Putting Grammar In (Its) Place! What, When, and In What Order— A Planning Tool-Kit

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"I have a choice what to teach, so I'm always concerned I've left something important out." "I don't know the scope and sequence." "We are struggling with relevancy." These comments were made by teacher-participants I surveyed at a workshop on applied grammar, but they reflect a general concern voiced by secondary instructors and student teachers I work with as an English Education instructor. I have led the week-long summer workshop annually for four years on behalf of the Bay Area branch of the National Writing Project (N.W.P.), and, in response to participants' feedback, I have increasingly focused not just on teaching grammar, but on *planning* for grammar. Teachers want coherent answers to questions related to long-term design: which topics to prioritize? When to teach them? In what order? And how to integrate these topics with existing curricula? In response, I have assembled a set of planning guidelines designed to help secondary instructors implement grammar across the academic year; these coordinates allow teachers to orchestrate plans according to an overarching logic, while being sufficiently flexible to apply to a wide variety of teaching situations and student populations. Without a far-sighted, coherent vision, it can be hard to see the grammar forest for the trees; instructors can be overwhelmed by an apparent clutter of labels, rules, and conventions, and excursions into grammar tend to be guided by thinking more wishful than joined-up. This problem is illustrated

by the fact that participants arrive at the workshop knowing not to target every error on a student paper but are generally less sure about which errors to emphasize and when to teach them. By the workshop's end, teachers are able to apply the planning criteria in order to select, sequence, and schedule grammar topics across the year, as well as embed them into their existing curricula. It is this planning "tool-kit" that is the focus of this article.

While teachers I work with sense that a little grammar, at the right time, can go a long way, they frequently lack the confidence to teach it. They can be confused about how to integrate it and uncertain of what constitutes "enough," as articulated by a teacher, whom I shall call Loretta, at the start of a recent workshop:

> My school and district OFTEN say grammar must be embedded in context, but RARELY provide models or support for how to embed it. Then, when I or other teachers try, the administration says, "You're teaching too much grammar," without giving alternative suggestions, or truly looking deeply at what the teachers or I are doing. Grammar is a sensitive topic, perhaps rightly so, since some old-fashioned styles of teaching are known to be deleterious to students. However, administrators are now triggered by the word "grammar" even though they know it's crucial and want it to be taught more.

At the root of this predicament lies a tension between two pedagogical imperatives, framed by Richard Hudson as a question: "Can grammar teaching be both contextual and systematic?" (103). Hudson notes that if teachers try to avoid isolated instruction and respond to grammar in context, as it arises, "'the right moment' … may never come" (103). For teachers, paralyzed by conflicting pressures, it can be tempting to brush off grammar instruction altogether. As one teacher-participant candidly put it, "[Grammar] always gets pushed off—it's easy to move to the next day." This seemingly endless deferral underlies Martha Kolln's premise, stated

in a letter to *English Journal*, that we have effectively "denied the study of grammar a place in the K–12 curriculum" by sacrificing "systematic study" to the principle of teaching in "context" (12-13).

Addressing the conundrum head-on, at recent workshops we unpack what it means to be systematic and expand our notion of what it means to be contextual. We are then able to construct organizational frameworks that support our ability to plan for grammar according to consistent logic. In the section that follows, I briefly describe the key theoretical principles that support a systematic approach to planning, one that can empower teachers like Loretta to take a proactive approach to grammar rather than a predominantly reactive one. I set out the workshop's rationale for teaching grammar and I describe how theories related to transfer of learning and the pedagogical principle of deliberate practice can help instructors implement a grammar curriculum that is coherent, integrated, and systematic.

Approaching Grammar Planning Systematically: Theoretical Overview

So how do we enable a systematic approach to grammar? At the workshop, we make a number of inter-related pedagogical moves. First, we prioritize writing as the focal point of planning; the litmus test for any grammar plan is whether it actually improves students' written work (i.e., their papers). Second, recognizing that grammar is a loaded, multifaceted term, we define our territory. The workshop's main concern is students' ability to construct, control, and vary the grammatical unit that is the written sentence—close in spirt to Patrick Hartwell's grammar as style. Effective syntax can sharpen the focus of a sentence, signal emphasis, and show (and create) relationships between ideas. We choose our topics wisely, cherry-picking those with most impact on students' ability to make and shape meaning through syntax. Third, we identify models for organizing daily lessons so that learning opportunities can be sequenced systematically and followed-through to logical conclusions, regardless of the specifics of classroom materials.

Fourth, for lesson design and for year-long curriculum planning, we draw on principles that support long-term transfer of learning, that is, those geared to helping students internalize and retain structures so that they can apply them independently to future, unfamiliar writing situations.

Although research on transfer is somewhat mixed, there are a number of conclusions that point towards improved retention and ongoing application of writing skills. The online *Elon Statement on Writing Transfer* highlights the importance of having students write "within specific contexts" that help students' perceive how writing skills can apply to real rhetorical situations, using "rhetorically-based concepts" such as "genre, purpose, and audience." During the workshop, we explore multiple ways that grammar can be embedded within socio-rhetorical contexts, but our most important move is to align particular grammatical features with the most rhetorically-appropriate writing. We do this by noting which structures are likely to feature in a given genre (e.g., verbal phrases and narrative writing). In this way, teachers can plan for such tie-ins across the curriculum, anticipating the optimal grammatical fit for any given assignment and reinforcing conditions supportive of transfer in which students "transform rhetorical awareness into performance" (*Elon Statement*). Instead of being primarily reactive, instructors can anticipate the most relevant rhetorical contexts to highlight grammatical skills.

Planning for this rhetorical alignment is made easier by the fact that we draw up a shortlist of grammar topics most relevant to our primary focus, effective sentence building. At the workshop, teachers learn to distinguish between more "surface" concerns which have minimal impact on how sentences are put together (such as the apostrophe) and more "serious" concerns which are intrinsic to sentence craft and impact how ideas are expressed. The sentence-level skills we place at the top of this hierarchy include the following: the sentence fundamentals of subjects and verbs; clause and phrase structures, and sentence complexity; and punctuation to signal relations between clauses, phrases, and sentences. Teachers are able

to prioritize concepts they will teach across the year and map them on to writing assignments. This is not to imply that mechanics do not matter; however, establishing hierarchies helps define our scope and make the grammar forest more navigable.

Adding to the rhetorical emphasis, we compile a list of other, more minor tweaks to the curriculum that can deepen socio-rhetorical, meaning-related contexts for learning, such as scheduling mini-lessons with the proofreading stage of assignments to accentuate the impact of grammar on performance. The checklist appears later in the article.

Since pedagogical method has bearing on the way that topics can be organized, it is worth briefly rehearsing the workshop's underlying principles. The mood music consists of socio-constructivist and inquiry-based learning, with an emphasis on showing and doing over lengthy explanations. In keeping with a focus on *applied* grammar, procedural knowledge of how to use grammar, such as composing a complex sentence, takes precedent over declarative knowledge of how to name grammar, such as traditional sentence parsing. This is not to say that explicit knowledge has no role in the internalization of new grammar skills—more that it relies on a particular kind of knowing, intimately connected to the learner's ability to apply what they learn. In this regard, the cognitive theory of deliberate practice (Kellogg and Whiteford) is particularly useful. It shows how, as teachers, we can create opportunities for students to simultaneously channel both attention and practice towards a target skill with an emphasis on how to use the skill until it becomes relatively "automatic and effortless" (251). In relation to grammar, this mental collaboration can be achieved by using sentence-manipulation techniques that help students to notice a structure—raising their conscious attention—at the same time as they experiment with it.

