

Past, present and future : supporting deaf children with the SPAG grammar curriculum

Kate Green

Team Lead Specialist Speech and Language Therapist

Claire Ingham

Advisory Teacher for Hearing Impairment

Past, present and future : supporting deaf children with the SPAG grammar curriculum

Despite many advances in Audiology and in Deaf Education, Deaf children are still at risk of having difficulties with language development (Ruffin et al 2013)

- Technology has its limitations
- Interaction of significant others varies
- Degree of deafness interacts with other factors that affect language development
- 9% of hearing children have Language Disorder ; 7% of hearing children have Developmental Language Disorder of no known origin – there is evidence that deafness can co-occur with this (Hawker et al 2008; Ramirez and Moore 2011)

THE SPAG CURRICULUM : IMPLICATIONS FOR DEAF CHILDREN

A Gift?

- Grammar is explicitly discussed in school
- Opens up a dialogue about grammar



A hurdle?

- Not just taught but also examined



- I. Challenges of the SPAG curriculum for Deaf children
- II. Techniques for teaching English Grammar to Deaf Children
- III. Prioritising what to teach

Task: Discuss this written language sample with your partner

- What grammatical errors hit you?
- What do you tend to do when presented with this sort of language?

Child A

I standing in my bedroom. I looked window. I can see people walked in path and people queue bus stop wait for bus. Outside weather really beautiful sunny. Children play with his friends they kick football. They played in street. I see some people pack his/her clothes in bag and put in car ready for go walking. Suddenly weather changed rain and could become grey become darker. People running around get in house and cars drive away escape bad weather. Become worst and lightening.

CHALLENGES OF THE SPAG CURRICULUM FOR DEAF CHILDREN

I. SPAG assumes that children have age appropriate understanding and use of language

Deaf children may have difficulty knowing what 'makes sense' grammatically and semantically especially in cloze procedure gap filling and judgement tasks

Which sentence is grammatically correct?

Tick **one**.

Tomorrow we went shopping at the sales.

☐

In three weeks' time, I will be on holiday.

☐

Next weekend, we had gone to the river to fish.

☐

Last summer, we swim at the beach and collect seashells.

☐

Tick the correct word to complete the sentence below.

It was raining heavily, _____ Fatima went out to play.

Tick **one**.

but

☐

if

☐

or

☐

that

☐

CHALLENGES OF THE SPAG CURRICULUM FOR DEAF CHILDREN

2. 'Syntactic' rules are not sufficient for children to be able to generalise and use grammatical structures meaningfully in everyday language

- Verbal definitions and explanations are hard to retain and apply
- The curriculum moves fast and there is often not enough exposure for consolidation so children can become muddled with too many rules
- Oversimplified rules can lead to semantic errors

Examples

Rule: *A conjunction links two words or phrases together*

Example from a child's writing:

“The children played on the swings because the slide is in the park.”

The child does not understand that “because” introduces the reason/cause that leads to the outcome.

Rule: *Adjectives can be used before a noun or after a the verb ‘to be’ as a complement*

A child is asked to underline the adjectives in these sentences and does the following:

They are people. The very tall tree fell over. That smells good

The child doesn't understand that adjectives describe the attribute of a noun and can be modified by the use of words such as “very” and “less”.

Rule : 'He' means boys are 'she' means girls



he



she

- Overgeneralisation : 'the naughty **he** is eating the cake'
- Narrowed interpretation : 'he is spraying water on the fire' = 'a **boy** is spraying water' rather than a fireman

Replace the underlined words with the correct **pronoun**. Write one pronoun in each box.

When Jack's grandmother came to stay, she gave Jack some money.



he

Jack used his money to buy a game called Gables. Jack could not



wait to get home and play the new game.



CHALLENGES OF THE SPAG CURRICULUM FOR DEAF CHILDREN

3. SPAG places a heavy emphasis on structures that are difficult to hear and which are context dependant

- **Verb tenses in particular are highly context bound : their use changes and this makes it difficult to teach consistent rules**

Example : Teaching that the verb ending 'ing' means 'present tense, now' causes confusion when considering a sentence such as ' the dog was chasing the cat' . Is this happening now or did it happen in the past?

