

**UNIVERSIDADE DE CAXIAS DO SUL**  
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**SYSTEMICS FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR: APPLYING THE  
INTERPERSONAL FUNCTION TO THE ANALYSIS OF EFL PEDAGOGICAL  
MATERIAL AND FOR SUGGESTIONS OF PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITIES.**

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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado  
como pré-requisito para a obtenção do título  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper was developed to explore how the use of Systemic Functional Grammar, specifically the Interpersonal Function, can help teachers in English as a Foreign Language courses. The Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) was developed by Halliday, who thought about how language works with the relation between speaker/writer and listener/reader. In this paper, SFG is introduced, with a brief explanation of the Experiential and Textual Metafunction, and a more detailed one of the Interpersonal Metafunction, which is the focus of this work. To examine how the use of SFG can help teacher, seven coursebook activities from five different books were analyzed. The main objective of the analysis is to make suggestions on how the exercises chosen can work with a functional perspective. From the analysis it is possible to conclude that SFG may be an advantageous tool for teacher to improve students learning from coursebook material, helping them learn how to truly manipulate language to communicate better in real life situations.

**KEY-WORDS: Systemic Functional Grammar, Interpersonal Function, English Teaching, Pedagogical Activities.**

## **RESUMO**

Este trabalho foi desenvolvido para explorar como o uso da Gramática Sistêmico-Funcional, especificamente a Função Interpessoal, pode ajudar os professores em cursos de Inglês como língua estrangeira. A Gramática Sistêmico-Funcional (GSF) foi desenvolvida por Halliday, que pensou em como a linguagem funciona na relação entre falante/escritor e ouvinte/leitor. Neste trabalho, é feita uma introdução sobre a GSF, com uma breve explicação sobre as Metafunções Experiencial e Textual, e uma explicação mais detalhada sobre a Metafunção Interpessoal, que é o foco deste trabalho. Para examinar como o uso da GSF pode auxiliar o professor, sete atividades de cinco livros didáticos diferentes foram analisadas. O principal objetivo da análise é fazer sugestões de como os exercícios escolhidos podem ser trabalhados sob a perspectiva funcional. Através da análise é possível concluir que a GSF pode ser uma ferramenta vantajosa para o professor aprimorar o aprendizado dos alunos utilizando o livro didático como base, ajudando-os a aprender como verdadeiramente manipular a língua para melhor se comunicar em situações de vida real.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Gramática Sistêmico-Funcional, Função Interpessoal, Ensino de Inglês, Atividades Pedagógicas.**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

As an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher, I believe it is part of my job to help my students not only to learn the vocabulary and grammar rules, but also how to use them in context. Language is used with different goals and with different meanings depending on the situation, that is, with different functions. These functions should be taught to the students so they can improve their use of the language beyond grammar structure and a list of vocabulary.

When I started learning English in school, I had a lot of difficulties and did not like it much, mainly because it was taught with a focus on grammar structure and vocabulary memorization without much context. It was only when I started reading things that interested me in English that I really learnt how to understand the way language was used in different contexts. When I took the Functional Grammar discipline during my course, I thought this approach was very refreshing and interesting. I realized, while reading about the theories and observing how they were applied in practical exercises that it was more natural to teach and learn that way. I have been teaching for three years now, and I noticed how the students find it easier and more interesting to learn when they can visualize why and how they use the vocabulary and grammar structures they are taught. Our purpose as teachers is not only to teach students grammar rules and vocabulary, but also to prepare them to use the language to communicate in different situations. This is where functional grammar can help.

Oliveira, Carneiro and Azevedo (2016) note that it is necessary, when working with grammar, to not base it only on presenting rules and patterns (in a top-down perspective), but also reflecting that grammatical knowledge can be initially acquired through exposition to linguistic structures and contextualized practice of these structures. A later reflection will give learners a chance to formulate, by themselves, the patterns involved in these structures (in a bottom-up perspective).

Lock (1996) points out that learning a second language is not easy and for most people it involves a considerable commitment of time and effort and that learners do not usually undertake such a task without the expectation of a payoff. And for most learners, the payoff will be the ability to communicate with other speakers or writers of the language. Therefore, to be truly useful to these learners, a description of the grammar of a language “needs to do more than simply lay out the forms and structures of the language.

It needs to show what they are for and how they are used.” That is why a functional grammar is more likely to be helpful to language learners and teachers.

At the private EFL school where I work, the coursebook is always present, as it was when I was learning the language. Coursebooks are tied to class planning, to the distribution of content, level, evaluations, themes, and other recourses. Teachers prepare their classes, create new materials, use activities and texts, and organize the content based on a course book (Silva, 2012). However, the coursebooks used at the school I work at, even when presenting current themes and inserting sections on language in context, do not always do this in a way that feels natural.

Regarding these points, this paper aims to answer the following question: “How can the interpersonal function approach help to adapt coursebook material to improve English teaching?”. To do this, this work will explain the basis of Functional Grammar, focusing on the Interpersonal Function and analyzing seven coursebook activities, proposing adaptations to improve them through the functional grammar perspective.

This work is developed using the bibliographical research approach, to be able to apply the functional grammar approach to coursebook activities. Gil (2002) notes that all academic studies need bibliographical research and explains that this type of research serves “to establish relationships between the information and data obtained with the proposed problem”. After reading the theoretical material, I went through the books I use in my work as a teacher to select the activities for analyzes and suggestions. I work with seven different coursebooks and chose five of them to use for this paper. The criteria was to choose activities from different levels and for different age groups for more variety.

In chapter two there are some important definitions of a few terms related to this paper. After this, there is an outline about Systemic Functional Grammar and the three metafunctions. The Experiential and the Textual Metafunctions are briefly described before bringing a more thorough explanation about the Interpersonal Metafunction, which is the focus of the present paper. In chapter three, there are seven analysis from five different coursebooks: Insta English Starter, Insta English 2, Insta English 4 and American Language Hub 3, published by Macmillan, and Super Minds 2, published by Cambridge University Press. The books and exercises were chosen because they are familiar to me and are used at the language school I work at. The Insta English series are

recommended by the publisher to be used for young teens. The Language Hub series is recommended by the publisher to be used with late teens and adults. The Super Minds series is recommended by the publisher to be used with children. The main objective of the analysis is to suggest some ideas of how to work with the Interpersonal Metafunction using these coursebooks. Finally, in chapter four, there is the conclusion section.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

Michael Halliday developed the Systemic Functional Grammar following the studies of Firth and Hjelmslev (Trinh, van Hoa and Phuc, 2017). Halliday highlighted the choices of interaction made by the speaker in certain situations and perceived language as a sociosemiotic system (Halliday *apud* Bochetti, 2018). The expansion of an awareness by the users of the language and what goals could be reached through their choices are important to determine the different contexts in which the speakers act. As language builds meanings that can be cultural and social, it is part of a set of semiotic system, that constitutes systems of meaning. For Halliday, language can be understood as dialectic, since, in the same way it is made by society, it also contributes to the maintenance and/or to the change of this same society. According to Lock (1996) the Functional Grammar approach views grammar as a resource for creating meaning in spoken and written discourse, opposed to the view of grammar as a set of rules that are to be applied even when they seem arbitrary.

Considering that Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG, from now on) is important in language teaching, it is necessary to define some terms, such as language, grammar, functional and the concept of Functional Grammar.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary<sup>1</sup> (2021) defines **language** as

“1a. the words, their pronunciation, and the methods of combining them used and understood by a community; 1b. a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings; 2a. form or manner of verbal expression; 2b. the vocabulary and phraseology belonging to an art or a

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/language>. Access in April 2021.



department of knowledge; 3. the study of language especially as a school subject; 4. specific words especially in a law or regulation”.

