GRAMMAR FOR ACADEMIC WRITING

Tony Lynch and Kenneth Anderson
(revised & updated by Anthony Elloway)

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Introduction

Grammar for Academic Writing provides a selective overview of the key areas of English grammar that you need to master, in order to express yourself correctly and appropriately in academic writing. Those areas include the basic distinctions of meaning in the verb tense system, the use of modal verbs to express degrees of certainty and commitment, and alternative ways of grouping and ordering written information to highlight the flow of your argument.

These materials are suitable for taught and research postgraduate students.

Study Notes

This course contains **Study Notes** at the end of each unit, providing answers and comments on the two types of exercise in the course:

- closed tasks - to which there is a single correct answer or solution;

- open tasks - where you write a text about yourself or your academic field. For these tasks we have provided sample answers (some written by past students) inside boxes. We hope you will find what they have written both interesting and useful in evaluating your own solutions.

*Note: every unit contains some suggested Extension Tasks – these are **open** tasks. Please do not send these tasks to us. If possible, show your answers to the open tasks to another student and ask them for their comments and corrections.*

Recommended Books

If you are interested in continuing to work on your grammar/vocabulary, I can recommend the following:

1. Grammar Troublespots: A guide for Student Writers by A. Raimes (Cambridge University Press, 2004).
   This is designed to help students identify and correct the grammatical errors they are likely to make when they write.

2. Oxford Learner's Wordfinder Dictionary by H. Trappes-Lomax (Oxford University Press, 1997).
   This is an innovative dictionary, designed to help you in the process of **writing** – unlike a conventional dictionary, which helps you understand new words when you are **reading**.

1   PACKAGING INFORMATION

In this first unit we look at ways of organising your writing into 'packages' of information that will make your meaning clear to the reader. To do that, we need to consider three <u>levels</u> of packaging of English:

- punctuation within and between parts of the sentence
- the grammar of sentence construction
- paragraphing

Punctuation

Task 1.1
Write in the names for these punctuation marks in the boxes below:

:	[ ]	;	[ ]	" "	[ ]
( )	[ ]	**[ ]**	[ ]	*	[ ]
&	[ ]	**@**	[ ]	**#**	[ ]
/	[ ]	****	[ ]	' '	[ ]

Task 1.2
All the punctuation has been removed from the text below. Read the whole text and put in slashes where there you think the sentences end. Then punctuate each sentence.

the university of edinburgh unlike other scottish universities is composed of colleges there are three of them sciences and engineering humanities and social sciences and medicine and veterinary medicine each college covers both undergraduate and graduate programmes of study although students are generally admitted to one college only they may have the opportunity to study subjects of another undergraduate programmess generally last three years or four for honours there is an extensive variety of postgraduate programmes of study including a 9 month diploma a 12 month masters and doctoral research programmes lasting at least 36 months

Grammatical construction of the sentence

Terminology

Any discussion of grammar requires some knowledge of the principal grammatical terms, so here's a quick test to check whether you need to brush up your knowledge of terminology.

Task 1.3
Write down one <u>example</u> (not a definition) of each of these terms:

term	*example*
a **clause**	
a **phrase**	
an **auxiliary verb**	
a **transitive verb**	
an **uncountable noun**	
indirect speech	
a **phrasal verb**	
an **adverb**	

Types of clause

Task 1.4

Match the four clause types on the left with the appropriate definition on the right:

1 **main** clause   **a** *clause joined to another by 'and', 'but', or 'or'*

2 **relative** clause   **b** *clause that can stand independently*

3 **co-ordinate** clause   **c** *clause beginning with 'who', 'which', etc.*

4 **subordinate** clause   **d** *clause that is dependent on another clause*

This terminology is helpful because it allows us to discuss the structure of a **text** (or sequence of sentences), which is a fundamental part of this course. It provides a way of analysing the formal components of a text - phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs - even if the content is hard to understand, as illustrated in the next task.

Task 1.5

The text below is part of an abstract for a talk. You may find it difficult to <u>understand</u>, unless you are a student of cognitive science or artificial intelligence. That doesn't matter! What we want you to do is to <u>analyse it</u> grammatically into the categories shown under the box. Tick the categories to show which of them are present in the six sentences.

Some Reasons for Avoiding Supervised Nets, and Ways of Doing So [i]

A Neural networks can be divided into supervised and unsupervised. **B** Supervised networks, such as the multilayer perceptron trained with backpropagation on a sum-of-squares error function, are useful for representing how some properties of the environment co-vary with others (function approximation), but are biologically dubious. **C** Unsupervised networks, such as the Self-organizing Map, are often more biologically plausible, but are used almost exclusively to represent the resting state of the environment (density estimation).

D In this talk I will argue that, for a common class of problem, it is wrong to use unsupervised nets. **E** I will go on to describe some unsupervised models that do the same job better, and then try to motivate them from a computational and biological perspective. **F** There will be some maths but more pictures.

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	main clause	*coordinate clause*	*subordinate clause*	*relative clause*
Sentence A:	✓			
Sentence B:				
Sentence C:				
Sentence D:				
Sentence E:				
Sentence F:				

Grammar: rules and resources

Grammar is often defined as the **rule system** of a language, but it is also useful to think of it as a **resource** for expressing meaning. For example, when we talk of someone 'knowing' the Present Perfect in English, we mean that they know <u>how to form it</u> (by combining the auxiliary verb *have* with the *past participle* of the relevant verb), but more importantly <u>in which situations</u> it is used and <u>which meanings</u> it can convey. Thinking of grammar as primarily 'rules' tends to make people think there is a one-to-one relationship between grammar and meaning. As we will see in the next task, the same meaning can be expressed in different ways, and even with different tenses.

Task 1.6
Think carefully about the meaning of this sentence:

> It's eleven years since the SDA Conference was last held here in Edinburgh.

Complete the eight sentences below in ways that express <u>the same meaning</u> as the one above.

A *The last time...*

B *The SDA Conference…….. last...*

C *It… in 2000......*

D *Eleven years have...*

E *This is the first...*

F *2000...*

G *The SDA Conference hasn't...*

H *Not for eleven years...*

That task highlights grammar as a resource. One important technique for extending your knowledge of English grammar is to <u>analyse</u> the texts you read for your degree course and to <u>notice</u> the variety of ways of expressing the same basic meaning.

Ways of packaging information in sentences

English offers three ways of showing the relationship between ideas:

Sequence

Research grants from the British government are getting scarcer. <u>As a result</u>, universities are having to seek funding from private industry.

Co-ordination

Research grants from the British government are getting scarcer <u>and</u> universities are having to seek funding from private industry.

Subordination

<u>As</u> research grants from the British government are getting scarcer, universities are having to seek funding from private industry.

or

Universities are having to seek funding from private industry <u>because</u> research grants are getting scarcer.

On the next page is a table showing some of the commonest linking markers: **sentence openers** and **conjunctions** (used in co-ordination and subordination).

Task 1.7
Put an appropriate marker in the space in each sentence:

A You can attend a graduation ceremony and receive your degree certificate from the

Chancellor of the University. _____ you can graduate *in absentia*

and get the certificate sent by post.

B In some areas of England, domestic water consumption is now subject to metering.

_____ some people on low incomes are washing less often.

C Approximately 120 matriculated students take ELTT courses at ELTC each year.

_____ they take a diagnostic test of English known as TEAM.

D Sigrid scored less than 50% on TEAM. _____ she did not apply for

English courses at ELTC because she should have taken ELBA, the test for non-graduating

students.

LINKING MARKERS

	1 SENTENCE OPENERS	**2 CONJUNCTIONS**	
		2A Co-ordinating	**2B Subordinating**
ADDITION	*In addition [to NP], ...* *Moreover, ...* *Also, ...* *Apart from [NP], ...* *Furthermore, ...*	*...and ...* *not only ...,* *but also ...*	*, who...* *, which...* *, where...* *, when...*
CONTRAST	*However, ...* *Nevertheless, ...* *On the other hand, ...* *In contrast, ...* *In spite of [NP], ...* *Despite [NP], ...*	*... but ...* *...(and) yet...*	*although...* *whereas...* *while...* *in spite of the fact that...* *despite the fact that...*
CAUSE/ EFFECT	*So...* *As a result...* *Consequently...* *Therefore...* *Thus...* *Hence...* *For this reason...* *Because of [NP],...*	*...(and) so...* *...(and) hence...*	*so...* *so that...* *because...* *due to the fact that...*
POSITIVE CONDITION	*In that case,...* *If so,...* *Then,...*	*...and...* *...and (then)...*	*if...* *as/so long as...*
CHOICE/ NEGATIVE CONDITION	*Alternatively, ...* *Otherwise,...* *Instead of [NP],...* *Rather than [NP],...* *If not,...*	*...or (else)...*	*If... not...* *unless...*
TIME ORDER/ LISTING	*Then...* *Afterwards,...* *First(ly),...* *Second(ly),...* *Next,...* *Prior to [NP],...* *Before [NP],...* *Finally / Lastly,...*	*...(and (then)...*	*before...* *after...* *, after which...* *when...* *now that...*

Note: [NP] = Noun Phrase, which may include a <u>noun</u>, or a <u>verbal noun</u> (*-ing* form):

e.g.   *Instead of <u>complaints</u>,*   *it would be better to offer advice*
   Instead of <u>complaining</u>,

Task 1.8
Now do the same for this text about how parents correct or ignore their children's language errors.

Learning conditions[ii]

The way in which parents correct their children's errors in their first language tends to be limited to corrections of meaning. _____, in informal learning of a second language (i.e. not in the classroom) errors that do not interfere with meaning are usually ignored, because most people would feel they were being impolite if they interrupted and corrected someone who was trying to have a conversation with them! _____, they may 'correct' if they cannot understand what the speaker is trying to say. _____, errors of grammar and pronunciation are rarely commented on, but the wrong choice of word may receive a comment from the confused listener. The only place where the correction of language errors is common is the language classroom.

Task 1.9
Rewrite the information below as TWO or THREE sentences. That involves deciding how the ideas are logically related, and then using a **marker** or **conjunction** (co-ordinating or subordinating) to match your meaning.

Learning English is not easy.

Learning German is in some ways more difficult.

German has different articles for masculine, feminine and neuter nouns.

You have to change the endings of adjectives to match the nouns.

This is harder for speakers of English than for speakers of French.

French also uses adjectival endings.

People say that knowing English helps you to start learning German.

When you have passed the elementary stages, English is less help.

At an advanced level, knowledge of English is no help at all.

Relative clauses

LANGUAGE BOX: Relative connectors

in subject position

> The student <u>who</u> (or <u>that</u>) saw me yesterday was absent this morning.
> The book <u>which</u> (or <u>that</u>) proved most helpful was the one by McKenzie

as object

> The supervisors <u>who</u> (or <u>that</u>, or less commonly <u>whom</u>) students appreciate most are
> those that give the clearest advice.
> The equipment <u>which</u> (or <u>that</u>) I avoid using is the gas spectrometer.

> [N.B. In object position, you can omit the connector: *The equipment I avoid using*…]

as a possessive + noun

> South Korea is a crowded country, <u>whose</u> capital looks increasingly like Hong Kong.
> I was talking to two Italian researchers, <u>whose</u> English was hard to understand.

with a preposition

> The address <u>to which</u> you have to send the form is shown on the back
> (or: *The address <u>which</u> you have to send the form <u>to</u> is…*)

with a quantifier / noun / adjective

> There were three lecturers in the office, <u>none of whom</u> knew much about it.
> The library had a variety of books, <u>the most popular of which</u> are on short loan.
> We had a long meeting, <u>by the end of which</u> she had accepted our proposal.

with a place / time expression

> The Student Union is the place <u>where</u> you'll find most adverts for flats.
> Childhood is said to be the period in our lives <u>when</u> we learn fastest.

in combination

> In Scottish universities, the Rector is an elected officer, <u>one of whose responsibilities</u>
> is to represent the interests of the students in Senate meetings.

Task 1.10
Write definitions of the words below, using the relative connectors on the right.

university	**campus**	*who, in which, at which, when,*
department	**lecturer**	*into which, who, that, where,*
graduation	**seminar**	
student loan	**postgraduate**	

Task 1.11
For practice, write a description of the institution where you work or study in your home country. Use as many as possible of the relative connectors shown on page 8. Write 100-150 words.
NB - You should not send this to your tutor, but you can compare your text with that on page 14 of this unit.

Paragraphing

The definition of **paragraph** in *Wordfinder* is 'a section of writing which covers a particular idea'. So when writing a text we should make sure that we start a new paragraph when we move to a new point, or to a new development of an existing point. A good test for whether or not to begin a new paragraph is whether we could invent a <u>heading</u> for it.

Task 1.12
Tony Lynch received this e-mail from a Chinese professor. As you will see, the text is clear enough but the writer did not divide it into paragraphs. Read it and decide (1) where you would make a new paragraph and (2) what heading you would give each one.

A.J.Lynch@ed.ac.uk

April 14, 2008

Dear Tony Lynch

I have recently read your interesting article in the <u>ELT Journal</u> and could not help writing to you to thank you for your wonderful ideas. I have been a professor of English for 40 years and working/supervising more than 30 foreign teachers over the past 15 years. Most of them are native, but unqualified teachers. Every day we are trying to help our students and, inevitably, we have to react to their mistakes. It seems to me that all of us have not been consciously aware of when and how to react to our students' mistakes. A typical picture in my class is to "step in as soon as learners encounter communication problems", as you said in your article. My reaction has often been to interrupt their speech. My foreign colleagues' more diplomatic reaction does no good either in facilitating our students' learning. You are right to ask us teachers "to think about when and how (much) we should help". To my foreign colleagues, I'd like to ask: Why? Non-professional language teachers need to know that correction is needed and they should not let all the significant mistakes go unchecked. I have been trying your suggestion in my class and I can see positive results. It is a little painful for me to resist my temptation to step in as soon as the problems come out, but it is also very rewarding to see my students' more relaxed and confident learning manner in their learning process. That is just a beginning and I'll try to tailor some methods to my teaching practice and help my students better in their English learning. I am writing to see if there is an opening at your

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university for me to do a one-year research, because I'll take a sabbatical starting from 2009. I wanted to go the USA but now I have changed my mind telling myself "Why not to go to a British university like Edinburgh?" The great English language originated in the UK! But I don't know much about your country, especially your higher education institutions. Maybe there is not as much opportunity in the UK as in the USA, but I'd like to try. It would be very kind of you if your could convey my letter to the director of your centre or some other schools. I look forward to hearing from you.

(Name)

Extension Tasks
[Please do not send these tasks to us. If possible, show your answers to the tasks to another student and ask them for their comments and corrections.]

You could practice the grammar studied in this unit by trying the following task(s):

Task 1.13
Write a text of about 100 words about a controversy or problem in your academic field. Write notes first and then decide how to connect the ideas. Write your text as a single paragraph containing <u>no more than four</u> sentences.

Task 1.14
Think of a new development in your field – something that has changed the way people work or think about an issue. Write a text describing the development and explaining why it is important.

Study Notes for Unit 1

Task 1.1

colon	semi-colon	(double) inverted commas / quotation marks
(round) brackets	(square) brackets	asterisk
ampersand	at-sign	hash
slash	back-slash	(single) inverted commas / quotation marks

Task 1.2
The original text was this:

The University of Edinburgh, unlike other Scottish universities, is composed of Colleges. There are three of them: Science and Engineering, Humanities and Social Science, and Medicine and Veterinary Medicine. Each College covers both undergraduate and graduate programmes of study. Although students are generally admitted to one college only, they may have the opportunity to study subjects of another. Undergraduate programmes generally last three years (or four for Honours). There is an extensive variety of postgraduate programmes of study, including a 9-month Diploma, a 12-month Masters and doctoral research programmes lasting at least 36 months.

Notice that the words University and Faculty have capital letters when they refer to <u>specific</u> examples, as is the case with Edinburgh University in line 1 and the Arts Faculty in lines 6-7.

Task 1.3

term	*example*
a **clause**	(a clause is a group of related words containing a subject and a verb) *She is older than her brother.*
a **phrase**	(a group of related words that does not contain a subject-verb relationship) *in the morning*
an **auxiliary verb**	Helping verbs or auxiliary verbs such *as will, shall, may, might, can, could, must, ought to, should, would, used to, need* are used in conjunction with main verbs to express shades of time and mood.
a **transitive verb**	Some verbs require an object to complete their meaning: *"She gave _____ ?" Gave what? She gave <u>money</u> to the church.* These verbs are called transitive.
an **uncountable noun**	Uncountable nouns are used for nouns describing a mass (*clothing*), a natural substance (*air*), food (*bacon*), an abstract concept (*advice*), a game (*chess*), a disease (*diabetes*), or a subject of study (*biology*). Uncountable nouns have no plural form.

indirect speech	Unlike direct speech, indirect speech does not use the exact words of a speaker: *Direct speech: The lecturer asked, "How am I doing?".* *Indirect speech: The lecturer asked how he was doing.*
a **phrasal verb**	Phrasal verbs (often called multi-word verbs) consist of a verb and another word or phrase, usually a preposition or adverb. The resulting combination creates what amounts to a new verb, whose meaning can sometimes be puzzling to non-native speakers. *The plane took off.*
an **adverb**	Adverbs are words that modify a verb (*He drove slowly. — How did he drive?*) an adjective (*He drove a very fast car. — How fast was his car?*) another adverb (*She moved quite slowly down the aisle. — How slowly did she move?*)

Task 1.4 Solution: 1= b; 2 = c; 3 = a; 4 = d

Task 1.5

	main clause	*coordinate clauses*	*subordinate clause*	*relative clause*
Sentence A:	YES	-	-	-
Sentence B:	YES	YES (*but*)	YES (*how*)	-
Sentence C:	YES	YES (*but*)	-	-
Sentence D:	YES	-	YES (*that…*)	-
Sentence E:	YES	YES (*and*)	-	YES (*that…*)
Sentence F:	YES	-	-	-

In Sentences B and C, the word '*but*' links co-ordinate clauses; in Sentence F, it links two noun phrases (*some maths* and *more pictures*) within a clause.