- **Complex prepositions such as 'by' similarly change their meaning according to context:**
Example: Teaching children to rely on hearing 'by' to identify a passive sentence will present difficulties for Deaf children and would not apply in the following sentence: 'The teacher told her to stand by the door'

CHALLENGES OF THE SPAG CURRICULUM FOR DEAF CHILDREN

4. Children are required to talk about language using complex language (eg reasons, explanations, predictions)

Deaf children process information visually and express concepts simultaneously: reasoning using sequential language is therefore challenging

Techniques for teaching English Grammar to Deaf Children

a. Combining Implicit and Explicit Teaching

Implicit techniques: the child is given lots of exposure to language and works out the rules for themselves

Explicit techniques: the child is taught explicit rules

Mixed techniques : combine exposure with discussion about why we use the language that we do

Research shows a mix of these techniques is important. SPAG uses explicit teaching – we need to combine this with some more implicit techniques

Focused stimulation : commenting on pictures and objects

Example : to demonstrate who the pronoun 'he' refers to

Commenting 'He likes chocolate and he likes chocolate and he....'



Not just 'the boy'

Focused stimulation : organising structured conversations

Example : to demonstrate that pronouns are use to refer back to people

Conversation with the TA: ‘ I can’t remember who likes fruit?’ ‘**He** does’ (point)... ‘ Oh I thought he did?’ ‘No he likes chocolate’



Conversation with the TA: ‘ Let’s read this. Who paid £100, did she (point to Sophie) or did he (point to Mr Thomas)?’

*Mr Thomas bought Sophie a new puppy. **He** paid £100.*

Focused stimulation : drawing attention to contrasts

Commenting: he likes chocolate and he likes..... and **she** likes chocolate

Encourage the child to draw their own conclusions: what was different? What did I say? Why did I do that?



Focused Stimulation : Create a repetitive story and leave gaps for the child to fill



He went in the shop (grandpa) and he went in the shop (little boy) and he went in the shop (footballer) and SHE went in the shop (girl)

He bought a guitar(grandpa) and he bought a teddy(little boy) and he bought some lego(footballer) and SHE bought a purse(girl)

He got in the red car(grandpa) and he got in the blue car(little boy) and got on the bike(footballer) and ... walked(girl)

Caution when using Focused Stimulation

- You need to think about obligatory contexts : when do we actually use this structure?

Question: When you would naturally use a 3rd person perfect? ('s' on the ends of verbs)

Example: when stating facts

' A humpback whale grow**s** to the size of a bus. It live**s** in the Arctic but migrate**s** to tropical oceans to breed. It sing**s** to find a mate

Techniques for teaching English Grammar to Deaf Children

b. Providing emphasis on meaning and functional use: how does a structure change the conversation? When do we use it, in what context?

Syntactic techniques: teaching categories of grammatical words and focusing on grammatical rules.

Example: 'add 'ed' to make a past tense'

Semantic techniques: demonstrating to the child the meaning of grammatical words and word endings and linking this to comprehension

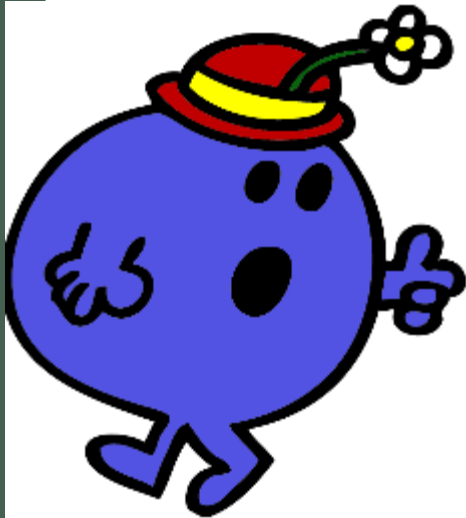
Example: 'Mum washed the car' what does this mean

