

Teaching English Grammar

A Handbook for Australian Teachers

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Preface

There is a mastery of the sentence which is very close to power; to be strong is to first of all finish one's sentences.
Does not grammar itself describe the sentence in terms of power, of hierarchy: subject, subordinate, complement?
(Barthes 1986:109)

Effective and powerful writers and readers understand how words are formed and how syntactic patterns carry and influence meaning. We stated the importance of grammar in our first text, published in 1996, *Grammar in its Place* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press). In the intervening years, we have continued to develop our knowledge of teaching English grammar through our work in hundreds of classrooms in Australia and Asia, and in a series of chapters in six major texts on literacy education (Campbell & Green 2000, 2003, 2006; Tompkins, Campbell & Green 2012; and in 2015 and 2018 with Carol Smith), as well as in two series of student texts (Ryles, Campbell & Coghill 1998 and 2005).

We believe that:

- Students bring to their study of written English their implicit understanding of the nature and function of spoken English.
- Grammar can be integrated explicitly and implicitly into the classroom program in all curriculum areas.
- Knowledge of grammar is gained and applied through classroom discussions of a variety of texts.
- Knowledge of grammar is gained and applied in writing through discussions about student writing, and through explicit feedback that is based upon student involvement in editing and proofreading their own writing.
- Knowledge of all dimensions of the English language, including grammar, assists clear, concise and effective expression.
- Teachers and students in a school or system need a shared metalanguage for talking about language.

We also believe that students need information about English in order to edit and rewrite their texts. Scriptwriter Mike Rich made this point most effectively in the movie *Finding Forrester* (2000), when William Forrester (Sean Connery) tells 16-year-old aspiring writer Jamal Wallace (Rob Brown): *You write the first draft with your heart. You rewrite with your head.*

The implementation of the *Australian Curriculum: English* has provided Australian teachers with the framework and direction for a national program for the teaching of English language for writing, reading, speaking and listening. The curriculum places literature, language and literacy as equal strands in an English curriculum, and positions all dimensions of English language knowledge explicitly within that curriculum. Sentence grammar and cohesion are quite clearly developed throughout the curriculum. The directions for teaching vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, figurative language and Standard Australian English require further explication, and that explicit detail and its curriculum implementation through the grades is provided in this book.

Implementing a program for teaching English language knowledge for writing and reading, speaking and listening, and creating and viewing requires teachers to:

- access, provide and use a variety of authentic texts from both contemporary and traditional sources that reflect the range of cultural and community perspectives that appear in spoken, written and multimedia imaginative, informative, persuasive, everyday and poetic expression
- teach explicitly those terms used for discussing the students' developing knowledge of English for a multiplicity of purposes in a range of contexts for different audiences;

- apply the principles and conditions of learning so well expressed by Holdaway (1979) and Cambourne (1988), especially demonstration, expectation, approximation, use and responsibility, and responsive feedback. Immersion is carried by access to texts, silent reading, discussions about texts, and the end-of-day practice when the teacher reads aloud to the class.

How to Use this Book

This book consists of five parts:

- A. curriculum and syllabus requirements; teaching notes for grammar, punctuation and spelling; and considerations for assessment of writing
- B. frameworks of detailed information to support the teacher and the school curriculum leader, provided in grids and supporting text
- C. strategies for teaching English grammar
- D. assessing, monitoring and reporting writing development
- E. links to professional standards for teachers.

Parts A and B are linked through the lists of content coded as “B” in the left-hand column of Part A. Further content information about English for teaching is therefore available in Part B.

Part A has been designed for all classroom teachers from Foundation Year to Year 10. For Foundation Year to Year 6, the relevant content descriptions from the *Australian Curriculum: English* are listed and then explicated in the left-hand column. Syntactic patterns, punctuation and spelling to be taught are listed in the middle column. The achievement standards and some editing tasks are provided in the right-hand column. For Years 7–10, readers are referred to the *Australian Curriculum: English* for content descriptions and achievement standards. Very detailed information is provided in order to build further upon the information provided in Year 6.

