form the following verb tenses:

1. The continuous tenses:

   - They *are surfing* the net. (present continuous) (Cat: Ells *estan navegant* per internet)

   - He *was watching* a film on TV. (past continuous) (Cat: Ell *estava mirant* una pel·lícula per la tele)

2. The passive voice:

   - The internet *is composed* of thousands of networks. (Cat: Internet *està compost* per milers de xarxes)

   - The house *was destroyed* by the fire. (Cat: La casa *va ser destruïda* pel foc)

As an auxiliary verb, "to have" is used to form the following tenses:

1. The perfect tenses:

   - I *have bought* a new scanner. (present perfect) (Cat: *He comprat* un escàner nou)

   - He *had arrived* when I called. (past perfect) (Cat: *Havia arribat* quan jo vaig trucar)

The auxiliary verb "to do" has no translation into Catalan or Spanish. It is used in these cases:

1. To form the negative of the lexical verbs:

The particle "got"

The particle "got", which usually goes with the verb "to have", has no meaning. It indicates that "to have" is used as a lexical verb in the sense of "posses".

- Peter *doesn't live* with his parents (Cat: Peter *no viu* amb els seus pares)
- I *don't speak* Greek (Cat: *No parlo* grec)

2. To form the interrogative of the lexical verbs:

- *Does* James *work* in a bank? (Cat: *Treballa* James en un banc?)
- Where *do* you *live*? (Cat: On vius?)

1.1.1 The forms of the verb "to be"

As the verb "to be" is so basic and is used so often, it is very important to learn its conjugation.

> The **conjugation** of a verb refers to the different forms that the verb can take. The forms must agree (Cat: concordar) with the subject, which is indicated by the personal pronouns or by a noun. The personal pronouns in English are: *I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *it* (singular); *we*, *you*, *they* (plural).

The short forms

The short forms are used in the oral language or whenever we want to reproduce the oral language in a written text. In formal texts, the short forms are not used.

In English, the verbs normally have two different forms for the present and only one for the past, but the verb "to be" is an exception because it has three forms in the present and two in the past.

The table below shows the conjugation of the verb "to be" in the present tense.

TABLE 1.1. The present forms of "to be"

	Affirmative Longform	Short form	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	am	'm	am not	'm not	am I ...?
you	are	're	are not	aren't	are you ...?
he, she, it	is	's	is not	isn't	is he / she / it ... ?
we	are	're	are not	aren't	are we ...?
you	are	're	are not	aren't	are you ...?
they	are	're	are not	aren't	are they ...?

Notice the three different forms of the verb *to be* in the present tense: *am*, *is*, *are*. Notice also that the negative is formed by adding the negative particle "not" to the verb form. On the other hand, in the interrogative form the normal order of subject (S) + verb (V) is reversed (V + S).

> The personal pronoun "you" has different meanings. In the 2nd person singular, it has the meaning of Cat: *tu*, but in the 2nd person plural it has the meaning of Cat: *vosaltres*. "You" is also used to translate the formal Cat: *vostè/vostès*.

The following table shows the different forms of the verb "to be" in the past tense.

TABLE 1.2. The past forms of "to be"

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	was	was not	wasn't	was I ... ?
you	were	were not	weren't	were you ... ?
he, she, it	was	was not	wasn't	was he / she / it ... ?
we	were	were not	weren't	were we ... ?
you	were	were not	weren't	were you ... ?
they	were	were not	weren't	were they ... ?

As you can see in the table, the verb "to be" has only two different forms in the past tense: *was*, *were*. The affirmative has not got a short form in the past.

1.1.2 There is / There are

Apart from being used as a lexical and an auxiliary verb, "to be" is also used in the expression "there is / there are". The sentences with "there is / there are" express the notion of existence and translate the meaning of the Catalan impersonal verb *haver* and the Spanish *haber*. In English, there are two forms: one is used with a singular noun (*there is*) and the other one is used with plural nouns (*there are*). In Catalan and Spanish, however, there is only one form: Cat: *hi ha*, Sp: *hay*.

In the table below, you can see the conjugation of "there is / there are" in the present tense.

TABLE 1.3. Conjugation of "there is/there are"

Affirmative Long form	Short form	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
there is	there's	there is not	there isn't	is there ...?
there are	there're	there are not	there aren't	are there ...?

The following table shows the conjugation of this form in the past tense.

TABLE 1.4. Conjugation of "there was/there were"

Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
there was	there was not	there wasn't	was there ...?
there were	there were not	there weren't	were there ...?

It is important to consider that in most cases the word "there" is considered as the subject of the sentence, but the verb does not agree with "there", but with the noun that follows.

Here are some examples of the use of this verb:

- *There is* a new operating system in the market. (Cat: *Hi ha* un nou sistema operatiu al mercat)

- *There are* many web pages about dogs. (Cat: *Hi ha* moltes pàgines web sobre gossos)

- *There was* a problem with the program. (Cat: *Hi va haver* un problema amb el programa)

- *There were* many people at the convention. (Cat: *Hi havia* molta gent a la convenció)

1.1.3 The forms of the verb "to have"

"To have" is another basic verb and it is very important that you learn its conjugation. Remember that it is both used as a lexical verb (with the meaning of *tenir*) and as an auxiliary verb (with the meaning of *haver*).

In the following table, you can see the conjugation of the verb in the present tense.

TABLE 1.5. The verb "to have" in present

	Affirmative Long form	Short form	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	have got	've got	have not got	haven't got	have I got ... ?
you	have got	've got	have not got	haven't got	have you got ... ?
he, she, it	has got	's got	has not got	hasn't got	has he / she / it got ... ?
we	have got	've got	have not got	haven't got	have you got ... ?
you	have got	've got	have not got	haven't got	have you got ... ?
they	have got	've got	have not got	haven't got	have you got ... ?

The verb "to have" and American English

As a lexical verb, the conjugation of the verb "to have" in American English is different from that of British English. In AmE., the negative and interrogative forms of the present and the past tenses are formed with the auxiliary "do" (as in all the lexical verbs). For example: *I don't have. Do you have ...? He didn't have. Did they have ... ?*

In the present tense, this verb has only got two different forms ("have" and "has").

In the following table, you can see the forms of this verb in the past tense.

TABLE 1.6. The conjugation of "to have" in the past

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	had	had not got	hadn't got	had I got ... ?

TABLE 1.6 (continued)

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
you	had	had not got	hadn't got	had you got ... ?
he, she, it	had	had not got	hadn't got	had he / she / it got ... ?
we	had	had not got	hadn't got	had we got ... ?
you	had	had not got	hadn't got	had you got ... ?
they	had	had not got	hadn't got	had they got ... ?

In the past tense, there is only one form ("had").

The particle "got" is not common in the affirmative form of the past, but it is normally used in the negative and the interrogative forms.

1.1.4 The forms of the verb "to do"

The auxiliary verb "to do" is very important because it is used to form the negative and interrogative forms of the present simple and the past simple tenses.

The table below shows the conjugation of the verb "to do" in the present simple tense.

TABLE 1.7. The conjugation of "to do" in present simple

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	do	do not	don't	do I ...?
you	do	do not	don't	do you ...?
he, she, it	does	does not	doesn't	does he / she / it ...?
we	do	do not	don't	do we ...?
you	do	do not	don't	do you ...?
they	do	do not	don't	do you ...?

Notice that the 3rd person singular takes the form "does".

The following table shows the forms of the verb "to do" in the past simple tense.

TABLE 1.8. The conjugation of "to do" in past simple

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	did	did not	didn't	did I ...?
you	did	did not	didn't	did you ...?
he, she, it	did	did not	didn't	did he / she / it ...?
we	did	did not	didn't	did we ...?
you	did	did not	didn't	did you ...?

TABLE 1.8 (continued)

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
they	did	did not	didn't	did you ...?

When "to do" is conjugated as a lexical verb, it follows the same rules as all the other verbs. For this reason, in the negative and interrogative forms, we can find the verb "to do" in its auxiliary sense and in its lexical sense within the same sentence. For example:

- I *don't do* the shopping (Cat: Jo *no faig* la compra)

- *Do* you *do* any exercise? (Cat: *Fas* exercici?)

- What *does* Mary *do*? (Cat: Què *fa* Mary?)

1.1.5 The answer to yes/no questions with auxiliary verbs

We have seen how to ask a question with the auxiliary verbs. When you answer a yes/no question which contains an auxiliary verb, you must include the personal pronoun and the auxiliary verb in your answer. This is called "a short answer" because all you say is "yes" or "no", but in English it is necessary to add the subject and the auxiliary verb. Remember that the verb has to agree with the subject (the personal pronoun).

Here are some examples:

- *Is this a plotter? - Yes, it is.*

- *Were you at home? - No, I wasn't.*

- *Has Mike got a brother? - Yes, he has.*

- *Was Jenny with you? - No, she wasn't.*

- *Do you speak English? - Yes, I do.*

- *Does he like beer? - Yes, he does.*

In the case of questions with "there is / there are", you must always use the subject "there" instead of a personal pronoun. Examples: - Is there a printer here? - Yes, there is. - Are there any people? - No, there aren't.

> There are two types of questions:
>
> - **Yes/no questions** are those whose answer simply requires *yes* or *no*. These answers usually include the subject and the auxiliary or modal verb of the question.
>
> - **Wh-questions** are those which have an interrogative pronoun (*what, where, when, how much*, etc.). The answer requires specific information. They are called "wh-questions" because most of the interrogative pronouns start with "wh-".

1.2 Vocabulary: nouns and "false friends"

Nouns are very important words in a language. They denote a person, a place or a thing. *Student*, *Mike*, *book*, *dog*, *water*, *lesson*, *London*, *love*, *importance* and *sensation* are all examples of nouns. To use the English nouns appropriately, we should consider some aspects such as number, type of noun, the expression of the possessive or the gender. On the other hand, the study of a certain type of nouns called "false friends" will help you understand the correct meaning of some words and use them correctly.

1.2.1 Nouns

English nouns have number (singular and plural) and gender (masculine, feminine, neuter), but, unlike Spanish, gender is not important because it is not marked by any external elements and it only affects grammar in the use of personal pronouns. However, the distinction between countable and uncountable nouns is important in English. It is also important to learn the possessive form of the nouns because it is very different from the way it is in Spanish or Catalan.

Number

The plural of most nouns in English is formed by adding -s to the singular, just as in Spanish. For example: *printer > printers*. But there are some special cases:

- Nouns ending in consonant + y form the plural with -ies: *ferry > ferries*, *baby > babies*, *party > parties*, etc.

- Nouns ending in -sh, -ch, -s, -x or -z form the plural with -es: *bus > buses*, *box > boxes*, *crash > crashes*, *boss > bosses*, etc.

- A few nouns ending in -o have plurals in -oes: *echo > echoes*, *potato > potatoes*, *tomato > tomatoes*, *tornado > tornadoes*, *volcano > volcanoes*,

but most nouns in -o have plurals in -s: *radio > radios*, *kilo > kilos*, *piano > pianos*, *photo > photos*, etc.

- Some nouns ending in -fe or -f form the plural with -ves: *knife > knives*, *life > lives*, *shelf > shelves*, *half > halves*, etc.

There are also some irregular plurals that do not follow the rule of adding an -s to the singular. Some examples are: *child > children*, *man > men*, *woman > women*, *mouse > mice*, *foot > feet*, *person > people*, etc.

Some other words have the same form in singular and plural, as for example: *Japanese > Japanese* (and all the nationality nouns ending in -ese), *sheep > sheep*, *fish > fish*, *series > series*, *headquarters > headquarters*, etc.

Countable and uncountable nouns

We should also consider the difference between "countable" and "uncountable" nouns. The difference is important because sometimes the grammar rules are affected by the type of noun.

Countable nouns are those which refer to names of objects, people, ideas, etc, which can be separated into units and counted. Examples of countable nouns are: *book, student, year, country, hour, friend, computer*, etc. You can express these nouns in plural.

Uncountable nouns are those which refer to names of materials, liquids, abstract qualities and other things that we see as masses, and not as separate objects. Some examples of uncountable nouns are: *paper, water, friendship, money, love, hardware,* etc. These nouns have no plural form.

In general, it is quite easy to distinguish between countable and uncountable nouns, but sometimes the difference is not so clear. Compare: *work* (uncountable) and *a job* (countable); *travel* (uncountable) and *a journey* or *a trip* (countable); *glass* (uncountable) and *a glass* (countable). To know exactly if a noun is countable or uncountable, you must check a good dictionary.

You can change an uncountable noun into a countable noun by adding certain expressions: *advice* (Cat: consell) > *a piece of advice* (Cat: un consell); *news* (Cat: notícies) > *a piece of news* (Cat: una notícia); *bread* (Cat: pa) > *a loaf of bread* (Cat: un pa); *water* (Cat: aigua) > *a glass/a bottle of water* (Cat: un got/ampolla d'aigua), etc.

Possessive with 's

The English language has a peculiar way of expressing possession with a noun. It is called "Saxon Genitive" and it is formed by adding 's to the noun. This system is only used with nouns denoting people and in certain time expressions. Examples:

- Mike's job (Cat: la feina del Mike)

Uncountable nouns in -s

Some singular nouns end in -s, but have no plural form because they are uncountable. For example: *news*, *mathematics*, *domotics*, etc.

- My friend's office (Cat: el despatx del meu amic)

- Mr Smith's speech (Cat: la xerrada del Sr. Smith)

- My sister's car (Cat: el cotxe de la meva germana)

- The people's opinion (Cat: l'opinió de la gent)

- Yesterday's weather (Cat: el temps d'ahir)

- Last night's accident (Cat: l'accident d'ahir a la nit)

In plurals ending in -s, there is only an apostrophe ('). Examples:

- My friends' office (Cat: el despatx dels meus amics)

- In two days' time (Cat: d'aquí a dos dies)

- My sisters' car (Cat: el cotxe de les meves germanes)

As you can see, the name of the possessor with the 's comes in front of the noun which is possessed.

When the possession refers to a noun which does not denote people, we must express possession with the preposition "of" (Cat: de), just as we do in Spanish or Catalan. Examples:

- The streets of London (Cat: els carrers de Londres)

- The name of the street (Cat: el nom del carrer)

- The eyes of the tiger (Cat: els ulls del tigre)

Gender

The gender of an English noun is determined by the sex of the person or animal to which it refers: *man* is masculine and *woman* is feminine, *bull* is masculine and *cow* is feminine, *Robert* is masculine and *Lisa* is feminine, etc.

There is no problem with the grammatical gender: people are *he* or *she* and things and animals are *it*.

Some jobs and positions have different nouns for men and women. Examples: *actor* (Cat: actor) > *actress* (actriu), *groom* (Cat: nuvi) > *bride* (Cat: núvia), *waiter* (Cat: cambrer) > *waitress* (Cat: cambrera), *policeman* (Cat: policia) > *policewoman* (Cat: dona policia), etc.

Some words ending in -man (for example: *fireman*, *chairman*, etc.) do not have a feminine equivalent, but in many cases the ending -person is now being used (*fireperson*, *chairperson*, etc)

However, most of the names of jobs and positions have the same form for men and women. For example: *teacher, student, doctor, engineer, president, director*, etc.

1.2.2 False friends

Learning a language means the gradual acquisition of four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Depending on the student's objectives, some skills will be more important than the others, but the knowledge of a language requires a minimum mastery of the four skills. The only way of acquiring such mastery is through constant practice. It is obvious that the more you practice, the more you will learn how to read, write, understand and speak in English. However, to get practice on the four skills, you will need to learn the vocabulary of the language and the grammar rules that organise the sentences and give them sense. Grammar and vocabulary are the two basis on which a language stands. In classroom learning, but most specially in distance learning, the only way of acquiring the vocabulary and the grammar is by studying and memorising the words and the rules. Once you have a basic knowledge of the vocabulary and the grammar, you can gradually improve such knowledge through the practice of the four skills, especially reading.

We assume that you have already acquired the basic knowledge required to start the practice of the four skills. In any case, the use of reference material, such as dictionaries and grammar books will help you review your knowledge. Now we are going to explain an aspect of vocabulary which sometimes may bring confusion and generate mistakes. We are going to speak about the "false friends".

Learning the English vocabulary may seem difficult at first, but in fact it is not so. Many words, especially those in the fields of science and technology, have a Greek or Latin origin and, therefore, they are easily recognisable for a Spanish or a Catalan speaker. You probably do not need a dictionary to understand the meaning of words like "information", "university", "computer", "reality", "family", "television", "history", and many others.

However, we should be careful with such similarities, as not all the English words that look like the Catalan or Spanish words have the same meaning. These types of words are called "false friends" because they seem to have one meaning but they actually have another. They are apparently friendly, but in fact they are treacherous. There are not many false friends in English, but some of them are very frequently used and for this reason it is important to remember their meanings.

The table below shows a list of some frequently used false friends.

TABLE 1.9. English false friends

English word	Catalan translation	Similar Catalan word	English translation
actually	de fet	actualment	currently, now
approve	acceptar, aprovar	aprovar (un examen)	pass
assist	ajudar, atendre	assistir a	attend, go to
conductor	director d'orquesta	conductor	driver
disgust	fàstic	disgust	upset (adj.)
exit	sortida	èxit	success
fabric	teixit	fàbrica	factory

TABLE 1.9 (continued)

English word	Catalan translation	Similar Catalan word	English translation
lecture	conferència, xerrada	lectura	reading
library	biblioteca	llibreria	bookshop, bookstore
motorist	automobilista	motorista	motor cyclist
preservative	conservant	preservatiu	condom
sensible	sensat, amb seny	sensible	sensitive

So be careful whenever you have to use any of these words or other false friends because they may lead to confusion. It is not necessary to learn them by heart, as you will learn them as you use them in their context, but you should be conscious of them and look them up in the dictionary if you have any doubts.

1.3 Use of reference material: finding the correct meaning of a word

One of the most important tools for the learner of a foreign language is the dictionary. A dictionary is mostly used to look up the meaning of a word, but if you know how to use it, it can help you in many other aspects, like the spelling or the pronunciation. Therefore, it is very important that you use a good bilingual dictionary to help you in your studies. Online dictionaries are also a good option, as they offer a lot of information about different aspects of the language. One of the most interesting features of online dictionaries is the possibility of listening to the pronunciation of a word. So it is highly recommended that you locate some dictionaries in the web. Keep them in your bookmark list and use them whenever you are working online.

A popular tool among the learners of a foreign language is the translator, a program that translates a text from one language into another language of your choice. Nowadays, translators are quite accurate and very appropriate to understand the general meaning of a text, but we should bear in mind that the translation is done automatically by a machine, which means that the program does not usually distinguish the context or the different meanings of a word. Therefore, a translator is not the most appropriate tool to make an accurate translation or to write a good text in English. Finally, translators may save a lot of time to students, but they also prevent them from making the necessary effort to learn a language.

Apart from dictionaries and translators, there are other resources that students can use when learning a foreign language. A grammar book, for example, is specially useful for the self-study of a language, as it may help students to complete the grammar points in the curriculum. Many grammar books also include practice exercises, so students can get some extra practice when needed. English textbooks, which are the ones normally used at schools, offer a great variety of activities to practice the four skills. And, of course, the Internet offers thousands and thousands of websites where you can study and practice the English language. The greatest advantage of the internet resources is that you can practice the oral skills (mostly

A dictionary, a grammar book and a textbook

listening), which you cannot do when using resources in paper format. Speaking is perhaps the skill which is the most difficult to practice without the help of a person who listens and talks to you.

As a student of the English language, then, you are encouraged to use the great variety of learning resources that are available in the market and on the Internet.

The dictionary is probably the handiest tool for the student of English who wants to look up the meaning of a word, but a dictionary usually contains so much information that it is often hard to find the correct meaning. We are going to learn how to interpret the information contained in a dictionary entry.

FIGURE 1.1. Dictionary entry for the word "start"

From Collins Pocket Plus Inglés

For example, let's imagine that we need to find the meaning of the expression "start your car". If we look it up in the dictionary, we can see that there are many different meanings for the word "start". The figure above shows the dictionary entry for the word "start":

It is necessary to find the correct meaning of "start". For this, we should learn to interpret the conventional elements that appear in the entry. To begin with, it is important to consider which part of speech the word belongs to. Is it a verb? Is it a noun? Or is it an adjective? The context usually gives us the answer. In our example, "start your car", the word "start" is obviously a verb, as it is followed by a noun, "your car", which is the direct object.

Now we should notice the abbreviations that appear in the entry: *n* (*nombre*),*vt* (*verbo transitivo*), *vi* (*verbo intransitivo*). If "start" is a verb and has a direct object, it means that it is a transitive verb, so we must concentrate only on the definitions under the abbreviation *vt.* (*empezar, comenzar*, etc), and disregard all the others.

However, we can see that there are different meanings of "start" as a transitive verb. Again, we have to find which is the correct one. To help you, look at the words that appear in brackets: these words tell you the context in which the word appears with that specific meaning and sometimes they also give a synonym. Now read those

words one by one carefully, and notice that there is an annotation that says: (*car, engine*). This means that "start" has the meaning indicated only when it refers to cars and engines. Remember that the direct object of the verb is "your car". Therefore, the meaning that we are looking for is "arrancar, poner en marcha". It makes sense: "start your car" means "poner el coche en marcha", "arrancar el coche".

Now introduce that same expression in a translator. The result is: "inicie su coche". In Catalan, it is much worse: "inicieu seu cotxe". Although the idea is not difficult to understand, the automatic translation is not accurate enough and sometimes it may result in mistakes. A good dictionary, however, even a pocket one, gives a lot of information to find the correct meaning in a specific context.

Our example refers to the translation into your own language, but a bilingual dictionary is also useful to translate from our language into English. We normally do so when we have to write a text in English. However, the process to find the correct translation is exactly the same.

1.4 Translating a text

At the early stages in the learning of a language, we translate all the time from our own mother tongue into the target language. When we read a text in English, we mentally translate it into our own language in order to understand it. When we write a text, first we think what we want to say in our language and then translate it into English. When we try to speak, first we think in Catalan or Spanish and then translate our thoughts into English. This is the normal process when you study the language outside an English speaking context. As you advance in the study of the language, you "learn" to think in English and then you do not need to translate, as the thoughts come naturally in the target language.

But apart from the personal use of translation that we may make in our learning process, we should also learn how to make a good translation of written texts. Considering that the greatest part of professional documents, manuals and correspondence is in English, it is important to learn how to translate a text for the benefit of others. In this section we are going to explain how to translate a technical text from English into Catalan and give some useful ideas that you should take into consideration.

The most basic tool a bilingual dictionary to check the meaning of unknown words. To make a good tranlation, it is also very important to have a good knowledge of the grammar structures of both the mother tongue and the foreign language.

The first thing that we should consider is that we do not have to translate only the words, but also the syntactical structure of English. As Catalan and English belong to different linguistic families (Romanic and Germanic, respectively), their syntactical structures are often very different.

> The target language is the language that we are learning. It stands in opposition to the mother tongue.

> The term "syntax" refers to the way in which a language organises the words in a sentence. The result is the "syntactical structure".

Here is an example: imagine that we must translate the English sentence "I'm 25 years old" into Catalan. We do not need a dictionary because we know all the words. But if we translate only the words, the result is "Jo sóc 25 anys vell", a sentence that has little sense in Catalan. This means that we must also change the syntactical structure and think which is the correct structure in Catalan to express the same idea. In this case it is not difficult to understand the idea and translate that sentence as "Jo tinc 25 anys". The example is very simple, but it illustrates very well how both languages express the same idea with two different syntactical structures.

A good translation should transmit the original idea as faithfully as possible. The resulting text should adjust to the syntactical rules of the language into which you translate and avoid unnatural structures taken literally from the foreign language.

See section "Use of reference material" in this unit for details on how to use a bilingual dictionary.

Using a bilingual dictionary is not easy and requires a certain practice to find the correct definitions. Nowadays there is another tool which is extensively used to translate texts: the automatic translator. In a translator, you introduce the text in the original language and the program automatically gives out the translation into the language of your choice. The problem is that very often the resulting text is full of mistakes and then you need to revise the text and make correcctions.

Here is an example of a translation of a technical text from English into Catalan. We have used the widely-popular Google translator. As you compare the translator version with the final version of the text, notice the changes that we have made to correct the translation.

English version:

Electricity powers our world and our bodies. Harnessing its energy is both the domain of imagined sorcery and humdrum, everyday life – from Emperor Palpatine toasting Luke Skywalker, to the simple act of ejecting the "Star Wars" disc from your PC. Despite our familiarity with its effects, many people fail to understand exactly what electricity is – a ubiquitous form of energy resulting from the motion of charged particles, like electrons. When put to the question, even acclaimed inventor Thomas Edison merely defined it as "a mode of motion" and "a system of vibrations." (from the website www.howstuffworks.com)

Google translator version:

L'electricitat del nostre món i els nostres cossos. L'aprofitament de l'energia és alhora el domini de la fetilleria imaginat i monòtona, la vida quotidiana - des del Emperador Palpatine torrat Luke Skywalker, que el simple acte d'expulsar el 'Star Wars' disc del seu PC. Malgrat la nostra familiaritat amb els seus efectes, moltes persones no aconsegueixen entendre exactament què és l'electricitat - una forma omnipresent de l'energia resultant del moviment de partícules carregades, com els electrons. Quan es posen a la pregunta, fins i tot aclamat per l'inventor Thomas Edison simplement el defineix com 'una manera de moviment' i 'un sistema de vibracions.'

Corrected version

L'electricitat fa funcionar el nostre món i els nostres cossos. L'aprofitament de la seva energia pertany tant al domini de la bruixeria com al de la monotonia de la vida quotidiana -des de l'emperador Palpatine brindant per Luke Skywalker fins el simple acte de treure el disc de La Guerra de les Galàxies del teu PC. Encara que estiguem familiaritzats amb els seus efectes, molta gent no aconsegueix entendre què és exactament l'electricitat, una forma omnipresent d'energia originada pel moviment de partícules carregades, com els electrons. Quan se li va plantejar la pregunta, fins i tot el famós inventor Thomas Edison la va definir simplement com 'una forma de moviment' i 'un sistema de vibracions'.

Reading the translator version and then comparing it to the corrected version is an excellent exercise to notice the low quality of automatic translations. For this reason, it is necessary to make a manual revision of the text in order to make corrections and produce a correct translation.

In a 'reversed translation', that is, a translation into the foreign language, the process is exactly the same. We normally need a 'reverse translation' when we must write a text in English, as we tend to think in our own language and then translate into the foreign language. When we use an automatic translator to translate a text into English, it is very important that we introduce a text without spelling mistakes or else the internal dictionary of the program won't find the words.
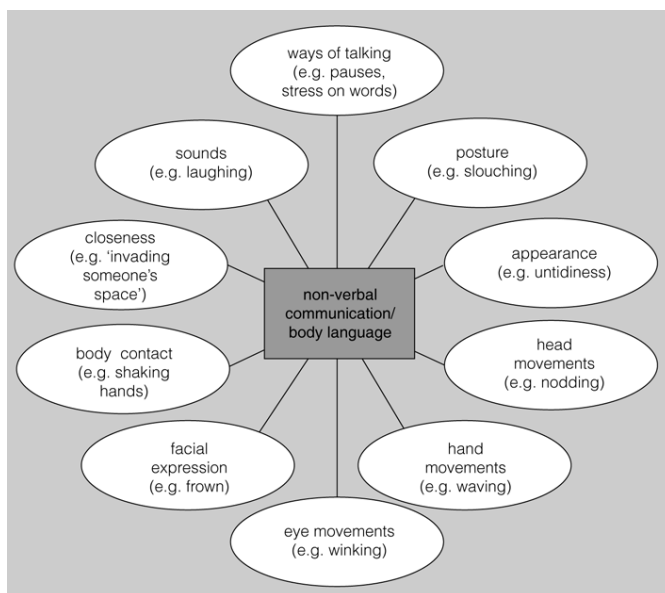
2. Non-verbal communication

Communication is the process by which information is exchanged through the use of sounds, which properly arranged form what is usually called a language. Verbal communication, then, refers to the use of words, which are organised in sentences in accordance to the syntactical rules of a particular language. On the other hand, non-verbal communication refers to the communicative process in which the information is transmitted by means of what is called body language, which includes gestures, body position, face expressions and specific behaviour. In our daily life, we normally use a combination of verbal and non-verbal communication.

