

Down and dirty with grammar

Presented by

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Wordsmart consulting

Anticipatory set

What's (potentially) wrong with this text by a Year 3 student?

FROGS

Frogs jump and croke a lot. Ther skin is slippery and wet. They hide sometimes and ther big eyes blink. I no some poepel who are scerd of them. I am not scerd of them. I think they are vere cute. Thats what I think.

Anticipatory set: What's wrong?

FROGS

Frogs jump and croak a lot. Their skin is slippery and wet. They hide sometimes and their big eyes blink. I know some people who are scared of them. I am not scared of them. I think they are very cute. That's what I think.

- Spelling (obviously)
- Genre and purpose?? → no real awareness (yet) of matching language features and purpose, e.g. process (verb) types; use of general v specific participants and third v first person; neutral v value laden vocabulary choices; thematisation and cohesion

Anticipatory set

A theme of this workshop: How do teachers move students from their commonsense ways of reading and writing to more culturally valued ways of reading and writing?

Objectives

- To consider the practicalities of teaching grammar in twenty-first century classrooms
- To explore a range of ways that grammar can be used to help with reading and writing
- To convince you that grammar ‘lessons’ do not have to be boring

Outline

- The NAPLAN language conventions test: does it really test literacy?
- Contextualising grammar
- How can grammar be taught?
 - River of words
 - Punctuation cat and mouse
 - Grammar for critical reading and writing

The NAPLAN language conventions test

Does it really test literacy?

NAPLAN 08 (p10)

Jacques Cousteau

French diver Jacques Cousteau was influential in making the general public aware of the underwater world. Through his documentaries featuring sunken wrecks and those featuring the natural marine environment, Cousteau's film work captivated people worldwide. His films allowed audiences to glimpse a new world.

NAPLAN 08 (p10)

In the first sentence, the word *French* is used as

- a verb.
- a noun.
- an adverb.
- an adjective.

This text has been written in

- first person.
- second person.
- third person.

In the last sentence, the word *allowed* is used as:

- a verb.
- a noun.
- an adverb.
- an adjective.

NAPLAN 08

LAME

NAPLAN 08

These issues are important, but limited.