Language, according to Lock (1996) is a system of communication and analyzes grammar to discover how it is organized to allow speakers and writers to make and exchange meanings. Language is used to construct and maintain interpersonal relations and the social order that lies behind them, and in doing so, the world can be interpreted and represented. It is a tool for representing knowledge, for constructing meaning (Matthiessen and Halliday, 1997). Eggins (2004), postulates that Systemic Grammar is interested in language as a social semiotic, that is, in how people use language to communicate with each other in accomplishing everyday life. This leads to systemic linguists to advance four main theoretical claims about language: 1. that language use is functional; 2. that its function is to make meanings; 3. that these meanings are influenced by the social and cultural context in which they are exchanged; and 4. that the process of using language is a semiotic process, a process of making meanings by choosing.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary<sup>2</sup> (2021), **grammar** can be defined as “1a. the study of the classes of words, their inflections and their functions and relations in the sentence; 1b. a study of what is to be preferred and what avoided in inflection and syntax. 2a. the characteristic system of inflections and syntax of a language; 2b. a system of rules that defines the grammatical structure of a language. 3a. a grammar textbook; 3b. a speech or writing evaluated according to its conformity to grammatical rules. 4. the principal or rules of an art, science, or technique”. Matthiessen and Halliday (1997) consider grammar as one of the subsystems of a language, more specifically, the system of wording of a language. It is a phenomenon that can be studied and can be viewed, in one perspective, as a set of rules; and in another perspective, as a resource for creating meaning through wording.

**Functional**, in the Merriam-Webster<sup>3</sup> (2021), can be defined as “1a. of, connected with, or being a function; 1b. affecting physiological or psychological functions but not organic structure. 2a. used to contribute to the development or maintenance of a larger whole; also: designed or developed chiefly from the point of view of use. 3. performing or able to perform a regular function.”

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<sup>2</sup> Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/grammar>. Access in April 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/functional>. Access in April 2021.

The concept of **Functional Grammar** does not have a definition in the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2021) and, in the Oxford dictionary<sup>4</sup> (2021), has only one definition: “a grammar that analyses how language is used to communicate.” Butt et.al. (2003) note that the SFG is a way to describe lexical and grammatical choices from the systems of wording so that we are always aware of how language is being used to realize meaning. For Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), a systemic grammar is one which is organized around a concept of grammaticalization, whereby meaning is construed in networks of interrelated contrasts.

In Halliday’s functional theory, language is envisaged as a semiotic system in which the choices are conditioned by three factors: the relationship of the individual with the world, the relationship of the individual with others and the relationship of the individual with the language. The relationship of the individual with the language is conditioned by the pressures derived from the other two relationships, that is, with the communicative situation (Sousa, 2015). These three relationships define three kinds of meanings, that form the base of Halliday’s studies: the experiential, interpersonal and textual meanings.

## 2.2 FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR AND THE THREE METAFUNCTIONS

According to Lukin<sup>5</sup>, language is a resource of meanings, and SFG offers a number of structures that can be modified according to people’s needs, in order to be functional and applicable in real life. As stated by Mehawesh (2014), words never occur alone, there are always paralinguistic and extralinguistic features. When people listen to a message, they are not only taking in the verbal message, but also making judgments about the speaker and their message on the basis of background information and several extralinguistic codes.

According to Butt et al (2003), there are three broad functions of language that are central to the way grammar works in the language system: language has a representational

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<sup>4</sup> Available at: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/functional-grammar?q=functional+grammar>. Access in April 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Available at <https://www.annabellelukin.com/getting-started-with-functional-grammar.html> in <https://vimeo.com/46990721> Access in May 2021

function, that is, we use it to encode our experience of the world (experiential meanings); language has an interpersonal function, that is, we use it to encode interaction and show how defensible we find our propositions (interpersonal meanings); and language has a textual function, that is, we use it to organize our experiential and interpersonal meanings into a linear and coherent whole (textual meanings). Also, language encodes all these meanings simultaneously.

The **Experiential** metafunction is part of the ideational functional - that represents the speaker's meaning potential as an observer (Mehawesh, 2014) – and it is related to the field of communication. Butt et al (2003) exemplify it as the way we represent reality, it is what people talk *about*. Lock (1996) relates this function with the ways language represents our external and internal experiences of the world. That is to say that this metafunction is concerned with how we talk about experiences (actions, beliefs, situations, states...), the people involved in them and the circumstances (time, manner, place...). For Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), experiential meaning is expressed through the system of process type or Transitivity, with the choice of process implicating associated participant roles and configurations.

Following with the **Textual** metafunction, Eggins (apud Halliday, 1974) describes it as the 'relevance' or the 'enabling' metafunction. Eggins (2004) explains it as the level of organization of the clause which enables the clause to be packaged in ways that makes it effective given its purpose and its context. That is to say that it is concerned with the potential the clause offers for its constituents to be organized differently, to achieve different purposes. For Lock (1996), Textual meaning has to do with "the way in which a stretch of language is organized in relation to its context" and it is important in the creation of coherence in spoken and written text.

The third, and the one this paper will focus on, is the **Interpersonal** metafunction. Butt et al (2003) describes it as the function that allows us to encode meanings of attitudes, interaction and relationships which realize tenor of discourse. Mehawesh (2014) briefly describes it as a categorization of the various acts which participants make relating to an act or a whole work.

Interpersonal meaning, according to Lock (1997), has to do with the ways we act upon one another through language – giving and requesting information, getting people

to do things, and offering to do things – and the ways we express our judgments and attitude. According to Butt et al (2003), interpersonal meaning covers two main areas: the type of interaction and the kind of commodity being exchanged; and the way speakers take position in their message.

The Interpersonal metafunction, therefore, offers resources for interacting with language, resources for giving and demanding information or goods and services, and resources for modulating our messages. For example, if you say:

*Bring milk on the way home.*

We have a command, through an imperative clause, and it sounds like an order. In this case, we are demanding goods and services. We could change the sentence, still with the same goal – demanding goods and services – but in a way that does not sound like an order. For example:

*Could you bring milk on the way home?*

As stated before, this sentence is still a demand for goods and services, but the difference between the first and second sentence, besides the grammar structure, is the way it sounds in an interaction. While the first one is an explicit order, and could be ill received by the listener, the second one is perceived as a request for the listener, made in a softer way, and likely diminishing the probability of offending the listener. It is important to show these points to students, because depending on the context of a situation and the intonation used, just following a grammar structure to communicate – like only using the imperative to demand goods and services – may sound disrespectful and rude. This way, students can learn to use language as a communication tool, using grammar rules and structures as a basis and not as a rigid script for interactions.

Another important point in the Interpersonal meaning, is the classification of Subject and Finite of a sentence. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) state that the Finite element “is one of a small number of verbal operations expressing tense or modality”. Butt et al (2003) defines the Finite as the focus for the expression of interpersonal meaning, it is the part of the verbal group which encodes primary tense or speaker’s opinion. It has two main interpersonal roles in the verbal group: it can be a sign of TIME

in relation to the speaker; or it can be a MODAL sign of the speaker's opinion. Lock (1996) defines the following characteristics of Finite:

- a. If a verb group contains a Finite, it will always be the first constituent of the verb group.
- b. Only Finites are marked for tense.
- c. Only Finites are marked for number agreement, meaning that their form changes according to the number and person of the Subject.

There can also be clauses without a Finite, for example, clauses with *verb+ing* and verbs in the *infinitive with to*.

The most straightforward way of identifying the Subject, according to Lock (1996) and Thompson (2014), is by adding a *tag* to the clause, and the pronoun in the tag refers back to the Subject. For example: *My cousin should be home already, shouldn't he?* In this sentence, the tag is “*shouldn't he*”, and the pronoun used – *he* – refers back to the Subject – *my cousin*. The subject can also be defined by other formal characteristics (Lock, 1996, p.12):

- a. Subjects are typically noun groups;
- b. The five pronouns with special subject forms - *I, he, she, we* and *they*;
- c. In *declarative mood statements*, the Subject is usually the noun group that immediately precedes the Finite.