Task 1.6
These answers assume we are counting backwards from 2011. The main thing to notice is the variation in the verb tense according to the sentence opening.

A *The last time the SDA Conference was held here in Edinburgh was eleven years ago/in 2000*

B *The SDA Conference was last held here in Edinburgh eleven years ago/in 2000*

C *It was in 2000 that the SDA Conference was last held here in Edinburgh*

D *Eleven years have passed since the SDA Conference was last held here in Edinburgh*

E *This is the first time for eleven years that the SDA Conference has been held here in Ed…*
   This is the first time since 2000 that the SDA Conference has been held here in Edinburgh

F *2000 was the last time (that) the SDA Conference was held here in Edinburgh*

G *The SDA Conference hasn't been held here in Edinburgh for eleven years (or since 2000)*

H *Not for eleven years has the SDA Conference been held here in Edinburgh*

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In the last sentence, the negative phrase *Not for eleven years…* at the start of the sentence causes an **inversion** of the verb and subject. This happens with a number of similar negative and restrictive expressions, e.g. *Never, Hardly, Nowhere, Seldom, At no time*, and *Under no circumstances.*

Task 1.7
A   *Alternatively*
B   *Consequently*
C   *Prior to that / Beforehand*
D   *However / Nevertheless*

Task 1.8
The original markers were   **A**   *Similarly*
                                   B   *However*
                                   C   *Thus*

Task 1.9
Possible solution, in three sentences:

> *Learning English is not easy, but in some ways learning German is more difficult, because German has different articles for masculine, feminine and neuter nouns. Moreover, you have to change the endings of adjectives, which is harder for speakers of English than for, say, speakers of French, which also uses adjectival endings. People say that knowing English helps you to start to learn German, but when you have passed the basic stages, it is less help, and knowledge of English is no help at all at advanced level.*

Task 1.10
The point in this exercise is for you to notice the combination of <u>term to be defined</u> and the <u>relative connector</u>.

university – a college or collection of colleges **at which** people study for a degree
campus – the area of land **where** the main building of a university is
department – one of the parts **into which** a university is divided
lecturer –a person **who** teaches at a university or college
graduation – a ceremony **in which** degree certificates are given to people who have graduated from a university
seminar – a class at a university or college **when** a small group of students and a teacher discuss or study a particular topic
student loan – money **that** a bank or an institution lends to a student so that they can pay to do their course.
postgraduate – a student **who** is studying for a second degree at a university

Task 1.11

> *I work part-time in a student counselling centre in Athens, where I have been a volunteer for the past three years. The centre has team of six staff, each of whom has their own consultation room. But most of my time I spend studying for my PhD in the Department of Psychology, which is on the main university campus. The Department is in two sections: the main building is in very poor condition but the annexe is much more modern. I share a workroom in the annexe with four other students, which is not very convenient.*

Task 1.12   Tony Lynch's solution:

Paragraph 2 starting at   'A typical picture in my class…'
Paragraph 3   'I have been trying your suggestion…'
Paragraph 4   'I am writing to see if…'
Paragraph 5   'I look forward to hearing from you'

Possible headings for those paragraphs:

1. *Introduction/Opening*
2. *The local teaching situation*
3. *Trying out your suggestions*
4. *Enquiry about a job*
5. *Closing*

Task 1.13   Sample answer:

> *There are a number of problems and conflicts between conservationists and stakeholders in the management of the Cairngorms area. The conservationists want the area to be maintained with the minimum of human disturbance; the stakeholders need to use the area for a variety of purposes. Currently, the greatest conflict is the plan to develop downhill ski facilities, which can cause problems such as damage to vegetation, an increase in waste and litter, soil erosion, and disturbance to birds, deer and other wildlife. In order to solve the problems, the Cairngorms Partnership has been set up to guide the sustainable development of the area; its members include representatives of the local councils and communities, land owners and conservationists.*

Task 1.14   Sample answer:

> *As health <u>has become</u> more and more important to people, medicine <u>has gained</u> greater status. Doctors <u>have done</u> a great deal of clinical and research work and, as a result, many diseases <u>have been controlled</u> or even eliminated - especially in the last 20 years. For example, few patients suffer from tuberculosis these days, since the introduction of BCG vaccine. Thus life expectancy <u>has increased</u> considerably all over the world, particularly in the developing countries. Apart from the advances in the treatment of infectious diseases, doctors <u>have also found</u> ways of investigating and treating cancers. In some cases we <u>have had</u> particular success - for example, mammograms for screening breast cancer and radiotherapy.*
>
> ***However***, *it seems there are always new problems for medical science to deal with; some cancers remain difficult to manage, and one disease that is of major concern nowadays is AIDS. AIDS is likely to be the most serious problem for medicine to tackle over the next twenty years. Although we can hope that the risk of cancer will be reduced, we cannot be so sure that we will be able to find a treatment or cure for AIDS.*

Notice that in her first paragraph the student used the <u>Present Perfect</u>, to refer to changes in the recent past, and then switched in the second to other tenses, to describe the current and future prospects.

References

[i] E-mail notice from Will Lowe, Centre for Cognitive Science for an Interdisciplinary Tea Seminar. 15 March 1998.

[ii] Extract adapted from Patsy Lightbown and Nina Spada, *How Languages are Learned* (OUP 1993, page 22)

2   INFORMATION SEQUENCE: Describing

Ordering the information

When someone writes well, their text seems to 'flow' like a liquid - in fact the word *fluent* means precisely that. The readers have to make very little effort to understand your meaning and the information seems to come in a natural order. The characteristics of writing which create this impression vary from language to language. In English, one of the key factors in fluent writing is the <u>order of information within the sentence</u>, and in particular at the beginning of the sentence.

Our past students at Edinburgh have told us that their supervisors sometimes return a piece of writing with comments such as *"I can't follow this"* or *"Make this clearer"*. The difficulty seems to arise from the sequence of information; if you order your information differently from the 'natural' sequence that a native speaker of English expects, they have to work harder to make sense of it, and in some cases they may find it impossible to understand.

Task 2.1
Compare these two versions of the same text:

Version 1

Norma has had a terrible five years. Someone stole her car and set it on fire in 2006. Two of her toes had to be amputated the year after that. A road accident killed her husband in 2008. The other driver's carelessness was the cause of the crash. A storm damaged her house earlier this year.

Version 2

Norma has had a terrible five years. In 2006 her car was stolen and set on fire. The year after that she had to have two of her toes amputated. In 2008 her husband was killed in a road accident. The cause of the crash was the other driver's carelessness. Earlier this year her house was damaged by a storm.

Which version do you think flows more naturally?

How is it different from the other one?

To native readers of English, Version 2 appears to be more fluent. That is because the ideas in each sentence follow the tendency in written English for *old* (or *known*) information to be presented before *new* (*unknown*) information. The diagram below shows this general movement from old to new in the text about Norma.

old information   **new** information

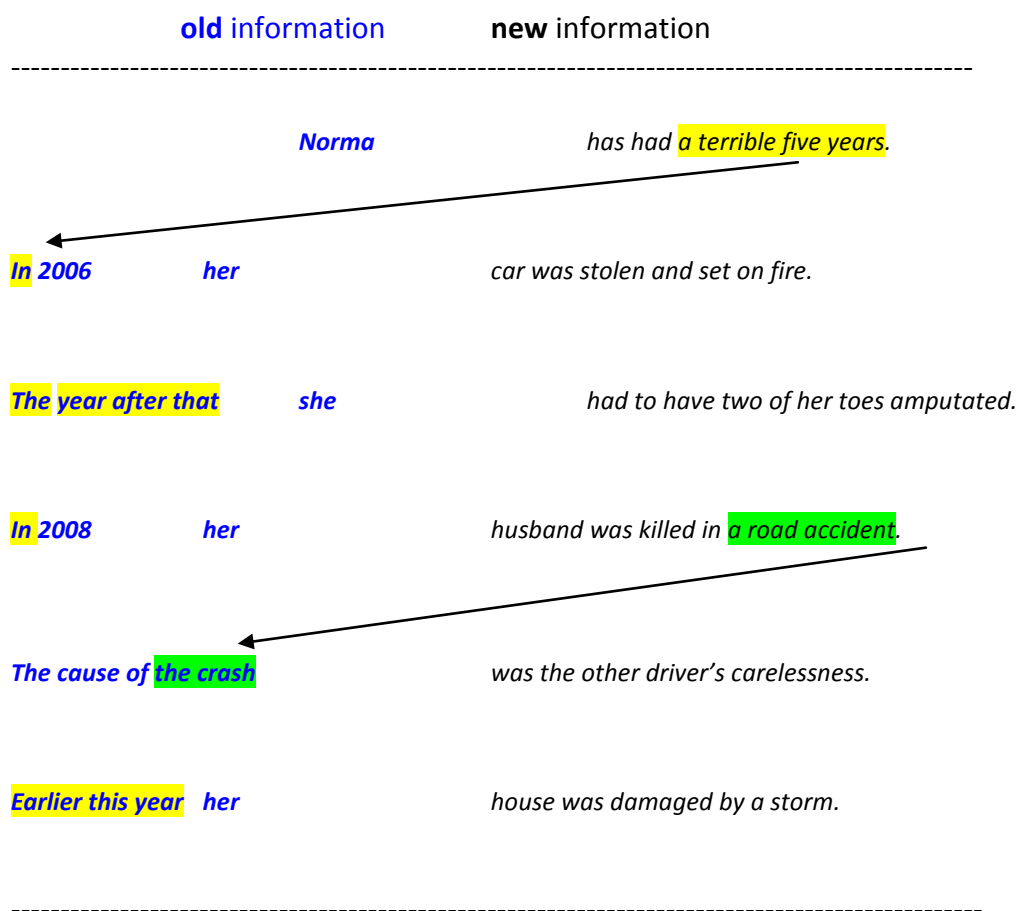*Norma*   has had *a terrible five years*.

In 2006   *her*   car was stolen and set on fire.

The year after that   *she*   had to have two of her toes amputated.

In 2008   *her*   husband was killed in *a road accident*.

The cause of *the crash*   was the other driver's carelessness.

Earlier this year *her*   house was damaged by a storm.

As you can see from the highlighting, once a piece of information has been presented as **new** in the second part of a sentence, it can be used as **old** information, at the beginning of a later sentence.

This left-to-right, old-to-new movement in English is a <u>strong tendency</u> but not an absolute rule. You will find many texts where a writer goes against the tendency. However, in your own writing, if you follow the advice in this unit about information sequence you should find that it will make your texts clearer to British readers.

Task 2.2
Have a look at this paragraph about Finland. Does it flow from old to new?

> *There are 188,000 lakes in Finland. Many people are now very concerned about them.*
> *Chemicals have polluted most of the larger lakes. A Finnish government report recently*
> *confirmed this.*

Task 2.3
Change the order of information in sentences 2, 3 and 4 to make the text flow more smoothly.

Original	Improved
There are 188,000 lakes in Finland.	*There are 188,000 lakes in Finland.*
Many people are now very concerned about them.	*They…*
Chemicals have polluted most of the larger lakes.	*Most…*
A Finnish government report recently confirmed this.	*This*

Notice that in Sentences 3 and 4, the way to bring **old** information to the front of a sentence is to <u>make it the subject of a Passive verb:</u>

> *Most of the larger lakes **have been polluted** by chemicals*

> *This **was** recently **confirmed** by a Finnish government report.*

The need to bring an old topic to the front of a sentence in written English is one of the reasons why the Passive is common in academic texts. We will return to this point (or: This point will be returned to!) later in this unit.

Task 2.4
This time, there are two parts to the task:

> (1) Decide on the best sequence for the five sentences about manufacturing

> (2) Re-write the sentences as one paragraph, changing the information order within each sentence if you need to.

A	*So the prices of many goods are now lower because of computerisation.*
B	*The more economical use of raw materials is one of these changes.*
C	*Computers are an essential part of manufacturing industry.*
D	*In addition, faster manufacturing processes have resulted from their introduction.*
E	*Improvements in production have been made possible by computers.*

Task 2.5
Read the text below carefully. You need to change the information order in ONE of the sentences. Which one? How?

Student Loans[i]

An increasing proportion of the government money available to undergraduate students for maintenance is provided through student loans. These are administered by the Student Loans Company. Student loans are not means-tested and interest is charged in line with the Retail Prices index. Loans for courses of less than five years must be repaid over 5 years. Loans for courses lasting 5 years or more will be repaid over 7 years. In the April following course completion, repayments automatically begin unless a graduate's earnings are less than 85% of national average earnings . In this case, repayments are postponed.

Task 2.6
Below is a paragraph about archaeological excavations/surveys. The sentences forming the paragraph are all grammatically correct, but as a whole the paragraph does not 'flow' very well. Make changes to the sentences, where appropriate, so that the information flows across the paragraph –to do this pay attention to the 'old-to-new' flow in each sentence.

The first step in an archaeological excavation or survey is the selection of the site. Information such as who lived there, how old it is, and what timeframe it covered is what archaeologists first need to learn about the site at this stage. Through the use of such things as maps, photographs, regional studies, oral histories, and historic documents of surrounding sites, the archaeologists accomplish this initial analysis. Once this is done, the possible results of the excavation must then be assessed by the archaeologists. Whether or not the work done at a site will yield innovative or duplicated results is taken into consideration. Careful deliberation must also take place to determine whether or not the proper funds, technology, and human resources are available to perform the excavation properly, because the information that comes from a site can only be viewed once.

Description

Now that we have looked at the principle of information sequence in English, we are going to apply it to various types of description:

* *   describing a system
* *   describing a procedure
* *   describing a causal relationship

Describing a system

Here the word *system* refers to anything with a multi-part structure (an organism, an institution, etc.). Some useful expressions for describing systems are listed in the box:

LANGUAGE BOX: Describing a system

Whole-part

The university	*comprises* *is made up of* *contains* *is composed of* *consists of* *is divided into*	*nine faculties*

Part-whole

Four countries	*form (part of)* *make up* *constitute*	*the United Kingdom*

Task 2.7

Write a description of the department, centre, or institute where you are studying at Edinburgh University. Describe both its physical components and also its complement of staff and students.

Describing procedures

In general, Passive forms are used when the identity of the person (etc.) doing an action is less important than the nature or consequence of the action itself:

Cherie was arrested when she arrived in Guadaloupe

There it is clear it must have been police or customs officers who arrested her.

Similarly, one reason for the frequency of the Passive in academic English is that it creates the impression that the events or ideas are being described <u>objectively;</u> it reduces the personal involvement of the writer/researcher.

(As we saw earlier in this Unit, a second reason for using the Passive is a <u>technical</u> one: it allows you to put an old topic at the beginning of the sentence, to help the flow of the text).

A specific procedure in a research study

Typically, the experimental part of a research study (the **M**ethod section of the **IMRaD** model) is described using the *Past Simple Passive*:

> *Data collection and analysis[ii]*
>
> *Three sets of data were gathered on these students after they had been attending reading classes for three weeks: an oral reading interview, a sample of oral reading, and a retelling (summary) of the oral reading.*
>
> *As discussed earlier, the reading interview provides information about the students' model of reading - that is, their mental image of reading. In order to examine the interaction between their reading model and their reading behaviour, a detailed analysis of the oral reading samples was performed to identify mis-pronunciations. Profiles of the students' use of various clues in the text (sound/letter, grammatical and meaning clues) were established. The retelling or summaries of the oral reading were transcribed and evaluated on a scale 1-6 from very poor to excellent, depending on the quantity and accuracy of the information that the student could provide about the characters, events and implied meanings of the reading text. All the data were evaluated and checked by at least two researchers.*

Task 2.8
Write a short text (about 150 words) describing the method used in a research study that you have been involved in yourself or have recently read about.

A general procedure

In cases where a writer describes a conventional or normal way of doing things, rather than a specific element in one particular case, the tense normally used is the *Present Simple Passive.* It has been underlined in the example below.

Applicants to the University of Edinburgh whose first language is not English are required to provide

evidence of adequate proficiency in English, which in most cases takes the form of a certified score on

a recognised measure of academic English, such as IELTS or TOEFL. Acceptance level for most Faculties

at Edinburgh is now set at IELTS 6.5 overall, with no module score below 6.0; candidates who choose

to take TOEFL are also expected to take the supplementary Test of Written English. After acceptance,

students are required to take TEAM as part of their matriculation at Edinburgh; in some Faculties,

individuals are exempted if they have achieved IELTS 7.0 or higher for acceptance.

In some cases, a text will contain a mixture of Active and Passive forms; the writer uses the Active to emphasise the *actions* or *decision-making* by the participant(s) involved, or the Passive when emphasising the *procedure* rather than the participants.

Task 2.9
Write a description of a common procedure related to academic life, for example:
>   how students are assessed on your degree course
>   how equipment is prepared for use in an experiment
>   how to access an electronic database.

If none of those suggestions suits you, then adapt the question to match your individual circumstances.

