SIT TESOL Certificate Pre-Course Task

The aim of this pre-course task is to develop your awareness and knowledge of the language you are going to teach—English! Although you will be asked to submit your completed task at the start of the course, this is not a test. But we do ask that you give it thoughtful consideration and try to complete as much of each section as you possibly can.

We suggest that you work on the task in a series of short periods rather than doing it all at one sitting as this will make the activity less arduous.

You may use any resources available to help you complete the task. Here are some suggestions. You can consult grammar books, talk with anyone you think might have a better grasp of grammar than you do (your mother, your high school English teacher), and/or consult on-line resources. It may also help you to draw on your knowledge of any foreign languages you may have previously studied.

You will find any of the following grammar books useful for reference:
- Swan, M - Practical English Usage (Oxford University Press)
- Swan, M & Walter, C - How English Works (Oxford University Press)
- Murphy, R - English Grammar in Use (Cambridge University Press)
- Thornbury, S - About Language (Cambridge University Press)

There are 7 parts to this task:

1. Parts of Speech
2. The Tense System
3. Meaning/ Use
4. Vocabulary
5. Simplifying Language
6. Pronunciation
7. Looking at the Learner

Part 1: Parts of Speech: Nouns, verbs, articles, pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, conjunctions

Name the parts of speech underlined in each of the following sentences.
e.g. Give it to him. pronoun
Part 2: The Tense System

Tenses in English can be either Simple or Continuous (Progressive) e.g. He lives: Present Simple; He is living: Present Continuous. The Continuous form is made by ‘be’ + ‘–ing’ (The Present Participle).

Look at the following sentences and write whether they are Simple or Continuous.
   a) He went to Spain.                                  _________________________
   b) She will be leaving soon.                          _________________________
   c) They arrive at 8.00.                               _________________________
   d) He has been living there for 4 years.            _________________________
   e) He had never been there before.                    _________________________

The Present and Past Perfect.  The Perfect form is made by ‘have’ + the Past Participle. The past participle often looks like the regular past tense although there are many irregular verb exceptions

Present perfect:  I have worked in Brattleboro since 1969.
Past Perfect:   He had enjoyed playing soccer before he injured his knee.

Look at the following sentences and check the ones in the present perfect and the past perfect tenses.
   a) She’ll be here tomorrow.                           _________________________
   b) He had never left home.                           _________________________
   c) Have you opened the letter?                       _________________________
   d) We had a swim.                                    _________________________
c) Do you drink coffee? _______________________

The 2 factors-- Simple vs Continuous-- combine with the time - i.e. Present, Past, or Future - in the naming of the tense.

Complete the chart below with the verb ‘live’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Simple</th>
<th>Continuous</th>
<th>Perfect Simple</th>
<th>Perfect Continuous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>he lives</td>
<td></td>
<td>He has been living</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>He was living</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>He will live</td>
<td></td>
<td>he will have lived</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All sentences so far have been in the Active voice. To form Passive voice sentences, we add the verb ‘to be’ before the main verb which is in the past participle form. One use of the passive voice is to avoid specifically naming the “do-er” of the action.

e.g. I made a cake: Past Simple
A cake was made: Past Simple Passive

Write the following sentences in the passive voice:

1. John Dewey wrote the article. ________________________________
2. They built their house in 1996. ______________________________
3. I will finish my homework at 8 PM. ___________________________
4. We give thanks daily. _________________________________

Part 3. Meaning/Use

We have so far been looking at grammatical form or structure but it is also important to examine the meaning and use of language.

I. Name the tense used in the following three sentences:
   a) He’s drinking coffee. ______________________________
   b) He’s arriving tomorrow. _____________________________
   c) He’s working for IBM. ______________________________
What is the time period referred to in each sentence?

a)_________________________________________________ 

b)_________________________________________________ 

c)_________________________________________________

II. Name the tense used in these sentences. What is the time period referred to in each sentence?

a) I live in London.                     ________________

b) I start work next week._______________

c) I want to go home now____________________

III. Name the tenses in the following two sentences. What do we know about the time the sentences are spoken?

a) I saw him this morning.                   ________________

b) I’ve seen him this morning.______________

V. The following sentences all refer to the future. What are the tenses used in each sentence? How do they differ in meaning?

a) I’ll see you next week._________________

b) Look! It’s going to rain!______________

c) He’s going to learn Spanish next year.________

d) I’m flying to America tomorrow._________

e) The plane arrives at 9.00.______________

When looking at language we need to consider a) the form, b) the meaning and c) the use or the function. When deciding what to teach, we will sometimes teach things because of their grammatical importance. However we sometimes teach things because of their functional significance - students need to know how to give advice, make a complaint etc.

