Teacher's notes

Use formal and informal language (1)

Warm up

Present students with a list of general phrases and words in English that are clearly either formal (e.g. *How do you do? Please accept my apologies. May I open the window? Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. It is widely considered that ...*) or informal (e.g. *Hi guys! How's it going?*). Ask students about the phrases: *Are they formal or informal? How do you know? When can we use them? What other situations are formal or informal? What other formal/informal words and phrases do you know?*

Using the Factsheet

There are three possible ways to use the Factsheet:

1. Give students the Factsheet before the lesson, so they can read it at home and come to the lesson prepared to do the Worksheet. If you use this approach, start the lesson by checking that all students have read and understood the Factsheet and answer any questions.
2. Give students the Factsheet at the beginning of the lesson and start by working through it with the students.
3. Focus on the Worksheet in the lesson, then give students the Factsheet at the end of the lesson, so they can take it home and keep it as a reference or revision tool.

Theory to practice

Get students to read the information and check understanding.

Using the Worksheet

Practice

1 In pairs, look at the academic situations. Score them from very informal (1) to very formal (10).

- Put students in pairs.
- Ask them to work through the situations one at a time, ranking each one on its level of formality.
- Walk around the class to monitor and assist where necessary.
- Get some pairs to share their answers with the whole class.
- Have a whole-class discussion about any differences in opinion and what makes each situation more or less informal.
- Answer any questions.

Suggested answers

Informal (1–3): chatting to friends after a lecture
Quite informal (4–5): talking about coursework in your study group / planning a project with your group
Quite formal (6–7): debating ideas in a seminar / discussing problems with accommodation staff / talking about coursework in a tutorial / asking questions in a presentation / asking questions in a lecture
More formal (8–10): interviewing for a PhD at a university / responding to exam feedback from tutors

> **TIP**
> Get students to look at the tip. Get one of the students to read the tip aloud for the whole class.
> Check understanding and answer any questions.

2 In pairs, read the tutorial conversation. Identify examples of language from the list.

- Put students in pairs.
- Ask them to read aloud the conversation in pairs, taking turns to play the different roles.
- With the whole class, elicit if the conversation is formal or informal.
- Get students to discuss the questions and find the examples of the language structures.
- While students are working, walk around the class to monitor and assist where necessary.
- Go through the questions and answers with the whole class.
- Have a whole-class discussion about how these language structures mark a more formal conversation.

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Answers

softening words (*perhaps, maybe*, etc. – to make language less direct): *It perhaps needs / data is just a little confusing / Possibly change / chart would potentially be clearer / Maybe highlighting the title*

modal expressions (*could, would*, etc.): *Could you identify / Would you mind suggesting / I might be able to / Shall I use / that might be a good idea / conclusions could be a little shorter / Might they be better presented*

If requests: *If I could add one more point / If we can just look at*

respectful language (including titles): *Dr McNair*

3 Make the sentences more formal using the ideas in Exercise 2.

- Get students to work on this individually.
- While students are working, walk around the class to monitor and assist where necessary.
- Ask them to discuss their answers in pairs one at a time, taking turns to present their answers.
- With the whole class, elicit the answers.
- Have a whole-class discussion about which language features from Exercise 2 were used to make the sentences more formal.

Suggested answers

a Could you make the labels a little clearer on the images, please?
b Would you be able to provide some suggestions for a title, Dr Jones?
c If we could move on to another topic, please.
d You possibly haven't written quite enough. Would you be able to increase the word count to two thousand, please?
e Would you mind suggesting ways for me to improve my grade, Dr Jones?
f This essay introduction could possibly be improved.
g The paragraphs might be clearer if you thought a little more about the topic sentences for each one.
h Would you mind telling me where I can find the data, please?

TIP

Get students to look at the tip. Get one of the students to read the tip aloud for the whole class. Check understanding and answer any questions.

4 In pairs, find examples in the word cloud. Discuss if they are formal or informal.

- Put students in pairs.
- Get students to match types of language with examples in the word cloud.
- While students are working, walk around the class to monitor and assist where necessary.
- Get some pairs to share their answers with the whole class.
- Ask them to work through the words and phrases to find matching formal and informal pair equivalents.
- With the whole class, elicit the answers.
- Have a whole-class discussion about language features from the list that mark informal and more formal language.

Answers

a *sure*
b *find out*
c *under the weather*
d *but*
e *PTO*
f *I've finished!*
g *graphs, visual data; sick, under the weather; sure, yes, of course*
h *I have finished!, please turn over*
i *however*
j *investigate*

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Item pair answers

but – however / find out – investigate / graphs – visual data / I have finished! – I've finished! / PTO – please turn over / under the weather – sick / sure – yes, of course

More informal

slang (*sure*)
phrasal verb (*find out*)
idiom/expression (*under the weather*)
shorter common word (*but*)
abbreviation (*PTO*)
contraction (*I've finished!*)

More formal

synonyms (*graphs, visual data*)
full form (*I have finished, please turn over*)
longer academic word (*however*)
longer academic verb (*investigate*)

5 **In pairs, read the discussion. Identify the highlighted language in the conversation.**

- Put students in pairs.
- Get students to read the discussion aloud, taking on multiple roles and then repeating reading different roles.
- Ask them to work through the questions one at a time, identifying the correct language forms.
- While students are working, walk around the class to monitor and assist where necessary.
- Get some pairs to share their answers with the whole class.
- Have a whole-class discussion about alternative more formal forms that could be used in the discussion.

