

The problem:

Time and time again, I see wonderfully expressive and meaningful pieces of writing by children, but the demonstrated level of surface feature skill simply lets the writing down. If we could establish those skills, whilst encouraging the child as a writer, I am sure that we would have higher writing achievement. Often, punctuation is confused, missing, over-used. This seems related to a lack of awareness of sentence structure. To an extent, solve the sentence building issue, and we solve the punctuation problem. I have been reading, talking to people, and viewing resources in an attempt to see how we can best provide children with the knowledge and skills which might help them to build good sentences, and punctuate them correctly - resulting in highly meaningful texts, displaying good surface features.

My Board kindly financed me to attend the UK Literacy Association 2016 Conference in Bristol, but, firstly, what is happening in the UK regarding the inclusion of grammar in Literacy programs.

From the UK Curriculum Statement:

'English has a pre-eminent place in education and in society. A high-quality education in English will teach pupils to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others, and through their reading and listening, others can communicate with them. Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development. Reading also enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know. All the skills of language are essential to participating fully as a member of society; pupils who do not learn to speak, read and write fluently and confidently are effectively disenfranchised.'

Comment: This statement does not seem to recognize that writing, also, enables people (including children) to develop culturally, emotionally ...etc. I believe that our NZ writing programs help our children to develop their identity, their personality, and that their writing does open up opportunities for interactions with others. In my experience, children generally love to write, and love to share their writing. A number do have difficulty, but there is an underlying enjoyment. The statement above also seems to place literature ahead of children's own experiences when schools are looking for contexts for writing.

It would appear that UK Schools are basing a lot of their Literacy learning on good texts in English. The drive is on in the UK for children to be able to write in an 'academic English' style - some schools doing so to the extent that all of a child's writing in any one year is based around a series of shared texts (up to 10 in a year), with a result that children are not writing from personal experience, and are not being exposed to teacher modelling of writing from experience. If so, it would appear that children's writing tends toward an exercise in re-

creation, rather than the creation of original, and personally meaningful texts. I do accept that texts can be used to introduce grammatical skills, and to develop knowledge of what good writers do, but I believe that most of the texts the children create should genuinely be their own.

The UK Curriculum statement has a heavy emphasis on the development of Spelling, Grammar, and Handwriting, with a high stakes test of the first two of these when a student reaches age eleven. (It is interesting to note, as an aside, that the UK approach does not emphasize **sloped** handwriting. As I see it, slope = speed - children can not write at speed if they are having to maintain perpendicular shapes. It is extremely surprising that this is not recognized in the statement.)

It would appear that children might well be 'writing for their teachers', rather than 'writing to express themselves'. Their writing appears to be dependent on their teacher, and the text they are currently studying. However, if this general approach means that their surface feature development is superior to that of NZ children, then what can we take from the UK approach that would support our children's writing development?

I attended the UK Literacy Association Conference in Bristol. This is a very academic conference, primarily featuring presentations of research to others within the academic community. However, it is a wonderful conference to be part of, as a lot of the work being done is right at the forefront of research into teaching and learning. There appeared to be some concern at the effect that the high stakes testing was having on the children's creativity and expressiveness. One of the presenters pointed me in the direction of Jonny Walker Hopemonger (UK Education Blogger) Jonny asked some Year Four children at the end of the school year if they were looking forward to Year Five. They said, 'No, because then it's only a year until we have to do SATs'!

The 1960s and 1970s saw the essential abandonment of the teaching of grammar in most of the 'Anglophile' nations, in favor of more creative approaches to the teaching of English curriculums. A 1998 revision of the UK Curriculum re-introduced the idea of grammar teaching, but it has been the recent 2013 Curriculum re-write that has made this a statutory part of the curriculum. Most States in the United States, and the Australian Curriculum have also reintroduced a more deliberate teaching of grammar in recent times.

The Australian Curriculum

The National Curriculum appears to be more prescriptive than the actual NZ Curriculum document. The grammar component of their curriculum appears at each Year level under the heading, 'Expressing and developing ideas'. At foundation level, for instance, Identify the parts of a **simple sentence** that represent 'What's happening?' (Predicate), 'What state is being described?' (Adjectives?), 'Who or what is involved?' (Subject) and the surrounding circumstances (ACELA1451)

The Australian Curriculum is interpreted by each state. It is not easy for a newcomer to

navigate/make sense of the different State Curriculum documents, but it certainly does appear to be the case that more deliberate teaching of grammar is intended.

From the revised New South Wales English Curriculum - Writing - Stage 3 - Year 5 and 6.

OUTCOME

A student:

- EN3-6B
- uses knowledge of sentence structure, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary to respond to and compose clear and cohesive texts in different media and technologies

CONTENT

- Students:
- Develop and apply contextual knowledge
- understand that language is structured to create meaning according to **audience**, **purpose** and **context**
- understand that choices in **grammar**, punctuation and vocabulary contribute to the effectiveness of texts
- Understand and apply knowledge of **language forms and features**
- identify and explain how choices in language, for example **modality**, emphasis, repetition and **metaphor**, influence personal response to different texts (ACELT1615) **
- understand the difference between main and subordinate **clauses** and that a complex **sentence** involves at least one subordinate clause (ACELA1507) **
- experiment using a range of language features, eg **connectives**, topic sentences, **active** and **passive voice** and **nominalisation**
- understand how **noun groups**/phrases and **adjective** groups/phrases can be expanded in a variety of ways to provide a fuller description of the person, place, thing or idea (ACELA1508)
- understand how ideas can be expanded and sharpened through careful choice of **verbs**, elaborated **tenses** and a range of **adverb** groups/phrases (ACELA1523) **
- show how ideas and **points of view** in texts are conveyed through the use of vocabulary, including **idiomatic expressions**, objective and subjective language, and that these can change according to context (ACELY1698) **
- identify a variety of connectives in texts to indicate time, add information, clarify understanding, show cause and effect and indicate condition/concession
- use complex punctuation to engage the reader and achieve purpose
- understand how the grammatical category of possessives is signalled through **apostrophes** and how to use apostrophes with common and proper **nouns** (ACELA1506)
- understand the uses of **commas** to separate clauses (ACELA1521)
- Understand and apply knowledge of vocabulary
- understand the use of vocabulary to express greater precision of meaning, and know that words can have different meanings in different contexts (ACELA1512)

