

Essential Grammar



Marcello Giovanelli

[@mmgiovanelli](https://twitter.com/mmgiovanelli)

Senior Lecturer, English, Language
and Applied Linguistics at
Aston University



Jennifer Webb

[@funkypedagogy](https://twitter.com/funkypedagogy)

Assistant Principal: Teaching and
Learning and *Research Lead* at
Trinity Academy Cathedral in Wakefield
www.funkypedagogy.com

If we use words incorrectly we are going to think incorrectly and therefore we are going to make the decisions on which our thinking is based incorrectly and that's either going to be a nuisance or it's going to wreck our lives. Our happiness depends on grammar.

Interview on *Radio 5 Live*

Neville Gwynne,

Properly spoken and written language is the lifeline which any conscientious schooling system can offer to every child, from whatever background. It is the only possible path to real social equality. . . . To teach people how to speak and write their language properly and well is to give them a ticket to freedom. Being 'tolerant' of their 'differences' is another way of writing them off.

(Daley, 1991)

in Sealey (1994)

The emphasis is on SpAG in KS2. Mr Gove wanted it that way. No creativity. No interest for the reader. Just using the subjunctive and propositional clauses (sic)

Posted on Twitter, May 2017

Finite and non-finite verbs [...] blow my mind. Could anyone explain finite and non-finite verbs to me and why they might be of interest to my language students? And participles, participles scare me'

Anonymous post to *The English Language List*, October 2013

A02

- As was the case last year, a significant number relied heavily upon looking at structural features of poems and produced extensive analysis of these features. Much of this was very assertive and candidates should guard against making lengthy claims about what the number of lines in a stanza, or the line length, might signify.
- Similarly, many assertive claims were made about the impact of enjambment.
- Centres should encourage candidates to limit their use of terms taken from English Language study, as these often distract from literary analysis.

Reactionaries and Romantics (Carter 1988)

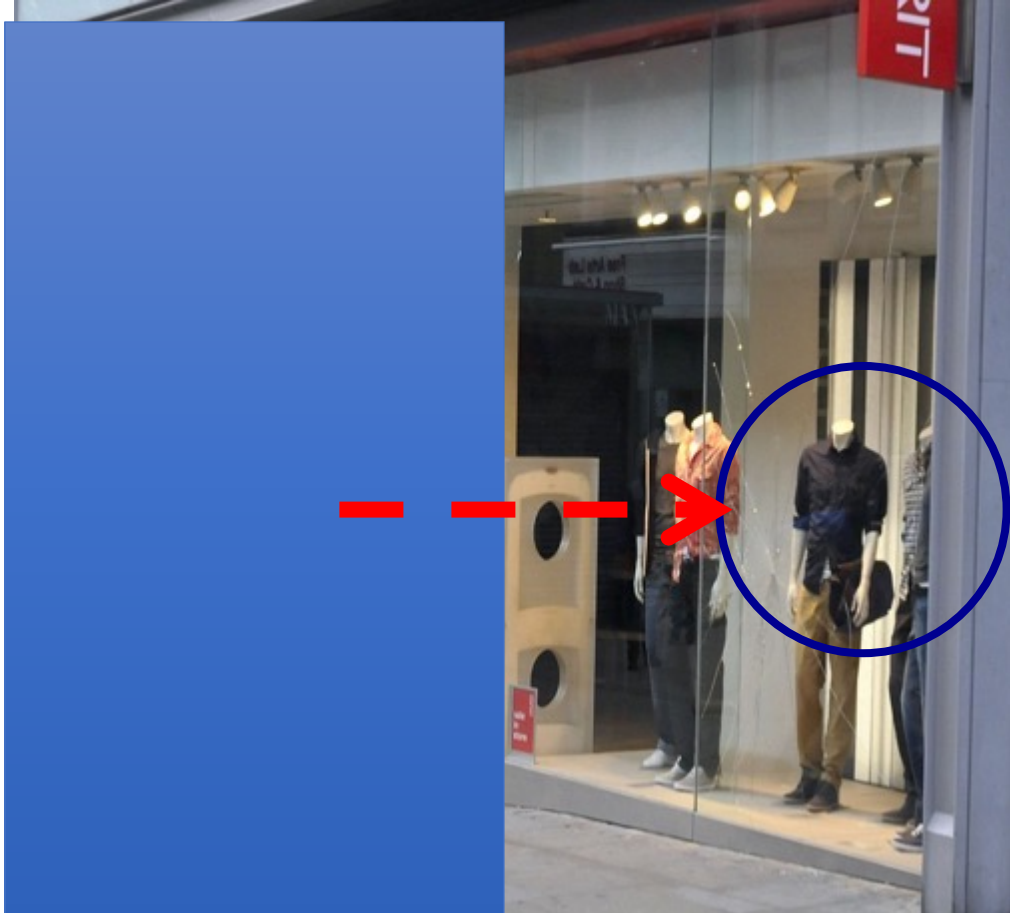
- **Reactionaries:** prescriptive view of language, language as rules, need for stabilization/resistance to change
- **Romantics:** issues about 'knowledge' in English, personal/individual, anti-formalization (grammar), centrality of literature in the curriculum