a. the car is dirty and mum is splashing water on it right now

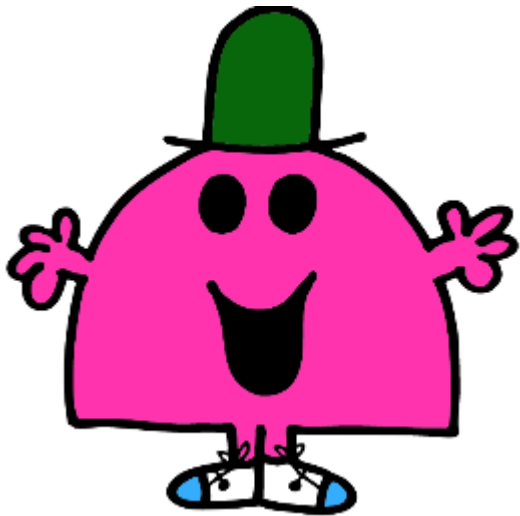
b. the car is dirty and mum is getting ready to go outside with the bucket of water

c. the car is clean and mum is standing with an empty bucket

Creating 'characters' for verb tenses



Miss Bossy : tells us what to do
Uses : Action words with no ends
(imperatives)



Mr chatterbox: tells us what happened and asks us
'what did you do?'
Uses : Past tense action words : some of them have
'ed'; some of them sound different



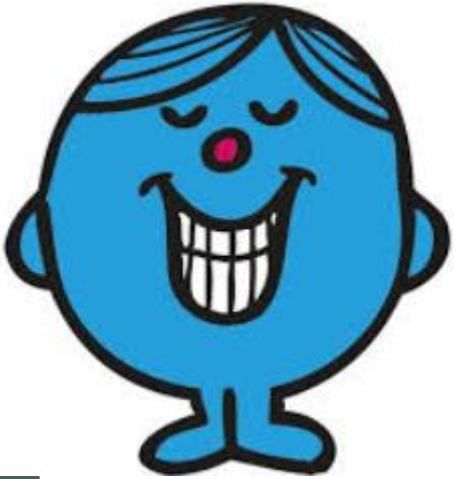
Miss Chatterbox : likes to tell us what is happening
RIGHT NOW and asks us 'what are you doing at the
moment?'

Uses : Action words with 'ing'

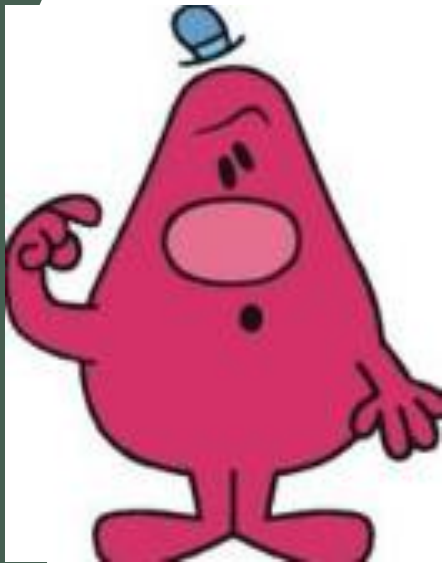


Mr Stubborn: tells us what always happens and asks
us 'what do you do?'

Uses : Action words with nothing on the end
or Action words with 's' on the end



Miss Perfect collects verbs that all obey the rules
(regular verbs)



Mr Scatterbrain collects verbs that don't obey the
rules
(irregular verbs)

Using barrier games to demonstrate how meaning changes when structures are used



Her hat is blue and
his hat is red

His coat is green
her coat is yellow

Link sentences to pictures to show the meaning : look at whole phrases not just individual elements

that has long hair

The mum is chasing the girl **that has long hair**

The mum **that has long hair** is chasing the girl



Teaching children underlying semantic 'roles'

Example: Understanding 'causes' or 'agents' is helpful for working on

- the use of different types of pronouns
- prepositions that relate to agents (eg by, with)
- active and passive sentences

Syntactic teaching: Passives contain the word 'by'
Semantic teaching : what caused this?