Heightening students' attention can support the development of meta-awareness, which, according to the *Elon Statement*, "often plays a key role in transfer," a principle supported by multiple studies (e.g., Billing; Wardle; Perkins and Salomon). Importantly, according to David Billing, metacognition of procedural skills and the ways they

can be applied can support the development of "flexible schemata" that can help learners transfer the skills to "dissimilar problems" beyond the immediate context (509). With reference to grammar, a degree of metacognition can help students abstract their knowledge of skills and how they can be used in writing in order to apply them to different, unfamiliar writing situations; this is what David Perkins and Gavriel Salomon call "high road" transfer (7), a point developed by Nelson Graff in the context of secondary education settings:

> Helping students make their knowledge of grammar explicit, however, enables them to make more conscious and strategic choices about language use… . For high-road transfer, students need to learn the explicit procedural and conditional knowledge that will help them decide which skills to apply to problems in new situations. (3)

According to this principle, metacognitive awareness of grammar procedures and how they connect to rhetorical choices can promote the development of more flexible thinking ("conditional knowledge"), helping students to more consciously vary the rhythms of their sentence structures according to purpose and occasion. In short, situating grammar skills in rhetorical context is said to be supportive of transfer, but at least equally important is students' ability to decontextualize these skills through reflection and metacognition in order to support application to new, different settings (Billing 488).

In the rest of this article, I describe in more depth the criteria we use to make planning decisions. Drawing on my work with the N.W.P. specifically and my role as Coordinator of English Education at San Francisco State University where I prepare future secondary educators, I start with the business of day-to-day lessons, including how to address error in student writing, since lesson design contributes to the bigger organizational picture, and vice versa. I then describe ways to contextualize grammar by making relatively minor adjustments to the curriculum and the spirit in which it is

delivered before I finally turn to the main focus: year-long curricula design. Conscious that English Language Arts teachers shoulder many competing demands, the workshop is guided by the mantra of minimal grammar for maximum gain. The workshop culminates with teachers working in grade-levels on grammar year plans in which grammar is integrated with their existing curricula and tailored for their student populations. I conclude by sharing four of these outlines as models for how teachers can apply the planning tool-kit.

"Avoiding the Rabbit Holes:" Balancing Doing and Knowing

To zero-in on the logistics of planning, I start the workshop by asking two deceptively simple questions: "Why teach grammar?" and "What does it mean to *know* grammar?" Pondering the first question makes clear a central tenet of the workshop: the only instruction that matters is that which can be shown to improve student writing. Furthermore, this wholly practical benchmark—to produce better writing—can be measured in two ways, end-points which sharpen the overall focus of planning, providing purpose and direction: to improve *sentence correctness* (to avoid, detect, and correct errors) or to advance *sentence power* (to vary sentences for stylistic effect). The second question ("What does it mean to *know* grammar?") speaks to an important distinction between different ways of knowing: knowing in the sense of "defining and naming," associated with traditional schoolbook grammar, and knowing that is more practicable and use-oriented, likely to carry over to writing and to help students internalize forms or notice and correct errors. This tension between two kinds of knowing, the first that is primarily declarative, the second that works to raise awareness in support of procedural skills, is articulated by two workshop participants whom I surveyed; one writes that she frets over, "Spending too much time on details and not getting a sense that students ever *really* get it," and the other queries, "How to realistically expect … instruction to transfer to writing?" About half of the participants tend to have

some previous experience teaching grammar; of these, most tend to the "naming of parts" variety, with—in their own words—seemingly negligible impact on students' actual writing.

To best support the development of procedural skills and their transfer to writing, it helps to understand something of how the brain processes applied knowledge. A model of learning that sheds light on this is called "controlled processing" (Maybery and Speelman 84). This theory puts two cognitive states in synergy, one that is largely unconscious and another that is governed by a "conscious intention to learn" (Wynne 257). Essentially, internalization of a new skill is supported by balancing *doing* and *knowing*. Over-reliance on one or the other presents problems—exposure alone is frequently insufficient as is an over-emphasis on explanation. This dual approach is reflected in the way many of us learn to drive a car; rather than learn about motor vehicles in the abstract, with an emphasis on declarative knowledge (e.g., naming the parts of the engine), we take a car on an empty road in order to isolate key maneuvers (e.g., clutch control in a manual car), targeting practice and focusing attention simultaneously—doing and knowing in a reciprocal relationship. Furthermore, targeting skills in a safe environment allows the learner to take risks, supported by the instructor's immediate feedback.

Thinking about grammar from a functional perspective helps instructors to reconceptualize how they plan for and assess student learning, ultimately shifting the pedagogical tone of their teaching from knowing-what to knowing-how. The symbiotic cognitive states of controlled processing can be activated by creating opportunities for deliberate practice (Kellogg and Whiteford), exercises which funnel both hands-on experimentation and mindfulness onto a single skill (e.g., use of verbal phrases). Examples of deliberate practice for grammar include exercises in manipulating syntax such as sentence imitation and sentence combining, both of which can be found in Don Killgallon's workbooks on sentence composing; I also provide examples of both in the Appendix. Ronald Kellogg and Alison Whiteford single-out sentence combining for the role it can

play in "training students to produce complex sentences," because such sentences, "place the greatest demands on working memory," and therefore, "benefit from deliberate practice" (257). In the ways they channel procedural thinking related to the manipulation and generation of syntactic structures, sentence combining and sentence imitation approximate the kind of problem-solving skills writers use when composing actual sentences.

Deliberate practice in manipulating syntax raises students' consciousness as they experiment with form—a delicate dance between knowing and doing. As students experience a form in isolation, singled-out for rehearsal, their conscious attention of this form is heightened. Teachers can build on this sense of focus, fine-tuning the degree of explicit instruction in response to student performance; explanations can arise as needed in the light of students' approximations, adding to their existing, but frequently latent, grammar know-how and tilting the balance towards internalization. Furthermore, this explicit attention is grounded in concrete examples, tied to what a structure *does* to a sentence and its effect on meaning, helping to sidestep, in the words of one participant, the "rabbit holes" of overly-abstract and seemingly endless explanations. Applied grammar is geared towards performance rather than definitional exactitude, and noticing and naming are a means to this end rather than an end in themselves. The goal is to build on what students can (already) do and to add just enough explicit instruction—modeling, explaining, clarifying—to nudge students in the right direction. With this sense of "knowing" (or, perhaps better, "know-how") in mind, instructors can ask the following questions when designing in the spirit of applied grammar:

- Is the thrust of teaching and learning toward application—i.e., students' writing?
- Is the emphasis of instruction on procedural skills rather than declarative knowledge? Is "knowing" in the service of application and retention rather than an end in itself?
- Would students benefit from deliberate practice to "test

drive" new structures or rules (e.g., sentence imitation and sentence combining)?
- Are explanations grounded in concrete examples, such as students' own sentence manipulation workouts?
- Are explanations just enough, too little, or too much? Is the degree of explicit explanation likely to support or interfere with learning?

With the underlying pedagogical principles of the workshop established, I turn to the logistics of reifying such an ethos within fully developed, systematic lessons.

Lesson Planning Tool #1: Logical Lesson Design

Having clear, consistent principles for organizing grammar lessons—regardless of the choice of activities—allows instructors to identify any gaps in their plans that might hinder students' internalization of new skills. During the N.W.P. workshop, we identify two models of lesson design that promote systematic sequencing and act as touchstones to evaluate daily planning: the gradual-release-of-responsibility model (Fisher and Frey 3) and inquiry-based instruction. In practice, teachers frequently blend these models, breaking down learning into manageable steps but also encouraging inductive exploration and discovery.

A gradual-release of responsibility model is showcased in Roberta Ching's text-based grammar modules that support the California Expository Reading and Writing Curriculum (E.R.W.C.). I frequently use Ching's curriculum as a reference point for grammar planning because I have been involved in training teachers within the E.R.W.C. ecosystem and because it provides complex teaching strategies in an elegant design, with clear, logical sequencing of scaffolds. Each grammar module complements one of the main reading and writing modules, and proceeds from a teacher-led mini-lesson of a form or rule through group activities and individual practice to application to students' writing. Activities grow in complexity and scaffolds are progressively removed so that

students take responsibility for transferring the target skill to their writing. Learning mainly takes place in class time, creating ongoing opportunities for peer- and self-assessment and for immediate feedback.