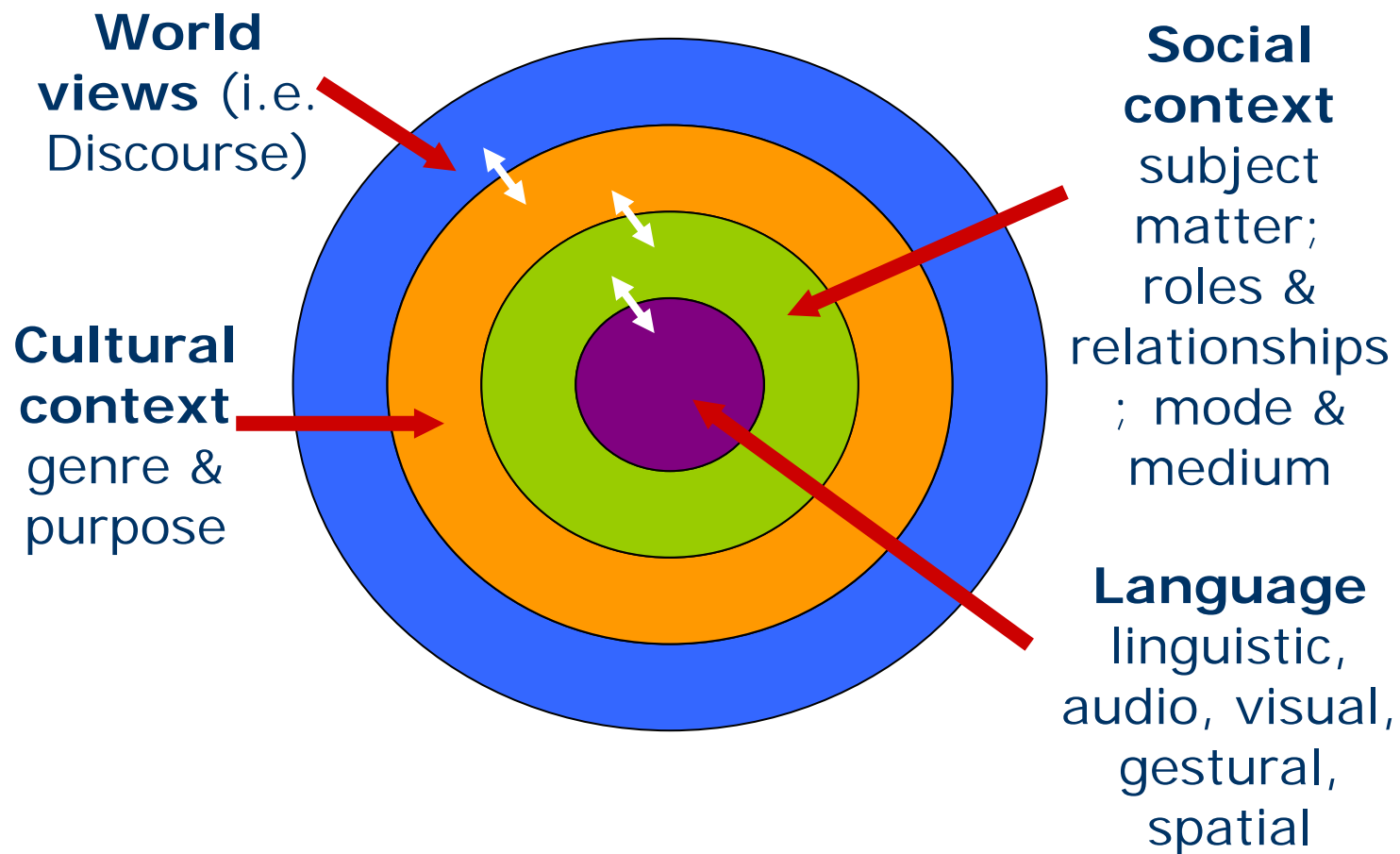
They should not be the (sole or even main) guide to what teachers and students do with grammar in the classroom.



Contextualising the grammar scope and sequence



The context-text model



Language – literal & metaphorical

- **Linguistic (written and spoken)**, e.g. staging of information, cohesion, vocabulary (incl. figurative language), grammar, punctuation & paragraphing, spelling, layout, intonation and rhythm
- **Visual**, e.g. objects, size, setting, colours, lines and vectors position, direction, camera angle, camera movement, shot type, light, editing
- **Gestural**, e.g. eye contact, facial expression, stance, gesture
- **Spatial**, location and movement in space
- **Audio**, e.g. volume, music, sound effects, silence

Comparing contexts and texts

	Monsters of the deep	Gentle giants
Worldviews	Sharks are to be feared & are evil.	Whales are cute, almost human
Genre & purpose	Short news report to inform	
Subject matter	Sharks	Blue whales
Roles & relationships	Journalists for general, adult public	
Mode & medium	Newspaper; paper/internet	
Language choices	Very similar except for use of Appraisal resources	

Use of Appraisal (evaluative) resources

Text 2: Gold Coast beaches were **invaded** yesterday by one of nature's **most vicious** predators. A **mob** of sharks kept **terrified** swimmers out of the water all day. The sharks were hunting large schools of **small** fish. Their **ferocious** attack on the small fish could be seen from the beach. One local scientist described it as a 'feeding **frenzy**'. "They are **killing machines**," the expert said. "They **tear** into the small fish and **massacre** them by the thousands."

Text 3: **Lucky** tourists on the Gold Coast were **treated** to a visit yesterday from a **magnificent** school of blue whales. The **gentle giants** played all day just a few hundred metres from the beaches that were packed with **delighted** tourists. / The **graceful** creatures seemed to be giving a performance as they rose out of the water and blew water from their water spouts. The whales **seemed to be in family groups** with several small whales swimming **lovingly** alongside their mothers.

More on Appraisal

www.grammatics.com/appraisal

How can grammar be taught?



So old school...

