Professional Development Programme on Effective Strategies for Teaching Grammar in the Primary English Classroom

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Workshop objectives…

- To let participants reflect on their current grammar teaching practices, and on the needs of the primary learners in their respective contexts

- To introduce participants to various approaches to grammar instruction in the primary classroom context, like inductive noticing approaches, and how they can be integrated to suit the needs of the students through demonstrating sample tasks

- To make participants aware of how grammar is realised at the text level and the corresponding pedagogic implications

Ice-breaker

1. What is grammar?

Write a word, phrase, metaphor in the chat that you feel best describes 'grammar'

Grammar is…

Grammar is the *glue* that holds language together.

Grammar is the *engine* that drives language.

Grammar is a *map* of the language.

Grammar is the *pieces* of a jigsaw puzzle.

Grammar is the *instruction manual* of language

Cambridge Grammar of English

"Grammar is concerned with how sentences and utterance are formed. In a typical English sentence, we can see the two most basic principles of grammar, the arrangement of items (syntax) and the structure of items (morphology)." (Carter & McCarthy, 2006, p.2)

I gave my sister a sweater for her birthday.

- Syntax – How the words are arranged enable us to interpret what the sentence means.
  - *I* who gave the sweater, not *my sister* as I came before the verb.

- Morphology – concerned with the structure of words and phrases.
  - *gave* not give as it happened in the past.
  - *Sweater* no *sweaters* as only one
  - *I* not *me, mine, or my* as in the subject position.

Feelings

1. What do your students think about grammar?

Write a word, phrase, metaphor in the chat that you feel best describes your students' feeling about grammar

Should we teach young learners grammar at all? Yes /No ?Maybe?

- "it seems increasingly likely that paying attention to grammatical features of a language is not something that happens automatically in communication, and that therefore some artificial methods of pushing attention are needed, i.e. teaching" (Cameron, 2001, p.101)

- So if we should teach grammar, what do we need to consider and how do we do it?

Cognitive processes in learning of grammar

- Children are exposed to meaningful language that is fully contextualised in discourse

- They notice language patterns and how they are used

- They hypothesise about the 'rules' and the system of language

- They use language meaningfully and in the process they structure and restructure their internal grammar.

- Eventually the language patterns become automatized, i.e. they are used accurately and appropriate with little conscious thinking or planning

Implications of this for our classroom practice

1. Provide opportunities for learners to be exposed (exposure) to grammar in meaningful contexts

2. Guide students to notice patterns and help students infer rules or hypothesis

3. Provide activities that can guide students to use language and provide opportunities for structure and (re)structuring.

4. Provide opportunities for students to produce grammar to express meaning in authentic discourse

Texts as authentic exposure are

- contextualised in the social world
- reflect natural use of grammar
- have varied social purposes (text types/genres)
- should be age-appropriate and have interest-value
- should elicit meaningful and natural interaction with the text

Breakout room – Activity 1: Authentic exposure

- Think of a recipe,
  - Why do people write and read recipes?
  - What content do you expect to find?
  - How will the text be organised?
  - What grammatical features might you find?
  - What vocabulary might you find?

  - You have 10 minutes ☺

A recipe

Why do people write and read recipes?	What content do you expect to find?
How will the recipe be organised?	**What grammatical features might you find?**
What vocabulary might you find?	

Now, look at this authentic example of recipes. What do you think of it? Does it meet your expectations?

- Analyse the key grammatical features.
    - What content do you see?
    - How is the text organised?
    - What grammatical features can you find?
    - What vocabulary can you find?

    - Why is the text organized this way? Why might we find these grammar and vocabulary?
    - What does this tell us about the link between purpose and text?

Now look at the example from a textbook. What do you think of it? Does this meet your expectations?

What features does the text focus on?

Does this match the authentic example?

What could be some of the problems of exposing students to texts and language like this?

Grammar analysis

- Workbook example

- No clear social purpose here (Help mum with steps?)

