Improving reading and writing skills at KS4

The '*Grammar for Writing*' Pedagogy at KS4

Developed by Professor Debra Myhill, University of Exeter

Introduction:
The *Grammar for Writing* pedagogy

Professor Debra Myhill directs an educational research team at the **University of Exeter**. As well as being Associate Dean of Research, Debra also leads on the Secondary English PGCE course at the University of Exeter and is a former English teacher.

Debra and her team carry out research into a wide range of areas within literacy, including focusing specifically on the role of grammar teaching in improving writing.

In 2012 Professor Myhill published the findings of a three-year study into the effectiveness of **contextualised** grammar teaching – a pedagogy developed at the University of Exeter and now called *Grammar for Writing*.

The *Grammar for Writing* pedagogy has since proven to almost **double the rate of writing progress at KS3** in randomised control trials.

Find out more about this initial KS3 study at:

www.pearsonschools.co.uk/ks3gfw

Grammar for Writing at KS4?

GCSE change for 2015 brings about a new set of expectations and challenges for learners, most notably with the emphasis on 100% examination, literary heritage texts, writing skills and technical accuracy. Never before have reading and **writing skills** been so important for the success of learners at school, college and in people's learning and working lives.

Naturally, the next step for the University of Exeter and Pearson was to discover whether the use of the *Grammar for Writing* pedagogy had the same profound results in boosting learner progress at **KS4** as it did at KS3.

The study…

Professor Myhill and her team set out to answer the question:

*'Does explicit teaching of contextualised grammar at KS4
improve pupils' attainment in reading and writing non-fiction?'*

The KS4 study was designed to be as close to the initial large-scale study (KS3 version) as possible.

- The trial involved **12** classes of year 10 students in 4 schools randomly selected from the South West of England.

- The sample were randomly allocated into either an **intervention** group of 161 students or a **comparison** group of 147 students in a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) - the gold standard in scientific research such as clinical trialling.

- The intervention group were taught a three week scheme of work founded upon the principles of the *Grammar for Writing* pedagogy, while the comparison group were taught **various schemes** (according to the usual practice of their teachers) which focused on the same GCSE assessment objectives as the intervention.

- An abridged sample Edexcel GCSE English reading and writing non-fiction examination paper, marked by Edexcel examiners, was used to measure **reading and writing attainment** of both groups before and after the intervention period.

- Two students and the teacher from each intervention class were interviewed twice during the delivery of the intervention, each time following on from lesson observation.

Summary of results
– key findings

The research findings showed very positive results from using *Grammar for Writing* with **KS4-level students**.

- The intervention had a **statistically significant positive impact** on student reading and writing outcomes, with a more significant impact on reading than on writing.

- The intervention had a **statistically significant positive impact** specifically on students' responses to reading questions which required **language analysis**, and on the **sentence structure**, **punctuation** and **spelling** scores of the writing test.

- In the reading test, the benefits were greater for classes which had a higher ability profile, but the statistical tests did not find that **ability**, **gender**, **pupil premium** status (or free school meal where schools used that measure), or **EAL** status had a significant impact on the effect of the intervention.

- Evidence from the student interviews and reading tests indicates that the use of metalinguistic terminology helped some students to **articulate their thoughts** more clearly when talking and writing about texts, particularly when **analysing language** and discussing the effects of grammatical structures.

- Evidence from the writing tests indicates that in the post-test intervention group, students were more **focused on crafting sentences** for effect and were experimenting with a wider variety of sentence structures.

- Participating teachers expressed the opinion that the scheme **encouraged students to engage more 'consciously'** with the writing process, thinking more carefully about the options available to them and more about the effect of the techniques applied, instead of writing a 'stream of consciousness.'

- **Explicit attention to grammar can foster student reading and writing development** when it is contextualised within lessons which focus on reading and writing.

You can read the **full report** at **www.edexcel.com/gfw**

Pearson
and *Grammar for Writing*

We believe the *Grammar for Writing* pedagogy provides an exciting, evidence-based method for improving writing and reading progress at KS3 and KS4 through contextualised grammar teaching, which will help many learners to effectively develop the English skills required today and to reach their true potential.

We've been working alongside the University of Exeter since 2012 to embed this pedagogy in teaching and learning resources for KS3, culminating in our **Skills for Writing** series.

More recently, we've been working with Debra Myhill and the University of Exeter to develop a range of **free resources**, **published resources** and **Professional Development training** – all embedding the *Grammar for Writing* pedagogy - for the new **Edexcel GCSE 2015** qualifications.