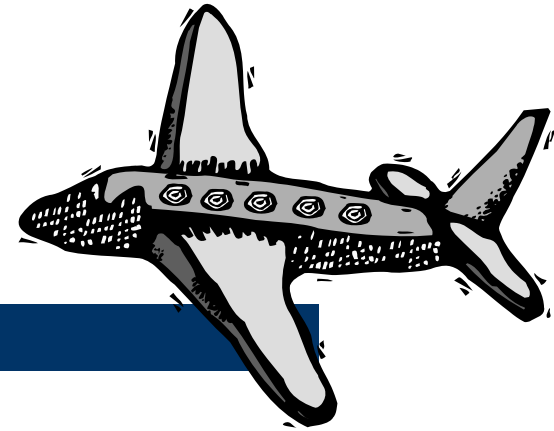
Learning grammar in the 70s

- Once a week
- Jacaranda's *Living English*
- Rules of usage

So new school

- Learning in context – planned, structured, scaffolded
- Active learning

Orientation for short story



‘Angelica’

The plane was plummeting towards the ground. Smoke streamed from the engine. The cabin filled with sound: the roaring of the plane as it dropped out of the sky and people screaming. She could see that some people were praying. The plane was only metres from the ground. It would be over in seconds. She knew they were all going to die.

Claire opened her eyes. She was breathing heavily; her hands were sweating.’

Angelica

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In the classroom

Context, e.g.

- What world view (values, beliefs & attitudes) has given rise to this type of text?
- What's the genre & purpose?
- What's the topic?
- Who's writing for whom? What relationships are being established?
- What's the medium?

Analysis of 'Angelica' – Part 1

Angelica

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In the classroom (see handout)

Grammar (written language), e.g.

- **Stages:** title, orientation & problem/complication (flash forward)
- **Cohesion:** e.g. alignment with anonymous 'she' & forward referencing to 'Claire' (?); related words (plane, cabin, engine); pronoun reference (the plane-it)
- **Vocabulary:** concrete; use of evaluative words (e.g. plummeted, roaring); metaphor in title?

Analysis of 'Angelica' – Part 2

Angelica

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Claire opened her eyes. She was breathing heavily; her hands were sweating.

Grammar (written language), e.g.

- **Grammar:** action Processes; Past tense; high probability (e.g. would be, were going to die); general to specific participants; short clauses
- **Punctuation & Paragraphing:** fullstop, colon, semi-colon
- **Spelling:** conventional

Activity one

Cohesion in 'Angelica': A river of words

The plane was plummeting towards the ground. Smoke streamed from the engine. The cabin filled with sound: the roaring of the plane as it dropped out of the sky and people screaming. She could see that some people were praying. The plane was only metres from the ground. It would be over in seconds. She knew they were all going to die.

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Activity one

Cohesion (pronoun reference) in 'Angelica': A river of words

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Claire opened her eyes. She was breathing heavily; her hands were sweating.'

Why?

Activity one

Cohesion (word associations) in 'Angelica': A river of words – have a go

The plane was plummeting towards the ground. Smoke streamed from the engine. The cabin filled with sound: the roaring of the plane as it dropped out of the sky and people screaming. She could see that some people were praying. The plane was only metres from the ground. It would be over in seconds. She knew they were all going to die.

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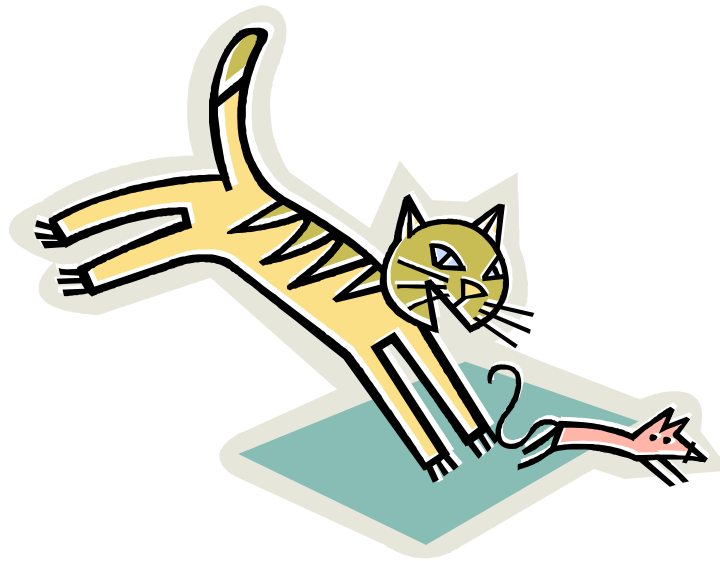
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Language learning cycle