When we speak of communication, we usually think of language, that is, we think of verbal communication. However, non-verbal communication is often more important than language itself, especially when we have to deal with other people, where you often have to transmit or understand more things than language can express. When we communicate with another person, non-verbal communication adds a lot of things to the message that we hear or that we transmit.

FIGURE 2.1. Examples of body language

For this reason, understanding non-verbal communication is very important when we have to deal with other people in our daily work. This type of communication can reinforce our messages or it can conceal the messages that we do not want to transmit. Non-verbal communication covers a range of factors, which may include body language, tone, appearance and the physical surroundings.

Body language is very much used in the sales field, for example. Salespeople are trained to observe and interpret the body language of potential customers in

order to understand their non-verbal signals and so increase the probability of sales success. As you can see in the figure above, there are many examples of body language.

In sales, the careful control of body position, eye contact and hand movements will contribute to a better communication with the public. For this reason, it is very important to control your non-verbal communication skills.

Some behaviours are considered positive, as they are generally considered to encourage communication, whereas others show anxiety, aggression, boredom and other negative feelings. Direct eye contact, scratching your nose, arms crossed on chest, standing with hands on hips, sitting with your legs apart, placing your hand on your cheek, open palms, drumming fingers, tilted head .... these are all examples of negative and positive feelings transmitted by body language. Therefore, it is very important to control such language and use it consciously to transmit the appropriate message in each specific situation. However, focusing on body language alone can cause some misinterpretations.

There are other aspects which we should consider, as for example personal space. When two people are talking to each other, they tend to stand at a specific distance apart. The average personal distance may vary from one culture to another and depending on the relationship between the people. In general, Americans tend to require more personal space than in other cultures, whereas in Latin cultures the distance is smaller and people tend to feel more comfortable standing close to each other.

Another issue to take into account when we want to communicate effectively is trying to avoid physical contact while you are speaking, as this may lead to discomfort for the person with whom you are talking. In Anglo-Saxon cultures, touching the other person while speaking is considered a bit too intimate for casual acquaintances, whereas in Latin cultures there is a greater tendency to touching.

In conclusion, learning a language does not only mean to learn the grammar rules and the vocabulary and then practice the different skills. Learning a language also means to control the body language that applies to.

2.1 Grammar: the present tenses

The verbs are the parts of the speech that describe the action, the existence or the state of the subject. The verbs are usually inflected. This means that they can take different forms, depending on the person of the subject (first, second or third person), the number (singular or plural) and the tense, which describes how and when the action takes place.

The present tenses are those which are used to refer to the present. There are two present tenses: the present simple and the present continuous.

2.1.1 The present simple

The present simple is used to express a regular, habitual action. It also describes permanent states and universal truths. The present simple usually appears in the sentence with adverbials of time that indicate regular actions, like "everyday", "once a week", "on Sundays", etc. The verbs in present simple are also used with the adverbs of frequency.

Unlike Catalan and Spanish, and the Romanic languages in general, the conjugation of the English verbs is very simple. The verb "to be" has three different forms in the present simple, but the greatest majority of the other verbs only have two forms. If you compare the conjugation of any English verb with all the different forms of the Catalan verbs, you will see the simplicity of the English verb system.

The following table shows the conjugation of the verb "work" in present simple:

TABLE 2.1. Conjugation of the present simple

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	work	do not work	don't work	Do I work ...?
You	work	do not work	don't work	Do you work ...?
He / She / It	works	does not work	doesn't work	Does he work...?
We	work	do not work	don't work	Do we work ...?
You	work	do not work	don't work	Do you work...?
They	work	do not work	don't work	Do they work...?

The base form of a verb is the form without any inflections. For example, "go", "be", "speak", etc. It is the form which we find in the dictionary entries.

Notice the following:

- In the third person singular, that is, when the subject is "he", "she" or "it" (or a noun in the third person singular), the verbs in present simple add an -s. All the other forms are the same as the base form.

- The present simple forms the negative and the interrogative with the auxiliary "do", which takes the form "does" in the third person singular. With the auxiliary "do", the verb is always in the infinitive.

Now let's see some examples of the use of the present simple.

1. Habitual actions:

   - I *get up* at seven o'clock everyday. (Cat: *Em llevo* a les set cada dia)
   - John *plays* tennis on Sundays. (Cat: John *juga* al tennis els diumenges)
   - We never *smoke* at work. (Cat: *No fumem* mai a la feina)
   - My friend always *helps* me (Cat: El meu amic sempre m'*ajuda*)

2. Permanent states:

- Australia *is* a very big country. (Cat: Austràlia *és* un país molt gran)
- Poor Mary *has got* a serious problem. (Cat: La pobra Mary *té* un problema seriós)

3. Universal truths:

- The sun *rises* in the east. (Cat: El sol *surt* per l'est)
- Water *boils* at 100ºC. (Cat: L'aigua *bull* als 100ºC)

2.1.2 The present continuous

The present continuous form is used to express an action that is taking place at the moment of speaking. It is also used for temporary actions, that is, actions that take place only for a certain period of time. Compare this use with the present simple, which expresses permanent actions. For all this, the present continuous usually appears with adverbials like "now", "at this moment", "at present", "this week", etc., adverbials which indicate that the action is either taking place at the moment or is temporary.

The present continuous is a compound verb. The structure is:

- AUXILIARY "BE" (in present) + VERB ENDING IN -ING

The table below shows the conjugation of the verb "work" in the present continuous.

TABLE 2.2. The conjugation of the present continuous

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	am working	am not working	'm not working	am I working ...?
you	are working	are not working	aren't working	are you working ...?
he, she, it	is working	is not working	isn't working	is he working ...?
we	are working	are not working	aren't working	are we working ...?
you	are working	are not working	aren't working	are you working ...?
they	are working	are not working	aren't working	are they working ...?

Here are some examples of the use of the present continuous:

1. Actions taking place at the moment of speaking:

- Look! It *is snowing*. (Cat: Mira! *Està nevant*)
- I think that they *are speaking* Russian. (Cat: Crec que *estan parlant* rus)
- We *are not doing* anything now. (Cat: Ara *no estem fent* res)

2. Temporary actions:

- Sarah usually lives in London, but she *is living* in Boston this month. (Cat: Sarah normalment viu a Londres, però aquest mes *està vivint* a Boston)

- I always go to work by car, but I *am taking* the bus this week. (Cat: Sempre vaig a treballar amb cotxe, però aquesta setmana *agafo* l'autobús)

Notice the contrast between the present simple and the present continuous in the two last examples. The sentence in present simple indicates what the subject does regularly whereas the sentence in the present continuous indicates a temporary action, one which only takes place that month or that week.

In English the present continuous is more widely used than in Catalan. Notice how in the last example above, the present continuous tense is translated with the present simple.

There are some verbs which are **not** used in the present continuous although they indicate an action that is taking place at the moment of speaking or a temporary action.

Some of these verbs are: *love, like, enjoy, hate, prefer, want, think, remember, doubt, understand, know, believe, see, have* (in the sense of possession), *own*.

2.2 Vocabulary: frequency adverbs

Frequency adverbs are those which indicate the frequency of an action. They answer questions with the interrogative pronoun "How often...?" (Cat: Amb quina freqüència...?)

Here is a list of the most important frequency adverbs in descending order of frequency (from highest to lowest):

- Always (Cat: sempre)

- Usually (Cat: normalment)

- Often (Cat: sovint)

- Sometimes (Cat: algunes vegades)

- Seldom (Cat: poques vegades)

- Never (Cat: mai)

Apart from these adverbs, there are some adverbial expressions which are also used to indicate the frequency of an action. For example:

- Once, twice, three times a week (Cat: una, dues, tres vegades a la setmana)

- Everyday (Cat: cada dia)

- Every year (Cat: cada any)

- From time to time (Cat: de tant en tant)

All these adverbs and adverbial expressions usually appear in sentences with the verb in the present simple because they express the idea that the action takes place at regular intervals.

When using a frequency adverb it is very important to place them in their right position within the sentence. In general, the frequency adverbs are placed **after** the modal and auxiliary verbs and **before** all the other verbs. The adverbial expressions are placed at the beginning or at the end of the sentence.

The only exception to the rule is the adverb "sometimes", which can go at the beginning, in the middle (after modal verbs and before all the other verbs) or at the end of the sentence. For example:

Sometimes he speaks very fast / He *sometimes* speaks very fast / He speaks very fast *sometimes* (Cat: De vegades parla molt de pressa)

Notice that in Catalan the position of the adverbs is much more flexible than in English.

Here are some more examples of the use of frequency adverbs and adverbial expressions:

- He *always* arrives late (Cat: *Sempre* arriba tard)

- He can *never* do the shopping (Cat: no pot fer *mai* la compra)

- He is *usually* at home in the mornings (Cat: *Normalment* és a casa als matins)

- They *seldom* use the typewriter (Cat: *Poques vegades* utilitzen la màquina d'escriure)

- Frank works at home *twice a week* (Cat: Frank treballa a casa *dues vegades a la setmana*)

- *From time to time*, I like eating out (Cat: *De tant en tant* m'agrada menjar a fora)

2.3 Connectors and punctuation

In writing, it is very important to use connectors in order to link the different sentences together and give internal cohesion to the text. A text without connectors is sometimes hard to read and does not transmit the ideas clearly because without connectors the ideas are not related to each other and, therefore, part of the information is missed. However, an excessive use of connectors may alter the fluency of a text. We can combine connectors and punctuation marks to link the different ideas and create fluent, well-written texts.

2.3.1 Connectors

Connectors are words that link ideas and show how these ideas are related to one another in the text. They help you organize your written texts and make them easy for the reader to understand them.

Next you will find a list of English connectors and their Catalan equivalents. They are classified according to the logical relationship between sentences or parts of a sentence. We have also added an example of their use.

Positive addition:

- And - *i* ('I like reading *and* listening to music')

- As well as - *així com (també)* ('I play football *as well as* handball')

- Also / too / as well - *també* ('He likes music. - I *also* like music / I like music, *too*. / I like music *as well*'.)

- Besides / Moreover / In addition - *a més a més* ('It rained all the time. *Besides,* it was cold. / *Moreover,* it was cold. / *In addition,* it was cold'.)

Negative addition:

- Or - *ni* ('I don't like getting up early *or* going out at night')

- Neither ... nor - *ni ... ni* ('We *neither* went to work *nor* stayed at home')

- Either - *tampoc* ('He doesn't like music - I don't like it *either*')

Disjunctive conjunctions

- Or - *o* - ('Do you prefer red *or* green?')

- Either ... or - *o... o* ('I like it *either* red *or* green, but not blue')

Condition:

- If - *si* ('I will help you *if* you want')

- Unless - *a menys que, si no* ('We can eat outside *unless* it's very cold')

Contrast:

- But - *però* ('It's quite good *but* very cheap')

- However - *malgrat tot, no obstant* ('It's quite good. *However,* it's very cheap')

- Although / even though - *tot i que, encara que* ('It's quite good *although/even though* it's very cheap.')

- In spite of - *malgrat* ('*In spite of* the rain, we had a great time')

- While / whereas - *mentre que* ('In the morning it was fine *whereas/while* in the evening it rained very hard')

- On the other hand - *per altra banda* ('I was tired. *On the other hand,* I had not eaten anything')

- On the one hand ... on the other hand - *per una banda ... i per l'altra* ('*On the one hand,* I was tired. *On the other hand,* I had not eaten anything')

- On the contrary - *Al contrari* ('It was not cold. *On the contrary,* we were very hot all the time')

Exception:

- Except for - *excepte, llevat de* ('I finished them all *except for* two or three / *Except for* two or three, I finished them all')

- Apart from - *a part de* ('*Apart from* Tom, nobody came to the party / Nobody came to the party *apart from* Tom')

Explaining ideas:

- That is to say / That is - *és a dir* ('It was snow white, *that is to say,* very white')

- In other words - *en altres paraules* ('It was snow white. *In other words,* it was very white')

Giving examples:

- Like - *com* ('We saw many wild animals *like* foxes and rabbits')

- Such as - *com ara* ('We saw many wild animals *such as* foxes and rabbits')

- For example - *per exemple* ('We saw many wild animals. *For example,* foxes and rabbits.')

- As for example - *com per exemple* ('We saw many wild animals *as for example* foxes and rabbits')

Describing similarity:

- Similarly - *de manera semblant* ('I wrote a report. *Similarly,* John wrote all the letters we had to send.')

- In the same way - *de la mateixa manera* ('I wrote a report. *In the same way,* John wrote all the letters we had to send.')

Listing ideas:

- At first / firstly / In the first place / to begin with / first of all - *primerament, en primer lloc, per començar, abans de res* (*At first, /Firstly, /In the first place, /To begin with, /First of all,* I got up.)

- Secondly / After this / Next / Then - *en segon lloc, després d'això, a continuació, aleshores* (*Secondly, /After this, /Next, /Then,* I had breakfast.)

- Finally / in the end - *finalment, al final* (*Finally, /In the end*, I went to work.)

Time:

- When - *quan* ('He called me *when* I wasn't at home.')

- Whenever - *sempre que* ('You can come *whenever* you want.')

- As soon as - *tan aviat com, així que* ('Please call me *as soon as* you arrive home.')

- While - *mentre* ('I was trying to concentrate *while* he was playing the drums.')

- Meanwhile - *mentrestant* ('He was playing the drums. *Meanwhile,* I was trying to concentrate.')

- Before - *abans de* ('Please turn off the lights *before* leaving the office/...*before* you leave the office.')

- After (prep.) - *després de* ('We went out *after* the rain.')

- Afterwards (adv.) - *després, a continuació* ('It stopped raining. *Afterwards,* we went out.')

- Then - *aleshores* ('It stopped raining. *Then,* we went out.')

- Since - *des que* ('I've been waiting *since* I arrived this morning')

- until - *fins a* ('I'll wait *until* you come.')

'After' and 'Afterwards'

Do not confuse the meaning of these two connectors: "after" is a preposition and must be followed by a noun: *after the class*. "Afterwards" is an adverb and is followed by a sentence, from which it is separated by a comma in the written language: *Afterwards, I went out.* The meaning of "afterwards" and "then" is the same.

Purpose:

- To / in order to - *per tal de, per a* ('I went out *to / in order to* see the Carnival parade.')

- In order not to - *per a no* ('I didn't go to work *in order not to* meet Jane.')

Reason and cause:

- As - *com que, ja que* ('*As* it was raining, we stayed at home.')

- Because - *perquè* ('We stayed at home *because* it was raining.')

- Because of / Due to - *a causa de, degut a* ('We stayed at home *because of / due to* the rain.')

- As a result of - *Com a conseqüència de* ('*As a result of* the rain, we stayed at at home / We stayed at home *as a result of* the rain'.)

Result:

- So - *per tant, així que, de manera que* ('It was raining *so* we stayed at home.')

- Therefore - *en conseqüència, per tant* ('It was raining. *Therefore,* we stayed at home.')

- For this reason - *per aquesta raó* ('It was raining. *For this reason,* we stayed at home.)

Summarising:

- In conclusion - *en conclusió* ('We spent everything we had. *In conclusion,* we have no money for you.')

- In short - *en resum, en poques paraules* ('We spent everything we had. *In short,* we have no money for you.')

- To sum up / summing up - *resumint* ('We spent all the money we had. *To sum up,/Summing up,* we have no money for you.')

All these connectors are used much in the same way as their Catalan equivalents. As you read a text in English, you should study the connectors carefully and see how they are used.

Now read an example of a short text with some connectors (in bold):

Although the Internet has some advantages **because** it is useful to broaden your knowledge and meet new people, it **also** has some disadvantages **due to**, **for example**, its free access to pages which show cruel violence and crimes. **On the one hand**, there are people who think that the Internet should be a free space to express ideas.**On the other hand**, some people consider that the Internet can be dangerous **if** its use is not controlled. **In conclusion**, the Internet has both advantages and disadvantages, **but** people must learn to use it for positive aims.

Next read that same text without connectors and compare:

The Internet has some advantages. It is useful to broaden your knowledge and meet new people. It has some disadvantages. Its free access to pages which show cruel violence and crimes. There are people who think that the Internet should be a free space to express ideas. Some people consider that the Internet can be dangerous. Its use is not controlled. The Internet has both advantages and disadvantages. People must learn to use it for positive aims.

2.3.2 Punctuation marks

Apart from connectors, when you are writing a text it is also important to consider the punctuation marks and use them correctly. You should remember that punctuation also includes the use of capital letters, which in English are used differently from Catalan and Spanish. Punctuation marks seem unimportant and we do not usually pay much attention to writing commas or stops, but they contribute to give cohesion to the text, so we should use them carefully and combine them with the connectors. We are going to give some tips to produce a coherent text and to explain the most important uses of the punctuation marks.

First of all, try to write short sentences in order to keep the word order more easily. As you advance in your knowledge of English, you can write longer and more sophisticated sentences, but at first it is advisable to write simple sentences. You should organise your text into different paragraphs to separate the different blocks of information. As with sentences, you should avoid long paragraphs. Each paragraph should refer to the same idea or to secondary ideas related to the main one.

As for punctuation, remember the following:

- Do not write a comma (,) between the subject and the verb although the subject is very long.

- Write a full stop (.) at the end of a sentence. If the sentence ends with a question mark (?) or with an exclamation mark (!), then you must not write the full stop.

- Adverbials and connectors at the beginning of a sentence are usually separated from the sentence by a comma. *Example*: Nowadays**,** computers are very fast. / In the first place*,* click on the program icon.

- Write a colon (:) to introduce a list of items or an explanation. *Example*: the continents are**:** Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Oceania.

- Write a comma to separate the elements in a list, except those separated by "and" or "or". *Example*: the days of the week are Monday**,** Tuesday**,** Wednesday**,** Thursday**,** Friday**,** Saturday and Sunday.

- Use the semi-colon (;) to separate the groups of items in a list. *Example*: In computing we must distinguish between hardware and software. Hardware

Other uses of capital letters

Apart from its common use in punctuation, a capital letter is always used with the pronoun "I", the adjectives derived from proper names (English, Londoner, etc.) and with days of the week (Monday, Tuesday, etc.). As in Catalan, capital letters are also used in all the proper names.

refers to the material parts of a computer (keyboard, monitor, printer, loudspeakers, etc.)*;* software refers to programming and includes operating systems, compilers, editors, etc.

- Use the brackets to add some extra information to a sentence. *Example*: Websites usually have a home page (a beginning page).

- Write a capital letter at the beginning of the sentence or after a full stop.

2.4 Writing a summary

We write a summary to explain the main ideas of a text in a few sentences.

When writing a summary, we should remember the following:

- Only include the most important information.

- Do not include information that is not important, as for example, details, direct speech, examples to illustrate the ideas, etc.

- Do not express your own opinion or add information that is not in the text.

As in everything else, writing a good summary requires some practice. Here are some ideas to help you:

- First of all, read the text to get a general idea of its contents.

- Read the text again and underline the three or four most important ideas.

- Without looking at the text again, write a few sentences about the text from memory. Try to use alternative words.

- Read the text again and check your summary. Make sure that you have included all the important information and that you have not copied from the text.

- If you think that the summary is too long, cut out the unnecessary details.

Here is some useful language that you can use in your summaries:

- *Connectors to express contrast*: In spite of, despite, although, however.

- *Connectors to add information*: In addition, also, too.

- *Connectors to express reason and result*: This is so because, because, so, therefore.

- *Relative clauses*: The film, *which* is about a safari, shows that... The statement *that* he gave in March is no longer true.

Here is an example of a summary.

Text

The Island

In recent years, we have seen significant developments in cloning. Sheep, cows, cats and, more recently, dogs that have been cloned in the name of scientific progress. One of the potential uses of cloning is to 'grow' replacement organs in human clones for people who are ill. It is this subject that is portrayed in a new film released this week in the USA called 'The Island'.

The film features Ewan McGregor and Scarlett Johansson and it raises awareness of this highly controversial moral issue. However, in spite of excellent performances from both main actors and spectacular special effects, the film received a disappointing reaction from American audiences. It is possible that the subject is too difficult and that some audiences prefer thrillers without the moral dilemmas. The film opens in the UK next week and it will be interesting to see how the British audiences react.

Summary

The new film 'The Island', which deals with the controversial subject of cloning people, has not been received well in the USA. Although the acting and effects are very good, some audiences may have been disappointed by the moral message of the film.

3. Cultural differences

Success in today's global economy very often depends on the ability to establish international relations. But the contact with other countries and with their diversity demands flexibility and awareness of the similarities and differences with other cultures.

Different cultures and cultural backgrounds imply obstacles, challenges and difficulties that are obvious in general areas such as behaviour, etiquette, values, expressions and non-verbal communication.

Cultural differences may create misunderstandings between members of an organisation even before they have started to know one another. The consequences of that lack of cultural understanding by miscalculation of the cultural impact may affect our performance at work.
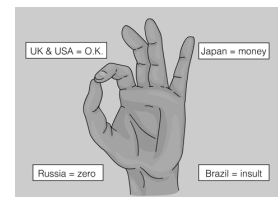
A good knowledge of religion, politics, history, gender roles, business ethics, social institutions, humour and values will help you determine the value and the role of your service in another country. Cultural competency can help you avoid cultural blunders, which may make the difference between your success and failure.

One gesture, four different meanings

The use of language is very important for success in international relationships in two different ways. On the one hand, we need to use a foreign language (especially English) to communicate with people from other countries. On the other hand, there are certain items in your job that must probably be translated for the benefit of others. Such items may include business letters, cards, company brochures and leaflets.

International relationships and business international interactions are filled with cultural mistakes and poor translations that can cause great embarrassment to their authors because of their lack of cultural sensitivity.

To be successful in international relations, it is necessary to speak the language correctly, but also to be aware of the differences in behaviour and values of other people. For example, if you are introduced to an English woman for the first time, do not try to kiss her on her cheeks, as you would probably do in Spain. In England, kissing in a first meeting is not considered proper, so shake hands instead. Touching someone while speaking is also considered very rude, so keep a distance with the other person. Also, do not ask personal questions to someone that you have just met. We might do that for the sake of conversation, but asking a person where he was born, where he lives, what he likes, etc. is seen as an intolerable interference into one's personal life. But you can safely talk about the weather, which is England's favourite topic for conversation.

Like most other people, the English appreciate polite language. Words like

'please' and 'thank you' are more frequently used than in other languages, so remember to use them when you speak in English. When you are talking to someone that you do not know well, remember to choose the most polite ways of making requests and offers by using the important word 'would': *would you like a coffee?*, *would you mind sitting down?*, *would you mind if I smoke?*, etc. If you are ever late to a meeting or an appointment, you must always apologise and add the reason for being late. For example, you can say: *I'm really sorry I'm late. I couldn't find a taxi.*

These are only a few examples applied to England. In the USA, things are different because the Americans are different, and the same is true of the Irish, the Japanese, and of all the other people belonging to different cultures.

The conclusion is that becoming aware of the differences between cultures, as well as exploring cultural similarities, are vital skills. They may help you communicate with others more harmoniously and establish a positive working environment.

3.1 Grammar: Basic sentence structure

As in other languages, in English the words in a sentence cannot be placed as we like. Instead, they must be placed in accordance with certain syntactical rules that tell us the correct order of the words so that the sentence can make sense and convey the meaning that we want to express.

The syntactical rules also tell us which form a word must take when we place it whithin a sentence. For example, the rules will tell us whether we must write "he" or "him", "boy" or "boys", "live" or "living".

In this section, we are going to learn how to write a correct English sentence by placing all the elements in the correct order.

But before we can do so, it is necessary to understand the different functions of the words within a sentence. The most important functions are:

- The subject: it indicates the person or thing that does the action of the verb or that the whole sentence refers to. In the sentence "John is running home", "John" is the subject.

- The verb: it expresses the actions, the feelings or the state of the subject. In the sentence "Martin speaks English", the verb is "speaks".

- The complement: it gives information about who, what, where, when, etc. In the sentence, "I'm writing a letter", "a letter" is the complement.

There are different types of complements. Here are the most important ones:

- Direct object: it receives the action of the transitive verbs. In the sentence "I'm reading a book", "a book" is the direct object.

- Indirect object: it refers to the person or thing to which the direct object is directed. In the sentence, "I send a present to my friend", "to my friend" is the indirect object.

- Time adverbial: it tells when the action takes place. In the sentence, "I met her last year", "last year" is the time adverbial.

- Place adverbial: it tells where the action takes place. In the sentence, "I met her in the library", "in the library" is the place adverbial.

With that information, we are ready to explain the structure of the English sentences. For that, we are going to divide the sentences into three groups: statements, interrogative sentences (or questions) and imperative sentences.

3.1.1 Statements

A statement is a sentence that transmits some information. All the sentences in English must have an explicit subject and a verb, so they must all have at least those two elements. A statement can be positive or negative.

Positive statements

The basic structure of positive statements is:

a) SUBJECT + VERB + COMPLEMENTS.

Examples:

- *I like swimming.* (Cat: M'agrada nedar)

- *Mr Holmes is the new director.* (Cat: El Sr. Holmes és el nou director)

- *The weather will be very nice in summer.* (Cat: A l'estiu farà molt bon temps)

When the sentence has a direct and an indirect object, the complements must also be placed in a certain order. This order depends on the way we express the indirect object, as we can express it with a word or with the preposition "to":

b) SUBJECT + VERB + INDIRECT OBJECT + DIRECT OBJECT

Examples:

- *I sent Mrs Smith a good present.* (Cat: Vaig enviar un bon regal a la Sra. Smith)

- *Robert gave me an English class.* (Cat: Robert em va donar una classe d'anglès)

c) SUBJECT + VERB + DIRECT OBJECT + "TO" + INDIRECT OBJECT

Examples:

- *I sent a nice present to Mrs Smith.* (Cat: A la Sra. Smith li vaig enviar un bon regal)

- *Robert gave an English class to me.* (Cat: Robert em va donar una classe d'anglès a mi)

Read the Catalan translations to see the different emphasis on the indirect object in both types of structures. With the use of the preposition "to", we tend to emphasize the indirect object.

When there are both a place and a time adverbial in the same sentence, the order is usually:

d) SUBJECT + VERB + PLACE ADVERBIAL + TIME ADVERBIAL

Examples:

- *I met my girlfriend in Rome three years ago.* (Cat: Fa tres anys, vaig conèixer la meva amiga a Roma)

- *My parents came to my house last week.* (Cat: Els meus pares van venir a casa meva la setmana passada)

When the complement is a time or a place adverbial, this can be place at the beginning of the sentence before a verb, but separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma:

e) PLACE/TIME ADVERBIAL, + SUBJECT + VERB + COMPLEMENTS

Examples:

- *In Canada, it is very cold in winter.* (Cat: Al Canadà hi fa molt fred a l'hivern)

- *Yesterday, the class started at one o'clock.* (Cat: Ahir la classe va començar a la una)

Negative statements

When the statement is negative, we must add the adverb "not", but the sentence structure depends on the type of verb:

f) SUBJECT + DO/DOES/DID + NOT + LEXICAL VERB (in infinitive) + COMPLEMENTS

Examples:

- *John does not like working at night.* (Cat: A John no li agrada treballar de nit)

- *We do not work on Sunday.* (Cat: Nosaltres no treballem els diumenges)

- *They did not repair the lights last night.* (Cat: [Ells/Elles] no van arreglar els llums ahir a la nit)

g) SUBJECT + AUXILIARY/MODAL VERB + NOT + COMPLEMENTS

Examples:

- *We must not smoke in the factory.* (Cat: Nosaltres no hem de fumar a la fàbrica)

- *He is not in the restaurant.* (Cat: Ell no és al restaurant)

- *We have not seen him for weeks.* (Cat: Fa setmanes que [nosaltres] no l'hem vist)

3.1.2 Questions

The interrogative sentences, which are also called "questions", can have different structures, depending on the type of the verb. In English, all the interrogative sentences must end with a question mark (?)

Here are the basic structures of the English questions:

a) (INTEROGATIVE PRONOUN) + DO/DOES/DID + SUBJECT + LEXICAL VERB (in infinitive) + COMPLEMENTS ?

Examples:

- *Do you live in the city centre?*

- *Where does your brother work?*

- *What did you do yesterday?*

- *Does Mike know any languages?*

The interrogative pronouns (who, what, where, when, etc.) are only used in wh-questions and are always placed at the begining. In yes/no questions there is no interrogative pronoun, so the questions begin with the appropriate form of the auxiliary verb "do".

