

Education Bureau Funded Professional Development Programme

Grammar as Choice: The Role of
Grammar in Enhancing Students' Writing
in the Senior Secondary English
Language Classroom

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Warm-up reflections on teaching grammar in writing lessons

Read a teacher's quote below. To what extent do you share this teacher's view? How is this relevant to the teaching of grammar in your writing lessons?

"It's easy if you ask them to rewrite the sentences, because they find it easy to follow... However, they just don't know when we are supposed to use passive voice and when we are supposed to use active voice. And, one student even asked me why we have to use passive voice in our daily lives. I find this question difficult to answer, and in fact so do my colleagues. No one can give me a correct answer. I've thought about it, but even now I really don't know how to handle the question. I finish the worksheets with them and they know how to rewrite the sentences. But, I don't know how to explain to them when it is used. " (Andrews, 2007)

Overview

1. The notion of text grammar: What is it and how can we promote it in our senior secondary writing lessons?
2. Reflections on reading-to-write teaching units:
 - Example A: A proposal letter
 - Example B: A letter to the editor
3. Understanding the language criteria in the HKDSE Writing Paper with students' sample essays

1. What is text grammar?

- 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

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?

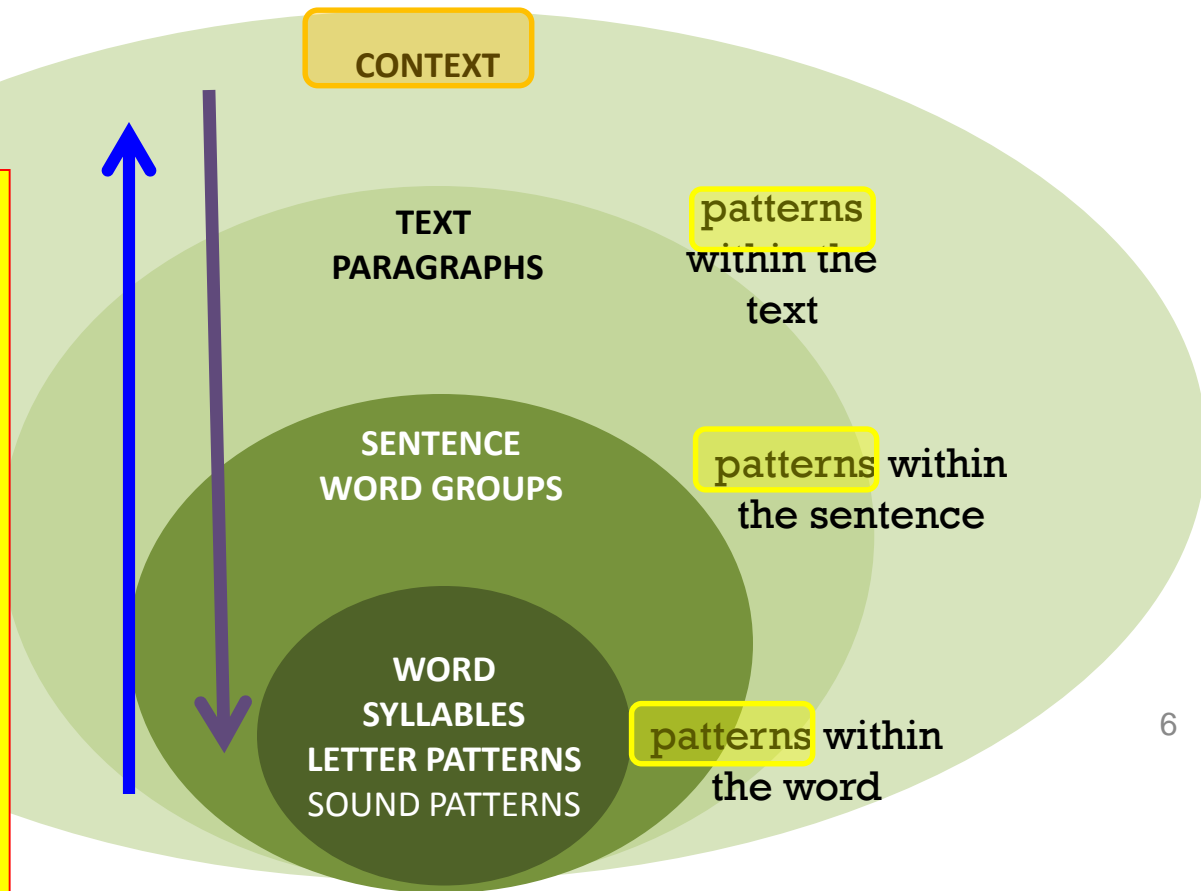
–WHAT YOU'LL FIND HERE:

- 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

+ A Functional View of Language in Context (Rose, 2005) (The Genre Egg Approach)

→ Provide scaffolding to students through different levels

Grammar is across all levels of language. Let's take 'short stories' as an example!



Grammar as Choice: Short Stories

- What can be the purpose of the short story that the students are to write?
- What can be its rhetorical structure?
- What sentence patterns/vocabulary can they use?

Grammar as Choice: Other Genres

What can be the communicative purpose(s) of each of the genres? What are the grammar choices writers use to achieve those purposes?

Debate speeches

Procedural texts

Expository essays

Witness reports

Sometimes writers or poets intentionally break the typical grammatical conventions to create certain effects.

e.g. “I’m loving it”!

How can we promote text grammar in our secondary classrooms?

