LESSON PLAN:  
Formal and Informal Language

Preparation

Lesson Overview

This lesson helps students differentiate the use of formal and informal English. They work in pairs to practice recognizing examples of formal and informal writing. They learn when it is appropriate to use formal and informal language while role-playing these situations. Students listen to and read an interview from a space tourist in the form of a newspaper article. They become familiar with vocabulary associated with space travel and the structural elements of unfamiliar words. Students express an opinion about their own willingness to travel in space and how they would spend $20 million. The lesson is extended by having the students role play a college interview and demonstrate formal and informal speaking in their native languages in order understand the use of nonverbal clues.

Do Before Teaching

1. Photocopy and cut out the Sentence Strips: Formal and Informal? in the Lesson Masters section, one for each pair of students.
2. Have student vocabulary journals ready for this lesson.

Supplementary Materials and Adaptations

Use the following supplementary materials and adaptations to create context and support content concepts for English language learners:

- Hands-on manipulatives and multimedia (including media in students’ native languages)
  - Project the website below to provide examples of informal language. (http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Finding-Nemo.html) Explain that the language used in movies is usually informal because it is supposed to show how people talk in real life.
- Pictures and visuals
  - Project the photo shown below to show a situation where using formal language is important. This picture shows a job interview. http://www.saidaonline.com/en/newsgfx/job%20interview.jpg
- Demonstrations
  - Compare the words of Gregory Olsen with the rest of the article. This will give students an opportunity to see how formal and informal language can be used in the same piece of writing.
- Related Readings (including readings in students’ native languages)
  - A Mission to Remember
    Teacher-turned-astronaut Barbara Morgan completed her first mission in space as a tribute to the memory of Christa McAuliffe who was to be the first teacher in space.
Teaching Routine

Before Reading

*Introduce Lesson (5-10 minutes)*

- Briefly review the concept of formal and informal language. Explain that formal language is used for important purposes, and informal language is used for everyday purposes. When you talk to your friends, you use informal language. When you go on an interview for a job or for college, you use formal language. Point out that it is important to know when to use each kind of language.

- Have the students arrange themselves into pairs. Copy and distribute a set of Sentence Strips: Formal or Informal? to each pair. Have the students in each pair take turns reading the sentence strips. Then have them identify which are formal and which are informal. Confirm the student matches.

**Formal**

- The meeting took place at the mayor’s office.
- The city plans to have a parade on Fourth of July.
- The plane will arrive shortly.
- What jobs do you think will interest you?
- The storm is expected to end by this evening.
- The bridge will be closed for repairs.

**Informal**

- So what are you gonna do this weekend?
- You will so not win the next soccer match.
- You are out of your mind if you think that will happen.
- How much dough did you spend on that sweet jacket?
- The burgers were totally delicious.
- The movie was a snoozer, so we ditched early.

Extra Support

- Read one of the formal and one of the informal sentences out loud using appropriate stress and intonation.

- Ask a volunteer to read each sentence to reflect whether it is formal or informal. You may find that having more than one student read each sentence improves their understanding of formal versus informal language.
• Preteach key vocabulary needed for understanding lesson instruction. Use the vocabulary journal process with the terms atmosphere, cosmonaut, experiment, journey, recently, unaffected, and unique.

  ○ Remind the students that they learned the meaning of the word unique in the previous lesson. You might point out that the beginning of the word, uni, means one; something is unique if it is one of a kind.

  ○ Display the term journey so that it is visible to all students.

  ○ Pronounce the term journey and have students repeat it.

  ○ Point out that this word is used in two ways in the passage they will read. One is as a noun meaning a trip, and the other is as a verb meaning to make a trip. Some other words in English that are like this are find, lock, bill, and paint.

  ○ Explain the meaning of cosmonaut and its relationship to astronaut. Point out that both words end in naut, which means traveler. The prefix cosmo means universe, and astro means space.

  ○ Display the remaining vocabulary words. Pronounce the words and have the students say them out loud. These words have complicated pronunciations, so be prepared to clarify the pronunciation of each one. Spend a moment on the structural analysis of unaffected and its relationship to affected.
Provide Direct Instruction and Modeling (10 minutes)

- Remind the students that they learned about interviews in the previous lesson. Some students talked to astronauts on the space station. The interview was very informal, and the astronauts were sometimes joking. Ask the students to name some times when they use informal language. You may begin the discussion by explaining when you use informal language.