Describing causal relationships

In academic writing it is unusual to see the sort of simple expressions of direct cause-and-effect that people use in everyday speech; this reflects the fact that academic research and discussion deals with complex issues. So a statement such as

> *Poverty causes crime*

is very unlikely to occur in an academic text; not all poor people commit crimes, and conversely many crimes are committed by rich people. A more academically acceptable version of that sentence is

> *Poverty is one of the causes of crime*   or   *Poverty may cause crime*

Task 2.10
Practise using some **cause / effect language**: complete the sentences below with the six expressions provided. Take care with the prepositions.

can result   *brings*   *contributes*   *lies*   *affects*   *has an influence*

       1   Poverty _____ behind crime

       2   Poverty _____ to crime

       3   Poverty _____ in crime

       4   Poverty _____ on crime rates

       5   Poverty _____ crime

       6   Poverty _____ about crime

Task 2.11
Which of the following factors do you think has the <u>greatest</u> effect on a person's success in learning a foreign language?

     age   *sex*   *height*   *personality*

     income   *musicality*   *intelligence*   *job*

Write a short text about how the factor you have chosen influences the way someone learns another language.
(You could refer to **cause/effect** in *Wordfinder*, including the subsection on 'having an effect on a person', if you have access to a copy.)

Extension Tasks

[Please do not send these tasks to us. If possible, show your answers to the tasks to another student and ask them for their comments and corrections.]

You could practice the grammar studied in this unit by trying the following task(s):

Task 2.12

Go to the library and find an interesting textbook. Copy out some of the paragraphs and draw a diagram to illustrate the flow of information in the paragraphs. Show your answers to someone.

Task 2.13

Take a piece of academic writing you have done recently and select from it a short passage (e.g. your introduction). Identify the ways in which you have organised the information. Does if flow from old to new information? If not, change the order of information to make it flow better. Show your two versions to someone and ask them to identify which version flows better.

Study Notes for Unit 2

This unit is of particular importance to making your writing clear and understandable to the British reader. The area we deal with in the unit - the order in which information is presented in academic English - is often overlooked when people talk about 'grammar'. In fact, this is an area in which British students also have difficulties, because it is rarely taught in their English classes at school.

Task 2.1
Our answer is given at the top of the second page of the unit.

Task 2.2
No, it doesn't. It displays the same weaknesses as Version 1 of the Norma text.

Task 2.3
(There are 188,000 lakes in Finland)

They greatly concern many people
> or: *They are causing great concern to many people*
> *They are of great concern to many people*

Most of the larger lakes (or: *ones) have been polluted by chemicals*

This was recently confirmed by a Finnish government report
> or: *This was confirmed by a recent Finnish government report*

Task 2.4 The original order was C – E – B – D – A, with the old-new links shown below:

Computers are an essential part of manufacturing industry. They have made possible improvements in production. One of these changes is the more economical use of raw materials. In addition, their introduction has led to (resulted in) faster manufacturing processes. Computerisation has now reduced the prices of many goods.

Task 2.5
Sentence 6 would be better if it began: *Repayments automatically begin in the April following…*

Task 2.6
Possible solution, with better 'flow':
The first step in an archaeological excavation or survey is the selection of the site. First, the archaeologists should learn as much as they can about a site, such as who lived there, how old it is, and what timeframe it covered. They accomplish this initial analysis through the use of such things as maps, photographs, regional studies, oral histories, and historic documents of surrounding sites. Once this is done, the archaeologists must then assess the possible results of the excavation. They take into consideration whether or not the work done at a site will yield innovative or duplicated results. Because the information that comes from a site can only be viewed once, careful deliberation must also take place to determine whether or not the proper funds, technology, and human resources are available to perform the excavation properly.

Note: The solution follows the pattern of referring back to what is known and giving new information. Most sentences start with something that has been mentioned in the previous sentence. This creates a good sense of cohesion and flow. In the original text, however, most new sentences start with a new idea, making it difficult for the reader to follow the thread of the story.

Task 2.7 is an open question, for which we have no sample answer. If you would like to email us your text, we will correct it (if you are one of our ESSENTIAL students) and return it to you with comments. We can then include it in a future version of this course, if you give us permission.

Task 2.8 Sample answer:

Data were collected on tree growth: density per hectare, diameter and height. The trees in the sample area were counted and then the tree density was calculated by dividing their number by the area. Each tree was measured for its diameter as breast height (dbh) in centimetres and the total tree height in metres. Next, the tree growth model was calculated by using the regression and interpolation model, in which the factors above were the ordinate factor and growth the abscissa factor.

Task 2.9 Sample answer:

Academic posts at British universities are advertised in the national press and on the Internet. Applications are invited from candidates who meet the qualification criteria that are set out in the advert. A deadline is set, after which the applications are analysed. A shortlist is then drawn up of candidates who will be asked to attend an interview; reference letters are requested from the two or (normally) three referees named by each candidate. Once the shortlisted candidates have been interviewed, one is chosen and invited to take the post. If he or she decides not to accept it, then the second-best candidate is normally offered the job. Occasionally the post is re-advertised again and the whole process repeated if the chosen candidate turns down the post.

So the British system is based on public advertising and personal references, unlike other countries where academic posts are awarded on the basis of competitive exams and testimonial letters.

Task 2.10

1 *lies*	**2** *contributes*	**3** *can result*, or: *plays a part*
4 *has an effect/influence*	**5** *affects*	**6** *brings*

Task 2.11

In my opinion personality has a great influence on a person's success in learning a foreign language. Many aspects of personality have a direct effect on that learning. One of the most important is perseverance, which makes the learner work hard and not be affected by difficulties. Another side of personality which contributes to a person's success in learning is whether he or she is optimistic. Also, motivation has a marked effect on how well someone learns; it usually prompts him/her to use as much intelligence as possible.

References

[i] *Briefing Note* by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom. August 1995.

[ii] Adapted from 'A case study of two readers' in Carrell, Devine and Eskey (eds) *Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*. Cambridge University Press, 198, page 131.

3 INDIRECTNESS: Making requests

We will be using the term *indirectness* in this unit to refer to ways of sounding *polite* or *reasonable* in the demands you make of other people. It may be that you will find yourself needing to ask for advice and help in a range of situations – in your Department, the Accommodation Office, the Advice Place, and so on. The English you use when you first approach the person can influence the way they receive you. British people value indirectness more than other English-speaking communities, and so in this unit we examine a number of ways of being effectively indirect.

Task 3.1
What is the common feature of the six sentences below? (They are separate items - not a conversation.)

> *Could I ask you a favour?*

> *I wanted to make an appointment with Dr Flowers*

> *I was hoping to see Dr Flowers*

> *What was the name?*

> *Suppose I came back some time tomorrow morning?*

> *Would it be ok if I waited till she's back?*

What they share is the use of a Past verb form (*could*, or Past Continuous, or Past Simple) to convey respect and reasonableness. Using a more direct-sounding form such as

> *I want to make an appointment*
> or   *I'm hoping to see Dr Flowers*

could give the impression that you are impatient, or that you are expecting other people to fit in with your needs. (Even if you are, it's more effective with British people to appear not to!)

Task 3.2
Think about how you would translate the six sentences into your first language. Would you express the verbs as past forms, or would it be done differently in your language?

Written requests: Letters and emails

While studying at Edinburgh you are likely to need to send various types of written messages to individuals or institutions. You may have to write to arrange an appointment, or to apply for funding, or for a job. In this sort of writing - especially in letters - it is important to follow the established conventions of formal English, and to express your requests politely.

Task 3.3
Read the three letters on this page and the next, and underline the expressions that mark <u>politeness.</u>

LETTER 1

Dr Mary Close
Department of Chaotics
18 Buccleuch Place
Edinburgh EH8 9DX

2 August 2008

Dear Dr Close

I am currently studying on the MSc in Applied Chaotics, and am now considering whether to apply to do a higher degree. During the course of my studies, I have become increasingly interested in some of the more theoretical aspects of environmental chaotics. As this is your field of special expertise, my Course Director, Dr Hector Braine, has suggested that I might ask you for advice. I wonder if it would be possible for me to meet you briefly at some point over the next three weeks to discuss my ideas for research? I am free every afternoon after 3.30, except Thursdays, and on Friday mornings.

Could you possibly let me know whether any of these times would be suitable? I would hope not to take up more than half an hour of your time. You could contact me by e-mail, or leave a note in my pigeon-hole in the Department.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hsiao
s089003214@sms.ed

LETTER 2

Gillian Brown
Director of Studies
English Language Teaching Centre
21 Hill Place
Edinburgh EH8 9DP

33 Dalziel Terrace
Edinburgh EH22 6BZ
2 February 2010

Dear Gillian Brown,

 At the suggestion of Kenneth Anderson, I am writing to ask if the English Language Centre might have need of a teacher for any of its courses in August and/or September. Edinburgh is my home town and working at Edinburgh would give me an opportunity to spend some time at home as well. My preference would be for work on either a general English or EAP course, though I would be ready to do other teaching as well. I enclose a recent version of my CV.

 I look forward to hearing from you or one of your colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

LETTER 3

Dr J. Khan
Institute of Sociological Research
University of Auchtermuchty
New Zealand

18 September 2008

Dear Dr Khan

I would greatly appreciate receiving a reprint of your article "Towards a semiology of graffiti". From what I know of your other work, this article would be very relevant to my research.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours sincerely

Phil Anderer

Task 4
Underline the instances of *would* in the three letters.

Would

The modal verb *would* occurs frequently in formal letters like those we have just looked at, indicating that the situation you are talking about is uncertain or hypothetical. Using *would* in requests and suggestions in letters expresses polite 'distance'. One way of explaining why English adopts this form is to think of it as a **hidden conditional**: if the person <u>helped</u>, you <u>would</u> be grateful.

Task 3.5
Rewrite these examples as full conditional sentences, like the first one:

My preference would be for evening work.

 = I would prefer evening work if it were available

I would greatly appreciate receiving your article.

=

Obviously I would be willing to accept other work

=

Task 3.6
Below are 20 examples of *would* used in letters of application from teachers looking for work at ELTC.

Underline the *would* expressions. When you have done all 20 sentences, on the next page write down **the most common ones**. Then answer the questions that follow.

1. As well as teaching English I would also be interested in teaching Italian or Turkish

2. I would not like to apply for the advertised posts but would very much like to be considered for any possible vacant post on either a part-time or a full-time basis.

3. I would be willing to come over to the Centre to discuss the matter with you at your convenience.

4. I would be very grateful if you could send me further details of the posts and let me know if you would consider me for one of the positions available.

5. I have enclosed my CV and would be grateful if you could let me know of any vacancies.

6. I would be most grateful if you could let me know whether you are likely to require any teaching staff during this period.

7. If you wish to obtain references, I would suggest that you contact ---- and ----.

8. Would it be possible to come and see you about the possibility of finding work with the Centre?

9. I would be able to come and see you any time next week.

10. I would very much like to have further details.

11. I would be interested in doing some teaching at Hill Place during the summer and enclose my CV for your inspection.

12. I am particularly interested in the English for University Studies course but would also be willing to assist in General English courses.

13. However, from June this year I'll be seeking employment of an EFL/SL/SP nature and would be grateful if you could keep my application under consideration should any vacancies occur.

14. Alternatively I would be very grateful if you could give me any other addresses to contact.

15. I am interested in gaining experience in the field of EFL teacher training and would be grateful if, in your reply, you could indicate any possibilities of my being able to do so in your department.

16. If you have any information which might be of use, I would be grateful to hear from you at the address on the enclosed CV.

17. On completion of my contract in April I shall be returning to the UK and would welcome the opportunity to teach in the language department of a University or College of Higher Education.

18. I would very much like to be considered for this work and enclose a copy of my CV which gives my personal details, education and previous experience.

19. In response to your advertisement for an English teacher to work in Edinburgh this summer, I would like to be considered for the post.

20. I would be most grateful if you could let me know of any post available at the English Language Teaching Centre or elsewhere in Edinburgh.

Data supplied by Dr Hugh Trappes-Lomax

Questions:

1. The function of these letters is to apply for jobs. <u>Why</u> do people usually write *I would like to apply* rather than *I am applying*?

2. Which expressions are used to make polite **requests**? Write them below:

3. Write down the expressions used to indicate **interest.**

4. In what ways can the expression *I would like to* be made <u>more emphatic</u>?

5. What about *I would be grateful*?

6. Look at the sentences which contain **if**. Do they follow the rules you have previously learned for 'conditional' sentences? (We will come back to conditional sentences in Unit 7).

Would is not the only way to express 'polite distance'. Here are some others:

> I feel **I could contribute** to such a department in three ways: teaching EAP/ESP to overseas students; assisting with teacher training programmes for both overseas and "domestic" teacher trainees and helping to produce relevant course materials.
>
>
> Since then I have found employment teaching general English and commercial English, but **I was wondering** whether you have any vacancies for after the summer, or whether you could keep me in mind for next year.
>
>
> I am writing to you to ask if the Centre **might** need a teacher, or teacher trainer, for any of its courses during August and/or September.

The language of requests

Task 3.7

Complete the gaps in the box below.

(If you have a copy of *Wordfinder*, you could look at the entry for **request**.)

LANGUAGE BOX: Making a request

Asking for something

to ask someone _____ something

to request something _____ someone

to _____ a request _____ something

to apply ____ someone ____ something

to _____ an application

Asking someone to do something

to ask someone ___   ____ something **for you**

to ask someone if / whether _____   _____ do something

to ask a favour _____ someone

Task 3.8
Write down six ways of making a request. What do you think is the best way to <u>create an opening</u> (= prepare the reader) for a request? (Again, you could look at the *Wordfinder* entry, if you have a copy of the book.)

Task 3.9

Read the email message below and fill in the gaps with an appropriate tense of these verbs:

TRY	BE	WONDER	HAVE	TROUBLE	COME	CAN	READ

I _____ sorry to _____ you, but I just _____ whether you _____

Joan Shearing's correct email address? I _____ her article on vocabulary in a recent

issue of "Independence" and _____ to email her at the address given, but my

message _____ back marked 'addressee unknown'. _____ you help?

Many thanks, if you can.

Tony Lynch

Expressing a problem

Task 3.10

Consult a good dictionary to check that you understand the differences in <u>meaning</u> and in <u>grammar</u> between the items in the box below. (Or look up **problem** in *Wordfinder.)*

LANGUAGE BOX: Expressing a problem

Nouns

difficulty	*trouble*
hitch	*snag*
puzzle	*question*
dilemma	*obstacle*

   Verbs

to face	*to tackle*
to arise	*to overcome*
to be in	*to pose*
to work on	*to work itself out*
to sort out	*to resolve*
to encounter	*to be engaged on*

Extension Tasks

[Please do not send these tasks to us. If possible, show your answers to the tasks to another student and ask them for their comments and corrections.]

You could practice the grammar studied in this unit by trying the following task(s):

Task 3.11

Think of a problem you have faced since you came to Edinburgh and have not been able to resolve. Write an email explaining the problem, what you have done and why that hasn't worked. Use as many items as possible from the *Language Box* on page 34.

Task 3.12

Choose one of the following situations and write an appropriate letter / email. If you choose to write a letter, use one of the conventional formats shown earlier in this unit.

1. You intend to do some research (for an MSc project, or as part of a research degree, for example) in an area that you know relatively little about. Your course director / supervisor has advised you to talk to Dr Albert Squeer, a lecturer in the School whom you do not know well. Write Dr Squeer a short letter /email asking for an appointment. Explain briefly why you want to see him, but do not go into too much detail. Indicate the times that would be suitable for you.

2. Write a letter / email to your course director, asking her to extend a deadline for the writing assignment you are currently working on. Give reasons for your request.

Study Notes for Unit 3

Task 3.1
All six sentences contain a past form: *could / wanted / was hoping to / was / came back / waited*

Task 3.2
Open question. Many European languages also use a verb feature (e.g. Past or Subjunctive) to show indirectness, but unlike English some of them also offer a choice of different forms of *you* - some informal and others more formal. Languages such as Japanese use certain expressions to show deference and humility. (Please let us know about your language, if you have a different way).

Tasks 3.3 and 3.4
Letter 1

> *… that I might ask you for…*
> *I wonder if it <u>would</u> be possible…*
> *Could you possibly let me know…*
> *I <u>would</u> hope not to…*
> *You could contact me…*

Letter 2

> *… if the Centre might have…*
> *<u>would</u> give me an opportunity to…*
> *My preference <u>would</u> be for*
> *I <u>would</u> be ready to…*

Letter 3

> *I <u>would</u> greatly appreciate…*
> *… <u>would</u> be very relevant …*

Task 3.5
I would greatly appreciate it if you could send me your article
Obviously I would be willing to do other work if the sort of work I want were not available

Task 3.6

1. As well as teaching English <u>I would also be interested</u> in teaching Italian or Turkish

2. <u>I would not like to</u> apply for the advertised posts but <u>would very much like to be considered for</u> any possible vacant post on either a part-time or a full-time basis.

3. <u>I would be willing to</u> come over to the Centre to discuss the matter with you at your convenience.

4. <u>I would be very grateful if</u> you could send me further details of the posts and let me know if <u>you would consider me for</u> one of the positions available.

5. I have enclosed my CV and <u>would be grateful if</u> you could let me know of any vacancies.

6. <u>I would be most grateful if</u> you could let me know whether you are likely to require any teaching staff during this period.

7. If you wish to obtain references, <u>I would suggest that</u> you contact ---- and ----.

8. <u>Would it be possible to</u> come and see you about the possibility of finding work with the Centre?

9. <u>I would be able to</u> come and see you any time next week.

10. <u>I would very much like to</u> have further details.

11. <u>I would be interested in</u> doing some teaching at Hill Place during the summer and enclose my CV for your inspection.

12. I am particularly interested in the English for University Studies course but <u>would also</u> <u>be willing to</u> assist in General English courses.