The combination of the Subject and Finite is essential for the realization of Mood (Butt et al, 2003; Lock, 1996), which is mainly concerned with the expression of interpersonal meaning. The Mood enables us to ask questions, give statements, and give commands. It is this system that selects between imperative, declarative, and interrogative moods. And the order of Subject and Finite is the grammatical sign of the kind of exchange that is taking place. In the declarative mood, in which the speaker tells the listener something, the order is Subject+Finite. In the interrogative mood, in which the speaker *asks* the listener something, the order is Finite+Subject. In the imperative mood, in which the speaker *prompts* the listener to do something, there is no Subject and no Finite. The Subject in imperatives is usually understood by the context.

SFG highlights the idea of interaction between people, investigating what are the relevant choices, both in the kind of meanings we might want to express and in the kinds of wordings that we can use to express these meanings – and then to match these two sets of choices (Thompson, 2014). Considering that we use language to exchange meanings, we usually have a purpose when communicating with other people. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), there are two fundamental types of speech role that lie behind more specific types: giving and demanding. When the speaker is giving or demanding something, this implies an interaction with a listener, leading to an exchange between them. The nature of the commodity being exchanged has two distinctions: goods and services or information. Therefore, in a conversation, people are always giving or demanding information or goods and services, as exemplified in Picture 1:

**Picture 1 – Giving or demanding, goods and services or information.**

role in exchange	Commodity exchanged	
	(a) goods-&-services	(b) information
(i) giving	'offer' would you like this teapot?	'statement' he's giving her the teapot
(ii) demanding	'command' give me that teapot!	'question' what is he giving her?

Source: HALLIDAY and MATTHIESSEN, 2004, p.107

As seen in the chart, there are four main ways people interact with each other: giving goods and services, giving information, demanding goods and services and demanding information. Eggins (2004) describes this as follows: offering goods and services may be speaker oriented (e.g., *Can I get you a glass of water?*) or addressee oriented (e.g., *Would you like a glass of water?*); demanding goods and services can be done inclusively (e.g., *Let's take a walk*) or exclusively (e.g., *Take a walk*); demanding information can be querying (e.g., *Who broke your toy?*) or questioning (e.g., *Was it your brother?*); information involves a choice between opinion (e.g., *She should eat less sugar.*) or fact (e.g., *She started a new diet.*); and responding moves can be either supporting (e.g., *Yes, that's it*) or confronting (e.g., *No, that's wrong.*).

Giving goods and services usually relates to offering something to someone. For example: “Would you like a cup of tea?” or “Do you want a cup of tea?”. In these examples, someone is offering a cup of tea to the listener. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), there are two possible responses, the listener can accept or reject the offer. The expected answer for acceptance is “yes, please”, and for declining is “no, thanks”.

Giving information usually relates to people stating information to the listener, that is, they are saying something that brings information about what they are talking about. For example: “The dog ate my homework”. In this example, the person is stating a fact, informing the listener about something. Here, there are also two possible answers, one to confirm the statement, “Did it?”, and one to contradict it, as in “No, he didn’t.”

Demanding goods and services usually relates to the speaker giving a command to the listener. For example: “Can you pass me the salt, please?” or simply “Pass me the salt.”. In these examples, the speaker is demanding a service and the listener can either accept it or refuse it, saying “Here it is” or “No”.

Demanding information usually relates to the speaker making questions to the listener, either to better understand what is happening or because of doubt about something, depending on the context. For example: “What did your dog do?” or “Did your dog really eat your homework?”. In the first example, the speaker wants to understand a situation better, in the second, they are doubting the situation. The listener can answer the first as “It ate my homework” or disclaim it as “I don’t know”.

Of course, during conversations, it is not always so straightforward, there are no scripted answers that fit in all dialogues and situations. It all depends on the context of culture or situation, and both are important to communication. The biggest context is the **context of culture**. When you think about different groups of people, you can probably think about their different customs, ceremonies, forms of address, ways of expressing feelings and level of politeness, things that are acceptable or not, so you can get an idea of the importance of culture in shaping meanings, and in the choice of language used in interactions. Butt et al (2003) describes the context of culture as the sum of all the meanings possible in a particular culture. Within this context, people use language in many more specific context and situations. And each of these is an inner context, called

the context of situation. The **context of situation** is still related to the culture but leaning more on the speakers and the environment and relationship between them. The situations are more specific than the culture. Their combination “results in the difference and similarities between one piece of language and another” (Butt et al, 2003, p.3).

So, even if coursebooks bring certain rules to be followed, for example, that the regular way of demanding goods and services is using commands in the imperative, depending on the context, the speaker may sound rude and disrespectful. So, if a speaker says, “Would you mind bringing me a glass of water?”, they are demanding a service, but it sounds better and more respectful than saying “Bring me a glass of water.” In another example, if you are a teenager going out with friends, and your parents say, “You should be home by 9 p.m.”, you will interpret this as a demand, even if the modal *should* is usually taught as representing advice, especially for beginners. That is why it is important, when teaching a language, to show students that communication needs to be appropriate to the context, to their goals and to the people they are interacting with.

Both contexts need to be explored in class when teaching students that are going to be exposed to different situations in their real-life events. When we need to choose what kind of language we are going to use, we need to be able to understand the context of the conversation and the situation we are in and the people we are interacting with. For example, we do not use the same language in a formal situation like a job interview that we use among close friends in a barbecue. And even in informal situations, we are expected to be “more polite” to people we are not familiar with than those we are closer to. These are all points that need a lot of attention when communicating, and it seems that sometimes coursebooks might not bring these specifications to the application of language, usually teaching the rules applied to a single situation.

Another important aspect of the Interpersonal function are the concepts of Polarity and Modality. The Polarity is the opposition between positive (*It does. Drink that!*) and negative (*It doesn't. Don't drink that!*) (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004, p.143). However, sometimes, when people communicate, speakers want to signal that they are not definite about their message, that is, they want something between a definite *yes* and a definite *no* (Butt et al, 2003). And this is where Modality comes in. This term, according to Butt et al (2003) is used to refer to all positioning by speakers about probability, usuality, typicality, obviousness, obligation, and inclination. Halliday and Matthiessen



(2004) state that the modality system construes the region of uncertainty between *yes* and *no*. There are two basic types of modality, the first is called **modalization** and the second is called **modulation** (Thompson, 2014).

Modulation usually refers to goods and services, and shows the degree of **obligation** (e.g., *You should come home now*) and **inclination** (e.g., *I'll give you a ride*). There are several ways of using language to get people to do things for us (Aijmer, 2015; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). Modulated clauses can be offers (*Can I get you a glass of water?*), requests to the listener (*Come here.*) or suggestions that both the speaker and the listener do together (*Let's go home.*). According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), both obligation and inclination can be expressed in two ways, though not by both together: by a finite modal operator (*you should do that; she'll go with them*) and by an expansion of the Predicator, typically by a passive verb (*you're supposed to do that*) or by an adjective (*she's happy to go with them*). Obligation can be expressed by different degrees: low, mid and high. These values of obligation represent more precise meanings that range from permission (*you're allowed*) up to some absolute requirement (*it's a necessity*) (Thompson, 2014). Inclination shows the willingness of the speaker to fulfill an offer, usually signaling this with expressions of ability, willingness, and determination (Thompson, 2014).

According to Aijmer (2015), modalization usually refers to information, and shows the degree of probability (*possibly/probably/certainly*) and usuality (*sometimes/usually/always*). Modalization can be expressed through modals (*might, may, can*), through modal adjuncts (*possibly, perhaps, maybe, definitely*), through metaphors of modality (*I'm sure, I think*), and through objective metaphors of modality (*It is possible that, It is probable that, It is certain that*). There are several choices of degree of certainty and usuality. **Usuality** refers to the frequency with which something happens or is (e.g., *always, usually, occasionally, seldom, once, never..*). **Probability** refers to the judgments about the likelihood of something happening or being. There are different degrees of **probability** – from low to high probability (White, 2000). Probability can be expressed by a “finite modal operator” (e.g., *will*), by a “modal adjunct” (e.g., *probably*) or a combination of both (e.g., *will probably*) (Aijmer, 2015, p.6). Therefore, a paradigm is set up to organize it (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004), as seen in Picture 2.