Reading-to-write tasks

Example A: A proposal letter

Example B: A letter to the editor

2. Reading-to-write tasks:

Example A: A proposal letter

Example B: A letter to the editor

- **Goal:** Building students' awareness of uses of grammar items in texts (through which communication takes place)
- **Strategy:** Analysing texts and matching grammar items with their communicative purposes with the rhetorical structure of common genres

Alignment between text grammar and TBLT:
grammar integrated with communication
through the four macro skills

Reading-to-write Example A

—A proposal letter

Reading-to-write Example A—A proposal letter:

October 15, 2015

Mr. Nadim Dalwal
English Language Coordinator
Dar Al-Jandal School, Riyadh

Dear Mr. Dalwal,

Subject: Proposal To Hold An ELT Book Fair At Your School

Dar Al Jarad Publishing and Distribution House is pleased to invite your school to host an English Language Teaching (ELT) book fair.

We at Dar Al Jarad believe it is essential that we work directly with schools in Riyadh in order to enhance English literacy among students. We have chosen to approach your school to host one of these events because we are aware of your high educational standards and your interest in improving English literacy at your school.

Objectives:

Our objectives for holding the book fair at your school are as follows:

- To empower both teachers and students with our valuable ELT educational resources which include: readers, textbooks, support materials, and exam books.
- To introduce the students and the teachers to new ELT resources that are available on the market and how these resources can enhance literacy in the classroom.
- To familiarize parents with new ELT materials and the selection process that Curriculum Coordinators go through when developing an English program.
- **Benefits:**
Direct benefits that will come from hosting a book fair will be:
 - The school will receive valuable publicity which will result in increased student enrolment.
 - 15% of the proceeds from each title sold will go toward supporting the school's English program.
 - The school staff and administration will work closely with the ELT distributor which will enhance cooperation between the school and Dar Al Jarad.
 -
 -

Step 1: Reading a model text exemplifying typical genre features for meaning!!!

Reading-to-write Example A—A proposal letter:

Section	Function in the text	Typical language/sentence patterns (examples)
Subject	To state what the letter is about	A noun phrase beginning with 'Proposal to...' e.g. Proposal To Hold An ELT Book Fair At Your School
Introduction (first two paragraphs)	To...	
Objectives	To...	
Benefits	To...	
Arrangements	To...	
Conclusion	To...	

Step 2: Analysing grammar features typical of the genre with the use of a sentence making table

How can we vary this step to cater for learner diversity?

Example for the use of writing frames: A proposal letter

_____ (Date)

_____ (The receiver's full name and position)

Dear Mr/Ms _____,

Subject: _____

(introduction)

I am _____ (introducing yourself). *Our group*

have _____ . *I am writing to* _____

_____ (state the reason for writing)

Objectives:

Our objectives for holding _____ :

- *To...*
- *To...*
- ...

Step 3:
Guiding students to use the grammar features identified to write their text with a writing frame

How can we vary this step to cater for learner diversity?
The use of sentence-making tables

Sentence making tables

Communication function	Sentence patterns
Giving suggestions	It is suggested/proposed that...
	...is a good idea

Communication function	Sentence patterns
Giving explanations	This results from...
	This is due to...

Communication function	Sentence patterns
Giving examples	Take... as an example.
	For instance,...

Reading-to-write Example B

—A letter to the editor

Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

- We're going to examine this example more closely from both the perspectives of the teacher and the senior secondary students. You'll switch roles between the two.

Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

Part 1: Read Text 1 *“Key to a happy Hong Kong family could be a mobile messaging group on WhatsApp or WeChat”* and answer the following questions.

1. Read line 18: “The quality of your family communication will be better” if the elderly are in a family messaging group.
2. Identify two words in the text which can replace ‘enhance’ (Line 49).

boost (line 26)

improve (line 38)

Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

3. The purpose of Text 1 is...

A) to promote the use of mobile messaging groups.

B) to report a study and a project launched by a university.

C) to explain how local families should take care of the elderly.

D) to ask for more resources from the Government on family service.

Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

4. Decide whether each of the following is true, false or not given.

	True	False	Not given
i) All Hong Kong families communicate through mobile platforms like WhatsApp.		<input checked="" type="radio"/>	
ii) The government's integrated family service centres are currently not functioning well.			<input checked="" type="radio"/>
iii) Social workers will communicate with their clients more through WhatsApp.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>		

Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

Part 2: Compare Texts 1-3. What do they share in common? What are the differences among them? List as many points in the table below as you can. You may find the following prompting questions useful:

Do the texts...

- focus on the same topic?
- target the same group of readers?
- adopt a subjective or objective tone?
- belong to the same text type?

Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

Similarities among the three texts:	Differences among the three texts:		
<p data-bbox="96 411 589 521">Same topic</p> <p data-bbox="96 554 788 664">Same target readers</p> <p data-bbox="96 696 1014 806">Inclusion of quotation marks</p> <p data-bbox="96 839 966 1039">Arguments supported by evidence</p> <p data-bbox="96 1096 1027 1296">What are the grammar patterns suggesting these?</p>	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3
	Different genres		
	Different purposes of writing		
	Different language styles/formalities		

Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

Part 3: Read Text 2 and Text 3 again and answer the following questions.

1. What is the text type of both texts?

Letter to the editor

2. What is the purpose of this text type?

To express personal opinions on an issue

3. Circle/underline all the verb groups in Text 2 and Text 3. Then answer the following:

Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

3a) What tense(s) is/are used in this text type? For what kind(s) of meaning? Complete the following table.