13. However, from June this year I'll be seeking employment of an EFL/SL/SP nature and <u>would be grateful if</u> you could keep my application under consideration should any vacancies occur.

14. Alternatively <u>I would be very grateful if</u> you could give me any other addresses to contact.

15. I am interested in gaining experience in the field of EFL teacher training and <u>would be</u> <u>grateful if</u>, in your reply, you could indicate any possibilities of my being able to do so in your department.

16. If you have any information which might be of use, <u>I would be grateful to</u> hear from you at the address on the enclosed CV.

17. On completion of my contract in April I shall be returning to the UK and <u>would welcome the opportunity to</u> teach in the language department of a University or College of Higher Education.

18. <u>I would very much like to</u> be considered for this work and enclose a copy of my CV which gives my personal details, education and previous experience.

19. In response to your advertisement for an English teacher to work in Edinburgh this summer, <u>I would like to be considered for</u> the post.

20. <u>I would be most grateful if</u> you could let me know of any post available at the English Language Teaching Centre or elsewhere in Edinburgh.

Questions:

1. *I would like to apply* emphasises the power relationship; *I am applying* sounds too direct.

2. Expressions to make polite **requests:** any of the ones underlined above. Notice, too, how *if you could* follows *I would be grateful*…, making a very polite combination.

3. Expressions showing **interest** in a job:

   I would like to be considered for…

   I would welcome the opportunity to…

4/5. *I would <u>very much</u> like to*; I *would be <u>most</u> grateful / <u>very</u> grateful*

Task 3.7

> ## Asking for something
>
> > to ask someone **FOR** something
> >
> > to request something **FROM** someone
> >
> > to **MAKE** a request **FOR** something
> >
> > to apply **TO** someone **FOR** something
> >
> > to **MAKE** an application
>
> ## Asking someone to do something
>
> > to ask someone **TO DO** something **for you**
> >
> > to ask someone if / whether **THEY CAN** do something
> >
> > to ask a favour **OF** someone

Task 3.8
Will you… Would you… Can you… Could you possibly… Do you mind… Would you mind ?

Opener: I'm sorry to bother you… (I'm sorry to trouble you… I'm sorry to be a nuisance…)

Task 3.9

> *I AM sorry to TROUBLE you, but I just WONDERED whether you HAVE/HAD Joan Shearing's correct email address? I READ her article on vocabulary in a recent issue of "Independence" and TRIED to email her at the address given, but my message CAME back marked 'addressee unknown'. COULD/CAN you help?*

Task 3.10
The nouns should be straightforward. The verbs can be grouped like this:

Initial *identification* of the difficulty:
          X **poses** a problem
          we **face** /**encounter** a problem = a problem **arises**
          we **are in** difficulty / trouble
Attempt to deal with it:
          we **tackle** / **work on** / **are engaged on** the problem

Successful dealing with it:
          we **sort out** / **overcome** / **resolve** the problem

Sometimes the problem resolves *itself*:
          X has **worked itself out** / **sorted itself out**

Task 3.11   Sample answer:

When I arrived in Edinburgh, I faced many difficulties. The worst problems were the language and the feeling that I would not see my home for almost a year. I found it difficult to make requests of people, to apply for things, and to ask people for help. That has always been hard for me, even in my own language.

Now the situation is much easier. Nevertheless I still have not managed to resolve all my grammar problems. I probably have not worked hard enough because I am sometimes lazy and write very little in English. There is obviously a link between speaking, listening, reading and writing, but I have not solved the puzzle.

Task 3.12   Sample answer to task type 2:

Dr T Dewson
Department of Philosophy
David Hume Tower

14 November 2009

Dear Dr Dewson,

I am writing to ask if it would be possible for me to have an extension for my assignment.

Recently I have been working on my outline for the conference which I will be attending at the end of this month in Manchester. I am fully aware that it is very important for me to hand in my current assignment on time. However, as you may know, it would also be very beneficial for my future career if I could get my paper published in the proceedings from the conference.

Would it therefore be possible for you to extend the deadline for my assignment by two weeks? I am very sorry if this causes you any difficulties.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

4   THE FUTURE: PREDICTING AND PROPOSING

"I've never predicted anything and I never will do"
Paul Gascoigne, footballer

Verb Forms

Task 4.1   Read the text below and underline all the future verbs.

WORLD TRENDS[i]

As we move towards the 21st century, cheap labour and plentiful raw materials are losing their status as keys to economic development. Instead of manufacturing, it is the information and service sectors that will provide new growth. Powering this change is the astonishing worldwide expansion of the computer industry. As automation makes armies of workers in heavy industry redundant, the successful nations will be those that can produce an educated population and a large pool of scientists and engineers. Good education explains, in part, the success of Japan, and the rapid rise of other south and east Asian nations. For the older industrialised nations, the provision of a constantly better trained and more flexible workforce is a growing challenge which the educational system will find hard to meet.

As the rapidly industrialising nations catch up, they can also expect to encounter other problems of the wealthy, including the need to adapt to a society containing a much higher proportion of old people. Japan will encounter the fastest demographic change of all.

Urbanisation will continue at a rapid pace in the industrialising nations. By 2020 these countries will have caught up with the Western world; half their populations will be living in towns and cities. Growing wealth and urbanisation can be expected to provide new opportunities and play a part in reducing inequalities between men and women, in education and in income. The extremes of poverty will also be eliminated in the early stages of development, but the gap between rich and poor is certain to remain. Traditional social structures will weaken bringing increases in divorce, births outside marriage and crime. As nations enter the post-industrial phase, long-term unemployment seems likely to be added to their problems, intensifying these trends.

Task 4.2
You should have found nine verbs containing the word *will*. How many <u>different tenses</u> are there among the nine cases?

Task 4.3
Look again at that text. Can you find any other verbs, which do <u>not</u> contain the word *will,* that are used to express the notion of the future? If so, circle them.

The way we describe future events, plans and possibilities in English is quite complex. Firstly, there is no single "Future Tense" in English; instead we have a <u>variety of verb forms</u>, such as Modal verbs, expressing different shades of meaning. Secondly, academic writing features a range of <u>non-verb vocabulary</u> (nouns, adjectives and adverbs) referring to the future.

LANGUAGE BOX: Verb forms expressing the future
(All the forms shown below are found in both Active and Passive)

I will [verb]   to talk about what you think or guess or expect the future to be
The second phase of my research will be trickier than this one

I am going to [verb]   to talk about decisions or firm intentions
I'm going to ask her for a meeting next week

Present Continuous   to talk about fixed plans or arrangements
Did I tell you that we're getting a new computer on Thursday?

Present Simple   to talk about timetables or schedules
Next term starts on 12 October

I am + TO (verb) to talk about fixed plans or decisions made by someone else
The Principal is to visit the new building in a couple of weeks

Future Continuous   to talk about something that will be going on at a certain
                time in the future
By the year 2050 computers will be doing most housework tasks

---

Task 4.4
Find the most suitable form of these verbs, to go in the appropriate space in the sentences below.

HAVE (twice)   BE (twice)   DISCUSS   GIVE   GO   FINISH

1   *Most universities _____ fewer students if the economic downturn*

continues.

2   *I expect Friday's meeting _____ a long one, because we*

_____ next year's budget.

3   *I'm sorry, but Dr Evans _____ very busy tomorrow. He _____*

two lectures and then he _____ to the conference at York.

4   *Do you think you _____ your project ready for Friday? I don't think I*

_____ mine by then.

In some situations you may need to be more precise about the relative timing of events in the future. Two further options are offered by the **Future Perfect** tenses.

LANGUAGE BOX: The Future Perfect

1. Simple
   to refer to something that will have been <u>completed</u> by a specific point

   I (shall) will have [verb+ED]
   (Active)   *He will have finished his project by the time you see him again*
   (Passive) *The equipment will have been repaired by the end of June*

2. Continuous
   to emphasise <u>how long</u> something will have <u>continued</u> by a certain time

   I (shall) will have been [verb+ING]
   (Active)   *In July he will have been working at ELTC for 20 years*
   (The Passive form of this tense is very rare)

Task 4.5

Maria is doing an MSc in Traffic Observation at KB. One of the course requirements is that the students have to spend 120 hours (in term time) on a traffic census, counting vehicles in Mayfield Road. They can put in a maximum of 8 hours in any one week. Maria started her observation in week 2 of the Autumn Term and intends to continue doing 8 hours a week.

Fill in the spaces to complete these statements about Maria. (This tests your grammar, your knowledge of the University timetable AND your maths!)

1   By the start of the Christmas vacation she _____

*   _____ hours observation.*

2   By the beginning of February she _____ traffic for

*   _____ weeks.*

3   By the time she completes her observation requirement, she _____

*   approximately 25,000 vehicles.*

Will and *going to* in speech and writing

As you may have noticed since you came to Edinburgh, people tend in everyday speech to mix their use of the Future forms. In particular, you hear *will* and *going to* used interchangeably, even in the same sentence:

> *"**We're going to see** quite a bit of heavy rain in most parts of the country over the next 24 hours, and **that will continue** through most of the next day or so in the far north-west, so **it's not going to be** very pleasant at all"*   (BBC weather forecast)

However, in academic writing *will* is much more common than *going to*.

Task 4.6
The extract below[ii] comes from a television documentary about research into malaria by Dr Manuel Patarroyo in Colombia. It shows a US Army doctor's comments on the potential value of a vaccine developed by the project team.

Read what the doctor said and underline all the Future verbs he used. Which ones would you expect him to change, if he were <u>writing</u> instead of speaking?

Doctor *I'm pretty sure there's a reasonable chance that we're going to find a positive response to Patarroyo's vaccine. Don't forget, though, that so far, even in his best studies, he's only finding 50 to 60 per cent protection. We just don't know whether that's going to be increased by making higher levels of antibodies - and perhaps new formulations will help - or whether this vaccine's going to have to be combined with another one, like sporozoite, to get the 80 or 90 or 100 per cent protection we're going to need.*

Task 4.7 *(optional)*
Re-write the doctor's comments in an academic style. As well as making changes to the Future forms, you will need to change some <u>other features</u> of his speech (e.g. informal expressions, redundancy) to make it acceptable as written English for the university context.

NB - You should not send this to your tutor, but you can compare your text with that on page 46 of this unit.

Verbs of intention

We can express the future not only by using a grammatical Future form, but also by choosing a verb whose <u>meaning</u> contains the notion of future action or intention to act.

Task 4.8
Put the following <u>verbs</u> into one of the two spaces below, depending on whether they are followed by the Infinitive (*to appoint*) or the Gerund (*appointing*):
(You can find more information in the *Wordfinder Dictionary* entry for **intend/plan** - **intentions**.)

is planning on / aims / is thinking of / intends / plans / is planning

The College   *to appoint a new Postgraduate Officer*

The College   *appointing a new Postgraduate Officer*

Are there any differences in the meaning of the verbs you have written in?

Task 4.9
The extract below is from the final section of a journal article on research into listening, where the author was discussing the possible directions for future research. <u>He uses no Future verb forms</u>. So **how** does he express the notion of the future? Underline the words he uses for that purpose.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN LISTENING RESEARCH[iii]

This review has attempted to reflect the range of recent listening comprehension research. At this point it is appropriate to speculate about avenues for future work. Several have already been suggested: an expansion of research into the impact on listening comprehension of the visual element in electronic media; investigation in a wider variety of languages into the ways in which first-language speech patterns influence listening in a second language; and exploration of the link between listening level and listening strategies.

In addition, I foresee three likely strands of investigation into listening. Firstly, current research suggests a renewed interest in the way listeners monitor and remedy gaps in comprehension. Secondly, we can expect further research adopting a parallel interactive approach to listening, combining the tendencies known by the shorthand labels of 'top-down- and 'bottom-up'. Thirdly, we may see a continued momentum towards an ultimately more complete view of the listener, achieved through studies adopting the listener's individual point of view, and in more naturalistic contexts.

Non-Verb Forms

Although people tend to think of the Future in terms of **verbs** (in that text: *speculate*, *foresee*), there are other grammatical devices for writing about events to come. Also in the text about listening research were examples of future-orientated **nouns** (e.g. *direction, avenue, exploration, strand*), **adjectives** (e.g. *continued, further*) and **adverbs** (*ultimately*).

LANGUAGE BOX: Intentions, plans and outcomes

1. Verbs

        arrange
        organise
        plan (ahead)
        draw up a plan
        outline
        succeed in
        fail

2. Nouns

        schedule
        plan
        planning
        proposal
        success
        failure

3. Adjectives

        unplanned
        *spontaneous (*versus *planned)*
        *involuntary (*versus *intentional or deliberate)*
        (un)successful

4. Adverbs

        spontaneously
        at short notice
        involuntarily
        according to plan
        (go) smoothly

(You can find more information in the *Wordfinder Dictionary* entry for **intend/plan** - **intentions**.)

Extension Tasks

[Please do not send these tasks to us. If possible, show your answers to the tasks to another student and ask them for their comments and corrections.]

You could practice the grammar studied in this unit by trying the following task(s):

Task 4.10

This task comes in three <u>alternative</u> versions. If you are a Master's student, do version A; if you are doing research, do version B; and if you are an undergraduate, do version C.

A. Your Programme Organiser sends you an e-mail, asking you to tell her your first thoughts on the topic you intend to do for your summer dissertation. She wants to know about it now, so that she can allocate an appropriate member of staff to supervise your dissertation. Write a text outlining your plans.

B. Your Supervisor sends you an e-mail, asking you to give a talk on your research topic at the School's graduate seminar in two weeks' time, and to send her an abstract for the talk. Write an e-mail message in reply: Either <u>accept</u> her invitation and compose the abstract; or <u>decline</u> the invitation and tell her why you're not yet ready to give a talk, and when you will be able to do so.

C. Your Personal Tutor e-mails you and asks what your plans are for next semester: which courses you would like to take. S/He also needs to know whether you are going to spend the Christmas vacation in the UK or at home, and when you will be finally leaving Edinburgh.

Task 4.11

Draft a short summary of your English learning 'career', in three paragraphs:

- In the first, describe where / when / how you studied English before coming to Scotland. [For this paragraph, use Past tenses]

- In the second, explain what you have done so far in Edinburgh to improve your English (both in class and in the 'real world'). Say which areas of English you have tried to improve in particular, how you have done that, and how well you think you have done. [In this one, you will probably need to use mainly the Present Perfect].

- In the final paragraph, outline your plans for the future (immediate and longer-term), as far as learning English is concerned - will you be attending further ELTT classes next term? How do you intend to continue your progress after you finish this course today? [Here, use the various Future verb and non-verb expressions that we have practised in this unit]

Study Notes for Unit 4

The aim of the first three tasks is to remind you that the notion of the future is expressed in English in many ways, and not only through the use of the sort of verbs that are listed in grammar books under "The Future".

Task 4.1
The nine verb expressions containing the word *will* are:

Paragraph 1	*will provide* (line 3)	**Future Simple (Active**)
	will be (line 5)	Future Simple (Active)
	will find (last line)	Future Simple (Active)
Paragraph 2	*will encounter* (line 3)	Future Simple (Active)
Paragraph 3	*will continue* (line 1)	Future Simple (Active)
	will have caught up with (line 2)	**Future Perfect Simple (Active)**
	will be living (line 2)	**Future Continuous (Active)**
	will also be eliminated (line 5)	**Future Simple (Passive)**
	will weaken (line 7)	Future Simple (Active)

Task 4.2
Those nine verbs represent four different tense forms, whose names are shown in **bold** above.

Task 4.3
Examples of non-*will* verbs are:

Paragraph 1	*move towards / are losing their status / is a growing challenge*
Paragraph 2	*can also expect to*
Paragraph 3	*can be expected to / is certain to remain / seems likely to…*

As you have probably noticed, that text contains a range of other words, apart from verbs, which point towards the future, including ones that emphasise the idea of <u>change</u> and <u>development</u> (which logically extends into the future). Here are some examples:

Paragraph 1	*worldwide expansion / constantly better trained*
Paragraph 2	*the need to adapt to…*
Paragraph 3	*(intensifying) these trends*

We will be discussing other non-verb expressions of the future later in this unit.

Task 4.4
1   *will have / are going to have*
2   *will be / is going to be; are discussing / are to discuss / will be discussing*
3   *is / is going to be / will be; is giving / will be giving; goes / is going*
4   *will have; will have finished*

Task 4.5
1   *will have completed 72* (hours)
2   *will have been observing/counting… 12* (weeks)
3   *will have counted*

Task 4.6
The ones with   *is/are going to…*:
             we're going to find;
              that's going to be increased;
             this vaccine's going to have to be combined;
             and *we're going to need.*

Task 4.7 Tony Lynch's suggestion:

It is likely that we will find a positive effect of Patarroyo's vaccine. However, it should be remembered that even the most positive results to date have established only 50-60 per cent protection. It is not yet certain whether that rate will (or: *can) be increased by the use of higher antibody levels - although new formulations may help - or whether the vaccine will have to be combined with another, such as sporozoite, in order to achieve the necessary 80-100 per cent protection.*

Task 4.8

> *aims / means / intends / plans (is planning)* + TO APPOINT…
> *is planning on / is thinking of* + APPOINTING…

Of those verbs, *is thinking of* is much less definite than the others; it suggests that no firm decision has yet been made.

Task 4.9
He uses a great variety of future-oriented words: *speculate / avenues / future work / expansion / wider variety / exploration / foresee / likely / strands / suggests / renewed interest / expect / further/ (continued) momentum towards*

Task 4.10
No sample answer.