- investigate how vocabulary choices, including evaluative language can express shades of meaning, feeling and opinion(ACELA1525)
- Respond to and compose texts
- select some more challenging language features, literary devices (eg irony, humour) and grammatical features (eg modality) to engage and influence an audience
- experiment with different types of sentences, eg short sentences to build tension and complex sentences to add detail
- use topic sentences and appropriately organise main (independent) and subordinate (dependent) ideas to enhance coherence in written texts
- select appropriate language for a purpose, eg descriptive, persuasive, technical, evaluative, emotive and colloquial, when composing texts
- use grammatical features, eg pronouns, conjunctions and connectives, to accurately link ideas and information to ensure meaning when composing texts.

The NZ Curriculum

There is very little detail in the actual Curriculum Statement. For instance, at Level Three (same level as the above)

Under Language Features

– uses a range of text conventions, including most grammatical conventions, appropriately and with increasing accuracy.

Under Structure

– uses a variety of sentence structures, beginnings, and lengths.

These are fleshed out in the Literacy Learning Progressions (see further below) - note the aims from Year Three that children 'write independently' - this would tend to equate to the goal many schools have of building 'children as writers'. Within that, there is an obvious intention to build knowledge of sentence components, but perhaps the lack of detail in the Curriculum Statement, and in the Progressions, is not helpful in making this sufficiently important to teachers.

Talking with NZ experts:

Rena Kettle - Teacher at Belmont Primary School.

I was keen to talk to Rena, as she had previously taught at my school, and was aware of where we were 'at' in writing. I therefore already knew that Rena definitely believes that children's learning about how sentences work, and how they can make them work for their writing, is best done in real writing contexts. Different genre provide wonderful opportunities for teachers to be able to introduce new concepts to students. For instance, when writing 'Fairy Tale' newspaper articles (the genre under study), children need to be able to convey the 'Who, What, When, Where, and How' in their first paragraph. To be able to do this in the one sentence is a great sentence building opportunity for children, quite a challenge, but very effective when they are highly motivated by the Fairy tale context in which they are working. The concern some researchers have is that when children's 'grammar experiences' are dependent on the writing context, there is then no programmed and sequential development of their metalinguistic understanding. It would be sheer chance that the skills being developed in

the children's 'fairy tale' newspaper reports relate to the children's previous learning. Refer to Hudson, in 'Best Practices in Writing Instruction' - Second Edition, Zoi. A. Philippakos, Charles A. MacArthur, and David L. Coker Jr.

There are times when Renae does have children involved in deliberate sentence analysis activities - pulling apart, moving parts, identifying parts. She also agreed that the use of 'grammar games' does help children build up a basic metalinguistic vocabulary, that they can then employ in discussions with classmates, teacher, and, to use when explaining why they have framed sentences as they have.

Renae's ability to teach writing well is partly due to the fact that she took a course at University in Advanced Curriculum English. The handbook for the course contains an interesting chapter from 'Writing and the Writer' (1982) by F. Smith, entitled 'What is the role of grammar?' After presenting the arguments for and against the teaching of grammar, he concludes, 'The research cited above does not support the regular systematic teaching of formal grammar to students. However, we do not recommend that students never be exposed to the categories and rules of grammar..... for the majority of students, a brief introduction to the main rules which govern our sentence structures will be of interest'.

Professor Judy Parr - University of Auckland

I enjoyed an hour with Professor Parr. I introduced my view that, whilst I know that many experts are agreed that 'grammar' should be taught in the context of authentic writing tasks, and also that there is more research to back the 'No! to grammar in the teaching of writing' side of the argument than there is for the 'Yes, we need to' side, it appears to me the case that too many children reach Year Five and Six at my own school, and just have very little idea of how to construct a skilled series of sentences. If we were teaching children about what a sentence actually is ('Yes, they all know about capital letters and full stops') might they then be able to achieve more accuracy in sentence construction, employ new sentence types, and, as a result, then be able to punctuate more accurately.

Judy talked about the AssTTLe work she did when this assessment tool was set up, the detailed Moderation mechanisms that were part of the tool, the PD she did with a number of schools around the teaching of language, and the significant results these teachers achieved with their children.

The lack of deeper teacher knowledge of 'how English language works' is one factor that needs to be addressed if we are to enable children to be able to talk about their writing in agreed terms. PD is needed in this area for teachers.

We discussed what 'grammar teaching' might look like. It would certainly not be 30 minutes on 'proper nouns' one week, 30 mins on 'collective nouns' the next. As much as possible it would come from the current, more generalized learning needs of the class/children, and would be as interactive as possible. I believe that it should be fun, something that children can go home

and talk to mum and dad about - a bank of knowledge that would help them talk about and create good sentences.

I asked Professor Parr if there was any research that had looked at how younger children might benefit from 'grammatical adventures'. The research I had seen all seemed to focus on Upper Primary/Intermediate/lower High School levels. She was not aware of any research in NZ at Junior levels. I do think that some research in this area could be beneficial. It would need to be longitudinal - following children's development over time - to see if adventures in grammar might help solve the problems I see at Year Five/Six level.

I suggested to her that we might improve children's understanding of how language works if we could anticipate their needs, and provide support for them as they become (generally) ready to explore a feature. I think of Year Two/Three children, who appear to be well ready to learn more complex concepts, and 'sponge-like' in soaking up new learning - I am sure that they would engage in 'grammar play' - and, for example, be able to identify and talk about the subject of their sentences.