Edexcel
GCSE 2015 (9-1) free support

edexcel

As part of our GCSE 2015 (9-1) qualifications offering, we'll be providing a range of **free support** for our Edexcel centres which enables you to put the *Grammar for Writing* pedagogy into practice:

- **1 scheme of work**: *Truth is Stranger than Fiction*

- **9 lessons**, comprising lesson PowerPoints, worksheets, a lesson plan and various extra assets

- **A free lesson, available to download now at our webpage below**.

## Find out more:
www.edexcel.com/gfw

Published resources

In spring **2015**, we'll be launching a **brand new teaching and learning service** designed specifically for the new Edexcel GCSE (9-1) English Language specification. The course components incorporate both the ***Grammar for Writing*** and the ***Let's Think in English*** pedagogies, to help you improve learner outcomes for all of your students.

The resources follow on from the successful *Skills for Writing* KS3 series, designed to fully prepare learners of all ability for the challenges of the new GCSE 2015 curriculum.

The resources will comprise:

- *ActiveLearn* Digital Service, powered by ActiveTeach, giving you full access to our interactive front-of-class teaching, planning and assessment service: a wealth of resources to support every extract in the Text Anthology.

- **Professional Development Pedagogy Training** delivered by experts to provide a deep understanding of the pedagogies and how best to embed them into your teaching.
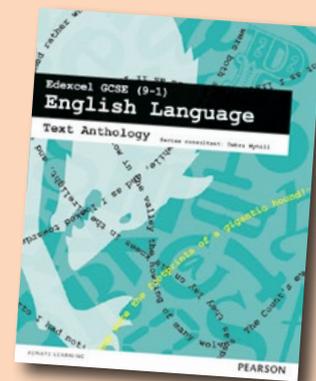
- *Text Anthology (printed)* - 100 fiction and non-fiction extracts carefully chosen to engage children.

- *Revision Guide and Workbook* to support mock and final exam preparation.

*These published resources are not yet endorsed and will be subject to change

Find out more: www.pearsonschools.co.uk/edgcseenglangcg

Principles
of the *Grammar for Writing* pedagogy

The *Grammar for Writing* pedagogy has been developed and refined through a lengthy and rigorous process of trialling and the use of quantitative and qualitative feedback from that trialling. Over that time, seven key principles have emerged:

1. **Make a link between the grammar being introduced and how it works in the writing being taught.**

The emphasis throughout the *Grammar for Writing* pedagogy is on exploring the **effects that grammatical features create on the reader**. This might be exploring the use of modal verbs by speech writers to express different levels of assertiveness, or the way a fiction writer uses extended noun phrases to add descriptive detail.

2. **Explain the grammar through examples, not lengthy explanations.**

Grammar for Writing **is not a grammar course**. The purpose is not to produce students who can identify and label parts of a sentence; rather the purpose is **to make visible how texts are shaped** and how effects are created, so that students can apply this understanding to their own writing.

3. **Build in high-quality discussion about grammar and its effects.**

At the heart of *Grammar for Writing* is the principle that **talk is a key mechanism through which students learn**. The approach deliberately incorporates regular opportunities for students to discuss the grammar points being introduced, to explore the possibilities of language and discuss interpretations and effects.

4. **Use authentic examples from authentic texts to link writers to the broader community of writers.**

Using authentic texts avoids the pitfalls of examples artificially created to exemplify a grammatical point, and also helps young writers explore what real writers do, what choices they make in order to create desired effects.

5. **Use 'creative imitation' to offer model patterns for students to play with and then use in their own writing.**

Imitation can be a powerful tool with which to improve students' writing. The *Grammar for Writing* approach advocates the use of textual models and the use of imitation as a scaffold that allows students to try out new structures and play with new ways of expressing something.

6. **Select activities which support students in making choices and being designers of writing.**

Grammar for Writing seeks to show students **how design choices operate at every level of text production**, from choices about the content and structure of a text to the choices about words, images and syntactical structures.

7. **Include language play, experimentation, risk-taking and games.**

Where 'traditional' grammar teaching has often been characterised by prescriptive, rule-bound views and an emphasis on accuracy and error correction, *Grammar for Writing* promotes **playfulness and experimentation** with language. This helps young writers to see the elasticity of language and the possibilities it affords, rather than what writers must not do.

Find out more:

www.edexcel.com/gfw

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