Standards/prescription/fetishization of
metalanguage/dubious practices

v

The myth of creativity/resistance to metalanguage

- **CONNECTING GRAMMATICAL FORMS AND CHOICES
WITH MEANING**
- **GRAMMAR IS MEANING**



The rioter smashed the window

The window was smashed by the rioter

The window was smashed

The smashed window



Speaker ambushes PM

he blocked another vote

the commons speaker ruled

He gave Downing Street no notice

Mr Bercow's move [...] killed

A senior government source said the Speaker [...] wanted to wreck Mrs May's plan

John Bercow was accused

■ **Fury as grandstanding Speaker ambushes PM with bombshell ruling on her deal**

■ **Now Britain must beg EU to delay leaving - and faces up to 20 MONTHS in limbo**

SMIRK THAT SAYS: BREXIT BE DAMNED

Sabotage: John Bercow yesterday

JOHN Bercow was accused of trying to sabotage Brexit last night after he blocked another vote on Theresa May's deal.

In a dramatic intervention, the Commons Speaker ruled that the EU withdrawal agreement could not be put to a vote again without substantial changes. He gave Downing Street no notice of his announcement, which came just 24 hours before the Prime Minister was expected to ask the Commons to decide on the issue for a third time following two crushing defeats. As well as sparking a constitutional crisis, Mr Bercow's move all but killed any prospect of a vote before Mrs May heads to an EU summit on Thursday. It also means she may have to ask Brussels for a delay of up to 20 months. A senior Government source said the Speaker, who is an outspoken critic of Brexit, wanted to wreck Mrs May's plan of limiting the delay to three months. 'It seems clear that the Speaker's motive here is to rule out a meaningful

By Jason Groves Political Editor

Turn to Page 6

Grammar and style

In the kitchen, he poured another drink and looked at the bedroom suite in his front yard (1). The mattress was stripped and the candy-striped sheets lay beside two pillows on the chiffonier (2). Except for that, things looked pretty much the way they had in the bedroom – nightstand and reading lamp on his side of the bed, nightstand and reading lamp on her side (3).

His side, her side (4).

He considered this as he sipped the whisky (5).

Raymond Carver 'Why don't you dance?'

In the kitchen, **he** poured another drink and looked at the bedroom suite in his front yard (1). The mattress was stripped and the candy-striped sheets lay beside two pillows on the chiffonier (2). Except for that, things looked pretty much the way they had in the bedroom – nightstand and reading lamp on **his** side of the bed, nightstand and reading lamp on **her** side (3).

His side, **her** side (4).

He considered this as **he** sipped the whisky (5).

‘He’: some simple stylistic questions

- Pronoun instead of proper or common noun
- Cannot be pre-modified: compare ‘the [adj] man’
- A kind of restriction on processing: limits the knowledge that readers can draw on
- Why?
- What would it be like if Carver had not used a pronoun?

Some more questions

Looking for patterns and their effects

Stylistics = linguistics + literary interpretation

- Sentences and clauses: multi-clause v minor
- Phrases: prepositional phrases
- Lexis: types of verb – actions, perceptions, states of being

In the kitchen, he poured another drink and looked at the bedroom suite in his front yard (1). The mattress was stripped and the candy-striped sheets lay beside two pillows on the chiffonier (2). Except for that, things looked pretty much the way they had in the bedroom – nightstand and reading lamp on his side of the bed, nightstand and reading lamp on her side (3).