Match the following structures with the appropriate functions.  
E.g. 1 matches with D.

1. Shall we go to the cinema?                   A. Contradicting
2. If only I had remembered.                  B. Threatening
3. You can go now if you want.                C. Admitting
4. Can I have the day off?                     D. Suggesting
5. I’ll admit you’ve got a point there.       E. Sympathising
6. I’m terribly sorry I’m late.               F. Criticising
7. I’m so sorry you aren’t feeling well.      G. Regretting
8. Can I have a drink, please?                H. Conceding
9. Get out of here this minute!               I. Disagreeing
10. You’re absolutely right.                   J. Agreeing
11. This steak is overcooked. K. Giving permission
12. That’s absolute rubbish! L. Apologising
13. It isn’t cold, it’s hot. M. Asking permission
14. Yes, I did it. N. Complaining
15. That’s why he’s always here. O. Denying
16. I never said that! P. Advising
17. I’ll kill you! Q. Requesting
18. You really shouldn’t eat so many sweets R. Commanding
19. You should have told someone, you know. S. Explaining

In the same way that one structure can have more than one meaning, so one function can be expressed in more than one form. e.g. ‘giving advice’ can be expressed by ‘you should’, ‘you ought to’, ‘you’d better’, ‘it might be an idea to’, ‘I’d advise you to’, etc.

List 6 different ways of asking someone to open the window. Consider the formality/informality of the language and which you would use in a more/less formal situation. Start your list with the most formal example.

1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________
4. ____________________________________________
5. ____________________________________________
6. ____________________________________________

Part 4. Vocabulary
This section is designed to make you aware of some of the difficulties experienced by foreign learners with English vocabulary.

I. Look at the following words. How are they similar and how are they different?

Similar:___________________________________________
Different: Slurp__________________________________________
Sip________________________________________________
Swallow______________________________________________
Gobble_______________________________________________
Bolt_______________________________________________
Swig_______________________________________________
II. What does ‘get’ mean in the following sentences?
   a) He got a new car last week. ______________________________
   b) I managed to get the wine. ________________________________
   c) He got really brown on holiday. ___________________________
   d) I got a train from Victoria. ______________________________
   e) I didn’t get what he said. ________________________________
   f) We got there late. _________________________________________
   g) Could you get me a drink? ________________________________

III. What is the opposite of:
   dry? ____________________ rough? ______________ _______
   strong? __________________ hard? _____________ _________
   thick? _________________

Now give the opposite of:
   dry wine ____________ rough sea ____________
   strong cigarette ______ a hard exercise ____________
   a thick person __________

What can you say about the difficulties with vocabulary that foreign learners may encounter from the previous exercises?

IV. Why can you say...........?

   a) ‘a car’ but not ‘a water’?
   _______________________________________________________

   b) ‘He raised the price’ but not ‘he rose the price’
   _______________________________________________________

   c) ‘I waited’ but not ‘I goed’?
   _______________________________________________________  

Part 5. Simplifying Language

Plain English
In ESOL teaching it is often necessary to summarize or explain ideas in simple language. Rewrite the following in the simplest possible English:

1. It has been noted with concern that the stock of books in the library has been substantially declining. Students are asked to remind themselves of the rules for
borrowing and return of books, and to bear in mind the needs of other students. Penalties for overdue books will in future be rigorously enforced. (library notice).

2. People whose professional activity lies in the field of politics are not, generally speaking, conspicuous for their respect for factual accuracy. (magazine article).

3. I should be greatly obliged if you would have the kindness to furnish me with a written statement of the indebtedness I have incurred in connection with the repast served to me. (pompous restaurant guest).

Part 6. Pronunciation

A. Stress

This is the ‘beat’ of the sentence or the word.