It would appear to me that 'grammar' inevitably becomes a remedial need - we leave it too late - some children just do not 'osmose' these things - teachers then have to try to patch things up. It is almost always too late!

The idea of 'grammar play' belongs to the following researchers:

Consider the following:

Abstract

This paper reports on a national study, involving a mixed-method research design comprising a randomised controlled trial (RCT), text analysis, student and teacher interviews and lesson observations. It set out to investigate whether contextualised teaching of grammar, linked to the teaching of writing, would improve student outcomes in writing and in metalinguistic understanding. The RCT involved 744 students in 31 schools in the south-west and the Midlands of England, and was a blind randomisation study. Classes were randomly allocated to either a comparison or intervention group, after the sample had been matched for teacher linguistic subject knowledge (LSK). The statistical data were complemented by three interviews per teacher and three interviews with a focus student in each class, plus three lesson observations in each class, giving a data-set of 93 teacher interviews, 93 student interviews and 93 lesson observations. In addition, the final pieces of writing produced for each scheme of work were collected. The statistical results indicate a significant positive effect for the intervention, but they also indicate that this benefit **was experienced more strongly by the more able writers in the sample**. The regression modelling also indicates that **teacher LSK was a significant mediating factor** in the success of the intervention. The qualitative data provide further evidence of the impact of teacher knowledge on how the intervention was implemented and on students' metalinguistic learning. **It also reveals that teachers found the explicitness, the use of discussion and the emphasis on playful experimentation to be the most salient features of the intervention**. The study is significant in providing **robust evidence for the first time of a positive benefit derived from the teaching of grammar, and signals the potential of a pedagogy for writing which includes a theorised role for grammar**.

Myhill, D. A., Jones, S. M., Lines, H. & Watson, A. (2012). Re-thinking grammar: the impact of embedded grammar teaching on students' writing and students' metalinguistic understanding. *Research Papers in Education*, 27 (2), 139-166.

And, further; from: Grammar teaching and writing skills: the research evidence

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Do structured grammatical exercises improve writing?

Grammar teaching could be surreptitious, as it were, with a clear underlying theory of grammar but minimal use of grammatical terminology. This is in fact how a lot of grammar teaching has been done; and in particular there is a well-recognised activity called 'sentence combining' which seems to be widely used in the USA. There seems to be good evidence that this kind of activity benefits children's writing (Abrahamson 1977; Barton 1997; Hillocks 1986; Mellon 1969; O'Hare 1973), and in some studies it turned out that this kind of grammar teaching produced better results than more traditional teaching of grammatical analysis. For example, Ellis (1994) reporting Hillocks (1986) writes: "Only grammar teaching showed an overall negative effect. ... On the basis of a comparison of 67 experimental studies, Hillocks commented, 'Nearly everything else is more effective in increasing the quality of writing'. (Hillocks 1986:214)"; in contrast, "Hillocks surveys the many studies of the effects of sentence combining, and finds them overwhelmingly POSITIVE at all levels (grade 2 to adult). 60% show significant gains in syntactic maturity; 30% non-significant gains; 10% no gains." (Weaver 1996).

Why should these exercises be so much more successful than traditional analysis? It seems reasonable to assume that it is at least in part because they are exercises in the production of language, and specifically in the production of written language, so they feed much more directly into the child's growing repertoire of productive skills than exercises in grammatical analysis do. In short, they are more closely integrated into the teaching of writing, so the skills acquired in isolation are more likely to transfer directly into a usable skill. However, this conclusion does not necessarily rule out the possibility of transfer from grammatical analysis under the right conditions

The highlighting is my own. I was very pleased to find this report, as my earliest thoughts about building the study of grammar in my own school have revolved around a 'sentence building' approach - that some/most of the learning time should be spent constructing small texts that demonstrate more skilled use of strategies in grammar. We do need to ensure, though, that there is some sequential development, rather than haphazard adventures in sentence combining.

How often do we provide children with sentence building opportunities? We do seem to be very much focused on the creation of texts, with little time given to experimentation in building sentences.

There is an increasing amount of research now being conducted into how children's knowledge of the way in which language works can equip them to make informed choices about how they construct their

writing. In times gone by we assumed that children's implicit knowledge of how words work together would enable them to do this. It would appear that this is not sufficient - deliberate learning opportunities are required in order for children to develop the metalinguistic knowledge that will enable them to know about writing, to be able to talk about writing in effective terms, to be able to craft their writing. Refer to excellent articles by Chen and Myhill, and Myhill and Watson.

Chen and Myhill list four categories of metalinguistic understanding, based around Bialystok's two categories, 'analysis, and control'. They are:

Identification: the locating and/or naming of a particular concept - eg this bit tells me why the chef did it.

Elaboration: the elaboration of the concept through explanation or exemplification - eg 'Yes, and that is known as an adverbial phrase, because it is more than a single adverb, but it does not contain a verb'

Extension: the stretching of understanding from the concept to its link with writing - 'So that helps people understand the first part of the sentence - 'I turn the heat down at this stage,

Application: the articulation of how the concept creates meaning in written text - 'Oh - ok, and that helps people to understand why they mustn't let the milk boil'.

These categories might support teachers in creating open ended metalinguistic discussions, especially in view of the fact that teachers often feel that they do not have the knowledge required to help children understand, for instance, why it is more correct to frame a sentence 'this way' rather than 'that way'.

There will inevitably be a need to acknowledge that teachers and children may well be learning together. It would be marvelous if the discussions that take place around a particular sentence, inspire teachers to research, find explanations they can discuss with their children, and so, improve their ongoing understanding of how our language works. Regular discussions about sentences children have created, will enable the building of this meta-language.