## Picture 2 – The probability paradigm

certain	that must be true	that's certainly true	that must certainly be true
probable	that will be true	that's probably true	that will probably be true
possible	that may be true	that's possibly true	that may possibly be true

Source: HALLIDAY and MATTHIESSEN, 2004, p. 148

Another distinction expressed in the paradigm is that between subjective (*that must be true*) and objective modal expressions (*it is certain that it is true*). This distinction also applies to adverbs and adjectives (Aijmer, 2015, p. 6). Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) also describe two other possible orientations to differentiate between meanings, whether they are implicit or explicit. The term *implicit* is used when the modality is expressed in the same clause as the main proposition, and the term *explicit* is used when it is expressed in a separate clause (Thompson, 2014). Thus, there is a matrix of four feature combinations, as seen in Picture 3.

## Picture 3 – Distinctions in the modal paradigm

	subjective	objective
implicit	must	certainly
explicit	I'm certain that ...	it is certain that ...

Source: HALLIDAY and MATTHIESSEN, 2004, p.150

Within modalization and modulation, the most important variables that can be manipulated are the value and the orientation. Value refers to where the modal expression falls in terms of degrees of probability, usuality, obligation and inclination. Orientation refers to how much the speaker takes responsibility for the modal meaning (Thompson and Muntigl, 2008). Their key points are illustrated on Picture 4.

**Picture 4 – Main variables in the domain of Modality**

	modalization		modulation	
	probability	usuality	obligation	inclination
<b>commitment:</b>				
<b>high</b> ↑	she must be	she's always	you must	I'm keen to
<b>median</b>	she will be	she's usually	you should	I'm determined to
<b>low</b> ↓	she may be	she's sometimes	you can	I'm willing to
<b>responsibility:</b>				
<b>objective</b> ↑	it's likely that	it's usual for	it's essential to	—
	maybe	usually	supposed to	willing to
	may	will	must	will
<b>subjective</b> ↓	I think that	—	I expect you to	I volunteer to

Source: THOMPSON and MUTINGL. Interpersonal Communication. In chapter 6 - Systemic functional linguistics: An interpersonal perspective, 2008

Assuming that all speakers of a language want to use it to express meaning, the successful use of language can be viewed as knowing how to make choices from several language forms appropriate for various situations. So, it is important to show students to identify these situations and help them learn how to make the appropriate choices. Since most coursebooks are limited regarding showing a lot of context diversity, the next part of the present work is going to analyze coursebook activities and give teachers ideas on how to make them work through the Interpersonal Metafunction of SFG.

### 3 COURSEBOOK ANALYSIS AND IDEAS

#### 3.1 ACTIVITY 1

The first activity that is going to be analyzed is from the book Insta English 2 (Heyderman et al, 2020), which is usually used for teenagers with A2-B1 level. The activity is from Unit 4, where students are working with the modal verb *should*.

The book starts presenting this grammar point with the following two exercises, as shown in Picture 5 below:

Picture 5 – Insta English 2: should

**should (Affirmative and Negative)**

1 Read the following sentences. Write GOOD if the recommendation / suggestion given is good and BAD if it is not appropriate.

a  Everyone should have access to clean water to drink.

b  Saving water shouldn't be a real concern.

c  People shouldn't use less water outdoors.

d  People should consider when and how much water is needed.

e  Reusing and recycling water should be considered.

2 Complete the rules below with *should* or *shouldn't*.

a \_\_\_\_\_ is used to make recommendations and give advice. In a sentence, it gives the meaning of 'It is a good idea.'


b \_\_\_\_\_ is the negative form and means that you *aren't* recommending or advising something. 'It's NOT a good idea.'

c The sentence structure is: subject + \_\_\_\_\_ (or \_\_\_\_\_) + base form of the verb.

3 Complete the chart with *should* or *shouldn't*.

affirmative	
I / You	_____ save water.
He / She / It	_____ consider saving water.
We / You / They	_____ recycle water.
negative	
I / You	_____ waste water.
He / She / It	_____ be left out.
We / You / They	_____ drink unsafe water.

4 Look at the information about saving water at home. Complete the sentences with *should* or *shouldn't*.



5 Read the situations below and give people some advice / recommendation.

a You are walking down a street and you see two kids throwing trash on the sidewalk.  
\_\_\_\_\_

b Your neighbor is watering his plants with a hose. He's been doing it for two hours!  
\_\_\_\_\_

c Your friend is doing the dishes under constantly flowing water.  
\_\_\_\_\_

d Your little brother is flushing the toilet nonstop!  
\_\_\_\_\_

Source: Insta English 2, 2020, p.60

The activity introduces this modal verb for the first time to the students, in Activity 1, where they are asked to read the sentences and decide if the recommendations are good or bad. The sentences chosen for this activity are related to the text in the previous page, where it talks about the environment and saving resources. So, in this activity, the students have some context of situation to judge the sentences. However, those meanings are only related to suggestions and recommendations. In the second activity, students need to complete a set of rules for the use of *should*. They learn that if they want to make a recommendation or suggestion, they use *should*, if they want to say that something is not

advisable, they use *shouldn't*, and then they are presented with the sentence structure to use this modal verb. The third activity is a chart they have to complete. The fourth activity they have to fill in the blanks with the affirmative or negative forms. And in the fifth activity, they have a set of hypothetical situations in which they need to give advice or recommendation.

The activities presented show mainly the form of this modal verb, with some situations with a little bit of context. Nevertheless, it gives the idea that the only way to give suggestions, advice and recommendation is by using *should*, and that it only serves those functions, regardless of context. Therefore, to give students a broader use of this grammar aspect, I suggest the following activity:

They will start by thinking how they usually give advice in their L1. The teacher will write them on the board and, after that, will point out that there are different ways and different words to do this. Then, the teacher will write a few options to give advice without using *should*. For example: you need to, I recommend, I suggest, maybe you could... The teacher can also ask the students if they have different ways to give advice/suggestion depending on who they are talking to. For example, if they want to give a suggestion to a friend and to a teacher or someone in a position of authority, would they use different vocabulary or intonation? This way, they can start to think about the different functions that change with the context to use the language.

After that, the teacher will write on the board two or three sentences using *should*. For example: You should be home by 9 p.m.; You should have the presentation ready by tomorrow.; You should wear pants to enter this restaurant. Then, the teacher can ask the students if these are suggestions and why. They will probably say yes, because of the use of *should*. Then, the teacher will give context to each sentence and ask the students if they still think it is a suggestion/advice. For example, the first sentence is a parent telling that to their child before they go out with friends. The second sentence is a teacher telling that to a student. The third sentence is a sign or a receptionist in a restaurant. The teacher will ask again if those are still just suggestions. Now the students will probably say those are rules or orders. By doing this, the students will start noticing that grammar rules are not set in stone and used just as they are in the books.

Having now presented these different uses from the book, the teacher will give an activity to practice it. The teacher will prepare two texts in the form of dialogues. The students will read the texts and answer the following questions: a. What is likely the relationship between the speakers in the dialogue? (e.g., friends, acquaintances, employer and employee, etc); b. What are they talking about?. Then, the students will underline the sentences in the dialogue on both texts that shows that one speaker is giving advice to the other and circle the sentences that shows that one of the speakers giving an order/making a demand. The teacher will check the answers when they finish. For the text, the teacher can find one ready, adapt one as needed or create one from scratch. If the teacher decides to create them, it is suggested to use the sentences from activity 5 from the book as prompts.

