Effective Learning and Application of Grammar Knowledge in the Senior Secondary English Language Classroom

Grammar

English

Senior Secondary

Learning and Teaching

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Overview

1. Reflections on grammar and grammar teaching
2. Tasks promoting grammaring and text grammar
3. Generalising some grammar teaching principles

1. Reflections on grammar and grammar teaching

Read a teacher's problem with the passive voice below.
Can you provide an answer to the teacher's question?

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)

Do you agree with what the teacher said?
Do you think this is something your SS students are facing?
What can we do to help improve this situation?

What is grammar?

Product vs. Process View of Grammar

- **A set of static rules Vs a process of mapping grammar onto lexical items**

- **'Grammaring'** (Larsen-Freeman):

  'The process by which a sequence of words is fine-tuned in order to create a more complex message than mere words can express' (Thornbury 2006:93)
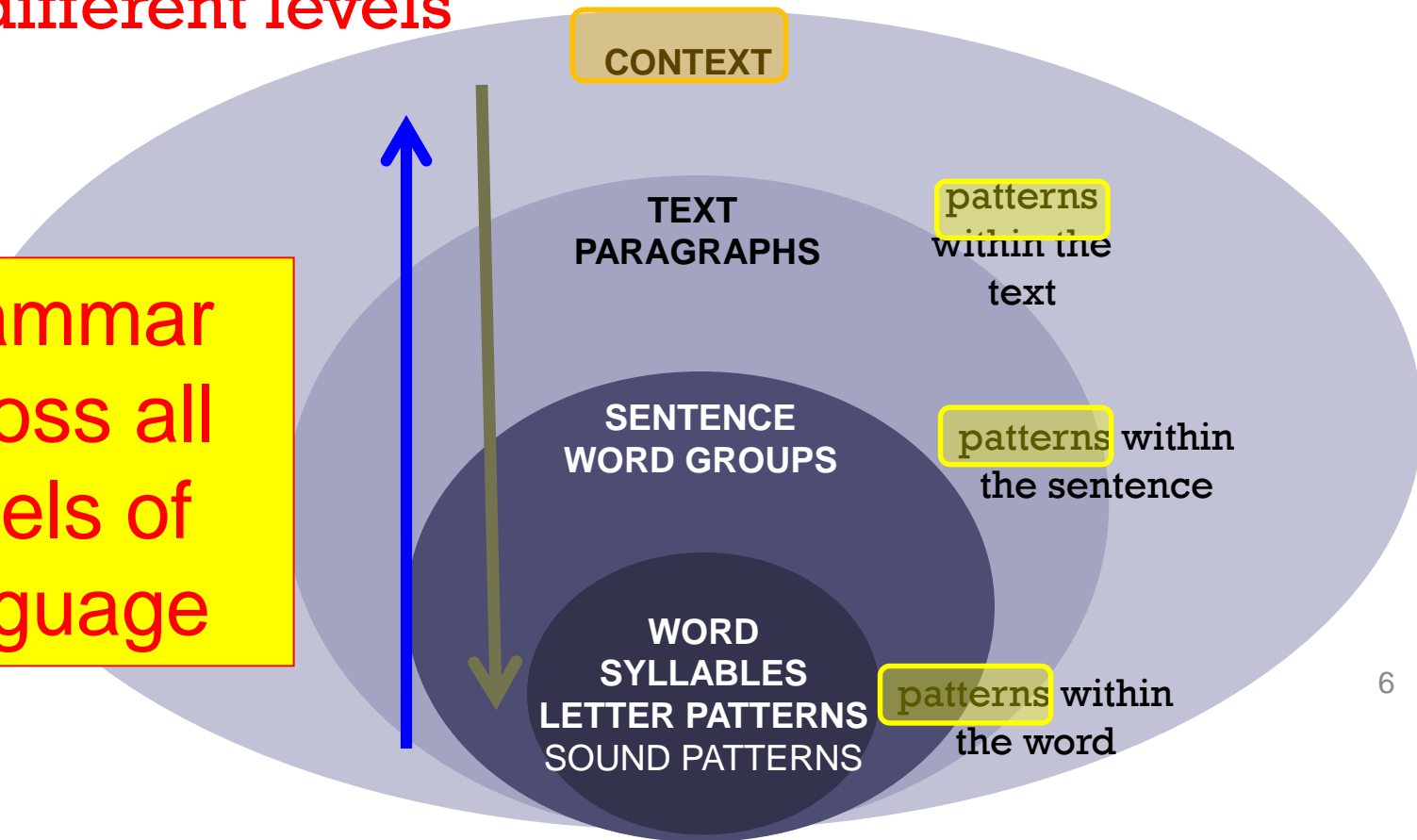
Two Key Pedagogic Implications:

- Grammar has to be taught and assessed in conjunction with (rather than separately from!) the four macro skills

- Grammar should be considered at the level of texts (and not just sentences!)