His hair is blowing

Why ? **What** caused that? – **the wind** is blowing it

Passive Sentences

Problem + **Cause of the problem**

His hair was blown **by the wind**

The 'cause' or 'agent' is not always the same as the 'subject' (the first item in the sentence)

Grouping words and attach them to symbols to demonstrate their function

Group connectives and work on one category/function at a time using that range of connectives only rather than mixing them

Sequencing – showing the order

- next
- then
- first, second, third...
- finally
- meanwhile
- eventually
- after
- before



We went to the cinema after we had a meal

Adding more information

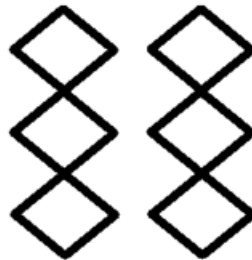


- and
- also
- as well as
- moreover
- in addition
- too

She wanted new shoes as well as a new bag

Comparing – how things are similar

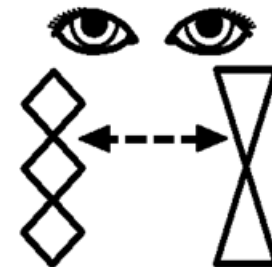
- in the same way
- Similarly/Similar
- likewise
- as with
- like
- both
- equally



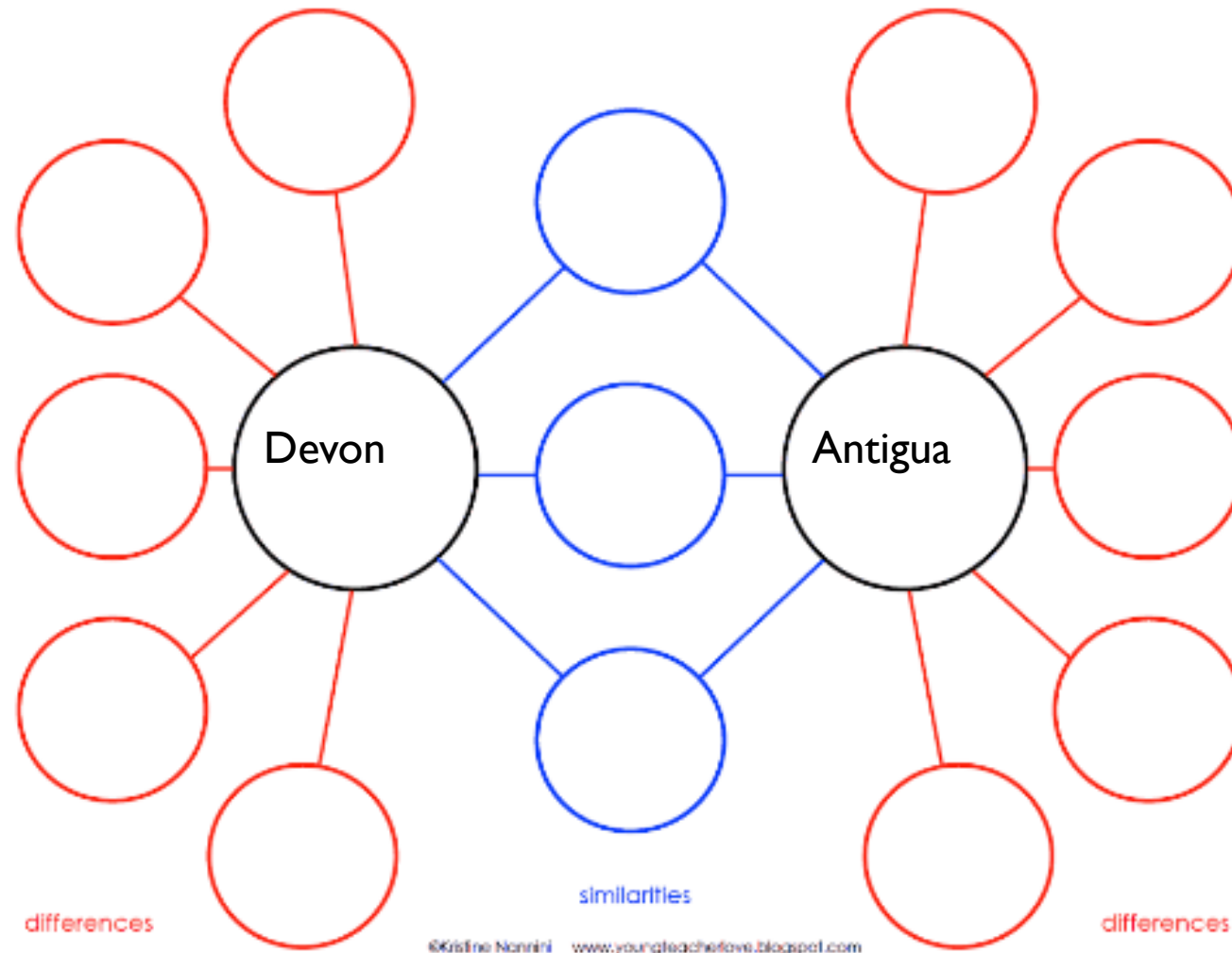
The two girls are similar because they both have red hair

