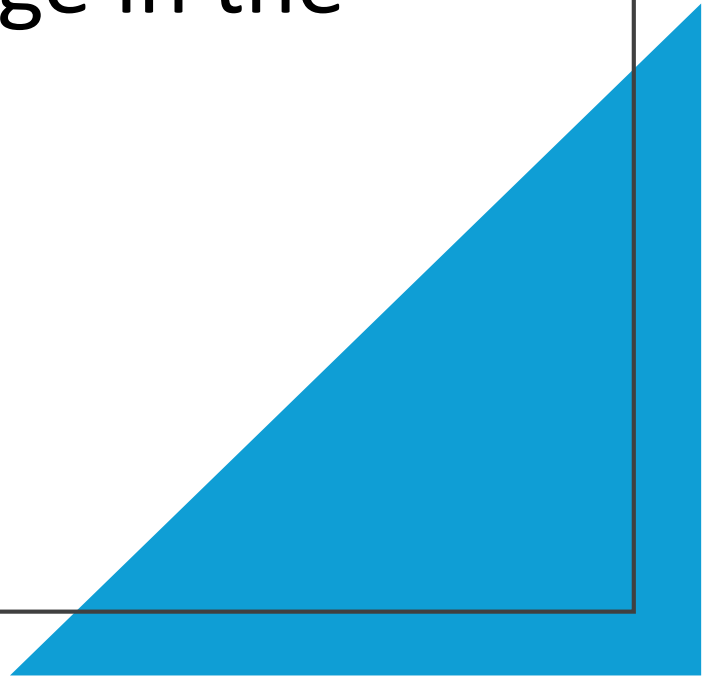


Professional Development Programme

Adopting Effective and Creative Strategies to Enhance Students' Grammar Knowledge in the Primary English Classroom

Dr Rona LI, Faculty of Education, HKU



What is grammar?

- Grammar is 'a description of rules for forming sentences, including an account of the meanings that these forms convey'. (Thornbury, 1999)
- 'Technically, the term *grammar* refers to the structure or system of a language, which sounds simple enough. But socially, the term *grammar* can bring up images of diagramming sentences or memorizing rules and definitions, as well as confusion and boredom.' (Calderonello et al., 2003, p.1)

English Language Education

Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide
(Primary 1 – Secondary 6)



Prepared by
The Curriculum Development Council

Recommended for use in schools by
The Education Bureau
HKSARG
2017

ELE KLA Curriculum Guide (P1-S6) (2017) (p.68)

Learning and Teaching Grammar in Context

Grammar is a means to an end rather than a body of knowledge to be learnt for its own sake. Grammar is best learnt in meaningful contexts, where students are exposed to authentic language use and can make connections between language forms and functions. The task-based approach to English language learning readily lends itself to the learning and teaching of grammar as it provides a context and purpose for engaging students in a task which requires the effective use of the language for its completion. Through learning and teaching grammar in context, students can gain a better understanding of how, why and when to use particular language items and structures.

English Language Education

Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide
(Primary 1 – Secondary 6)



Prepared by
The Curriculum Development Council

Recommended for use in schools by
The Education Bureau
HKSARG
2017

ELE KLA Curriculum Guide (P1-S6) (2017) (p.69)

4.2.4 Learning and Teaching of Text Grammar

The task-based approach engages students in interacting and communicating in the target language with their attention principally focusing on its meaningful use rather than the language form. Tasks, which often involve the use of different types of texts (e.g. information, persuasive, literary, imaginative), provide opportunities for the learning and teaching of text grammar, which 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. Knowledge of text grammar also enables students to understand the organisation and structure of texts. In extending grammar learning from the sentence level to the text level, teachers can guide students to note the forms and functions of the target language items through exploring the salient grammar features (e.g. imperatives, passive voice, relative clauses) of a text and making hypotheses about the communicative functions they perform in awareness raising activities such as text comparison and guided discovery activities.

For the learning and teaching of text grammar, teachers are encouraged to select a variety of text types (e.g. advertisements, biographies, manuals, speeches), themes and content so that students can better understand the features associated with a particular text type and apply the knowledge acquired in writing and creating relevant texts.