His side, her side (4).

He considered this as he sipped the whisky (5).

Grammar and the curriculum

Common questions from teachers...

- How do we make grammar meaningful and not a **bolt-on** to the curriculum?
- How do we stop grammar from feeling like it's **not relevant**?
- How do we create a successful grammar **program**?



**The brain needs to
make links...**

**Therefore, grammar
must be taught in
context...**

sentence types: imperative,
declarative, interrogative, exclamative

Emphatic connectives: above all, in
particular, significantly, indeed, notably

Sentence Construction

modification, appositives,
subordinating conjunctions

punctuation of clauses

expanding sentences: complex
sentence structures for descriptive
writing

**Plan an explicit ‘grammar’
topic to sit alongside each
curriculum unit over the
year. Create high quality
resources to accompany
it, and ensure that
students are doing
retrieval to ensure it
sticks.**

Sounds good, doesn’t it?

Add on.

Sitting alongside = isn't an integral part of our subject

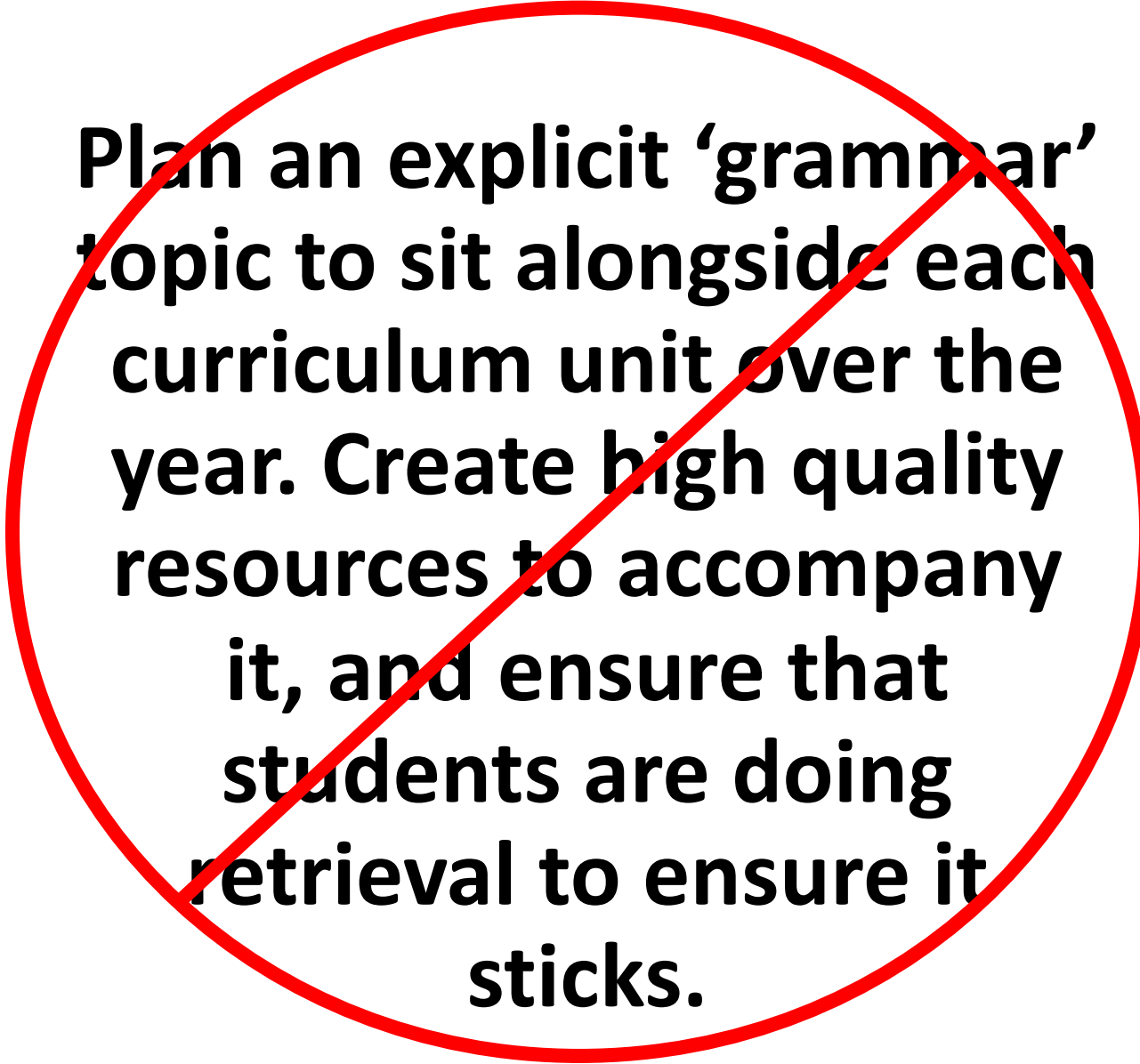
Grammar isn't 'extra' – it's the foundation.