Contrasting – how things are different

- on the other hand
- yet / but
- in contrast
- however
- although
- otherwise
- unlike
- whereas
- alternatively



One dog has long ears whereas the other one has short fluffy ears



©Kristine Nannini www.youngteacherlove.blogspot.com

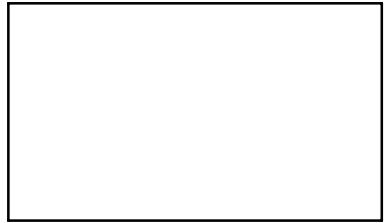
In the same way
Similarly
Also

However
On the otherhand
But
Although

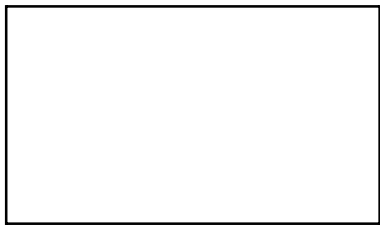
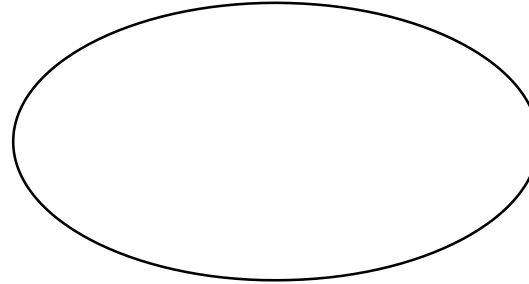


and

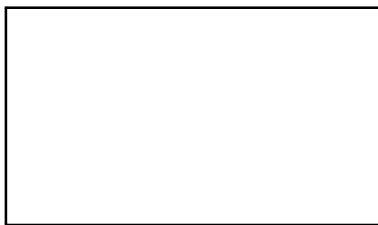
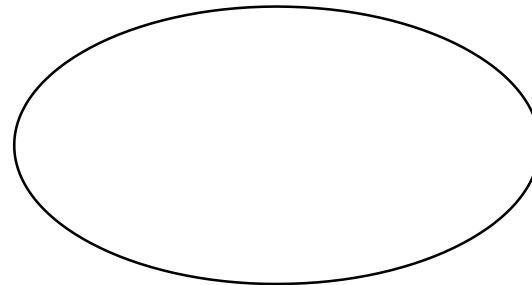
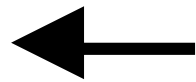
+