**Sentence Stress:** We stress the important words in the message we want to convey - the words which carry the message. Thus, in the utterance: ‘He’s flying to Chicago’, Chicago would normally carry the main stress. This, however, will also depend on the context in which the utterance is made. If this utterance followed the question: ‘Is John driving to Chicago?’ the main stress would be on flying.

Mark the word which carries the main stress in the following pairs of responses.

1. a) What do you like most about him?        a) I like his eyes
    b) Do you like her eyes?                  b) I like his eyes

2. a) Where have you been?                          a) I’ve been to Spain
    b) Shall we go to Spain?                  b) I’ve been to Spain

3. a) Would you like a cigarette?                   a) I don’t smoke
    b) You do smoke!                        b) I don’t smoke

As a result of stressing some words and not others, the sound of the unstressed word often changes.

Compare the pronunciation of the word ‘can’ in the following examples.

A: Can you swim?
B: Yes, I can. Can you?
A: I can swim, but I can’t dive.
How are the sounds different? 

The neutral unstressed sound (known as the schwa \( \approx \)) is very common in English and is generally pronounced “uh” or like the u in cup.

In the following sentences, underline the schwas.

a) a packet of soup  
b) bacon and eggs  
c) He was born in Brazil

What kind of words often have the schwa sound? 

Word Stress: In an utterance certain words are stressed and some are unstressed; likewise, in a word, one syllable generally carries more stress than the others.

Mark the stress on the following words:

a) kangaroo  
b) comfortable  
c) accommodation  
e) magazine  
f) blackbird  
g) documentary

Like unstressed words in sentences, so unstressed syllables in words often have the schwa sound.

Mark the schwa in the following words:

a) mother  
b) away  
e) station  
c) color  
d) organ  
f) agree

B. Individual Sounds

In order to help students to make English sounds and to improve their pronunciation it is important to understand a little about what sounds we make and how they are made.

Unfortunately for the learner, English words are not pronounced as they are spelled.

C. Sounds and Spelling

English words are not consistently pronounced as they are spelt. e.g. bough & bow.
Match the words according to their vowel sounds.

1. dog  
   a. maid
2. steak  
   b. height
3. shoe  
   c. though
4. work  
   d. heard
5. wide  
   e. taught
6. bone  
   f. few

**Part 7. Looking at the learner**

1. Look at the following student profiles and decide what they have in common. Consider the profiles and make a list of how they differ in terms of reasons for learning English, attitudes to learning, motivation, place of learning and expected progress.

   a) Yoko is a 45 year old business woman who works for a company in Tokyo. In order to gain promotion in her job she needs to improve her English. She is attending a Business English course in the UK for two months.

   b) Juan is a 17 year old Spaniard. He attends secondary school in Madrid and studies English as part of the school curriculum. He has never been abroad.

   c) Hudda is 8 and has come to England with her parents who intend to settle in the UK. She is going to a state primary school and is not having special English classes.

   d) Antonio is 23 and studying Chemical Engineering in Peru. He speaks very little English but needs to be able to read textbooks in English.

   e) Alice is 56 and works in a shop. She is studying in the UK for four weeks at a private language school and would like to improve her English so that she can communicate socially when travelling to other countries.

   f) George and Maya are a 60-year couple from Somalia hoping to settle in the UK. They are attending community ESOL classes twice a week. George was a cardiologist and Maya a headmistress before seeking refugee status in the UK. They speak no English outside the classroom.
g) Yung Soo is a 20 year old Chinese Business Studies student attending two afternoons of English classes at an FE College hoping to pass the academic IELTS exam in order to be accepted onto a degree course at a UK university. His command of English is quite good but she has pronunciation problems which makes her difficult to understand.

h) Altin is 16 and is an asylum seeker. He is in the UK on his own as he was separated from the rest of his family while trying to escape the troubles in his own country. He is attending a full time general studies and ESOL course as he hopes to get into the mainstream of education in order to get a vocational qualification.

i) Saraj is 40 and has had home tutoring for a year. Now that her children are at school she attends ESOL classes for two mornings a week. She wants to be able to write notes to her children’s teachers and to deal with day to day things affecting her family.

Pre-Course Task devised by Marie Therese Swabey and Stella Alderto