In order to foreground the organizational logic, below I extract the most essential steps included in the grammar modules:

- Modules start with a "guided composition" activity to highlight a rule (e.g., complete versus incomplete sentences) or form (e.g., adjective clauses) in the context of a current class reading. The instructor reads aloud a short excerpt cherry-picked from the corresponding module's main reading, while students listen carefully; the teacher reads aloud for a second time and students take notes without access to the original text. As an optional scaffold, students might also share their notes in small groups. Finally, students attempt to reproduce the passage using their notes, trying to match the original syntax as best they can. The instructor collects the excerpts as formative assessment. This opening activity contextualizes the target structure in a class reading and encourages students to think about it by first hearing it and then attempting to transcribe it.
- The instructor shows an overhead projection of four or so isolated examples of the target feature (e.g., sentences demonstrating use of specific verb tenses), taken from the same excerpt, inviting students to discuss what they notice. Sometimes examples are doctored to highlight the structure or rule and sometimes incorrect versions are placed alongside correct versions for contrast (e.g., complete sentences versus fragments). By isolating and contrasting the structure, the teacher is able to further raise students' attention.
- The instructor builds on students' consciousness by explaining the feature and how it works, including any

appropriate definitions (e.g., defining subjects, verbs, and the grammatically complete sentence).

- Students perform a series of identification exercises, in which they underline the feature(s) (e.g., subjects and verbs) in individual sentences before progressing to whole passages (e.g., a paragraph or two), each sample taken from the main readings or from anonymous (past) student samples. The identification activities can act as a powerful tool in further helping students to notice the structure and how it works in sentences, enabling them to perceive patterns and variations for themselves.
- Students use deliberate practice to experience using the feature, including such activities as: sentence combining (e.g., adjective clauses), fill-in-the-blanks (e.g., appropriate verb tenses), or correction exercises (e.g., editing run-on sentences). Exercises proceed from isolated sentences to short excerpts (e.g., a paragraph or two) and are again drawn from the work of students or from current readings, thus once more contextualizing grammar in real writing (a point to which I will return when discussing context).
- In the final stage, the instructor again shows the original guided composition excerpt on an overhead and puts its alongside one of the students' samples, sparking discussion about any differences in syntactic choice and the possible implications for meaning. The overhead is removed and students re-edit their original attempt in order to be as close to the actual passage as they can, further deepening their awareness. Students then target the structure or rule when editing their current papers; it is this application of the skill to their papers that will be used to assess students' learning.

By culminating in application to students' current compositions, Ching's curriculum is designed to help students become "independent editors of their own writing" (xv). This

emphasis on applicability represents an opportunity to "transform rhetorical knowledge … into performance" (*Elon Statement*) in order to reinforce long-term retention of skills. Students' consciousness of the target skill is bolstered by Ching's emphasis on teaching—rather than assigning—proofreading. Students follow a number of steps that support their ability to edit their writing, with emphasis on the target structure:

- Students choose to concentrate on the whole or part of their paper to proofread.
- They underline the target feature.
- They make corrections to the target feature, placing a question mark next to anything they are unsure of.
- Next, they exchange papers and consult with a peer about their queries.
- Finally, for unresolved issues, they can call-in the instructor for help.

Besides focusing students' attention through a set of well-defined steps, with a degree of differentiated choice, the protocol also creates windows for the class to share, discuss, and practice proofreading techniques (e.g., slowing down, reading aloud, putting a finger under each word) that can help students become more mindful self-readers, better able to notice and address sentence-level issues.

Ching's template is flexible; students' guided compositions are used diagnostically to shape instruction, and scaffolds are modified, revisited, or removed in response to ongoing formative assessment derived from the activities. The modules provide a template of what a fully-fledged gradual-release-of-responsibility design might look like, helping instructors to calibrate their own planning and visualize potential gaps in logic, as well as alternative sequencing and possible next steps. In the workshop, teachers try out the identification exercises (e.g., underlying verbal phrase structures in sentences) and deliberate practice exercises (e.g., combining sentences using verbal phrases), noting how the activities work in

tandem to raise awareness of structural patterns and variations. While Ching's template provides a reassuring sense of direction, instructors consider what a slimmed down sequence might look like, particularly given the demands on time; in the workshop, we discuss the possibility of frontloading the hands-on components—such as the identification exercise and deliberate practice—and holding much of the teacher-led mini-lesson, explanations, and definitions in reserve, in effect emphasizing the more inquiry elements that can be built-upon as needed.

Turning to inquiry-based sequences, the pedagogical emphasis is on student rather than teacher explanation, with explanations proceeding from—rather than preceding—students' hands-on practice. Commonly, sequences begin by summoning students' prior knowledge and progress through problem-solving activities and deliberate practice towards collective understanding. According to the *Elon Statement*, "conscious reflection on prior knowledge and adaptation of it for new contexts and purposes" may work in the service of transfer, preparing students to draw on this knowledge as they problem-solve different writing situations. A common inquiry sequence involves "guided noticing," in which students extract a rule from analyzing multiple examples. To teach speech punctuation, for example, Linda Christensen copies relevant pages from a class reading and asks groups to discover the rules and provide an example for each. She initially guides the students by providing clues about where to look (e.g., the position of the quotation marks); she has them highlight relevant conventions and punctuation (e.g., the placing of capital letters and commas), name the rules they discover, and put these rules—along with examples of each—on group posters. Once posters have been checked, they can be put on the classroom walls or the instructor can create a reference sheet as a handout (266). Typically, an inquiry sequence ends with direct application to writing—for instance, in this case, students might be asked to produce a low-stakes piece that incorporates two characters talking, demonstrating their knowledge of speech punctuation.

In a second inquiry-oriented sequence, Killgallon's sentence composing workouts make use of contrast to hook students and to stimulate inductive thinking. Modules begin by showing students a list of sentences, first without, then with the target structure (e.g., adjective clauses). The hook takes students through a number of steps, tweaked a little here to highlight its full inquiry potential:

1. Students identify the structure:
    a. Teacher shows sentences without the structure.
    b. Teacher shows the same sentences with the structure (students can highlight the difference).
2. Students describe the structure, answering questions like: "What does it look like?" "What are its features?" "What does it do for the sentence?" And "Where can it (best) be used:
    a. as a sentence opener?
    b. in a subject-verb split?
    c. as a sentence closer?"

In this model, students are invited to discover a structure within a syntactic context, noting its characteristics, its function, even its position within a sentence, with the potential to discuss its effect on meaning. After this exercise in noticing and naming, each module proceeds through a series of sentence manipulation exercises (e.g., sentence imitation and sentence combining), reinforcing students' consciousness as they play with form.

From these examples, teachers gain a sense of how an inquiry sequence might unfold. First, students are invited to notice the relevant form(s) (e.g., through isolation, contrast, studying models) and reflect on what they already know, then identify and describe in their own words, then perform a number of deliberate practice exercises, and, finally, apply to writing. Students' problem-solving acts as a conduit for more conscious awareness that the instructor can nurture as needed to promote internalization.

Referencing these organizational frameworks means instructors

can make more informed decisions about lesson planning, able to re-see and fine-tune their own designs: how they might begin and end sequences; where they might provide extra support; where they might try a more inductive approach, and so on. In place of wishful thinking—providing an explanation and hoping students will "get it"—instructors have logical pathways to promote student learning. The prompts below help teachers test the logic of their own designs and whether they are organized to optimize application and retention:

- Which will work best for my student(s): a gradual-release-of-responsibility model, an inquiry-based method, or a blend? Are there any gaps in my sequence where additional support might help students internalize a feature? For example, if students are not transferring a structure to writing, perhaps targeted proofreading and/or teacher think-aloud modeling of how to apply it during writing would help students make the bridge between practice and performance—the *Elon Statement* recommends explicit modeling of "transfer-focused thinking and the application of metacognitive awareness," as an enabling practice for long-term transfer.
- Do I start with the students—have I solicited what they already know and diagnosed their needs? Am I formatively assessing?
- Does proofreading take place in class? Is it scaffolded? Targeted?
- Have I made a direct bridge to student writing—is application the end-point?

Lesson Planning Tool #2: Assessing and Responding to Error—Logically

Once student papers have been collected, it helps to know how to diagnose and address errors in a systematic way. In the workshop, we draw on William Robinson's summary of error-analysis (54-5) to identify four potential sources of error:

- *Process-based errors*: these are mistakes or slip-ups that can stem from how thoroughly someone has internalized a skill or from the relative demands of the writing task (e.g., more likely with on-demand or timed writing); a logical response is to focus on proofreading strategies and to set targets with individual students.
- *Knowledge-based errors*: these are errors arising from lack of knowledge; a reasonable response is for instructors to hold back commenting until they have taught the form or rule and students possess sufficient awareness to act on the feedback.
- *Dialectical variations and linguistic echoes from other languages*: teachers need to be sensitive to students' sociolinguistic backgrounds and support language variety with a diverse curriculum and by raising awareness of the validity of all varieties.

