

Integrating the Elective Modules in the English Language Curriculum at the Senior Secondary Level An Exemplar

Introduction

This exemplar focusses on integrating the language arts and non-language arts modules in the Elective Part of the senior secondary English Language curriculum to help learners consolidate and extend their language skills, and connect their learning experiences. It illustrates how teachers can integrate the following two elective modules through the learning unit ‘Consumerism’ covered at S5:

- Language Arts module: ‘Learning English through Short Stories’; and
- Non-Language Arts module: ‘Learning English through Social Issues’

Background

The learning activities were tried out in a co-educational school located on Hong Kong Island with learners of average ability. The learners’ exposure to English was largely confined to their English lessons. They were rather weak in writing, particularly in terms of generation of ideas and use of appropriate vocabulary and language forms to express themselves. However, they showed great interest and motivation in learning the language and enhancing their proficiency through participating in challenging learning activities. The project teacher was keen to try out new learning and teaching approaches in order to motivate and stretch her students’ learning.

Planning Stage

- Understanding students’ learning needs
The target S5 learners showed interest in learning about short stories and demonstrated understanding of the basic elements of a story, which had been taught in S4. However, it was observed that they lacked skills in developing interesting and creative plots and story writing techniques in producing engaging stories of their own.
- Planning the school-based English Language curriculum
The three elective modules chosen for the school-based English Language curriculum were ‘Learning English through Short Stories’, ‘Learning English through Social Issues’ and ‘Learning English through Workplace Communication’. For the elective module on ‘Learning English through Short Stories’, learners would learn about the major features of short stories, (e.g. setting, characters and plot) and more advanced writing techniques, such as flashbacks, appreciated short stories in class and wrote their own stories. In order to develop learners’ critical thinking skills and creativity and connect students’ learning experiences, it was decided this elective module would be integrated into another elective module on “Learning English through Social Issues” so as to between the two elective modules. A learning unit on ‘Consumerism’* was then designed to facilitate the learning and teaching of English through expressing views and ideas on a social issue in the form of a short story.

* Please see Appendix 1 for the unit overview.

Acknowledgements

Some of the activities have been tried out in Henrietta Secondary School. We thank the school for sharing their experience and resource materials.

<i>Learning Tasks/Activities</i>	<i>Impact on Learning</i>
<p>Task 1 Understanding causes and effects of consumerism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners listen to a song in Youtube about how people overspend using credit cards to fulfil their impulsive desires. They brainstorm the consequences and discuss whether they themselves have encountered similar situations in real life. • Learners watch a presentation about consumerism, work out its definition and key concepts and discuss its possible causes. They also brainstorm the possible effects of consumerism as shown in some cartoons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Learners relate the topic of consumerism to their prior knowledge of issues concerning overspending. ➤ Learners gain background knowledge and vocabulary about the topic of consumerism. They consider both the positive and negative effects of consumerism and generate more ideas on the topic from multiple perspectives.
<p>Task 2 Promoting wise consumption</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each learner receives a data file on the topic of over-consumption related to one of the roles assigned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consumer (Shopper who supports green shopping) - Consumer (Shopper who enjoys and supports consumption for pleasure and quality life) - Businessperson - Environmentalist • Learners read their data file individually to locate examples of overspending and suggest ways to avoid it. They decide whether the government should take the lead in educating the public about “wise consumption” and brainstorm reasons to support their stance from the perspective of the role assigned to them. • Learners who are assigned the same role first work together to discuss their stance on the discussion topic and reasons to support their stance. Then, each group presents their stance to the class. This is followed by a Question-and-Answer Session, where learners of each group come up with a question for another group. They also note down the questions for their own 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Learners are exposed to different views on the social issue “consumerism” and encouraged to explore the issue by identifying and exploring relevant arguments and supporting details. They are provided with opportunities to come up with an argument and support it with relevant information from the resources given. ➤ Learners work in groups in the discussion and Question-and-Answer Session to generate and organise their arguments, and to express them in English orally. They listen to their peers’ ideas and respond to new ideas and/or opposing views with relevant examples and sound reasons.

<p>groups, prepare them in groups and respond to the questions.</p>	
<p>Task 3 Appreciating Short Stories “Money”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners revisit the concept of plot structure of short stories, label the core elements of a plot (i.e. exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution) and match them with their descriptions. • Learners read the first part of the story “Money”. They make predictions as to what will happen by suggesting possible climax, falling action and resolution for the story individually. They then form groups and share their storyline with their groupmates. Each group chooses the best plot and further improves it. • Learners share their work in groups, and write their comments on the plots produced by other groups using the peer assessment form. • Learners read the rest of the story “Money” and identify its climax, falling action and ending. They are encouraged to comment on the ending of “Money” and are introduced to some possible ways of ending a story (i.e. ending with a twist, positive note, reflection, quotation and dialogue). They are then challenged to provide an alternative ending that would captivate the readers to a greater extent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Learners activate their prior knowledge of plot structure acquired in the previous year level. ➤ Learners exercise their creativity by creating plots. They work collaboratively to discuss new ideas and express them in English orally. ➤ When conducting the peer evaluation, learners listen to their peers and share their comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the plots. ➤ Learners develop a better understanding of different techniques of ending a story that help engage the interests of the readers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners read another story “The Brand Name Battle”, work out the sequence of the jumbled story and learn the use of flashbacks and dialogues in the story. • Learners read a sequel to the story “The Brand Name Battle” and fill in the blanks with vocabulary and expressions they have learnt from the previous lessons on consumerism and story appreciation. They create dialogues between the two main characters and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Learners’ are more aware of the techniques commonly used in story writing to add interest as well as provide details about the characters, setting and plot events.