See section "The answer to yes/no questions with auxiliary verbs" in unit called "Learning English" for more information on the two types of questions.

b) (INTERROGATIVE PRONOUN) + AUXILIARY/MODAL VERB + SUBJECT + COMPLEMENTS ?

Examples:

- *Where are you?*

- *What is he doing?*

- *Can you speak English?*

- *What should I do?*

- *Who have you met?*

3.1.3 Imperative

The imperative form is used when we want to give instructions, to make a request or to give an order. The main characteristic of the imperative sentences is that they do not have an explicit subject. The implicit subject is usually "you", but this is never expressed. In imperative sentences, we must always write an exclamation mark (!) at the end.

The structure of the imperative sentences in English is:

a) VERB + COMPLEMENTS

Examples:

- *Run!*

- *Be here at four!*

- *Listen to me*

The structure of the negative imperative is the following:

b) DON'T + VERB + COMPLEMENTS

- *Don't go!*

- *Don't forget to turn off the lights!*

- *Don't be silly!*

Notice that in imperative sentences, the negative form is always with "don't" for all verbs, lexical and auxiliary. Modal verbs are never used in the imperative form.

3.2 Vocabulary: adjectives and the comparative forms

The adjectives are the words that are used to make descriptions. With the adjectives, we can describe the material world around us, but we can also describe feelings and emotions. For these reasons, it is important that we learn how to use adjectives correctly. This is important because in English the use of the adjectives is quite different from their use in Spanish and Catalan.

3.2.1 Adjectives

The English adjectives have the following characteristics:

- In their attributive use, they always go before the noun to which they refer. For example: *a **big** tree* (Cat: un arbre **gran**), *an **interesting** book* (Cat: un llibre **interessant**), *a **special** day* (Cat: un dia **especial**), etc.

- Unlike Spanish and Catalan, the English adjectives are invariable. This means that they do not change depending on the number and gender of the noun. For example: *a **big** tree / some **big** trees* (Cat: un arbre **gran** / alguns arbres **grans**), *a **tall** man / a **tall** woman* (Cat: un home **alt** / una dona **alta**), etc.

Adjectives have an **attributive use** when they go before a noun, as, for example, in *a big tree*. When they are the predicate of the sentence, we say that they have a **predicative use**. In this case, they go after the verbs 'be' and 'feel'. For example: *the tree is big; I feel tired.*

There is a list of some basic adjectives which are used to describe common feelings and emotions in the table below.

TABLE 3.1. Adjectives describing feelings and emotions

good	*bo*	interested	*interessat*
bad	*dolent*	embarrased	*avergonyit*
happy	*feliç, content*	nervous	*nerviós*
unhappy	*infeliç, descontent*	surprised	*sorprès*
sad	*trist*	depressed	*deprimit*
tired	*cansat*	angry	*enfadat*
excited	*emocionat, excitat*	thankful	*agraït*
bored	*avorrit*	refreshed	*descansat*
relaxed	*relaxat, tranquil*		

We can express the adjectives in different degrees of intensity. To do this, we can add an adverb of degree before the adjective. Some of these adverbs are:

- Very (Cat: molt) - I am *very* tired (Cat: estic *molt* cansat)

- Little (Cat: poc) - I am *little* tired (Cat: estic *poc* cansat)

- A little (Cat: una mica) - I am *a little* tired (Cat: estic *una mica* cansat)

- So ... that ... (Cat: tan ... que ...) - I am *so* tired *that* I can't go (Cat: estic *tan* cansat *que* no hi puc anar)

- Quite / Rather (Cat: bastant) - I am *rather* tired (Cat: estic *bastant* cansat)

- Too (Cat: massa) - I am *too* tired to go (Cat: estic *massa* cansat per a anar-hi)

3.2.2 Comparative forms

When the adjectives are used to make comparisons, they take either the comparative form or the superlative form. The comparative form is used when we compare two things, whereas the superlative form is used when we compare one thing with all the other things.

The form of the adjective depends on the number of syllables. The basic rules to form the comparative are shown in the table below.

TABLE 3.2. Comparative forms

Type of adjective	Form	Example	Meaning
One-syllable adjectives	-ER THAN	sad > sadder than ...	trist > més trist que ...
Two-syllable adjectives ending in -y	-IER THAN	happy > happier than ...	content > més content que ...
All the other adjectives	MORE ... THAN	tired > more tired than ...	cansat < més cansat que ...

Notice that the word "than" is used to link the comparative adjective with the rest

of the sentence. Do not confuse with the conjunction "that".

The following table shows the forms of the superlative.

TABLE 3.3. Superlative forms

Type of adjective	Form	Example	Meaning
One-syllable adjectives	THE -EST	sad > the saddest	trist > el més trist
Two-syllable adjectives ending in -y	THE -IEST	happy > the happiest	content > el més content
All the other adjectives	THE MOST ...	tired > the most tired	cansat > el més cansat

A few adjectives have irregular forms in the comparative and the superlative. Among these, we find three very common adjectives:

- Good - better than - the best (Cat: bo - millor que - el millor)

- Bad - worse than - the worst (Cat: dolent - pitjor que - el pitjor)

- Far - farther than - the farthest (Cat: llunyà - més llunyà que - el més llunyà)

3.3 Speaking about likes, dislikes and preferences

To express what we like or dislike, we can use a variety of verbs. These verbs allow us to express different degrees of intensity. Some of the most common are:

- love (Cat: estimar, encantar)

- like (Cat: agradar)

- dislike (Cat: desagradar)

- enjoy (Cat: gaudir de)

- hate (Cat: odiar)

- detest (Cat: detestar)

The verb "dislike" is mostly used in formal written texts. In speech, we normally use the negative form of "like" ("don't like") instead of "dislike".

These verbs can appear in different structures:

1. LOVE/LIKE/DISLIKE/ENJOY/HATE/DETEST + NOUN:

    - He loves animals. (Cat: li encanten els animals)
    - Did you enjoy your meal? (Cat: Et va agradar el menjar?)
    - I hate noise. (Cat: Odio el soroll)

2. LOVE/LIKE/DISLIKE/HATE + VERB IN INFINITIVE:

    - I love to walk in the woods. (Cat: M'encanta passejar pel bosc)

- They like to read. (Cat: Els agrada llegir)

- I hate to get up early in the mornings. (Cat: Odio llevar-me d'hora als matins)

3. LOVE/LIKE/DISLIKE/ENJOY/HATE/DETEST + VERB IN THE -ING FORM:

- I love walking in the woods. (Cat: M'encanta passejar pel bosc)

- I enjoy playing tennis. (Cat: Gaudeixo jugant al tennis)

- I detest getting up early in the mornings. (Cat: Detesto llevar-me d'hora als matins)

> There is no difference in meaning between the use of the infinitive or the -ing form where both forms are possible.

We can intensify the meaning of the verbs "like" and "enjoy" by adding some intensifiers, as for example, "very", "much" or "not... at all". The rest of the verbs do not need such intensifiers because the intensity is implicit in their meaning. Here are some examples:

- I like football *very much* (Cat: M'agrada *molt* el futbol)

- I didn't enjoy the play *much*. (Cat: L'obra no em va agradar *gaire*)

- We did*n't* like the exhibition *at all*. (Cat: L'exposició *no* ens va agradar *gens*)

Apart from verbs, you can use certain expressions to express your likes and dislikes. Some of these expressions are: "to be interested in" (Cat: estar interessat en), "to be fond of" (Cat: ser aficionat a) or "can't stand" (Cat: no poder suportar). These expressions are normally followed by a noun or by a verb in the -ing form. For example:

- I'm very interested in meeting the new director (Cat: M'interessa molt conèixer el nou director)

- Are you interested in sports? (Cat: T'interessen els esports?)

- They are very fond of bonsais (Cat: Són molt aficionats als bonsais)

- He's fond of writing (Cat: És aficionat a escriure)

- I can't stand stupidity (Cat: No suporto l'estupidesa)

- I can't stand getting up early (Cat: No aguanto llevar-me d'hora)

> Notice that in Catalan, the verb "agradar" is pronominal, so we say: "(a mi) m'agrada...", "(a ell) li agrada...", etc. In English, however, the verb "like" is transitive. For this reason, the structures in both languages are different and they should not be confused: "(A mi) m'agrada viatjar" is "I like travelling". It is incorrect to say: *'Travelling likes me').

As for preferences, the most common verb is "prefer" (Cat: preferir). The correct structures to use this verb are the following:

1. PREFER + NOUN + TO :

    - I think she prefers animals to people. (Cat: Crec que prefereix els animals a les persones)

2. PREFER + VERB IN INFINITIVE (With the verb in infinitive, we don't usually express the second term of the preference):

    - I prefer to come early (Cat: Prefereixo venir d'hora)

3. PREFER + VERB IN THE -ING FORM + TO:

    - I prefer going late to waiting for hours. (Cat: Prefereixo anar tard que esperar durant hores)

Finally, we should remember that the verbs "love", "like", "dislike", "hate" and "detest" are never used in the continuous tenses, so it is wrong to say: *"I am liking this film", *"Are you hating running?", etc.

However, the verb "enjoy" can be used in the continuous tenses, so it is correct to say: "Are you enjoying your meal?", "I'm enjoying the film very much", etc.

3.4 Phonetics: vowel sounds, consonant sounds and diphthongs

Phonetics is the science that studies the sounds of a language and helps to pronounce the words correctly. In the present textbook we are not going to devote much time to the description of the English sounds, as the best way to learn the pronunciation of the words in a language is by imitation.

However, it may be useful to get an idea of the sound system of English to help you with the pronunciation. Some dictionaries include the pronunciation in their entries. You will always find it next to the word in square brackets ([...]) The symbols used in the transcriptions are those corresponding to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

Some online dictionaries, like WordReference, also include sound files with a recording of the words to show their pronunciation.

3.4.1 Vowel sounds

In English there are 12 vowel sounds, whereas in Spanish there are only five and in Catalan, eight.

This great number of vowel sounds is due to the fact that English makes a distinction between short and long vowels sounds. The difference is important because sometimes the vowel length can make the difference between the pronunciation of two words. For example, 'sheep' (Cat:ovella) and 'ship' (Cat: vaixell) are only distinguished by the length of the vowel sound: 'sheep' is pronounced with a long vowel sound (/i:/) whereas 'ship' is pronounced with a short vowel sound (/i/).

Apart from long and short vowels, there are other vowel sounds which may be difficult to pronounce because they do not exist in Catalan or Spanish.

The table below shows the vowel sounds of English with their approximate pronunciation.

TABLE 3.4. The English vowel sounds

Phonetic symbol	Example	Approximate pronunciation
/ɑː/	f<u>a</u>ther	Long vowel sound. Like in Spanish 'p<u>a</u>dre'
/æ/	c<u>a</u>t	Short vowel sound. Similar to Catalan open è, as in 'cel'
/ʌ/	b<u>u</u>t	This sound does not exist in Catalan or Spanish. Similar to Spanish 'a', but shorter
/e/	m<u>e</u>t	Similar to Spanish 'e' in 'mesa'
/ə/	fath<u>er</u>	Like the Catalan neuter vowel, as in 'par<u>e</u>'
/ɜ/	b<u>ir</u>d	This sound does not exist in Spanish or Catalan. It is like French in 'fl<u>eur</u>'
/ɪ/	sh<u>i</u>p	This sound is similar to Spanish or Catalan 'i', but shorter and tending to 'e'
/iː/	sh<u>ee</u>p	Like the Catalan or Spanish 'i', but longer.
/i/	ver<u>y</u>	Like the Catalan 'i' in 'vi'
/ɔː/	b<u>all</u>	Like the Spanish 'o', but longer.
/uː/	m<u>oo</u>n	Like the Spanish 'u', but longer.
/ʊ/	b<u>oo</u>k	Similar to Spanish 'u', but shorter.

There are no fixed rules for the spelling of words. For this reason, a sound can have many different spellings. When you learn a new word, you should learn the meaning, but also the spelling and the pronunciation. But remember that the best way of learning the pronunciation of words is by listening and speaking to native speakers.

3.4.2 Consonant sounds

In general, consonant sounds are similar to the Spanish and Catalan sounds, but they sometimes differ in the spelling. For example, the consonant sound in

the Spanish word 'cero' is the same as the English sound in 'thin', but the two languages use a different letter or combination of letters to represent that sound.

Some other consonant sounds of the English language do not exist in Spanish, but they do in Catalan. For instance, the sound of the English word 'John' is the same as that in the Catalan word 'Joan'. Also, the sound in 'fish' is the same as that in the Catalan word 'peix'.

There is an English sound that may be difficult to pronounce for a Spanish or Catalan speaker, as it does not exist in these two languages. That sound is represented by the IPA symbol /ð/. It appears in such English words as 'the', 'this' or 'there' and it is pronounced a little as the Spanish or Catalan intervocalic 'd' in 'cada'.

Another characteristic of the English consonant sounds is that there is a distinction between the sounds of *b* and *v*, which does not happen in Spanish or in standard Catalan.

3.4.3 Diphthongs

Diphthongs are the combination of two vowel sounds. There are eight diphthongs in English.

The following table shows the English diphthongs with their approximate pronunciation.

TABLE 3.5. The English diphthongs

Phonetic symbol	Example	Approximate pronunciation
/aɪ/	like	As in Catalan 'aire'
/aʊ/	now	As in Catalan 'caure'
/eɪ/	late	As in Spanish 'peine'
/əʊ/	boat	Pronounced as a close 'o' followed by 'u'
/ɔɪ/	boy	As in Spanish 'voy'
/uə/	poor	Pronounced as Spanish or Catalan 'u' followed by the neuter sound ə

The English diphthongs have a great variety of spellings. The following words, for example, have all the same sound, but different spellings:

day /deɪ/; late /leɪt/; waiter /weɪtə/; straight /streɪt/

Home electronics

Carles Mora Queralt i Manuel Felipe Barroso Terrones

Contents

Introduction

The present unit is called 'Home electronics' and it deals with the aspects that are the closest to us, as they refer to such everyday things as digital electronics and the installations that bring the electricity and the TV signals to our homes.

The era of analogical devices has certainly passed. Nowadays digital electronics are everywhere and for this reason we are going to make some reference to the topic, a reference that must be necessarily brief. Apart from that, we are also going to make a description of the electrical and the TV installations. As it is obvious, such descriptions do not have a professional purpose. The objective of this course is not to learn Electronics (for this you have the other modules in the studies of 'Instal·lacions elèctriques automàtiques'), but to provide you with the appropriate vocabulary to talk about professional matters in English. You can learn these words by working on the texts that you can find at the beginning of each section.

The unit is divided into three sections. In the section called 'Digital electronics', you will learn about different ways of expressing the past. You will also learn about the apparently complicated system of the English prepositions of place and time, with a special reference to the correct expression of the time and the dates. The use of prepositions can be a little difficult because there are no rules to explain their correct use, so you should learn them as a unit with the noun they go with. In this section you will also see examples of business letters and e-mails as well as the different elements of these two types of text and how those elements are organized in what is called 'the layout'. The section also includes the characteristics of the formal language and the informal language, so you can distinguish both styles and use them appropriately. Finally, you will learn how to explain and respond to problems related to your job.

In the section called 'Electrical installations', you will read a text with a description of the installation that allows electricity to reach our homes. In this section, you will also get some ideas to improve your speaking skills. They are only ideas because there are no rules for speaking. The acquisition of the speaking skills very much depends on your possibility of getting together with someone who can help you in this task. However, you will learn about the characteristics of the oral language, which you can try to apply when you practise your oral skills. You will also study the modal verbs, the pronouns and possessives and the different ways of making and responding to requests, that is, how we can ask other people to do things.

The section 'Television installations' is mostly devoted to the listening skills, but you can also apply most of the contents to improve your speaking skills. The text is about the characteristics of the TV installations and how they work in order to bring and decodify the TV signal that is captured by the aerial. In the grammar

section, you will study the conditional sentences in English. You will also learn different expressions which are commonly used in telephone conversations and how to express your opinions and agree or disagree with other people's opinions.

Finally, you will learn how to write a curriculum vitae in English. This ability is more and more necessary everyday, as in a globalized society the jobs are no longer located in our own territory. Very often, the possibility of finding a job only comes if we are ready to move to another country or we have the ability to deal with companies from other countries. It is for this reason that the English language has become so important in the professional field.

Learning objectives

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

1. Understand oral messages in standard language both in daily life situations and in the professional field of the electrical installations as well as analize the general meaning of a message and relate it to the corresponding language resources.

- Arrange the elements that make up a message.

- Identify the main idea in a message.

- Be conscious of the importance of understanding the main ideas in a message even if you do not understand all the elements that compose the message.

- Get specific information in messages about usual aspects of the everyday and professional life.

- Identify the main ideas in a well-structured speech in standard language about well-known aspects and transmitted in the media.

2. Understand simple written texts related to the field of electrical installations and analize the contents comprehensively.

- Choose reference material and technical dictionaries.

- Read simple texts in standard language.

- Translate a text in standard language by using reference materials, if necessary.

- Interpret the general meaning of a message.

- Relate the text to its correponding context.

- Identify the terminology used in a message.

- Interpret technical manuals.

3. Produce clear, well-organized oral messages frequently used in companies of the field of electrical installations and take an active part in professional conversations.

- Express the tasks which you have to carry out in your job.

- Communicate by using formulas, connectors and strategies used in the interaction with other people.

- Describe and arrange a task in a sequence.

4. Write simple texts in standard language as normally used in the field of electrical installations and use the appropriate resources for each situation.

- Write short texts referring to everyday and/or professional aspects.

- Summarize texts related to your job.

- Organize the information in a coherent way.

- Apply the appropriate rules and specific vocabulary when filling in documents.

5. Show the appropriate attitude and behaviour in communicative situations as established by international conventions

- Define the most distinctive aspects of the customs of English-speaking communities.

- Describe the social conventions of your country.

- Identify the values and beliefs which are characteristic of English-speaking communities.

- Identify the social and professional aspects of your job in all types of oral and written messages.

- Apply the social conventions in English-speaking communities.

1. Digital electronics

Digital electronics is a part of the wider science of Electronics which refers to electronical systems where signals are represented only by two states, which are usually called "0" (or "false") and "1" (or "true"). Each of these states has a certain voltage band, usually between 1.5 and 18 volts. Digital electronics stands in opposition to analogue electronics, in which signals are codified whithin a continuous range.

Digital electronics can use the Boolean logic to make extraordinarily complex logical and arithmetical calculations. The Boolean logic is based on the two values "0" and "1" and this is why it is also called "binary logic". Digital systems are very useful because it is much easier to switch into a limited number of states than to reproduce a continuous range of values, as it happens with analogue electronics.

The most common use of the Boolean logic is to build up digital circuits, which are the basis of all digital devices. A digital electronic circuit is composed of logic gates. A logic gate is a device that performs logical operations with the purpose of producing one output from one or more logic inputs. There a few simple logic gates which can be combined to build up practically any digital component.

The simplest gate is called "NOT gate". It takes one bit as an input (for example "0") and produces the opposite as output ("1"). Other types of gates are the "AND gate" (which performs an "and" operation on two inputs: the idea is that if one of the inputs is "0", then the output is always "0") and the "OR gate" (if one of the inputs is "1" then the output is always "1"). These are the three basic types of gates, but there are others, like the NAND and the NOR gates, which are combinations of the basic types. These gates produce an incredibly high number of combinations of the binary digits 1 and 0. As an example of this, one hour of music in a compact disc is composed of about 6 billion binary digits.

The digital electronics has represented a great advance in relation to analogue electronics. One advantage is that with digital electronics the quality of the sound or the image has improved a lot. This is so because a digital signal can very easily avoid the noise that distorts the sound and the image in analogue devices. The reason is that a digital signal only takes two levels whereas an analogue signal is represented in a continuously variable range, so any distortion of the signal affects the output.

Another advantage of digital circuits is that a signal can be improved by adding binary digits to represent the signal, and this does not require a change in the system except for the addition of more digital circuits. However, in analogue systems an improvement of the resolution requires deep changes in the whole system.

In spite of everything, digital systems also have some disadvantages. For example,

they require more energy than analogue systems and this produces more heat. Some devices, like computers, must incorporate a fan to cool the whole system, which in turn requires more energy to make it run. In battery-powered devices, like the mobile phones, this may prevent the use of all the potentialities of digital systems. Digital systems are also more sensitive to errors in the misinterpretation or the loss of simple pieces of data. If this happens, the system makes the wrong calculations and all the related data may change and so produce the failure of the whole system.

1.1 Grammar: the past tenses

The past tenses are those which are used to speak about the past. We can conceive the actions of the verbs in different ways. For example, we can see the action as finished or unfinished at the moment of speaking. We can also conceive the action as taking place at a point in the past or as having a continuity for a certain period of time. For this reason, there is a variety of verb tenses which are used to express the past.

The verb tenses which we are going to study are the past simple, the past continuous, the present perfect simple, the present perfect continuous, the past perfect simple and the past perfect continuous.

These tenses very often appear in the same sentence with adverbs and adverbial expressions that refer to the past (like "yesterday", "last night", "one year ago", etc.)

Also, when we conjugate the past simple and the perfect simple tenses, it is important to consider whether the verb is regular or irregular.

1.1.1 The past simple

The past simple expresses a finished action or a state in the past. The action in the past simple never includes the idea of duration. The emphasis is on what happened and when it happened. The past simple is also used to express a series of actions that happened one after the other in the past. A sentence with the verb in past simple usually includes an adverb or adverbial expression which indicates that the action took place in the past and is now finished. Some of these adverbs are: "yesterday", "last night", "last year", "one year ago", "in 1900", "in the 19th century", etc.

See the annex "List of irregular verbs" for a list of the most important irregular verbs in English.

The conjugation of the past simple tenses depends on whether the verb is regular or irregular. The past tense of regular verbs always end in -ed, but the irregular verbs have a different form in the past. There is no way of guessing which verbs are regular and which verbs are irregular, so the only option is to learn the irregular

verbs by heart.

The table below shows the past simple forms of the regular verb 'work'.

TABLE 1.1. Conjugation of the past simple (regular verbs)

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	worked	did not work	didn't work	Did I work ...?
You	worked	did not work	didn't work	Did you work ...?
He / She / It	worked	did not work	didn't work	Did he work...?
We	worked	did not work	didn't work	Did we work ...?
You	worked	did not work	didn't work	Did you work...?
They	worked	did not work	didn't work	Did they work...?

The table below shows the past simple forms of the irregular verb 'go'.

TABLE 1.2. Conjugation of the past simple (irregular verbs)

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	went	did not go	didn't go	Did I go ...?
You	went	did not go	didn't go	Did you go ...?
He / She / It	went	did not go	didn't go	Did he go...?
We	went	did not go	didn't go	Did we go ...?
You	went	did not go	didn't go	Did you go...?
They	went	did not go	didn't go	Did they go...?

Notice the following:

- In the past simple, the verbs have all the same form, including the 3rd person singular, which does not add an -s, as in the present.

- The negative and interrogative are formed with the auxiliary "did", which is actually the irregular past form of "do". After "did", the verb always takes the infinitive without "to".

- The irregular verbs are only evident in the affirmative form. In the negative and affirmative, the verb is in the infinitive because of the auxiliary "did".

Here are some examples of the use of the past simple:

1. Finished actions:

   - I *worked* in a factory 20 years ago. (Cat: *Vaig treballar* a una fàbrica fa 20 anys)

   - *Did you watch* the film on TV last night? (Cat: *Vas veure* la pel·lícula de la tele ahir a la nit?)

- Mr Smith *didn't start* to work in this company until last year. (Cat: El Sr Smith *no va començar* a treballar en aquesta empresa fins l'any passat)
- She *met* her husband at a party when they were 15. (Cat: *Va conèixer* el seu marit a una festa quan tenien 15 anys)

2. Consecutive actions:

- I *got up*, *had* a shower and *left* the house. (Cat: *Em vaig llevar*, *em vaig dutxar* i *vaig marxar* de casa)
- He *had* two drinks, *took* his car and *had* an accident. (Cat: *Va prendre* dues copes, *va agafar* el cotxe i *va tenir* un accident)

3. States in the past:

- *Were* you very tired after yesterday's long day at work? (Cat: *Estaves* molt cansada després del llarg dia de feina d'ahir?)
- We all *felt* very happy when he left. (Cat: Tots nosaltres *vam estar* molt contents quan va marxar)
- It *was* very hot last summer. (Cat: *Va fer* molta calor l'estiu passat)

1.1.2 The past continuous

When we use the past continuous, we express an action in the past which was not finished at the specific moment that we mention. On the contrary, the action still continued for a time after that moment. In the past continuous, we emphasize the duration of the action, which we regard as taking place for a while. It is used much in the same way as the present continuous, but referring the action to the past.

The past continuous is also used to express two or more actions in the past that were taking place at the same time. It is a compound tense which has the following structure:

- AUXILIARY "TO BE" (in past simple) + VERB ENDING IN -ING

The following table shows the past continuous forms of the verb 'work'.

TABLE 1.3. The conjugation of the past continuous

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	was working	was not working	wasn't working	was I working ...?
you	were working	were not working	weren't working	were you working ...?
he, she, it	was working	was not working	wasn't working	was he working ...?
we	were working	were not working	weren't working	were we working ...?
you	were working	were not working	weren't working	were you working ...?

T ABLE 1.3 (continued)

	Affirmative	Negative		Interrogative
		Long form	Short form	
they	were working	were not working	weren't working	were they working ...?

Notice that the past continuous has the same structure as the present continuous, with the only difference that the auxiliary verb "to be" is conjugated in the past.

Here are some examples of the past continuous in a context:

1. Unfinished actions in the past:

   - I *was sleeping* at eleven last night. (Cat: *Estava dormint/dormia* ahir a les onze de la nit)
   - What *were* you *doing* last year? (Cat: Què *estaves fent/feies* l'any passat?)
   - I *wasn't doing* anything. (No *estava fent/no feia* res)

2. Simultaneous actions in the past:

   - He *was talking* about the markets while everybody *was sleeping*. (Cat: *Estava parlant* dels mercats mentre tothom *dormia*)
   - They *were going* home when I *was* still *waiting* for them in the boardroom. (Cat: *Anaven* cap a casa mentre jo encara els *esperava* a la sala de juntes)

As you can see in the examples, the past continuous form is usually translated into Catalan with the periphrastic form ("estava dormint") or with the simple form of the "pretèrit imperfet" ("dormia").

These sentences express the idea that at the time indicated ("at 11 last night", "last year"), the action of the verb was not finished. The action started before that time and continued afterwards.

When we express the idea of two simultaneous actions, the two sentences are usually linked with the time connectors "while" (Cat: mentre) or "when" (Cat: quan).

The difference between the uses of the past simple and the past continuous is very clear in a certain type of complex sentences. In these sentences, we find two actions in the past: one describes a long action that took place for a certain time (in past continuous) while the other is a short action (in past simple) that took place in the middle of the long one.

For example:

   - I *was waiting* for the train when I *met* Anne. (Cat: *Estava esperant* el tren quan *em vaig trobar* a Anne)
   - While we *were eating* outside, it *started* to rain. (Cat: Mentre *estàvem menjant* a fora, *va començar* a ploure)

In the two examples, we have a long action ("was waiting", "were eating") and a short action ("met", "started"). The two sentences are linked with "when" and "while", respectively. The idea is that the subject was doing something when something else happened in the middle of that action.

> As we said when explaining the present continuous, not all the verbs admit the continuous forms. There are some which cannot be expressed in the past continuous although the context would require that form. Remember some of these verbs: *love, like, enjoy, hate, prefer, want, think, remember, doubt, understand, know, believe, see, have* (in the sense of possession), *own*.

1.1.3 The present perfect simple and the present perfect continuous

In spite of their name, the present perfect simple and the present perfect continuous always refer to past actions. However, they refer to a past with strong connections with the present.

The present perfect simple

The present perfect simple is used in the following cases:

- To express an action that started in the past, but is not finished yet. The sentence usually has the prepositions "for" or "since".

- To express a recently finished action whose consequence is still felt in the present.

- To express a finished action in the past, but within a period of time which is not finished yet. In this case, we usually specify the period of time with the corresponding adverbial ("today", "this morning", "this week", "this year", etc.)