  As part of the workshop, we discuss the role of code-switching techniques popular with teachers (Delpit; Wheeler and Swords), as well as more recent critiques of these methods. According to Lisa Delpit, code-switching is an additive-based approach to language that gives all students access to the "codes of power," (24); however, it should be delivered alongside critical framing of the "arbitrariness" of codes and their power-relationships (45). We draw on the ideas of English teacher Judith Baker who has her students create informal linguistic ethnographies of the varieties they use (e.g., at home, at work, at hobby), encouraging students to own the language choices they make and frame them in relation to issues around identity and justice. In relation to language justice, we discuss current challenges to code-switching. Compositionist Vershawn Ashanti Young argues for an alternative to the dualistic code-switching model, calling for "code-meshing," a more expansive view of academic language

that validates students' blended languages; sociolinguists Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa explore social bias around language, problematizing notions of correctness and appropriateness to contest the "racial status quo" (169).

Although the specific needs of English Language Learners lie outside the scope of this article, a resource we reference in the workshop in relation to error-analysis is Douglas Fisher et al.'s "Examples of Transfer from Primary Language Structures" (70), a guide to the kind of linguistic patterns that learners might carry over from other languages (e.g., lack of indefinite articles).

- *Developmental errors*: these spring from risk and experimentation; for example, recurring sentence fragments might be a result of students trying out more complex sentence structures, such as subordinate clauses; comma-splices might indicate a readiness to learn new forms such as the semi-colon or phrasal structures to link sentences closely-related in meaning. Such errors can also occur as result of oral interference or perhaps as process errors—sometimes conferencing with individual students or listening to what they can correct under optimal proofreading conditions can help clarify the source of an error-pattern.

A systematic approach to error is non-judgmental and recognizes mistakes as a natural part of learning. Revealingly, one workshop participant reflected on an error-pattern that had recently emerged in the writing of one of his students, sharing how a misconception of the error had negatively affected his feedback to the student. The sudden appearance of "dangling modifiers" had been perceived by the instructor solely in terms of deficits to be avoided, embodied in his liberal use of red-ink; he now recognized the error as likely arising from the student's willingness to experiment with verbal phrases, thus representing an opportunity to reward the risk-taking and teach the relevant

structure. Rather than police correctness, teachers can invite students into conversations about error. For example, teachers can encourage students to set personal targets from an error sheet (a menu of common errors) and use the sheet to chart their own progress across papers.

We consider other factors when weighing-up how to respond to errors. While teachers commonly prioritize errors that interfere with students' intended meaning, we balance this consideration alongside other factors such as students' readiness to learn a particular form or rule and the relative "seriousness" of an error. We discuss how surface errors (e.g., around the use of the apostrophe) are essentially "closed" in nature, reliant on fixed rules, and thus more akin to spelling; more serious errors are "open" in that they depend on some kind of choice or decision, tending to impact the architecture of the sentence and weigh on meaning. In this regard, we rate the following as the more serious: the role of subjects and verbs and how they relate; verb tense; clause and phrase structures; sentence boundaries. In contrast with surface mechanics, which have finite rules, the only limit on sentence formation is the writer's syntactic repertoire. Pat Cordeiro makes a similar case for punctuation, which, unlike "closed capacity" skills such as spelling and capitalization, cannot be "routinized" or "learnable in a single, final form," but is "forever open to negotiation" and a part of a writer's meaning-making process (59-60).

Which error to attack and when to tackle it is a judgment call, but it is possible to make informed decisions. The chart in Figure 1 lists a series of prompts designed to assist instructors in weighing their response to error while wearing two hats: a "reader" hat and a "teacher" hat. The former recognizes students' roles as communicators and is sensitive to the fact that "real" readers can be critical, albeit sometimes unfairly; the latter recognizes students as learners and posits learning as an ongoing, developmental process, requiring continuing support, time, and pedagogical nuance.

Responding as a Reader	Responding as a Teacher

• Which errors get in the way of reading?
• Which errors are likely to bother readers?
• Are they worth devoting (much) time to? Are they surface? Usage? A "one-off" or part of a bigger pattern?
	• Does an error occur frequently?
	  • Is it likely to recur in future papers?
	  • How "serious" is it?
	  • What is its likely source?
	  • Is there any evidence the student can apply the form or follow the rule?
	  • Does it violate a rule I can explain readily?
	• When is the best occasion to address this error—do I respond now or make a teacher's note? Have we addressed this error previously? Do I intend to address it with the class at some point?
	• Which error is the student most interested in or ready to address?
	• Did the student (or I) set specific targets?

Figure 1: Responding to Error as a Reader, Responding as a Teacher

To help students address errors in their writing, Ching's proofreading steps represent a valuable template, and such steps can be augmented with specific strategies designed to help students perceive and correct—or "find and fix"—errors related to sentence control issues, comma-splices and sentence fragments:

For comma-splices:

- First circle all commas.
- See whether a complete sentence follows the comma.

- If it does, see whether another complete sentence precedes the comma.
- If it does, there is a run-on sentence error present.

For sentence fragments.

- Look for end-punctuation (e.g., periods or semi-colons) that mark complete sentences.
- Put brackets [ ] around all the word groups punctuated as sentences.
- Analyze the "sentences:"
- Does each *sound* like a complete sentence?
- Does each contain a main verb and subject?
- If there are subordinate clauses, are they attached to main clauses?

The steps can be used for proofreading students' own writing or for deliberate practice, with students playing the role of "editor" or "peer expert" on a sample that contains comma-splices or fragments. Rather than start with rules or explanations, the sequences build on what students already know (even if partially). Students are given a framework to channel their thinking and the instructor can intervene as required. The act of annotating directs students' attention onto their sentences and how they are constructed. In checking their sentences, they are then asked to tap into their innate sense of a sentence ("Does each *sound* like a complete sentence?"). For many students, these moves should probably suffice for capturing most of the errors. However, as back-up, students are asked to apply a limited *working* knowledge of grammar—"subject," "verb," and perhaps "subordinate clause"—for testing trickier sentences, implying certain base-level understandings. These simple (but not simplistic) problem-solving tools work to avoid, as much as possible, the grammar rabbit-holes by tapping in to students' latent grammar knowledge and by anchoring discussions in actual writing.

Lesson Planning Tool #3: Creating Contexts—Proactively

At the start of this article, I cited one instructor struggling to balance systematic with contextualized instruction and another grappling with "relevancy," and since these are common grammar-related issues, at the workshop we interrogate our conceptualization of context so that it is not just a reactive phenomenon but one that can be planned and prepared for. While it is vital to monitor and respond to students' writing for what they are doing (and, in terms of next steps, on the verge of doing), we also take a proactive stance to context by situating grammar within a broader social and rhetorical framework, as part of students' communicative arsenal. We thus view grammar through a socio-rhetorical lens, cultivating the most meaningful contexts for literacy learning by emphasizing its role as a social tool and in shaping a writer's meaning. The prompts that follow speak to modifications, often relatively minor, that instructors can make to their existing grammar curricula to make them more meaning-centered, better integrated with reading and writing, and more relevant to students' social worlds:

- Have I scheduled mini-lessons during the proofreading stage of writing to support direct application to writing?
- Are exercises drawn from "real" writing, including class texts and contemporary culture, to reinforce the reading-writing connection and emphasize relevance?
- Do exercises engage students at their own level by drawing on their writing, making sure to ask permission and to use examples from across the student body to avoid singling out individuals?
- Do exercises approximate the kinds of thinking processes writers use when they write (e.g., sentence imitation and combining)?
- Have I created a positive and non-judgmental ethos for grammar instruction in which mistakes are seen as a natural

part of learning?

- Does my curriculum validate language variety and rhetorical choice?
- Do we share, model, and practice proofreading strategies? Have I discussed the logic of error-patterns with students? Do students target their own errors?
- Do lessons start with the students rather than the "rule," tapping into what they already know? Do they encourage social contexts such as collective inquiry and peer-editing?
- Is grammar tied to the power of student voice, demonstrating the positive impact of syntactic variety on the ethos of the writer and the emotions of the reader? Can I show how excessive error can impact an author's meaning and credibility (e.g., by performing a think-aloud of a doctored passage strewn with run-on sentences)?