- Content and organization

- Grammar features
    - Adverbs of sequence/ connecting adverbs (First, then)
    - Determiner – 'some'
    - Imperatives – heat, put, cut
    - conjunction 'and'
    - pronouns – 'it'
    - Preposition 'into'
    - adverbs – 'out' 'after'

- Vocabulary
    - Verbs showing action – heat / wash
    - Food Nouns – butter / sugar / apple
    - Utensils – bowl/ oven
    - Specific words – mixture

Authentic examples –Fluffy American Pancakes

- Social and communicative purpose – clear and precise procedures on how to make pancakes

- **Content and organization**

- **Grammar features**
    - adverbs of sequence / connecting adverbs, 'then'
    - Imperatives, 'sift', 'pour'
    - conjunctions, 'when' 'and' or 'but'
    - 2nd person pronouns, 'you' 'your'
    - auxiliary verb 'will'
    - Use of commas
    - quantifiers – knob of / lashings of
    - abbreviations – tbsp, tsp, g, oz

- Vocabulary
    - adjectives – large
    - food words – milk, flour, caster sugar, baking powder
    - Specific cooking words – batter, mixture,

Implications for learning and teaching grammar

- Grammar is a tool for expressing meaning
- Grammatical features in texts are intimately connected to the social function and communicative purpose of the text
- Textbook texts are often contrived in the following ways:
  - Social context and purpose of the text is lacking
  - Content and organisation may not be typical
  - Language used is over-simplified, aim to exemplify one particular structure
- Teachers need to critically analyse textbook texts and their language, and compare them with authentic examples.
- Teachers can encourage students to notice and hypothesise about language used in authentic texts.

Implications of this for our classroom practice

1. Provide opportunities for learners to be exposed (exposure) to grammar in meaningful contexts

2. **Guide students to notice patterns and help students infer rules or hypothesis**

3. Provide activities that can guide students to use language and provide opportunities for structure and (re)structuring.

4. Provide opportunities for students to produce grammar to express meaning in authentic discourse

What does noticing mean in grammar teaching?

Features of good 'noticing' activities

- The grammatical feature has already been encountered in discourse, and responded to meaningfully;

- The noticing activity draws from students' discourse experience;

- It helps learners isolate the feature for focused attention.

- It requires active participation (and thus attention) by the learner;

- It makes learners think about both form and meaning;

- It requires thinking and reasoning; cognitive processing; construction of understanding

- It is at a level of detail appropriate to the learner;

- The learners notice: they do not use or produce the language

(based on Batstone,1994, and Cameron 2001)

- **Noticing for the learner**
- Learners are presented with explicitly formulated information about forms and their functions.

- Teacher centred, transmission oriented ⟷

- **Noticing by the learner**
- Learners are guided to work out for themselves information about forms and their functions.

- Student-centred, discovery oriented

(based on Batsone, 1994)

Noticing and hypothesising processes in textbooks: *for* or *by* the learner?

What are the problems with this approach?

An example chosen from a textbook

- Students don't have to be engaged or pay much attention.
- They don't have to think deeply (cognitive depth) about the form and meaning.
- They are not given chances to engage with their interlanguage/inner grammar.

Noticing and hypothesizing

- If we use the authentic recipes to show grammar in context which language feature / patterns might we guide students to notice and help them infer rules or hypothesis ? Why?

language feature / patterns might you guide students to notice and help them infer rules or hypothesis

1. Use of imperatives

e.g. Peel and remove seeds from the pumpkin and cut into small cubes.
e.g. Pour the milk mixture…

2. Use of quantifiers

2 tbsp / 130ml / ½ tsp / 2 tablespoons

3. Use of the conjunction – when

e.g. When melted, add the pumpkin and the cream.
e.g. When it's melted, add a laddle of batter.

Breakout Room Activity 2: A grammar noticing activity

- Look at this activity and discuss the following questions:

- How does it help learners noticing the meaning and form of the grammar in context?

- What form is focused on? How does the social purpose of the text impact on this item? How could you make learners aware of this?

- How does this activity differ from the ones in textbooks?

- You have 15 minutes in breakout rooms

How does the textbook introduce quantifiers?

What is the problem with this approach?

