

# English Language

Grammar: Teaching and Learning:  
ideas for teaching grammar across A level English  
Language, including extended class activity

### GRAMMAR, INCLUDING MORPHOLOGY: TEACHING IDEAS

1. To introduce the key grammatical concepts, start from the instinctive knowledge that learners will have. Provide them with a set of sentences, some of which will be ungrammatical e.g. The unboy was tree a climbing. This can lead to a discussion of the link between word order and meaning, and word formation in English. It will help learners to appreciate that they already have a body of knowledge, which language study will make more conscious.
2. Introducing the key grammatical concepts can be teacher-led, with definitions and examples provided for the learners to apply. As they gain experience, however, the introduction of new concepts can be more interactive with learners producing their own examples from the given information, or building their own definitions from a set of data e.g. the structure of noun phrases.
3. To make their knowledge of grammatical structures part of their usable lexicon, learners need practical exercises in which they identify and describe phrases, clauses and sentences in context e.g. underlining selected features such as noun phrases or subordinate clauses; cloze deletion exercises where learners have to insert an appropriate verb phrase in terms of tense, voice, aspect, modality; writing their own noun phrases, building from a simple structure to a complex pre- and post-modified phrase; creating their own words.
4. Tying specific grammatical features to a distinctive text type will help learners to see examples in context, and to understand the importance of exploring meaning e.g. headlines and noun phrases; commentaries and verb phrases; period texts and subordinate clauses; reading scheme books and simple sentences
5. Learners should become alert to language use around them. They should be encouraged to collect short examples of the language they encounter on a day-to-day basis for analysis e.g. newspaper headlines, signs, book titles, place names, packaging etc.
6. Allocate some lessons as 'Terminology Check' lessons. Record all the terms used during the course of a lesson and compare the range as learners acquire more knowledge and experience week by week. The aim should be to see terminology across all the language levels, not just word classes!

### Extended Class Activity: GRAMMAR, INCLUDING MORPHOLOGY

1. Read the two versions of the fairy tale 'The Three Bears', printed below. Write a four-five sentence overview which demonstrates that you have engaged with the texts.
2. Identify any distinctive use of lexis and syntax in the texts. You should think about the type and form of words; the structure of phrases; the range of main and subordinate clauses; and the sentence types and structures.
3. Annotate the texts using appropriate terms and make notes on:
  - the context
  - the purpose
  - the intended audience
  - the tone.
4. How effective is the simplified version? Explore the different lexical and grammatical choices made by each writer and the effects created.

#### Text 1: An extract from 'The Story of the Three Bears', Robert Southey (1837)

This fairy story was being told orally in Britain from the 1830s, but Southey was the first to record it in his collection of prose writings, *The Doctor*.

One day, after they had made the porridge for their breakfast, and poured it into their porridge-pots, they walked out into the wood while the porridge was cooling, that they might not burn their mouths, by beginning too soon to eat it. And while they were walking, a little old Woman came to the house. She could not have been a good, honest old Woman; for first she looked in at the window, and then she peeped in at the keyhole; and seeing nobody in the house, she lifted the latch. The door was not fastened, because the Bears were good Bears, who did nobody any harm, and never suspected that any body would harm them. So the little old Woman opened the door, and went in; and well pleased she was when she saw the porridge on the table. If she had been a good little old Woman, she would have waited till the Bears came home, and then, perhaps, they would have asked her to breakfast; for they were good Bears, —a little rough or so, as the manner of Bears is, but for all that very good-natured and hospitable. But she was an impudent, bad old Woman, and set about helping herself.

So first she tasted the porridge of the Great, Huge Bear, and that was too hot for her; and she said a bad word about that. And then she tasted the porridge of the Middle Bear, and that was too cold for her; and she said a bad word about that too. And then she went to the porridge of the Little, Small, Wee Bear, and tasted that; and that was neither too hot, nor too cold, but just right; and she liked it so well, that she ate it all up: but the naughty old Woman said a bad word about the little porridge-pot, because it did not hold enough for her.

Then the little old Woman sate down in the chair of the Great, Huge Bear, and that was too hard for her. And then she sate down in the chair of the Middle Bear, and that was too soft for her.

And then she sate down in the chair of the Little, Small, Wee Bear, and that was neither too hard, nor too soft, but just right. So she seated herself in it, and there she sate till the bottom of the chair came out, and down came her's, plump upon the ground. And the naughty old Woman said a wicked word about that too.

### Text 2: An extract from 'Goldilocks and the Three bears' (1993)

This version of the fairy story has been retold using familiar language so that children can read the story for themselves. It was published as part of a reading scheme, which introduces young readers to traditional tales in an accessible form.

One day, Mummy Bear made some porridge for breakfast. She made it very hot. Even Daddy Bear could not eat it.

"Come on Mummy Bear and Baby Bear," said Daddy Bear. "We will go for a walk."

"Yes," said Mummy Bear. "Our porridge will cool."

So they went off into the woods. After a little while, a nosy little girl came out of the woods.

Her name was Goldilocks.

"I wonder who lives in that little house?" she said. She went up to the door and knocked.

But there was no answer.

The door was open a crack and Goldilocks pushed it. "Hello?" she called out. There was still no answer. So Goldilocks walked in. The house was very cosy, and there were three chairs around the table. Goldilocks could smell something.

"Mmmm," she said. "That smells good."

Then she saw the three bowls on the table. They were full of porridge.

"Yum yum!" said Goldilocks and she ran to the table. First, she tried some porridge from the biggest bowl.

"Ouch!" said Goldilocks. "That's much too hot. I can't eat that."

Next, she took some porridge from the middle-sized bowl.

"Yuch!" she said. "That's much too cold. I can't eat that."

Then Goldilocks took some from the smallest bowl.

"Mmmm!" she said. "That's just right." And she ate the porridge until it was all gone.

"Now I need a rest," said Goldilocks. She went to the biggest chair and sat down.

"Oh no!" she said. "That's much too hard. I can't sit in that."

Next, she tried the middle-sized chair.

"Oh no!" she said. "That's too soft. I can't sit in that."

Then, Goldilocks sat in the smallest chair.

"Oh Yes!" she said. "That's just right." But she wriggled and she wriggled, and she squirmed and squirmed. And suddenly, SNAP! The leg on the chair broke.

### Secondary texts:

Accessible grammar texts:

*The Frameworks of English, Ballard (Palgrave Macmillan, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2013)*

*Discover Grammar, Crystal (Longman, 1996)*

*Rediscover Grammar, Crystal (Longman, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2004)*

*Making Sense of Grammar, Crystal (Longman, 2004)*

*Grammar and Vocabulary, Jackson (Routledge, 2002)*

*Mastering Advanced Level English Language, Thorne (Palgrave Macmillan, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2008)*

*Mastering Practical Grammar, Thorne (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)*

Grammar books more suitable for teachers:

*English Grammar for Today, Leech, Deuchar and Hoogenraad (Palgrave Macmillan, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2005)* – provides a very clear model of grammar

*An A-Z of English Grammar and Usage, Leech (Pearson Longman, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2001)* – excellent for checking usage/grammatical description of specific words

*A Communicative Grammar of English, Leech and Svartvik (Routledge, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2003)*

*English Language Knowledge for Secondary Teachers, Ross (Routledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2013)*

*A Course in English Language Teaching, Ur (CUP, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2012)*