The integration of grammar with reading and writing is further deepened as the workshop transitions to year-long design and a systematic response to the "big" organizational questions—what, when, in what order? In the section below I describe the planning coordinates that teachers use to chart their grammar year plans—how they prioritize topics, integrate them with their existing curricula, and tailor them to the needs of their own students.

Navigating the Forest: Tools for Long-Term Planning

Teachers use three main criteria to prepare their year plans: first, they select and organize in outline the topics that matter most to writing; second, they maximize the reading-writing connection by aligning grammar topics rhetorically to genres of writing (and reading) they are teaching; and, third, they deploy diagnostic and formative assessment to calibrate their planning. These criteria for mapping topics across the year are encapsulated in the three guiding questions below.

Long-Term Planning Tool #1: Which Topics? In the light of our overriding goal to improve students' sentence power and correctness, the first step in drawing up long-term plans is to compile an inventory of "high-leverage" topics (a term adapted from Grossman et. al.)—those grammar skills likely to have maximum impact on sentence precision and variety. Before teachers consider their own curricula, they need to be cognizant of what's "out there," the grammar palette from which they can draw; with a handle on the potential scope, they can make informed decisions about their own trajectories. To sketch out a collective provisional list, we comb through existing inventories in textbooks and study their overall logic. Ultimately, we primarily draw from three models which privilege the reading-writing connection and constructivist pedagogy, and which I overview below.

Ching's text-based grammar is the most comprehensive model in the way that it catalogs and organizes topics within a meaning-based curriculum; it can be condensed into the following essential shortlist:

- Sentence fundamentals: identifying *verbs* and *subjects* (the basis for everything that follows);
- When sentences go wrong: *fragments* and *run-ons;*
- Verbs: *making subjects and verbs agree;*
- Verbs: *tense* and *academic writing* (including *passives and modals*);
- Connecting sentences:
  - *Coordination, transitions, and semicolons,*
  - *Subordination,*
  - *Participial modifiers and phrases.*

Ching's bird's eye view of topics helps define our territory, representing a comprehensive, coherent program, focused on the needs of writers. The trajectory essentially proceeds from sentence correctness to sentence power—though teachers can choose their own entry points based on their students' abilities and needs.

Leah Zuidema's inquiry-based grammar workshop is aimed at high school students and the center of gravity is again on crafting the written sentence. Her workshop uses guided noticing to invite students to detect structures and structural patterns (e.g., repeated use of sentence fragments for effect) in published writing—students' "mentor texts"—and apply them to their own writing, so that grammar is "embedded in the contexts of both reading and writing" (64). Zuidema's program traces a similar arc to Ching, foregrounding issues of correctness and, most particularly, sentence power:

Sentence patterns (simple, compound, complex)
Verbs,
Fragments,
Coordination and subordination,
Cohesion,
Sentence rhythm,
Writer's voice,
Adverbials,
Adjectival forms,
Nominals,
Stylistic variations,
Gendered language.

Ching and Zuidema stand out as reference points for considering scope and organization, but an alternative arrangement by Michael Smith and Jeffrey Wilhelm is notable for the way it synchronizes grammar with writing assignments across successive grade-levels; this is a valuable model for departments who plan as teams and wish to share responsibility for grammar. The authors plan vertically by channeling grammar instruction into three kinds of writing tasks which are revisited year on year—personal narrative, fictional narrative, and expository/argument (72-76). For illustration, here is a summary of their suggestions for the personal narrative with the grammar focus for each grade level (73):

Grade 5: Autobiography of discrete experience(s) (fragments)
Grade 6: Themed autobiography, such as literacy autobiography (verb tense)
Grade 7: Memoir (run-ons/comma-splice errors)
Grade 8: Multimedia profile of self (comparatives)
Grade 9: Personality profile of classmate (quotations)
Grade 10: Process descriptions/how-to of an area of expertise (punctuating transitions)
Grade 11: Personal Essay/Soapbox (punctuating complex sentences)
Grade 12: College Application Essay (punctuating parentheticals)

Pinning grammar topics to a fixed set of genres, spiraled across grade-levels, represents an efficient way to ensure their implementation while embedding them within student writing. When fictional narratives and expository/arguments are added to the mix, it makes for a wide-ranging but evenly distributed grammar program.

The sheer scale of grammar coverage found in textbooks, however, can be daunting. Understandably, teachers can be put-off by the apparent glut of terms and implied level of expertise. Killgallon's modules on sentence composing, for example, progress through four different kinds of phrase structures (appositive, participial, absolute, prepositional) and two clause structures (adjective and adverb), inviting the questions: where to begin and how to proceed? This is particularly true for instructors with a minimal background in grammar, confronted by a series of apparently discrete concepts and little sense of how they relate. To help such teachers navigate this particular forest, I introduce a simple reference chart (Figure 2) that highlights the interrelatedness of clause and phrase structures by showing what they *do* to a sentence and how they build on each other.

Example: The cat is eating fish. She is very content. *(= two simple sentences)*

You can combine sentences by:	Example and label:
"Bridging" sentences (coordination)	
a) using *joining words* such as **for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so** ("F.A.N.B.O.Y.S.")	**a)** The cat is eating fish, so she is very content. *(compound sentence)*
"Submerging" a sentence inside another (subordination)	
b) using *signal (subordinate)* words **who, whose, which, that**	b) The cat, who is eating fish, is very content. *(adjective clause)*
c) using other *signal* words/phrases such as **because, since, when, after, while, where, although, if, in order that**	c) While the cat eats fish, she is very content. *(signal word + clause)*
Using phrases ("reduced" clauses)	
d) using an *-ing or -ed* verb	**d)** Eating fish, the cat is very content. *(verbal or participial phrase)*
e) using other *phrases* (e.g., after *signal* words such as **since, while, although, if,** or *appositives*)	**e)** While eating fish, the cat is very content. *(signal word + phrase)* The cat, a fish eater, is very content. *(noun phrase appositive)* The cat, very content, is eating fish. *(adjective phrase)*
Plus:	Fish eaten, the cat is very content. *(absolute phrase)*

Figure 2: Sentence Combinations Made Simple

Self-evidently, this is not a purist take on grammar; the aim is to represent the widest variety of sentence power moves (i.e., combinations) in the most efficient way, with minimal labels—for example, using "signal word + clause" to subsume both adjective and adverb clauses. On one level, the table assists teachers in decoding textbook taxonomies; packing (and unpacking) complex sentences into simple sentences is surely the most transparent way to demystify complexity. On another level, the table places structures within a bigger picture, proceeding from compound to complex sentences and from clauses to phrases (framed as "reduced" clauses), though teachers are not tied to this sequential logic. It reassures teachers such as the one cited earlier who fears she may have "left something important out" and it offers logical ways forward for those uncertain about next steps. By emphasizing shared characteristics over fine distinctions, it also implies something else important. Rather than assume a linear progression in which every new structure merits equal attention, all that may be required to move students from one structure to another is a little nudging; rather than proceed according to coverage, better to watch and wait, adding precision, wrinkles, or new moves once students have developed a degree of fluency—as well as trusting in students' own developmental growth.

Long-Term Planning Tool #2: Which Genres? The most powerful way to integrate grammar with reading and writing is to marry structures to the kinds of writing in which they are most likely to feature—where they are part of the stylistic D.N.A. This level of synchronization is not an exact science, but the following checklist makes it easier for instructors to match structures to genres and promote the most rhetorically- and contextually-specific writing situations for students to experience grammar:

- Creative writing and literary texts manipulate a wide variety of clauses and phrases to invoke pathos; they also deploy varied and often contrasting sentence types and rhythms for effect, and even punctuation, such as dashes and exclamations.