- To express a finished action in an indeterminate past, that is, we say what happened, but not when it happened. In this sense, the present perfect usually appears with certain adverbs ("yet", "just", "already", etc.)

As in the case of the past simple,

the past participle can be irregular. The only way of knowing the correct forms of irregular verbs is to learn them by heart.

The present perfect simple is a compound verb tense that has the following structure:

- AUXILIARY "HAVE" (in the present simple) + PAST PARTICIPLE FORM OF THE VERB

The following table shows the conjugation of the present perfect of the regular verb 'work'.

TABLE 1.4. The conjugation of the present perfect simple of regular verbs

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	have worked	have not worked	haven't worked	have I worked ...?
you	have worked	have not worked	haven't worked	have you worked ...?
he, she, it	has worked	has not worked	hasn't worked	has he worked ...?
we	have worked	have not worked	haven't worked	have we worked ...?
you	have worked	have not worked	haven't worked	have you worked ...?
they	have worked	have not worked	haven't worked	have they worked ...?

In the next table, you can see the forms corresponding to the irregular verb 'go'.

TABLE 1.5. The conjugation of the present perfect simple of irregular verbs

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	have gone	have not gone	haven't gone	have I gone ...?
you	have gone	have not gone	haven't gone	have you gone ...?
he, she, it	has gone	has not gone	hasn't gone	has he gone ...?
we	have gone	have not gone	haven't gone	have we gone ...?
you	have gone	have not gone	haven't gone	have you gone ...?
they	have gone	have not gone	haven't gone	have they gone ...?

Notice the irregular form of the verb in the past participle ("gone")

Now see some examples of the use of this verb tense:

1. Actions that started in the past, but are not finished:

- I *have worked* in this company for 23 years. (Cat: *Fa* 23 anys *que treballo* a aquesta empresa / *Porto* 23 anys *treballant* a aquesta empresa)

- They *have studied* English since they were ten. (Cat: *Estudien* anglès des que tenien deu anys / *Porten estudiant* anglès des dels deu anys)

Notice the translation of these examples into Catalan to see the meaning of the sentences in present perfect. In both examples, the action started in the past ("23 years ago", "when they were ten"), but it is not finished. This means that now I am still working in this company, and that now they are still studying English. The prepositions "for" (Cat: durant) and "since" (Cat: des de) indicate the period of time that the action has taken place. As you can see in the examples, the Catalan language uses a totally different structure to express the same idea.

The prepositions "for" and "since" are both used to express the period of time that has passed from the beginning of the action until the present, but they appear in different contexts:

- "For" is used with a period of time (23 years, ten days, six hours, etc.)

- "Since" is used with a specific moment in the past that marks the starting point of an action (yesterday, last Monday, three o'clock, etc.)

"For" can also be used with other tenses to indicate the duration of an action, but "since" is only used with the present perfect because it always refers to an action that started in the past and still continues in the present.

2. Recently finished actions:

- It's wet because it *has rained* all night. (Cat: Està mullat perquè *ha plogut* tota la nit)

- She is tired because she *has worked* a lot. (Cat: Està cansada perquè *ha treballat* molt)

In these examples, the recent action ("has rained", "has worked") still has a consequence in the present ("it is wet", "she is tired").

3. Actions within a period of time that is not finished:

- *Have* you *done* anything special today? (Cat: *Has fet* alguna cosa especial avui?)

- We *haven't seen* Mike this week. (Cat: Aquesta setmana *no hem vist* a Mike)

Notice that the period of time indicated by the adverbial ("today", "this week") is not finished at the moment of speaking. We are in the same day and in the same week in which the actions have taken place.

4. Actions in an unspecified past:

- I *have* just *arrived*. (Cat: *Acabo d'arribar*)

- They *haven't gone* home yet. (Cat: Encara *no han anat* a casa)

- The classes *have started*. (Cat: Les classes *han començat*)

In all these sentences, we refer to actions that happened in the past, but without saying when.

There are some adverbs that are usually associated with the present perfect tense when it indicates actions in an unspecified past. These adverbs are the following (table 1.6).

TABLE 1.6. Adverbs used with the present perfect simple

Adverb	Example	
Never	I have *never* been in Japan.	No he estat *mai* al Japó.
Just	They have *just* arrived.	*Acaben d'*arribar.
Already	They have *already* repaired the computers.	*Ja* han arreglat els ordinadors.
Ever	Have you *ever* been to Japan?	Has estat *alguna vegada* al Japó?
Yet	They haven't arrived *yet*.	*Encara* no han arribat.
Yet	Have they arrived *yet*?	*Ja* han arribat?

The present perfect continuous

The present perfect continuous is used much in the same way as the present perfect simple, but in the continuous form we emphasize the continuity of the action rather than the action in itself. The present perfect continuous is used to express an action that started in the past but is not finished yet. The period of time that has passed from the beginning of the action until the present time is expressed with the prepositions "for" or "since".

The structure of this complex verb form is:

- AUXILIARY "TO BE" (in present perfect simple) + VERB ENDING IN -ING.

The table 1.7 shows the forms of the present perfect continuous of the verb 'work'.

TABLE 1.7. The conjugation of the present perfect continuous

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	have been working	have not been working	haven't been working	have I been working ...?
you	have been working	have not been working	haven't been working	have you been working ...?
he, she, it	has been working	has not been working	hasn't been working	has he been working ...?
we	have been working	have not been working	haven't been working	have we been working ...?
you	have been working	have not been working	haven't been working	have you been working ...?
they	have been working	have not been working	haven't been working	have they been working ...?

Here are some examples of the use of the present perfect continuous:

- We *have been working* in this company for more than 20 years (Cat: *Portem treballant* a aquesta empresa des de fa més de 20 anys)

- They *have been waiting* in the hall since ten o'clock (Cat: *Porten esperant*

al vestíbul des de les deu)

1.1.4 The past perfect simple and the past perfect continuous

These two verb tenses are similar in meaning to the present perfect tenses, but they always refer to actions that started and finished in the past. Remember that the present perfect tenses describe actions that started in the past and still continue in the present.

The difference between the simple and continuous tenses has to do with the way in which we regard the action.

The past perfect simple

The past perfect simple is used in the same way as the present perfect simple, but the action of the verb started and finished in the past. In general, the past perfect simple is used to describe an action that took place before another action in the past, which is expressed with the past simple.

This tense is formed in the following way:

- AUXILIARY "HAVE" (in past simple) + PAST PARTICIPLE

The table 1.8 shows the conjugation of the regular verb "work" in past perfect simple.

TABLE 1.8. The conjugation of the past perfect simple of regular verbs

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	had worked	had not worked	hadn't worked	had I worked ...?
you	had worked	had not worked	hadn't worked	had you worked ...?
he, she, it	had worked	had not worked	hadn't worked	had he worked ...?
we	had worked	had not worked	hadn't worked	had we worked ...?
you	had worked	had not worked	hadn't worked	had you worked ...?
they	had worked	had not worked	hadn't worked	had they worked ...?

It should be remembered that the past participle has irregular forms.

Here are some examples of the use of the past perfect simple:

- When he retired in 1980, he *had worked* for 40 years. (Cat: Quan es va jubilar al 1980, *havia treballat* durant 40 anys)

- I *had* never *seen* Andrew before he came here. (Cat: No *havia vist* mai a

Andrew abans que vingués aquí)

- In 1987 I *had finished* my studies. (Cat: A l'any 1987 *havia acabat* els estudis)

In these examples, we mention an action in the past ("when he retired in 1980", "before he came here") or a point in the past ("In 1987") and express the action that had taken place before that time ("had worked", "had never seen").

The past perfect continuous

The past perfect continuous has the same use as the present perfect continuous, but the action of the verb started and finished in the past. As in all the continuous tenses, the past perfect continuous stresses the continuity of the action.

This tense has the following structure:

- AUXILIARY "BE" (in past perfect simple) + VERB ENDING IN -ING

The table 1.9 shows the conjugation of the verb "work" in past perfect continuous.

TABLE 1.9. The conjugation of the past perfect continuous

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	had been working	had not been working	hadn't been working	had I been working ...?
you	had been working	had not been working	hadn't been working	had you been working ...?
he, she, it	had been working	had not been working	hadn't been working	had he been working ...?
we	had been working	had not been working	hadn't been working	had we been working ...?
you	had been working	had not been working	hadn't been working	had you been working ...?
they	had been working	had not been working	hadn't been working	had they been working ...?

The following sentences illustrate the use of this tense:

- We *had been waiting* for three hours when he finally appeared. (Cat: *Havíem estat esperant* durant tres hores quan finalment va aparèixer)

- We were tired because we *had been working* hard all day (Cat: Estàvem cansats perquè *havíem estat treballant* molt durant tot el dia)

1.2 Prepositions of place and time. Clock times and dates.

In a sentence, the prepositions are generally placed before a noun or noun phrase. The term "noun phrase" refers to an expression in which a noun is the nucleus or most important word (as for example, in "an interesting summer").

As is obvious, the prepositions of place are those which are used to express the location of the noun, whereas the prepositions of time are those which are used in time adverbials to indicate when the action takes place. You may find that the correct use of the prepositions is a little confusing because sometimes their use depends much on the noun that it goes with rather than on their meaning. There are no exact rules to establish which prepositions go with each noun, so the best option is to learn the preposition and the noun as a unit.

Closely related to the prepositions of time are the clock times and the dates. As we will see, there is a variety of ways of expressing the times and the dates.

1.2.1 Prepositions of place

We can distinguish two types of prepositions of place:

1. Those expressing position.

2. Those expressing movement.

We are going to study them separately.

Prepositions expressing position

The most common prepositions and prepositional phrases to express the position or location of a person or a thing are:

- **In** (Cat: a, dintre de): in the garden, in the box, in the street, in England, in the city, etc.

- **Inside** (Cat: dintre de): inside the kitchen, inside the pocket, etc.

- **Outside** (Cat: fora de): outside the house, outside the country, etc.

- **On** (Cat: a, a sobre de): on the desk, on the shelf, on the chair, on the wall, on the floor, etc.

- **At** (Cat: a): at the door, at the table, at the cinema, at the window, at the tree, etc.

- **Opposite** (Cat: al davant de, enfront): opposite the park, opposite Sandra, opposite the school, etc.

- **In front of** (Cat: davant de): in front of a man, in front of the house, etc.

- **Next to** (Cat: al costat de): next to the bank, next to my friend, next to the lamp, etc.

- **Behind** (Cat: al darrera de): behind the curtains, behind a bus, behind the door, behind the tree, etc.

- **Near** (Cat: a prop de): near London, near the road, near the window, etc.

- **Over** (Cat: per damunt de): over the bed, over my head, etc.

- **Under** (Cat: a sota de): under the table, under a tree, under my jacket, etc.

- **Above** (Cat: per damunt de): above the vice-president, above the house, etc.

- **Below** (Cat: per sota de): below the president, below the standards, etc.

- **On the corner of** (Cat: a la cantonada de): on the corner of the street, on the corner of London Rd and High St., etc.

Some prepositions are very similar in meaning. The use of one or the other depends on the exact meaning that we want to convey. For example, we can say:

- He is *in* the cinema (meaning that he is inside the cinema, and not in the street)

- He is *at* the cinema (in a general sense, stressing the purpose of going to the cinema rather than the location)

- The lamp is *on* the table (resting on the table)

- The lamp is *over* the table (hanging, with no contact with the table)

"Above" and "below" are mostly used to refer to a higher or lower position in status, whereas "over" and "under" are used to refer to the place. For example:

- The president is *above* the vice-president.

- The poster is *over* the bed.

Prepositions expressing movement

These prepositions are used with verbs that denote movement, like: "come", "go", "drive", "fly", "put", "walk", "swim", "run", etc. The most important are:

- **Into** (Cat: cap a dins de): into the woods, into the box, into the street, etc.

- **Onto** (Cat: cap a sobre de): onto the table, onto the wall, onto the floor, etc.

- **To** (Cat: cap a): to Japan, to the school, to the wall, to the door, etc.

- **From** (Cat: de, des de): from Japan, from school, etc.

- **Under** (Cat: cap a sota de): under the table, under the tree, etc.

- **Over** (Cat: per damunt de): over the wall, over the line, etc.

- **In front of** (Cat: cap a davant de): in front of the shop, in front of a person, etc.

- **Opposite** (Cat: enfront de): opposite the school, opposite the front door, etc.

- **Behind** (Cat: cap a darrera de): behind a car, behind the door, etc.

As you can see in the examples, most of the prepositions have the same form when they denote position and when they denote movement. Compare these sentences:

- I ran *behind* a car (Cat: Vaig córrer cap a darrera un cotxe) (movement)

- I was *behind* a car (Cat: Estava darrera un cotxe) (position)

- I put the box *under* the table. (Cat: Vaig posar la caixa a sota la taula) (movement)

- The box was *under* the table. (Cat: La caixa estava a sota de la taula) (position)

But in other cases there are different prepositions:

- I went *into* the house. (Cat: Vaig entrar dins de casa) (movement)

- I was *in* the house. (Cat: Estava a dins de la casa) (position)

- I put the keys *onto* the table. (Cat: vaig posar les claus al damunt de la taula) (movement)

- The keys were *on* the table. (Cat: Les claus estaven sobre la taula) (position)

> In speech, it is very common to use the prepositions "in" and "on" to denote both movement and position. So we can say:
>
> - I went *in* the house.
>
> - I put the keys *on* the table.
>
> In writing, however, the forms "into" and "onto" are preferred.

The prepositions "to" and "from" are only used with verbs of movement:

- I'm flying *to* England. (Cat: Vaig a Anglaterra)

- I'm coming *from* that shop. (Cat: Vinc d'aquella botiga)

1.2.2 Prepositions of time

Here are the most important prepositions of time and their uses:

In (Cat: a, en): this preposition is used in the following cases:

- with years, centuries and historical periods: in 2010, in the 19th century, in the Middle Ages, etc.

- with the names of the months: in April, in September, etc.

- with the names of seasons: in spring, in summer, in autumn, in the fall (Am.Eng.), in winter.

- with the parts of the day (except "night"): in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening.

On (Cat: a, en): this preposition is used in the following cases:

- with the days of the week: on Mondays, on Tuesday, on Saturday morning, etc.

- with dates: on 9th June, on 4th February 2009, etc.

At (Cat: a, en): this preposition is used in the following cases:

- with clock times and nouns denoting clock times: at 4 o'clock, at 3:30pm, at midnight, at dawn, etc.

- with the names of holidays and festivals: at Christmas, at Easter, etc.

- with the words "night" and "weekend": at night, at the weekend.

- in the expression "at the end of..."

For (Cat: durant): this preposition expresses duration. It is always placed before a period of time: for five years, for three hours, etc.

Since (Cat: des de): this preposition is used to express the starting point of a present action or state: since last year, since yesterday, etc.

Before (Cat: abans de): before 1997, before three o'clock, before summer, before Christmas, etc.

After (Cat: després de): after 1997, after three o'clock, after summer, after Christmas, etc.

Until (Cat: fins a): this preposition is used in all situations to indicate the end of an action: until midnight, until 2023, until Sunday, etc.

At this point, it should be noticed that when we indicate only the starting point of an action, we generally use the preposition "since"; when we only express the end of the action, we use "until". When we express the beginning and the end, we use "from...to", but we can also say "from...until".

From ... to (Cat: des de... fins a): this double preposition indicates the starting point and the end of an action: from three to four; from April to May, from the 18th to the 20th century, etc.

> The prepositions IN, ON and AT are not used when the noun phrase that follows has any of these words: "last", "next", "this", "that" and "every". For example:
>
> - Last Monday (and not: *on the last Monday)
>
> - Next summer (and not: *in the next summer)
>
> - This April (and not: *in this April)
>
> - Every year (and not *in every year)

1.2.3 Clock times

We generally use clock times to answer questions like:

- What's the time? (Cat: quina hora és?)

- What time is it? (Cat: quina hora és?)

Both questions are used in the same way, with no difference in meaning.

When we have to add minutes to the hour, there are two ways of expressing the clock times. The following table shows the different ways in which we can express time.

TABLE 1.10. The expression of clock times

3:00	three o'clock	
3:05	three oh five	five past three
3:12	three twelve	twelve minutes past three
3:15	three fifteen	a quarter past three
3:30	three thirty	half past three
3:40	three forty	twenty to four
3:45	three forty-five	a quarter to four
3:56	three fifty-six	four minutes to four
4:00	four o'clock	

In relation to the expression of clock times, you should notice the following:

- The adverb "past" indicates the minutes between the hour and the half hour; the adverb "half" indicates the half hour; the adverb "to" indicates

the minutes between the half hour and the next hour.

- When the minutes are not multiples of five, we should add the word "minutes": twenty-two minutes past six; forty-three minutes to eight, etc.

In English-speaking countries, the 24-hour clock is not widely used, as they prefer to add the labels "am" (ante meridian) and "pm" (post meridian). Therefore, 23:40 is usually expressed as "11:40 pm" and 11:40 is "11:40 am".

1.2.4 Dates

The expression of the dates usually implies the use of the day, the month and the year. The formats of dates are different in British and American English, so it is very important to be well aware of the differences.

The table below shows the different ways of expressing the dates in both varieties of English.

TABLE 1.11. The expression of dates

	British English	American English
A	The ninth of June 2007	June the ninth, 2007
B	9th June 2007	June 9th, 2007
C	9 June 2007	June 9, 2007
D	9/6/2007	6/9/2007
E	9/6/07	6/9/07
F	09/06/07	06/09/07

In relation to the dates, notice the following:

- Format A is very formal and is mostly used in printed items, such as wedding invitations.

- Formats D, E and F can cause misinterpretations if we don't know in which variety of English the date is written. We can interpret the date 6/9/2007 in two ways: 9 June 2007 (in the American format); 6 September 2007 (in the British format).

- The way in which we write and say the dates often differs. All the dates, irrespective of their format, are pronounced: 'the ninth of June two thousand and seven'(in British English) or 'June the ninth two thousand and seven' (in American English).

1.3 Formal and informal style: business letters and e-mails

Written communication is a very important aspect in the use of English for business purposes. The interchange of business letters, e-mails and faxes is almost unavoidable in our jobs today. Therefore, it is very important to learn the basic aspects in the writing of this type of texts. Letters, e-mails and faxes are subject to a great deal of formality, especially business letters, so it is necessary to learn the special characteristics of this type of written communication.

1.3.1 Formal and informal style

When it comes to writing, we can distinguish two main styles: formal and informal. Let's see an example of each one to compare them and see the differences:

Formal style:

This is to inform you that I am interested in the post of programmer advertised in 'Computer World' of 3rd March and would appreciate if you could send me further details.

Informal style:

Do you remember the advertisement for a job as an electrician? It was in 'La Vanguardia' of last 3rd March. Well, I inform you that I'm interested in the job. Can you tell me more about it? Thanks.

The difference between the two texts is obvious. But what makes one text formal and the other text informal?

The difference is in the style of writing, that is, in the way in which we use the words to express our ideas. Different contexts require different ways of putting words together. We do not express ourselves in the same way when we write in an academic or scientific context as when we write to a friend or to a member of our family. The vocabulary and the syntax change depending on the situation. This difference in the styles of writing is the difference between formality and informality, or the difference between formal and informal writing.

Here is a list of characteristics of each style of writing:

Formal:

- Do not use colloquial words/expressions (use: "post" instead of "job", "I would appreciate it if..." instead of 'I would like...', etc.)

- Do not use contractions (write full words: "I am", "do not", "cannot", "will not", etc.)

- Write in third person (except in business letters, where the first person may be used)

- Do not address readers using the second person pronouns (use: "the reader" instead of "you", etc.)

- Do not use abbreviated words (use full versions, like "photograph", and not "photo"; "television", and not "TV", etc.)

- Do not use the imperative voice (say: "could you send me...?" instead of "send me...")

- Use the passive voice (for example: "it is believed that..." instead of "we believe that...")

- Use longer and more complex sentences (short and simple sentences makes a writing poor)

Informal:

- Use colloquial words and expressions ("well", "kids", "guy", etc.)

- Use contractions ("I'm", "don't", "can't", "won't", etc.)

- You may use first, second, or third person.

- You may address readers using the second person pronouns ("you", "your", etc.)

- You may use abbreviated words ("photo", "TV", etc.)

- You may use the imperative voice (for example: "Send me...", "Please remember...", etc.)

- You may use the active voice (for example: "We believe that...", etc.)

- You may use short and simple sentences.

These are only some of the differences between formal and informal writing. But you should remember that both styles are correct. It is all a matter of tone and setting. Formal English is used mainly in academic writing and business communications, whereas Informal English is casual and is appropriate when communicating with friends and relatives. When you choose the style of writing, you should think what you are writing and who you are writing to. Independently of the style of writing that you use (formal or informal), you must be consistent and not mix the two.

1.3.2 Business letters

Business letters are usually sent through the Post Office or a courier service. The main reasons for writing a business letter is to apply for a job, but there may be many other reasons: to persuade, to inform, to request, to thank, to remind,

to recommend, to apologise, to congratulate, to complain, to reject or accept a proposal, to introduce a person or project, to make an invitation, etc.

Business letters are formal texts that include a set of rules that are necessary to follow in order to write a correct letter. Some language aspects like grammar, punctuation and vocabulary are very important. Also, a good knowledge of the principles of letter writing is essential for successful communication in business. These principles include the layout of the letter, that is, the position of the different elements, the degree of formality and the type of language required for the specific purpose of the letter.
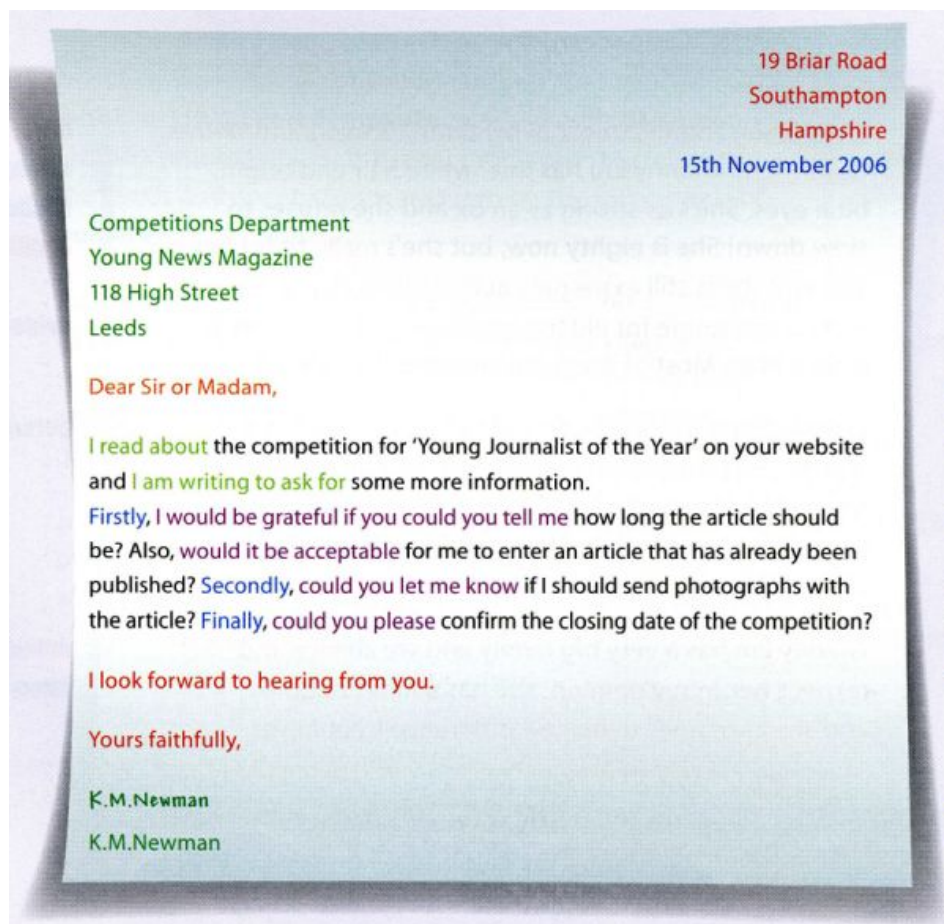
Layout of a business letter

See section "Dates" in this unit for information on the different date formats.

When writing a business letter, you should follow the standard format. The different components of the letter should appear in a specific position:

- **Your address**: on the top right corner of the page. Do not include your name in the address.

- **Name and address of the recipient**: a line below your address, on the left-hand side of the paper.

- **Date**: below your address (but the date may also go below the recipient's address). Also, be aware of the correct date format.

- **Opening**: two lines below the date. Begin with "Dear + the receiver's title and surname" (for example, "Dear Mr Jones"). If you don't know the receiver's name, write: "Dear Sir or Madam". Write a comma after the opening.

- **Body of the letter**: two lines below the opening. Separate the text clearly into paragraphs and use the appropriate language.

- **Closing**: two lines below the body, always on the left-hand side. The standard closing expression is: "Yours sincerely". Write a comma at the end.

- **Signature**: sign your letter right below the closing and type your name and surname. If you are writing for a company, add your title (Director, Head of Department, etc.)

- **Enclosure**: if you enclose a document with the letter, write it down after your signature (for example, "Enc: Curriculum vitae")

Figure 1.1. Figure 1

The figure above shows an example of a business letter written in the layout described above, but there might be variations, especially in the position of the date, which can also go below the receiver's address.

The language style of business letters

When writing the body of the letter, we can use different degrees of formality in the language, depending on our relationship with the receiver. The style can be **very formal**: when you do not know the person you are writing to; **formal**: when you know the name but do not know the person; **semi-formal**: when you know the person.

The difference in formality is especially evident in the conventional opening and closing expressions:

- **Opening**:

    - Very formal: Dear Sir or Madam / Dear Sirs
    - Formal: Dear Mr/Mrs Jones
    - Semi-formal: Dear Michael Jones

- **Closing**:

– Very formal: Yours faithfully (British English); Yours truly (American English)

– Formal: Yours sincerely (British English); Sincerily (American English)

– Semi-formal: Best regards; Best wishes

Independently of the degree of formality, there is a number of set expressions which are normally used to express common ideas in business letters. Here are some of these expressions:

- **Explaining the purpose of your letter**:

  – "I am interested in (applying for the post of personal assistant) ...'

  – "I am writing about (the meeting) ..."

- **Referring to the last contact with the receiver**:

  – "With reference to your letter of (28th October), ..."

  – "Following our phone conversation (yesterday), ..."

  – "Thank you for your letter of last (28th October), ..."

- **Referring to the subject**:

  – "Regarding the question of (your complain), ..."

  – "Regarding your advertisement for (the post of personal assistance), ..."

- **Referring to enclosures** (if any):

  – "I am enclosing (my CV)"

  – "Enclosed is a copy of (my CV)"

- **Requesting action**:

  – "I would be grateful if you would (send me a copy of your complain)"

  – "I would appreciate it if you would (send me a copy of your complain)"

- **Ending the letter** (before the closing):

  – "I look forward to hearing from you."

  – "Many thanks for your help in this matter."

Finally, a few things to consider when writing a business letter:

- A business letter should never be handwritten.

- Do not use contractions ("I don't", "I'm writing", etc.). Contractions reproduce the spoken language and do not correspond to the formality of the text.

- Do not add postscripts. Give all the information in the body of the letter.

1.3.3 E-mails

E-mail is the fastest and cheapest way to communicate. Today, it is the most common form of communication and is rapidly substituting business letters.

In general, e-mails are more informal than business letters and have fewer rules. However, there are some points to remember when writing an e-mail:

> The set of rules that governs the correct style of e-mails is called 'netiquette'.

- Write your mail as short as possible.

- Do not write in capital letters. The use of capital letters in e-mails implies that you are shouting.

- Write formal e-mails to people that you don't know (the opening and closing expressions as well as the language are the same as for business letters).

- Write semi-formal e-mails to people that you know.

- E-mails to colleagues and friends can be informal.

As for the contents of the e-mail, you should consider the following:

- Start with the most important information.

- Write the less important information in a separate paragraph.

- If the other person doesn't know about the situation you are writing about, explain it carefully at the beginning.

- If you are replying to a previous mail:

    - Avoid replying only "yes" or "no". Refer back to the question and then give your answer. A "No" answer normally requires an explanation.
    - Use the "Reply" tool to send your message. In this way, the original message will be revealed and it will be easier to refer to the previous message.