Part B provides grid frameworks for ten dimensions of English, and allows curriculum leaders and teachers to gain an overview of the continuity of content in each dimension of English. Knowledge of English for teaching, learning and writing encompasses the following dimensions of written English, all of which need to be used simultaneously if a text is to be clearly understood by the reader. Therefore, a knowledgeable writer will be able to:

- structure different types of texts, and vary language according to purpose, context and audience (B.1 in Part A);
- develop, structure and write paragraphs to suit purpose and type of text (B.2 in Part A);
- write a variety of sentence types, and manipulate syntactic patterns of different kinds of clauses, phrases and groups (B.3 in Part A);
- punctuate text correctly (B.4 in Part A);
- understand the uses of all parts of speech, and use the terms in discussion about texts written by themselves and others (B.5 in Part A);
- manipulate systems of cohesion in order to create effective texts (B.6 in Part A);
- choose and use a wide vocabulary (B.7 in Part A);
- explore and use figurative language (B.8 in Part A);
- use evaluative and modal language purposefully (B.9 in Part A);
- know and use the expected standards of the written forms of Standard Australian English (B.10 in Part A);
- spell correctly (B.11 in Part A);
- edit their own and others’ written texts (B.12 in Part A); and
- understand the uses and differences of language (B.13 in Part A).

(Note: The explicit content listed in B.13 reflects the Content descriptions of the Language strands of language variation and change, and Language for Interaction.)

Ten of the dimensions from Part A have been included in Part B. Information on editing is provided in the right-hand column in Part A, and in Part D.

Part C provides teachers with step-by-step lessons for teaching the syntactic patterns and sentence types listed in the central column of Part A. Part C is the central part that reflects the title of the book: *Teaching English Grammar*.

Part D provides systems for formative assessment and summative evaluation.

Part E has been designed to assist teachers and school administrators with using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Teachers who use this book continuously can demonstrate high levels of teacher accomplishment.

This second edition has been updated to include relevant changes to the Australian Curriculum: English since 2012, and accords with Version 8.3 (2017). There have been significant additions to Part D, and a few changes to reflect new terminology and English language use.

A curriculum document provides explicit directions for teaching content, but there remain layers of implicit content. This book explicates that implied content via frameworks of knowledge about English. It is designed to assist teachers to manage the details of English in a comprehensive, yet cohesive, program for teaching writing and reading. The many dimensions that contribute to the frameworks of the English language reflect its complex nature. Yet that very complexity also gives rise to infinite opportunities for creativity.

We, together with the many teachers who have worked with us in recent decades, have found that the carefully scaffolded and modelled lessons on teaching grammar that are contained in this text give rise to student interest in developing their knowledge of English and writing. We have also found that teachers who model their thinking as they write for and with their students, inspire those students, helping them to coordinate the skills and creativity of writing. Language is complex, but its learning relies upon simple instructional practices, and upon purposeful and engaging use and application.

Rod Campbell and Graham Ryles

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About the Authors

Rod Campbell AM PhD, MEdSt, BA, Grad Dip Ed, Cert Teaching, has taught in almost all areas of education from early childhood to postgraduate university level, including special education, secondary and primary schools. He is co-author with David Green of four literacy education texts, published by Pearson Australia (2000–2012). Carol Smith joined them for two further texts on literacy education published in 2015 and 2018. Rod’s workshops are highly regarded by participants, and his school-based in-service programs are popular with teachers. He has conducted classroom-based research into improving students’ uses of English in their writing. Rod Campbell was a finalist in 2015 for the *Courier-Mail* and Queensland College of Teachers Professor Betty H Watts OBE Memorial Award for an Outstanding Contribution to Teaching.

Graham Ryles OAM, MA, MEd, BA has taught in primary and special schools, and has been a school principal, a sessional university lecturer and a former chair of the Victorian State English Committee. He has consulted with universities and publishers in English, literature and art, and has published significant works in art and English. Graham is a Fellow of the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne.

This edition of *Teaching English Grammar* is the thirteenth publication that Rod and Graham have co-authored since 1996.