Task 4.11
Sample answer:

I began learning English when I was 6 years old at primary school. Since then I have continued my English studies up to the present. However, my ability in English is limited; it may be that I did not work hard enough or pay sufficient attention in class. In my country most of the books are in Thai, although I used English books on my BSc course. Before I came to Edinburgh I had learned English at the British Council in Chiang Mai. I found it quite useful but it was only a short course and my English did not improve much.

When I arrived in Edinburgh in September, I attended the English pre-sessional course for Veterinary Studies students for 4 weeks. Since then I have found that my ability in speaking and writing English has not improved and my TEAM results were poor. I had worked hard in September but still had to enrol on ELTC courses.

Now that I am about to finish this course in grammar, I feel that I have made some progress. I know that I will still have to do Course 5, because of my low TEAM score, but that will probably be enough to help me do the written assignments that I am to do in the second and third terms. I think that my work on these courses will enable me to write my MSc dissertation without too many problems.

References

[i] Adapted from *New Scientist* supplement 'World Trends', 15 October 1994.

[ii] Adapted from the transcript of 'Malaria: Battle of the Merozoites', *Horizon*, 3 February 1992.

[iii] Adapted from 'Theoretical perspectives on listening' by Tony Lynch in *Annual Review of* Applied *Linguistics 1988*, page 12.

5   THE PAST: REPORTING

There are many contexts in academic writing where you have to report on past events. You may need to report on work done by other researchers - for example, in an introduction or literature review - or you may be reporting on your own work. Alternatively, you may need to describe non-academic events, such as economic or social developments. In doing this you will need to make appropriate choices of verb tense forms. In this unit we look at how academic writers choose between four important tense forms - the **(Simple) Present**, **(Simple) Past**, **Present Perfect** and **Past Perfect** - in reporting events and situations. The commonest verb form used in this type of context is the Simple **Past Tense**.

Task 5.1
The text below is the abstract of a journal article reporting a community health programme. Read it and underline all the **Simple Past Tense verbs** - both active and passive. (The first two Past Tense verbs have already been underlined; you should find eight more.)

GROWTH MONITORING: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY HEALTH VOLUNTEERS [i]

A community volunteer programme <u>was initiated</u> in rural Jamaica in May 1990. The main aim of the programme <u>was</u> to monitor the growth of children less than 36 months of age through community health volunteers (CHVs) and improve their nutritional status. At the end of the second year the programme was evaluated to determine its effectiveness. The results of the evaluation indicated that almost all (95.6%) of the children were covered by the CHVs. In addition the participation rate was high (78.5%). However, only 50% of the children were adequately covered. Nonetheless, 81% of them gained adequate weight. Indeed, malnutrition levels declined by 34.5%. The annual cost per child per year for the total programme was fairly moderate (US$14.5). The results suggest that CHVs can play an important role in primary health care programmes in developing countries.

Task 5.2
Six verbs in the text are *not* in the Simple Past Tense form. Circle them. Then, in the table below, write the verbs, the name of the form, and the reason why that form is used in the text:

	verb	*name of form*	*reason for use*
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

Past *versus* Present

In academic writing, the choice between the Past and Present Tense often indicates the difference between <u>specific</u> information and <u>generalisations</u>. For example, in reporting empirical investigations (experiments, surveys, etc.), details which are specific to the study, e.g. methods and results, are reported in the Simple Past Tense, while (as in the last sentence of the community health abstract) the Present Tense is used for generalised conclusions.

Task 5.3

This excerpt is from a report by Dr Shari Cohn, a researcher at Edinburgh University. Dr Cohn is investigating the phenomenon known as 'second sight', a psychic ability which for many centuries has been claimed to exist among Celtic peoples, such as the Gaelic population of north-west Scotland.

In the gaps, write an appropriate form of the verb shown in brackets (number 4 is negative). Be prepared to explain your choice of tense.

SECOND SIGHT [ii]

To find the frequency of second sight in the general population, a large-scale mail survey using random sampling methods [1]………………… (BE) *undertaken in different areas of Scotland. Second sight* [2]………………(BE) *generally regarded as being more prominent in the Western Isles and Highlands of Scotland than elsewhere. However, the survey data* [3]…………………. (SHOW) *this* [4]…………………. (not, BE) *the case - the phenomenon* [5]………………… (OCCUR) *in all areas of Scotland. Nor* [6]……………… (BE) *having a family background from the Highlands and Western Isles a strong predictor of having second sight. Throughout Scotland, people who* [7]……………………….. (REPORT) *having second sight* [8]………………… (BE) *significantly more likely to report second sight in blood-related family members. This* [9]………………. (GIVE) *empirical support to the traditional belief that second sight* [10]……………….. (RUN) *in families.*

Past *versus* Present Perfect

Task 5.4
Read the following extract from a text outlining the recent history of archaeology. Check the meaning of any words you don't understand in a dictionary, or ask the tutor. Twelve verb structures have been underlined in the text. Write down the tense in each case:

	TENSE		TENSE
1		7	
2		8	
3		9	
4		10	
5		11	
6		12	

The New Archaeology [iii]

Over 20 years ago, Old World archaeologists <u>recognized</u>[1] that the chronologies of European prehistory, which had been based on the radiocarbon dating method, <u>were</u>[2] incorrect owing to flaws in the method. Another chronology <u>has been proposed</u>[3] that <u>has resulted</u>[4] not simply in the redating of individual monuments but rather, in terms defined by British archaeologist Colin Renfrew, in the establishment of a new approach to prehistoric cultural development. Previously, cultural achievements such as the development of metallurgy <u>were thought</u>[5] to have radiated from a single point of invention in the Middle East. Now, multiple sites of invention <u>have been posited</u>[6], leading to a conception of humans as much more innovative than previously supposed.

Since the 1980s, archaeologists in North America, Australia, and New Zealand <u>have increasingly been called upon</u>[7] to adapt their research strategies to the wishes and interests of indigenous peoples, who <u>have not only demanded</u>[8] the return and reburial of human skeletal remains and certain artefacts <u>but also</u> <u>insisted</u>[9] that their cultural values be respected when excavations are conducted. The accommodation of scientific research strategies to traditional cultural sensitivities <u>marks</u>[10] a new direction in archaeological practice and is a development that <u>was scarcely contemplated</u>[11] a few decades ago, when it <u>was assumed</u>[12] that rigidly scientific objectivity would soon dominate archaeology.

Task 5.5
All but one of the verbs in Task 5.4 was in either the **Past** or the **Present Perfect Tense**. Why did the author choose the Past in some cases and the Present Perfect in others? Write your explanation of the difference here:

The Past Tense is used to refer to …
In contrast, the Present Perfect is used to refer to …

As its name suggests, the **Present Perfect Tense** is really concerned with **the present situation**, even though the action that the verb refers to happened or started in the past. For example, academic writers often choose the Present Perfect Tense instead of the Past Tense when they are really interested in the **present consequences of recent events**.

The archaeology text, for example, is about the *present* situation of the field, which is why most of the verbs are in the Present Perfect (and why the Present Simple is used for verb 11). In this text, the writer uses the Present Perfect in cases such as 3, 4 and 6 in the first paragraph to highlight changes in understanding that have led to 'a new approach' to the subject (notice the use of *now* in the fourth sentence):

> ***Now**, multiple sites of invention **have been posited** [= there is **now** a new theory], leading to a conception of humans as much more innovative than previously supposed.*

The Present Perfect is, therefore, the appropriate choice for describing **current trends**:

> *Since the 1980s, archaeologists in North America, Australia, and New Zealand have increasingly been called upon to adapt their research strategies to the wishes and interests of indigenous peoples …*

The Present Perfect is often used with time expressions that refer to periods that are still continuing, or have just ended: ***since 1991, in recent years, in this century***.

In contrast, you use the **Past** Tense when you 'locate' the situation or action in a past time - for example, when you refer to a **past date or period**:

> ***Over 20 years ago**, Old World archaeologists recognized that the chronologies of European prehistory … were incorrect.*

> *… a development that was scarcely contemplated **a few decades ago**, when it was assumed that rigidly scientific objectivity would soon dominate archaeology*

Task 5.6
The following text is part of a report on waterborne diseases. Some verbs and other words - such as 'not', and some adverbs - have been removed. The missing words are shown in brackets. Decide on the appropriate tense in each case, and write the correct form in the gaps.

N.B. one verb is *not* in the Past or Present Perfect.

WATERBORNE DISEASES [iv]

Cholera and typhoid [1]…………… (BE) *widespread in Europe and North America 100 years ago, but now* [2]…………………….…...(almost, DISAPPEAR) *from the developed world, largely because of improved water supplies and sanitation. However, this* [3]…………………………(not, HAPPEN) *to the same extent in developing countries. In Peru, for example, where there* [4] ………………………… (BE) *more than 500 000 cases of cholera since 1991, social expenditure* [5]…………………….. (DECLINE) *over the past 10 years* and *the supply of water to almost 90 per cent of the rural population* [6]………………. (still, BE) *grossly contaminated. The World Bank* [7]…………………… (ESTIMATE) *in 1993 that diarrhoea and intestinal worm infections caused by poor water supplies and bad sanitation* [8]………………………… (ACCOUNT FOR) *as much as 10 per cent of the entire disease burden of developing countries.*

The United Nations, recognising that most of the disease [9]…………………. (BE*) the result of polluted water supplies,* [10]……………………. (SET UP) *a Decade of Water, 1981/1990. Its aim* [11]………………. (BE) *to provide safe water supply and adequate sanitation for everyone. Over the decade, the number of people lacking a safe water supply in less well developed countries* [12]……………………. (DROP) *from 1800 million to 1200 million. Although the number of people without lavatories* [13]…………………….. (REMAIN) *at around 1700 million, against a continued population increase, this* [14]………………… (BE) *significant progress.*

Past *versus* Past Perfect

During the cold war, Britain occupied a pivotal position in education and politics because it <u>had collaborated</u> with Bulgarian officials in placing UK teachers of English in English language medium schools throughout Bulgaria. After the dismantling of the former Eastern bloc, the UK (primarily through the British Council) continued to place the majority of its teachers in English language medium schools throughout Bulgaria. The British expanded their role in English language education to include teacher education and consultancy. In this way, they preserved their influence as curators of the institution of the English language - a valued linguistic currency both during and after the cold war.

Task 5.7
That text[v] describes a past situation (during the cold war), so the basic tense is the Simple Past Tense. Why is the second verb *had collaborated* in the **Past Perfect**? Write your explanation here:

The **Past Perfect** is less common in academic writing than the Past Tense or Present Perfect. In reporting past events, the Past Perfect is mainly used in contrast to the 'normal' Past Tense when you want to emphasise that something happened <u>before</u> the events / situations you are focusing on. It may help to think of the relationship between the *<u>Past Perfect</u>* tense and *<u>past</u>* time as similar to the relationship between the *<u>Present Perfect</u>* and *<u>present</u>* time: you use the Past Perfect when you want to refer to an earlier event or situation that had some effect on the past time you are writing about.

One typical context in academic writing in which Past Perfect forms are relatively frequent is in **research reports**, when you refer to events or situations which had already occurred *before* the study was conducted. This extract is from a study of drug abuse[vi] (IDUs are intravenous drug users):

> *Of the 3129 drug users studied, 68.7% were aged between 21 and 40; 84.8% were IDUs and heroin was the commonest drug of addition. Nearly 70% of the IDUs <u>had never shared</u> injection equipment with others. There were significantly more young addicts (< or = 30 years old) who <u>had shared</u> needles compared with the older ones (31.2% vs 26.8%, P < 0.05).*

The next example[vii] reports some of the findings of a study of students' experiences with International Teaching Assistants (ITAs) at an American university:

> *For Group 1, the average number of ITA-taught courses was 2.3. Typically, respondents <u>had taken</u> these courses to meet a degree requirement, and frequently (46% of the time) they were not in the undergraduate's major. Although a higher percentage of students in some colleges <u>had had</u> at least one ITA, students in the colleges of engineering and agriculture <u>had taken</u> significantly more courses taught by ITAs than those in any of the other colleges. Males <u>had taken</u> significantly more ITA-taught courses than females. Engineering students were most likely to have had ITAs in courses in their major field as well as in required courses. Not surprisingly, the number of courses with ITAs increased with the number of years the respondent <u>had been</u> in school. Over 20% of the seniors <u>had had</u> five or more courses from ITAs, yet over 57% of the freshmen already <u>had had</u> at least one ITA in their first semester, because they were enrolled in many of the required introductory courses customarily staffed by TAs.*

Task 5.8
The fourth sentence above ('Engineering students …') does not contain a Past Perfect verb. Here, how does the writer make clear indicate that these students had <u>previously</u> been taught by ITAs?

Reported speech

It is often appropriate to use the Past Perfect to report statements or questions which referred to a previous time. For example, if someone says to you

'I haven't finished writing the essay.'

you might later say to someone else

'She told me **she hadn't finished** writing the essay.'

Task 5.9
The questionnaire used in the study about International Teaching Assistants (on page 7) contained the following two questions about the respondents' previous experience with ITAs:

1. Have ITAs taught any of your required courses?

2. Have you had problems with any of your ITAs?

Write one sentence <u>reporting</u> (not quoting) these two questions:

Respondents were asked …

Another common use of the Past Perfect is in **'conditional' sentences**:

<u>*If I had not been awarded*</u> *a scholarship I would not have been able to study at Edinburgh.*

We will come back to conditionals in Unit 7, **Speculating**.

Reported speech

You may find it helpful to refer to this summary:

LANGUAGE BOX: Past and Present Tenses

Simple Past Tense

- **events or situations in past time (focus on <u>past</u>)**

ACTIVE *the English Civil War **began in 1642***
*the Prague School of Linguistics **flourished in the nineteen-thirties***
PASSIVE *the structure of DNA **was discovered** by Watson and Crick*

- **reporting research methods and results**

ACTIVE *subjects **answered** questions*
*the difference **was** significant*
PASSIVE *measurements **were made***
*data **was/were recorded***
*improvements **were observed***

Simple Present

- **generalised conclusions**

ACTIVE *diet **plays** a significant role in behaviour for this age group*
PASSIVE *students' ability to concentrate **is affected by** their sleeping habits*

Present Perfect

- **past events causing present situation (focus on <u>present</u>)**

ACTIVE *the government **has introduced** new legislation*
PASSIVE *the plans **have been abandoned***

- **current trends, recent developments**

*genetic engineering **has made** considerable advances in recent years*
*research **has concentrated** on the effects, rather than the causes*

Past Perfect

- **earlier situations relating to the past time in focus**

ACTIVE *When the Labour government was elected, the Conservatives **had been** in power for 18 years.*
PASSIVE *Printing **had been used** in China for over a thousand years before it emerged in Europe.*

- **reporting research findings about previous events**

*Analysis of the records showed that 22% of patients **had visited** the GP in the previous six months.*

- **reported speech**

*Subjects were asked **if they had seen** the advertisement.*

Task 5.10

Below is another extract from Dr Cohn's report about second sight[2]. Use a dictionary where necessary, and fill in the gaps with a suitable choice of **verb** (under each paragraph you will find a list - in random order - of the original verbs used). Decide on the most appropriate **tense** to use. In some cases you will need to use a **passive** form. (Unit 2, **Information Sequence**, contains more work on the passive). Include the words in brackets in the appropriate places.

Fieldwork [1]…………………….. in different parts of Scotland over several years. Seventy people [2]………………………

and over 500 accounts [3]…………………………. .

I [4] …………………………. people who (either) [5]…………………….. the questionnaire or [6]………………………. by the School

of Scottish Studies. I [7]…………………………. people in their homes and [8]……………………………time building a rapport

with them as the material they were giving me [9]…………………… intimate and, in many cases, (never, before)

[10]…………………………. During the interview, the person [11]………………………… in a sensitive manner about the

circumstances of the experiences in an attempt to find possible explanations.

interview (x2); question; be; collect; recommend; give; conduct; fill out; visit; spend; record

[…] Second-sight experiences also [12]……………………………. awake visions of a person before, at the moment of, or

after death. In most cases, the apparition [13]………………………… solid and the percipient [14]………………………….

unaware that the person [15]…………………………. ill or near death. For instance, a person from Skye

[16]………………………………… an awake vision of her neighbour who she thought [17]……………………… from holiday in

England. In her own words, "It [18]………. absolutely natural. There [19]…………… nothing unnatural, nothing

frightening about it. In fact, I [20] (not) ……………. aware that he [21]…………. dead. I took it that he [22]…………… still

alive…". She [23]………………. later by the neighbour's employer that he [24]………………. quite unexpectedly. Her

vision of the neighbour [25]………………….. with the time of his death.

be (x6); appear; have; include; coincide; inform; die; return

Extension Tasks

[Please do not send these tasks to us. If possible, show your answers to the tasks to another student and ask them for their comments and corrections.]

You could practice the grammar studied in this unit by trying the following task(s):

Task 5.11

Write a short report on a piece of academic or professional work you have been involved in (e.g. a project or study). Explain the <u>aims</u> of the work and <u>procedures</u> you followed, and also comment on the <u>value</u> of the work (for example, can you draw any conclusions, or make recommendations, or has it affected the way you do things now?) Pay special attention to your choice of tenses.

Task 5.12

Write a short autobiographical text on your academic / professional life so far.

Study Notes on Unit 5

Task 5.1

A community volunteer programme <u>was initiated</u> in rural Jamaica in May 1990. The main aim of the programme <u>was</u> <u>to monitor</u> the growth of children less than 36 months of age through community health volunteers (CHVs) and <u>improve</u> their nutritional status. At the end of the second year the programme <u>was evaluated</u> <u>to determine</u> its effectiveness. The results of the evaluation <u>indicated</u> that almost all (95.6%) of the children <u>were covered</u> by the CHVs. In addition the participation rate <u>was</u> high (78.5%). However, only 50% of the children <u>were adequately covered</u>. Nonetheless, 81% of them <u>gained</u> adequate weight. Indeed, malnutrition levels <u>declined</u> by 34.5%. The annual cost per child per year for the total programme <u>was</u> fairly moderate (US$14.5) with growth monitoring <u>accounting for</u> nearly half (42.7%). The results suggest that CHVs <u>can</u> <u>play</u> an important role in primary health care programmes in developing countries.