### 3.2 ACTIVITY 2

The second activity that is going to be analyzed is from the book *Insta English Starter* (Heyderman and Mauchline, 2019), which is usually used for pre-teens starting on the A1 level. The activity is from Unit 2, where students are presented with the Imperative, as shown in Picture 6 below:

## Picture 6 – Insta English Starter: Imperatives

### Imperatives

affirmative	negative
Create your avatar.	Don't forget the clothes.

- 3 Look at the chart above. What auxiliary verb do we use to form the imperative negative? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Use the affirmative (✓) or negative (✗) to complete the tips on how to take care of a dog. Use the verbs in the box.

change give (2x) take (2x) let

- a \_\_\_\_\_ it food twice a day. ✓
- b \_\_\_\_\_ it for a walk every day. ✓
- c \_\_\_\_\_ it any sweets! ✗
- d \_\_\_\_\_ its water in the evening. ✓
- e \_\_\_\_\_ it eat plastic! ✗
- f \_\_\_\_\_ it for a walk without a leash. ✗

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thirty-three 33

Source: Insta English Starter, 2019, p. 33

This activity presents beginner students with the Imperative, and it is the only section in the whole book that talks about it. Students are shown a table with an affirmative and a negative sentence in the Imperative. After that, it is called attention to the auxiliary verb to form a negative imperative without any other explanation. This is followed by a short fill in the blanks exercise that they need to complete in the negative or affirmative of the provided verbs according to the symbols at the end of each sentence. No clarification is given besides what is shown on Picture 3.

Therefore, to work with this grammar aspect using the Interpersonal function, it is suggested the following:

First, the teacher should bring attention to exercise 3, after checking if the students understand the vocabulary used, asking them what those sentences look like (do they look like a suggestion, a rule, a statement...). Since the book does not say anything about when to use the imperative, the teacher can show its uses in different contexts. In the sentences given in the coursebook, it can be deduced it is being used to talk about strong suggestions. If this exercise was being used use more advanced students (A2-B1), it could be asked them to rewrite those rules with a weaker suggestion (using *should*, for example). With beginner students, like those using this book (Insta English Starter), the teacher can ask them in what other ways they would explain those rules to a friend, for example. They can do this in their L1 and the teacher can help they translate it. Then, students and teacher can build together the new version and write it on the board. For example: *When you take care of a dog, it needs to eat twice a day and change its water every evening. You shouldn't let it any sweets or plastic. And it needs to go for a walk every day, but never without its leash!* After writing the text on the board, ask the students what the difference is between the one in the book and the one in the board. They will probably notice that the one in the book is more 'rigid' and the second more 'softer'. Ask them in what situations they would use the first and the second version. They should be able to notice that the first one is more formal, and probably would appear in a leaflet or rule book, and most likely in written form. And the second is more informal, probably an exchange of information between friends, or even a vet explaining to their client how to take care of dogs, and most likely in spoken form. If the students are not able to reach this conclusion, or cannot articulate the difference, the teacher can help.

Afterwards, the teacher can show the students, through examples, how an Imperative sentence is constructed, that is, without the Subject, and always in the Second Person Singular. The teacher does not necessarily need to name this, just showing examples and comparisons. For example: *Don't leave without a coat.; Drink at least 8 glasses of water every day; Don't be late for class; Bring your friend to the party; Eat vegetables every day; Don't stay up late.* And for comparison: *I don't leave without a coat; You need to drink at least 8 glasses of water every day; He isn't late for class; You can bring your friend to the party; You need to eat vegetables every day; They don't stay*



*up late*. These comparisons are to show them the difference in the form and structure of sentences, as well as the situations they are used in.


For the next part, to practice it, the students can be paired up to do two things. First, they will build a set of rules using the Imperative. The rules can be about anything they want, but for suggestions: what kind of clothes they should wear for a birthday party, what kind of rules they have at home, what kind of rules do they need to follow in the classroom. The teacher will check their work. After that, they will present their rules in the form of a spoken dialogue. Because it is just a set of rules, one student will have to ask something like “*What do I need to wear at the party?*”, and the other will answer with the list. Then, the students will rewrite the rules in a different format, that is, without using the Imperative. The teacher will help as needed and check their work. Afterwards, the students will present the rewritten rules in spoken dialogue. At the end of the activity, the teacher can ask them how they would feel if someone talked to them like the first part of the activity and like the second part. In an interaction, which one would be more polite and nice. If the rules should be put on a sign, which way they think would be better.


That way, even beginner students can realize that there are different ways of demanding goods and services, and that it will depend on the situation, the people they are talking to and on their goals.

### 3.3 ACTIVITY 3

The third activity that is going to be analyzed is also from the book *Insta English Starter* (Heyderman and Mauchline, 2019), which is usually used for pre-teens starting on the A1 level. The activity is from Unit 3, where students are presented with the Simple Present tense, as shown in Picture 7 below:

## Picture 7 – Insta English Starter: Simple Present





**GRAMMAR 1**

### Simple Present

- Read the sentences and underline the verbs in the simple present.
  - We need to eat and drink to stay alive.
  - Carrots contain beta-carotene.
  - Vitamin A maintains our eyesight.
  - Chocolate contains antioxidants.
- Complete the chart with the correct verb forms.
 

affirmative	
<b>eat / eats</b>	
I / You	_____ fruit.
He / She / It	_____ fruit.
We / You / They	_____ fruit.
- Look at the sentences in activities 1 and 2. What is different about the *he/she/it* form?
- Underline the correct words.
  - My brother eat / eats strawberries every day!
  - Strawberries help / helps you to stay healthy.
  - They contain / contains vitamin C.
  - Your body need / needs vitamin C for protection.
  - Most animals produce / produces vitamin C in their bodies, but not humans.
- Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in parentheses. Use the simple present affirmative.
  - We \_\_\_\_\_ (eat) more than 600 kilos of food a year.
  - She \_\_\_\_\_ (like) vegetarian restaurants.
  - They \_\_\_\_\_ (cook) healthy food.
  - He \_\_\_\_\_ (drink) milk for breakfast.
- Read the excerpts and underline the auxiliary verb in the negative form.
  - It doesn't help our night vision.
  - ... if you don't buy pizza in a shop.
- Complete the chart with the correct auxiliary.
 

negative	
<b>doesn't / don't</b>	
I / You	_____ eat meat.
He / She / It	_____ eat meat.
We / You / They	_____ eat meat.

**TIP**

When we use -e in the auxiliary, we don't use it in the main verb: He **doesn't** drink water. ✓

- Look at the sentences in the table. How do you form the simple present negative?
- Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in parentheses. Use the simple present negative.
  - I \_\_\_\_\_ (eat) dairy products.
  - She \_\_\_\_\_ (drink) milk.
  - Water \_\_\_\_\_ (contain) vitamins.
  - Some people \_\_\_\_\_ (like) chocolate.
  - My mom \_\_\_\_\_ (cook) unhealthy food.
  - My friends \_\_\_\_\_ (eat) fruit.
- Complete the text with the correct form of the verbs in parentheses. Use the simple present. Then answer: What is the text about?
 

Your body a \_\_\_\_\_ (need - ✓) a lot of this. It b \_\_\_\_\_ (contain - ✗) fat or sugar. Doctors c \_\_\_\_\_ buy - ✓ 'Drink eight glasses every day'. It d \_\_\_\_\_ (give - ✗) you energy but it e \_\_\_\_\_ (hydrate - ✓) you.
- Read the questions and underline the auxiliary verb in the interrogative form.
  - Do you like fish?
  - Does she eat chicken?

