

Learning Grammar and Vocabulary from User Manuals



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ABSTRACT

We come across many English words and expressions in our daily life that we unconsciously learn from. Ironically, we ignore their significance. A language teacher can make use of the content as resource for the classroom. The user manual of a cell phone is one such resource, rich in language potential to guide our learners in schools and colleges in acquiring grammar and vocabulary (synonyms and spelling). The teacher can use the instruction manual for locating the learning content and impart it among the learners. The students would definitely appreciate learning from the user guide as it is mostly gadget-friendly. The teacher chalks out activities and selects some sample literature to be used in the classroom.

Key words: Language learning resources; Teaching grammar and vocabulary; User manual as ESL resource.

Introduction

The role of authentic English texts to improve language skills cannot be underestimated. The language teacher can use texts from everyday life to enable the learners identify and understand the functions of language. It offers learners a chance to learn language from the practical use of language in our life. There are lots of such texts available to us in the form of instruction manuals for refrigerators, television sets, mobile phones, air conditioners, etc. All these materials can be made use of as a **resource** for imparting language lessons in the classrooms. The lessons will not only be interesting but also

motivating for the learners across all levels, especially, intermediate and advanced. The teacher can use this resource for improving grammar as well as vocabulary in the learners. I have used the **user guide of Nokia3220** as sample text for the current study.

1. Activity for Learning Grammar: The students are provided with a selected extract from the User Manual for finding the type of structure used. The teacher underlines or highlights beforehand the specific structures to be identified. They can do it through mutual discussion. If they fail to do it, the teacher guides them through question prompts.

Extract-A:

Your device is powered by a rechargeable battery. The full performance of a new battery is achieved only after two or three complete charge and discharge cycles. The battery can be charged and discharged hundreds of times but it will eventually wear out. When the talk and standby times are noticeably shorter than normal, **replace** the battery. **Use** only Nokia approved batteries, and **recharge** your battery only with Nokia approved chargers designated for this device. (Nokia 3220 UserGuide).

Learning grammar:

What are the underlined expressions? These are: **“is powered, is achieved, can be charged and discharged”**. What do the underlined expressions signify in grammar? All these are passive constructions. Why is the passive voice used here? Which of the words are in bold? These are **“Replace, Use, Recharge”** What are these in grammar? What is their usage in grammar called? These are verbs. These are used in imperative structures.

Find out other sentences in the imperative:

- Use the battery only for its intended purpose.
- Never use any charger or battery that is damaged.
- Do not short-circuit the battery
- Always try to keep the battery between 15°C and 25°C (59°F and 77°F).

Extract-B: The following text has been numbered for the purpose of language study.

Navigate the menus: The phone offers you an extensive range of functions that are grouped into menus.

1. To access the menu, select **Menu**.
2. Use the navigation key to scroll through the menu and select a submenu (for example, Settings). To change the menu view, see Menu view in Display p. 74.
3. If the menu contains submenus, select the one that you want (for example Call settings).
4. If the selected menu contains further submenus, select the one that you want (for example, Any key answer).
5. Select the setting of your choice.
6. To return to the previous menu level, select **Back**. To exit the menu, select **Exit**. (Nokia 3220 UserGuide).

Learning Grammar: The teacher may ask the following questions to elicit responses from the learners:

- i. What type of sentence is the sentence in 1? (**Ans.** To + Infinitive structure)
- ii. What type of sentence is the sentence in 2? (**Ans.** Imperative structure)
- iii. What type of sentence are the sentences in 3 and 4? (**Ans.** Conditional sentence)
- iv. What type of sentence is the sentence in 5? (**Ans.** Imperative structure)

- v. What type of sentences are the sentences in 6? (**Ans.** It begins with To + Infinitive structure)

Extract-C: The following text has been taken from “Message” of the manual and has been numbered for our study.

Messages

1. *The message services can only be used if they are supported by your network or your service provider.*
2. **Note:** *When sending messages, your phone may display the words Message sent.*
3. *This is an indication that the message has been sent by your device to the message centre number programmed into your device.*
4. *This is not an indication that the message has been received at the intended destination.*
5. *For more details about messaging services, check with your service provider.*
6. **Important:** *Exercise caution when opening messages.*
7. *Messages may contain malicious software or otherwise be harmful to your device or PC.*
8. **Note:** *Only devices that have compatible features can receive and display messages.*
9. *The appearance of a message may vary depending on the receiving device. (Nokia 3220 UserGuide).*

Learning Grammar: The teacher may use the following question prompts to elicit learners’ responses:

- i. What type of sentence is the sentence in 1? (**Ans.** Conditional sentence. “Only” is used here to emphasize.)
- ii. What type of sentence is the sentence in 2? (**Ans.** It begins with the Conjunction “when”. It is a Conditional sentence. Use of “May” sound formal.)
- iii. What type of structure is in the sentences in 3 and 4? (**Ans.** “that” is a Conjunction in both the sentences joining two sentences.)
- iv. What type of sentence is in the sentence in 5? (**Ans.** Use of “for” at the beginning of the sentence makes it sound formal. The Conjunction “for” helps the narrative move further.)
- v. What type of sentence is in the sentence in 6? (**Ans.** Imperative structure)
- vi. What type of sentence is in the sentence in 6? (**Ans.** Modal May means Possibility)
- vii. What type of sentence is the sentence in 7? (**Ans.** “only” at the beginning of the sentence means to stress on the particular type of devices)
- viii. What type of sentence is the sentence in 8? (**Ans.** Modal “may” here means probability)

2. Activity for learning synonyms: The teacher selects extracts from the user manual and provides them to the students

for study. The students are asked to focus on the underlined words and predict their synonyms through mutual discussion. Then they are provided with the list of synonyms by the teacher for checking and comparison.