<p>present it to their classmates, who in turn comment on their work using a peer-assessment form.</p>	
<p>Task 4 Writing a creative story</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners are introduced to the writing task, a short story which includes the sentence ‘I feel rich.’ and the assessment criteria on content, organisation and language. (<i>Refer to Appendix II for details.</i>) • Learners are taught explicitly and shown examples on how to apply relevant knowledge on consumerism and narrative techniques in their writing. They then discuss in groups possible areas for transfer of knowledge and language skills from the learning activities on consumerism story writing techniques to the current writing task. Each group presents their ideas to the class. • Learners brainstorm the setting, characters, conflict, plot and possible transfer of knowledge and narrative techniques and write their short stories. (<i>Refer to Appendix II for details.</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Learners gain an understanding of the task requirements and expected learning outcomes before attempting the writing task. ➤ Modelling on the teachers’ demonstration, learners practise transferring their prior learning in a new context collaboratively. They receive feedback from their teacher and peers, reinforcing their awareness of transferring the skills and knowledge from elective module to the other. ➤ Learners consciously transfer the previously acquired knowledge and narrative in creating a new short story of their own.

Appendix I Assessment Form for Task 4

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below average	Unsatis- factory
Content					
• Writing presents an interesting plot (e.g. incorporating a conflict, climax and twist ending)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Writing includes characters who are presenting views from multiple perspectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Writing includes Interesting and engaging dialogues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Content fulfils the task requirements in terms of length and format	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisation					
• The plot is well-structured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Ideas are well-connected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Language and Style					
• Words and expressions, especially for those related to consumerism, are appropriately used	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Speech verbs are effectively used to construct dialogues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Adverbs are effectively used to construct dialogues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• A wide range of sentence structures is appropriately used	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Grammar is accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Spelling and punctuation are accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Tone and style are appropriate for the intended audience and purpose of writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other Comments (if any)

Appendix II Worksheet for Task 4

Task 4: Writing a creative story

Read the flyer below and write a story for the competition.

Story Writing Competition 2014
organised by Young Writers Association
is now accepting entries!

Topic:
 Write a story that includes the line “I feel rich”.

Prizes: 1st prize - \$5,000 book coupon
 2nd prize- \$3,000 book coupon
 3rd prize - \$1,000 book coupon

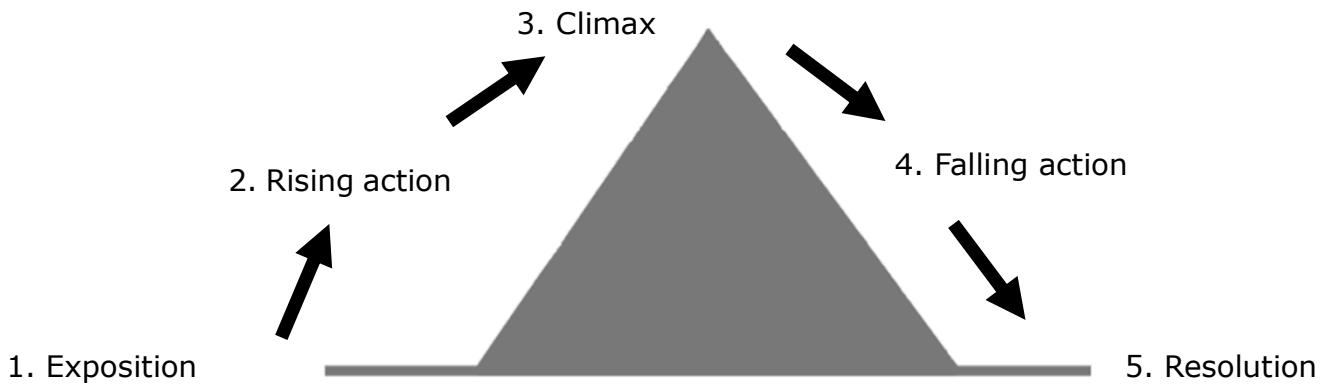
Eligibility: Full-time students aged 12-18

Write a short story of about 300 to 400 words and send it to us on or before 31 December 2014. The winning short stories will be published in Banana Daily and on the Internet!

Brainstorm ideas on the setting, characters and conflict for your story.

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>Setting</p> <p>e.g. location, time, mood, sight, smells, sounds, tastes, feelings</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 200px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>Characters</p> <p>e.g. appearance, jobs, personality, different views / actions on ‘feeling rich’</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 200px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>Conflict</p> <p>e.g. mental / emotional / social problems caused by different views / actions on ‘feeling rich’ among characters</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 200px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>
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Brainstorm ideas on the plot of your story.



	Gist	Checklist on Application of Knowledge and Language Skills
Exposition		<input type="checkbox"/> Including views on ‘feeling rich’ from multiple perspectives through different characters
Rising action		<input type="checkbox"/> Using vocabulary related to consumerism appropriately <input type="checkbox"/> Constructing dialogues with speech verbs appropriately
Climax		<input type="checkbox"/> Constructing dialogues with adverbs to indicate the mood of the speaker appropriately <input type="checkbox"/> Ending the story with a positive note, reflection, question, dialogue or in a creative manner
Falling action		<input type="checkbox"/> Fulfilling the task requirements in terms of length and format
Resolution		