Task 5.2

verb	*name of form*	*reason for use*
1 to monitor	*infinitive (with 'to')*	*expressing purpose*
2 (to) improve	*infinitive*	*expressing purpose*
3 to determine	*infinitive*	*expressing purpose*
4 suggest	*(Simple) Present*	*stating conclusion*
5 can	*Present*	*stating conclusion*
6 play	*infinitive*	*after 'can'*

Task 5.3
These are the original verb forms. Other forms would be possible in some cases - see the notes that follow.

To find the frequency of second sight in the general population, a large-scale mail survey using random sampling methods [1] <u>was</u> undertaken in different areas of Scotland. Second sight [2] <u>is</u> generally regarded as being more prominent in the Western Isles and Highlands of Scotland than elsewhere. However, the survey data [3] <u>shows</u> this [4] <u>not to be</u> the case - the phenomenon [5] <u>occurs</u> in all areas of Scotland. Nor [6] <u>was</u> having a family background from the Highlands and Western Isles a strong predictor of having second sight. Throughout Scotland, people who [7] <u>reported</u> having second sight [8] <u>were</u> significantly more likely to report second sight in blood-related family members. This [9] <u>gives</u> empirical support to the traditional belief that second sight [10] <u>does run</u> in families.

Notes

1. Here, *was* is part of the **passive** structure of *undertake*.

2. **Present**, because it relates to what many people (still) generally believe - not just to those involved in the research.

3. In this case the **Past Tense** (*showed*) would be a possible alternative.

4. The original text had the **Present Infinitive**, but Simple Present *is not* would also be possible: *survey data shows (that) this is not the case*; Past Tense is <u>not</u> possible here, as this is a generalised conclusion, relating to the truth of the belief reported in 2.

5. General conclusion, so **Present**.

6. **Past tense** here indicates the author is again writing specifically about the data obtained in (results of) the study, as in the sentence that follows; but I think this could equally be a general claim, so the **Present Tense** is also possible.

7. **Past tense**, because this sentence reports the findings of the study (the 'people' are the subjects).

8. As above - the statistical information makes this clear.

9. Back to general conclusions.

10. The 'traditional belief' is one of the phenomena under investigation. Here, the author has used the 'do' form of the Present Tense, *does run* for emphasis, but the neutral *runs* would also be possible.

Task 5.4

1	Past	7	Present Perfect
2	Past	8	Present Perfect
3	Present Perfect	9	Present Perfect (NB <u>not</u> Past - 'have' not repeated after *but*)
4	Present Perfect	10	Present
5	Past	11	Past
6	Present Perfect	12	Past

Task 5.5
Our answers are given on the page after the task. Basically, the Past Tense is used to refer to events in the Past, viewed as 'history', while the Present Perfect is used when the focus of interest is on the Present situation.

Task 5.6
Cholera and typhoid [1] <u>were</u> widespread in Europe and North America 100 years ago, but now [2] <u>have almost disappeared</u> from the developed world, largely because of improved water supplies and sanitation. However, this [3] <u>has not happened</u> to the same extent in developing countries. In Peru, for example, where there [4] <u>have been</u> more than 500 000 cases of cholera since 1991, social expenditure [5] <u>has declined</u> over the past 10 years and the supply of water to almost 90 per cent of the rural population [6] <u>is still</u> grossly contaminated. The World Bank [7] <u>estimated</u> in 1993 that diarrhoea and intestinal worm infections caused by poor water supplies and bad sanitation [8] <u>accounted for</u> as much as 10 per cent of the entire disease burden of developing countries.
The United Nations, recognising that most of the disease [9] <u>was</u> the result of polluted water supplies, [10] <u>set up</u> a Decade of Water, 1981/1990. Its aim [11] <u>was</u> to provide safe water supply and adequate sanitation for everyone. Over the decade, the number of people lacking a safe water supply in less well developed countries [12] <u>dropped</u> from 1800 million to 1200 million. Although the number of people without lavatories [13] <u>remained</u> at around 1700 million, against a continued population increase, this [14] <u>was</u> significant progress.

Task 5.7

Our explanation follows on the next page; the collaboration occurred (or began) before the other events and situations mentioned.

Task 5.8

to have had - 'Perfect Infinitive' after *likely* refers to an earlier situation.

Task 5.9

This is how the original article reports the questions:

Respondents were asked whether ITAs had taught their required courses and whether they had problems with any of their ITAs.

Task 5.10

Below are the tenses used in the original text. In some cases, other choices would be acceptable - see the notes which follow.

Fieldwork [1] was conducted in different parts of Scotland over several years. Seventy people [2] were interviewed and over 500 accounts [3] were collected. I [4] interviewed people who [5] had either filled out the questionnaire or [6] were recommended by the school of Scottish studies. I [7] visited people in their homes and [8] spent time building a rapport with them as the material they were giving me [9] was intimate and, in many cases, [10] had never been recorded before. During the interview, the person [11] was questioned in a sensitive manner about the circumstances of the experiences in an attempt to find possible explanations.

Second-sight experiences also [12] include awake visions of a person before, at the moment of, or after death. In most cases, the apparition [13] appears solid and the percipient [14] is unaware that the person [15] is ill or near death. For instance, a person from Skye [16] had an awake vision of her neighbour whom she thought [17] had returned from holiday in England. In her own words, "It [18] was absolutely natural. There [19] was nothing unnatural, nothing frightening about it. In fact, I [20] wasn't aware that he [21] was dead. I took it that he [22] was still alive…". She [23] was informed later by the neighbour's employer that he [24] had died quite unexpectedly. Her vision of the neighbour [25] coincided with the time of his death.

Notes

The first paragraph deals with the interview procedures used in the study, so the basic tense is the **Simple Past**; the two cases of the **Past Perfect** (5 and 10) refer to time before the interviews were carried out. Note that the Past Perfect would be logical in 6, and this would be a possible alternative; it is quite common, however, after using the Past Perfect in one verb, to go back to the Simple Past in subsequent verbs if it is clear from the context that they refer to the same earlier time.

The **Present Tense** in the first sentence of the second paragraph shows that this is a generalisation (a statement of knowledge about the second sight phenomenon in general) based on the findings, rather than simply a report of the results of the study. This statement is then supported by a specific example from the data, and so the basic tense is the **Past**, with the **Past Perfect** (in 17 and 24) used to clarify the sequence of events.

Task 5.11

When I was a medical student in China I worked in hospital wards for two months. Sometimes we were busy, especially when patients were first admitted to the hospital. Their histories would be taken, they would be examined and other tests made. That was my work. Some patients' histories were quite straightforward; many had been in good health before, so it did not take long to complete the work. But others were seriously ill, with symptoms and signs of many different diseases, so you can imagine how long it took for me to take their history. Anyway, the work on the ward was interesting and exciting, especially when the diagnosis was correct.

Task 5.12

Nuttha was born in Thailand in 1963. She studied horticulture at Chiang Mai University for 4 years. After graduating she became an assistant researcher and worked for 9 months for an organisation which specialises in flower crops. She came to Edinburgh to take the M.Sc. course in Seed Technology. She was the first employee of her institution to study for a degree in Britain.

Sources

[i] Adapted from 'Growth monitoring: the role of community health volunteers' by B. Melville et al. in *Public Health, March 1995*: 109/2, page 111.

[ii] 'Second sight: fact or fiction?' by S. Cohn in *Edit*, Summer 1998: No 14, pages 28-31.

[iii] Adapted from 'Archaeology', *Microsoft® Encarta® 97 Encyclopedia.* © 1993-1996 Microsoft Corporation.

[iv] 'Waterborne diseases' by Keith Jones in *Inside Science*, 9 July 1994: No 73, page 1.

[v] 'English language cultures in Bulgaria: a linguistic sibling rivalry?' by L. O'Reilly. *World Englishes* 17/1, 1998, page 74.

[vi] 'Practice of drug abuse among inmates of a drug rehabilitation centre in Hong Kong' by Y.C. Lo *et al*. in *Public Health* 109/2, 1995, page 201.

[vii] Adapted from 'Undergraduates' experiences with and attitudes to International Teaching Assistants' by B. Plakans in *TESOL Quarterly* 31/1, 1997, page 106.

6 Using English articles

Learning how to use (or not use) articles in another language can be very frustrating. In our own language, the way we identify something as general or specific, or known, or recently mentioned, is largely automatic so we don't need to think about our choices. Having to choose between different forms of article in a second language involves competent knowledge of their rules of use.

Article use is in fact one the most fundamental differences between the world's languages:

- Most languages do not use articles (e.g. Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Latin)

- Some have a **definite** article, but **no indefinite** article (e.g. Arabic)

- Some have **definite and indefinite** articles (e.g. German, Spanish)

- A small number (e.g. Kurdish, Italian, French, English) have **definite** (*the*), **indefinite** (*a/an*) and **partitive** (*some*)

- It seems that no language has **only the indefinite article** – although some use the number one in its place.

However, even when two languages - such as English and French - have a similar range of articles and are closely related, the precise ways in which the articles are used are not identical. For example, the English generic statement "*Lions are dangerous*" is expressed in French as "*Les lions sont dangereux*", where "*Les*" is the plural definite article. The word-for-word English equivalent of the French sentence, "<u>The</u> lions are dangerous", refers to a *specific* group of lions.

In short, successful use of the English article system is not always straightforward and it is an important part of this course for students who are required to produce clear academic English in their course assignments.

Task 6.1: Reflection

If your language is not mentioned in the bullet-point list (above), which of the five groups does it belong in?

Task 6.2: Test yourself

Before we look in more detail at how the English article system works, it is worth checking which areas of the system <u>you</u> can use confidently and which you are less sure about. That will help you focus on the relevant section of the unit; you may not need to study all of the sections.

Below are two short tests of English article use, for you to assess how confident you are that you can get the answers right.

Decide in each case whether the underlined numbered space should be filled with THE, A, AN or ZERO (no article).

Test 1: New rules for Everest climbers

Expeditions on _(1)_ Mount Everest will be more closely monitored than before from _(2)_ next year, according to _(3)_ BBC. _(4)_ Nepalese officials say that for _(5)_ first time, _(6)_ government team will be located at _(7)_ base camp. They will monitor and help _(8)_ expedition teams, coordinate _(9)_ rescues and protect _(10)_ environment. _(11)_ change follows _(12)_ embarrassing incidents on _(13)_ slopes of _(14)_ world's tallest mountain, including _(15)_ fight between _(16)_ sherpas and _(17)_ mountaineers.

Purna Chandra Bhattarai, _(18)_ chief of _(19)_ tourism industry division that oversees _(20)_ mountaineering, told _(21)_ BBC: "There is _(22)_ need for _(23)_ permanent government mechanism at _(24)_ Everest base camp to regulate _(25)__ mountaineering activities. _(26)_ Integrated Service Centre will also help _(27)_ climbers by offering them _(28)_ communication and _(29)_ safety-related services."

Mr Bhattarai says that, starting from _(30)_ next year's spring climbing season, _(31)_ team at _(32)_ base camp will represent _(33)_ government's administration on _(34)_ ground. It was getting difficult to regulate _(35)_ mountaineering activities from _(36)_ capital, Kathmandu.

Test 2: Bogeyman

_(1)_ bogeyman is _(2)_ imaginary being used by _(3)_ adults to frighten _(4)_ children into _(5)_ good behaviour. _(6)_ bogeyman has no specific appearance, and _(7)_ conceptions about him can vary drastically from _(8)_ household to household within _(9)_ same community. In many cases, he has no set appearance in _(10)_ mind of _(11)_ adult or child, but is simply _(12)_ non-specific embodiment of _(13)_ terror. _(14)_ P/parents may tell their children that if they misbehave, _(15)_ bogeyman will get them. _(16)__ B/bogeymen may target _(17)_ specific mischief — for instance, _(18)_ bogeyman that punishes _(19)_ children who suck their thumbs — or _(20)_ general misbehaviour.

In _(21)_ many countries, _(22)_ fictitious scary man similar to _(23)_ bogeyman is portrayed as _(24)_ man with _(25)_ sack on his back who carries _(26)_ naughty children away. This is true for _(27)_ many Latin countries and _(28)_ Eastern Europe, as well as _(29)_ Haiti and some countries in _(30)_ Far East. In Spain, *el hombre del saco* is usually depicted as _(31)_ impossibly ugly and skinny old man who eats _(32)_ misbehaving children he collects. In Argentina, Chile and particularly in _(33)_ Southern and Austral Zones, he is mostly known as "El Viejo del Saco" ("_(34)_ old man with _(35)_ bag") who walks around _(36)_ neighbourhood every day around _(37)_ supper time.

When you have decided on your answers, **check them against the original texts**, which you will find in the *Study Notes* section at the end of this unit.

Main uses of the English articles

Basically, you **use *the*** (the definite article) **when the listener / reader can identify the thing you are referring to:**

- because they already know the thing you mean
- because you have already mentioned it
- because it is understandable from context

Already known

You would say 'I got **a** letter this morning', if the person you're talking to doesn't know what letter you mean (the existence of a letter is news to the listener).

You would say 'I got **the** letter this morning' if your listener knows you have been expecting a particular letter. So *the* signals something like '***you know the one I mean***'.

Already mentioned

A general rule of thumb is: use **a** for first mention of 'new' information and use **the** after that. (Here, 'new' means not known to your reader/listener). So you might tell a friend 'I got **a** letter from the library this morning', but later in the conversation you would say '**The** letter was about a book I'd asked for'.

Understandable from context

In some situations you can assume that the listener/reader will know which thing you are referring to, even if you are mentioning it for the first time. In the previous example, the speaker said '**the** library', because she knew it would be clear **from the context** which library was meant. If the conversation is between two students, the listener will assume it is their university library. Similarly, if you mention '**the** Prime Minister' in the UK, the listener (in 2013) will assume you mean David Cameron.

Similarly, we say '**the** sun', '**the** moon', '**the** world', because it is obvious which we mean. This is known as *unique reference*.

Sometimes, the reason for using *the* is where the **other parts of the sentence** identify or define which thing you mean:

- '**the** Chinese economy', because 'Chinese' identifies <u>which economy</u> you mean
- '**the** coast of Scotland' because 'of Scotland' identifies <u>which coast</u> you mean

But you say '**a** member of Parliament', not 'the' because there are many MPs, so 'of Parliament' does <u>not</u> in this case identify which one you mean.

Grammar of the noun phrase

If the noun-phrase is **COUNTABLE** and **SINGULAR**, you **ALWAYS** need an article (or another determiner). So you could never use, for example, *sample*, *pipe, experiment* without a determiner of some sort, because these are all singular countable nouns.

The choice of determiner depends on the context, and what you mean. You could say '**the** experiment', '**an** experiment', '**our** experiment', '**that** experiment', '**one** experiment', but <u>never</u> just 'experiment'.)

So *a/an* (the indefinite article) <u>must</u> be used with **singular countable noun-phrases** if you don't need *the* or another determiner. You could say that *a/an* is the *default* for singular countable noun-phrases; if you have no reason to use another determiner, you must use *a/an*.

Singular, <u>un</u>countable nouns (e.g. investment, software, research), and **plural nouns** (companies, policies, experiments) **can be used without an article** ('zero article') if you don't need *the*.

Specific and generic reference

The difference between *specific* and *generic reference* is particularly important in academic writing. So far we have dealt with *specific reference*, i.e. when the noun-phrase refers to some particular thing. In the 'letter' examples, '*a* letter' and '*the* letter' both referred to one particular letter, not letters in general.

With uncountable or plural noun-phrases, you usually use *some* to show that you are referring to particular things: 'There's some milk [uncountable, singular] in the fridge'; 'I've got some books [countable, plural] to take back to the library'.

Generic reference

For many international students this is the aspect of English article system that causes most difficulty. When referring to things in general ('generic reference'), there are four possibilities – and sometimes more than one is possible in the context.