In teaching beginners and younger learners…

- We may need to simplify and even oversimplify the grammar for learners in the beginning stages (But still ensure a level of authenticity)

- Children will only have partial understanding

- We should help them 'notice' regularities and patterns and let them 'grow their own grammar' – this is also called 'consciousness-raising'

- We do this through tasks and games – rules of the language are ***gradually*** raised (Nunan, 2005)

- If we do it too fast, we will kill motivation!

Hypothesising

Principle: *By* the learner, ie involving students actively through questions, elicitation and inviting participation

Strategies:

- Highlight grammatical form on the board through tabulation, colour coding, arrows etc

- Check understanding of concepts through: concept questions (yes/no, short answer), eliciting further examples, applying the rule to a few examples
  - NB Asking students to correct wrong examples is also a strategy for checking concepts, but it may confuse students!

- Avoid complex metalanguage and explaining the language or providing lengthy grammar 'rules'

- At this point, written exercises may be useful (remember the difference between 'a task', 'a communicative activity' and 'an exercise'?

Rules by the Learner

Quantifiers presented in textbook

What rules might they hypothesis?

Quantifiers in authentic recipe or cooking activity

What rules might they hypothesis?

Implications of this for our classroom practice

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3. **Provide activities that can guide students to use language and provide opportunities for structure and (re)structuring.**

4. Provide opportunities for students to produce grammar to express meaning in authentic discourse

What is a Restructuring Activity?

Features of (re)structuring activities

- They require students to actively use the language (as opposed to noticing it) to express meaning i.e. form and meaning are interconnected

- They involve problematising i.e. gives students choices in content and form which compel the learner to make adjustments in grammar to express meaning.

- They push students to 'out-perform their competence' i.e. they are producing or understanding language which is a notch more complex than what they would normally produce or understand, and in this way restructure their internal grammar

- They involve sufficient scaffolding i.e. finely tuned support so that students can focus on grammar and meaning

(adapted from Thornbury 1999 and Cameron 2001)

Teaching Grammar

"The purpose of a pedagogic grammar is to provide the learner with **<u>useful insights</u>** into the language under study"

(Willis, 1996)

**PRACTICE STAGE
IS CRUCIAL**

Possible restructuring tasks for YLs

- **Game task:** children are asked to use the grammatical structure in a game setting, which will make grammar use fun and spontaneous

- **Experimental task:** children are asked to apply their knowledge of grammar by producing, for instance, a dialogue or written text

- (Lewis and Mol, 2006, p5-6)

Exploring (re)structuring activities

Activity 3:

1. Watch the demonstration of a card game, as an example of a restructuring activity for 'quantifiers'

2. Watch the worksheet demonstration focussing on 'quantifiers'

Card Game Demonstration

- **Grammar restructuring activity**

- You have all been asked to make something for the class party, but the ingredients have all got mixed up. Ask your group mates if they have the ingredients you need to for your recipe.

- Goal: Get all the ingredients you need for your recipe

- Target language: Quantifiers

- **Rules:**

- 1. Each group member take one recipe card.

- 2. Deal the ingredients cards equally. You should have 8 cards each.

- 3. If you have any ingredients you need, place them down on the table.

- 4. Ask your group members for the other ingredients you need to make your recipe:

- Group member 1 can go first. Ask any group member for one ingredient you need. E.g. 'Peter, do you have a cup of sugar?'

- If your group member has the ingredient, they have to give it to you and say, 'Yes, I have it.'

- If your group member does not have the ingredient, they say, 'No, I don't have it.'

- It's group member 2's turn.

- 5. The activity ends when you have the ingredients you need for your recipe.

Activity 3: Breakout room discussion

• Discuss the quality of language use and practice in the two activities. What are the similarities and differences? Which activity facilitates the processes of restructuring?

• You have 10 minutes

(Re)structuring activities

- **Importance of context and importance of choice**

- "In actual contexts grammar is not a static object: it is a resource providing us with options from which we choose in order to express our meanings effectively and appropriately." (Batsone 1994: 66)

Implications of this for our classroom practice

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Breakout Room Discussion

- What have you learnt about the processes of learning grammar and how you can apply these in your classroom practice?

- What challenges might you face in applying these principles in your school context?

- Do you have any questions?

- You have 10 minutes to discuss

Text grammar

What is it?