Grammar enables students to understand the whole picture for literature study.

In writing, if they don't understand how to USE grammar, they are just stumbling into expressing things by accident and sometimes getting lucky.

This is unacceptable.

We wouldn't leave other areas of knowledge to chance in our subject. This one is arguably the most important...



Plan an explicit 'grammar' topic to sit alongside each curriculum unit over the year. Create high quality resources to accompany it, and ensure that students are doing retrieval to ensure it sticks.

Golden Threads

How can writers use **structures** at a micro and macro level to create meaning?

clauses, sentences,
punctuation, word types etc...

How can I create meaning with precision, and **write like a** novelist, literary scholar, journalist, advocate, politician...?

Foundations of writing –
crafting sentences... How do I
write tentatively? How do I
write persuasively?

How can powerful knowledge of **genre** enhance my appreciation and understanding of literature?

How do historical, social, political, religious, literary and personal factors **influence** writers and their audiences?

How can writers use **language, imagery and symbolism** to explore profound themes and universal human truths?

Language choices, word classes,
devices: listing, repetition,
emphatic positioning etc etc

Grammar for...



Academic Writing:

Beyond modelling and live commentary...

Visuospatial concept mapping.

Aim: construct sentences which can handle **multiple concepts** at once, demonstrate and elicit **links**, and explore the **cumulative effect** of a number of text features at once.

Shakespeare says...

This shows...

This also suggests...

This might link to...

Blake's attack on the great institutions of British power is simultaneously furious and devastating. Not only does he convey a powerful sense of anger – 'every cry of every man' – but he also highlights the lived reality of the most vulnerable in society through reference to 'infants', child labour of 'chimney-sweepers' and the stark lives of young unmarried mothers.

Blake's attack on the great institutions
of British power are ~~simultaneously~~
~~furios~~ and ~~devastating~~.

Blake's attack on the great institutions
of British power are simultaneously
furios and devastating.

adverb

What can we describe?

What two things do
we want to say?

SIMULTANEOUSLY →

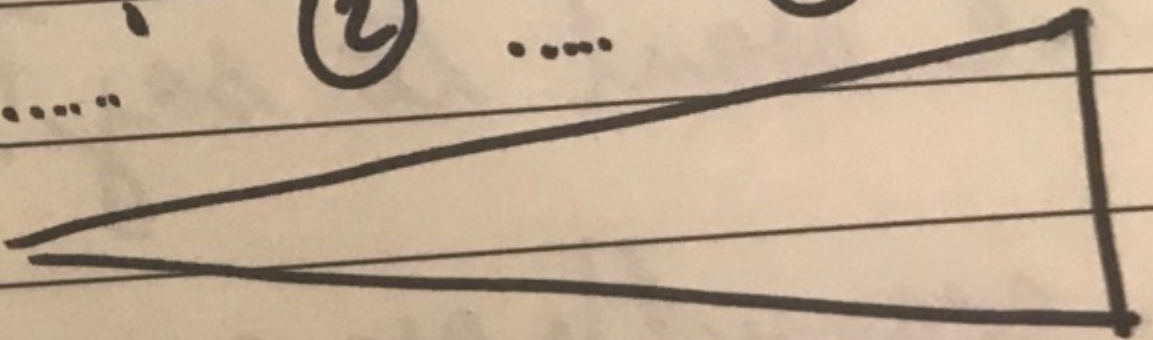
angry tone

SIMULTANEOUSLY →

highlights
lines of vulnerable

Not only - - - - - but also

→ through ① ' ② ' ③ '