- Narratives, including biography, tend to feature verbal phrases, which are likely in "any genre that has a narrative sense," (Weaver and Bush 115). Verbal (or participial) phrases allow the author to modify the subject or doer of the sentence in order to suggest action without requiring a separate sentence.
- Argumentation tends to emphasize logical relations "expressed through coordination, subordination, and the use of transitions and parallel structures" (Ching x).
- Concessive clauses and phrases (e.g., those beginning with "although," "though," "while," "whereas") are qualifying devices that help increase the credibility of arguments. Concessive constructions are ideal for highlighting the grammatical function of clause and phrase structures and the influence that syntactic choice can have on meaning. Take these two sentences: "Motorbikes are fun," and "Motorbikes are dangerous." Ask students to join the two sentences using a concessive structure, first to show a "typical" teenager's point of view (e.g., "Although motorbikes are dangerous, they are fun"), then a parent's or guardian's (e.g., "Although motorbikes are fun, they are dangerous"). The alternative placement of the original two sentences, either as a main clause or submerged as a subordinate clause, reveals how rhetorical significance is implicit in syntax, meaning dependent on grammatical choice, and it also illuminates the role of end-positioning on emphasis—the operative sentence comes at the end. Additionally, the subordinate clause can be readily reduced to illustrate phrase structures (e.g., "Although dangerous, motorbikes are fun") or moved position to split the subject and verb (e.g., "Motorbikes, although dangerous, are fun"), highlighting the role of parenthetical commas.
- Persuasive writing that makes recommendations, such as opinion and soapbox pieces, lends itself to "modals and other qualifying methods" such as "should," "must," "might" (Ching xv).

- Genres such as summaries, reviews, and newspaper articles, in which "persons, places, or events need to be briefly characterized" (Weaver and Bush 115), are likely to make use of noun phrase appositives, an economical way of adding information to a sentence.
- Formal reports might make use of the passive voice to deemphasize agency.
- Biographical writing that considers the subject's past, present, and future can be useful for showcasing shifts in verb tense and for identifying time markers.
- Texts written "primarily in the present tense" are useful for teaching subject-verb agreement (Ching xv), for example, a description of something people do habitually (e.g., "Every time I get up/she gets up/they get up in the morning …").

Matching structures rhetorically and stylistically to genres can support transfer of learning in a number of ways. A very direct way of turning "rhetorical knowledge … into performance" (*Elon Statement*), it emphasizes procedural skills and the conditional knowledge of how to apply these skills in relation to writing situation and rhetorical impact. By helping to raise students' consciousness of how structures can increase their sentence power, it can support a meta-awareness of language that Wardle calls "one of the most transfer-encouraging behaviors" (77). Metacognition can prepare students to repurpose skills for different settings, especially if students are asked to make connections across genres and consciously reflect on how a structure used in one genre might also be relevant for a different genre, with a new purpose and a new context (Graff 3). In relation to planning, the rhetorical marriage of grammar and genre means that teachers can pre-empt grammar skills students will need for writing tasks, allowing for proactive interventions. Furthermore, it enables instructors to exploit readings to model how authors use grammar, for example, by drawing attention to particular use of coordination or subordination or the ways authors navigate between verb tense (potentially useful for English Language Learners).

Long-Term Planning Tool #3: What Do Students Know? All plans are provisional until students are taken into account. Since the end-goal is to improve writing and maximize long-term retention of skills, it is logical to begin the year with some diagnostic writing to assess students' prior knowledge of (applied) grammar and to continue to gather data formatively during instruction in order to fine-tune plans. Without assessing what students already know and are ready to learn, the possibility exists that instruction is either superfluous or fails to build on students' latent knowledge. Student self-assessment is a vital part of this process, as are ongoing reminders of what students already know, what they have learned, and how they might adapt this knowledge for future applications. As stated, according to the *Elon Statement*, having students consciously reflect on their prior knowledge may prime them to tap into this knowledge when they "encounter writing in new settings." In other words, students need to continually reflect, connect, and project. As we have seen, as part of self-assessment and in collaboration with the instructor, students can set personal grammar targets, perhaps taken from a checklist, and informed by reviewing their past work. Near the start of the year, the whole class might generate a list of topics to be addressed, creating a positive ethos around grammar from the outset. In addition, by reflecting on structures and related "thinking they have done" *after* applying them, students can further raise their metacognition, increasing the likelihood of long-term transfer (Billing 496).

The *Power Write*, described by Fisher et al. as an activity for improving fluency in English Language Learners, can be harnessed as a diagnostic tool for all students. A variation on the quick-write, Power Writes provide both deliberate practice and formative assessment in grammar forms and rules. On a given topic, students are instructed to, "Write as much as you can, as well as you can" (Fisher et al. 96) in three timed rounds, lasting the same set time (e.g. one or two minutes). After each round, students total their word count to chart their (presumably) growing fluency and then reread

their piece, first circling any errors, then correcting whichever ones they can. Besides the pedagogical value of self-assessment, students' circling and correcting of potential errors yield rich data for the instructor: forms that students automatically get right (already internalized); errors they perceive during proofreading and correct (process errors); errors they perceive (by circling) but are unable to correct (thus demonstrating partial-knowledge); and errors they miss altogether (knowledge-based errors). A variation might have students target specific forms, either individual targets or topics recently covered in class (e.g., verb tense). Furthermore, since students are writing "live" in class time, they can discuss and share skills such as proofreading strategies and then try to apply them with immediate effect.

From Principles to Practice: Four Teacher Plans

Drawing on the above guidelines, teachers create their grammar year plans, represented by the four outlines that follow. These provide models for various grade-levels and different kinds of schools. As the outlines make evident, teachers are able to use the long-term planning tools to tailor-make plans for their individual curricula, learning goals, and student populations, each guided by a clear sense of logic; they are also able to make informed decisions based on our lesson planning tools—for example, scheduling and scaffolding proofreading for maximum benefit and contextualizing activities by drawing from course readings and student writing (which each teacher states as their intention). Most teachers put information on slides, which I reproduce here with permission. All names are pseudonyms.

Val: 9th Grade, Public School

Val will be teaching 9th grade in a public school for the first time, though she has taught middle school for many years. Unsure of her new curriculum, she concentrates on the first semester, framing grammar as a tool "to make meaning in writing." Rather

than share a finalized outline, she talks us through her ideas as they are still in flux.

In the first unit, students will interview each other, leading to biographical profiles—students' first major assignment. Students will also read a variety of models to help them structure their own biographies, likely a mix of published writings and past student samples.

Val intends to include diagnostic writing as part of the introductory unit; however, based on her previous students, she already intends to highlight the "sentence fundamentals" of subjects and verbs in order to attend to a number of essential skills. Students will first become familiar with the role of subjects and verbs by identifying them in sentences derived from class readings, then transfer this knowledge to their proofreading. During proofreading, students will underline their main subjects and verbs, and then check their accuracy according to individualized targets: some might need to check subject-verb agreement, others might concentrate on verb tense, and others might focus on a more rhetorical element—choosing more powerful verbs. To further support this emphasis, Val intends to raise the profile of proofreading by using peer collaboration and by building in scaffolded steps as outlined earlier, including modeling and differentiated choices (e.g., students choose to focus on all or part of their paper and try out different self-reading techniques). In regard to verb tense, students' personal profiles are particularly appropriate, since, as we have seen, biographical writing tends to include components related to past, present, and future, facilitating explicit attention to the negotiation of tenses.

To increase students' sentence power, Val hopes to anchor grammatical structures to the genres students will be experiencing, as described in our genre checklist. In the opening biographical unit, students will be encouraged to look for interesting sentence structures in their readings (their "mentor texts"), with a focus on "long and short sentences" and on how such variety can impact meaning. Asking, "How are long sentences constructed?" Val will review compound sentences and introduce verbal phrases, as

appropriate for narrative writing. She will use sentence imitation and sentence expansion exercises (as outlined in Killgallon). In an ensuing unit on argumentation, Val will appropriately focus on structures that signify logical relations: topic sentences, transitions, and possibly subordinate clauses, particularly the concessive. Later, she intends to teach fictional narratives when she will prioritize adjectives/adjective phrases and revisit verbal phrases to add color to students' descriptions. Finally, for summary writing, she intends to introduce the noun phrase appositive as a fittingly succinct way to add information.

In her draft plan, Val is already able to select and organize grammar topics according to their rhetorical relevance to the writing tasks students will be undertaking, while, for correctness issues, she scaffolds proofreading, prioritizes fundamental issues around subjects and verbs, and enables student choice and differentiated targets.