Summary:

We should be building more 'deliberate' teaching of grammar into our writing programmes:

- To develop a shared terminology which we can use in all discussions from Year One to Year Six - whether whole class, group, paired discussions by children, or individual teacher/child conferencing.
- To encourage the joy of language - to inquire into, to manipulate sentence parts, to explore the different ways of constructing sentences, aside from the focus on creating meaningful texts.
- To enable the 'surfacing' of children's misconceptions about sentences, phrases, clauses - so that these can be addressed through deliberate acts of teaching.
- To enable teachers to incorporate the elements covered in more explicit grammar learning into

their writing lessons.

- To help children understand what a sentence (in its various forms) is, so that they know WHEN and HOW to punctuate correctly.
- To avoid having to 'put things right' with children who do not seem to be developing correct grammatical understanding.
- To provide a framework one or two steps ahead of the children - so that they can employ grammatical conventions when they are ready to do so.
- To provide opportunities for 'above' children to be able to write at an even higher level through being introduced to higher level grammatical strategies.
- To support children's future or present Second/Third language learning - giving them the means to compare languages and usages.
- Remember - the most effective grammar instruction happens when children are actively involved in creating their own 'grammar memories' documents/folders. At the least, I do think an artist portfolio folder would enable teachers to capture any grammatical understandings discussed in the course of writing instruction. But it could be more structured than that, and could capture the deliberate adventures in grammar that the teacher might do with the children each week - building a 'Class Grammar Book' - with pages on 'Subject'; 'Predicate'; 'Simple sentences'; 'Adjective order'; 'Noun phrases' etc. Children could be nominated to write examples into the book - decorate, make it something the children and teacher would re-visit/refer to.

Concerns:

Will Junior children cope with this?

Why can Junior children not be involved in conversations about the subject of a sentence - "Who or what is this sentence about?" "The man at the hot dog stand put heaps of tomato sauce on my hot dog". "It's about hot dogs" "It's about a hot dog with lots of tomato sauce". "Is it?" "Who put the tomato sauce on the hot dog?" "The man!" "So isn't the sentence about the man?" We need to be able to help children talk **about** the construction of writing.

The kids will find it boring!! (I don't know enough about it, and so, will not be able to switch the children on to the idea)

That depends on how we present the activities. If we are prepared to do some PD, so that we know what we are talking about, and then share our knowledge with the children in fun ways, then they will become enthusiastic about it too. We can add a competitive element - eg

'Search Page 3 of this (copied) Journal story - circle all of the verbs - how many can you find - to push the children to argue about whether or not that word is a verb!

'Cut up sentence - first to assemble to form a correct sentence!'

We cannot afford to spend time on 'grammar lessons'!!

But, we have children doing 'daily dash' type activities - how do we know that 15 mins in the week spent on fun inquiries into words/sentences will not pay dividends as children grow through the school? How do we know that taking 15 to 20 minutes out of 'writing time' once a week won't make a difference to the quality of writing and the degree of writing understanding, and prevent misunderstanding at the senior levels of the school.

We should not be teaching grammatical knowledge out of the actual writing context!

It is all too much for children to deal with! Consider what our poor children are having to bear in mind during a writing activity - the purpose of the writing activity; the current objective they are aiming for; to be able to choose interesting vocabulary etc etc etc - to try to accomplish good sentence forms whilst attending to all of these other duties is too much - let's give them time to play around with sentences - OK, sure, let's try to give authentic reasons for doing so, but let the focus be on experimentation..

Discussion.... Finding answers to why questions.

Most of our kids don't need it - they can form perfectly good sentences anyway.

But they have no significant knowledge of grammatical terminology, so, during conferencing with their teacher, or, when they come to study another language, or, as they move into secondary school, they do not know their subject from their object etc.

My own school's recent 'wrestle' with the conundrum:

Consistent 20 percent 'below' or 'well below' in NS over the years - and this appears to be a common state of affairs in the Primary sector.

Surface features review - difficulties of quantifying the problem - it is very difficult to be able to quantify the problem.

Decision to adopt the Yolanda Soryl approach in Years 1 to 4 as a separate program - to build phonemic awareness, so that we can eradicate some of the Spelling issues that persist into Year Five and Six, but, in order that it not detract from the time spent on writing, we made an adjustment to school timetable to allow for this.

Difficulties in how to cater for the widely varying surface feature needs of the children - cross-grouping? This always creates flow on difficulties.

Decision to re-focus Years 5 and 6 on the Jill Eggleton approach - writing from personal experience - focus on the writing, rather than always on a genre.

I agree with the idea that the best teaching happens during 1 to 1 conferencing when teaching points can be addressed directly with the child who needs them - when conferencing a child's writing, issues of correct grammar usage can be addressed, but the problem remains that, unless children have been introduced to grammar rules and the associated vocabulary, then these conferencing conversations are less efficient, as the rules have to be explained to each child at that time. This lessens the effectiveness of the conversation to really improve the child's writing.

Why the problem?

Lack of teacher knowledge, particularly in grammar - lack of confidence.

Lack of availability of really helpful learning progressions in grammar.

Lack of shared vocabulary.

Time!

Balancing 'expression' with 'skills'.

Class size - 30 children in a class - how do we achieve the best for each of those 30?

Range of abilities and understanding.

Motivation - keep children enthusiastic about writing.

So, what do we/might we/should we expect to see happening in NZ classrooms in this area? What are the understandings here, that teachers might be able to develop with their children?

What discussions might arise if teachers deliberately get their Year One children to talk about 'and' versus 'but'? Would the children come up with the idea that 'and' relates two connected ideas, that there is a time sequence concept at work?? Would they come up with the idea that the 'but' suggests 'Whoops' - something changed, someone was disappointed??? Some wonderful discussions might arise. Children could investigate 'and' and 'but' with some humorous, group based -sentence building. We should not be taking these things at face value - there is a richness waiting to be explored.