Extract-A:

SWITCH ON SAFELY

Do not switch the phone on when wireless phone use is prohibited or when it may cause interference or danger.

ROAD SAFETY COMES FIRST

Obey all local laws. Always keep your hands free to operate the vehicle while driving. Your first consideration while driving should be road safety.

INTERFERENCE

All wireless phones may be susceptible to interference, which could affect performance.

SWITCH OFF IN HOSPITALS

Follow any restrictions. Switch the phone off near medical equipment.

SWITCH OFF IN AIRCRAFT

Follow any restrictions. Wireless devices can cause interference in aircraft.

SWITCH OFF WHEN REFUELLING

Do not use the phone at a refuelling point. Do not use near fuel or chemicals.

SWITCH OFF NEAR BLASTING

Follow any restrictions. Do not use the phone

where blasting is in progress. (Nokia 3220 UserGuide).

What are the synonyms of the underlined words? Let the students first prepare a list which may later on be tallied with the teacher's list of synonyms.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Synonyms</u>
prohibited	banned, barred, proscribed, restricted, refused
interference	conflict, intrusion, intervention, tampering
danger	peril, pitfall, menace, jeopardy
operate	act, do, conduct, run, work, accomplish
consideration	thinking, deliberation, contemplation, debate, examination
safety	security, immunity, asylum, safeness, defense
susceptible	receptive, responsive, sensitive, liable, vulnerable
affect	influence, alter, change, upset, modify
restrictions	check, condition, constraint, control, restraint
equipment	apparatus, furniture, accessories, appliances

devices	gadget, machine, appliance, equipment	Extensive	vast, broad, comprehensive, expanded
refueling	refilling	Range	area, dimension, field, length, space
blasting	blow up, damage, destroy, demolish, annihilate	Access	approach, connection, entry, avenues, introduction

Extract-B:

Navigate the menus: *The phone offers you an extensive range of functions that are grouped into menus.*

1. To access the menu, select **Menu**.
2. Use the navigation key to scroll through the menu and select a submenu (for example, Settings). To change the menu view, see Menu view in Display p. 74.
3. If the menu contains submenus, select the one that you want (for example Call settings).
4. If the selected menu contains further submenus, select the one that you want (for example, Anykey answer).
5. Select the setting of your choice.
6. To return to the previous menu level, select **Back**. To exit the menu, select **Exit**. (Nokia 3220 UserGuide).

Prepare a list of synonyms for the underlined words: Let the students first prepare a list which may later on be tallied with the teacher's list of synonyms.

Words Synonyms

Navigation exploration, sailing, flying, journey, voyage

Scroll	list, document, roll
Menu	card, cuisine, list of items
Display	array, example, demonstration, exhibition, unfolding
Exit	door, outlet, gate, opening, passage out
View	glimpse, look, outlook, picture, scene

Extract-C:

Messages:

1. The message services can only be used if they are supported by your network or your service provider.
2. **Note:** When sending messages, your phone may display the words Message sent.
3. This is an indication that the message has been sent by your device to the message centre number programmed into your device.
4. This is not an indication that the message has been received at the intended destination. For more details about

messaging services, check with your service provider.

5. Important: *Exercise caution when opening messages.*

6. Messages *may* contain *malicious software* or otherwise be *harmful* to your device or PC.

7. Note: Only devices that have *compatible features* can receive and display messages. 8. The *appearance* of a message may vary depending on the receiving device. (Nokia 3220 UserGuide).

Find out Synonyms for the following words: Let the students first prepare a list which may later on be tallied with the teacher's list of synonyms.

Words	Synonyms
Services	assistance, benefit, use, utility
Network	grid, organization, system, arrangement
Indication	gesture, hint, implication, expression, sign
Device	apparatus, machine, gadget
Programmed	set up, design, compile, book, list
Destination	target, aim, purpose, terminal
Exercise	act, task, discharge, drill

Caution	care, discretion, heed, watchfulness, foresight
Malicious	vicious, wicked, awful, evil
Software	operating system, programme, application, system
Harmful	adverse, bad, risky, damaging, destructive
Compatible	adaptable, consistent, suitable, congruent
Feature	trait, aspect, character, ingredient
Appearance	display, exhibition, presence, manifestation

Further Activity:

The learners can henceforth remain alert to the English words and structures used in the instruction manual independently when they come across the manuals of other electronic gadgets or appliances.

Relevance: The language teacher can use this material to design more activities for their language classes to add freshness and motivation among the learners.

Reference

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