Tense(s) used	Example(s)	Meaning(s) expressed
Present simple	The article refers to...; People use...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Putting forward the writer's arguments - Describing what the writer thinks is true to support the arguments made
Present continuous	I am writing to...; ...is increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stating the writer's intention - Describing trends
Past simple	The researchers also emphasised...; ...said they were not ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reporting survey/report results for supporting the writer's arguments

Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

3b) Some verb groups are not in any tense. Can you identify them and the meanings they express?

Verb group type(s)	Example(s)	Meaning(s) expressed
Modals, e.g. can, should, may, might	can help boost...; may not be able to...; Why should people...	- Stating obligations, possibilities, abilities etc. in supporting the writer's arguments
Imperatives	Take action directly; Care for people...	- Making suggestions in relation to the writer's arguments
To infinitives	To answer Mr Wong; To teach the elderly	- Stating purposes
Gerunds	having no choice...; Being able to stay in...	- Describing phenomena, facts

Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

Tenses/Verb group type(s)	Example(s)	Meaning(s) expressed
---------------------------	------------	----------------------

Suggestions on catering for learner diversity:

- For weaker students, teachers may focus on less verb forms or scaffold their students in completing the above two tables
- For more able students, teachers can focus on additional verb forms like those in conditional sentences and present and past participles as verbal adjectives

Do these tables look like the **sentence making tables** exemplified in Example A?

Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

4. Circle/underline all the cohesive devices in Text 2 and Text 3. What meanings do they express?

Cohesive devices	Meaning(s) expressed
And; also; besides; too	Introducing an additional point which is in line with the previous one
However	Introducing a comment which contrasts with the previous one
As	Because
When, if	Introducing a condition for a consequence
They; many	Referring to a group of people mentioned in the previous clause
Such as	Introducing example illustrating the writer's arguments
This	Referring to and summarising the ideas in the previous clause/sentence


Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

4. Circle/underline all the cohesive devices in Text 2 and Text 3. What meanings do they express?

Cohesive devices	Frequency of occurrence?
And; also; besides; too	Which are the more frequently used cohesive devices?
However	
As	
When, if	
They; many	
Such as	
This	

Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

5. Complete the following graphic organiser summarising the rhetorical structure of Text 2 and Text 3. You may use the information in the help box or your own words.

	Major stages of the text	Special language features found in each stage
Stage 1:	Heading	A simple statement or question with the use of a modal verb
		
Stage 2:	Stating the purpose of writing and the topic of the text	A statement beginning with 'I am writing to...'



Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

5.

	Major stages of the text	Special language features found in each stage
Stage 3:	Stating the writer's stance on the topic	The adjective frames: 'it would be + adjective + to...' and 'it is + adjective + that...'
↓		
Stage 4:	Giving evidence justifying/illustrating the writer's stance	Rhetorical questions (answers known to everybody already)
↓		
Stage 5:	Summarising the text with the writer's stance restated	Conditional sentences: 'If/when/no matter..., ...will.....'

Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

6. Do you know the meaning of the following expressions? If not, can you deduce their meaning from where they are found in Text 2 and Text 3:

...regarding the trend of... (Text 2, line 9)

...can benefit... (Text 2, line 20)

...is much more important and better than... (Text 2, line 26)

...is key for... (Text 3, line 10)

...may not be able to... (Text 3, line 11)

...means... (Text 3, line 20)

...help boost... (Text 3, line 25)

Rationale:

Introducing vocabulary at the phrase level (i.e. collocations) that the students can make use of in the subsequent writing task; thereby achieving lexico-grammar

Reading-to-write Example B—A letter to the editor:

Part 4:

With reference to the tables completed in Part 3 above, write your response to the following prompt:

“It has been claimed that in the workplace many Hong Kong fresh university graduates are less hard-working and less willing to face challenges compared to those in the past.

You strongly disagree with this opinion. Write a letter to the editor of the Hong Kong Daily disagreeing with this opinion. Support your view with three reasons and/or examples.”

(HKDSE 2017, Paper 2: Q8)

Debriefing on Examples A & B

- Following a genre-based pedagogical approach
- Focusing on grammar items typical of the target genre(s), and the meaning functions they express within the rhetorical structure of the genre(s)
- Potential for promoting self-directed and self-regulated learning
- Useful references for promoting text grammar:
 - Thornbury, S. (1999). How to teach grammar. Harlow: Longman.
 - Thornbury, S. (2001). Uncovering grammar. Oxford: Macmillan Heinemann.

Let's have our well-deserved
break!

**UNDERSTANDING THE LANGUAGE
CRITERION IN THE HKDSE (PAPER 2)**

In the remaining part of the session, we will ...

- Explore the **criteria** for DSE Paper 2 and analyse **the demands** of writing tasks and implications for teaching / assessing **grammar as choice**
- Compare and analyse **candidates' scripts** exploring what differentiates them in terms of **use of grammar**
- Consider the implications for **classroom practice** and **learning activities**: focusing on **grammar as choice in written texts**

Exploring the **criteria** for DSE Paper 2
and analysing **the demands** of writing
tasks and implications for teaching /
assessing **grammar as choice**

DSE Paper 2: The three parameters

CONTENT

LANGUAGE

ORGANISATION

Where is grammar assessed in the DSE marking scheme?