=>TEXT GRAMMAR

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

→ Provide scaffolding to students through different levels

Grammar across all levels of language

CONTEXT

TEXT
PARAGRAPHS

patterns within the text

SENTENCE
WORD GROUPS

patterns within the sentence

WORD
SYLLABLES
LETTER PATTERNS
SOUND PATTERNS

patterns within the word

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2. Tasks promoting grammaring and text grammar

A. Text reconstruction tasks
B. Text analysis tasks
C. Consciousness-raising tasks
D. Reading-to-write tasks

A. Text reconstruction tasks
Example 1: Texting

u got d
gaga tkts?

internet
jammed 2.
try l8r

no prob thx
4 trying

still in d
q @20
ahead

sry☹
sold out

Texting seems to have features of both spoken and written language. Write out this text dialogue as if the two people were talking on the phone.

Why is this called "grammaring"?

A. Text reconstruction tasks

Example 2: Packing up sentence

Cat's Feat

← If this is the headline of a newspaper article, what do you think the article is about?

A. Text reconstruction tasks
Example 2: Packing up sentence

To know exactly what news report is about, we often need to read not only the headline, but also the first sentence of the article. Such a sentence is often long and complexly constructed. How can we raise students' awareness of this key feature of this text type?

e.g. from SCMP:

Step1: Deconstruction (e.g. use of a graphic organiser)

A professional surveyor and amateur musician who stood up to MTR staff who tried to stop him from singing and strumming his guitar on a footbridge near Kwun Tong station has been hailed as a "hero" for his actions.

Can you design a graphic organiser for unpacking this complex sentence?

A. Text reconstruction tasks

Example 2: Packing up sentence

Cat's feat

- Her name was Mor.
- She was 16-weeks old.
- She jumped 200 feet.
- She lived in an apartment.
- She lived in British Columbia.
- She lived on the 22nd floor.
- She jumped from a balcony.
- She landed in the street.
- She walked away.
- She did not have a scratch.

Cat's feat

A 16 week-old kitten named Mor jumped 200 feet from a balcony of her 22nd floor apartment in British Columbia, landed on the street and walked away without a scratch.

(from Lindstromberg, S. ed. (1990) <u>The Recipe Book</u>. Longman)

B. Text analysis tasks

Example 1: The use of passive voice

What do you think of this text as a piece of writing? Why? Can you improve it?

Tennis star attacked!

Jessica Jake, the tennis star, was with a friend last week in Happy Valley when a dog attacked her. The dog bit her very badly. An ambulance rushed her to hospital where doctors admitted her immediately. Her doctor discharged her yesterday, but she needs further treatment. Her doctor told her to rest for two weeks.

As a result, Jessica will miss the American Grand Slam Tournament in Los Angeles. She says she feels devastated, but she'll be ready for the tournament in Australia in December. Vets have put the dog down and a judge has ordered the owners to pay Jessica compensation.

(Adapted from Scott Thornbury. How to Teacher Grammar, Pearson Education, 1999)

Read the improved text and discuss why each example of the passive voice is used

Tennis star attacked!

Jessica Jake, the tennis star, was with a friend last week in Happy Valley when 1) she was attacked by a dog. 2) She was bitten very badly and 3) she was rushed to hospital where 4) she was admitted immediately. 5) She was discharged yesterday, but she needs further treatment. 6) Jessica was told to rest for two weeks.

As a result of this incident Jessica will miss the American Grand Slam Tournament in Los Angeles. She says she feels devastated, but that she'll be ready for the tournament in Australia in December. 7) The dog has been put down and 8) the owners have been ordered to pay Jessica compensation.

(Adapted from Scott Thornbury. How to Teacher Grammar, Pearson Education, 1999)

What is the genre of this text? Can you think of another genre in which the passive voice is typically used? Why is passive voice used in that genre?

C. Consciousness-raising tasks
Example 1: The use of second conditional

A C-R teaching and learning sequence for SS:

Step 1: Video-watching:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCezICQNgJU

Watch the video and answer the following questions:

1. What's special about the car in the video?

2. Who makes the car?

3. Would you buy that car if you can afford it? Why/why not?

What could be the rationale for setting a discussion task for the video text?

A C-R teaching and learning sequence for SS:

Step 2: Reading for meaning

Read the text and answer the following four questions.

1. Who wrote the text?

2. Where would you expect to find the text?

3. Could you suggest a title for the text?

4. Do you think the GM agrees with Bill Gates comment on lines 2-3? Why/why not?

Does Version 1 look authentic?
What are the differences between the two versions?

A C-R teaching and learning sequence for SS:

Step 3: Grammar Discovery

Work in pairs. One of you will use SET A of the task sheet (P.6→P.7→P.8) and the other will use SET B (P.9→P.7→P.8). Follow the instructions and complete the tasks.

Consciousness-raising Tasks

- Promoting learner autonomy?

- Integrating grammar with the four macro skills

- Possibly deeper engagement and memory through self-discovery?