Learning and teaching of grammar in context (at the text level)

Focus on **Form**

- Describe explicit instruction on **discrete points of grammar in isolation**, with no apparent focus on meaning (i.e. a structure-based syllabus) (Ellis, 2006)

Teaching grammar explicitly

- Explicit knowledge** is **conscious, declarative**, and often inconsistent (i.e. it takes the form of ‘fuzzy’ rules inconsistently applied) and generally only accessible through **controlled processing in planned language use**. It is **verbalizable**, in which case it entails semi-technical or technical **metalanguage**. (Ellis, 2006)

- Objective is to help learners understand **grammar rules**; metalanguage is used whenever necessary

Focus on **Meaning**

- ‘Overtly draws students’ attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on **meaning or communication**’ (Long, 1983, pp. 45-46)

Teaching grammar implicitly:

- Implicit knowledge** is intuitive, procedural, systematically **variable, automatic**, and thus available for use in **fluent, unplanned language use** (Ellis, 2006)

- Objective is to help learners **comprehend and express meaning at the text level in different kinds of genre**

Examples of Text Types for Key Stages 1 – 4 (P1 – S6)

A text is produced for a given purpose. Hence, the text types listed below can be of different natures such as narrative, informational, procedural, expository, persuasive, depending on the purposes they serve. Teachers might like to draw students' attention to both the conventions and features of a particular text type and the purpose the text serves in the learning and teaching process.

Text Types for KS1 (P1 – 3)	Additional Text Types for KS2 (P4 – 6)	Additional Text Types for KS3 (S1 – 3)	Additional Text Types for KS4 (S4 – 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertisements • Captions • Cards • Cartoons and comics • Charts • Conversations • Coupons • Diaries • Directions • Fables and fairy tales • Forms • Illustrations • Instructions • Labels • Leaflets • Lists • Menus • Notes and messages • Notices • Personal descriptions • Personal letters • Personal recounts • Picture dictionaries • Poems • Postcards • Posters • Product information • Rhymes • Riddles • Rules • Signs • Songs • Stories • Tables • Timetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounts • Announcements • Autobiographies • Biographies • Blogs • Brochures • Catalogues • Children's encyclopaedias • Dictionaries • Directories • Discussions • Emails • Explanations of how and why • Formal letters • Informational reports • Jokes • Journals • Maps and legends • Myths • News reports • Pamphlets • Plays • Procedures • Questionnaires • Recipes • Telephone conversations • Tongue twisters • Weather reports • Webpages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book reviews/reports • Encyclopaedias • Film reviews • Interviews • Itineraries • Letters to the editor • Manuals • Memoranda • Newspaper/Magazine articles • Presentations • Short films • Short novels • Social media texts • Talks • Trailers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstracts/synopses • Agendas • Debates • Documentaries • Editorials • Essays • Feature articles • Films • Minutes • Novels • Proposals • Speeches • Resumes • Thesauri

Source:

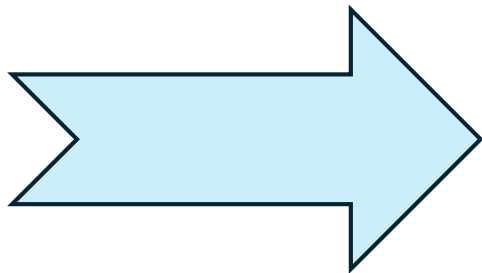
The Curriculum Development Council, Education Bureau. (2017). *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (P1-S6)*. HKSAR

Teaching Grammar in Context – Punctuating as an example

- Learning to punctuate is a difficult area for local Chinese learners (ESL) because of **first language interference**.
- Some children may associate punctuation marks with **'space' but not meaning**. (Wyse & Jones, 2008)
e.g. they put full stops at the end of each line (rather than sentence)
- This may be explained by teachers' introduction to children's usage of punctuation marks to **positions rather than functions**.

Grammaring in a local primary classroom

- When learning a language, there are basically four skills – **Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking.**
- According to Dianne Larsen-Freeman (2003), there is a fifth skill – **Grammaring**, which is defined as ‘the ability to use grammar structures accurately, meaningfully and appropriately’.



**Explore how to help students
*grammar better***

Gamification of grammar teaching and learning

- Features of gamification (Nilubol & Sitthitikul, 2023, p.383-384)

Features	Teaching grammar effectively and creatively with games
Rules of the game (e.g. time limit, reward system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners follow the rules.• Teachers can manage the implementation of grammar activities effectively.
Aesthetic elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Infusion of graphics, images and multi-modal elements makes the grammar activities more appealing.
Competitive nature of games	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The idea of turning something mundane into an exciting activity - friends compete against one another while simultaneously offering encouragement.
Problem-solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gamification has a lot of potential in terms of teaching players how to solve problems. Because of the cooperative nature of games, more than one individual can focus on solving a problem as a team – application of grammar rules.

Teaching grammar **inductively**

- Help students **discover** the grammar rules **themselves**
- Start with **examples/ counter-examples**
- Use **questions** to prompt students to discover the rules

Teaching grammar **deductively**

- **Teacher-centred** – explanation of grammar rules to learners
- Teachers may use **metalinguage** to explain the corresponding grammar rules.

Teaching grammar inductively/ deductively

- There is no 'ONE SIZE FITS ALL'!
- Both approaches have their own strengths.
- Teachers need to make sound pedagogical decisions and adopt strategies that best meet their students' learning needs.