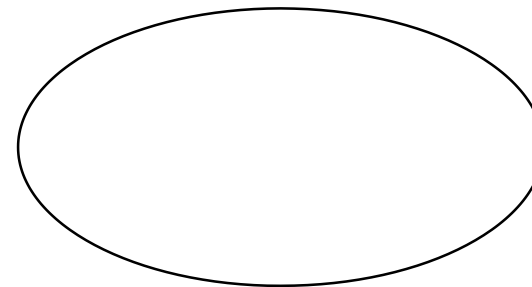
so



because



but



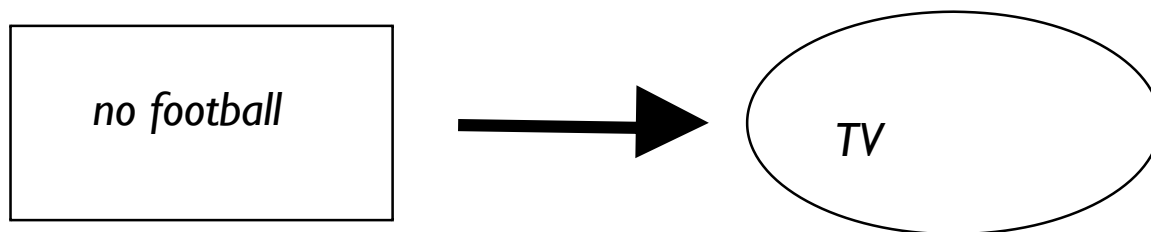
Using symbols to
illustrate the
underlying
meaning of
grammatical
words

The boy didn't play football.....

because..... it was raining



so.....he watched TV



Until

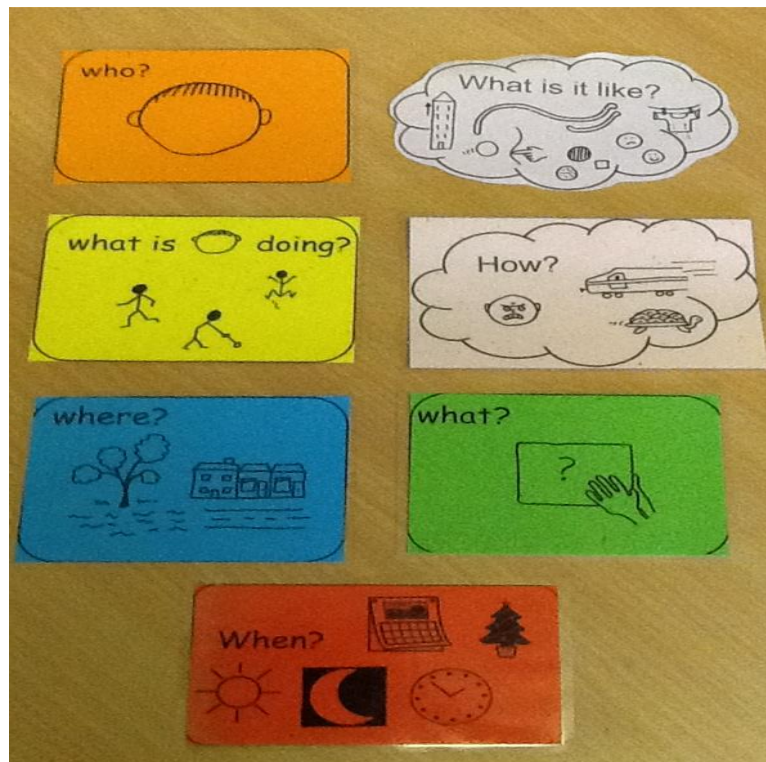


Techniques for teaching English Grammar to Deaf Children

c. Use visual strategies to demonstrate structures but use these to show resultant changes in meaning