Edgar: 9th Grade, Public School

Edgar, also a 9th grade public school instructor, has thus far struggled to effectively integrate grammar into his curriculum, although he believes his students would benefit from some targeted support. He has, in the past, used worksheets that mainly focus on labeling parts of speech, and admits that he witnessed, "no evidence of transfer to writing." Now he intends to speak to the errors he commonly sees in his students' writing and to align, wherever he can, sentence power with the genres students will be writing. He hopes to benefit all his students, including the English Language Learners, particularly around subject-verb agreement and tense.

Attention to sentence correctness issues is distributed across the year's four units: subject-verb agreement and complete sentences in the first; fragments and run-ons in the second; tense in the third; and reflection and review in the last. To support these and other correctness issues, Edgar will teach proofreading and will provide mini-lessons on grammar skills when students are ready to edit

their papers, gradually increasing student responsibility across the year: first, students will practice proofreading skills and learn about error-patterns; next they will use error-sheets to set personal targets; and, last, they will reflect on their progress to increase metacognition and, thus, likelihood of long-term retention of skills.

For sentence power, Edgar synchronizes relevant grammar skills with rhetorically-appropriate writing wherever possible—verbal phrases for narrative writing, concessive clauses for arguments, and modals and voice (active and passive) for formal research reports.

Edgar's full outline is demonstrated in his slide (see figure 3). As he is already familiar with his teaching curriculum, he is able to achieve a high level of integration; the logic of his long-term strategy is evident in his ability to prioritize and sequence grammar topics in relation to writing tasks. He includes a diagnostic paper as well as ongoing formative assessment so he can adjust his teaching while working within a framework which is clear and consistent in scope and direction.

9th Grade Integrated Grammar Year Plan
Unit 1: Narrative/Descriptive Writing (Sept. - Oct.)
• Diagnostic paper • Sentence Fundamentals • Subject verb agreement review • Identifying verbs and subjects • Sentence Combining • Coordination; compound sentence creation • Verb phrases for narrative writing • Punctuation • Capitalization • Comma usage (with compound sentence work) • Proofreading Strategies • How to proofread • Error Awareness (individual and class patterns)
Unit 2: Informative/Explanatory Writing (Nov. - Dec.)

- Attention to Verbs
  - Subject verb agreement
- Sentence Combining
  - Adjective clauses for logical connections

- Sentence Problems
  - Fragments
  - Run-ons
- Punctuation
  - Quotation marks and integrating evidence
  - Parentheses
- Proofreading Strategies
  - Proofreading guide
  - Error Awareness Sheet - Students Target Personal Problem Areas

Unit 3: Argumentative Writing (Jan. - March)

- Attention to Verbs
  - Verb agreement/tense consistency
  - Verbs for introducing summaries and quotations
- Sentence Combining
  - Signal words for concessive clauses
- Tone and Voice
- Proofreading Strategies
  - Error Awareness Sheet - Students Target Personal Problem Areas
  - Proofing Checklist Based on Target

Unit 4: Research Projects (April - May)

- Attention to Verbs
  - Tense and academic writing (active vs. passive voice and modals)
- Sentence Combining
  - Parallelism
  - Expanded use of clauses
- Proofreading Strategies
  - Error Awareness Sheet - Review, Updates and Reflections

Figure 3: Edgar's 9th Grade Grammar Year Plan

Marie: 12th Grade, Charter School

Marie is an experienced 12th grade teacher in a charter school with motivated students. Like Val and Edgar, she intends to start

with a diagnostic essay in order to refine how she approaches her grammar plans. Based on her previous teaching experience, she knows her student body tends to have a problem with run-on sentences. She now perceives the cause as likely developmental in origin and therefore sees it as an entry point into teaching semicolons and subordination to link sentences that are closely-related in meaning. By being somewhat heavy-handed towards run-on sentences in her previous teaching, she reasons that she may have inadvertently caused some students to over-compensate, leading to sentence-fragments. In the case of both run-ons and fragments, Marie sees opportunities to discuss sentence formation and control and to improve students' sentence variety and complexity using sentence imitation and sentence combining. Her curriculum also places value on subject-verb relationships, sentence boundaries, pronouns, and prepositions—important areas for all her students, including the English Language Learners (see figure 4).

GRAMMAR PLAN for Seniors

September: Review Sentence Fundamentals

- Identify subjects and verbs
- Identify prepositions and prepositional phrases
- Understand subject-verb agreement

October – December: ISSUE #1: Run-Ons (primary) & Fragments (secondary)

- Learn punctuation rules (comma, semicolon, colon, dashes)
- Add conjunctions
- Recognize and punctuate subordinate clauses and phrases correctly
- Use the words of others (quotations and paraphrasing) effectively

January – March: ISSUE #2: Short Choppy Sentences

- Review punctuation rules (comma, semicolon, colon, dashes)

- Recognize and use verbal and adjective phrases
- Recognize and use appositives
- Recognize and correct dangling modifiers
- Edit for subject verb agreement

April – May: ISSUE #3: Vague/Incorrect Pronoun Usage

- Identify pronouns and antecedents and edit for agreement
- Use passive voice selectively and effectively
- Evaluate adverbial clauses for logic
- Vary sentence beginnings

Figure 4: Marie's 12th Grade Grammar Year Plan

Sam and Amy: 8th Grade, Public Schools

Sam and Amy collaborate on a middle school outline, a radical departure from their existing naming-of-parts methods. Instead of teaching grammar in isolation from the rest of the curriculum and "all at once," they take inspiration from Smith and Wilhelm's technique of funneling grammar instruction into a limited number of defined writing tasks—in Sam and Amy's case the genres selected are: narrative, literary analysis, and argumentation. Furthermore, when introducing new structures, they privilege those likely to play a rhetorical role in these three tasks: narrative is earmarked as a natural fit for noun phrase appositives in order to add succinct detail and verbal phrases to enhance descriptions, with absolute phrases penciled-in as a potential next step, depending on student progress; literature essays will spotlight logical connections—transitions, subordination, and semi-colons; argumentation will add concessive clauses. Students also compose book reviews; here, attention will again fall on use of noun phrase appositives to incorporate concise details about author and text.

In relation to sentence correctness, in their opening unit, Sam and Amy introduce the building blocks of the grammatical sentence—subjects and verbs—replacing a previous emphasis on parts of speech. They plan to make proofreading strategies

explicit, including use of the "find and fix" methods for correcting fragments and comma-splices; they also intend to address verb tense consistency and the relationship between pronouns and antecedents, important for the English Language Learners in their classes. Comma-usage will be highlighted for its role in speech punctuation during the narrative unit and for parenthesizing the phrase and clause structures as they are introduced.

Working with their students to create personal targets, Sam and Amy will have their students self-review their previous writing portfolios at the start of the year and they will also collect-in diagnostic papers for their own teacher review. Their plans are ambitious; however, the fact that they are grounded in logical decisions makes the implementation of the grammar curriculum—in whole or in part—far more likely to happen.

8th Grade Grammar Year Plan

Narrative: what do students need to write narrative well?

- Subject/verb—creating complete sentences; identifying and fixing fragments and run-ons
- Sentence variety—simple, compound, complex sentences; appositives and verbal phrases
- Use of commas—not all rules: focusing on punctuating dialogue and parenthesis
- Verb tenses—present and past tevnses: noticing a reason for changing from one tense to the another; step-by-step process for identifying and fixing unnecessary shifts
- Time signal words; transitions

Expository/literary analysis–-what areas of grammar need to be added at this point?

Figure 5: Sam and Amy's 8th Grade Grammar Year Plan

- Sentence variety: subordination—adverb clauses, adjective clauses, noun clauses; complex sentences using sentence imitation models
- Punctuating quotes/more comma usage—differentiating between dialogue and citing the text
- Using strong, active verbs; avoiding passive voice and verb 'to be'
- Transitions for this type of writing, plus semicolons, working on logical connections

Argument/persuasion—what points of grammar need to be added for this type of writing?