As with business letters, e-mails also have a standard format that organises the information. However, the places for your name, the receiver's address, the date and the subject are clearly indicated and might even appear automatically. It is very important that you always write the subject of your e-mail. The subject should summarize the purpose of the message in as few words as possible. Two other elements that are common in e-mails are "carbon copy" (abbreviated to CC), where you can include the names of other people who will also receive the message, and "blind carbon copy" (abbreviated to BCC), where you include other people who will receive a copy of the message, but their names will be invisible to the main receiver (the person in the field "TO").

Here is an example of the language in a formal e-mail message:

Subject: Computer Networks conference

Dear Mr Burns

I am interested in attending the conference on Computer Networks at the University of London on 6-7 March. Could you please send me the registration form?

I would be grateful if you could also send me a list of hotels in the area as well as a programme for the conference.

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Roberto Vázquez

2. Electrical installations

Electricity is a very important element in a house. Lights, appliances, television, HVAC systems and security alarms all run on electricity. For this reason, the electric installation is a very important element in the building of a house. Electric installations are more commonly referred to as electric wiring. This is composed of an electric circuit composed of the necessary elements to assure the correct work of the circuit itself and of the electric devices connected to it.

The electric wiring must be installed by a licensed electrician and it must follow the legislation that applies to this type of work. The international standard IEC 60364 Electrical Installations for Buildings of the International Electrotechnical Commission is an attempt to organize the national wiring standards of the European countries, but the fact is that most countries still apply their own national standards.

A circuit breaker

The process that allows the electricity to reach a house and turn on a lamp begins in the power station, which transforms energy into electricity. The distribution system includes transformers that allow to change the voltage without changing the electric power. The electric circuit that distributes the electricity throughout the house starts in the main entrance panel, which includes the circuit breaker, a security feature that protects the circuit from overload or short circuit. The circuit breaker is different from the fuse. Whereas the former can be reset after use, a fuse must be replaced once it has operated. There are other smaller panels at different points in the house to facilitate the wiring.

The electricity reaches all the house through the wires, which usually run inside the walls. At various points in the circuit, there are switches that allow, for example, to turn on and off the lights in a room. A switch is an electric component that interrupts the current (or flow of electricity). It generally consists of a mechanical device set on the wall. The electricity can be transferred to the different devices by means of a socket. A socket is usually mounted on the wall and has two or three holes called female contacts. The plug is a connector composed of protuding prongs or male contacts. The plug is attached to a cable, so when you plug in an electric device, the electricity is transferred through the cable to give power to the device. Most devices have a switch to stop the power supply, so it is not necessary to unplug everytime we want to turn it off.

The electric plugs and sockets might be different in other countries. The differences are related to voltage, shape and types of connectors and are the consequence of the lack of an international standard.

The home electricity is supplied by electric companies which exploit the energy resources and built and maintain the distribution system. They charge the user in accordance with the quantity of electric energy that he has consumed in a certain period of time. In order to control the energy consumed in a house or a building,

the companies set up electricity meters in order to measure the amount of energy. These meters are placed either inside the house or in a common area in the building to facilitate the access of the company staff that control the readings of the meter. The energy is typically mesured in kilowatts per hour, which is the amount of energy used by a load of one kilowatt over a period of one hour.

2.1 Grammar: modal verbs

The modal verbs form a class of verbs that have some special characteristics that make them different from all the other verbs. From a syntactical point of view, they are very similar to auxiliary verbs. Those characteristics are the following:

- Modal verbs have not got their own meaning. Together with another verb, which always takes the base form, they are used to express certain ideas like obligation, possibility, advice, etc. The structure of the sentence with a modal verb is the following:

    – S + modal + Verb in infinitive.

- The modal verbs do not change their form. They normally have one form, which is used to express the present and the future. The verb *can*, however, has a present form (*can*) and a past form (*could*). To express other verb tenses, we must use an alternative verb or expression with the same meaning as the modal verb.

- The modal verbs form the negative and the interrogative in the same way as the auxiliary verbs. The structure of this type of sentences is the following:

    – Negative: S. + MODAL + NOT + V. IN INFINITIVE
    – Interrogative: MODAL + S. + V. IN INFINITIVE

The modal verbs are: *can, could, must, should, may, might, will* and *would*.

On the other hand, the structure of the English questions is very similar to Spanish and Catalan, especially when the verb is an auxiliary or a modal. In all the other cases, however, the English language requires the use of the auxiliary verb "do", which may cause some difficulties for the learners of the language. Also, the expression of "question tags" in English is very different from Catalan and Spanish.

2.1.1 Can, could

The modal verbs "can" and "could" are, in fact, two forms of the same verb, but they have different meanings:

"Can" is used to express:

- **Present ability**: He can cook - (Cat: Ell sap / pot cuinar)

- **Certain possibility**: It can rain - (Cat: Pot ser que plogui)

- **Informal permission**: Can I go, please? - (Cat: Puc marxar, si us plau?)

- **Informal request**: Can you open the window, please? - (Cat: Pots obrir la finestra, si us plau?)

"Could" is used to express:

- **Past ability**: He could swim - (Cat: Ell podia / sabia nedar)

- **Uncertain possibility**: It could rain - (Cat: Podria ser que plogués)

- **Formal permission**: Could I go, please? - (Cat: Podria marxar, si us plau?)

- **Polite request**: Could you open the window, please? - (Cat: Podries obrir la finestra, si us plau?)

The following table shows the complete conjugation of "can".

TABLE 2.1. The modal verb "can"

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	can	cannot	can't	can I ...?
you	can	cannot	can't	can you ...?
he, she, it	can	cannot	can't	can he / she / it ...?
we	can	cannot	can't	can we ...?
you	can	cannot	can't	can you ...?
they	can	cannot	can't	can they ...?

Notice that the long form of the negative is spelt as one word.

The table below shows the forms of "could".

TABLE 2.2. The modal verb "could"

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	could	could not	couldn't	could I ...?
you	could	could not	couldn't	could you ...?
he, she, it	could	could not	couldn't	could he / she / it ...?
we	could	could not	couldn't	could we ...?
you	could	could not	couldn't	could you ...?
they	could	could not	couldn't	could they ...?

The modals "can" and "could" can only refer to present, future or, in the case of "could", past actions. If we need to use other verb tenses, we have to use alternative expressions with the same meaning as the modal verbs. For example:

Be able to (Cat: ser capaç de) expresses ability:

- I haven't been able to open that box. (Cat: No he estat capaç d'obrir aquesta capsa) or (Cat: No he pogut obrir aquesta capsa) (present perfect)

- I would like to be able to do it. (Cat: M'agradaria ser capaç de fer-ho) or (Cat: M'agradaria poder/saber fer-ho) (infinitive)

The other meanings of "can" and "could" have no alternative expressions, as they are not used in other contexts.

2.1.2 Must, should

The meanings of the verbs "must" and "should" are the following:

"Must" is used to express:

- **Obligation**: We must eat to live. (Cat: Hem de menjar per viure)

- **Prohibition** (in the negative): You mustn't smoke. (Cat: No has de fumar)

- **Predictions**: This must be Mary. (Cat: Aquesta deu ser Mary)

"Should" is used to express:

- **Advice**: You should come. (Cat: Hauries de venir)

- **Moral obligation**: We should eat something. (Cat: Hauríem de menjar alguna cosa)

> The difference between "obligation" and "moral obligation" sometimes depends on the circumstances. An obligation is something that we must do because there is a law or because it is strictly necessary. The obligation depends on external circumstances. On the other hand, a moral obligation is something that we should do because we feel that it is necessary. It depends on our own feelings. For example, the sentence "We must eat to live" is an obligation because if we do not eat, we die. The sentence "We should eat something" is a moral obligation because it is not necessary to eat anything in that moment to live, but I feel that we should eat something.

The following table shows the complete conjugation of "must".

TABLE 2.3. The modal verb "must"

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	must	must not	mustn't	must I ...?
you	must	must not	mustn't	must you ...?
he, she, it	must	must not	mustn't	must he / she / it ...?
we	must	must not	mustn't	must we ...?
you	must	must not	mustn't	must you ...?
they	must	must not	mustn't	must they ...?

When it is used to express obligation, "must" only refers to the present or the future. To use this verb in other tenses, we need the alternative form **have to** (Cat: haver de). On the other hand, when "must" has the meaning of prohibition, it has the alternative form **be prohibited / forbidden** (Cat: estar prohibit)

Examples:

- I *had to* go to the dentist yesterday - (Cat: Vaig haver d'anar al dentista ahir)

- I'*ve had* to visit George - (Cat: He hagut de visitar George)

- Ten years ago, it *was* also *prohibited* to smoke at work - (Cat: Fa deu anys tampoc es podia fumar a la feina)

The following table shows the conjugation of "should".

"Must" and "have to"

The alternative form of "must" can also be used in present and future with little difference in the meaning. Examples: We *must / have to* eat to live, I *must / will have to* do it tomorrow.

TABLE 2.4. The modal verb "should"

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	should	should not	shouldn't	should I ...?
you	should	should not	shouldn't	should you ...?
he, she, it	should	should not	shouldn't	should he / she / it ...?
we	should	should not	shouldn't	should we ...?
you	should	should not	shouldn't	should you ...?
they	should	should not	shouldn't	should they ...?

There is no alternative expression of "should". If we want to express the idea of "moral obligation", we must use the form "have to", as with the modal verb "must".

2.1.3 May, might

The meanings of the verbs "may" and "might" are the following:

"May" is used:

- To express a **possibility**: It may rain tonight. (Cat: Pot ser que plogui aquesta nit)

- To **ask for permission** (formal): May I take this seat, please? (Cat: Puc agafar aquesta cadira, si us plau?)

- To **give permission** (formal): You may go now. (Cat: Ja pots marxar)

"Might" is used:

- To express a **remote possibility**: It might rain tonight, but I don't think so (Cat: Podria ser que plogués aquesta nit, però no ho crec)

- To **ask for permission** (very formal): Might I speak to you for a moment? (Cat: Podria parlar amb vostè un moment?)

- To **give permission** (very formal): You might come (Cat: Pot entrar)

> Both "may" and "might" are used to speak about a possibility. The difference is that "may" indicates a possibility that the speaker sees as possible whereas "might" indicates a possibility which will not probably happen. On the other hand, "may" and "might" are used to ask for and give permission in two different levels of formality. However, "can" and "could" are much more common to ask for and give permission.

The following table shows the complete conjugation of "may".

TABLE 2.5. The modal verb "may"

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	may	may not	-	may I ...?
you	may	may not	-	may you ...?
he, she, it	may	may not	-	may he / she / it ...?
we	may	may not	-	may we ...?
you	may	may not	-	may you ...?
they	may	may not	-	may they ...?

"May" has no short form in the negative, as other verbs.

The table below shows the conjugation of "might".

TABLE 2.6. The modal verb "might"

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	might	might not	-	might I ...?
you	might	might not	-	might you ...?
he, she, it	might	might not	-	might he / she / it ...?

TABLE 2.6 (continued)

we	might	might not	-	might we ...?
you	might	might not	-	might you ...?
they	might	might not	-	might they ...?

As you can see, the modal verb "might" has no short forms in the negative.

Both "may" and "might" are only used to refer to the present and to the future, but they have the alternative expression **It is possible to ...** to express possibility in other tenses. For example:

- It *hasn't been possible to* cure cancer so far. (Cat: Fins el moment no ha estat possible curar el càncer)

- *To be possible to* fly to Mars is one of the scientists' dreams (Cat: Ser possible volar a Mart és un dels somnis dels científics)

2.1.4 Will, would

The modal verb **"will"** is used for:

- **The future forms**: I think that it will rain tomorrow. (Cat: Crec que demà plourà)

- **Requests**: Will you open the window, please? (Cat: Obriràs la finestra, si us plau?)

On the other hand, **"would"** is used in the following cases:

- **Conditional forms**: If I had time, I would go. (Cat: Si tingués temps, hi aniria)

- **Polite requests**: Would you open the window, please? (Cat: Obriries la finestra, si us plau?)

The following table shows the forms of "will".

TABLE 2.7. The modal verb "will"

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	will	will not	won't	will I ...?
you	will	will not	won't	will you ...?
he, she, it	will	will not	won't	will he / she /it ...?
we	will	will not	won't	will we ...?
you	will	will not	won't	will you ...?
they	will	will not	won't	will they ...?

The long form "will not" is very little used. On the other hand, notice that in the short form, there is a change in the vowel sound (i > o).

The following table shows the conjugation of "would".

TABLE 2.8. The modal verb "would"

	Affirmative	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	would	would not	wouldn't	would I ...?
you	would	would not	wouldn't	would you ...?
he, she, it	would	would not	wouldn't	would he / she / it ...?
we	would	would not	wouldn't	would we ...?
you	would	would not	wouldn't	would you ...?
they	would	would not	wouldn't	would they ...?

2.2 Vocabulary: pronouns and possessives

A pronoun is a word that is used to replace a noun or noun phrase that has already been mentioned. The main objective of a pronoun is to avoid the repetition of nouns and contribute to the fluency of the language. Depending on their function within the sentence, the pronouns can be divided into "subject pronouns" and "object pronouns".

As is obvious, the possessives are used to express possession. They can go before a noun and then they are called "possessive adjectives" or "determiners" (other determiners are the articles and the quantifiers). They can also be used to replace a noun in the possessive form (Saxon genitive) and then they are called "possessive pronouns".

"Determiners" are small words, like articles, possessives, demonstratives or quantifiers, which are always placed before a noun to modify its meaning.

2.2.1 Pronouns

The pronouns that function as subject of the sentence are called **subject pronouns**. They have person, number and gender distinctions. In the following sentences, you can see the subject pronouns in *italics*. Where relevant, we have included the same sentence with a noun to illustrate the use of the pronoun:

- **Singular**:
  - *I* can speak four languages. (Cat: *Jo* sé parlar quatre idiomes)
  - *You* are late. (Cat: *Tu* arribes tard)
  - Peter Fox is the new commercial director - *He* is the new commercial director. (Cat: Peter Fox és el nou director comercial - *Ell* és el nou director comercial)

- Laura drives to work everyday - *She* drives to work everyday. (Cat: Laura va a treballar amb cotxe cada dia - *Ella* va a treballar amb cotxe cada dia)

- The printer has no paper - *It* has no paper. (Cat: La impressora no té paper - No té paper)

- My dog is big and black - *It* is big and black. (Cat: el meu gos és gran i negre - *Ell* és gran i negre)

- **Plural**:

  - My friend and I go running every weekend - *We* go running every weekend. (Cat: El meu amic i jo anem a córrer cada cap de setmana - *Nosaltres* anem a córrer cada cap de setmana)

  - Peter and you should work less - *You* should work less. (Cat: Peter i tu hauríeu de treballar menys - *Vosaltres* hauríeu de treballar menys)

  - Frank and Gina are getting married in April - *They* are getting married in April. (Cat: Frank i Gina es casen a l'abril - *Ells* es casen a l'abril)

  - All the computers in the office were damaged by the fire - *They* were damaged by the fire. (Cat: Tots els ordinadors de l'oficina van ser malmesos pel foc - *Ells* van ser malmesos pel foc)

In Catalan and Spanish, the subject pronouns are not so much used as in English because in those languages the person is marked by the form of the verb. Remember that in English we must always say the subject pronoun.

You should remember a few things about the subject pronouns:

1. The pronoun "I" is always spelt with a capital letter.

2. "You" is used in the second person singular (Cat: tu) and in the second person plural (Cat: vosaltres). "You" can also be translated by the formal Catalan "vostè", "vostès".

3. In the third person singular, the pronoun has gender distinction: masculine (he), feminine (she) and neuter (for things and animals) (it)

4. In the third person plural, there is no gender distinction.

The pronouns that have the function of objects are called **object pronouns**. As in the case of subject pronouns, there is person, gender and number distinction. The following sentences illustrate the use of object pronouns:

- **Singular**:

  - Could you tell *me* your phone number, please? (Cat: *Em* podries dir el teu número de telèfon, si us plau?)

  - Wait a moment! I'll give *you* something. (Cat: Espera un moment! *Et* donaré una cosa)

- I met Mr Smith in the hall - I met *him* in the hall. (Cat: Em vaig trobar el Sr Smith al vestíbul - Me'*l* vaig trobar al vestíbul)

- We called my friend Anna last night - We called *her* last night. (Cat: Vam cridar a la meva amiga Anna ahir a la nit. *La* vam cridar ahir a la nit)

- Can you speak German? - Yes, I can speak *it* quite well, and you? (Cat: Saps parlar alemany? - Sí, *el* parlo bastant bé, i tu?)

- **Plural**:

  - Sandra came to the cinema with *us* last night. (Cat: Ahir a la nit, Sandra va venir al cinema amb *nosaltres*)

  - I'll give John and you an iPad - Is it OK for *you*? (Cat: Us regalaré un iPad a John i a tu - *Us* està bé?

  - Tell the visitors to wait outside - Tell *them* to wait outside. (Cat: Digues als visitants que esperin fora - Digues-*los* que esperin fora)

The object pronouns can be the direct object or the indirect object of the sentence and they are always used after prepositions.

2.2.2 Possessives

The possessive adjectives are always placed in front of the noun which they modify. The following are some examples of their use:

- **Singular**:

  - *My* name is Jones (Cat: *El meu* nom és Jones)

  - What's *your* job? (Cat: Quina és *la teva* feina?)

  - This is Roger and *his* sister Jane. (Cat: Aquest és Roger i *la seva* germana Jane)

  - This is Jane and *her* brother Roger. (Cat: Aquesta és Jane i *el seu* germà Roger)

  - This is the dog Blacky and *its* masters Jane and Roger. (Cat: Aquest és el gos Blacky i *els seus* amos Jane i Roger)

- **Plural**:

  - We have two cousins. These are *our* cousins. (Cat: Tenim dos cosins. Aquests són *els nostres* cosins)

  - You and Jack had a dog. Where's *your* dog? (Cat: Tu i Jack teníeu un gos. On és *el vostre* gos?)

- These are Roger and Jane and *their* dog Blacky. (Cat: Aquests són Roger i Jane i *el seu* gos Blacky)

- We built three houses with *their* gardens and all. (Cat: Vam construir tres cases amb *els seus* jardins i tot)

In relation to the possessive adjectives, notice that in the third person singular the possessive agrees in gender with the possessor and not with the noun, as in Catalan:

- Roger and his (=Roger's) sister.

- Jane and her (=Jane's) brother.

On the other hand, the **possessive pronouns** are specially used in an attributive position (that is, after the verb "to be") and never before a noun. Here are some examples of their use:

- **Singular**:

  - Is this your desk? - Yes, it's *mine*. (Cat: És aquesta la teva taula - Sí, és *la meva*)

  - Is that my jacket? - No, I think it's not *yours*, it's mine. (Cat: És aquesta la meva jaqueta? - No, crec que no és *la teva*, és la meva)

  - Jim is driving an expensive car, but it is not *his*, it's his father's car. (Cat: Jim condueix un cotxe car, però no és *seu*, és el cotxe del seu pare)

  - This is Jane and this dog is *hers*. (Cat: Aquesta és Jane i aquest gos és *seu*)

- **Plural**:

  - Don't take this meal! It's *ours*! (Cat: No toquis aquest menjar! És *nostre*!)

  - Jane and Roger! Is this dog *yours*? Yes, it's ours. Its name is Blacky. (Cat: Jane and Roger! És *vostre* aquest gos? - Sí, és nostre. Es diu Blacky)

  - These are Jane and Roger and this dog is *theirs*. (Cat: Aquests són Jane i Roger i aquest gos és *seu*)

Notice that the third person singular form in masculine (his) is the same as that of the possessive adjective.

Using pronouns and possessives appropriately is very important to write a fluent text. Here is an example of a text without pronouns and possessives:

Text without pronouns and possessives

Peter and **Peter's** sister Jennifer have a large family. **Peter and Jennifer** have only one brother. The name **of Peter and Jennifer's brother** is Mark. **Mark** is only eight years old and **Mark** only likes playing with **Mark's** Nintendo. But **Peter, Jennifer and Mark** have 23 cousins! **Peter, Jennifer and Mark's cousins** live in a big house in a town called Peterwood.

Compare now with this other text, where the nouns have been substituted by their corresponding pronouns and possessives:

Text using pronouns and possessives

Peter and **his** sister Jennifer have a large family. **They** have only one brother. **His** name is Mark. **He** is only eight years old and **he** only likes playing with **his** Nintendo. But **they** have 23 cousins! **They** live in a big house in a town called Peterwood.

As a summary, the table below shows the different forms of the pronouns and possessives.

TABLE 2.9. Pronouns and possessives

	Singular					Plural		
Subject pronouns	I	you	he	she	it	we	you	they
Object pronouns	me	you	him	her	it	us	you	them
Possessive adjectives	my	your	his	her	its	our	your	their
Possessive pronouns	mine	yours	his	hers	(its)	ours	yours	theirs

2.3 Making and responding to requests

As in the case of orders, a request is used when we ask other people to do something. The difference between an order and a request is that an order is more direct, whereas a request is more polite. Orders are usually found in signs (Pull, Push, Stop, Do not litter, etc.), but in speech it is more common to use a request.

Requests are made with a variety of modal verbs, depending on the degree of politeness that we want to convey. The following sentences express the same request in an increasing degree of politeness:

- Open the window! (order) (Cat: Obre la finestra!)

- Open the window, please! (order) (Cat: Obre la finestra si us plau!)

- Can you open the window (please)? (Cat: Pots obrir la finestra [si us plau])?

- Could you open the window? (please)? (Cat: Podries obrir la finestra [si us plau])?

- Will you open the window (please)? (Cat: Obriràs la finestra [si us plau])?

- Would you open the window (please)? (Cat: Obriries la finestra [si us plau])?

- Do you mind opening the window (please)? (Cat: T'importa obrir la finestra [si us plau])?

- Would you mind opening the window (please)? (Cat: T'importaria obrir la finestra [si us plau])?

Notice that the two first examples are orders or commands (they are in the imperative form). A request is actually a polite way of giving orders. The aim of the Catalan translations in brackets is to show the approximate meaning of each request. The expression 'please' is optional, but the English usually add it to the sentence to make the request even more polite.

There are different ways of responding to requests. Here are some examples:

- **To agree with the request**:

    - Yes, of course.
    - Ok, no problem.
    - Yes, of course I (can).
    - Of course I don't mind.
    - Certainly.
    - Sure.

- **To disagree with the request**:

    - I'm sorry, but I can't (I'm on the phone right now)
    - I'm afraid I can't (it's too cold in here)

When you disagree with a request, it is considered polite to give some type of explanation of the reasons why you disagree.

2.4 Speaking: characteristics of the oral language

Speaking is one of the four skills implied in the learning of a language (the other three are: writing, listening and reading). Writing and speaking are active skills, which means that the learner must produce a text. But a written text is very different from an oral text. They both use the grammar rules and the vocabulary to create a comprehensible text, but the rules and the vocabulary used in speaking might be very different from those used in a written text. Also, the conventions applied to the spoken language might be different, and for this reason speaking should be learned independently from the other skills.

In general, when speaking we tend to be less formal than in writing, although in speaking there are also different degrees of formality. A formal speech in which you talk about your company to a group of foreign visitors, for example, will be more formal than when you talk with those same visitors in a pub that evening. When you talk to your workmates, your friends or your family, you would use a very informal language packed with colloquial expressions, probably including swear words.

Here is a short list of words and expressions commonly used in speech, but not in writing:

- gonna (=going to)

- wanna (=want to)

- 'cause (=because)

- gotta (=I have got to)

- Great! (=excellent!)

- I'd rather (=I prefer)

- I'm dying to (=I would like very much to)

- Are you into...? (=Are you interested in...?)

- Damn!

- Fucking...

See section "Formal and informal style" in this unit to review the characteristics of the informal language.

In general, the characteristics of the oral language coincide with the characteristics of an informal written text. We should add that, when speaking, the message usually includes lots of stammering, pauses for effect, body language and other linguistic resources. Also, pronunciation and intonation are very important in oral messages. However, we should bear in mind that the objective of a learner should not be to speak English as a native speaker. Having a foreign accent is right and sometimes even attractive. The most important thing is that you can speak fluently in order to transmit the message correctly and without mistakes.

Learning how to speak English fluently is not an easy task because it requires a lot of practice. Speaking is specially hard to achieve in a classroom context and more so if the learning takes place in a virtual classroom. But there are many possibilities of learning how to speak outside the classroom.

Here are some ideas that can help you if you want to practise your speaking skills:

1. Do not pay much attention to the formal grammar that you have learned. This may sound strange, but think that many English native speakers only know about 20% of the grammar rules of their language. However, they can speak fluently. This is so because they have learned the language in a natural way. The idea is that you do not waste much time remembering grammar rules when speaking because they will be applied automatically as you gain more and more confidence.

2. When speaking, do not translate from your mother tongue. The word order and grammatical structures of both languages are probably very different and it is not a good idea to translate from one language to another, as this may lead to lexical and grammatical mistakes. Instead, try to "think" in English and speak directly in that language.

3. Speaking requires a lot of practice. You can probably learn some grammar rules and lots of new words in one evening if you study and remember them, but you cannot certainly learn how to speak in one evening. This requires time and patience. You need to find a way of practising your speaking skills, which leads to the fourth rule...

4. Surround yourself with an English-speaking context. This does not mean that you must go and live in England, Ireland, the USA or Australia (although this would be very good for your speaking skills). You can practise by getting together with people who speak English and decide to devote at least an hour to speak only in that language. You can talk to other learners like you who need to practise their speaking, but although this might be good to get some practice, it is not so good for learning new words and expressions. The best thing is to find a native English speaker (not necessarily a teacher) who can help you to speak by listening and talking to you.

5. Study with appropriate material. Some people go to the BBC news to listen to English and then they imitate their tone and language. But the language in the news is not the language spoken by people in the streets. To learn the real language, you need to speak with real people, if possible, with native speakers.

3. Television installations

Television is one of the most influential forces on a country's population nowadays, as practically all the homes have at least one television set. In Spain, people spend on average between two and four hours sitting in front of the TV.

There has been a great revolution in the world of TV recently, similar to the change produced by the introduction of colour. The change from analogue TV to the new digital TV has introduced many improvements both in the quality of sound and image and in the size and portability of television sets. Apart from that, the appearance of a great variety of thematic channels has widened the user's choice and has allowed to cover a great variety of interests.

The now old-fashioned cathode ray tube (CRT) sets normally receive analogue signals over the air by means of the antenna, which takes the signal to the TV set, where it is translated into image and sound. The signal can reach the TV set through a cable or via satellite.

Nowadays most television sets on sale are digital. These use digital signals, which improve the quality of the transmission. Such technological evolution is usually called Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) because it broadcasts land-based (terrestrial) signals, which are received by the antenna.

The transition from analogue to digital television has now been completed. The technological blackout has taken place. Apart from the obvious advantages of digital television, one of the reasons for the change was to make space in the radio spectrum for police and other safety communications.

With the switch to digital television, many people may want to buy a new, and more expensive, high-definition television (HDTV) set, but it is not necessary to do so. If you still use an older analogue television set, you will need a digital-to-analogue converter to watch television.

The installation of a television system in a house is quite simple. The digital signal travels in the air and it is picked up by the antenna set up on an elevated position, normally on the roof of a house or the top of a building. A cable then connects the antenna with the home. This requires the installation of an antenna socket, where you plug in the antenna plug. This cable takes the digital signal to the converter box, where it is changed into an analogue signal. The converted signal travels to the TV set via another cable, which is connected to the TV aerial socket. The electrical power which the television needs is supplied by the electrical installation of the building, so the TV set must be plugged in to a power point.

An antenna plug next to a power point

3.1 Grammar: conditional sentences

The conditional sentences are those which include a condition, that is, a sentence which will be true only if a certain condition takes palces. In these sentences we usually speak of uncertain events and situations: things that may or may not happen, depending on the condition.

There are different types of conditional sentences, which differ in meaning and structure. The names of the different types are:

- zero-conditional

- first conditional

- second conditional

- third conditional.

In this section, however, we are only going to study the first and the second conditional sentences, which are the two most widely used types.

3.1.1 The first conditional sentences

The structure of the first conditional sentences is as follows:

IF + PRESENT SIMPLE + ... , ... WILL + INFINITIVE ...