Using e-learning resources – infusing grammar teaching in a shared writing task

- Doing shared writing with students
- Exercising co-construction
- Grammar focus – past tense

Using e-learning resources – infusing grammar teaching in a speaking task

Healthy Bites Make Me Bright!

(Sung to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It")

If you want to eat some veggies, take a bite!

(Clap clap)

If you want to eat some veggies, take a bite!

(Clap clap)

Carrots help your eyesight shine so bright,

Lettuce makes your muscles strong and tight,

If you want to eat some veggies, take a bite!

(Clap clap)

Countable/ uncountable nouns

Carrots help...

Lettuce makes...

Conditional sentences

If you want to eat some veggies,
take a bite.

Word order

... makes your muscles strong and tight
... makes your (noun) (adjective) and
(adjective)

Selection of 'good sources' when designing grammar activities for young learners – **The 5 As**

A wide variety of sources: Use a mix of different types of resources, such as digital tools, print materials, and hands-on activities, to cater to different learning styles.

Active engagement: Choose sources that are interactive and fun to maintain the learners' interest. This can include games, songs, and stories.

Age Appropriateness: Ensure the materials are suitable for the age group in terms of language complexity, themes, and visual appeal.

Adaptability: Choose sources that can be easily adapted to different learning environments. This can save teachers' preparation time.

Authenticity: Use authentic materials that reflect real-life language use. Young learners find these materials more relevant to their real-life experience.

- Noticing – Students notice/ pay attention to a novice grammar item. (e.g. tenses)
- Hypothesising – Students see the patterns in language, create hypotheses about the rules these patterns might demonstrate, and gradually revise their hypotheses according to new information.
- Structuring/ Re-structuring – Using the input they have gathered, students find patterns and generate grammar rules correspondingly. If they get misunderstood/ misinterpreted, they reconstruct these rules.
- Automatising - Through repeated practice of the successful forms, its use will ultimately become automatic, in just the same way as it does with children acquiring their first language.

Adapted from Hedge (2000, pp146 – 149)

Dealing with grammatical errors

Reformulation

- Correct *for* the learners
- A 'corrective' strategy

Identification of the errors

- Let students know that something is ungrammatical
- Encourage students to reflect and make corrections themselves

Negotiation of meaning

- Let students know that the construction is not comprehensible
- Create room to negotiate meaning with the learners

Describing the errors

- Tell students what kind of errors there are in their production
e.g. wrong tense/ missing article/
problematic word order/ wrong voice

References (1)

- Buckingham, J. (2014). Open Digital Badges for the Uninitiated. *The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language*, 18(1).
- Calderonello, A. H., Martin, V. S., & Blair, K. (2003). *Grammar for language arts teachers*. Longman.
- Corbett, P., & Strong, J. (2014). *Jumpstart! grammar : games and activities for ages 6-14*. Routledge.
- The Curriculum Development Council, Education Bureau. (2017). *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (P1-S6)*. HKSAR
- Dean, G. (2003) *Grammar for Improving Writing and Reading in the Secondary School*. David Fulton Publishers.
- Ellis, R. (2006). Current issues in the teaching of grammar: an SLA perspective. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40 (1), 83-107.
- Finocchiaro, M and Brumfit, C. (1983) *The functional-notional approach*. Oxford University Press.
- Flores, J. F. F. (2015). Using gamification to enhance second language learning. *Digital Education Review*, (27), 32-54.
- Gower, R., Phillips, D., and Walters, S. (1995) *Teaching practice handbook*. Macmillan.
- Hall, N. (1998) *Punctuation in the Primary School*. Reading, University of Reading, Reading and Language Information Centre.

References (2)

Hedge, T. (2000) *Teaching and Learning in the Language classroom*. Oxford University Press.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2003). Teaching language: *From grammar to grammaring*. Thomson/Heinle.

Long, M. H. (1983). Does second language instruction make a difference? A review of the research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17, 359-382.

Nilubol, K., & Sitthitikul, P. (2023). Gamification: Trends and Opportunities in Language Teaching and Learning Practices. *PASAA: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand*, 67, 378-400.

Parrott, M. (1993) *Tasks for language teachers*. CUP.

Rinvolutri, M., & Davis, P. (1995). *More grammar games : cognitive, affective, and movement activities for EFL students*. Cambridge University Press.

Scrivener, J. (2005). *Learning teaching (Vol. 2)*. Macmillan.

Thornbury, S. (1999). *How to teach grammar*. Longman.

Thornbury, S. (2001). *Uncovering Grammar*. Macmillan.

Thornbury, S. (2002). *How to teach vocabulary*. Pearson Education Limited.

Wyse, D. & Jones, R. (2008). *Teaching English Language and Literacy*. London and New York: Routledge.