- Sentence variety: concessive clauses
- Review and build on citing evidence with quotes
- Pronouns and antecedents
- Introduce transition words specific to argument

Closing Thoughts

The teachers' blueprints illustrate how the planning coordinates can be used to map out grammar topics, integrated with existing syllabi. Teachers are able to prioritize issues central to sentence architecture and meaning over more surface concerns and differentiate between "musts" (e.g., verbal phrases) and "maybes," (e.g., absolute phrases), depending on student progress. To further pinpoint topics, teachers consider the genres students will be producing (and consuming) and correlate them with structures most appropriate to those styles in order to deepen rhetorical context, illustrate the power of syntactic choice, and support transfer. Students can apply grammar skills in the most meaningful way, with emphasis on the *how* and the *why*. In relation to correctness, the fundamentals of the written sentence, such as verb tense, can be plotted in advance, while emergent patterns can be addressed as they reveal themselves in student writing, supported by diagnostic tools and self-assessment. Mini-lessons can be scheduled with proofreading to maximize buy-in and application, with students actively participating in target-setting and cataloging their progress in relation to error.

Teachers are, of course, not tied to these plans. On the contrary, as with all such plans, they are contingent; however, whatever adjustments teachers make can be done so within a logical framework. For instructors who prefer to tackle grammar concerns as they arise, or who dip into grammar only occasionally, perhaps in conferencing with individual students, the inherent logic of the framework still holds true, situating a given topic within an overall schema and hierarchy, and making it easier to imagine any potential next steps and systematic ways to implement them. Whatever choices an instructor makes, they can be grounded in the curriculum and students' writing—rather than dictated by a text book.

By applying a set of clear and coherent organizational principles, and by knowing how learning contexts can be proactively anticipated and cultivated, we have seen how teachers are able to plan for sentence-level work. Taking a systematic approach, they are able to sift and sort grammar topics, knowing which matter most, connect topics to particular kinds of writing (and, therefore, writing tasks), and design logical lessons geared towards application and long-term transfer. With reference to context-building, we have seen multiple ways to connect grammar meaningfully to reading and writing, but also to student voice, as well as a range of other pedagogical tweaks, including: emphasizing proofreading, validating and exploring language diversity, treating error logically, and using student self-assessment alongside ongoing formative assessment. With these criteria in mind, teachers can make more informed decisions in response to the questions: what, when, and in what order?

Notes

[1]Thanks to Catharine Lucas, former grammar project leader, for this distinction. As I discuss later in the article, the workshop has lively discussions on notions of "correctness" since there is no singular version of English; we do, however, all agree on the importance of students' ability to manage the written sentence through such features as well-focused subject and verb relationships, command over tense, the construction of grammatically complete sentences, and careful consideration of sentence punctuation (such as end-punctuation) that best serve their intended meaning and boost their credibility as writers.

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APPENDIX

Examples of Sentence Imitation and Sentence Combining

In the workshop, teachers try out exercises that I have also used with college students. For sentence imitation, I mainly reference Killgallon for examples of sentences taken from published authors,

although exercises can also be found in a booklet by James Gray and Robert Benson, available online. I cherry-pick the best sentences for my purposes—for example, I might want to avoid sentences that are overly-complicated or distract from the target structure. I include twelve or so in total, and these can include relevant variations—for verbal phrases, for example, most would be verbs ending in –ing, but some might show the –ed past form.

The examples below are reproduced from Killgallon's chapter on verbal phrases (or "participial phrases"). However, I remove Killgallon's headings and the bold font to encourage inductive learning: I want students to identify any patterns and variations in the structure, such as sentence position, for themselves.

First, I have students underline the verbal phrase in each sentence. This might lead to conferencing, peer sharing, or whole class interventions, though the point here is not to "correct" each answer, but to cultivate inquiry and direct students' thinking onto verbal phrases—to get them to notice. Students then compose their own sentences underneath the model sentences—they might choose six or so they want to imitate, depending on progress. As far as possible, students imitate the model sentences word for word, absorbing patterns and building their "muscle memory" for the form:

Verbal Phrases: Sentence Imitation

Sentence Openers

1. **Whistling**, he let the escalator waft him into the still night air. Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*

   [My example: Panting, he forced his canoe to propel him over the cold dark water.]

2. **Looking over their own troops**, they saw mixed masses slowly getting into regular form. Stephen Crane, *Red Badge of Courage*

3. **Amazed at the simplicity of it all**, I understood everything as never before. Alphonse Daudet, "The Last Lesson"

Subject-Verb Splits

4. My father, **cautioning me not to work a horse till he had fed fully**, said I had plenty of time to eat myself. Lincoln Steffens, "A Boy on Horseback"

   [My example: The instructor, reminding me not to lose focus, told me I had lots of skills to learn.]

5. Eckels, **balanced on the narrow path**, aimed his rifle playfully. Ray Bradbury, "A Sound of Thunder"

6. The sight of Mick's exploring beam of light, **flashing and flickering through the submarine darkness a few yards away**, reminded him that he was not alone. Arthur C. Clark, *Dolphin Island*

Sentence Closers

7. The entire crowd in the saloon gathered about me now, **urging me to drink**. Richard Wright, *Black Boy*

   [My example: A large group on the lake shore called out to me, cheering me on.]

8. She called to him, **excited**. Daphne du Maurier, "The Birds"

9. The magician patted the hand, **holding it quietly with a thumb on its blue veins, waiting for life to revive**. (two participial phrases) T.S. White, *Book of Merlyn* (Killgallon 14-15).

I also take sentences directly from published texts. All examples below were taken directly from a book review introduced to me by

a former colleague, Professor Nelson Graff. The article, by Jessica Bruder, appears in *The New York Times* and reviews the children's book *Once Upon a Banana*, by Jennifer Armstrong. The review is brimming with linguistic drama, including rich verb choice ("tumble," "swipes," "topples," "catapults," "crashes," "dashes"), alliteration ("clumsy chaos," "topples townsfolk") and analogy ("like dominoes," "like a life-size Rube Goldberg machine") that we can mine in class. It also contains copious use of adjective clauses and verbal phrases to which I can draw students' attention. Focusing on the latter, I might start by asking students to see how many verbal phrases they can discover for themselves or I might highlight the relevant structure each time it occurs and ask students to identify any patterns in how it is formed, positioned, or used. Verbal phrases are particularly apt for describing the wild action of the featured book, so there is a link between grammar and meaning that can emerge as students experience the deliberate practice below:

Verbal Phrases: Sentence Imitation and Sentence Combining

a) Sentence Imitation

Write your own sentences, attempting to match the sentences below word for word (as best as you can) to try and capture their rhythm and effect.

Examples:

1. **Plucked** from the compost by decades of slapstick, the peel portends disaster.

   [My example: Raised to the mouth with eager relish, the wine promises pleasure.]

2. As one misstep sparks the next, the town starts to feel like a life-sized Rube Goldberg machine**, juddering** toward an unknown goal.

[My example: As the waiters glide around, the restaurant takes on the appearance of a swarming hive, buzzing with energy.]

- Most picture books plod through their front matter, **treating** the cover, endpapers, copyright and title page like flyover country before finally introducing a story.
- Then the wild-eyed monkey dashes across the inside cover and following pages, **making** a break for his banana.
- Many of the messages are contextually funny, **offering** a stark contrast with the mayhem that engulfs them.

b) Sentence Combining:

Use verbal phrases to combine the pairs of sentences below, making the action in one sentence the background, explanation, or elaboration for the other.

Example:

I wanted milk. I went to the store.

Wanting milk, I went to the store.

- I planned to earn a good grade. I studied hard.
- We all walked outside. We enjoyed the sun and the cool air.
- The boys in Golding's novel go wild. This suggests how tenuous our hold on civilization can be.
- Huck and Jim floated along, unable to find each other. They were separated by the fog.
- I ran in the park. I saw a fox.

Note: I leave space under each sentence for students to write their sentences.

In this combined sequence, students practice sentence imitating and combining as mutually reinforcing problem-solving activities. Students might self-direct their own learning, choosing imitating or combining as their preferred tool, and self-assess when they are ready to try out the structure in writing. Imitation can be challenging, though some take to it relatively easily, and it should be enjoyable. I remind students that it is like trying on new clothes—some structures might feel uncomfortable for a while. As extra support, prior to the activities, I have students compose a short description on a topic of their choosing to draw on for their deliberate practice so they can focus attention on their syntax. They might return to this description after the exercises and embellish it with a few examples of the target structure.