46 forty-six

Source: Insta English Starter, 2019, p.46

In this part of the book, students have already worked with the Simple Present of the verb *to be* and *to have*. In this unit, they will work with regular verbs. The book starts asking students to underline the verbs, then complete a chart with the correct conjugation for each subject pronoun, and then to point out the difference of the verbs for the third person singular. After, there are two exercises asking for the correct conjugation before starting to show the negative form used in the Simple Present. For the negative, students are asked to complete a chart with *don't* or *doesn't* followed by exercises to practice the form. When students start learning English, it is often difficult for them to learn the correct

form of the verb to use for each subject, especially when they need to conjugate verbs with the third person singular. There are a few different ways to help them internalize this.

One of them, and that can help them identify Subject and Finite is the following:

The teacher can write a few sentences on the board, and the students will need to answer two questions for every sentence: a) What is happening? and b) Who is making it happen?. The first question will help them identify the Subject, the second will help them identify the Finite, along with the correct form of the verb. The teacher can make the first two or three sentences with the students and let them do the rest by themselves. When they are done, the teacher will check each sentence with them, pointing out how the Finites are used for each Subject.

Another way to practice this could be with a game, called “Who can use it?”. The teacher writes on the board, or even on the wall (in this case, using stickers or post its) several verbs. Each student will receive a few stickers or post-its with pronouns/nouns/names. They will have 30 seconds to check what they have. After that, they will turn their backs to the board. One at a time, or in groups, they will have 10 seconds to stick as many pronouns/nouns/names as they can near an appropriate verb. For each correct use, they get a point. Check everything when is over. If there are any mistakes, go over it with the students, asking them why they put it there, and asking them if now they think it should be used by “someone else”.

And yet another way to practice this is an activity adapted from the book “Functional Grammar in the ESL Classroom: Noticing, Exploring and Practising” by Jones and Lock (2011). The teacher will select, adapt or create a short text and cover all the Subjects with a picture related to it (If the Subject is *he*, or *the man*, or *Mark*, cover it with the picture of a man; if the Subject is a chair, cover with the picture of a chair; and so on). The students will read the text and be asked to underline all the verbs and to circle everything that marks a negative. After that, they will replace the pictures with a word showing who is doing the action in the sentences. They can replace it with subject pronouns (I, you, he, she, it, we, they), nouns (chair, dog, home...) or a name (Mike, Ana...). Check the answers with the students. Write on the board what they chose. Ask them why they made their choices. There will probably be different answers that are all

correct for each picture. Show the students why they are all correct. This exercise can be useful because usually when students are beginning to learn, they only conjugate verbs with the subject pronouns, and when a “different” subject show up in an exercise they get lost. For example, they memorized that the verb *to have* becomes *has* with *he/she/it*. However, if they are asked to use the verb *to have* with *Mary*, or *my dog*, or *John*, they sometimes have difficulties.

### 3.4 ACTIVITY 4

The fourth activity that is going to be analyzed is from the book *American Language Hub 3* (Day and Rees, 2019) which is usually used for learners on the B1+ level. The activity is from Unit 4, from the section *Café Hub*. This is a section that appears at the end of each unit and follows a group of characters to make a mini soap opera. The subjects seen in this section do not necessarily follow the grammar and vocabulary studied in the unit. The *Café Hub* section tries to bring language in use in different contexts. In the section from Unit 4, the focus is about clarifying and asking for clarification, as well as making complains.

Picture 8 – American Language Hub Level 3: Café Hub – part 1

The image shows a page from a textbook titled "Café Hub". At the top right, there is a header "4.5 Part 1" and two icons: a green circle with a white 'F' labeled "clarify and ask" and a green circle with a white 'P' labeled "intonation and". The main title "Café Hub" is in large white letters on a green background. Below the title, the word "COMPREHENSION" is written in bold green letters. There are three exercises labeled A, B, and C, each with a play button icon and a time range. Exercise A is for 00:00-02:30, B for 00:00-02:30, and C for 02:30-04:49. Each exercise includes a set of five numbered questions.

**COMPREHENSION**

**A** ▶ 00:00–02:30 Work in pairs. Watch the first part of the video without sound and guess the answers to the questions.

- 1 How is Gaby feeling?
- 2 What does Sam suggest?
- 3 How does Gaby respond?
- 4 What do they decide?
- 5 What misunderstanding do they have?

**B** ▶ 00:00–02:30 Watch the first part of the video with sound and check your ideas in Exercise A. What is the main reason Sam gives for taking Gaby on?

**C** ▶ 02:30–04:49 Watch the second part of the video and answer the questions.

- 1 What does the customer complain about?
- 2 What does the customer want Gaby to do?
- 3 How does Gaby react to the situation?
- 4 Why does the customer ask to speak to Sam?
- 5 How does Sam deal with the situation?

Source: American Language Hub Level 3, 2019, p. 46

The first activity shown in the book is for the students to watch the first part of a video without the sound and guess the answers to a few questions. Then, students watch the video again, but with sound to check the answers. And, in part C, they watch the second part of the video to answer a few more questions. This activity is already working with context, giving meaning through interactions. The idea is to change the activity a little to work through the whole section.

The first part will start the same: students will watch the first part of the video without sound and guess the answers to the proposed questions in part A of the exercise. However, the students should also explain their answers. For example, if they answer the

first question with *Gaby is sad*, they need to explain they think that because of her body language. Discuss with the students what they think the situation in the video is. After that, the students will work in pairs to make a dialogue for the video, incorporating their guesses and theories. When they are ready, have the students present the dialogue to the class. Bring to attention how each pair interpreted the situation, how each of them acted it out. Then, show them the first part of the video with the sound to see who got the closest. The next part is watching the second part of the video and answer the questions proposed on part C of the activity. Then, ask the students about the attitude of the customer. Was it polite or reasonable? And about Gaby and Sam's reaction? How would the students react if they were Gaby or Sam? And if they were having a similar problem as the customer, what would they do?

Afterwards, do the next activity proposed in the book, as shown in Picture 9.

### Picture 9 - American Language Hub Level 3: Café Hub – part 2

## FUNCTIONAL LANGUAGE

### Clarifying and asking for clarification

**A** ▶ 01:48–04:49 Complete what Gaby says with the correct form of *get*, *say*, *lose* or *catch*. Then watch the clip and check your answers.

#### Clarifying and asking for clarification

- 1 What did you \_\_\_\_\_?
- 2 Sorry, I didn't \_\_\_\_\_ that.
- 3 I don't \_\_\_\_\_ what you're saying.
- 4 So you're \_\_\_\_\_ you want me to ...
- 5 You've \_\_\_\_\_ me.
- 6 Why didn't you just \_\_\_\_\_ that?

**B** You are going to role-play a similar situation. Invent a conversation.

Student A: You are Sam. Begin with '... And remember to put the plates under here.'

Student B: You are Gaby. Ask for clarification and use phrases from Exercise A.

For this part, instead of filling the blanks by watching the video again, prompt the students to try without it. Help them as needed. Next, discuss with them which sentences they think are more or less formal, more or less polite. In what context and with whom would they use each sentence? Do they know other ways for asking or giving clarification? Write down their examples, if any. Skip part B and go to part C, as shown on Picture 10 below:

**Picture 10 - American Language Hub Level 3: Café Hub – part 3**

Making and dealing with complaints

**C** ▶ 02:30-04:49 Put the words or phrases in parentheses in the correct position to complete the sentences. Then watch the second part of the video to check.

Making a complaint	Finding out about a complaint	Apologizing
<sup>1</sup> I'm sorry to bother you, but <i>I'm afraid</i> there's a problem with ... ( <i>I'm afraid</i> ) I want my money back, please. <sup>2</sup> I'm not happy with the service. ( <i>really</i> )	<sup>3</sup> What is the problem? ( <i>exactly</i> ) What seems to be the problem?	I'm sorry to hear that. <sup>4</sup> That's no problem. I'm sorry about that. ( <i>so</i> ) <sup>5</sup> I'm sorry for the inconvenience, madam; it won't happen again. ( <i>terribly</i> )

Source: American Language Hub Level 3, 2019, p. 47

In exercise C, complete the activity with the students. Discuss with them if they think what the most polite or formal examples are, in what kind of context would each of them be used. Prompt them to give examples of how they would make a complaint in a formal setting or in an informal one. How would they ask for clarification about a complaint in formal and informal situations? And how they would apologize in formal and informal situations.