1. **PLURAL, NO ARTICLE** (<u>countable</u> noun-phrases only):

    - '**Mobile phones** are enormously popular'
    - 'I don't like **tomatoes**'

2. **SINGULAR, NO ARTICLE** (<u>uncountable</u> only):

    - '**Water** is vital to life'
    - 'I don't eat **fish**'

3. **THE + SINGULAR** (<u>countable</u> only) - used especially to talk about technological innovations as concepts – more abstract than type 1:

    - '**The mobile phone** has changed the way we behave'
    - '**The steam engine** revolutionised work'
    - 'There's no need to re-invent **the wheel**'

    Type 3 is also commonly used to refer to **participants / roles**:

    - (health services) 'Communication between **the doctor** and **the patient** is vital'
    - (law) 'T**he jury** delivers **the verdict**, and **the judge** decides **the sentence**'
    - (species of animal / plant) '**The long-eared bat** is at risk of extinction'
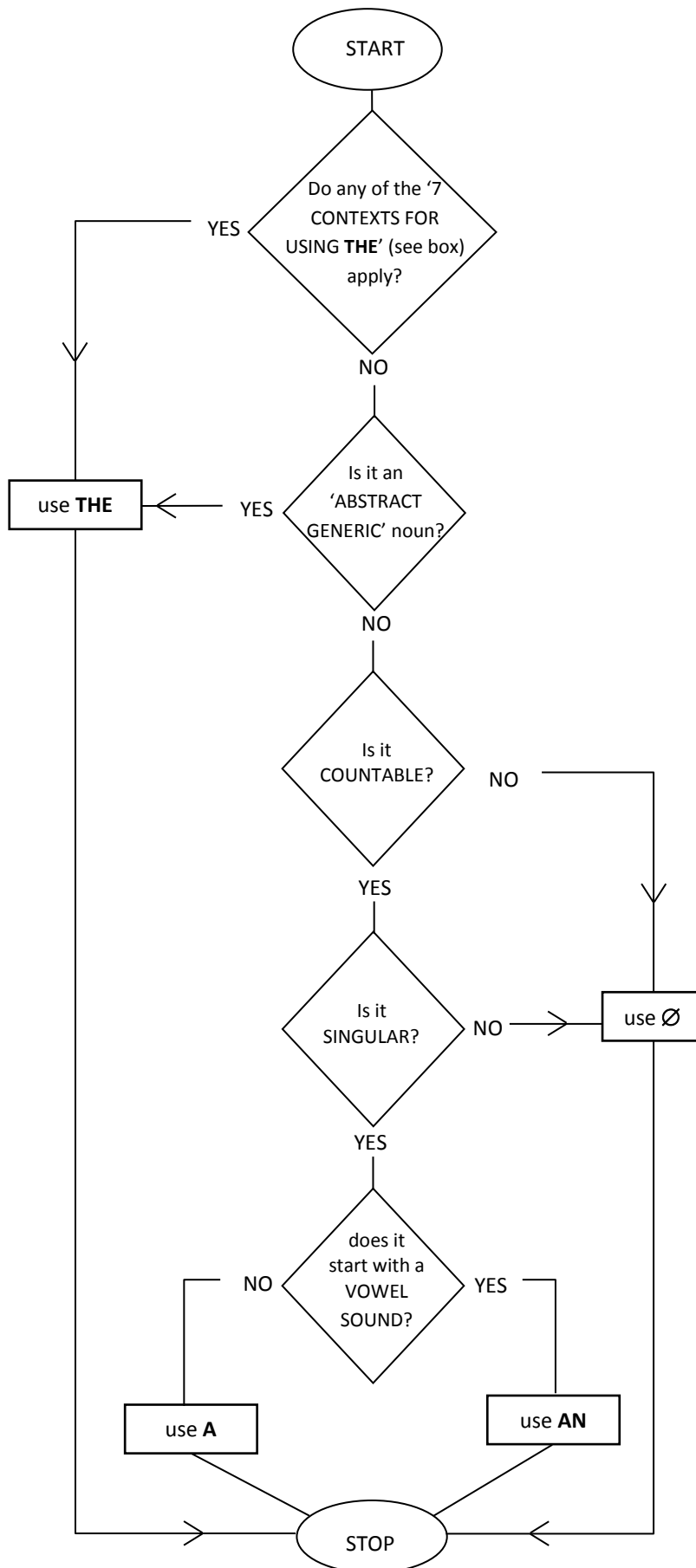
4. **A + SINGULAR** (<u>countable</u> only) - the least common option, used for **regular occurrences** or **typical examples**:
    - 'Many British people like to have **a cup of tea** when they get up in the morning'
    - '**A good doctor** is a good listener' (but also 'good doctors are good listeners').

Types 1 & 2 are the most frequently used, so if you are making a GENERALIZATION and you can't decide which form to use, they are the safest options.

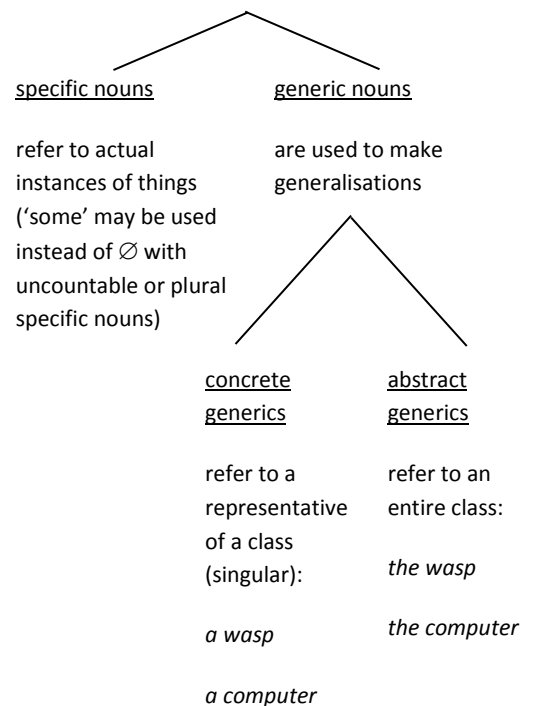## Decisions about article use

On the next page is a flowchart that many students have found helpful. It summarises the rules for choosing <u>the</u>, <u>a</u>, <u>an</u> and <u>zero</u> in English noun-phrases as set out in *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* by J. Swales and C. Feak (University of Michigan Press, 2004; pages 289-301). Study it carefully and see whether it makes sense.

START

Do any of the '7 CONTEXTS FOR USING THE' (see box) apply?

YES → use **THE**

NO

Is it an 'ABSTRACT GENERIC' noun?

YES → use **THE**

NO

Is it COUNTABLE?

NO → use ∅

YES

Is it SINGULAR?

NO → use ∅

YES

does it start with a VOWEL SOUND?

NO → use **A**

YES → use **AN**

STOP

---

7 contexts for using THE with specific nouns:

1. Explicit/implicit 'second mention':
   …a thin film. The film…; we bought a computer but the hard drive was damaged
2. Superlatives/ordinals: *the best, the second*
3. specifiers:
   the same, the only
4. shared knowledge/unique reference:
   the coffee machine; the sun
5. Post-modifiers with (non-partitive) 'of', etc.
   the price of gold; the key to room G5
6. Partitive 'of' phrases with plurals and uncountables:
   some of the subjects, most of the information
7. Names of theories, etc. modified by proper nouns:
   the Doppler effect
   (but not with possessives: *Einstein's theory)*

SPECIFIC or GENERIC NOUNS?

specific nouns

refer to actual instances of things ('some' may be used instead of ∅ with uncountable or plural specific nouns)

generic nouns

are used to make generalisations

concrete generics

refer to a representative of a class (singular):

a wasp

a computer

abstract generics

refer to an entire class:

the wasp

the computer

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Task 6.3: Analysis

Below is an extract from a text about neuroscience, in which the author's use of articles has been highlighted. In each case where he has used THE, try to explain his choice in terms of the **seven contexts** shown in the box in the Swales & Feak flowchart on the previous page.

See if you can find any <u>other</u> reasons for a decision to use THE.

According to Greenfield (1997), the greatest advances in understanding the brain's structure and processes were achieved from the work of two scientists in France and Austria in the middle of the 19th century. First, a French neuroanatomist, Broca, examined a patient who was unable to pronounce any words other than the sound 'tan' (and for this reason was known as Tan). When Tan died, Broca was able to examine his brain and discovered that the region that had suffered damage was completely different from what (ZERO) phrenologists predicted; according to (ZERO) phrenological theory, control over (ZERO) language was centred below the left eye socket, whereas in Tan's case the damage had occurred higher up in the brain. This is now known as (ZERO) Broca's area.

The second advance was led by an Austrian physician, Wernecke, who also worked with (ZERO) patients suffering from (ZERO) speech problems, though different from those studied by Broca. Unlike Tan, Wernecke's patients could pronounce (ZERO) words perfectly; their problem was that what they said was (ZERO) nonsense – a condition known as *aphasia*, in which words may be spoken in a jumbled order and the patient may also invent new words with no obvious meaning. (ZERO) Examination of the brains of these aphasic patients revealed that physical damage had occurred in a region quite separate from Broca's area. This led Wernecke to conclude that there is no single speech centre in the brain, and that different elements of (ZERO) speech are controlled in separate regions.

Task 6.4: Completion

Here is the next (and closing) paragraph from the text about brain research. The articles have been deleted, but this time you have to decide where one is needed.

Read it and decide where you need to insert THE, A or AN.

In short, we can say that key historical developments in brain research were, first, movement from description of brain's structure to explanation of how brain worked and, second, shift from simple view of brain as single unit to realisation that control over any one skill – such as speaking – is distributed across different areas of brain.

Extension Task

[Please do not send these tasks to us. If possible, show your answers to the tasks to another student and ask them for their comments and corrections.]

You could practice the grammar studied in this unit by trying the following task(s):

Task 6.5

Your task is to describe the process of **getting a university place** in your country. You will need to make clear the various stages in the process for someone who is unfamiliar with the system. (On the next page is a sample student text, with correct use of articles.)

- Explain the meaning of any technical terms you need to use, such as the local name (e.g. *Abitur, gaokao*) for the school-leaving examination or university entrance examination.
- Does everything depend on a student's exam results, or do teachers' reports from their secondary school play a role?

Write your draft without thinking too much about articles. Try to write it fluently, in one go.

- When you have finished the draft, read it carefully again. Focus on your use of THE, A, AN and the zero article. Are there any places where you are <u>not sure</u> whether you have made the correct choice?
- If you can, show the draft to someone else. See whether they agree with your choice.

Task 6.5 sample - *How to Get into University in Brazil*
adapted from http://www.gringoes.com/articles.asp?ID_Noticia=1058

Here is a description of the process by which a foreign student can get a university place at a Brazilain university.

If you want to take an undergraduate course at a Brazilian state university, the first step is to enrol for the Vestibular, which is the national university entrance examination. You will need a foreigner's ID registration number, or RNE. At http://www.fuvest.br you can see previous years' Vestibular exams. Enrolments finish in September and the first phase exams take place in November. You have to decide when you enrol and which university course you want to take, and you can consult the previous year's exam results to see what score you need to get in order to pass the first phase. The first phase exam is a multiple-choice general exam, covering chemistry, biology, physics, maths, geography, history, Portuguese and English. If you do well, you can then proceed to the second phase, which is a Portuguese written exam. There are many schools specialising in preparing students to take the Vestibular exam. These are called *cursinhos* (or 'little courses').

But there are alternative ways of getting into Brazilian universities. If you already have a university degree recognised by a Brazilian university, and an RNE, you can apply to study for a higher degree, or be accepted onto a degree course without taking the Vestibular.

To get your home university degree recognised, it has to be evaluated as being equivalent to a degree course in Brazil. You have to show a transcript of all your undergraduate exam results. The evaluation process takes 8 to 10 months. It will be difficult to get equivalence for a non-standard degree, such as (in my case) Chinese Studies, which is not offered at Brazilian universities.

A third way into Brazilian university is to start a course at a private university, and then apply for a transfer after two months to the public university of your choice.

Task 6.6

When you have read it, look again at the articles highlighted in green. Can you say why, in each case, the student (correctly) made that choice?

Useful websites on Articles

If you would like further explanation of the English article system, or additional practical exercises, here are some we recommend:

Explanations

Andy Gillett suggests several academic grammar websites at

http://www.uefap.com/links/linkfram.htm

Exercises

http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/grammar/articles/index.xml

http://www.grammarbank.com/articles-exercises.html

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/2/1

If you find other good resources, suitable for university students, please send the details to your ELTT course director, so we can add them to this page.

Study Notes

Task 6.2: Tests 1 and 2

Below are the original versions of the two passages, with the decision points highlighted. Where you see a word other than <u>the</u>, <u>a</u> or <u>an</u> highlighted, it indicates that the author used a <u>zero</u> article (no article).

In one or two places, it would be possible to have <u>the</u> (instead of <u>a</u> or <u>zero</u>) or, conversely, <u>a</u> instead of <u>the</u>. Those cases are highlighted in green.

Test 1: New rules for Everest climbers (adapted from the BBC News website)

Expeditions on Mount Everest will be more closely monitored than before from next year, according to the BBC. Nepalese officials say that for the first time, a government team will be located at the base camp. They will monitor and help expedition teams, coordinate rescues and protect the environment. The change follows embarrassing incidents on the slopes of the world's tallest mountain, including a fight between sherpas and mountaineers.

Purna Chandra Bhattarai, the chief of the tourism industry division that oversees mountaineering, told the BBC: "There is a need for a permanent government mechanism at the Everest base camp to regulate mountaineering activities. The Integrated Service Centre will also help climbers by offering them communication and safety-related services."

Mr Bhattarai says that, starting from next year's spring climbing season, the team at the base camp will represent the government's administration on the ground. It was getting difficult to regulate mountaineering activities from the capital, Kathmandu.

Reasons for article use in the Test 1 gaps:

> 1 – geographical proper names such as 'Mount X', 'Lake Y' and 'Port Z' have no article
>
> 2 – when <u>next year</u> means <u>the one after this year</u>, there is no article; but in the sentence ' I saw him in 2005 and **by the next year** he was died' there <u>would</u> be 'the' because it refers to the year following another year, in the past
>
> 3 – organisations with initials pronounced as letters (e.g B-B-C, U-N and E-U) have an article; organisations where the initials are pronounced as if they were a word (known as *acronyms*) have no article, e.g. 'UNICEF has appointed a new ambassador'
>
> 4 – first mention
>
> 5 – ordinal and superlative adjectives have an article
>
> 6 – first mention
>
> 7 – readers are assumed to know that there is a base camp on Everest
>
> 8 and 9 – non-specific
>
> 10 – understandable from context as meaning 'the environment around Everest'

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11 – Here, 'the change' refers back to the new policy described in the first two sentences: 'more closely monitored' and 'for the first time'.

12 – non-specific

13 – specific

14 – superlative

15 – writer assumes readers do not know about any fights between the two groups; if he thought readers were familiar with the problem, he would have written 'the fights'

16 and 17 – non-specific

18 – could be either <u>zero</u> or <u>the</u>

19 – specific here: 'the division that oversees…'

20 – abstract noun and therefore uncountable

21 – same reason as (3)

22 and 23 – first mention

24 –specific, and already mentioned

25 – non-specific

26 – understandable from context

27-29 – non-specific

30 – same as (2)

31 and 32 – already mentioned

33 – specific = 'the administration of the government'

34 – fixed expression: 'on the ground', like 'in the air' and 'under the sea'; could also be said to be unique reference

35 - non-specific

36 – a country has only one capital, so definite article

Test 2: Bogeyman (abridged from Wikipedia)

A bogeyman is an imaginary being used by adults to frighten children into good behaviour. The bogeyman has no specific appearance, and conceptions about him can vary drastically from household to household within the same community. In many cases, he has no set appearance in the mind of an adult or child, but is simply a non-specific embodiment of terror. Parents may tell their children that if they misbehave, the bogeyman will get them. Bogeymen may target a specific mischief—for instance, a bogeyman that punishes children who suck their thumbs—or general misbehavior.

In many countries, a fictitious scary man similar to a bogeyman is portrayed as a man with a sack on his back who carries naughty children away. This is true for many Latin countries and Eastern Europe, as well as Haiti and some countries in the Far East. In Spain, *el hombre del saco* is usually depicted as an impossibly ugly and skinny old man who eats the misbehaving children he collects. In Argentina, Chile and particularly in the Southern and Austral Zones, he is mostly known as "El Viejo del Saco" ("The old man with the bag") who walks around the neighbourhood every day around supper time.

Reasons for article use in the Test 2 gaps:

1 and 2 – the sentence is a definition; definitions tend to begin "<u>An</u> X is <u>a</u> Y which…", because you provide a definition only when you assume your reader **does not know the meaning**

3 and 4 – non-specific

5 – 'behaviour' is uncountable in general use, although in academic texts on psychology and zoology, for example, writers do use 'behaviours' in the plural, meaning 'different **types** of behaviour'. Googling for 'behaviour' produces over 100 million hits, whereas 'behaviours' produces 11 million. So the uncountable form is much more common.

6 – could be either <u>a</u> or <u>the</u> (second mention); my ELTC colleagues tend to prefer <u>a</u>, perhaps because this is an imaginary being and has no specific appearance?

7 – non-specific

8 – fixed expressions like 'from door to door', 'from pillar to post' and 'from end to end' usually have no definite article

9 – 'same' is always preceded by 'the'

10 – each adult or child would have one, so 'the'

11 – non-specific = all adults and children

12 = specific: 'the embodiment of terror'

13 – abstract noun

14 – Parents = non-specific

15 – here 'the bogeyman' because parents will imply there is one who's coming; 'a bogeyman' would imply the parents don't know *which* bogeyman (among many bogeymen) it will be.

16 – non-specific

17 – uncountable

18 and 19 – here, it is 'the' specific bogeyman responsible for punishing thumb-sucking, and those children that suck their thumbs

20 – same as (5)

21 – zero article before many; in other contexts, you do find 'the many…' followed by a relative clause, for example, 'I would like to thank **the many friends who have helped me** over the past few months'. But that does not apply in this case.

22-26 – all non-specific

27 – see reason for (21)

28 – no article before the adjective <u>Eastern</u>; there would have been an article before the noun <u>East</u> (as in number 30)

29 – countries only have 'the' when they contain a non-geographical adjective such as <u>United</u>; so, 'in Britain', but 'in <u>the</u> UK'

30 – 'the' because it's the noun East; we have 'in Eastern Indonesia', but 'in the East of Indonesia'

31-32 – non-specific

33 – refers to those two zones of South America

34 and 35 – specific; they *believe* there is only one

36 – countable and specific (to each person believing in the Bagman)

37 – time expressions usually have no article; 'at Easter', 'at night', 'at dawn'

Task 6.3

We have two cases of 'the brain', in the first and penultimate lines of the extract, which don't seem to be covered by the seven contexts. They are examples of abstract generic 'the'. The expression in paragraph 2, 'the brains of these aphasic patients' is different: there, it is specific (to those individual patients).