- Teaching grammar through texts enables students to see how the choice of language items is affected by the context and how it shapes the tone, style and register of a text. (CDC, 2017, p.68)

Text grammar

Activity 4 (Nine-second reading challenge):

- Read the start of a text below for three seconds. Can you guess what the text type is?
  - Once upon a time, I was a chef – tall hat, white coat, checked pants, the works! I left the restaurant business in 2003 when my first child was born…
- Now read what comes next in the text for another three seconds. Would you change your mind?
  - Now, I'm cooking for my family and sharing all my tested and perfected recipes with you here. The recipes on this site reflect my life: as a mom, I need easy meals the whole family will enjoy but the chef in me needs to eat too!
- Read the final part of the text for three final seconds. Your final comment on the text type?
  - WHAT YOU'LL FIND HERE:
    - Tested and perfected recipes that work for you the very first time
    - Step-by-step photos
    - Ingredient recommendations that take the guesswork out of grocery shopping
    - Menus for holidays, entertaining and everyday family meals

Text adopted from: https://www.onceuponachef.com/about

Text grammar

What tense(s) is/are used in the following text? What is it/are they used for?

Do you think asking KS2 students these two questions will help them read and understand the text?

Mr Lee is reading a thank-you letter from Ben's class. Read the letter.

Dear Mr Lee,   1

   Time flies. In July, we have to say <u>farewell</u> to our primary school.

   When we first came here, we were small children. After six years, we are able to read and write, and take care of ourselves   5
too. You have taught us so many things like the other teachers. You have also cared for us like our parents and best friends.

We will always remember the school garden, playground and classrooms. We will even <u>miss</u> visiting your office. We didn't expect that the Principal's office could be so colourful and bright!   10

   Having different activities at school was great fun too! The school picnics, Christmas parties, sports days and visits were all very enjoyable.

   We will come back often to visit you and the other teachers after our graduation. Don't forget us!   15

                                                                        Yours sincerely,

                                                                        P6A students

Text adopted from 2018 TSA KS2 Reading: http://www.bca.hkeaa.edu.hk/web/Common/res/2018priPaper/P6Eng/TSA2018_6ERW2.pdf

Text grammar

How can we promote it?
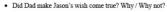
What's your comment on the students' use of tenses in the essay below?

Do you think analysing students' control of tenses and/or other grammar items in their essays can help them write better essays?
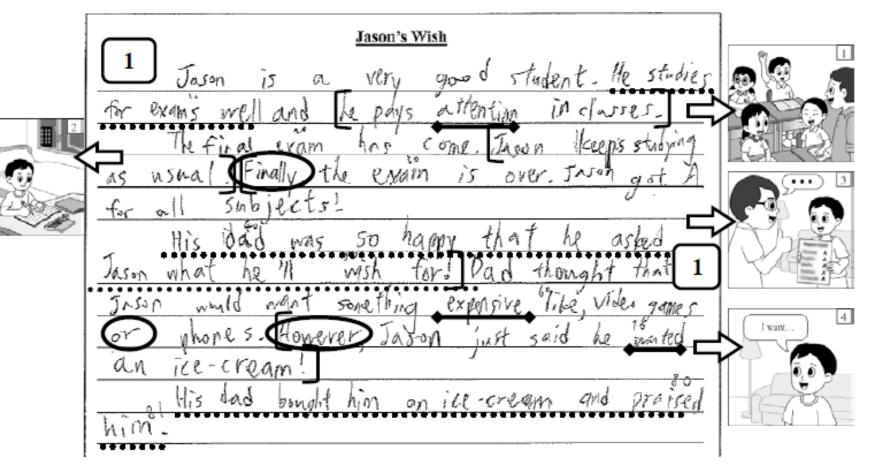

Jason's Wish (6ERW1 / 6ERW2 Part 5)

In this writing task, students were asked to write a story about whether Jason could have a reward from Dad when he showed Dad his good exam results based on the given pictures and guiding questions.

Text adopted from 2019 TSA KS2 Writing: http://www.bca.hkeaa.edu.hk/web/TSA/zh/2019tsaReport/chi/Ch7b_P6_English_TSA2019C.pdf

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