Afterwards, they will work in pairs and create a dialogue for three different scenarios. In one situation, they are among friends and have a minor misunderstanding

about something. In the second situation, they are at a restaurant and received a wrong order, or the food is bad. And in the third situation, they are at work dealing with a misunderstanding with their boss. They will present the dialogue to the class. The students can ask for students to comment on their classmates' dialogue, giving suggestions and opinions about the language used.

This activity will give the students an idea about how language changes according to the context and how there are several different ways to say the same thing.

### 3.5 ACTIVITY 5

The fifth activity to be analyzed is from the book *Super Minds 2* (Williams, Puchta and Lewis-Jones, 2012), which is used for children at a Starter level. The activity is from Unit 4. This book already works with more emphasis in the use of language instead of grammar rules, especially because it is a book usually used by children between 7-9 years of age. The chosen activity is from page 47, as seen in Picture 11 below:



## Picture 11 – Super Minds Level 2: Would you like...?

**1** Read and number the pictures.

1 Would you like an apple?  
Yes, please.

2 Would you like a tomato?  
No, thank you.

3 Would you like some bread?  
Yes, please.

4 Would you like an egg?  
No, thank you.

**2** Grammar focus Listen and say.  
Would you like a tomato? Yes, please.  
Would you like some bread? No, thank you.

**3** Check (✓) four things you would like to eat. Then ask and answer.

Source: Super Minds Level 2, 2012, p.47

In this page, students are presented with a sentence format for offering something. Therefore, they are learning about a way of offering goods and services. Here, they are taught the structure *Would you like...?* for this function. This activity gives an exercise that needs a little bit of interaction, as seen on exercise 3. However, it can be improved, so students can go beyond practicing only the structure, but also its function in different contexts.

The idea is to start the activity as it is in the book, presenting the structure, repeating the sentences to practice pronunciation, and then doing exercise 3, asking students to offer one of the foods on the table to a classmate. After, ask them how they usually offer things for their friends, their teachers, and people they are not very close to (for example, their parents' friends). Then, ask them how they accept and refuse things in their L1. Point out to them the difference in those situations, give them examples if needed. Ask them what they think is the politest way to offer things and to accept or

refuse them. Ask them if that are impolite ways to do this. Is there a difference in the vocabulary or structure? Is there a difference in the intonation? Give them an example by writing on the board something like *Would you a like an apple?*. Ask them if, just by reading it, they think it is a polite way to offer an apple. They will probably say that it is. Then say the sentence in an impolite or angry tone of voice. Ask them if they still think it is polite. They will probably say that it is not. While they give their examples, the teacher should note them down on the board, or on a piece of paper. They will realize that there are more ways to offer things than using just *Would you like...?*, or, in the case of Portuguese, *Você gostaria de...?*.

Now, the teacher can show them the equivalent of their examples in English. The teacher can show other ways of offering things and ask them in what situations it is appropriate and in what situation it is not. For example, if you are with close friends or people you see a lot, like your classmates, and you are eating a bar of chocolate. You can offer it by simply saying *Chocolate?*, or *Want some?*. Now, if they are at a friend's house, and want to offer a piece of chocolate to their friend's parents, or to someone they have never met before. Would they still offer it like that? Why or why not? Show students that all of the different ways they thought about can be correct, but not the most adequate in all situations or with any kind of person they are talking to.

After they are presented with different examples of offering goods and services they will work in pairs. They will offer something to their classmates in different situations. The first situation, they will have to be more formal, using the *would you like* format. They will take turns, so both can answer and accept/refuse the offer.

Work in pairs. They will practice two ways of offering something. First, they will use the *would you like* format. Second, they will use a less formal way to do it, it can be *want some*, or a different manner of their choice. They will take turns, so each one can offer and accept/refuse once.

Then, they will change pairs. The teacher will propose two different scenarios. Scenario one: they have their best friend at home, and it is time for a snack. How would they offer something? Scenario two: they are at home, but their mom has a guest that they have never met before. How would they offer something for this person? They will take turns for this practice as well.

This activity can show children that there are different ways to use language, and that in some situations you need to say things in certain ways, and in other situations say the same thing in a different way. Thus, they can learn to better communicate in different contexts of culture and situation.

### 3.6 ACTIVITY 6

The sixth activity is from the book Insta English Level 4 (Howarth et al, 2020), which is usually used for teenagers with B2 level. The activity is from Unit 7, page 114. It is a Speaking activity focusing on agreeing, disagreeing, and giving opinions, as seen on Picture 12 below:

**Picture 12 – Insta English Level 4 – Agreeing, disagreeing, and giving opinions.**

#### Talking About Technology

**1** Listen to the first part of Joanna, Rachel and David's conversation before their first lesson begins. Then choose the correct options to complete the sentences.

a Rachel **explains / asks** what the Science and Technology lesson is going to be about.  
b David **thinks / doesn't think** the topic of the lesson sounds interesting.

**2** Listen to the second part of the conversation and fill in the gaps.

That was a great class indeed! What do you think is the most interesting tech device \_\_\_\_\_?

It is definitely the first voice assistant. She said the first one \_\_\_\_\_ in 1962!

Well, I \_\_\_\_\_ at all. The first calculator was amazing.

\_\_\_\_\_ but I don't agree. Why is that interesting?

Because, as Ms. Edwards said, it was the earliest form of a computer! And computers \_\_\_\_\_ completely.

Yeah, I \_\_\_\_\_. Computers are one of the most important inventions ever.

I \_\_\_\_\_, but so are voice assistants.

I'm not \_\_\_\_\_ ... Maybe Rachel's right.

You \_\_\_\_\_ - you both use your voice assistants all the time! Even to tell the time!

**FUNCTIONAL LANGUAGE**

**Agreeing and Disagreeing**

I totally agree.

You're absolutely right.

I suppose so.

I'm not sure.

I'm sorry, but I don't agree.

100%

↑

0%

#### Speaking Task

Prepare a new dialogue between you and a friend.

**Step 1**

Choose the most interesting invention or use your own ideas.

**Step 2**

Think about how to ask for and give an opinion about the invention.

What do you think?

I think the ... is the most interesting, because ...

Think about ways of agreeing and disagreeing.

I suppose so.

I don't agree at all.

I'm not sure, I think that ...

**Step 3**

Work in pairs or groups. Practice your dialogues.

Source: Insta English Level 4, 2020, p. 114

The page starts with a dialogue in which the students have some gaps to fill while listening to it. After listening and filling the gaps, they need to answer exercise 1, that asks about what is happening between the two people in the dialogue – one person is explaining something, and the other is giving their opinion. Following that, they have a box titled “Functional Language”, which brings a few sentences that can be used for the purpose of agreeing or disagreeing with something. The next activity is a speaking task, in which they are asked to prepare a new dialogue, similar to the one they listened to, to talk about an interesting invention or their own ideas. They are giving a few suggestions. They need to give their opinion and the other person needs to agree or disagree. This activity is interactive but does not necessarily show different contexts for opinions and agreements. Therefore, it is up to the teacher to do it.