Examples:

- If you *don't save* your files, you *will lose* all your work. (Cat: Si no guardes als arxius, perdràs tota la feina)

- If you *practise* a lot, you *will speak* English fluently. (Cat: Si practiques molt, parlaràs anglès amb fluïdesa)

- If you *do* all the activities, you *will pass* the exam with no problems. (Cat: Si feu totes les activitats, aprovareu l'examen sense problemes)

Main clauses and subordinate clauses

The main clauses are those which have a meaning in themselves, whereas the subordinate clauses have no meaning if they stand alone. Their meaning depends on the main clause.

Notice the following details about the structure of the conditional sentences:

1. They are composed of a subordinate clause which expresses the condition (If you don't save your files) and the main clause, which expresses the result of that condition (you will lose all your work)

2. The subordinate sentence or condition is introduced by the word "if" (Cat: si)

3. The use of the verb tenses in the examples (present simple and the modal "will") is the most common, but we can also use other modal verbs, both in the main and the subordinate clause:

- If you *can* do all the activities, you will pass the exam with no problem. (Cat: Si *pots* fer totes les activitats, aprovaràs l'examen sense problemes)

- If you don't save your files, you *may* lose all your work. (Cat: Si no guardes els arxius, *pots* perdre tota la feina)

- If you *can* practise a lot, you *could* speak English fluently. (Cat: Si *pots* practicar molt, *podries* parlar anglès amb fluïdesa)

4. The order of the clauses can be reversed without losing their meaning:

- *If you don't save your files*, you will lose all your work.

- You will lose all your work *if you don't save your files*.

The only difference is in the punctuation: if we write the condition in the first place, we must write a comma (,) to separate both clauses. If we write the condition in the second place, then there is no comma.

We use the first conditional sentences when we speak about real conditions, that is, when the speaker considers that the condition is possible that takes place, so the result is also possible that happens.

When we say that the students will pass if they do the activities, we use the first conditional because we consider that it is very probable that this happens.

3.1.2 The second conditional sentences

The structure of the second conditional sentences is as follows:

- IF + PAST SIMPLE + ... , ... WOULD + INFINITIVE ...

Examples:

- If I *had* enough time, I *would go out* more. (Cat: Si tingués prou temps, sortiria més)

- If I *were* the director in this company, I *would raise* the workers' salaries. (Cat: Si jo fos el director d'aquesta empresa, pujaria el sou dels treballadors)

- If I *were* you, I *would be* more polite to customers. (Cat: Jo en el teu lloc seria més amable amb els clients)

Notice the following:

1. The condition *If I were you ...* is not usually translated as a condition in Catalan or Spanish, but in English we must always use a second conditional structure to express the idea.

2. In the second conditional sentences, the past tense of the verb "to be" is "were" in all sentences (If I were you ...) "Was" is not generally accepted, except in the informal spoken language, where it is possible to say: *If I was you ...* In most situations, however, the form is "were".

3. As in the first conditional, we can also use modal verbs, but they must refer to the past tense when the modal has time distinction:

    - If I had enough time, I *could* go out more. (Cat: Si tingués prou temps, *podria* sortir més)

    - If I were the director, I *might* rise the salaries. (Cat: Si fos el director, *podria ser que* pugés els salaris)

    - If I *could* be you, I would be more polite. (Cat: Si jo *pogués* ser tu, seria més amable)

4. The order of the clauses can also be reversed in the same conditions as in the case of the first conditional sentences.

We use the second conditional sentences in unreal situations. This means that we consider that the condition is very difficult, or impossible, that takes place. When we say '*If I had enough time ...*', we imply that, for the moment, it is not possible to have more time.

> The use of the first or second conditional sentence very often depends on the particular context or on the subjective perception of the speaker. For this reason, the same idea can be expressed in two ways. Compare these sentences:
>
> - First conditional: *If it rains tonight, I will stay at home*. (Cat: Si plou aquesta nit, em quedaré a casa)
>
> - Second conditional: *If it rained tonight, I would stay at home*. (Cat: Si plogués aquesta nit, em quedaria a casa)

In the first conditional, we think that it will probably rain that night (probably because it is now raining or it looks about to start raining), and in the second conditional, we think that it won't rain (probably because there are no clouds in the sky), but there is a small possibility.

When we speak about conditions that are impossible that happen (If I were you, If I were younger, If I were a dog, etc.), we must always use the second conditional.

3.2 Vocabulary: words and expressions commonly used on the telephone

Speaking on the telephone might be a little more difficult than face-to-face conversations because on the telephone you cannot see the other person and, therefore, you do not have the help of non-linguistic resources, like mimic or gestures, to interpret the message.

On the other hand, telephone conversations usually require a limited number of expressions that are mostly or exclusively used in that context. Speaking on the telephone with English native speakers might become a very common activity at the workplace, so it is important to get used to the conventional phrases used on the telephone.

Telephone conversations tend to be more informal than face-to-face conversations, so you should use the conventions used in informal situations. These conventions are also generally applied to the spoken language.

> See section "Formal and informal style" in this unit for the characteristics of the informal language.

The following table shows some of the expressions used on the telephone.

TABLE 3.1. Expressions used on the telephone

| Common expressions on the phone	Equivalence
Hello, this is ...	Hola, sóc ...
Who's calling?	De part de qui?
May I speak to ...?	Podria parlar amb ...?
One moment, please.	Un moment, si us plau.
I'm afraid he/she (is not in the office right now)	Em temo que (no és a l'oficina en aquest moment)
He/She (is in a meeting) Could you call back later?	Està (en una reunió) Podria trucar més tard?
I'll put you through.	Li passo la trucada.
Hold on a minute, please.	Esperi un moment / No pengi.
Can I take a message?	Vol que li deixi algun missatge?
Could I leave a message?	Podria deixar-li un missatge?
I'm calling about ...	Truco pel tema de ...
Thank you. Goodbye.	Gràcies. Adéu

You should try to introduce some of these expressions when you are speaking in English on the telephone. Remember that the appropriate way of identifying oneself through the telephone is: *This is ...* or *My name is ...* The usual *I'm ...* is not appropriate in this situation.

3.3 Language strategies: the listening skills

Listening is one of the four skills in a language (the other three are: writing, reading and speaking). It is a passive skill, which means that the learner must just understand a text. Unlike the active skills (writing and speaking), listening is relatively easy.

However, the learner must train his or her ear to the sound of a foreign language and to get this training the best option is, as always, to practise the listening comprehension as much as possible.

In a traditional face-to-face classroom, the learners can hear their teacher speak in English, so they can easily acquire a basis on which to improve their listening skills outside the classroom. In online courses, however, the listening opportunities are limited to the small amount of listening activities on the website, so it is the learners' responsibility to provide themselves with the opportunities to listen to English.
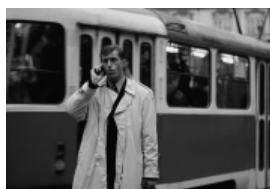
A person speaking on the phone

There are two basic types of texts that you can listen to: speeches, in which one person speaks and the other listens, and conversations, where two people speak. Although they both share the characteristics of the oral language, a speech is quite different from a conversation. A speech tends to be more formal, whereas a conversation is more informal. In general, a conversation is more difficult to understand because it usually includes lots of colloquial words and expressions. A good understanding also depends on the accents of the speakers.

Considering all this, we should then undertake the practice of the oral comprehension skills by listening to a variety of texts. In our daily lives there are many opportunities to listen to English. The secret to improve your listening skills is probably to practise comprehension in a context in which you feel comfortable and which you enjoy. If you like going to the cinema, for example, it is a good idea to watch the films in the original English version (which are the majority of films) and read the Spanish subtitles. You can do so on television, too, as most television sets come with the dual system that allows you to choose the original language of the program. If you like music, you will probably listen to songs in English most of the time. If so, read the lyrics while you are listening to the song and pay attention to the pronunciation of the words and phrases.

On the other hand, the Internet offers thousands of opportunities to practice your listening comprehension.

When you listen to English, you should remember that it is not necessary to understand all the words to get the message. Very often, a few words and the context itself can give you a clear idea of what the other person wants to say. For example, if you are in the street and a person comes to you with a map in his hand and asks you: '*Excuse me, ... to the station, please?*', you can easily guess what that person means, although you have only understood a few words in the whole sentence. Similarly, if you answer the phone in your office and you hear: '*Hello, ...*

Mr Collins ... to Mr Pérez?', you will most probably know that a Mr Collins wants to speak to Mr Pérez. However, your objective should be to understand as much as you can. The only way to do so is by intensive practice of your listening skills. If you learn to interpret the body language, you can also get a lot of information about the other person's message, not only about his or her explicit message, but also about the hidden message behind the other's words.

If, in spite of everything, you cannot understand what the other person is saying, you can use some of the phrases that ask for a clarification of the message. For example:

- Pardon? (Cat: Perdó? / Perdoni?)

- Excuse me, could you repeat, please? (Cat: Perdoni, ho podria repetir, si us plau?)

- Could you say that again please? (Cat: Ho podria tornar a dir, si us plau?)

- What's that again? (Cat: Què has dit?) (Colloquial, especially in American English)

- Sorry, I didn't understand. What did you say? (Cat: Perdoni, però no l'he entès. Què ha dit?)

So do not hesitate to use some of these expressions if you are listening to a native English speaker and you do not understand his or her message clearly.

3.4 Expressing and responding to opinions.

In our everyday communication, either at work or at home, we continuously express our opinions on different subjects. Giving an opinion means expressing your personal point of view on a subject, and very often it also implies trying to persuade the other people to agree with your opinion.

Similarly, we are continuously exposed to other people's opinions. We listen to them and then agree or disagree according to our own point of view.

We are going to study how to express opinions in English and how to respond to them.

3.4.1 Expressing opinions

When we speak, we are expressing opinions most of the time, although we may not be conscious of it. If we say, for example, *I don't like sports*, *it's too hot in here* or *John's lazy, isn't he?*, we are actually expressing a personal point of view with which other people can agree or disagree.

However, we very often need to be sure that the others understand that you are expressing your opinion and then it is necessary to mark your sentence as an opinion. To do so, we can use two verbs which introduce an opinion: "think" (Cat: creure, opinar) and "believe" (Cat: creure). Both can be used indistinctly, but "believe" expresses a stronger opinion than "think". Here are some examples:

- I think (that) the film is very interesting. (Cat: Crec/Opino que la pel·lícula és molt interessant)

- I think (that) you should wait a little longer. (Cat: Crec/Opino que hauries d'esperar una mica més)

- I think (that) you shouldn't talk to your boss like that. (Cat: Crec/Opino que no hauries de parlar-li així, al teu cap)

- I believe (that) he has been wrong to leave his wife. (Cat: Crec que ha fet malament de deixar la seva dona)

- I don't believe (that) we can get out of this crisis so easily. (Cat: No crec que puguem sortir tan fàcilment d'aquesta crisi)

> The verbs "think" and "believe" are followed by a subordinate clause introduced by the conjunction "that", but "that" is generally omitted in informal style, especially in the spoken language.

The verb "believe" can also be followed by the preposition "in" + a noun:

- I believe in justice. (Cat: crec en la justícia)

- I don't believe in people's stupidity. (Cat: No crec en l'estupidesa de la gent)

To express an opinion in the negative, we can turn either the main verb ("think" or "believe") or the verb in the subordinate clause into the negative form, for example, *I don't think (that) this is correct* or *I think (that) this is not correct*.

Apart from verbs, we can introduce an opinion with some prepositional phrases. Some of these are:

- In my opinion, ... (Cat: En la meva opinió, ...)

- In my view,... (Cat: En la meva opinió ...)

- From my point of view, ... (Cat: Des del meu punt de vista, ...)

- As far as I'm concerned, ... (Cat: Pel que a mi respecta, ...)

- As I see it, ... (Cat: Tal com jo ho veig, ...)

All these expressions come at the beginning of the sentence and, in the written form, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma (,) Examples:

- In my opinion, the director should resign. (Cat: En la meva opinió, el director hauria de dimitir)

- In my view, you should take the bus to come to work. (Cat: En la meva opinió, hauries de venir a treballar en autobús)

- From my point of view, the salaries are too low. (Cat: Des del meu punt de vista, els salaris són massa baixos)

- As far as I'm concerned, I wouldn't say anything. (Cat: Pel que a mi respecta, jo no diria res)

- As I see it, we shouldn't go on strike. (Cat: Tal com jo ho veig, no hauríem de fer vaga)

The most common ways of asking for other people's opinions are:

- What do you think of (the salaries)?

- Do you think that (the salaries are good)?

- Do you believe in (justice)?

- What's your opinion about (the salaries)?

3.4.2 Responding to opinions

When we need to respond to somebody's opinion we can agree or disagree with the other person, that is, we can have the same opinion or a different one. For this reason, we can use the verbs *agree* (Cat: estar d'acord) and *disagree* (Cat: estar en desacord). For example:

> Do not say *'I'm agree' or *'I'm not agree'. You should always say: 'I agree', 'I don't agree'.

- I think Emma should learn English - Yes, I agree (with you) / No, I disagree (with you)

The phrase *with you* is optional. We can express disagreement in two ways: with the verb 'disagree' or with the negative form of 'agree'. For example:

- I think Emma should learn English - No, I *disagree* / No, I *don't agree*.

Other options to respond to opinions are these:

- I share/don't share your opinion. (Cat: Comparteixo/No comparteixo la teva opinió)

- I'm of the same opinion as you. (Cat: Sóc de la teva mateixa opinió)

- I've got the same/a different opinion. (Cat: Tinc la mateixa/una altra opinió)

- I don't see things that way. (Cat: No ho veig d'aquesta manera)

Finally, when we respond to opinions expressed with the verbs 'think' and 'believe', it is very common to use expressions like: *so do I*, *neither do I*, etc. These expressions depend on the opinion expressed and have a special structure.

- To agree: I believe he should wait - So do I (Cat: Jo també)

- To agree: I believe he shouldn't wait - Neither do I (Cat: Jo tampoc)

- To disagree: I think he should wait - But I don't (Cat: Doncs jo no)

- To disagree: I think he shouldn't wait - But I do (Cat: Doncs jo sí)

These responses can be used whenever we need to respond to a statement, but then we should be careful with the structure because this changes depending on the verb in the statement. The correct structures are the following:

1. Agree to positive statements:

- SO + (AUXILIARY VERB/MODAL) + (SUBJECT) (Cat: Jo també, tu també, etc.)

  - I like swimming - So do I / So does John, etc.
  - He's very intelligent - So am I / So are we / So is my little daughter, etc.
  - You can speak English very well - So can you / So can Laura, etc.

2. Agree to negative statements:

- NEITHER + (AUXILIARY VERB/MODAL) + (SUBJECT) (Cat: Jo tampoc, tu tampoc, etc.)

  - I don't like swimming - Neither do I / Neither do we / Neither does she, etc.
  - He's not very intelligent - Neither are you / Neither am I / Neither is my daughter, etc.
  - You can't speak English very well - Neither can you / Neither can Mr Larson, etc.

3. Disagree to positive statements:

- BUT + (SUBJECT)+ (AUXILIARY VERB/MODAL in negative) (Cat: Doncs jo no, doncs tu no, etc.)

    - I like swimming - But I don't / But John doesn't, etc.
    - He's very intelligent - But I'm not / But we aren't / But my daughter isn't, etc.
    - You can speak English very well - But you can't / But Mr Larson can't, etc.

4. Disagree to positive statements:

- BUT + (SUBJECT)+ (AUXILIARY VERB/MODAL in positive) (Cat: Doncs jo sí, doncs tu sí, etc.)

    - I don't like swimming - But I do / But John does, etc.
    - He isn't very intelligent - But I am / But we are / But my daughter is, etc.
    - You can't speak English very well - But you can / But Mr Larson can, etc.

3.5 Writing a curriculum vitae

We have probably learned that we must not judge people on first impressions, but that we must know them to appreciate their good qualities. However, when an employer looks at a curriculm vitae (CV), he does precisely that: to judge a person on the first impression produced by the CV, without even knowing the candidate personally.

This is the reason why a CV should be carefully elaborated. It must convince the employer that you might become an appropriate candidate for the job. With hundreds of other CVs waiting for an opportunity, the most important thing is that your own CV attracts the employer's attention.

> Click on the link "jobstar.org" in the "Interesting links" section to see examples of CVs/resumées.

To attract the employer's attention, however, does not mean to write your CV in a variety of colours and/or spectacular font types. This will only distract the reader from the important information. Instead, you should use a conventional format and organize your information clearly.

There are many different models of CVs, but here are basic elements of a standard CV:

- **Contact information:** your name and surnames should be prominent (usually centered and in bold type) Then add your telephone number, your address and your e-mail address.

- **Summary:** probably the most important section in a CV. You must express in a few sentences your good qualities, your skills and your achievements for the job you are applying for. Here is where the employer will look first of all and you need to impress him/her discreetly so he/she wants to read more details about you.

- **Experience:** your relevant job experience should be listed chronologically, starting with your most recent job. For each job, you should mention the company and your job position.

- **Skills:** this section summarizes your special skills and relevant achievements for the job.

- **Education:** here you must list the school/s you attended and the degree you had in each one.

- **References:** here you should simply write 'Available upon request', which means that you will give the information when necessary. Employers don't look for references until the end of the interview, so it is not necessary to include them in your CV.

Except for the contact information, you must include the title of each section, in bold type or capital letters.

And here is a list of things that should not appear in a CV:

- **Errors:** making grammatical and/or spelling mistakes in a CV is the worst thing that can happen to a candidate for a job. The employer will immediately relate the mistakes to the candidate's carelessness and he/she will be obviously discarded.

- **Salary:** do not include your current salary or that which you expect to earn. Salary negotiations usually take place later on in the job seeking process, usually during the interview.

- **Irrelevant information:** you should only include the information which is relevant for the job and that which can benefit your interests. Do not include an average mark in a course if it is not a good one. Do not specify hobbies which have nothing to do with the job. They might probably tell about your character, but they will waste the reader's time.

Now, what information can you include in your CV if you have little or no work experience? In this case, you can list your school and social activities and link them to the job you are applying for.

A CV should always go together with a cover letter. A cover letter is one in which you explain why you are the ideal candidate for the job. It has no special format, but it follows the standards applied to all the other formal letters.

Domestic robotics

Carles Mora Queralt i Joan Tarrida Vallès

Contents

Introduction

This unit is called 'Domestic robotics'. Some alternative terms are 'domotics' (actually a contraction of 'domestic robotics') and 'home automation'. All these terms refer to the use of automation technologies and computer science applied to the home. Sometimes we use the term 'smart homes' to refer to automated houses. The unit also introduces two examples of automated systems: the alarm systems and the HVAC systems. The former is used to protect the house whereas the latter just makes life more comfortable. As always, these topics are introduced in reading texts, so you can get some examples of technical vocabulary applied to the specific field of domestic robotics.

The unit is divided into three sections.

The section called 'Domestic robotics' begins with a text which describes what domestic robotics are and different applications in the house. As for language, you will learn the different ways of expressing the future time and the imperative form of the verbs as well as the characteristics and use of articles, quantifiers and demonstratives. These are little but important words that are always placed before a noun or a noun phrase and modify or determine the meaning of that noun. This is why they are called with the generic name of "determiners". You will also learn to re-write a text, that is, to express the same ideas of a text, but using your own words. This might be useful when you have to write an article, for example, and you want to get the information that you need from other texts. In this section, you will also learn how to give and respond to instructions.

In the section called 'Alarm systems', you will read about one important example of house automation: the alarm system, which protects the house and its inhabitants from internal and external dangers. From the point of view of language, you will learn about the relative sentences in English. These sentences are very much used to make descriptions. You will also study some prefixes and suffixes, that is, the particles that are added before and after a word to change its meaning. If you know the meaning of prefixes and suffixes, you will easily understand many words that you do not know. The section also introduces the ways of expressing your wishes and making and responding to suggestions. Finally, you will get some ideas on how to use audiovisual materials to practise your English.

The section 'HVAC systems' is about another important example of house automation. The letters stand for 'Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning' and they refer to the different systems that contribute to the comfort of our homes. The language of this section includes information about the passive voice, its formation and the way we must use it. You will also study the different ways in which you can express your feelings and emotions, including a type of adjectives with very similar meanings and which sometimes generate lexical mistakes. These adjectives are formally distinguished with two different endings (-ing and -ed), but

their meanings are easily confused. The section ends with a text where we give you some advice for your study of the language after the end of this course.

With this unit, the course comes to an end. However, remember that your learning should continue if you want to practise and improve your English.

Learning objectives

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

1. Understand oral messages in standard language both in daily life situations and in the professional field of the electrical installations, as well as analize the general meaning of a message and relate it to the corresponding language resources.

- Arrange the elements that make up a message.

- Identify the main idea in a message.

- Be conscious of the importance of understanding the main ideas in a message even if you do not understand all the elements that compose the message.

- Get specific information in messages about usual aspects of the everyday and professional life.

- Identify the main ideas in a well-structured speech in standard language about well-known aspects and transmitted in the media.

2. Understand simple written texts related to the field of electrical installations and analize the contents comprehensively.

- Choose reference material and technical dictionaries.

- Read simple texts in standard language.

- Translate a text in standard language by using reference materials, if necessary.

- Interpret the general meaning of a message.

- Relate the text to its correponding context.

- Identify the terminology used in a message.

- Interpret technical manuals.

3. Produce clear, well-organized oral messages frequently used in companies of the field of electrical installations and take an active part in professional conversations.

- Express the tasks which you have to carry out in your job.

- Communicate by using formulas, connectors and strategies used in the interaction with other people.

- Describe and arrange a task in a sequence.

4. Write simple texts in standard language as normally used in the field of electrical installations and use the appropriate resources for each situation.

- Write short texts referring to everyday and/or professional aspects.

- Summarize texts related to your job.

- Organize the information in a coherent way.

- Apply the appropriate rules and specific vocabulary when filling in documents.

5. Show the appropriate attitude and behaviour in communicative situations as established by international conventions.

- Define the most distinctive aspects of the customs of English-speaking communities.

- Describe the social conventions of your country.

- Identify the values and beliefs which are characteristic of English-speaking communities.

- Identify the social and professional aspects of your job in all types of oral and written messages.

- Apply the social conventions in English-speaking communities.

1. Domestic robotics

The term "domestic robotics" is usually shortened to "domotics" (a word introduced as recently as 1984 by the journalist Bruno de Latour). It refers to the various automation technologies based on the computer science that are applied to different home activities.

Domotics or house automation includes central control of lighting, HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems, control of certain appliances and alarm systems. An automation system integrates the different devices in a house into a computer network, so that we can control everything from a central personal computer or even from outside the house via the internet. Other ways of interacting with your home is by voice, by remote control, but in all cases, the home reacts to your orders. This is why automated homes are sometimes called "smart homes", as they seem to think on their own. The integration of all the house functions results in convenience, energy efficiency and safety benefits.

Here are some examples of house automation:

- Doors can be opened with a four-digit code.

- Motion sensors will alert if somebody is walking inside or outside the house.

- Lights, television sets and stereo audio players can turn on and off automatically as you enter or leave a room.

- Lights and HVAC systems can turn on at a certain time to make the house comfortable by the time the owner gets home.

- A video door phone will allow you to see who is calling.

- The alarm will set off if someone gets into the house and will automatically call the police.

- You can control babies from anywhere in or outside the house.

An automated house needs a special tehcnology to work. The earliest was called X10 and was developed in 1975 by a Scottish company. The X10 technology still exists nowadays, but there has emerged a new type of technology that uses radio waves instead of the power line which is used by the X10. The two biggest

radio networks applied to home automation are ZigBee and Z-Wave. A later developement is that of the Insteon technology, which uses a dual network (radio waves and power line) to transmit their data. The advantage of Insteon is that a message can use the other platform if it can't get through on the other because of an interference.

The design of an automated home can be made at different levels, from a simple lighting starter kit which will automatically turn the lights on when opening the door to sophisticated security devices which are able to distinguish between a person and a dog. The most important thing in designing a smart home is to plan carefully how the house will work, especially if you need to set up wires. It's also very important to place the nodes of the wireless network appropriately so that they can have good routing range. You will probably need to install keypads, which are the most common means of activating the automated applications.

The complexity of automated systems makes it advisable to start with a basic home network and expand the system gradually as the needs of the users increase. One of the problems of smart houses is that new technologies change so fast that a big investment to update the system is usually needed. On the other hand, there might be security concerns. A hacker that gets access into your home network can easily disconnect your alarm. With so many cameras and controls around, you may also have the feeling that you are constantly being watched by a 'Big Brother'. We may also have some ethical concerns: are we so lazy that we cannot make the effort of switching a light on? We probably are: the next challenge is the development of person-like robots that can take up our jobs in the house, like cleaning and cooking.

The cost of an automated house depends on how smart you want your house to be, but it tends to be quite expensive. A house with a standard automation system may cost around 7,000 euros. Bill Gates spent 75 million euros on his totally automated home.

1.1 Grammar: the future tenses and the imperative form

In English there is not a specific verb tense to speak about the future. Instead, there are several verbs and expressions. Sometimes the differences between the meanings and uses of the different structures are not clear, so it is possible to use two or more different structures to express the same idea. The structures which can be used to express the future are:

1. "WILL" + VERB IN INFINITIVE

2. "BE GOING TO" + VERB IN INFINITIVE

3. THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSE

4. THE PRESENT SIMPLE TENSE

Apart from these structures, we can also use the future perfect and the future continuous verb tenses.

In this section, we are only going to study the two most common forms: the future forms with 'will' and with 'be going to'.

On the other hand, the imperative form of the verb is used exclusively for commands.

1.1.1 The future with 'will'

This form is with the modal verb "will".

The following table shows the conjugation of the verb "work" in the "will"-future.

See section "Grammar: modal verbs" in unit called "Home electronics" for details about the use of the modal verbs.

TABLE 1.1. The conjugation of the future with "will"

	Affirmative Long form	Short form	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	will work	'll work	will not work	won't work	Will I work?
You	will work	'll work	will not work	won't work	Will you work?
He/She/It	will work	'll work	will not work	won't work	Will he/she/it work?
We	will work	'll work	will not work	won't work	Will we work?
You	will work	'll work	will not work	won't work	Will you work?
They	will work	'll work	will not work	won't work	Will they work?

We must use the future form with "will" in the following cases:

1. To give or ask for information about the future (sometimes called "neutral future"):

- They *will go* on strike tomorrow. (Cat: Demà *faran* vaga)

- *Will* you *come* to work next Monday? (Cat: *Vindràs* a treballar el dilluns que ve?)

- I *will retire* next year. (Cat: *Em jubilaré* l'any que ve)

- I *will be* 38 next week. (Cat: La setmana que ve *faré* 38 anys)

2. To make predictions and talk about what we think or guess that will happen:

- It *will rain* all the week. (Cat: *Plourà* tota la setmana)

- I think that I *will stay* at home tonight. (Cat: Crec que *em quedaré* a casa aquesta nit)

- I'm sure that you *will* all *pass* the exams. (Cat: Estic segura que tots *aprovareu* els exàmens)

- I guess that you *will come*, won't you? (Cat: Suposo que *vindràs*, no?)

> When we express the idea of what we think that will happen in the future, we often include an expression in the sentence to say how we conceive the future. Some of the expressions commonly used are:
>
> - I'm sure that ... (Cat: Estic segur que ...)
>
> - I think that ... (Cat: Crec que..., opino que ...)
>
> - I believe that ... (Cat: Crec que ...)
>
> - I'm sure that ... (Cat: Estic segur que ...)
>
> - I'm not sure that ... (Cat: No estic segur que...)
>
> - I'm convinced that ... (Cat: Estic convençut que ...)

3. In conditional sentences to say what *will* happen if something else happens:

- If I pass the exams, I *will be* very happy. (Cat: Si aprovo els exàmens, *estaré* molt content)

- What *will* you *do* if you are fired? (Cat: Què *faràs* si et despatxen de la feina?)

4. In a series of interpersonal meanings to express requests, offers, promises, etc.

- *Will* you *come* here, please? (a request) (Cat: *Pots venir*, si us plau?)