Expectations - from the Literacy Progressions

After One year

They draw on knowledge and skills that include:

using vocabulary drawn from their own oral language or encountered in their reading or other classroom activities using their developing phonemic awareness to aurally segment words into syllables (e.g., *win-dow*, *ham-bur-ger*) and one-syllable words into individual phonemes (for example, *b/a/n/d*, *sh/i/p*)

using their developing visual memory to accurately write some key personal words and some high-frequency words¹

encoding (spelling) unfamiliar words by using their developing knowledge of phoneme– grapheme relationships, which enables them to:

recognise and write most sounds of English in at least one appropriate way (for example, *s*, *t*, *ch*, *ow*, *k*, *f*, *oy*)

recognise that there can be different ways of representing the same sound (for example, *phone/father;keep/cat*)

apply sound–letter relationships in order to write words they want to use (for example, *catapulla*)
encoding (spelling) unfamiliar words by using their developing knowledge of morphology to write word endings correctly (for example, *jump/jumped, boy/boys*)
using classroom resources such as wallcharts and picture dictionaries
forming all upper-case and lower-case letters and numerals correctly
understanding simple text types (for example, personal recounts and simple descriptions) and using them to meet their writing purpose
composing simple sentences and composing some compound sentences using conjunctions such as *and* or *but*;
using capital letters and full stops to begin and end sentences

After Two years

They draw on knowledge and skills that include:

using their personal content vocabulary of written words as well as words and phrases that are part of their expanding oral vocabulary
using their developing phonemic awareness to form new words aurally by changing or taking out some of the sounds in a word or by adding new sounds to words
using their visual memory to spell personal vocabulary as well as high-frequency words, which could include most of the words in essential lists 1 and 2 as well as some of the high-frequency words in essential lists 3 and 4.
encoding (spelling) unfamiliar words by:
 using their knowledge of diverse phoneme–grapheme relationships to write some of the sounds of English in different ways (for example, *photo, laugh, Friday*)
 applying strategies such as sounding out words, making analogies to words that sound or look the same, and using known chunks and rimes
 using their increasing knowledge of morphology to correctly spell word endings and other morphemes (for example, *greatest, florist*)
 applying their knowledge of simple spelling rules (for example, using -es for plural nouns ending in s, such as *buses*)
attempting some variety and precision in the use of adjectives, nouns, and verbs
forming all lower-case and upper-case letters correctly with increasing speed and automaticity
using appropriate text structures for text types such as simple recounts, descriptions, and reports
composing mainly simple and compound sentences, with some variation in their beginnings
using simple conjunctions correctly, with subject–verb agreement and noun–pronoun agreement
using full stops, question marks, or exclamation marks to end sentences and using capital letters correctly to begin sentences (and for familiar proper nouns)

After Three years

They draw on knowledge and skills that include:

using increasingly specific words and phrases (e.g., adjectives and more precise nouns and verbs) that are appropriate to the content of the text;
using their visual memory to spell personal vocabulary and high-frequency words (e.g., many words from essential lists 1–4 and some from list 5 and list 6⁴);
encoding (spelling) unfamiliar words by:
 using their knowledge of phoneme–grapheme relationships, along with their developing awareness of spelling conventions, to select correct spelling patterns for sounds in words (e.g., spelling the k sound correctly in both *catch* and *kitchen*)
 applying their growing knowledge of useful spelling rules (e.g., the rules relating to adding simple plural suffixes such as those in *baby/babies* and *half/halves*) and their growing knowledge of morphology (e.g., adding a *d* to *hear* to make *heard*)

applying their expanding knowledge of graphemes (e.g., of graphemes such as *or*, *awe*, *oar*, and *oor*, which record similar sounds) to write words correctly;

using simple written language features (such as alliteration) and visual language features (such as labelled diagrams) to support meaning;

writing all upper-case and lower-case letters correctly, legibly, and fluently;

using a basic text structure to organise their text effectively for its purpose (e.g., a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end);

using both simple and compound sentences that vary in their beginnings and lengths (and in the simple conjunctions used) and that are usually grammatically correct;

attempting to write complex sentences;

constructing sentences in which the tenses are mostly consistent;

using capital letters, full stops, question marks, and exclamation marks correctly.

By the end of Year Four

They draw on knowledge and skills that include:

using language and a simple text structure that are appropriate for the purpose, e.g., an orientation, sequenced events described in the past tense, and linking words to show sequence (for a recount);

using vocabulary (in particular, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) that clearly conveys ideas, experiences, or information;

encoding (spelling) by:

using their knowledge of diverse phoneme–grapheme relationships (e.g., *ship*, *chef*, *ocean*, *station*, *special*), of the

meaning and spelling of morphemes (e.g., root words and affixes), and of common, reliable spelling rules and conventions

using their visual memory to help them spell personal vocabulary and high-frequency words correctly (the high-frequency words include most words from essential lists 1–4 and many from essential lists 5–7¹);

expanding their writing vocabulary by using strategies such as:

applying their knowledge of the meaning of most common prefixes (e.g., *un-*, *sub-*, *pre-*, *non-*) and most common suffixes (e.g., *-ful*, *-ly*, *-tion*, *-able/-ible*, and *-ment*)

using reference sources (e.g., dictionaries and thesauruses) to check the meanings of words and to find new words;

using written language features (such as similes and onomatopoeia) and visual language features (such as illustrations and diagrams) to support meaning;

using mainly simple and compound sentences, along with some complex sentences, that vary in their beginnings, structures, and lengths and are mostly correct grammatically;

correctly using subject–verb agreement, tense agreement, and pronouns and prepositions;

using capital letters, full stops, question marks, and exclamation marks correctly and using speech marks, commas for lists, and apostrophes for contractions correctly most of the time.