Task 6.4: Original final paragraph

In short, we can say that the key historical developments in brain research were, first, the movement from description of the brain's structure to explanation of how the brain worked and, second, the shift from a simple view of the brain as a single unit to the realisation that the control over any one skill – such as speaking – is distributed across different areas of the brain.

Task 6.6 sample: *How to Get into University in Brazil*

Reasons for the student's green choices:

- a Portuguese written exam *(because non-specific; changes from year to year)*

- an RNE *(notice it is not <u>a</u> RNE, because the sound of letter R begins with a vowel, as do F, H, M and S, for example, so the student has used <u>an</u> – many British students would get this wrong!)*

- a transcript *(could be because in the student's home country you do not automatically get a transcript at the end of your degree course; or because the student has in mind a copy of the original transcript)*

- the public university of your choice *(because it is the specific one you have chosen)*

7 SPECULATING: Conditionals and modals

Drawing conclusions

When you draw conclusions based on evidence, or the application of a theory, you often need to make statements about your assessment of the <u>likelihood</u> that something

- is true <u>now</u>
- will happen <u>in the future</u>
- happened <u>in the past</u>

Task 7.1
What words expressing 'likelihood' can you think of to complete the gaps in the following?

1. There is a strong _____ of a further reduction in interest rates.

2. It is _____ whether the measures will be successful in practice.

3. The _____ outcome is a slight improvement in efficiency.

4. It is more than _____ that growth will be slower than the government forecast.

(More information can be found in the *Wordfinder Dictionary* entry for **Possible**.)

Task 7.2
Read the following extract from a newspaper report about medical research[i]

> *WOMEN SMOKERS are more likely than men to develop the most serious form of lung cancer, according to new research.*
>
> *The study by the British Thoracic Society (BTS) - the largest British investigation into lung cancer - found that nearly twice as many women as men under the age of 65 are diagnosed with small cell lung cancer, the most dangerous form of the disease.*
>
> *Seven out of ten of these cases could not be helped by surgery and more than half will be dead within six months of their diagnosis.*
>
> *The study found that men were more likely to have non-small cell lung cancer, which is less damaging to the lung, and nearly half could be considered operable.*
>
> *Dr Mike Pearson, chairman of the BTS Public Education Committee, said there were several reasons why women might be more susceptible to small cell lung cancer.*

What do you think those reasons might be? Write them here:

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Task 7.3

Some possible explanations for these findings are given in the later part of the article (Action on Smoking and Health is a pressure group). The specialists quoted use language that makes it clear that the reasons they give are speculative. Underline the words and phrases that express <u>uncertainty</u>:

> *"Our research suggests women have less resistance to the most dangerous kinds of lung cancer," he said. "This may be due to changing patterns of smoking behaviour - many women took up the habit a decade after men, who smoked heavily during the Second World War.*
>
> *"Women may also smoke in a different way to men, for example taking shorter, sharper inhalations, which could have an effect on the kind and severity of the cancer they develop."*
>
> *"There are probably several factors at work here, but a major suspect is the greater use of 'light' cigarettes by women," said Clive Bates, director of Action on Smoking and Health (ASH). "People adjust their smoking to get a satisfying dose of nicotine, and 'low-tar' smokers draw smoke more deeply into the lungs to get the nicotine they need."*

The report quotes <u>spoken</u> comments by Dr Pearson and Clive Bates. Did you underline any expressions which you would not expect to be used in academic <u>writing</u>?

Modal verbs

One of the most useful resources for expressing <u>varying degrees of certainty</u> in English is the system of modal verbs. The modals that are usually used in this way are:

might   would   could   may   should   will   must

Task 7.4

Match those seven modal verbs with their function (two are very similar):

FUNCTION	MODAL VERB
firm <u>prediction</u>	*will*
confident conclusion - no other explanation possible	
confident assumption, depending on things going <u>according to plan</u>	
describing a <u>hypothetical</u> situation	
possibility	
weaker possibility	**or**

Would

In Unit 3, **Indirectness**, we looked at one use of *would*, in polite requests. Another very common use is to speculate about <u>hypothetical situations</u>, often using **conditional sentences** to do this.

LANGUAGE BOX: Conditionals 1 and 2

CONDITIONAL 1

       ***If* + Present Simple**   ***will* + Stem**

       If she <u>wins</u> the Nobel Prize, it <u>will enhance</u> the University's reputation.

CONDITIONAL 2

       ***If* + Past Simple**   ***would* + Stem**

       If she <u>won</u> the Nobel Prize, it <u>would enhance</u> the University's reputation.

Task 7.5
Explain the difference in meaning between the two sentences in the box?

Task 7.6
Complete these conditional sentences:

1. If I were in my country now, _____ .

2. My English will improve if _____.

3. If _____ , I would take a month's holiday.

4. I _____ if I finish this exercise quickly.

Alternative conditionals

Conditional sentences do not always follow the 'standard' patterns illustrated on the previous page. For example, you can use a different modal verb in the main clause to indicate more uncertainty:

> *If the findings are inconsistent, we may need to do more experiments.*

> *If we had more modern equipment, we might finish the research sooner.*

You can also talk about conditions without using 'if'. One way to do this is by expressing the idea of the conditional clause as a noun-phrase. This example is from a newspaper report [ii]:

Plans to reduce the legal blood alcohol limit from 80mg to 50mg are to be abandoned by the Government to allow police to concentrate on persistent drivers who ignore the present limit. Government sources confirmed last night that a 10-month investigation into drink-drive reform has produced figures that show a move to lower the limit would save between 30 and 80 lives a year.

Task 7.7
Rewrite the last part of the sentence as a 'second conditional':

A move to lower the limit would save between 30 and 80 lives a year. $\Rightarrow$

If _____, between 30 and 80 lives a year would be saved.

Task 7.8
Here are some more alternatives to conditional clauses. Rewrite them as 'standard' second conditionals:

1. *If the talks were to fail, the peace process would collapse.*

2. *Were the machine to break down, we would need to hire a replacement.*

3. *Should inflation rise, the Bank of England would put up the interest rates.*

4. *To extend the project, we would need increased funding.*

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Speculating about the past

The modal verb structures we have looked at so far can be used to speculate about either present or future events or situations:

present *Smoking 'light' cigarettes may be more dangerous than many people believe.*

future *The legislation may be brought in next year.*

present *If I were a home student, my fees would be much lower.*

future *If I finished my research ahead of schedule, I would take a holiday.*

You may also need to speculate about what happened in the **past**. The following extract[iii] refers to historical events and situations.

Task 7.9
As you would expect, the most common verb structure is the Simple Past Tense, but in three places the writer indicates that there is some uncertainty about the facts. Underline the three expressions used to show that the information is speculative:

It may be that belief in a common truth was far more widespread than the surviving written sources suggest. At the height of the persecution of the Christians of Cordoba, a part of the Christian community protested that the victims were not truly martyrs because they had not been killed by pagans but by Muslims, 'men who worship God and acknowledge heavenly laws'. At about the same time, Nicetas of Byzantium was prompted to counter the opinion that Muslims worshipped the true God, and, early in the next century, the patriarch Nicolas wrote to the caliph that 'we have obtained the gift of our authorities [i.e. the Qur'An and the Gospels] from the same Source'. It may have been as early as 717 that mosques were permitted within the walls of Constantinople for the use of Muslim visitors and prisoners of war. In the Christian West, this view is less well known, but, in 1076, Pope Gregory VII wrote to the Hamm Odod ruler al-N Osir that 'we believe in and confess one God, admittedly in a different way', and stressed the Abrahamic root of the two religions. This idea never seems to have taken root in Western Europe, and had disappeared completely by the First Crusade.

You can use the same modal verbs to speculate about <u>past</u> events and situations:

LANGUAGE BOX: Modals referring to the past

Rule: Use **have** + Past Participle after the modal verb

I can't find the disk. I <u>must have</u> left it at home. (= I'm sure, because that is the only explanation.)

They <u>should have</u> arrived in Heathrow. (= I assume they have, because I know the flight times.)

Any change in blood pressure <u>would have</u> been recorded. (Hypothetical: = <u>no change</u> occurred.)

Fluctuations in temperature <u>may have</u> influenced the results. (= This is a likely explanation.)

The data <u>might / could have</u> been falsified. (= There is a small chance that this happened.)

Task 7.10
Express these ideas more concisely, using an appropriate modal verb:

1. *I expect they have received my message by now (because I know how long it normally takes).*

2. *A probable explanation is that the cleaner unplugged the machine by mistake.*

3. *It is beyond doubt that he lied to the court.*

4. *It is conceivable that she was bribed.*

Would have

LANGUAGE BOX: The third conditional

Third (or 'impossible') conditionals are used to speculate on what would have happened if circumstances or events had been different:

   ***If* + Past Perfect**   ***would have* + Past Participle**

   If we <u>had submitted</u> the application in time, we <u>would have received</u> the grant.
                    (= The application was late, so we didn't get the grant.)

Task 7.11
Complete these sentences to make true statements about yourself:

1. I would not have come to Edinburgh if ….

2. If I had not come to Edinburgh ….

Would have

Making recommendations

In the Conclusion section of a text we often need to include recommendations - for example, for changes to organisational structures, or procedures, or for policies to be implemented, or for further research to be done.

LANGUAGE BOX: Modals for advice / recommendation

Some modal verbs are also used to *advise* or make *recommendations*, but the list of modals used for recommending is not exactly the same as that for expressing degrees of certainty. This time they can be listed in order of strength of advice - from obligation to suggestion:

must (also *have to*)	absolute obligation / duty
should	firm advice or obligation
can	opportunity / possibility
could	suggestion
might	tentative / polite suggestion

Task 7.12
Rewrite the following suggestions in a more academic style. Use more formal vocabulary, and make the sentences more impersonal and concise. Possible sentence beginnings are provided:

1. What about expanding the role of the department?
   I propose …

2. If I were you, I'd give the director's job to Dr Soh.
   I (would) recommend …

3. I really think it would be a good idea to reduce the development budget.
   The development budget … (reduced)

4. We'd better look at our record-keeping procedures again.
   It is essential that … (reviewed)

Writing about the future often involves a *combination* of predicting, speculating and recommending, as you can see in these extracts from an article about the future of nursing by Professor Kath Melia of the Department of Nursing Studies at Edinburgh[iv]:

It is crucial that we educate nurses who can plan and effect care in a changing social context, and with an ageing population. The shift in emphasis in health care provision to the community is likely to produce a nursing profession in which a more generalised idea of care and nursing practice is more important than specialisation. The education process will have to yield nurses with analytic skills and a capacity to adapt; the graduate nurse with a firm grounding in the ways of community care will be in the lead in this scenario. […]

There is a danger of producing a catch-up climate in which no-one is ever satisfied with the credentials that they have because some brighter, newer, shinier model has just appeared on the horizon. A more collegial approach might be preferable, with a skill mix which allows nurses with different backgrounds and qualifications to work together in multi-skilled teams to effect patient care. […]

Nursing should not be duped by talk of role expansion and extension if it means cheap doctoring. If the medical profession needs assistants, let it find and train them without mounting border-raids on nursing.

Extension Tasks

[If possible, show your answers to the tasks to another student and ask them for their comments and corrections.]

You could practice the grammar studied in this unit by trying the following task(s):

Task 7.13

As your final piece of writing, we want you to evaluate the *Grammar for Academic Writing* course. This task will practise a number of the grammatical and lexical features we have covered in the course units:

• a summary of what you did during the course

• an evaluation - your positive and negative comments

• a recommendation for future years - would you suggest any changes?

PLEASE EMAIL YOUR ANSWER TO THIS TASK TO Anton.Elloway@ed.ac.uk
I won't be able to offer you any language feedback on your answer, but I will read your comments carefully and consider implementing changes to the course based on the feedback I receive.

Study Notes for Unit 7

Task 7.1
1. possibility / likelihood / probability / risk / chance
2. doubtful / uncertain / debatable
3. likely / probable
4. likely

Task 7.2   Open.

Task 7.3

> *"Our research **suggests** women have less resistance to the most dangerous kinds of lung cancer," he said. "This **may** be due to changing patterns of smoking behaviour - many women took up the habit a decade after men, who smoked heavily during the Second World War.*
>
> *"Women **may** also smoke in a different way to men, for example taking shorter, sharper inhalations, which **could** have an effect on the kind and severity of the cancer they develop."*
>
> *"There are **probably** several factors at work here, but **a major suspect** is the greater use of 'light' cigarettes by women," said Clive Bates, director of Action on Smoking and Health (ASH). "People adjust their smoking to get a satisfying dose of nicotine, and 'low-tar' smokers draw smoke more deeply into the lungs to get the nicotine they need.*

The expression 'a major suspect' would probably not be used in formal writing; the others would be perfectly suitable for writing.

Task 7.4

FUNCTION	MODAL VERB
firm <u>prediction</u>	*will*
confident conclusion - no other explanation possible	*must*
confident assumption, depending on things going <u>according to plan</u>	*should*
describing a <u>hypothetical</u> situation	*would*
possibility	*may*
weaker possibility	*might* **or** *could*

Task 7.5
A refers to a 'real possibility', while B is hypothetical. The situation is seen as something that may happen in A.

Task 7.6 Open

Task 7.7
If the limit were lowered / If the government lowered the limit

Task 7.8
If the talks failed ...
If the machine broke down ...
If inflation rose ...
If we extended / wanted to extend ...

Task 7.9

> ***It may be that*** *belief in a common truth was far more widespread than the surviving written sources suggest. At the height of the persecution of the Christians of Cordoba, a part of the Christian community protested that the victims were not truly martyrs because they had not been killed by pagans but by Muslims, 'men who worship God and acknowledge heavenly laws'. At about the same time, Nicetas of Byzantium was prompted to counter the opinion that Muslims worshipped the true God, and, early in the next century, the patriarch Nicolas wrote to the caliph that 'we have obtained the gift of our authorities [i.e. the Qur'An and the Gospels] from the same Source'*. ***It may have been*** *as early as 717 that mosques were permitted within the walls of Constantinople for the use of Muslim visitors and prisoners of war. In the Christian West, this view is less well known, but, in 1076, Pope Gregory VII wrote to the Hamm Odod ruler al-N Osir that 'we believe in and confess one God, admittedly in a different way', and stressed the Abrahamic root of the two religions. This idea* ***never seems to have*** *taken root in Western Europe, and had disappeared completely by the First Crusade.*

Task 7.10

1. *They should have received my message (by now).*
2. *The cleaner may have unplugged the machine by mistake.*
3. *He must have lied to the court.*
4. *She could / might have been bribed.*

Task 7.11   Open question

Task 7.12
Some suggestions - many alternatives are possible:

1. *I propose an expansion of the department's role.*
2. *I (would) recommend Dr Soh for the position of director.*
3. *The development budget should be reduced.*
4. *It is essential that our record-keeping procedures (should) be reviewed.*

Task 7.13 – End-of-course task
This final task is a really important one, from our point of view at ELTC, because past students' evaluations have enabled us to improve the course.

If you have been using these *Grammar for Academic Writing* materials independently, please email your evaluation to Anton.Elloway@ed.ac.uk.

Further help with grammar and vocabulary
Here is a list of some useful books and websites, with our comments.

Books

E/K = contains exercises and a key.

Exploring Grammar in Writing -- upper-intermediate and advanced **(R. Hughes; Cambridge University Press)**
 Like *Grammar for Academic Writing*, this book aims to develop your understanding of how genre, context and purpose affect grammatical choices in writing. **E/K**

English Grammar in Use **(R. Murphy; Cambridge University Press)**
 The best-selling book on British grammar. It presents grammatical rules (and exceptions) simply and clearly, and provides plenty of sentence-level exercises. **However, it provides rather limited help for students needing to write academic assignments. E/K**

Advanced Grammar in Use **(M. Hewings; Cambridge University Press).**
 In the same series as Murphy's book. More relevant to university-level writing. **E/K**

Academic Vocabulary in Use **(M. McCarthy and F. O'Dell; Cambridge University Press)**
 A guide to the key academic vocabulary used in all fields. **E/K**

Grammar Troublespots **(A. Raimes; Cambridge University Press)**
 Very practical guidance on points to notice when editing your own academic writing. **E/K**

How English Works **(M. Swan and C. Walter; Oxford University Press)**
 Intended 'to make grammar practice interesting'. As well as covering the usual areas, it comments on differences between spoken and written grammar where necessary. Also includes a useful **test** to show you which grammatical areas you need to concentrate on. **E/K**

Oxford Guide to English Grammar **(J. Eastwood; Oxford University Press)**
 A very thorough grammar reference book with clear explanations (there is a good section on articles and related points, for example), but no exercises. A companion volume, *Oxford Practice Grammar*, by the same author, has exercises but less complete explanations.

Cambridge Grammar of English **(R. Carter and M. McCarthy; Cambridge University Press)**
 'The ultimate guide to English as it is really used', according to the publishers. A large, very comprehensive reference grammar, for both spoken and written usage, based on recent research.

Web resources

Links to a number of useful grammar websites can be found in the website ***Using English for Academic Purposes*** www.uefap.com, maintained by Andy Gillett (from the *UEfAP* home page, select *Links*, then *Language*).

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[i] Abridged from 'Women risk most deadly lung cancer', by G. Cooper in *The Independent*, 3 December 1998.
[ii] 'Tougher drink-drive limit abandoned', by K. Harper in *The Guardian*, 3 December 1998.
[iii] *The History of Christianity*, edited by J. McManners (OUP, 1990).
[iv] 'Close quotes', by K. Melia in *Edit* 15, Winter 1998/99, page 34.