- Modelling
- Guided practice
- Independent practice

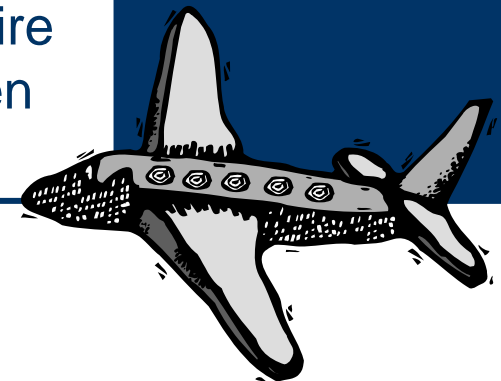
Activity two

Punctuation cat and mouse



Activity two

Circumstance	Participant	Process	Participant	Circumstance
The day before	there	had been	crashes.	
	One	was	the plane that Claire had been on.	



Activity 3

Using grammar to help identify values and beliefs.

Grammar, values and beliefs

grammatical forms are 'resources for encoding interpretations of experience and forms of social (inter)action. Benjamin Lee Whorf argued the point in relation to languages from different cultures. In what we call 'Standard Average European' languages, terms like summer, winter, September, morning, noon, sunset are coded as nouns, as though they were things. Hence these languages make it possible to interpret time as something you can count, use, save, etc. In Hopi, a North American Indian language, this is not possible. Time can only be expressed as 'subjective duration-feeling'. You cannot say 'at noon', or 'three summers'. You have to say something like 'while the summer phase is occurring' (Whorf, 1956). The critical linguists of the East Anglia School...have shown that such different interpretations of experience can also be encoded within the same language, on the basis of different ideological positions.

Grammar, values and beliefs

Tony Trew (1979: 106-7) has described how, when the Harare police, in what was in 1975 still Rhodesia, fired into a crowd of unarmed people and shot thirteen of them, The Rhodesia Herald wrote 'A political clash has led to death and injury' while the Tanzanian Daily News wrote 'Rhodesia's white supremacist police...opened fire and killed thirteen unarmed Africans.' In other words, the political views of newspapers are not only encoded through different vocabularies (of the well-known 'terrorist' vs 'freedom fighter' type), but also through different grammatical structures, that is, through the choice between coding an event as a noun ('death', 'injury') or a verb ('kill') which, for its grammatical completion requires an active subject ('police') and an object ('unarmed Africans').

Grammar goes beyond formal rules of correctness. It is a means of representing patterns of experience...It enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of their experience of what goes on around them and inside them. (Halliday, 1985: 101)

A history lesson

Using grammar to identify:

- values and beliefs of the writer
- how groups of people are being represented

See Texts 5-8

A history lesson: My Place

Re-writing, e.g.

'My name's Barangaroo. I **belong** to this place. We're **staying** here for the summer, at the creek camp, **to get** the fish down in the bay...We **camp** here because the creek water's so fresh and good, and we're close to the river and the bay. In the creek there's a swimming hole where my cousins and I always **play**...Last week a whale got washed up on the bay, so we **invited** some people from round about, and **had** a big barbecue. As well as the meat, we **had** piles of vegetables, and oysters and pippies and crabs and octopus...I **ate** so much I **thought I'd explode**...My grandmother **says**, 'We've always **belonged** to this place.' 'But how long?' I **ask**. 'And how far?' My grandmother **says**, 'For ever and ever.'