Formal systems

Example: Colourful Semantics

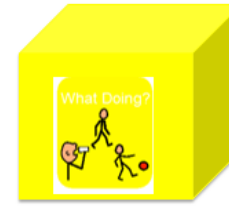
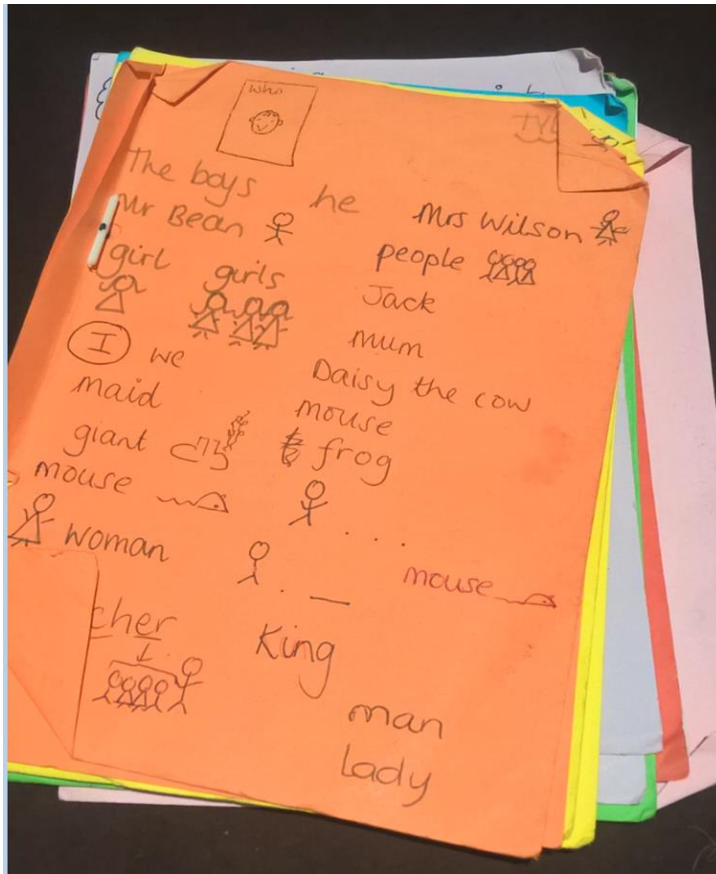


Introducing Colourful Semantics Implicitly to Young Children



Tiger
Squeezing
New socks
Hospital

Words can be record and stored in categories to support use in class



Colourful Semantics : often used to extend sentences and support word order

The girl is eating

The girl is eating a flower

the pretty girl is eating a flower

the pretty girl is eating a flower in the garden

the pretty girl is eating a flower cheekily in the garden

the pretty girl is eating a flower cheekily in the garden in the afternoon



Important to encourage sentence variety



Using colourful semantics: to expand phrases and clauses



The boy

with the
blue

T shirt

is watching



the girl

with the new

phone

The boy

who is walking

is watching

the girl

who is listening

Nouns: who, what, where,

Pronouns : who, what, where

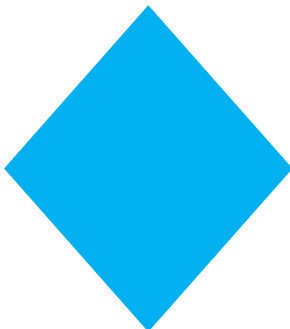
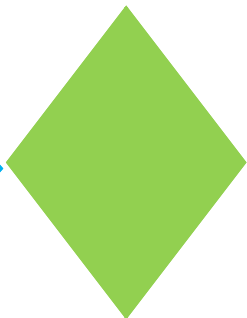
Verbs: what doing

Adverbs: how

Adjectives: what like

Informal methods

Using listening combined with shapes to indicate missing or incorrect words

I looked   *window.*

Listen to me reading this sentence, follow it with you finger

What did you hear when you touched the diamonds?

Using annotations and shapes : orthography to indicate tense and plurality

The girl broke her phone



The girl will break her phone



The girl is breaking her phone





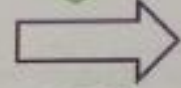

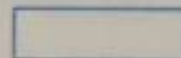

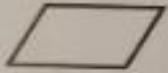


The girls broke their phones

Using annotations and shapes: to identify and remember types of grammatical word rather than using rules and definitions


Drafting your work:




Are these parts of the sentence wrong, are there too many or is it missing?



- Who/what 
- Pronoun 
- Auxiliary verb (is/am/are/was/were) 
- Verb 
- Preposition 
- Where 
- What (object) 
- Adjective 
- Time adverb (yesterday/tomorrow etc.) 

Check:

Is the spelling of the word right? _____

Does the word need an 'ing'? 