- Presenting multiple examples of the targeted grammar item in a contextualised manner

- Looking at grammar at the discourse level

Consciousness-raising Tasks

Adapting texts to cater for learner diversity:

- Scan Version 1 and Version 2 of the text. Which of the two is the original text and which is an adapted text? What/why are the adaptions made? What else can we do to use the same texts to promote grammar discovery of the weaker students?

- Read Text 2. Can it be used for the same C-R task? For what level of learners?

A Note on the Selection of Texts:

Selection of the non-print text (video):

- Leading-in the topic of cars manufactured by IT companies
- Preparing the students for the subsequent reading task

Selection of the print text (the reading text):

- For multiple contextualised examples of the targeted grammar item
- Point-forms and repeated syntax more accessible for the weaker students

D. Reading-to-write tasks
Example 1: A proposal letter

- 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

Reading to write—Proposal letter writing task:

Making the students read a model text for meaning, then analyse the genre features and typical sentence patterns:

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 in the market and how these resources can enhance literacy in the classroom.
- To familiarize parents with new ELT materials and the selection process that Curricular 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.
- ....

Reading to write — Proposal letter writing task:

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: 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…*
- *…*

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

Common Genres in SS

- Discussion Texts
- Exposition Texts
- Narratives
- Recounts
- Explanation Texts
- Letters (formal/informal)
- Reports
- Procedural texts
- Descriptions

3. Conclusion: Grammaring and text grammar

- Aiming at identifying:
  - the relationship between grammar and genre (text type)
  - grammar items typically found in (different parts of) the targeted genre
  - common genres in which the targeted grammar items are found
  - the meaning/function of the grammar items and how they relate to the overall purpose of texts of various genres (i.e. form-function mappings that are transferrable across genres)

- Going beyond the sentence level (e.g. conjunctions, passive voice)
- Linking grammar with the four macro skills
- Providing a platform for 'reading-to-write'
- Possibility of alternatively starting with identifying the grammar item we want to focus on and then match it with a genre in which the item is typically used (e.g. the C-R task)

Conclusion: Grammaring and text grammar

- Grammar should be considered **at all levels of language**

- Grammar has to be taught and assessed **in conjunction with** the **four macro skills to** promote its application, i.e. learning grammar through the four skills and applying grammar while performing the four skills

Grammar

**Listening
Reading
Speaking
Writing**
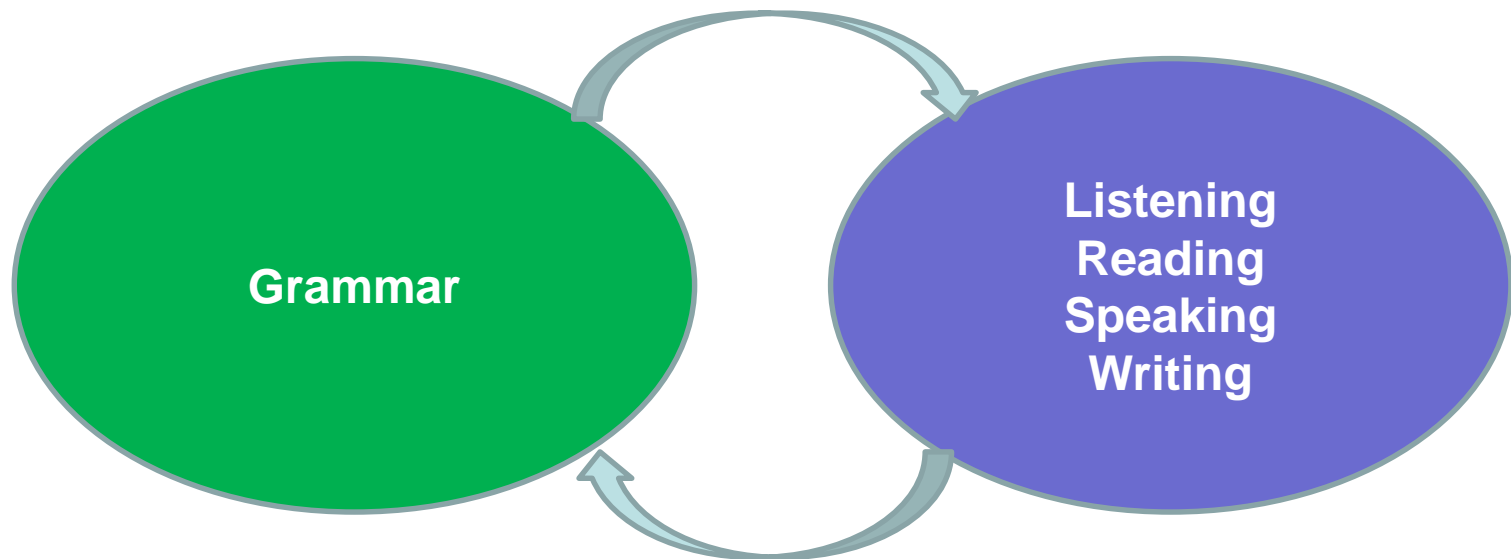
References for Grammaring / Consciousness-raising Activities

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