

Professional Development Programme

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

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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).

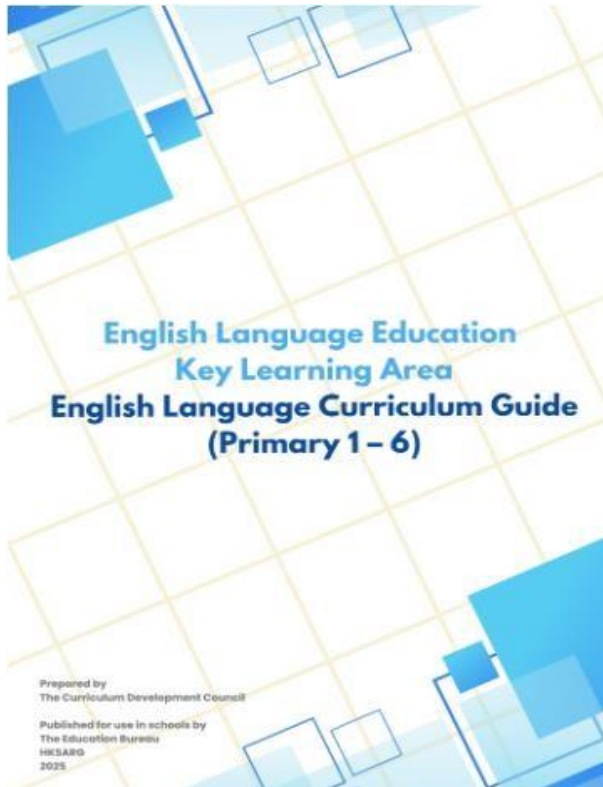
What is grammar?

Grammar can be defined as...

1. Rules about sentence formation, tenses, verb patterns, etc. in a reference book
2. The moment-by-moment structuring of what we say as it is being spoken
3. Exercises (e.g. fill in the gap, MC) about tenses, etc.
4. Our internal 'database' as to what are possible or impossible sentences

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

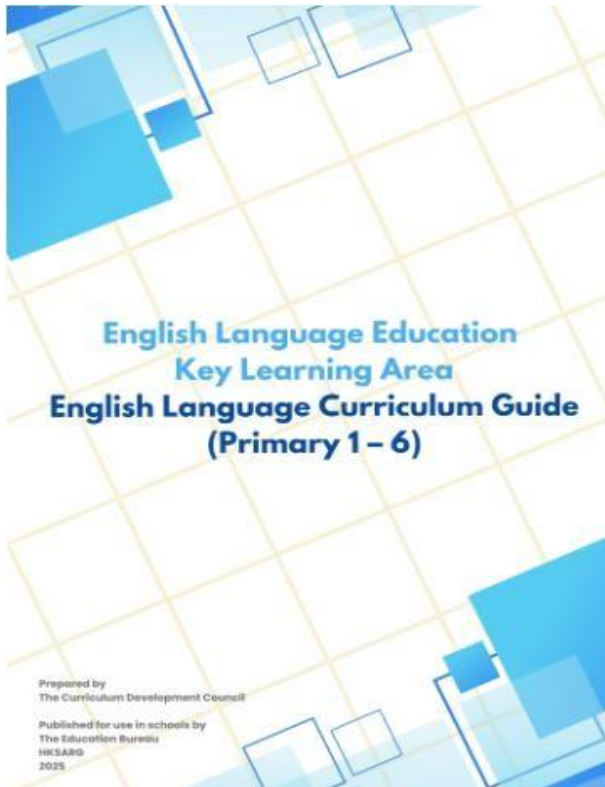
ELE KLA English Language Curriculum Guide (P1-6) (2025) (p.90-91)



4.6.1 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 facilitates the learning and teaching of grammar as it provides a context and purpose for engaging students in using English for task completion. Students can then gain a better understanding of how, why and when to use particular language items and structures.