- Don't worry, I'*ll help* you with your English (an offer or a promise) (Cat: No t'amoïnis, t'*ajudaré* amb l'anglès)

1.1.2 The future with 'be going to'

This form is actually a present tense (the present continuous of the verb "go"), but it is used to speak about the future.

The table below shows the conjugation of the verb "work" in the "be going to"-form.

TABLE 1.2. The conjugation of the future with "be going to"

	Affirmative Long form	Short form	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
I	am going to work	'm going to work	am not going to work	'm not going to work	Am I going to work?
You	are going to work	're going to work	are not going to work	aren't going to work	Are you going to work?

TABLE 1.2 (continued)

	Affirmative Long form	Short form	Negative Long form	Short form	Interrogative
He/She/It	is going to work	's going to work	is not going to work	isn't going to work	Is he/she/it going to work?
We	are going to work	're going to work	are not going to work	aren't going to work	Are we going to work?
You	are going to work	're going to work	are not going to work	aren't going to work	Are you going to work?
They	are going to work	're going to work	are not going to work	aren't going to work	Are they going to work?

> When we conjugate the verb "go" in the "be going to" form, we can omit the infinitive "to go": "I'm going out tonight" instead of "I'm going to go out tonight".

This form is used in the following cases:

1. To express a future event which is already planned and decided:

   - We *are going to buy* a new car next year. (Cat: L'any que ve *comprarem* un cotxe nou)

   - *Are* you *going to study* for the exam tonight? (Cat: *Estudiaràs* per a l'examen aquesta nit?)

   - I'*m going (to go)* to France next summer. (El proper estiu *aniré* a França)

2. To predict the future on the basis of present evidence and say that an action is starting or happening very soon in the future.

   - She *is going to have* a baby in May. (Cat: *Tindrà* un bebè al mes de maig)

   - Look at those clouds! It'*s going to rain*. (Cat: Mira aquells núvols! *Està a punt de ploure*)

1.1.3 The imperative form

The imperative form is used to give orders or commands. Its main characteristics are:

1. It has the same form as the infinitive.

2. The sentences with an imperative verb do not have a subject (the implicit subject is "you").

3. It can be addressed to a second person in singular and in plural, both in the informal use (tu, vosaltres) and in the formal use (vostè, vostès).

4. The negative form is with "do not" (don't) in front of the verb.

5. We often use the expression "please" to soften the command.

6. In writing, we normally write an exclamation mark (!) at the end of the sentence.

Here are some examples:

- Go! (Cat: Vés-te'n! / Aneu-vos-en / Vagi-se'n! / Vagin-se'n!)

- Sit down, please! (Cat: Seu, si us plau! / Seieu, si us plau! / Segui, si us plau! / Seguin, si us plau!)

- Don't smoke! (Cat: No fumis! / No fumeu! / No fumi! / No fumin!)

- Please, don't say anything! (Cat: Si us plau, no diguis res! / Si us plau, no digueu res! / Si us plau, no digui res! / Si us plau, no diguin res!)

1.2 Vocabulary: articles, quantifiers and demonstratives

Determiners

Determiners are certain words that always come before a noun and add some information to that noun. Examples of determiners are: *the*, *some*, *my*, *that*, *each*, etc.

The three types of words that we are going to study in this section have a characteristic in common: they are all determiners.

The determiners can be divided into two groups:

- Group A: articles, possessives and demonstratives

- Group B: quantifiers

The determiners in group A are used to identify things and people. They can say, for example, whether a thing is known or unknown or to which one the speaker is referring when there are several things. Determiners also tell whether the speaker is referring to a particular thing or things in general.

The determiners in group B tell about the quantity of things that the speaker is talking about. For this reason, they are called "quantifiers".

> We cannot put two determiners from group A together. For example, we can say: *my job* or *the job*, but we cannot say: **the my job*. However, two determiners from group B can go together if the combination makes sense. So we can say: *many more people*, *every two weeks*, etc.

1.2.1 Articles

The articles are little words that are always placed in front of a noun. If the noun has an adjective, the article is placed before the adjective. Articles allow speakers to refer either to things in general or to specific things.

Unlike Catalan and Spanish, the English articles are invariable, that is, they do not change with the gender or number of the noun that follows.

There are two types of articles:

- Determinate article: *the*

- Indeterminate articles: *a / an*

There are also some cases in which the article is not used. This non-existing article is usually called the *zero article*.

Use of the determinate article "the"

The determinate article *the* refers to specific things. It is used in the following cases:

1. To refer to something previously mentioned: I met a strange man. Later, **the** man called me at home.

2. To refer to something not mentioned before, but that both the speaker and the listener know about: Did you send **the** e-mail?

3. To define or identify a specific person or thing: **The** woman that we saw downstairs is **the** new secretary.

4. To refer to things that are unique: **the** Sun, **the** Moon, **the** Earth, etc.

5. To refer to organisations: **the** police, **the** United Nations, etc.

6. With family names in plural: **the** Smiths.

7. Before superlative adjectives and ordinal numbers: **the** best, **the** second, etc.

8. Before the names of the decades: **the** sixties, **the** nineties, etc.

9. Before adjectives to refer to a whole group of people (with the article, an adjective becomes a noun): **the** German, **the** old, etc.

10. Before names of countries in plural or countries formed with a common noun: **the** United States, **the** United Kingdom, etc.

11. Before the names of seas, rivers, mountain ranges and regions in the world: **the** Pacific, **the** Mediterranean, **the** Alps, **the** Far East, etc.

12. Before the name of the four points of the compass: **the** north, **the** south, **the** east, **the** west.

Use of the indeterminate article "a/an"

The indeterminate article refers to things and people in general. The article is spelt *a* before a word starting with a consonant (a boy) and it is spelt *an* before a word starting with a vowel sound or a mute 'h' (an intelligent boy, an hour).

The indeterminate article *a/an* is used in these cases:

1. Before countable nouns in singular when the noun is mentioned for the first time: I met **a** strange man. Later, the man called me at home.

2. Before the names of jobs: I am *a* teacher, she is *an* administrative assistant, etc.

3. Before nouns denoting nationalities and religions: she is **an** American, he is **a** Catholic, etc.

4. To refer to people and things in general: **a** tiger is a dangerous animal.

5. To refer to unspecific people and things: it was **an** embarrassing situation, I watched **a** film, etc.

6. In certain expressions of measurement: 20 km **an** hour, etc.

7. Before singular nouns and after the words *what* and *such* to denote surprise: What **a** shame!, Such **a** good film!

Uses of the zero article (Ø)

The article is not used in the following cases:

1. Before the names of countries in singular: **Ø** Germany is a rich country.

2. Before the names of languages: Do you speak **Ø** English?

3. Before the names of meals: we had **Ø** lunch at Gino's.

4. Before the names of most cities, streets, stations and airports: he lives in **Ø** Barcelona, the bank is in **Ø** London Rd, I arrived at **Ø** Waterloo station, the plane leaves from **Ø** Barajas airport. etc.

5. Before nouns with the possessive 's: **Ø** John's car, etc.

6. Before titles: **Ø** Mrs Johnson, **Ø** Princess Diana, etc.

7. Before uncountable nouns: **Ø** Time is **Ø** money.

8. Before countable nouns in plural with a general reference: **Ø** tigers are dangerous, **Ø** computers are very fast nowadays, etc

9. Before years: I was born in **Ø** 1965, etc.

To speak of people and things in general, there are three options in English:

- *a/an* + singular noun (*a* woman should have the same rights as *a* man)

- *the* + plural noun (*the* women should have the same rights as *the* men)

- *zero article* + plural noun (Women should have the same rights as men)

1.2.2 Quantifiers

The term "quantifier" refers to the word or words that express the quantity of a noun. They are usually placed before the noun which they modify. Their correct use depends on such aspects as the number, the type of sentence (affirmative, negative or interrogative) and the type of noun (countable or uncountable).

To express an exact quantity of a noun, you must use a numeral (one, two, three...). However, quantifiers indicate an indeterminate quantity. The English quantifiers are:

- no

- a/an, some, any

- a lot of, many, much

- little, few, a little, a few

The table below shows the use of the English quantifiers.

TABLE 1.3. The quantifiers

	Affirmative	Negative	Interrogative
Countable nouns	no, a/an, some a lot of, many few, a few	any many few, a few	any many few, a few
Uncountable nouns	no, some a lot of little, a little	any much little, a little	any much little, a little

Notice the following:

1. Although it has a negative meaning, the quantifier *no* can only go with verbs in the affirmative form. It has the same meaning as *not ... any*: *He hasn't got any friends = He has no friends*.

2. *A lot of* and *many* have the same meaning and they can both be used with countable nouns in affirmative sentences. The difference is that, in general, *a lot of* is used informally and *many* is used in more formal situations, as for example, in business letters.

3. *Few /little* and *a few /a little* all refer to a small quantity. The difference is this: *few* and *little* have a negative sense and indicate that the quantity of the noun is not enough for the purpose. On the other hand, *a few* and *a little* have a positive sense and indicate that the quantity, although small, is enough.

Here are some examples of the use of quantifiers. The type of noun is indicated in brackets:

- I've got *a* very interesting program (count.) (Cat: Tinc *un* programa molt interessant)

- There are *some* people (count.) in the room. (Cat: Hi ha *algunes* persones a la sala)

- Have you got *any* money (uncount.)? (Cat: Tens diners?)

- We didn't find *any* good websites (count.) (Cat: No vam trobar *cap* pàgina web bona)

- There's *a lot of* information (uncount.) in that website. (Cat: Hi ha *molta* informació en aquest lloc web)

- Mr Larson controls *a lot of* / *many* companies (count.) (Cat: El Sr. Larson controla *moltes* empreses)

- We haven't got *much* time (uncount.) (Cat: No tenim *molt de* temps)

- Are there *many* people (count.) in the room? (Cat: Hi ha *molta* gent a la sala?)

- We have *few* computers (count.) for so many people. (Cat: Tenim *pocs* ordinadors per a tanta gent)

- We have *a few* computers (count.), so we can work. (Cat: Tenim *uns quants* ordinadors, així que podem treballar)

- There's *little* time (uncount.) to finish the web page. (Cat: Hi ha *poc* temps per a acabar la pàgina web)

- We can finish because we have *a little* time (uncount.) (Cat: Podem acabar perquè tenim *una mica de* temps)

- There are *no* books on the shelves. Where are they? (Cat: No hi ha *cap* llibre a les estanteries. On són?)

1.2.3 Demonstratives

The demonstratives are a type of determiners that are used to point at specific people and things. As all determiners, they are placed before a noun or noun phrase, usually adjective + noun.

The English demonstratives are:

- this, that

- these, those

This and *that* are used with singular nouns and *these* and *those* are used with plural nouns. Furthermore, *this* and *these* refer to people or things that are near the

speaker, whereas *that* and *those* refer to people or things that are further from the speaker or are absent. In the past tense, we must use *that* or *those*.

The demonstratives are not used with uncountable nouns. For example, it is wrong to say: **this hardware*, or **that water*. We must say: *this type of hardware* and *that glass/bottle of water*

The demonstrative determiners can also be used as pronouns, that is, without a noun. For example:

- *This* is more expensive than *that*. (Cat: *Això* és més car que *allò*)

- Who is *that*? - *That*'s Elizabeth. (Cat: Qui és *aquella*? [*Aquella*] és Elizabeth.)

Here are some more examples of the use of the demonstratives:

- Is *this* your son? (Cat: És *aquest* el teu fill?)

- I don't know *these* people. (Cat: No conec *aquestes* persones)

- I like *those* earrings you are wearing. (M'agraden *aquestes* arracades que portes)

- *That* night I couldn't sleep. (Cat: *Aquella* nit no vaig poder dormir)

> Compare the use of the English demonstratives with Catalan and Spanish. In Catalan and Spanish, the demonstratives have number and gender inflexions, but in English there is only number inflexion. In Catalan, as in English, there are only two demonstratives: *aquest* (this) i *aquell* (that) and in Spanish there are three: *este* (this), *ese* (that) and *aquel* (that).

1.3 Giving and responding to instructions

In our daily or working life, giving instructions, that is, telling other people what they have to do, is a common activity. Typical situations in which we give instructions occur, for example, when giving directions, explaining a cooking recipe or telling how to operate a machine. For this reason, it is very important to learn the correct way of giving instructions, both in a written text and in oral speech.

To give instructions, we normaly use the imperative form of the verb. Here is a text to give the basic instructions to write and send an e-mail. Notice the verb forms in **bold** type.

Giving instructions:

First of all, **locate** your e-mail program (Outlook, G-Mail, Thunderbird, etc.) in your computer. **Click** on the icon to run the program and a text editor will appear.

Type the receiver's address in the word field called "To..." and next **type** the subject of your message in the corresponding field. After this, **write** the text of your message in the text editor. When you finish, **review** the spelling and **check** any mistakes. Finally, **click** on the button "Send" and the message will reach its destination in a few seconds.

See section "Connectors" in unit called "Learning English" for a list of connectors.

Apart from the verb form, you should also consider the use of the appropriate connectors, especially when you are giving oral instructions.

Notice the use of connectors in the text:

First of all, locate your e-mail program (Outlook, G-Mail, Thunderbird, etc.) in your computer. Click on the icon to run the program and a text editor will appear. Type the receiver's address in the word field called "To..." and **next** type the subject of your message in the corresponding field. **After this**, write the text of your message in the text editor. **When you finish**, review the spelling and check any mistakes. **Finally**, click on the button "Send" and the message will reach its destination in a few seconds.

In a written text, we can avoid the use of connectors by writing the different sentences in a list, as in the following example.

To write and send an e-mail:

1. Locate your e-mail program (Outlook, G-Mail, Thunderbird, etc.) in your computer.

2. Click on the icon to run the program and a text editor will appear.

3. Type the receiver's address in the word field called "To...".

4. Type the subject of your message in the corresponding field.

5. Write the text of your message in the text editor.

6. Review the spelling and check any mistakes.

7. Click on the button "Send".

The imperative form is the most direct way of expressing the idea represented by the verb. In the imperative, all the attention is phocused on the action, which is seen as a necessity, an obligation and sometimes even as an order, depending on the situation and the intonation. For this reason, in some cases the use of the imperative might lead to misunderstandings and conflict. If you want to soften the tone of your message, you can use the modal verbs *should* or *can*, especially in oral speech.

Here is the text of our example, but using modal verbs instead of the imperative form. Notice that we have introduced some changes in the use of connectors to improve the style (see words in *italics*).

First of all, you **should locate** your e-mail program (Outlook, G-Mail, Thunderbird, etc.) in your computer. *Then* you **should click** on the icon to run the program

and a text editor will appear. *Now* you **should type** the receiver's address in the word field called "To..." and next *(...)* the subject of your message in the corresponding field. After this, you **can write** the text of your message in the text editor. When you finish, you **should review** the spelling and **check** any mistakes. Finally, you **should click** on the button "Send" and the message will reach its destination in a few seconds.

To respond to the instructions, you can choose from different expressions. For example:

- Ok, thank you, I'll do that.

- Yes, great, thanks for telling me.

- Thanks a lot.

- I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I can't do that.

1.4 Rewriting a text in your own words

It sometimes happens that we have to explain certain things to other people and we have to look up the information in a written text. Then we have to transmit that information in our own words, either to make it clearer or just because we cannot copy literally from the text.

Also, if you have to write an article or develop a website, you need methods to write and rewrite texts on different topics. If you do not do so, you can be accused of plagiarism and have lots of problems.

Re-writing a text is not the same as summarizing. When you rewrite a text, you express the same ideas, but in other words. When you summarize a text, you can use the same words, but you only express the main ideas, and disregard all the rest.

The usual way of writing an article or a text for a website is to look for the material in different websites, books or magazines, combine all the information and then to rewrite each part in your own words. Essentially, you start with the ideas and expressions of the reference material and then you transform the text into your own words. When rewriting a text, it is important to express the same idea as the original, but using different words and even a different text structure. This does not mean, however, that you cannot introduce new ideas or develop existing ones.

To do this, it is very important that you have a good command of synonyms. The more synonyms you know, the easier it will be to change a text without changing the ideas. The aim should be to replace about half of the original words, but you must be careful to choose words that can be exchanged without altering the

fundamental meaning of the phrases and sentences. It is also very important to know how to express an idea with different syntactical structures.

For this task, a thesaurus, either in paper or online, can be very useful.

Here is an example of a text and its rewritten version. The objective is to make the original text more comprehensible to people with a lower level of English:

Original text

Can the government see what websites I visit?

Imagine you're shopping at a mall. You browse different stores, make a few purchases and move on. Then, you notice that a man you don't know seems to be following you. You even catch a glimpse of him taking notes on what you're looking at and buying. The entire time you've been shopping, you've been spied on!

Many people fear that a similar thing is happening on the Web. They're worried that someone, usually the government, is recording and analysing their Web browsing activity. They argue that these acts are an invasion of privacy. Are they right to be worried? Can the government keep track of all the Web sites everyone visits, and would it be able to act on that information?

(From the website: www.howstuffworks.com)

Rewritten version

Can the government see what websites I visit?

Imagine you are in a shopping-mall. You look in different shops, buy a few things and move on. Then, you have the impression that an unknown man is watching you. He is even taking notes about the things you look at and buy. You have been spied all the time!

Many people are afraid that the same thing is happening on the web. They are worried that someone, usually the government, is checking all the webpages that you visit. They think that they are invading their private lives. But are they right to be worried? Is it true that the government can see all the webpages that everyone visits? Could they do anything with all the information they get?

Notice that in order to make the original text more comprehensible, we have used more common synonyms for certain words and expressions and we have also changed some complicated structures to more simple ones. For example: *browse > look, store > shop, make a few purchases > buy a few things*, etc. We have also rewritten the sentence *They argue that these acts are an invasion of privacy* to the easier sentence *They think that they are invading their private lives*.

In conclusion, we must change a text to make it easier by using different words and expressions, but without changing the original ideas.

2. Alarm systems

Home security is becoming increasingly important in those days. In the past, when house doors remained opened to strangers for most of the day, nobody thought of installing an alarm. But times have changed. The increase in the number of break-ins in houses, shops and buildings have made the installation of burglar alarms necessary. Apart form burglar alarms (also called "intrusion alarms"), official buildings must also have fire alarms to warn people of the presence of fire and to minimize its effects. Museums, banks, prisons and military premises have sophisticated, high-protection alarm systems.

An alarm is a system which is typically composed of a sensor or sensors, a control panel and an alerting device. Sensors are usually mounted on a door or a window so that the alarm is set off when someone opens the door or the window, but there are other type of sensors that detect intruders in or around a building by means of ultrasound, electric or magnetic fields. A transmitter emits waves. When someone enters the area protected by the alarm, a receiver in the sensors detects either an interruption of the waves or a change of frequency, depending on the type of waves emitted, and this sets off the alarm. Infrared sensors detect the body heat of anyone crossing in front of the sensor.

The sensors are usually connected to a control panel with wires, but nowadays the wireless connections are more widely used because they are safer. A wired alarm could easily be disconnected merely by cutting the wire. However, wireless connections have the disadvantage that they use battery transmitters, and batteries must be continually supervised to allow a reliable signal to reach the control panel. In order to benefit from the advantage of both types of connections, there are hybrid systems which use wired and wireless connections.

The control panel is mounted on the wall inside the house or the room which is protected by the alarm. The panel allows to set the period of time in which the alarm will be on operation as well as connecting or disconnecting the system. When the sensor detects an intruder within the area, the control panel receives a signal which sets off the alerting device to warn people of the unwanted presence.

The alerting device typically consists on a loud bell or siren whose function is to frighten away the intruder. There are also silent alarms. They do not emit any sound, but send a signal to the nearest police station or private security company, usually through telephone wires, who are warned of the presence of an intruder in the area where the signal originated. The objective of silent alarms is to give the police or the security guards a greater chance of arresting the intruder. More sophisticated alarms, as for example those used in musems, banks and other robbery-sensitive buildings, include additional features like isolating a room with security doors and windows once the intruder is inside to prevent him/her from escaping before the police arrives.

Some burglar alarm systems in large buildings also include a closed-circuit television (CCCTV) with video cameras that transmit a signal to one or several monitors installed in a control post. The objective is to monitor the movements of the intruders and get images to facilitate identification.

Other types of alarm may have other features. Fire alarms, for example, are connected to water sprinklers distributed throughout a building. The sprinklers set off when the sensors detect smoke or fire to minimize the effects. Fire alarms may also cause security doors to close automatically to isolate the area and prevent fire from spreading to the rest of the building.

2.1 Grammar: the relative sentences

A relative sentence is a type of subordinate clause which gives information about a noun. That noun is in the main clause and is called the "antecedent".

Here is an example of a relative sentence:

- A web browser is an application *which is used to surf the net*. (Cat: Un navegador és una aplicació que s'utilitza per a navegar per internet)

Let's analyse the elements of this relative sentence:

- '*A web browser is an application*' is the main clause.

- '*... which is used to surf the net*' is the subordinate relative clause.

- '*which*' is a relative pronoun used to introduce the relative clause. The use of the relative pronoun depends on the noun that it refers to (the antecedent).

- '*application*' is the antecedent. It is the noun that marks the use of the relative pronoun.

- The relative pronoun is always placed immediately after the antecedent.

There are different relative pronouns. As you can see, their forms are the same as those of the interrogative pronouns.

The following table shows the English relative pronouns and their use.

TABLE 2.1. The relative pronouns

The relative pronoun is ...	... if the antecedent is ...
who	person (subject)
whose	person (possessive) thing or animal (possessive)
whom	person (complement)
which	a thing or animal

TABLE 2.1 (continued)

The relative pronoun is ...	... if the antecedent is ...
that	person (subject) thing or animals (subject)
where	a place adverbial
when	a time adverbial
why	'the reason'

Notice the following:

- The relative pronoun "that" can be used with people and things as an alternative to "who" and "which".

- The possessive relative pronoun "whose" is the same for people and things.

- The relative pronoun "whom" is used for people, but only when it has the function of complement of the relative clause. "Whom" is especially used in formal written texts. In informal texts and in speech, the most common form is "who".

There are two types of relative clauses:

1. Defining relative clauses: this type of relative clause defines or gives important information about a noun (the antecedent). Without the relative clause, the idea would be incomplete.

Examples:

- Mr Smith is the man *who / that will help you in your new job*. (Cat: Mr Smith és l'home que t'ajudarà a la teva nova feina)

- That's the park *where I met my wife twenty years ago*. (Cat: Aquest és el parc on vaig conèixer la meva dona fa vint anys)

- The things *which / that you have bought are on the table*. (Cat: Les coses que has comprat són a la taula)

2. Non-defining relative clauses: this type of relative clause does not define or give important information. It simply adds some extra information about the antecedent. Non-defining relative clauses are always written between commas.

Examples:

- Mr Smith, *who has a lot of experience*, will help you in your new job. (Cat: Mr Smith, que té molta experiència, t'ajudarà en la teva nova feina)

- This park, *where I met my wife twenty years ago*, is one of the smallest in the town. (Cat: Aquest parc, on vaig conèixer la meva dona fa vint anys, és un dels més petits de la ciutat)

- The things, *which I bought yesterday*, are on the table. (Cat: Les coses, que vaig comprar ahir, són a la taula)

In non-defining relative clauses, the relative pronoun "that" is not used as an alternative form to "who" or "which". On the other hand, the pronoun "why" is never used in non-defining relative clauses.

In the spoken language, it is possible to express a relative sentence without the relative pronoun, but you can only do that when the relative pronoun is not the subject of the relative clause. Compare these two sentences:

- The person (whom) I met last night was Jackson. (Here you can say the sentence without the relative pronoun 'whom' because the pronoun is the indirect object of the relative clause, and not the subject)

- The person who came to the party last night was Jackson. (Here you cannot say the sentence without the relative pronoun 'who' because the pronoun is the subject of the relative clause)

Here are some examples of defining relative clauses:

- Here is the woman *who/that* knows so much about computers. (Cat: Aquí està la dona *que* sap tant d'ordinadors)

- Is that the boy *whose* sister died in an accident? (Cat: És aquest el noi la germana *del qual* va morir en un accident?)

- The people *whom* we met in the meeting were all Australian. (Cat: Les persones *que* vam conèixer a la reunió eren totes australianes)

- The reason *why* they have come is unkown. (Cat: La raó *per la qual* han vingut és desconeguda)

- He is looking for a job *which /that* suits his interests. (Cat: Està buscant una feina *que* s'avingui amb els seus interessos)

Here are some examples of non-defining relative clauses:

- This hotel, *where* Madonna stays when she's in the city, is the most expensive I know. (Cat: Aquest hotel, *on* s'hi allotja Madonna quan ve a la ciutat, és el més car que conec)

- My company, *which* repairs computers, is called HappyComputers Ltd. (Cat: La meva empresa, *que* repara ordinadors, es diu HappyComputers Ltd)

- Sabrina, *whom* I met in a wedding, is now my wife. (Cat: Sabrina, *a qui* vaig conèixer a un casament, és ara la meva dona)

- In 1964, *when* I was born, my parents bought this house. (Cat: L'any 1964, que és *quan* jo vaig néixer, els meus pares van comprar aquesta casa).

2.2 Vocabulary: prefixes and suffixes

A prefix refers to the element that is added to the beginning of a word to modify or adjust the meaning of that word, whereas the suffix is added to the end of the word. Both prefixes and suffixes form part of the word to which they are joined and cannot be separated. Most of them are attached to the word, as in "bilingual", but a few are separated from the word by a hyphen (-), as in "extra-curricular".

Knowing the meaning of the most important prefixes and suffixes is important because it makes it easier to guess the meaning of unknown words. For example, if we know the meaning of the prefix "mis-" (wrongly) and we know the meaning of the verb "understand" (Cat: entendre), we can guess the meaning of "misunderstand" (Cat: entendre malament, although it is the first time that we come across that word.

Prefixes and suffixes can be added to nouns, adjectives and verbs to express a new idea. Suffixes are basically used to change the part of speech of a word, that is, to turn adjectives into nouns, nouns into adjectives, etc.

The majority of prefixes are the same and have the same meaning as the ones used in Catalan and Spanish. For example: *anti-, auto-, cyber-, extra-, hyper-, inter-, kilo-, micro-, mini-, mono-, multi-, neo-, photo-, post-, pre-, semi-, sub-, super-, tele-, trans-, vice-*, etc. Some others have a different origin and are not so easy to understand.

The table below shows a list of some widely-used prefixes in English.

TABLE 2.2. Some English prefixes

Prefix	Added to ...	Usual meaning	Examples
de-	verbs	reversing action	deregulate
dis-	adjectives, nouns, verbs	not, opposite	disloyal, disorder, discover
en-	adjectives, nouns	make, put in	enable, endanger
fore-	nouns, verbs	before	foreground, foretell
ill-	past participles	badly	ill-used
mid-	nouns	in the middle of	mid-90s
mis-	nouns, verbs	wrongly	misuse, misunderstand
out-	nouns, verbs	be/more than	outcast, outrun
over-	nouns, verbs	too much	over-confident, overheat
un-	adjectives, verbs	opposite, not	unimportant, undress

In the table below you can see a list of some common English suffixes and their meanings.

TABLE 2.3. Some English suffixes

Suffix	Added to...	Meaning	Examples
Suffixes that form nouns:			
-ee	verbs	object of the verb	employee
-er/-or	verbs	person/thing that does the action of the verb	manager, director
-ess	nouns	female	waitress
-ful	nouns	quantity contained in	handful
-ship	nouns	quality of	friendship
Suffixes that form adjectives:			
-able	verbs	that can be done	manageable
-ful	nouns	full of	useful
-ish	adjectives, nouns	tending to, similar to	bluish, childish
-less	nouns	without	homeless
-like	nouns	like	childlike
-ous	nouns	having	numerous
Suffixes that form adverbs:			
-ly	adjectives	in the way expressed by the adjective	strongly
-wards	prepositions of place	in that direction	backwards

An interesting aspect of prefixes and suffixes is that you can create words by adding the appropriate prefixes or suffixes. For example, you can add the suffix "-like" to a noun (like in "childlike") to form a new adjective: "teacher-like" (Cat: que actua o és com un professor), "animal-like" (Cat: que és com un animal), etc. In this case, the suffix is usually separated by the hyphen because the word is not yet incorporated into the language.