CONTENT	LANGUAGE	ORGANISATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Content entirely fulfils the requirements of the question➤ Totally relevant➤ All ideas are well developed/supported➤ Creativity and imagination are shown when appropriate➤ Shows a high awareness of audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Very wide range of accurate sentence structures, with a good grasp of more complex structures➤ Grammar accurate with only very minor slips➤ Vocabulary well-chosen and often used appropriately to express subtleties of meaning➤ Spelling and punctuation are almost entirely correct➤ Register, tone and style are entirely appropriate to the genre and text-type	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Text is organised extremely effectively, with logical development of ideas➤ Cohesion in most parts of the text is very clear➤ Cohesive ties throughout the text are sophisticated➤ Overall structure is coherent, extremely sophisticated and entirely appropriate to the genre and text-type

Is grammar also part of the content and organisation criteria?

CONTENT	LANGUAGE	ORGANISATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Content entirely fulfils the requirements of the question➤ Totally relevant➤ All ideas are well developed/supported➤ Creativity and imagination are shown when appropriate➤ Shows a high awareness of audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Very wide range of accurate sentence structures, with a good grasp of more complex structures➤ Grammar accurate with only very minor slips➤ Vocabulary well-chosen and often used appropriately to express subtleties of meaning➤ Spelling and punctuation are almost entirely correct➤ Register, tone and style are entirely appropriate to the genre and text-type	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Text is organised extremely effectively, with logical development of ideas➤ Cohesion in most parts of the text is very clear➤ Cohesive ties throughout the text are sophisticated➤ Overall structure is coherent, extremely sophisticated and entirely appropriate to the genre and text-type

Is grammar also part of content and organisation criteria?

CONTENT	LANGUAGE	ORGANISATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Content entirely fulfils the requirements of the question➤ Totally relevant➤ All ideas are well developed/supported➤ Creativity and imagination are shown when appropriate➤ Shows a high awareness of audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Very wide range of accurate sentence structures, with a good grasp of more complex structures➤ Grammar accurate with only very minor slips➤ Vocabulary well-chosen and often used appropriately to express subtleties of meaning➤ Spelling and punctuation are almost entirely correct➤ Register, tone and style are entirely appropriate to the genre and text-type	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Text is organised extremely effectively, with logical development of ideas➤ Cohesion in most parts of the text is very clear➤ Cohesive ties throughout the text are sophisticated➤ Overall structure is coherent, extremely sophisticated and entirely appropriate to the genre and text-type

In addition to grammatical accuracy, how else is grammar assessed?

CONTENT	LANGUAGE	ORGANISATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Content entirely fulfils the requirements of the question ➤ Totally relevant ➤ All ideas are well developed/supported ➤ Creativity and imagination are shown when appropriate ➤ Shows a high awareness of audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Very wide range of accurate sentence structures, with a good grasp of more complex structures ➤ Grammar accurate with only very minor slips ➤ Vocabulary well-chosen and often used appropriately to express subtleties of meaning ➤ Spelling and punctuation are almost entirely correct ➤ Register, tone and style are entirely appropriate to the genre and text-type 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Text is organised extremely effectively, with logical development of ideas ➤ Cohesion in most parts of the text is very clear ➤ Cohesive ties throughout the text are sophisticated ➤ Overall structure is coherent, extremely sophisticated and entirely appropriate to the genre and text-type

- **LANGUAGE**
- **Range** (sentence structures)
- **Complexity** (grammatical structures)
- **Well-chosen** (vocabulary)
- **Appropriately** (vocabulary)
- **Subtleties of meaning** (vocabulary)
- **Appropriate to text type** (register, tone and style)
- **ORGANISATION**
- **Clear** (cohesion)
- **Sophisticated** (cohesive ties)
- **CONTENT**
- **Awareness** (of audience)

Paper 2B, 2018 Questions:

Content Demands (*Ideas: relevance and creativity ... and originality*)

- Q2: Marathon running (*Sports communication*)
- Q3: Work-related communication / office hours (*Workplace communication*)
- Q4: Ambitions for study / parents (*Social issues*)
- Q5: Reporting students' class position (*Debating*)
- Q6: Athleisure as a fashion trend (*Popular culture*)
- Q7: Recordings of live drama (*Drama*)
- Q8: Scholarship for poetry workshop (*Poems and songs*)
- Q9: Caged bird / freedom (*Short stories*)

Other Demands of Questions: Genre Awareness

- Q2: HK Marathon
- Write **a blog** to be posted on the HK Marathon's website to encourage other readers to take part
- Q3: Work-related communication / office hours
- You are the boss ... Write **a letter** to staff addressing their complaints.
- Q4: Ambitions for study and parents' views
- You write an advice column for *Teen* magazine ... Write **a letter** of advice.
- Q5: Reporting students' class positions
- You are representing your school in an inter-school debating competition ... Write **a debate speech** arguing for OR against

- Q6: Athleisure
Write **an article** for the local newspaper explaining possible reasons for the rise in popularity
- Q7: Recordings of live drama
- Write **an article** for *Showbiz* magazine discussing whether these recordings are a good idea
- Q8: Scholarship poetry workshop
- Write **an application letter** explaining your interest in poetry and why you should be selected ...
- Q9: Pet bird in a cage
- Write **a story** ...