By the end of Year Six

They draw on knowledge and skills that include:

using an overall text structure that is appropriate for their purpose, e.g., an orientation, a problem, a climax, and a satisfying resolution (for a narrative) and an introduction, a series of main points, and a logical conclusion (for a report); selecting vocabulary that is appropriate to the topic, register, and purpose (e.g., academic and subject-specific vocabulary appropriate for specific learning areas or precise and descriptive words to create a mental image);

using written language features (such as emotive vocabulary) and visual language features (such as headings, charts, or maps) to extend or clarify meaning and to engage their audience;

using their knowledge of how words work (e.g., knowledge of diverse phoneme–grapheme relationships, of common, reliable spelling rules and conventions, and of the meanings and spellings of morphemes), along with their knowledge of word derivations, to fluently and correctly encode most unfamiliar words, including words of many syllables;

correctly spelling all high-frequency words¹ used in their writing;

organising related ideas into paragraphs (e.g., paragraphs comprising a topic sentence with supporting detail) and beginning to use cohesive devices to link paragraphs;

using simple and compound sentences that are correct grammatically and have a variety of structures, beginnings, and lengths and using some complex sentences that are mostly correct grammatically;

using basic punctuation that is mostly correct (e.g., when punctuating dialogue);

attempting some complex punctuation (e.g., using apostrophes for possession, commas for clauses, or semicolons).

Summary as quick reference

After One Year: composing simple sentences and composing some compound sentences using conjunctions such as *and* or *but*; using capital letters and full stops to begin and end sentences

After Two Years: attempting some variety and precision in the use of adjectives, nouns, and verbs; composing mainly simple and compound sentences, with some variation in their beginnings; using simple conjunctions correctly, with subject–verb agreement and noun–pronoun agreement; using full stops, question marks, or exclamation marks to end sentences and using capital letters correctly to begin sentences (and for familiar proper nouns).

After Three Years: using both simple and compound sentences that vary in their beginnings and lengths (and in the simple conjunctions used) and that are usually grammatically correct; attempting to write complex sentences; constructing sentences in which the tenses are mostly consistent; using capital letters, full stops, question marks, and exclamation marks correctly.

End of Year Four: using mainly simple and compound sentences, along with some complex sentences, that vary in their beginnings, structures, and lengths and are mostly correct grammatically; correctly using subject–verb

agreement, tense agreement, and pronouns and prepositions.

End of Year Six: using simple and compound sentences that are correct grammatically and have a variety of structures, beginnings, and lengths and using some complex sentences that are mostly correct grammatically; using basic punctuation that is mostly correct (e.g., when punctuating dialogue); attempting some complex punctuation (e.g., using apostrophes for possession, commas for clauses, or semicolons).

Classroom Activities - I have created a number of 'playful experimentations' below. They will apply to different Year groups, but I have not attempted to pigeon hole them. They may be modifiable up or down the years.

Word of the day - Any level

Invite children to bring a word of the day from home. Pop them in a hat. Pull one out, perhaps a second.

Discuss.

Word family?

Part of speech?

Tense?

Sentences - How we might talk about one sentence

Who or what is this sentence about?

What do we know about this person or object?

What did happen in this sentence?

To whom or to what did this happen?

How did it happen?

When did it happen?

Why did it happen?

What else do we know about how it happened?

Sentence quality - Any level

Questions we can ask of a sentence in order to judge its quality:

Does the sentence:

Have a subject?

Have a predicate/verb?

Decision - Is this an actual sentence.

Make sense?

Read easily?

Have the right order?

Have other quality components - eg adjectival/adverbial phrase/clause?

Have correct punctuation?

Create a feeling of some sort - suspense, sympathy, excitement, horror??

Be able to be read confidently by a reader - ie the reader will not stumble as they read this sentence?

Draw a response from the reader?

Create reader interest?

Add this list to the class Grammar Folder.

Sentence building - All Year groups

The basic activity - regular fun, school environment based writing opportunities - but **one sentence only**. This could almost form a class log of the school year - tapping into school events, with samples of 'best sentences' glued into a folder.

Write your week's best sentence - include the word '**cross-country**' - what adjectives and adverbs (and phrases/clauses), noun phrases, could you include?

Make sure you start and finish your sentence correctly.

Can you label your sentence with the sentence parts you know?

Eg Shivering, and moving from foot to foot at the start line, the cross-country runners waited apprehensively for the sound of the starter signal.

Sentence building - Year Three/Four plus

The basic activity - regular fun, school environment based writing opportunities - but **one sentence only**.

Start as whole class group, but with children ready to move to small groups. Teacher to select children from the class to; nominate a verb or predicate; to nominate a noun or subject; to nominate noun or object; to nominate an adverb.

Children to move to groups to create best sentence using these parts, and in any tense, with any other words/phrases/clauses they choose to use.

Write onto large paper.

Come back to whole class. Vote for best sentence. Teacher to choose children to justify their vote.

Sentence conversations - any level - increase the number of words, forcing chn to use phrases, clauses.

Can you write a sentence (or, question; statement) with exactly four words - one word has to be 'car'.

His car was blue.

10 words?

I saw a big truck crash into a parked car.

A question in 15 words?

Why did you drive Dad's car into town, if you were not coming home tonight?

A statement about 'computers' in 20 words?

It is quite amazing to see the progress that has been made in the last five years in computer technologies.

This makes chn think about their sentence construction - hopefully, they will start to try using phrases/clauses - esp as the number of words increases. It will encourage chn to discuss when a 'sentence' IS a sentence, and when it 'stops' being a sentence.

Subject - Year Two

A sentence has to have a subject. (It also has to have a predicate (verb).)

The subject is the 'thing' that DOES the action or HAS the action - eg the old **house** creaked; **Summer** is coming!

Eg Jack jumped - Jack is the subject, and jumped is the predicate.

At all times, and at every opportunity, model the placement of capital letter and full stop to signify beginning and end of sentence.

Choose a topic - 'At the beach'.

Each child to write a brilliant sentence about things that happen at the beach.

Eg I jumped off the wharf and made a huge splash.

The **dog** chased the ball into the water.

She was an amazing kiteboarder.

The lady's **hat** blew across the sand.

The **fisherman** winched his boat onto its trailer.

The fisherman's **boat** was really old.

The **boy** got out of the water and sunbathed to warm up.