Answers (and formal alternative suggestions)

a slang: *Nope* (*I'm afraid not*) / *C'mon* (*I'm surprised you are not aware*)
b phrasal verb: *find out* (*investigate*) / *put in* (*include*) / *ask for* (*request*) / *look up* (*research*) / *stand for* (*symbolize*)
c idiom/expression: *Piece of cake* (*That shouldn't be difficult*) / *call it a day* (*end our discussion*)
d shorter common word: *stuff* (*charts and visual data*) / *things* (*evidence, examples*) / *And* (*in addition, could you …*)
e abbreviation: *FYI* (*for your information*) / *NICE* (*National Institute for Care Excellence*)
f contraction: *we've* (*we have*) / *don't* (*do not*) / *We'll* (*we will*) / *I'd* (*I would*) / *I'm* (*I am*)
g synonyms: *data* / *figures*
h full form: *National Institute for Care Excellence*
i longer academic word: *references*
j longer academic verb: *investigate*

TIP

Get students to look at the tip. Get one of the students to read the tip aloud for the whole class.
Check understanding and answer any questions.

6 **In pairs, match the more formal academic words with the more informal words. Practise using them.**

- Put students in pairs.
- Ask them to match more formal and more informal words.
- While students are working, walk around the class to monitor and assist where necessary.
- Get some pairs to share their answers with the whole class.
- Ask them to take turns giving (speaking only) sentences using the paired words.
- With the whole class, elicit some of the sentences they used in the activity.

Answers

advantages and disadvantages – pros and cons / aim to – set out to / attempt – try / characteristic – typical / check – go through / conduct – carry out / consist of – made up of / correct – right / deliver – give / demonstrate – show / discuss – go into / document – write about / examination – exam / final – last / in summary – in short

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7 **Complete the two checklists for using formal and informal language.**

- Remind students they need to complete the checklist of ideas from items in the lesson.
- Get students to work on this individually.
- With the whole class, elicit the answers.
- Have a whole-class discussion about how more formal academic speaking means less of the informal items, but some are still acceptable – unlike academic writing.

Answers

More informal	More formal
Used in … • talking with **friends** • chatting with students about work • **planning** a project	*Used in …* • interviews for academic positions • feedback about exams and coursework • **academic** presentations • seminar discussions • tutorials • questions in **lectures**
• **slang** or casual words (*OK, you know*, etc.) • phrasal **verbs** (*find out, look up*, etc.) • **idioms**/expressions (*under the weather*, etc.) • shorter **common** words (*but, and*, etc.) • abbreviations (*asap*) • contractions (*We'll be there*, etc.)	• softening words (*perhaps, maybe*, etc.) • **modal** expressions (*could, would*, etc.) • **respectful** language (*Dr, Professor*, etc.) • *If* requests • **synonyms** (*graphs, visual data*) • full forms (*I have finished, please turn over*) • longer academic words (*however*) • longer academic **verbs** (*investigate*)

8 **In pairs, make notes for an academic discussion. Add language features to show how informal or formal it is. Present the conversation to your group and record it. Give feedback on other pairs' discussions. How informal/formal was the discussion? What language features told you it was formal or informal?**

- Put students in pairs.
- Ask them to prepare a short conversation from an academic setting.
- Remind students they need to include language features from the lesson.
- While students are working, walk around the class to monitor and assist where necessary.
- Get pairs to take turns presenting their discussion to other pairs. They should record it.
- Get pairs to take turns feeding back on the formality or informality of the discussion they listened to.
- Remind students they need to mention which language features from the lesson helped them judge how informal or formal the discussion was.
- Get some pairs to share their conversations with the whole class.
- Have a whole-class discussion about the formality of the language used.

Reflect

9 **Listen to your recording from Exercise 8. What other language could you have used to make it more or less formal?**

- Get students to work on this individually.
- Ask them to listen to their recordings, identifying language that would have made it more formal and less formal.
- Get some students to share their answers with the whole class.

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Learning outcome

By the end of the lesson, students should:

- know what informal and formal situations are in academic settings
- understand key language features that mark formal and informal language: idioms, slang, modal expressions, more academic words, phrasal verbs, etc.
- feel confident speaking in both formal and informal situations

Ending the lesson

Have a whole-class discussion about what students learnt in the lesson. Answer any questions.

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