- Display the website: http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Finding-Nemo.html. This page shows the script from the movie Finding Nemo. The beginning of the script contains many examples of informal language.

- Continue the discussion by mentioning situations in which formal language is necessary. Point out that the most common use of formal language is when people are at work or are interviewing for a job or college admission. Display the website: http://www.saidaonline.com/en/newsgfx/job%20interview.jpg. This page shows a situation where formal language is necessary.

- Another time that people often use formal language is when they are meeting new people. Because you don’t know much about these people, you speak a little more formally. Remind the students that this happens in many cultures. Encourage the students to discuss when formal and informal language are used in their native cultures.

- Project the article “A Trip of a Lifetime” so it is visible to all the students. Explain that this article is an interview, but it is different from the interview they read in the previous lesson and looks like a newspaper article.

- Point to the comments of Gregory Olsen that are in quotes. They are relatively informal, which is normal for an interview. Remind the students that the quotes around his words mean they are exactly what he said.

- Compare the rest of the article, which is relatively formal, with Olsen’s words. Explain that the writer of the article combined both formal and informal language.

- Next, have students follow along silently as you read the interview aloud, modeling fluent reading. After reading, ask the students if they sense the mood of Gregory Olsen from his words.

Extra Support

Be sure the students understand why ISS is in parentheses in the first paragraph. You should also explain that “space tourist” is in quotes because it is a new expression, not because Olsen said it.
During Reading

Next, have students complete the 5-Step Literacy Routine with “Live From Space.”

The 5-Step Literacy Routine

1. **Before-reading Poll** — Brings students’ prior knowledge into the classroom as they make connections and express opinions about the topic of the day.
2. **Article** — Students derive information from nonfiction articles differentiated to their levels. Repeated exposure to vocabulary and embedded strategy support enables all students to participate in classroom discussions. Access to grade-level text and activities ensure that students have frequent interactions with grade-appropriate complex text.
3. **Activity** — Students demonstrate successful close reading of text by responding to text-dependent questions that require higher-order thinking skills.
4. **After-reading Poll** — All students express their opinions again, based on the reading they did that day, with teachers requiring students to provide evidence for their opinions. Teachers then facilitate discussion and debates in the classroom.
5. **Thought Question** — A critical-thinking activity guides students to write in more formal scenarios with the intent to either argue or inform about a situation or narrate an event.

After mastering the concepts at reading-level, students have the opportunity to complete the same Article and Activity at grade level. They can also review their Poll results from both before and after reading and reflect on how their readings and experiences affect the evolution of their opinions.

Extra Support

- Remind students to refer to the bilingual picture dictionary at the bottom of the article as needed.
- You may find it helpful to read the questions and answer choices aloud before having students answer them. Be sure the students understand the format of Question 1.

After Reading

**After Reading Whole-Class Wrap Up (5–10 minutes)**

- When all students have completed the 5-Step Literacy Routine (or at least the first two steps), bring the class together to review the lesson, discuss any questions students have, and provide any reteaching that is needed. Ask the students to explain why Olsen went into space and how he was able to do it. Point out that their answers were probably an example of informal language. Then ask the students to say the same thing in more formal language. You may choose to have the students compose their responses as you write them on the board and edit them into a coherent, formal response.
- Have students return to their vocabulary journals and indicate their level of understanding for each of the new terms learned in this lesson.
Lesson Extensions

- Ask the students to pair up and role play a college interview. Each member of the pair will play the role of the college admissions person and the student. If necessary, provide questions to the students like, “Why would you like to come to this college?” or “What do you think it will be like to be in college?” Circulate among the groups to provide them with the help they need to speak in formal language.
- Ask volunteers to give examples of formal and informal speaking in their native languages along with English translations. Encourage them to use the same facial expressions and body language that they normally would. Point out that the difference between formal and informal language use is more than just words. Facial expressions, body language, and intonation help to set these language forms apart.
Sentence Strips: Formal or Informal?

- So what are you gonna to do this weekend?
- The meeting took place at the mayor’s office.
- You will so not win the next soccer match.
- The city plans to have a parade on Fourth of July.
- You are out of your mind if you think that will happen.
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