Is the tense right?   

Should it be a plural or a single word?  

Some refugees are from Countries at war.

Millions of people left their homes in Darfur.

20,000 people have been killed in Darfur.

People tried to stop the war.

The war ended in 2005.

Some refugees live in refugee camps.

A refugee camp is a group of tents.

The charities give the refugees tents, food and fuel.

Thousands of people die from starvation.

Britain accepts refugees from other countries.

Some refugees move to the UK.

Using annotations and shapes : to check work and look for noun verb agreement

Put the correct shapes around the words in these sentences:

1. Sarah ^S was ^V finishing ^O her homework

2. The girl ^S is ^V eating her dinner

3. The cat ^S is ^V chasing a mouse

4. The children ^S were ^V waiting in the hall

5. The man ^S is ^V speaking to his wife

6. Rebekah ^S was ^V brushing her hair

7. I ^S am ^V doing the shopping

8. The audience ^S were ^V enjoying the film

9. I ^S jumped into the swimming pool

d. Use listening tasks, visual phonics and pseudo phonetic scripts to reinforce how we pronounce grammatical words and word endings

Task :What are the rules for adding 's' or 'es' to spoken plural nouns?

Task:What are the rules for adding 't' or the extra syllable 'ed' to spoken past tense verbs

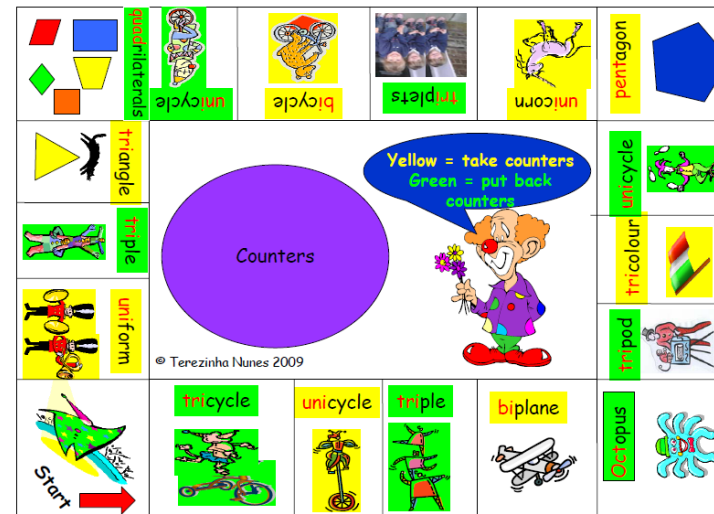
Add 'es' if the noun ends in the sounds ch, sh, s: watches, brushes, purses

Add 'ed' if the verb ends in the sounds 't' or 'd' : landed; started

Consider teaching these first as the extra syllable is easier to hear

Very useful resource for grammatical word endings

http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/ndcs/ndcs_literacy.html



Task: Look again at this sample – pick a sentence. How would you help the child to improve it using the techniques we have talked about

Child A :

I standing in my bedroom. I looked window. I can see people walked in path and people queue bus stop wait for bus. Outside weather really beautiful sunny. Children play with his friends they kick football. They played in street. I see some people pack his/her clothes in bag and put in car ready for go walking. Suddenly weather changed rain and could become grey become darker. People running around get in house and cars drive away escape bad weather. Become worst and lightening.

III Tips to help you to prioritise the structure to teach/focus on

- What is the child's developmental stage ? (refer to language assessments)
- Are there gaps that need plugging to move onto the next stage
- What would help the child's functional language : eg might conjunctions help to improve ability to express their opinions and reasons?
- How often do we use a grammatical structure (eg working on ' over' might be more helpful than working on 'between'; working on 'also' is more helpful than 'moreover'
- How easy is the structure to demonstrate/illustrate/explain without too much other language
- How easy is the structure to hear?
- Which structure would have the greatest impact/add the most to the child's expressive written and or spoken language (eg adding in relative clauses to extend sentences would improve descriptive writing)
- Are the rules concrete? Do they have too many exceptions?