ELE KLA English Language Curriculum Guide (P1-6) (2025) (p.92)

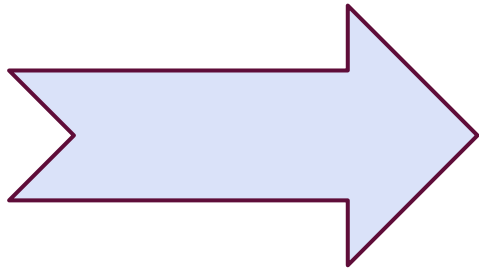


4.6.2 Learning and Teaching of Text Grammar

The task-based approach often involves the use of different types of texts (e.g. information, literary, imaginative and persuasive texts). It provides 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 the context shapes the **tone, style and register of a text**. 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 guided discovery activities. Teachers are encouraged to select a variety of **text types** (e.g. letters, blogs, instructions, biographies), **themes** and **content** so that students can understand the features associated with a particular text type and apply the knowledge and language skills acquired in writing and creating relevant texts.

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
learn grammar better

Grammar teaching approaches

1. An Inductive Approach

2. A Deductive Approach

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.

Grammar teaching approaches

1. Focus on form

2. Focus on meaning

Focus on **FORM**

Grammar item – Modal verb ‘should’

1. Tell students that this is a grammar lesson; focus is the **modal verb ‘should’**.
2. Show students one example *‘You should wash your hands before having lunch.’*
3. Explain to students the **rules** of using the modal verb ‘should’.
 - Use the root form
 - No ‘to’ before the verb
4. Distribute worksheet.

Focus on **MEANING**

Instructions to students

You will play the role of an Ambassador. In the upcoming assembly, you need to remind your classmates about the rules for using the covered playground during recess time.

Good morning, classmates. Today, I would like to remind you about the rules for the covered playground. First, you **should walk** instead of running so everyone stays safe. You **should also take turns** when using skipping ropes ...

From the **sentence level** to the **text level**

(i.e. Making an announcement in a school assembly)

Common text types students are exposed to at KS1 & KS2

KS1 e.g. Rules

KS2 e.g. Brochures

Examples of Text Types for Key Stages 1 and 2 (P1 – 6)

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)
• 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	• 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

Choice of appropriate grammar teaching materials

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An example - SOW Motivational Talk Videos

https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/kla/eng-edu/references-resources/Motivational-Talk/sow_MT.html



Exploring potential grammar areas for classroom instruction

1. Defining

Kindness is a gift that everyone can afford to give. This means that

...

2. Narrating past experience

I remember when I was in Primary Two, I saw a girl without hair.

Once, I went to the Hong Kong Central Library.

Any other potential grammar areas for classroom instruction?

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.

**Enhancing teachers' knowledge in planning
and teaching grammar effectively and
creatively at KS1 and KS2**

Some examples of **creative** consciousness-raising tasks

Grammar detective

1. Teacher invites the class to read a text.
2. Students become Grammar detectives and find out what's wrong with the text (e.g. verb tense).
3. Teacher invites students to:
 - a. Identify the errors
 - b. Correct the errors
 - c. Explain the errors

An example of a text for the Grammar detectives to analyse

Yesterday, Ben go to school and he feels happy because it is burger Friday. When he arrive in class, he sees everyone take out their books. Ben looks in his desk and cannot find his schoolbag. He says, "Oh no! I forget my bag at home!" The teacher laughing and asking, "What? No school bag???" Ben smiles and tries to respond, "Emmm... I...." But just then, his mum walks in and she brings Ben the bag.

Grammar focus – Verb tenses

To enhance metacognitive awareness:

1. Correct the tense errors
2. Explain errors (e.g. wrong verb tenses, missing '-ed' in the simple past tense)

Some examples of **creative** consciousness-raising tasks

Word transformation relay

1. Teacher suggests a magic word (e.g. play).
2. Students work in teams and create new sentences by changing the form of the magic word (e.g. player, played, playing, replay, etc.).
3. The team that produces the most sentences wins.

E.g.

We **play** chess during recess time.

All the students enjoy **playing** badminton in the PE lessons.

There are four **players** in a badminton game.

Grammar focus – Parts of speech

Contrastive awareness – Presenting multiple forms side by side helps students notice differences in spelling, affixes, and usage.

Collaborative noticing – Teamwork encourages discussion and peer correction, reinforcing noticing through social interaction and shared reasoning.

Dealing with grammatical errors

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Reformulation

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

Negotiation of meaning

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

Identification of the errors

- Let students know when a sentence is ungrammatical.
- Encourage students to reflect and correct errors independently.

Describing the errors

- Tell students the types of in their production
e.g. wrong tenses/ missing articles/
problematic word order/ incorrect voice

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