A possible way to improve this activity is by the following. First, the students complete the dialogue as asked for in the book. Second, the teacher can discuss with them the sentences on the “Functional Language” box. Ask students if the sentences as they are written sound natural to them, or if it sounds strange. How would they agree or disagree with something? Ask them if when someone says *I totally agree* it always is in fact a total agreement. The teacher can enunciate the sentence in two different ways. In one, the teacher can sound sincere, in the other, the teacher can use a more ironic or sarcastic tone. Show students that just the sentences by themselves do not have a literal meaning. It is the situation that will show the real meaning of what is being said. Then, they can start the speaking task, but slightly different from the book. The students will choose something to give an opinion about. It can be about food, a piece of technology, or even a book, movie, or series, as long as they are familiar enough with it to talk about it. After that they will explain and give their opinion about what they chose. However, they will do this in two different situations. In the first situation, they are talking to a friend. In the second situation, they are writing or recording a review about it for a magazine, blog, YouTube channel, or podcast. What would they change about the way they talk about it? They will present both versions to the class and their classmates will have to agree or disagree with their opinion and give a reason for it.

Another way to work with giving opinions, could be by imagining a few different scenarios. For example: imagine your best friend just got a new haircut and asked for your opinion about it. What would you say if you liked it? And if you did not like it, would say

it or not? And if you would say it, how would you do it?; Now, imagine if your teacher just said something you really disagree with and asked what you thought about it. If you could voice your disagreement, how would you do it? Would it be the same way you would do it to disagree with a friend?

These exercises can help students to contextualize their use of language regarding context of situation, and to observe how we need to use different vocabulary, grammar structure and even tone of voice depending on who they are talking to and what are their goals when they say something. This activity also works with Modality, showing different degrees of agreement, with expressions of intensity, like *totally*, *completely*, *absolutely*.

### 3.7 ACTIVITY 7

The seventh activity is from the book *Insta English Level 4* (Howarth et al, 2020), which is usually used for teenagers with B2 level. The activity is from Unit 4, page 60. It is a grammar activity about Obligation, No Obligation, Prohibition and Advice, as seen on Pictures 13 and 14.

Picture 13 – Insta English 4: Obligation, No Obligation, Prohibition, Advice – part 1



**GRAMMAR 1**

**Obligation, No Obligation, Prohibition, Advice**

- 1** Complete the chart with the sentences below according to what they express: obligation, no obligation, prohibition or advice.
- a You should shake hands when you meet a stranger.
  - b You must not be late.
  - c You must be polite everywhere.
  - d In the UK you don't have to bring a present, like flowers or chocolates.

<b>obligation</b>	<b>no obligation</b>
<b>prohibition</b>	<b>advice</b>

- 2** Complete the rules below.
- a We use \_\_\_\_\_ to show **obligation**.
  - b We use \_\_\_\_\_ to show there is **no obligation**.
  - c We use \_\_\_\_\_ to show **prohibition**.
  - d We use \_\_\_\_\_ to suggest something, to give **advice**.
- 3** Choose the correct words.

**RULES FOR SUMMER CAMP**

- a You **don't have to / must** be polite to the counselors.
- b You **must not / don't have to** talk in bed. People need to sleep.
- c You **must not / don't have to** make your bed. You can choose.
- d You **have to / don't have to** look after the key to your room.
- e You **must / must not** be late. Activities start at 8:30am.

Source: Insta English Level 4, 2020, p.60

## Picture 14 – Insta English 4: Obligation, No Obligation, Prohibition, Advice – part

2

### 4 Complete the dialogue using *must*, *have to*, *don't have to* or *must not*.

**Jim:** Can I go to the mall this weekend?

**Mom:** Yes, but there are some rules. You **a** \_\_\_\_\_ stay with your friends. You **b** \_\_\_\_\_ go anywhere on your own.

**Jim:** Right, Mom.

**Mom:** And you **c** \_\_\_\_\_ ride your bicycle into town, because there aren't any buses on Saturday.

**Jim:** Yes, Mom.

**Mom:** And you **d** \_\_\_\_\_ lose your keys or your new jacket.

**Jim:** Yes, Mom.

**Mom:** And you **e** \_\_\_\_\_ call me when you arrive.

**Jim:** OK, Mom.

**Mom:** But you **f** \_\_\_\_\_ buy me a present – only if you want to!

**Jim:** Thanks, Mom!

### 5 Underline the correct words to complete the text.

## My Sister and My Best Friend

I'm really lucky because I **a shouldn't / don't have to** wait to talk to my best friend at school. My best friend is my older sister, Karen, and we share a bedroom. However, we do have some rules. For example, there are borrowing rules. I **b must not / don't have to** borrow her clothes and she **c has to / doesn't have to** ask me when she wants to use my smartphone. We also **d have to / should** follow other rules in our bedroom. We both **e must not / have to** keep our stuff tidy. We have one more rule. Because Karen's older than me, she **f doesn't have to / must not** go to bed when I do, but when she comes to bed, she **g doesn't have to / must not** wake me up if I'm asleep! Luckily she's really kind, so she never does. I **h should / don't have to** be more like her!

---

The unit starts asking students to fill a chart according to what each sentence is demonstrating. Afterwards, they need to complete the rules for each modal verb presented (*should, must, must not, don't have to*). Then, they have three exercises to practice them. In exercise 3 (Picture 13), they need to choose between two options, all of them regarding *must, must not* and *don't have to*. Then, they need to fill in the blanks in a short dialogue between mother and son. And finally, another activity in which they need to choose between two possible answers.

Even though the book tries to bring a little bit of context for using these expressions, they show a very superficial use of ways of expressing obligation, prohibition, no obligation and advice. None of these exercises shows that different degrees are possible for them. Therefore, to help students work with Modality, specifically the aspect of modulation, the following activity is suggested.

First, the teacher can write on the board sentences demonstrating different strengths of obligation, without telling the students that. For example: *You must go to the party.* | *You definitely must go to the party.* | *You don't have to go to the party.* | *You honestly don't have to go to the party.* | *You must not go to the party.* | *You obviously must not go to the party.* | *You should probably go to the party* | *You should totally go to the party.* After writing the examples on the board, prompt the students to tell what the difference between them is. Do they all show the same intensity, the same degree? Why or why not? Ask them if they can rewrite a few sentences from the exercises using different expressions but showing the same meaning. For example, in exercise 3 (Picture 13) sentence a) *You must be polite to the counselors*, can be rewritten as *You should definitely be polite to the counselors*; sentence d) *You have to look after the key to your room*, can be rewritten as *You absolutely need to look after the key to your room*.

After they notice the different degrees, students will be asked to read a dialogue or short text containing obligations, permissions, and recommendations. The students will read the dialogue or text and write down every word or expression demonstrating recommendations/suggestions, permissions and obligations. Afterwards, they can be



asked to change the degree of each of these meanings or writing different ways of conveying the same meaning.

In that way, students can work with modality and the different degrees of obligation.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

The current paper aimed to explore how Systemics Functional Grammar can assist teachers to work with coursebook activities and expand on them through the Interpersonal Metafunction to help students to improve their use of language, making their communication more diverse and appropriate. In order to do this, it was necessary to do a bibliographic research to select the books and articles used to write this paper. Not all material read were used, but all of them contributed to my understanding of the topic. After selecting the appropriate material, it was necessary to better explore what the authors of said material had about SFG. It was also necessary to research suggestions of activities proposed by different authors, so a better analysis could be made on the activities chosen for this paper. After studying the material, I needed to look more deeply into the coursebooks I use for teaching. Then I selected a few activities to analyze and to suggest how to work with them using the Interpersonal Metafunction.

SFG is a vast topic, and due to the short time available to explore it, it was not possible to explore it more deeply, even regarding only the Interpersonal metafunction. Further studies could analyze the activities chosen for this paper through the Experiential and Textual metafunction, together with the Interpersonal, to explore not only the interaction aspect, but how the experience is represented and how it is organized in a coherent and linear whole.

Exploring SFG and taking a new look at familiar coursebook activities was a fascinating experience. It was possible to learn more about SFG and strengthen the belief that all teachers should understand at least the basics about it. People shape the language according to their context and objectives, and SFG helps in realizing this. For this paper, it was necessary to focus on only one of the three metafunctions, the Interpersonal

metafunction. Since for most students of EFL the goal is using and manipulating the language to interact, this metafunction was chosen.

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