A history lesson: My Place

It's not just content:

- Indigenous Australians are Actors associated with largely Doing (or Material) Processes (verb groups)
- Wider range of Processes (including 'inviting')
- Given a voice through Saying Processes

Questions



A large green shape on the left side of the slide, featuring a white, rounded rectangular cutout. The word "Conclusion" is centered within this white area. A dark blue horizontal bar with rounded ends extends from the right side of the green shape across the middle of the slide.

Conclusion

Grammar is:

- Creative
- Exciting
- Powerful

Get to know it better. Treat it with the respect it deserves.


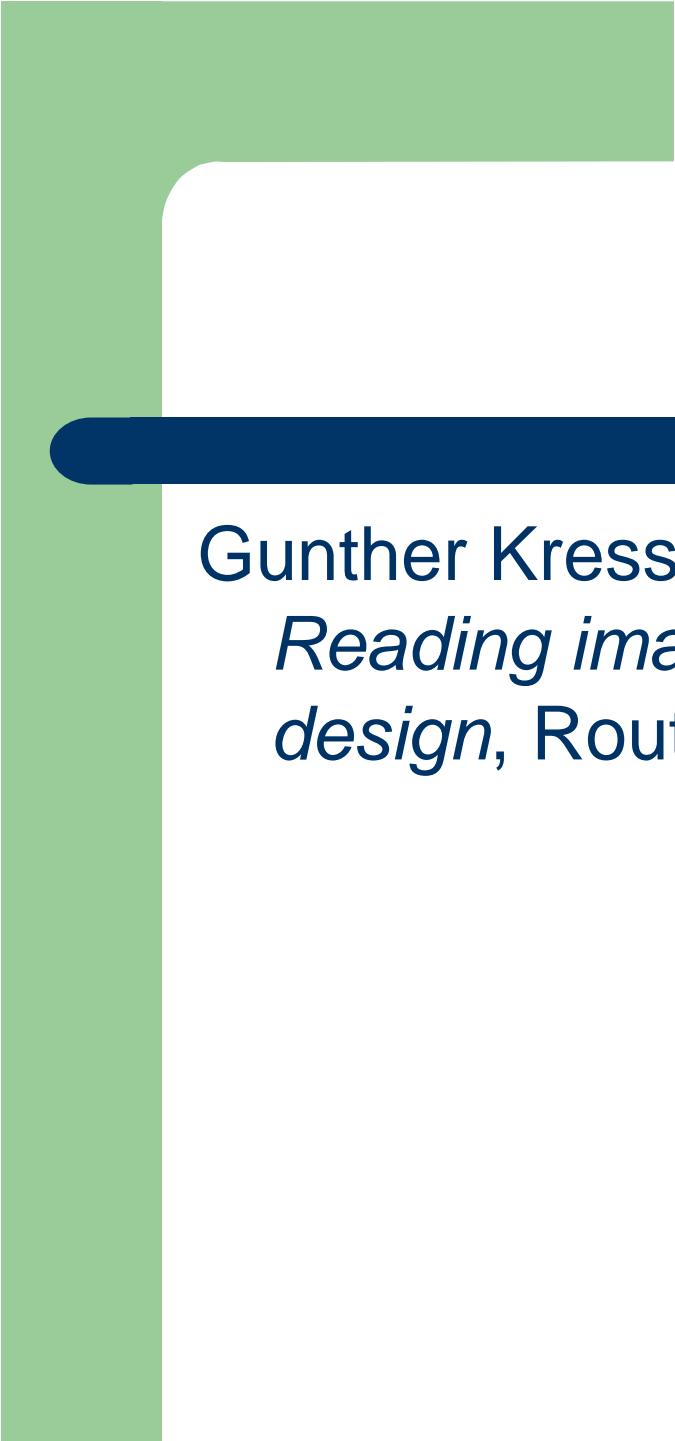
An advertisement

Full day grammar workshops →

- Building key grammatical knowledge (20 August)
- Using grammar to help students read and write (2 December)

Queensland Health Sciences Academy, Gold Coast

www.englishteacher guru.com



Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996)
*Reading images: the grammar of visual
design*, Routledge: London, pp1-2