Other Demands of Questions: Audience Awareness, Writer Identity and Audience/Writer Relationship

- Q2: HK Marathon
- Write **a blog** to be posted on the **HK Marathon's website** to encourage **other readers** to take part
- Q3: Work-related communication / office hours
- You are **the boss** ... Write **a letter to staff** addressing their complaints.
- Q4: Ambitions for study and parents' views
- **You write an advice column** for **Teen magazine** ... Write **a letter of advice**.
- Q5: Reporting students' class positions
- **You are representing your school** in an **inter-school debating competition** ... Write **a debate speech** arguing for OR against

- Q6: Athleisure
- Write **an article** for the **local newspaper** explaining possible reasons for the rise in popularity
- Q7: Recordings of live drama
- Write **an article** for **Showbiz magazine** discussing whether these recordings are a good idea
- Q8: Scholarship poetry workshop
- Write **an application letter** explaining your interest in poetry and why **you should be selected** ...
- Q9: Pet bird in a cage
- Write **a story** ...

Other Demands of Questions: Social Purpose for Writing

- Q2: HK Marathon
- Write **a blog** to be posted on the **HK Marathon's website** to **encourage other readers** to take part
- Q3: Work-related communication / office hours
- You are **the boss** ... Write **a letter** to **staff** **addressing their complaints**.
- Q4: Ambitions for study and parents' views
- **You write an advice column** for **Teen magazine** ... Write **a letter of advice**.
- Q5: Reporting students' class positions
- **You are representing your school** in an **inter-school debating competition** ... Write **a debate speech** **arguing** for OR against

- Q6: Athleisure
- Write **an article** for the **local newspaper** **explaining possible reasons** for the rise in popularity
- Q7: Recordings of live drama
- Write **an article** for **Showbiz magazine** **discussing** whether these recordings are a good idea
- Q8: Scholarship poetry workshop
- Write **an application letter** **explaining** your interest in poetry and **why you should be selected** ...
- Q9: Pet bird in a cage
- Write **a story** ...

What does this tell us about writing?

- When we write, we have a specific **genre** in mind
- Genres have social, communicative **purposes** and relate to **communicating meaning**
- Genres are not **rigid prototypes**
- Some are **more fixed / flexible** than others (*eg debate speech / letter of application vs feature article / story*)
- We consider the **context**, including the **audience/reader** and our assumed **relationship** with them as a **writer** and what **knowledge** is **shared** (*impacts on content, register, style and tone*)
- We make **grammatical** and **lexical choices** accordingly

WRITING (AND DSE PAPER 2) INVOLVES AN AWARENESS OF ...

GENRE

SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATIVE PURPOSE

AUDIENCE

RHETORICAL STRUCTURE

TONE, REGISTER, STYLE

This has implications for our **choice** and use of **grammar** (and lexis).

Is this only important for us as teachers? What about students?

- Before students do a writing task, we need to raise their awareness of **what** they're writing, for **whom**, **why**, how to **organise** ideas in such a text etc.
- They need to understand how important these issues are for **language choice**.
- We'll focus on some **pedagogic activities** that can help with this later later.


Paper 2A (2018)

- You are Chris Wong, the class teacher of 6A. You will be taking your class on a school trip next month to sky100, shown in the poster below.
- Write a letter to parents giving them the necessary information about the trip.

You may use the mindmap to help you write your letter (purpose of the trip, transportation, cost, lunch)

Poster:

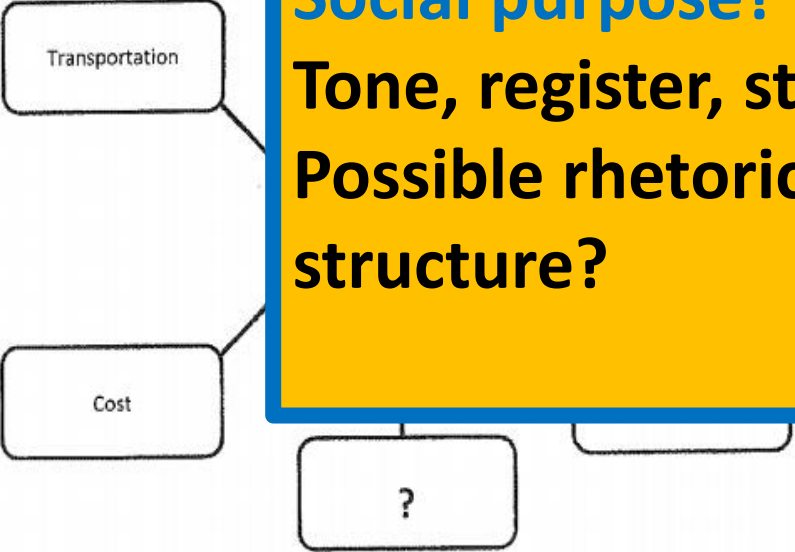
Highest indoor observation deck in the city!



sky100 Hong Kong
Observation Deck
100/F ICC
1 Austin Road
West Kowloon

Entrance fee: \$150
Opening hours: 10am-9pm

Mindmap:



```
graph TD; A[Transportation] --- B[?]; C[Cost] --- B;
```

What is the:

- Genre?
- Audience?
- Social purpose?
- Tone, register, style?
- Possible rhetorical structure?

Paper 2A (2018)

- You are **Chris Wong, the class teacher of 6A**. You will be taking your class on a school trip next month to sky100, shown in the poster below.

• What is the:

• **Genre?** Letter

Parents / Class Teacher

riter?