2.3 Making and responding to suggestions

Making suggestions is a very common situation. We make suggestions at home while planning a weekend or planning our holidays; when we are with friends and try to decide what to do; or at work, when your manager asks you for ideas to increase the sales in the company, for example. A suggestion is very similar to giving advice, but whereas a piece of advice is directed to another person, a suggestion usually includes the speaker.

To make suggestions, we can obviously use the verb "suggest" (Cat: suggerir). This verb can appear in different syntactical structures:

1. SUGGEST + VERB IN -ING: I suggest speaking in English (Cat: Suggereixo parlar en anglès)

2. SUGGEST + THAT-CLAUSE: I suggest that we speak in English (Cat: Suggereixo que parlem en anglès)

3. SUGGEST + NOUN: I suggest a Japanese restaurant (Cat: Suggereixo un restaurant japonès)

Notice that structure 2 introduces a subject in the suggestion. This allows the speaker to direct the suggestion to other people: *I suggest that he speaks English*; *I suggest that you speak English*, etc.

Apart from the verb, there are some expressions which are commonly used to make suggestions:

- **What about** (speaking in English)? (Cat: Què tal si [parlem en anglès]?)

- **How about** (speaking in English)? (Cat: Què tal si [parlem en anglès]?)

- **Why don't you/we** (speak in English)? (Cat: Perquè no [parles/parlem en anglès]?)

- **You/We could** (speak in English) (Cat: Podries/Podríem [parlar en anglès])

I'm afraid ...

This expression is very common when we respond negatively. It is used to soften the negative idea and show that you are not angry.

The way we respond to a suggestion, no matter in which form the suggestion is made, depends on whether we agree or we disagree.

The following table shows some possibilities in both cases.

TABLE 2.4. Responding to suggestions

Responding to suggestions	
To agree	**To disagree**
Yes, we could do that	I'm afraid it's not a good idea
Yes, that's a good idea	I'm afraid we can't do that
Ok, let's do that	I'd rather not
Yes, why not?	No, we can't do that
Ok, that's great!	No, we shouldn't do that

When we disagree with a suggestion, it is polite to explain the reason of your disagreement:

- A: Why don't we go to a restaurant?

- B: No, we can't do that. *We have no time and no money*.

This attitude is quite general and it is used in other situations, as when responding to requests and advice, or when we express different opinions.

2.4 Expressing wishes

To express a wish, we have different options in English. The most common way is by using the verb "wish" (Cat: desitjar) or the expression "would like" (Cat: m'agradaria / voldria). But apart from these two widely-used forms, there are others that we might also consider. There is quite a variety of sentence structures to express a wish.

2.4.1 The verb "wish"

Translation of "I wish that ..."

"I wish that" is not usually translated literally into Catalan or Spanish. These two languages use an equivalent expression instead (Cat: Tant de bo ...; Sp: Ojalá ...)

This verb can be used in different sentence structures to express a wish in the present, in the past or in the future. The past tense of "wish" (wished) is hardly used.

1. Wishes referring to the present and to the future:

- I WISH + (THAT) + S + VERB IN PAST SIMPLE + ...

    - I wish (that) you were more sociable. (Cat: Tant de bo fossis més sociable)

    - I wish (that) you came with us next week. (Cat: Tant de bo vinguessis amb nosaltres la setmana que ve)

- I WISH + TO + INFINITIVE + ...

    - I wish to speak to you as soon as possible. (Cat: Voldria parlar amb tu el més aviat possible)

    - I wish to tell you something. (Cat: Voldria dir-te una cosa)

- I WISH + INDIRECT OBJECT + DIRECT OBJECT.

    - I wish you a very good morning. (Cat: Et desitjo un molt bon dia)

    - I wish the new secretary good luck. (Cat: A la nova secretària li desitjo bona sort)

- I WISH + FOR + NOUN.

    - I wish for a glass of water. (Cat: Voldria un got d'aigua)

    - I wish for a better salary. (Cat: Voldria un salari millor)

2. Wishes referring to the past:

- I WISH + (THAT) + S + VERB IN PAST PERFECT (had + past participle) + ...

- I wish (that) I had been here before. (Cat: Tant de bo hagués estat aquí abans)

- I wish (that) I had taken an umbrella. (Cat: Tant de bo hagués agafat un paraigua)

As you can see in the examples, the typical structure with the verb "wish" is with a that-clause. In the spoken language, "that" can be omitted, as is usually the case with this conjunction. On the other hand, the form of the verb "to be" in the that-clause is "were" for all persons, as it also happens with the conditional sentences. So we must say:

- I wish I **were** richer. (Cat: Tant de bo fos més ric)

- I wish Sam **were** here to watch all this. (Cat: Tant de bo Sam fos aquí per a veure tot això)

2.4.2 "Would like"

The use of the expression "would like" is very common to express a wish. We can use "would like" in different sentence structures to refer either to the present, to the past and to the future.

1. Wishes referring to the present and to the future:

- I WOULD LIKE + TO + INFINITIVE + ...:

    - I would like to see you. (Cat: Et voldria veure)

    - I would like to stay a little longer. (Cat: Em voldria quedar una mica més / M'agradaria quedar-me una mica més)

- I WOULD LIKE + DIRECT OBJECT + TO + INFINITIVE + ...:

    - I would like Mr Johnson to be nicer. (Cat: M'agradaria que Mr Johnson fos més simpàtic)

    - I would like you to call the director right now. (Cat: Voldria que truquessis al director ara mateix)

- I WOULD LIKE + NOUN.

    - I would like a coffee. (Cat: Voldria un cafè)

    - I would like a new opportunity. (Cat: Voldria una nova oportunitat)

2. Wishes referring to the past:

- I WOULD HAVE LIKED + TO + INFINITIVE + ...:

  – I would have liked to be elected. (Cat: M'hagués agradat haver sortit elegit)

  – I would have liked to speak better French. (Cat: M'hagués agradat parlar millor el francès)

- I WOULD HAVE LIKED + DIRECT OBJECT + TO + INFINITIVE + ...:

  – I would have liked him to be more polite. (Cat: M'hagués agradat que [ell] hagués estat més educat)

  – I would have liked the job to be more interesting. (Cat: M'hagués agradat que la feina fos més interessant)

2.4.3 Other ways of expressing a wish

Other verbs that can be used to express wishes are "want" (Cat: voler) and "desire" (Cat: desitjar). The difference in the use of "want" and "wish" is that "want" is used for something which is possible to obtain, whereas "wish" usually refers to something which is more difficult to obtain. "Desire" has the same meaning as "wish", but it is used in more formal situations.

The verbs "want" and "desire" appear in the same sentence structures. When they are in the present tense, they may refer to the present or to the future. When they are in the past simple, they always refer to the past:

1. I WANT / DESIRE TO + infinitive + ...:

   - I want to go to Mr Smith's speech tonight. (Cat: Aquesta nit vull anar a la conferència de Mr Smith)

   - I desire to be alone, please. (Cat: desitjo estar sol, si us plau)

   - I wanted to come earlier, but it was impossible. (Cat: Volia venir abans, però ha estat impossible)

2. I WANT / DESIRE + DIRECT OBJECT + TO + INFINITIVE + ...:

   - I want you to sit down and listen. (Cat: Vull que seguis i escoltis)

   - I desired her to relax, but she was hysterical. (Cat: Desitjava que [ella] es calmés, però estava histèrica)

3. I WANT / DESIRE + NOUN:

   - I wanted some paper for the printer. (Cat: Volia paper per a la impressora)

   - I desire a peaceful evening. (Cat: Desitjo una tarda tranquil·la)

Sometimes, the expression "If only ..." (Cat: Si almenys ...) is used instead of the verb "wish" to express wish. "If only ..." is always used as an exclamation, so we must write the exclamation mark (!) at the end of the sentence. It is used in the following structures:

1. IF ONLY + S + PAST SIMPLE + ... (referring to the present and to the future):

   - If only I had money! (Cat: Si almenys tingués diners!)

   - If only you were a little more intelligent! (Cat: Si almenys fossis una mica més intel·ligent!)

2. IF ONLY + PAST PERFECT (had + past participle) + ... (referring to the past):

   - If only I had taken the mobile. (Cat: Si almenys hagués agafat el mòbil)

   - If only they had finished their work! (Cat: Si almenys haguessin acabat la feina!)

2.5 Use of audiovisual material

Learning a foreign language implies the knowledge of the grammar rules and vocabulary of that language, as well as the practice of four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Grammar and vocabulary can be acquired by devoting some time to their study, but they have no use if you cannot apply that knowledge to an effective communication. The only way of acquiring the four skills is by constant practice. You need time and patience, but in the end a good knowledge of the English language is highly beneficial for the students, especially at their workplace.

The best way to acquire the necessary practice of the four skills is to live in contact with the foreign language, so that you have to make an effort to manage in that language. Necessity and motivation are two important factors that favour the learning of a language. Of course, the best contact with English takes place when living in an English-speaking country, but as this is not always possible, it will be necessary to create the conditions to have the necessary practice.

The written skills (reading and writing) are relatively easy to practise at home, but the oral skills (listening and speaking) are more difficult because you need another person, preferably a native speaker, to practise those skills. In online courses, the difficulty is even greater because you do not even have a teacher in front of you who can help you with your oral practice.

Check the "interesting links" section for websites where you can practise English.

What should you do then? Fortunately, the audiovisual materials offer a good opportunity to practise your oral skills comfortably and from your own house. Watching films in their original English language, either at the cinema or at home, is a practical and interesting way of practising your listening skills. But it is in the Internet where you will find the greatest opportunities for practice. If you surf the net, you will find thousands and thousands of pages for learning and practising English (and in fact any other language in the world).

One of the largest and most interesting websites is that of the BBC. Apart from the real language which you can practice by reading and listening to the latests news, you have access to very good resources just by clicking on the link called 'Learning English'. There you can find lots of interactive exercises on grammar and vocabulary, as well as recordings and videos on many topics. There is also a section devoted to the practice of business English.

Aulafácil.com is a website specially addressed to Spanish-speaking students. It offers a great variety of free online courses on many different topics. If you click on 'Idiomas' and then on 'Inglés', you can choose from a great variety of English courses at different levels (from beginners to advanced) and on different topics, including grammar, vocabulary, reading and listening practice. The website might be worth to explore.

One of the most interesting possibilities that the internet offers to students of English is that of the video sharing websites, where you can practice your listening comprehension in a great variety of situations. The most popular of this type of websites is undoubtedly *YouTube*, where you can watch videos on any topics and situations and listen to different accents. Among the great offer, you can find many English lessons about different aspects of the English language. Just write the word 'English' in the search engine and you will have access to a variety of educational videos.

Online dictionaries are also a very useful tool for learners of English. You can find many examples in the Internet. Among the general language dictionaries, one of the best is *Wordreference*, which offers bilingual dictionaries in several languages as well as an only-English dictionary. An interesting feature of *Wordreference* is that you can also listen to the pronunciation of the word. Apart from that, you can have access to a language forum where users can ask for special or rare meanings of words and expressions. On the web, you can also find a great number of technical dictionaries on practically any topic. The great advantage of online dictionaries over traditional dictionaries is that online dictionaries can offer a great variety of language resources and links to similar dictionaries or reference materials.

Similar to online dictionaries are the automatic translators, of which perhaps the best-known is the *Google translator*. This application allows the user to introduce a text and the program will automatically translate it into the language of your choice. Translators are very useful when we need to understand a text in another language and, in fact, some web browsers include the application so the users can understand websites in foreign languages. Translators can be used as dictionaries and give out the meaning of a single word, but they are normally used to translate whole sentences or texts. However, a translator is not so useful if we use it to write texts. The main disadvantage is that translators do not consider the great variety of meanings that certain words might have, they cannot recognise many usual expressions and do not usually take the context into account. On the other hand, we must be very careful with the text that we introduce. If the text has spelling or punctuation mistakes, the translator might ignore the word (because it is not in its internal dictionary) or it may translate it wrongly.

To get information on a topic of your interest and practise your reading at the

same time, the best possibility is to choose one of the several online encyclopedias that are available on the net. The famous, long-living Encyclopaedia Britannica has an online version that is constantly updated. The advantage is that unlike the 24-volume encyclopedia on paper, the online version never becomes obsolete. But the most famous online encyclopedia is undoubtedly the Wikipedia, the 'free encyclopedia that anyone can edit', as it is stated on the main page. In this moment, the English version has almost 3,5 million articles and it is growing everyday. There is also a version in 'Simple English', where the texts are written in very simple language, so it is specially useful for learners or non-native English speakers.

The great challenge of online language learning is to find a way of practising speaking. In spite of the great variety of resources and technical possibilities that the Internet can offer to the students of a language, speaking is a skill which is still difficult to acquire online. Speaking implies the participation of at least two people and such participation is difficult to achieve in an online course. It is technically possible to speak with people from all over the world (using videoconferencing, for example), but we still have a long way to go to get the necessary infrastructure to be able to offer such a possibility. On the other hand, the characteristics of an online course, which requires a lot of solitary practice, also makes speaking difficult. However, you can practice your spoken English by recording and listening to your own voice. Our advice is that you listen to an English text online, then you read the same text aloud, record your voice and then compare your recording with the original one. You can then repeat the operation until your recording resembles the original text as much as possible.

3. HVAC systems

HVAC stands for Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning. It is a generic term which refers to a system whose main function is to contribute to the environmental comfort of a house or a building by providing the desired conditions of temperature and air circulation.

The HVAC systems are very important in large industrial and office buildings as well as in buildings where the temperature and humidity must be carefully regulated, as for example in greenhouses or aquariums. The design of HVAC systems in large buidlings corresponds to the field of mechanical engineering. In a home, the HVAC service is provided by the central heating, heat pumps and air conditioning units.

HVAC units like central heating or air conditioning imply the installation of separate units for heating or cooling a home. In central heating, the heat is generated in a central boiler, which heats water and distributes it through pipes to radiators placed around the house. In air conditioning systems, the basic device is the air conditioner, which is a machine designed to change the temperature and humidity of the house using a refrigeration cycle. In this process, heat is absorbed from indoors and transferred to the exterior of the house. The installation of HVAC units requires the installation of a variety of elements like central boilers, radiators, pumps, air conducts, pipes, air conditioners, air conditioning units, etc. We can in part avoid such complexity by including a reversing valve in an air conditioning installation. This valve automatically changes from heating in winter to cooling in summer, so a house can be heated and cooled using the same equipment instead of using two separate systems.

A good solution for heating and cooling a house in a simple and highly efficient way is by installing a heat pump. A heat pump is an electrical device which works very much like an air conditioner, moving hot and cold air from one place to the other to cool or heat a place. The biggest advantage of a heat pump is that there's no need to install separate heating and cooling systems. Heat pumps are also cheaper and more efficient than standard HVAC units because they only move heat from one place to the other instead of creating it by heating water. This also makes heat pumps more energy saving than other systems because they require very little energy to operate. And they are certainly cheaper to install and maintain.

The most common type of heat pump is the air-source pump. The working is very simple. A unit installed outside the building takes the outside air. A system of fans, coils and a compressor transforms the air into hot vapor which passes to a unit installed inside the building and is then distributed through the house by air conducts. A reversal pump installed on the compressor allows the system to reverse the process and instead of taking the heat from outside, it takes the inside heat and expells it outside, as an air conditioner does.

Air-source pumps are the most common type, but there are others, like the ground-source pump, which absorbs the heat from the ground and transfers it inside a house, and the absorption pump, which is similar to an air-source pump, but using natural gas or solar power instead of electricity.

As we said before, the main advantages of heat pumps are that they have the heating and cooling functions in a single system, they are cheaper because they consume less energy and therefore they are also more friendly to the environment. But they might also have some disadvantages. In very cold climates, heat pumps are not as efficient as in moderate climates because the system needs more energy to absorb and distribute the little heat that is available outside. When the difference in temperature between the inside and the outside of a house is very big, the system might even stop if it reaches a point of saturation. On the other hand, the heat produced by heat pumps is not so intense as the heat produced by the central heating.

3.1 Grammar: the passive voice

There are two basic structures in English: the active and the passive. Active structures are used when the verb is in the active voice (as for example, *I called*). Passive structures are used when the verb is in the passive voice (for example, *I was called*).

Stative verbs are those which refer to states, not actions.

But not all the verbs can have passive forms. Passive structures are impossible with intransitive verbs like *die* (Cat: morir) or *arrive* (Cat: arribar). There are also some transitive verbs that are seldom used in the passive. These are 'stative' verbs, as for example, *have* (Cat: tenir), *resemble* (Cat: semblar), *fit* (Cat: ajustar, encaixar), etc. For this reason, we can say: *John has a nice house*, but we cannot say: **A nice house is had by John.*

3.1.1 Uses of the passive

The subject in the passive voice

In a passive sentence, the subject does not do the action of the verb, as in the active voice. On the contrary, the subject receives the action. The person or thing that does the action is called "agent" and is introduced by the preposition *by*.

We can normally choose whether we prefer to use the active voice or the passive voice. It all depends on the idea that we want to emphasize. In general, we use the passive voice in these cases:

1. When we don't know who or what does the action, or when it is not important:

   - Many books have been written about the Civil War.

   - The results will be analysed in one week.

   - Many computers are connected to a server.

2. When the subject is too long:

- I was annoyed by Mary's insistence on staying at home all day. (Much better than: Mary's insistence on staying at home all day annoyed me)

3. When we want to emphasize what something or somebody did. In this case, we must include the agent, which is introduced by the preposition *by*:

   - The pyramids were built by the ancient Egyptians.
   - The film 'Avatar' has been made by James Cameron.
   - America was discovered by Christopher Columbus.

The passive voice is much more widely used in English than in Catalan and Spanish. Where these languages use the impersonal form, English normally uses a passive structure:

- Cat: *Es comenta que és molt rica*; Eng: *It is commented that she's very rich*.
- Cat: *A la Índia es parla anglès*; Eng: *English is spoken in India*.

The English verb *to be born* (Cat: néixer) is only used in the passive form: *I was born in 1967*.

3.1.2 The structure of the passive sentences

The structure of the passive form of the verbs is the following:

- VERB 'TO BE' (conjugated in the appropriate tense) + PAST PARTICIPLE

It should be remembered that the past participle of regular verbs is formed by adding -ed to the verb, whereas the irregular verbs have an irregular form.

The following table shows all the forms of the passive voice with examples.

TABLE 3.1. The form of the passive voice

Tense	Example	Meaning
present simple	I **am invited** to his party.	**Estic convidat** a la seva festa.
present continuous	He **is being spied** by the FBI.	**Està sent espiat** pel FBI.
past simple	I **was criticized** for my article.	**Vaig ser criticat** pel meu article.
past continuous	They **were being helped** by a man.	**Estaven sent ajudats** per un home.
present perfect	He **has been killed** by his servant.	**Ha estat assassinat** pel seu criat.
past perfect	She **had been chosen** Miss America.	**Havia estat elegida** Miss America.

TABLE 3.1 (continued)

Tense	Example	Meaning
future	The computer **will be repaired** tonight.	L'ordinador **serà reparat** aquest nit.

The future perfect (*has been being invited*) and future continuous (*will be being invited*) are very unusual.

The structure of the passive sentence is:

- SUBJECT + VERB IN THE PASSIVE VOICE + (AGENT) + ...

Remember that in a passive sentence, the subject is not the person or thing that does the action of the verb. The action is done by the agent, which very often is absent from the sentence.

3.1.3 Comparison of the active and the passive structures

The comparison between the active and passive form will help us understand the meaning of the passive sentences. We can express the same idea in the active and the passive structures:

1. Active: The storm *destroyed* the village. (Cat: la tempesta *va destruir* el poble)

2. Passive: The village *was destroyed* by the storm: (Cat: el poble *va ser destruït* per la tempesta)

Notice the following:

- In the active sentence, the most important information is what destroyed the village (*the storm*); in the passive sentence, the most important information is what happened (*the village was destroyed*).

- The subject in the active voice (*The storm*) is the agent in the passive voice (*by the storm*).

- The verb changes from active (*destroyed*) to passive (*was destroyed*), but it does not change the verb tense (past simple).

- The direct object in the active sentence (*the village*) becomes the subject in the passive sentence. This is the reason why only transitive verbs can be used in the passive: as intransitive verbs do not have objects, there is nothing to become the subject in the passive sentence.

3.2 Vocabulary: words to express feelings and emotions

The words that are used to make descriptions are the adjectives, as they express the characteristics of the noun they refer to. Therefore, to describe your feelings and emotions, you will need to use the appropriate adjectives. In English, this type of words are not used in the same way as in Catalan and Spanish, so it is necessary to learn the special characteristics of the English adjectives in order to use them correctly. But we must especially be careful with some pairs of adjectives that are often confused because their meanings are very similar.

Apart from adjectives, there are some verbs that are frequently used to express feelings and emotions.

> See section "Adjectives" in unit called "Learning English" for the characteristics of adjectives and a list of adjectives to describe feelings and emotions.

3.2.1 Adjectives in -ed and adjectives in -ing

There are some pairs of adjectives that are easily confused because of the similarity in their meanings. As for their spelling, one type of adjectives end in -ed and and the other type in -ing, as for example, *interesting / interested*.

The general meanings of each type of adjectives are these:

- Adjectives ending in -ed: they refer to a temporary state. They are actually the past participle forms of their corresponding verbs. Examples: *interested, terrified, embarrassed, fascinated*, etc.

- Adjectives ending in -ing: they refer to permanent characteristics of the noun. Examples: *interesting, terrifying, embarrassing, fascinating*, etc.

Here are some examples in their contexts:

- I met a very *interesting* person. (Cat: Vaig conèixer una persona molt *interessant*)

- I'm very *interested* in computering. (Cat: Estic molt *interessat* en la informàtica)

- The scene was *terrifying*. (Cat: L'escena era *terrorífica*)

- I certainly was *terrified* by the scene. (Cat: Vaig quedar certament *aterroritzat* per l'escena)

- I think the situation was *embarrassing*. (Cat: Crec que la situació va ser *vergonyosa*)

- You're right. I felt *embarrassed*, too. (Cat: Tens raó. Jo també em vaig sentir *avergonyit*)

- I find social networks *fascinating*. (Cat: Trobo les xarxes socials *fascinants*)

- I don't. I'm not at all *fascinated*. (Cat: Jo no. Jo no estic gens *fascinat*)

In the table below, you can see other examples of adjectives ending in -ed and -ing.

TABLE 3.2. -ed and -ing adjectives

-ed	-ing	Meaning
excited	exciting	emocionat - emocionant
amused	amusing	divertit - divertit
amazed	amazing	sorprès - sorprenent
astonished	astonishing	sorprès - sorprenent
shocked	shocking	sorprès - sorprenent
disgusted	disgusting	fastiguejat - fastigós
confused	confusing	confós - confós
horrified	horrifying	horroritzat - horrorós
frightened	frightening	espantat - espantós
depressed	depressing	deprimit - deprimient
worried	worrying	prepocupat - preocupant
annoyed	annoying	molest - molest
exhausted	exhausting	esgotat - esgotador
tired	tiring	cansat - cansat
satisfied	satisfying	satisfet - satisfactori

Notice that the Catalan language uses two different verbs for each type of adjective (*estar* sorprès / *ser* sorprenent). Sometimes, the verb is the only word that marks the difference between both meanings (*estar* cansat / *ser* cansat).

In English, there is only one verb (be), so the meanings must be distinguished with the form of the adjectives.

3.2.2 Verbs to express feelings and emotions

Apart from adjectives, the sentences that describe feelings and emotions also have certain verbs. Two of the most common verbs are:

- **Be** (Cat: ser/estar): I am happy (Cat: sóc feliç/estic content)

- **Feel** (Cat: sentir-se): I feel tired (Cat: estic/em sento cansat)

When we use the verbs "be" and "feel" with this kind of adjectives, they are actually interchangeable.

Another group of verbs are normally used with a noun to express our likes and dislikes. Some of these verbs are:

- **Like** (Cat: agradar): I like fruit (Cat: m'agrada la fruita)

- **Love** (Cat: estimar, encantar): I love reading (Cat: m'encanta la lectura/m'encanta llegir)

- **Dislike** (Cat: desagradar): I dislike television (Cat: em desagrada la tele/no m'agrada la tele)

- **Hate** (Cat: detestar/odiar): I hate noise (Cat: odio el soroll)

> The verbs "like" and its opposite "dislike" are transitive verbs in English. This means that the noun that comes after the verb is the direct object, as for example in: "I like fruit". In Catalan and Spanish, however, the corresponding verbs "agradar" and "gustar" are pronominal, so we must say: "m'agrada la fruita" or "me gusta la fruta". Notice the difference in the structure between English and Catalan and be careful when using the verbs "like" and "dislike". You should avoid making mistakes like: *"The fruit likes me".

As we also do in the case of the adjectives, we can add certain adverbial expressions to the verbs to modify their meaning. Some of these expressions are:

- **Very much** (Cat: molt): I like fruit very much (Cat: m'agrada molt la fruita)

- **Too much** (Cat: massa): I love chocolate too much (Cat: m'agrada massa la xocolota)

- **Quite** (Cat: bastant): I quite like music (Cat: m'agrada bastant la música)

Notice the position of the adverb "quite" before the verb, whereas the other adverbial expressions always go at the end of the sentence.

3.3 Further learning

In today's global society, in which there is a great mobility of people and ideas throughout the world, English has naturally become the world language. More than half the mail as well as most of the scientific and technical periodicals in the world are in English. It is also the language of computers and the language of the air, the sea and the sports. Almost half of the business deals in Europe are made in that language. And five of the largest broadcasting companies in the world (like the BBC and the CNN) transmit in English to audiences of more than 100 million worldwide.

The countries that want to be competitive in our globalised society are facing a double challenge: on the one hand, they have to instruct the population in the use of the new technologies, and on the other hand, they have to design a plan to improve the people's knowledge of English. Without that basic knowledge, a Spanish worker cannot compete with a European fellow worker, and the country will irremediably be kept behind in the race to the future.

It is a fact that the use of the new technologies is rapidly being assumed by the population, especially by the new generations, who are growing up in a society that is immersed in a technological revolution. However, the right environment to facilitate a good learning of the English language has not been created yet. It is true that the different governments are making an effort to create the right conditions, but there is still a long way to go.

Two things are evident: that English is very important to advance in today's society and that the learning of the language depends on the greatest part in people's own efforts and will to learn the language.

For all this, our advice is that your study of English should not stop at the end of this course. You might get your degree, but without a proper knowledge of English, your degree will not reach much further, so we strongly recommend you to continue learning the language.

This is our advice:

1. Create the right attitude to learn. Think of the importance of English to improve in your job and in your personal life. If you can speak English, you will compete with an advantage over other people who do not. This will create the motivation that is necessary in all learning, but especially in the learning of languages.

2. If you have time, take up some English course in a good language school or, better still, in the official language school (EOI). If you do not have time to go to school, as is probably the case, you can also study online, just as you are doing right now. The Internet offers a great variety of resources for self-learning. In this course, you have obtained, we hope, the necessary basis over which to build up your knowledge. We have explained how to use reference material and how to use the audiovisual materials available in the net. You can use this for your further learning.

3. Remember that the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) require constant practice. Create for yourself the right conditions in which to practise those skills. You can, for example, read articles of your interest in the Wikipedia (there is a version in Simple English) or browse the websites of international newspapers to learn the current news (in this way, you will also have different points of view on the same piece of news). You can write a small diary in English, watch films in their original version with subtitles or listen to the BBC radio on the Internet. Remember that you do not need to understand everything, but you will get familiarized with the sounds of English, so it will be easier for you to understand people. Get

together with someone who speaks English (if possible, a native speaker) and speak in English for a while. In this way, your spoken English will gradually improve.

4. If you can, travel to an English-speaking country and use the language in a real context. Try to use the language structures that you have learned during your formal learning, even if you have to prepare them before speaking. Do not be ashamed of speaking in English. Nobody will laugh at you for not speaking the language correctly.

5. Learning English requires a great effort, so be patient and do not get discouraged. Think of the many advantages that you will get if you learn the language well. Remember, however, that you do not have to speak like a native speaker. You will have a good knowledge of English when you can understand the main ideas in a speech or a text, when you can write a short note in English and explain things with basic words.

This is then our final advice. We have been with you for a very short time, but we hope that at the end of this course you have the impression that your English has improved. Your learning has not finished yet, but now it depends on you. We wish you very good luck in your further studies and we hope you have a brilliant future. Goodbye...