Come together - child reads out his/her sentence, and children identify the subject of their sentence.

Collect some of the sentences with subjects underlined, so that you can re-visit.

Record/paste some into Class Grammar log.

Subject and predicate - Year Two

So that the children get the idea that something (the subject) does something (the predicate) in every sentence, and so that they can pick these from a sentence that has other features, we should spend some time on this.

Eg The noisy red **speedboat(S) was pulling(Pr.)** three water-skiers!

The subject is simply '**speedboat**'.

Ask children to find a good sentence in their writing books, or have them write sentences and underline their **subject** and **predicate**. Ask each child to read out their sentence. Nominate children to identify the Subject and Predicate. Could do this in groups first, then come together.

Predicate - Simple present verbs - Year Two/Three

Description: A statement about something that someone does

Eg Robin **paints**.

With your group, take a turn each to do something. Write down the action that each person chooses.

Eg Troy **stands**.

Jenny **bends**.

Johnny **smiles**.

Ryan **sings**.

Circle the action each person has done.

As a class, big circle. Each person to do an action. Class to name the classmate, and what they are doing **in the present**.

Predicate - Simple past verbs - Year Two/Three

In your group, make a list of the things the members did last night. Just write the name and the action.

Eg Troy **read**.

Jenny **danced**.

Johnny **watched**.

Ryan **practiced**.

Share your actions with the class. When did you do them? **In the past**.

Predicate - Simple past - Year Two/Three

On your paper sheet, write down some of the **actions** that happened for you **yesterday** - eg **ate; skateboarded; shared; slept; cried; shouted; etc.**

Use one of your actions in a sentence, and circle your

Eg Last night, I **slept** in the rumpus room.

Yesterday, Dad **brought** home KFC for lunch.

Predicate - Simple past - Year One/Two

In a class circle, Child One names a present action eg **I run**. Next child gives the Simple past - **I ran**, and names the next Simple present, and so on.

Teacher to record on a chart, any trouble spots in Simple present form.

Return to trouble spots, and do a class circle with children choosing from the simple present trouble spots, and next child seeing if they can now name the simple past.

Don't dwell on hang vs hung/sang vs sung at this stage.

Tense - Year Two/Three

Use a 'Today I.....'; 'Yesterday, I'; 'Tomorrow, I will/am going to.....'.

Teach the children about the tenses. Use examples in the three tenses.

Child to go to tables, write three action verbs on a slip of paper, and bring back to mat. Child names one of their action verbs (in tense of their choice).

Chn pop hands up to name the verb in one other tense.

Predicate - Simple past and simple present - Year Three

Make up a class song or chant

Yesterday I **clung**, today I **cling**

Yesterday I **brought**, today I **bring**

Yesterday I **rang**, today I **ring**

Yesterday I **sang**, today I **SING!**

Today the soldiers **fight**, but yesterday they **fought**

Today the mailman **brings**, but yesterday he **brought**

Today the Policeman **seeks**, but yesterday he **sought**

Today the customer **buys**, but yesterday he **bought**.

Predicate - Past, Present, Future - Year Four

Children in class circle.

Child One names a verb in simple present tense (**run**), or present continuous (**am running**)

Child to his/her right names the past tense (**ran**) or (**was running**).

Child to left names future (**will run**) or (**will be running**)

Child to left names next verb.

Can make it that they have to match simple or continuous.

Conjunctions - Year Two

'And' and 'but'

Choose from 'and' or 'but'

Dad wanted to paint the house..... it was raining.

I rode to the beach... went for a swim.

I tried my best to find my puppy..... I couldn't find him anywhere.
Dad is a Scorpio.....mum is too.

Try to establish the difference.
Pop into log.

Predicate - Simple future - Year Three

Description: James **will run**.

(Can use James **is going to run**.)

In class circle, choose a child. This child names a classmate, and one simple action the classmate might well do **tomorrow** (could be something they might do at lunchtime, to limit the choices, and to prevent anything negative)

Eg Jack **will run**.

Is Jack doing this now? No, he is going to be doing it tomorrow.)

Jenny **will laugh**.

Is Jenny doing this now? No, she is going to be doing it tomorrow.

Ryan **will throw**.

Mina **will dance**.

Write two and pop up on the 'Spag'letics folder.

Predicate - Present progressive - Year Three

Description: Is an action that someone is doing right now!!!!

The children need to be able to see that the action is actually happening as you speak eg

James **is listening**.

Children in class circle.

Teacher to nominate a child to perform some action either standing still, or moving around the circle. At half-way, change.

Children pop hands up to name an action word - Jack **is running**; Jack **is hopping**.

Predicate - Action verbs and linking verbs - Year Five

Action verbs are about actions. Linking verbs are more about 'being' - they are more thoughtful, and about connecting other words.

Action or linking?

Jack **drove** home. (A)

Jack **is** home. (L)

But, some can be both!!

Jenny **feels** sick. (L)

Jenny **feels** the material for her new dress. (A)

Troy **looked** up at the plane. (A)

Troy **looked** really tired. (L)

Children in groups - brainstorm/look through a dictionary and find five other linking verbs: **am; is; are; was; were; appear; seem; look; become; feel; smell; tastes;**

There are about sixty altogether.

Choose one of your linking verbs - can you use it as an Action verb??

Eg Jane appeared tired vs Jane appeared from behind the tree.

Tense agreement - Year Two on.

Try to find a piece of children's writing that has conflicting tenses.

Discuss.

Eg I **went** to soccer practice and we **have to** run right round the field - twice!

Children to write a sentence that has two verbs that agree in tense.

Children to choose two tenses, and write a sentence of their own that has conflicting tenses.

Eg I **go** to swimming club on Tuesday afternoon and we **had** to swim two lengths.

I **went** to McDonalds for my birthday tea, and we **will have** lots of fun.

Discuss.

Sentence Building - Year Three

Given the cut up words of a compound sentence, build the two parts, and separate them with a comma. Add the capital letter and full stop.