To Inform
and
To Convince / Persuade

se?

er, style?

Formal / Semi-Formal

• **Possible rhetorical structure?**

- Opening salutation
- Reason for writing / topic
- General information about the trip
- Description of arrangements (chronological)
- Benefits of the trip
- Summary / Request
- Closing salutation

Paper 2A: What **grammatical choices** do we anticipate students to make taking into account ...

- Genre: **Letter**
- Audience: **Parents/Class Teacher**
- Social purpose: **To inform and convince / persuade**
- Tone, register, style: **Formal / Semi-formal**
- Rhetorical structure:

- You are Chris Wong, the class teacher of 6A. You will be taking your class on a school trip next month to sky100, shown in the poster below.
- Write a letter to parents giving them the necessary information about the trip.

You may use the mindmap to help you write your letter (purpose of the trip, transportation, cost, lunch)

What are the implications of this for how we **assess students' use of grammar** in the three parameters: CONTENT, LANGUAGE and ORGANISATION?

- Genre: **Letter**
- Audience: **Parents/Class Teacher**
- Social purpose: **To inform and convince / persuade**
- Tone, register, style: **Formal / Semi-formal**
- Rhetorical structure:

- You are Chris Wong, the class teacher of 6A. You will be taking your class on a school trip next month to sky100, shown in the poster below.
- Write a letter to parents giving them the necessary information about the trip.

You may use the mindmap to help you write your letter (purpose of the trip, transportation, cost, lunch)

Comparing and analysing candidates' scripts and exploring what differentiates them in terms of use of grammar

Look at the samples of students' writing for Question 1.

- Can you **rank** them from **weakest to strongest** taking into account the candidates' use of **grammar** and **lexis**?
- Which might be an example of a **level 5** script?

- **Weakest to strongest?**
- Script D
- Script B
- Script A
- Script E
- Script C

ANALYSING AND EVALUATING A
STUDENT'S WRITING AND THE
GRAMMATICAL (AND LEXICAL)
CHOICES THEY MADE

FOCUS ON *SCRIPT C*

Identify **grammatical** and **lexical choices** the student has made ...

- To show an awareness of **audience**
- To achieve the **social purpose**
 - To give information to the parents
 - To convince the parents
- To achieve appropriate **register, tone and style**
- To write a **grammatically cohesive** text
- To write a **lexically cohesive** text

An example: Lexical choices to write a cohesive text

- **students**
- *your children / your child / the students / our class / the class*
- **school trip**
- *our school trip / the trip / the sky100 school trip*
- **shuttle bus**
- *transportation / a shuttle bus*

- **Sky100**
- *the venue*
- *the observation deck*
- **Hong Kong**
- *the (whole) city / Hong Kong's*
- **activities**
- *funfilled activities / activities on stress relief*

Identify **grammatical** and **lexical choices** the student has made ...

1. To show an awareness of **audience**
2. To achieve the **social purpose**: To **give information** to the parents
3. To achieve the **social purpose**: To **convince** the parents
4. To achieve appropriate **register, tone and style**
5. To write a **grammatically cohesive** text

Audience awareness

- **Dear** parents / guardians
- **Yours sincerely**

- **your** children

- take **us** to ...

- Before **I** delve into the purpose of the trip
- **we** would like the students to ..
- or **the school** for further clarification
-

To give information

- Before I delve into the purpose of the trip, I will first **provide** the necessary details
- Lunch will **take** place in a nearby restaurant
- We will **be having** a school trip next month at sky100
- Our class will **be meeting** in the school hall at 9.15 sharp
- The class will **be dismissed** at 7.30 and will **be taken back** to school
- ... in a nearby restaurant **called** “Taste of Hong Kong”.
- Students must also **bring** \$150 for the entrance fee
- ...we **have reserved** a shuttle bus **that will take** us directly ...
- ... we have many fun-filled activities **planned** throughout the day
- ...

To convince

- take in the wonderful scenery
- we have many fun-filled activities planned throughout the day
- it will be very fun and educational
- the highest indoor observation deck in the whole city

- Our class will be meeting in the school hall at 9.15 sharp
- ...we have reserved a shuttle bus that will take us directly ...
- students would also learn more about Hong Kong's history
- take time off from their busy schedules
- activities that would help students relieve their stress and have a great time

Register, tone and style

- Dear parents /guardian
- Yours sincerely
- As you may have heard
- we would like the students to ...
- We hope your child could attend
- please feel free to contact me

Grammatical cohesion

- *It will be very fun*
- take time off from **their** busy schedules
- *throughout **the** day*
- ***Before** I delve into the purpose of the trip, I will **first** provide you with the necessary details*
- *As **previously mentioned***
- *Students must **also** Students would **also** ...*
- ***Besides** activities*
- *Learn about Hong Kong's history **and** how the the past ...*
- *... at 9.15am sharp **so as** to avoid any delay*

In addition to **accuracy**, there is evidence of ...

- **Range** (sentence structures)
- **Complexity** (grammatical structures)
- **Well-chosen** (vocabulary)
- **Subtleties of meaning** (vocabulary)
- **Appropriate to text type** (register, tone and style)
- **Clear** (cohesion)
- **Sophisticated** (cohesive ties)

- **Appropriate use of grammar: genre, audience, purpose, rhetorical structure, register tone and style**

If this were your student, are there any issues of accuracy that you might want to focus on with them?