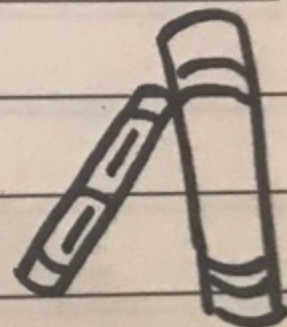
Idea ① - adjective

SIMULTANEOUSLY

Idea ② - adjective

Subordinating
conjunction

Not only - - - - - but also - - - - -



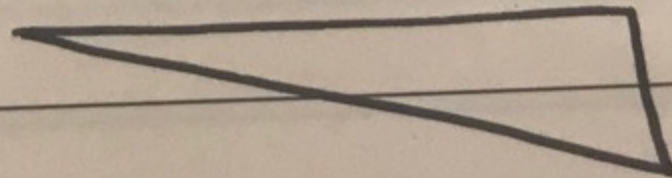
→ through

①

②

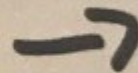
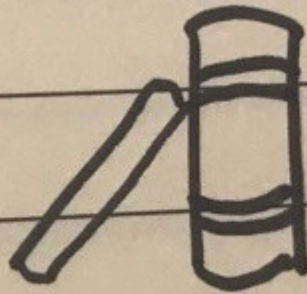
③

List



SIMULTANEOUSLY →

.

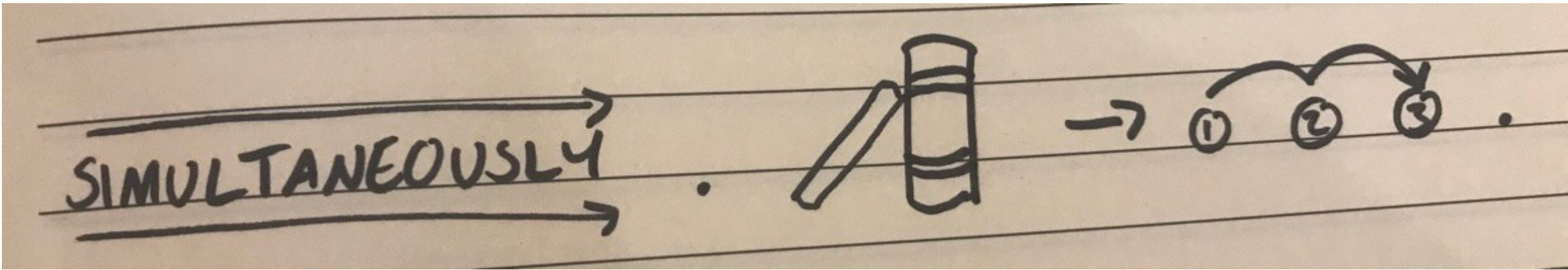


①

②

③

.



Aim: construct sentences which can handle **multiple concepts** at once, demonstrate and elicit **links**, and explore the **cumulative effect** of a number of text features at once.

Shakespeare says...

This shows...

This also suggests...

This might link to...

Lady Macbeth is simultaneously repulsive and endearing. Whilst we witness her unconscious confessions to murder and deceit, we also pity her vulnerability as she laments the brutal reality of their crimes: 'Banquo's dead; 'The Thane of Fife had a wife'; 'so much blood in him'.

Lady Macbeth is simultaneously repulsive and endearing. Whilst we witness her unconscious

confessions to murder and deceit, we also

pity her vulnerability as she laments the

brutal reality of their crimes. (1) 'Banquo's dead!'

(2) 'the Thane of Fife had a wife'; (3) 'so much blood

in him!'

Explicit integration of grammar into writing instruction:

- Teach content IN CONTEXT and demonstrate how explicit understanding of grammar just makes for better sentence construction AND better expression of abstract ideas.
- By using complex sentences, we are able to hold more concepts in the air at once, thereby making more interesting links AND developing our own understanding more clearly – writing is a GENERATIVE process.
- NOTE! Drawing isn't an effective instruction tool in its own right – this is about using the spatial relationships between things on a page to convey meaning. Don't try to “dual code it”... beware lethal mutations.

Essential Grammar



Marcello Giovanelli

@mmgiovanelli

**Senior Lecturer, English, Language
and Applied Linguistics at
Aston University**



Jennifer Webb

@funkypedagogy

**Assistant Principal: Teaching and
Learning and *Research Lead* at
Trinity Academy Cathedral in Wakefield
www.funkypedagogy.com**