

Time: 3 weeks, 1–3 in-class hours per week, with additional outside homework

This project requires minimal teacher input and is deeply personal for the students—a perfect beginning-of-semester activity when instructors do not have a lot of extra prep time and students are just getting to know each other.

Traditionally, this project encourages students to interview other students around campus. If that seems too daunting for your class, or if you are not teaching on a university campus, you could have students interview each other or partner with another class within your program.

Preparation

- Find a survey example (e.g., this interview at the *New York Times* (https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/24/opinion/teenagers-america.html?unlocked_article_code=1.gE8.787j.N8OvwGPgYjhP&smid=url-share)) or generate some possible survey topics.
- Determine survey parameters (e.g., in person, online, or a panel of volunteers).

Information Gathering

- Review question formation and basic verb tenses.
- Organize students in groups and guide them through choosing a topic and writing survey questions. Encourage relevant topics for the surveys; in context, topics often include American/university culture, time management skills, or current events.
- Have each group conduct their survey, either through in-person interviews or by distributing questionnaires.
- Ask each group to collate results and interviewee information in a chart.

Information Processing

Provide questions to assist students' data analysis. Here are some examples:

- What are the trends and anomalies?
- If conducted in your country, how might the survey results differ?

Information Display

- Introduce students to analytical language and academic writing conventions. Assign students to write a report with self-, peer, and/or instructor editing, submitting a final draft.
- Have students present their results in a slide deck to the class. Give audience members a form to complete as they listen to the presentations, and encourage them to ask questions about the data and analysis.

Final Reflection

- Discuss which parts of the process were difficult or could have been improved.
- Discuss how this type of interview might be used in different majors, classes, or even careers.

The Mock Job Fair Project

Rationale: This project allows students to practice the real-world language and skills needed for the job application process.

Target Grammar: Modals and question formation

Time: 4 weeks, 1–3 in-class hours per week, with additional outside homework

In this project, students play the roles of both job seeker and company recruiter at a mock job fair. This provides an authentic communicative environment through which a variety of grammar structures can be practiced. But beyond the language practice, there are real-world skills to be learned. Many of our students plan to apply for jobs in the United States, yet few have much experience with the process. Through this project, students gain experience with the job application process and with creating quality job application materials. As such, this project could be equally useful for a community-based adult English language program or similar contexts.

Preparation

- Before the first class, assign students to search for information related to cover letters, résumés/CVs, and elevator pitches; they can research this online or visit a campus career center.

Information Gathering

- Introduce modals and their use in job announcements (e.g., "The applicant *should/must/ought to...*"), job applications (e.g., "I *can/could...*"), and in interviews (e.g., "How *would* you describe your...").
- Review question forms and a variety of tenses, if needed.

Information Processing

- Guide students through creating an elevator pitch (a 30-second personal introduction which is memorized), a résumé or CV, and a cover letter, all of which will be used in the mock job fair. Tell students that all of the documents must use the students' own information. Provide time for self-, peer, and/or instructor editing and review.
- Have students create a company elevator pitch and job recruitment materials. This is a chance for students to have some fun—companies might be completely invented.

- Tell students to act as job recruiters, introducing their company and asking questions of the job seekers.

Information Display

- Have students take turns role-playing both job seeker and company recruiter at a mock job fair:
 - As job seekers, students have the chance to authentically use their elevator pitch, résumé, and cover letter as they would at a real interview.
 - As company recruiters, they have the opportunity to present their company's elevator pitch and slide deck and to ask a variety of questions to candidates.
- If possible, encourage students to participate in a real job fair at your university or a local company and report their experience back to the class.

Final Reflection

- Have students vote on the best company in the mock job fair to work for and explain why.
- Discuss how an interview or real job fair would be similar or different from this experience.
- Discuss which aspects of this process were most difficult and why.

The Gallery Project

Rationale: This project is highly creative and builds awareness about the value of complex sentences for clarity and accuracy.

Target Grammar: Clauses (adjective, noun, and adverb)

Time: 2–3 weeks with 1–3 in-class hours per week and additional outside homework

The gallery project offers students something novel and creative. Few of our students are frequent visitors at art galleries and even fewer have experience analyzing art academically, so this project gives them a chance to use academic language in a new context.

Traditionally, the project starts with a trip to the campus art museum. However, if a free, easily accessible museum is unavailable in your local community, students can go to almost any art museum website and access high-quality images of its collection.

Caveat

Having students engage with authentic art is an exciting aspect of this project. However, we have had issues with students using generative AI tools to complete the project because it is easy to find detailed descriptions of many works of art online. These descriptions can be input into ChatGPT, for example, and then manipulated to meet the assignment requirements.

Although the temptation to use AI cannot be fully circumvented, one solution is to avoid using authentic images. Instead, the instructor can generate novel and even bizarre images that no one has ever seen before with an AI tool like ChatGPT4 or Microsoft Copilot. Surprisingly, our students enjoy describing these strange images and creating backstories for them.

Preparation

- Decide whether to use traditional art or AI-generated art. Set any other parameters for students to select their piece of art.
- Create the assignment prompt, which could look something like this:

In 300–500 words, describe your selected artwork in sufficient detail that a person could imagine it, even if they could not see it.

Consider questions like the following:

- What colors dominate the work?
- How are light and shadow used in the image?
- Which images/shapes/etc. stand out, and which are less noticeable?
- What do you think is happening in this image and why?
- What is interesting or surprising about the work?
- How does it make you feel?

Information Gathering

- Provide instruction on a variety of clause types. Adjective clauses are especially useful in this assignment, as are noun and adverb clauses.
- Provide sample instructor-created art descriptions. Have students identify the various clause structures and their functions. Encourage students to how the description matches their own observations of that piece of art.

Information Processing

- After students select the artwork they'll use, have students bring the image to class and work with a partner to analyze the work together, using the questions as a guide.
- Have students draft their descriptions.
- Take one or two class periods to review and revise, utilizing a peer review process for students to analyze both the grammaticality and clarity of each writing.

Information Display

- Ask students to submit their descriptions for instructor feedback.
- Have students prepare a formal or informal oral presentation to share their chosen artwork and description with the class.

Final Reflection

- Discuss when students might use such descriptive language in other academic contexts.
- Analyze the role of clauses in creating vivid descriptions.
- Discuss which piece of art (or which presentation) students liked best and why.

Conclusion

Although our students are normally experts at fill-in-the blank grammar exercises, we find that these projects infuse our classes with a strong, rather than weak, version of CLT and challenge our students to use grammar in an authentic way. This approach boosts their engagement and confidence and also makes the class more fun for the instructors. Be creative in adapting these projects to fit your context and help students see the real-life relevance of grammar instruction.

*B1 and B2 are descriptors of proficiency levels from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages; learn more here (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/>).

References

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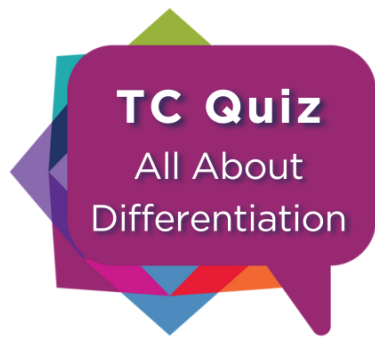
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