Considering the implications for
our practice

Teachers' thoughts on "marking" / giving feedback

- Frustrating (Ferris, Pezone, Tade and Tinti, 1997)
- Gruelling and anxiety-ridden (Stern and Solomon, 2006)
- Tedious and unrewarding (Hyland and Hyland, 1999)

- Conflict between HK teachers' beliefs and practices (Lee, 2009)
- Teachers focus on **form** but believe that there is more to good writing than accuracy

Some implications of today's session for providing feedback on students' writing

- Focus on **more than accuracy** eg complexity, range, appropriacy.
- Focus on what students **did well** and not only on weaknesses
- Recognise and value **risk-taking** ie use of more complex forms even if they may include errors
- Consider adopting a more **focussed** approach ie not focussing on everything / all errors
- Choose a grammatical/lexical focus that helps students to understand **how grammatical and lexical choices are linked to genre, audience, purpose, register, tone and style**

Considering the implications for **classroom practice** and **designing read-to-write activities** to focus on **grammar and lexis as choice in written texts**

Some suggested generic activity types

- Reader Response Activities
- Text Analysis / Highlighting Activities
- Text Comparison Activities
- Text Improvement Activities

One suggestion: Exploring
unnecessary lexical repetition /
lexical cohesion

Option 1 (Part A): Which opening to the letter is better? Why?

- Dear Parents / Guardians

As you may have heard from **the students**, **our class** will be having **a school trip** next month at sky100, the highest indoor observation deck in the whole city. **The trip** will be very fun and educational for **your children** as we have many fun-filled activities planned throughout the day for **them**.

- Dear Parents / Guardians

As you may have heard from **the students**, **the students** will be having **a school trip** next month at sky100, the highest indoor observation deck in the whole city. **The school trip** will be very fun and educational for **the students** as we have many fun-filled activities planned throughout the day for **the students**.

Option 2 (Part A): Which opening to the letter is better? Why?

- Dear Parents / Guardians

As you may have heard from the students, our class will be having a school trip next month to sky100, the highest indoor observation deck in the whole city. The trip will be very fun and educational for your children as we have many fun-filled activities planned throughout the day for them.

- Dear Parents / Guardians

As you may have heard from the students, the students will be having a school trip next month to sky100, the highest indoor observation deck in the whole city. The school trip will be very fun and educational for the students as we have many fun-filled activities planned throughout the day for the students.

Option 1 & 2 Task (Part B): *Revise the rest of the letter to avoid any unnecessary repetition of vocabulary*

- Before I delve into the purpose of the school trip, I will first provide the necessary details about the school trip. The students will be meeting in the school hall at 9.15 sharp so as to avoid any unnecessary delay on the way to sky100. The students must also bring \$150 for the entrance fee to sky100 and additional funds for the students' lunch. Lunch will take place in a nearby restaurant called "Taste of Hong Kong". As for the bus, we have reserved a bus that will directly take the students to sky100. The students will be dismissed at 7.30pm and will be taken back to the school for a short debriefing ...

- Or give further guidance through highlighting
- Before I delve into the purpose of **the school trip**, I will first provide the necessary details about **the school trip**. **The students** will be meeting in the school hall at 9.15 sharp so as to avoid any unnecessary delay on the way to **sky100**. **The students** must bring also \$150 for the entrance fee to **sky100** and additional funds for **the students'** lunch. Lunch will take place in a nearby restaurant called "Taste of Hong Kong". As for **the bus**, we have reserved **a bus** that will directly take **the students** to **sky100**. **The students** will be dismissed at 7.30pm and will be taken back to the school for a short debriefing ...

Option 3: *How could this student improve their letter?*

Dear Parents / Guardians

As you may have heard from the students, the students will be having a school trip next month to sky100, the highest indoor observation deck in the whole city. The school trip will be very fun and educational for the students as we have many fun-filled activities planned throughout the day for the students.

Before I delve into the purpose of the school trip, I will first provide the necessary details. The students will be meeting in the school hall at 9.15 sharp so as to avoid any unnecessary delay on the way to sky100. The students must also \$150 for the entrance fee to sky100 and additional funds for the students' lunch. Lunch will take place in a nearby restaurant called "Taste of Hong Kong". As for transportation, we have reserved a shuttle bus that will directly take the students to the venue. The students will be dismissed at 7.30pm and will be taken back to the school for a short debriefing.

One more suggestion: Exploring
use of grammar to convince /
persuade

Focus on convincing the reader: use of adjectives (Version 1)

Reading

- Provide students with a paragraph from **two letters** (one **with**, the other **without adjectives** describing the activities on two different school trips).
- Ask students if they were a parent, **which trip would want to pay \$150 for?** Why?
- Students go through the letters and **highlight** the key differences eg adjectives, intensifiers.
- Class discussion.

Writing

- Students **revise** the remaining paragraphs in the unconvincing letter to persuade parents to send their child on the trip.

Focus on convincing the reader: use of adjectives (Version 2)

Reading

- Provide students with a letter **without any adjectives** describing the activities.
- Ask students if they were a parent, would want to pay \$150 for the trip. Why / why not?

Writing

- **Brainstorm** adjectives
- Students **revise** the letter to make it more convincing by adding adjectives, intensifiers etc.

Consider some other read-to-write activities. You could focus on the suggestions below or come up with other ideas.