Eg Dad left for work early, but he left his laptop at home.

Irregular verbs - Year Three

Description: These are verbs that do not simply add -d or -ed for the past tense, as do regular verbs.

Regular verb examples:

I jump - I **jumped**

I laugh - I **laughed**.

Irregular verb examples:

I sing - I **sang**

I bring - I **brought**.

Children in groups: Five minutes to see how many irregular verbs they can write down. There are about 200 of them.

Option: Each group in turn gets to call out one of their irregular verbs. They get one point, but any other group with that verb has to cross it out. ??????

Reiterate - which is which? What is a regular verb? What is an irregular verb?

Present progressive - Year Three

Go outside, sit down with jotter. Write down five actions you can see happening - eg mowing; flying; shouting; skipping; etc. See if you can add the other bit that you need - eg **is** building

Go inside and write one of these actions into a sentence - eg Logan **is** mowing the lawns. Share your action words and your sentence with the class.

Trying to create particular atmospheres through deliberate experimentation with grammatical features

Building the setting:

Ok, before you start to write about what happened at your brother's birthday, you can add a sentence about what came before.

'It **had** poured with rain all day, and my brother was really disappointed, because he was not going to be able to take his friends kayaking for a birthday activity'.

The 'had' tells us that the rain was already falling before his party started.

Or, you can 'interrupt' your story to tell us of something that had already happened or been

done by someone, that affects the story you are telling us.

Eg I so enjoyed my brother's birthday party. Mum **had** arranged a magician to come, and she was really, really crazy funny.

When did the party happen? 'Saturday'. When do you think Mum arranged the magician? 'Last week, I think.' So that happened before the party actually happened.

Building Character:

How do we create a character through the manipulation of grammatical features.

Develop a SHY character **through the use of verbs** - how do the things this character does show that he/she is shy? List the verbs that might apply to a shy person - retreated; sank, perspired, shuffled, mumbled, whispered....

Develop a SHY character through the use of adjectives - other than 'shy' itself - what other adjectives/phrases can you use?

Through the use of adverbs?

Eg The shorter, stockier young guy edged forward quietly, to stand just to the left of his noisier friend. He wiped his eyes thoughtfully, and appeared to count slowly to three in front of the five people sitting around the table, before beginning to explain how it had all happened.....

Building suspense:

How might we build suspense?

1st person or 3rd person - Which would be best - 'I crept along the passageway, terrified that the crazy would come out of the next doorway.....', or, 'He crept along the passageway, terrified that the crazy would come out of the next doorway..'?

Verbs with adverbs - eased gradually, froze immediately, opened tentatively

Eg the young boy gradually eased the door open - inch by inch - peering through the gap and into the darkness , trying to see whatever it was, before it saw him...

Websites for Grammar activities - there are a number of these.

Study Ladder - Grammar - seems quite good.

British Council <https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/grammar-vocabulary>

The Guardian

www.theguardian.com › [Teacher Network](#) › [Teaching tips](#)

Ideas for classroom practice

From:

<https://nz.pinterest.com/pin/358739926548196455/>

Go also to:

Jump Start

<http://www.jumpstart.com/common/the-letter-game-view>

Teach Grammar to Children with Jolly Grammar - Jolly Learning Jolly ...

jollylearning.co.uk/overview-about-jolly-grammar/

This link takes you to the 'Oxford Jargon Buster'.

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/reading-site/expert-help/grammar-punctuation-and-spelling-made-easy>

My conclusions:

1. We need to take care in reading research on the teaching of grammar. The ground is moving - and the research now seems to support the idea that children who know about how language works can then bring that knowledge to the creation of clever texts.
2. We need to be able to appoint staff who have above average skill in written language. We need applicants to Colleges of Education to be skilled in this area, or helped to be ready to teach in this area when they graduate.
3. We need to be able to upskill our existing staff in this area.
4. We need to find a staff member who can champion this area of our in-school curriculum - learn about the area, support teachers, help provide resources, etc.
5. We need to involve our teaching staff in discussions about how we might involve children in learning about language.
6. We need to look at the documents which identify the grammatical learning that is suitable at given year levels, and decide a broad program of grammatical investigation.
7. We need to provide fun opportunities for 'playful experimentation' - no worksheets in sight.
8. We need to be listening to what children say, and addressing misconceptions that they have developed, or that we have caused for them.
9. We need to bear in mind that our work in this area is not to be about 'finding fault' with children's writing, and not about measuring their inadequacy, but about building their knowledge/understanding, and so, their abilities to create appealing and meaningful texts.
10. We need more support from the Ministry in how schools can develop program in this area. A one stop web location could allow educators to post 'best experiences' with children in developing metalinguistic knowledge and skill.
11. We need to maintain our drive to build 'children as writers' - with adventures in grammar supporting children's abilities to be able to best express their good ideas.
12. Build enjoyment - make it a fun learning part of our Literacy program.

Grammar texts

Grammar Girl presents the Ultimate Writing Guide for Students

Mignon Fogarty

Henry Holt and Company, 2011.

Recent publication

'Warm-up Games for Grammar'

Frances Adlam

Essential Resources

There are books for Years Three and Four; Years Five and Six; and Years Seven and Eight.

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The UKLA Committee

Claire Dowdall - UK

Professor Judy Parr

Mr Murray Gadd

Rena Kettle

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Australian Curriculum

NZ Curriculum Statement

The Literacy Learning Progressions

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Jonny Walker Blog

Hudson - Grammar Instruction - Chapter 19, Best Practices in Writing Instruction; Second edition, ed. Charles A. MacArthur.

Myhill and Watson - 2014 Grammar in the Writing Curriculum

Chen and Myhill, Children talking about writing: Investigating Metalinguistic Understanding.

Debra Myhill, Susan Jones, and Helen Lines, 'Grammatical Reasoning: How Learners Conceptualise Grammatical Metalanguage'