1. Grammatical forms to **convince** the parent to send their child on the school trip.
 2. Grammatical forms to refer to the **future**, **modals** for expressing **certainty** and use of **adverbials** with a focus on giving **clear information** in the letter and showing that the trip is **well-organised**.
 3. **Prepositional phrases** to produce more complex sentences: giving explicit, clear **information** about the trip.
 4. **Tone**, **register** and awareness of **audience**
-

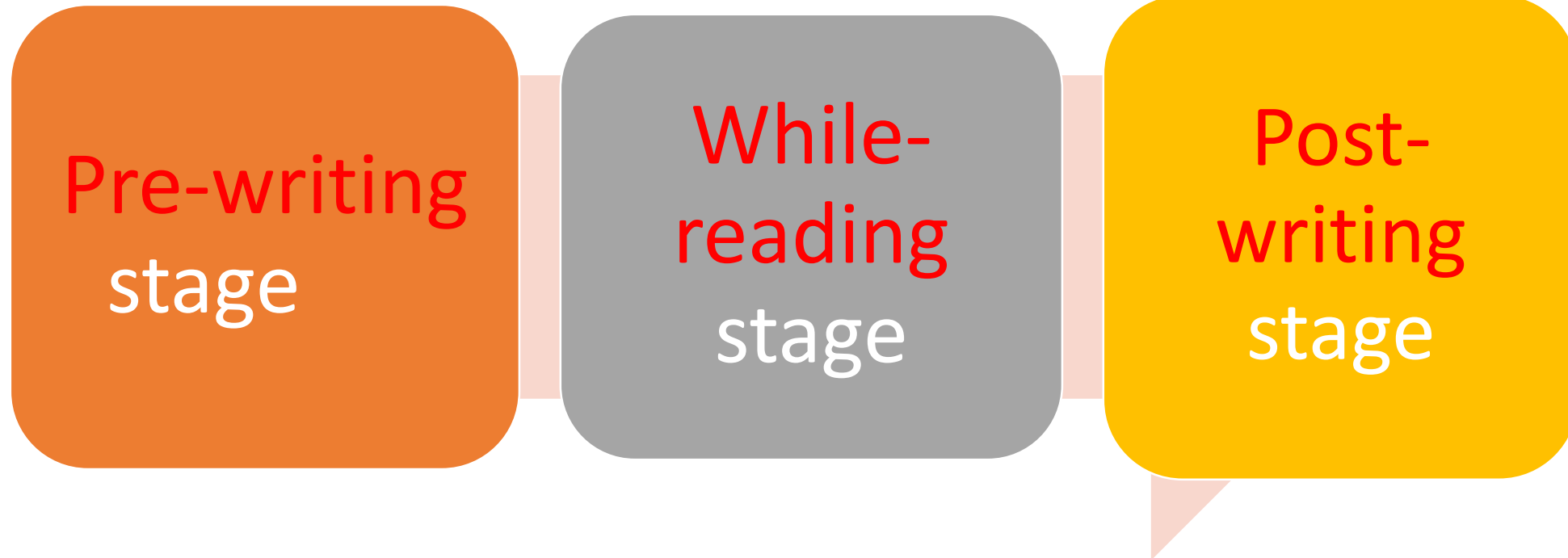
A possible learning sequence to be applied to different texts and different areas of grammar or lexis

1. Get students to read texts first for **meaning** taking into account **the genre, audience** and **purpose** eg *would you give this person a job, would you feel better after reading this letter of advice, would you recommend this story to someone else?*
 2. Get students to **compare** two texts / parts of texts (**highlighting** activities). The students have to **notice the differences**.

There should be a **clear learning focus** and **clear differences**. This could be linked to **communicative purpose and audience/reader** eg one letter is convincing / the other is not, one story is boring / the other is not, one letter of advice is too direct / the other is not. It could be linked **register** eg rude / polite.
 3. **Discuss** as a class. **Highlight** the text together – use colours to guide noticing. The teacher can provide input here.
 4. Get students to **apply** what they have learnt in a **guided** or **free** writing task.

They could be given **a text / part of** a text and asked to **improve** it ie make it more convincing, interesting etc. Alternatively, students could be asked to write their own paragraph focussing on the given learning objective.
- You can **write your own texts**, use **authentic texts** or **students' writing** when designing these activities. If doing the latter, I would advise tidying it up so that students aren't distracted by other things and the learning focus is very clear eg *rewrite the student's work with corrections made to grammatical errors which aren't part of the task objectives.*

When in a learning sequence might we use read-to-write activities?



When in a learning sequence might we use read-to-write activities?

• Pre-writing

- Do awareness and noticing activities and perhaps a guided writing activity at the pre-stage, based on students' needs and task demands.
- Tell students to focus on this aspect (eg use of grammar to convince) when they write their own texts and provide focussed feedback on this.

• Post-writing

- Having noticed that students have had difficulties in a given area, do awareness and noticing activities at the post-stage.
- Tell students to then revise their writing focussing solely on this chosen area.

While-writing (and feedback)

- One thing to ask ourselves is “Do students always have to write full compositions”? “Does their writing seem to be improving by doing lots of compositions with very detailed, comprehensive teacher feedback eg focussing on all errors?”
- Could some compositions be replaced by guided writing tasks? Might they learn more from such an approach?
- For example, for the letter to the parent task, could you focus on the opening paragraph to raise awareness of lexical cohesion and have them then improve the second and third paragraphs?
- Or, having analysed the opening paragraph with students, could they just be required to write the next two paragraphs ie do they have to write the whole text or would part of it suffice?