Grammar in Writing: Teachers' Reflections

Christine Anita Xavier*

Nanyang Technological University, 639798 Singapore
Email: christine.xavier@nie.edu.sg

Hing Mui Hong

Keming Primary School, 659762 Singapore

Willy A. Renandya

Nanyang Technological University, 639798 Singapore

Abstract

There has been much debate over the role of grammar instruction in the teaching of writing – whether grammar and writing should be taught separately, or in an integrated manner in the English Language writing class. This paper describes an action research project aimed at contributing to this debate through some teachers' reflections on integrating grammar and writing in the writing class. Five experienced English Language teachers in a Singapore primary school were concerned that while their students performed reasonably well in grammar tasks done in isolation, they struggled with the effective use of grammar in writing tasks. The teachers participated in the project by attending professional development sessions to enhance their knowledge of grammar as a meaning-making resource, before engaging in teacher inquiry of some student compositions to better understand how their students used grammar in writing. They then proceeded to revise existing writing instructional materials to explicitly integrate grammar and writing. Finally, the teachers were asked to reflect, on paper, on their experience in being part of the project. Results show that the action research process led to teachers' enhanced grammar content knowledge, better understanding of students' gaps in writing, and improved teaching practices in the writing class.

Keywords: Grammar, writing, grammar debate, action research, teacher inquiry, instructional materials

Introduction

There has been much debate over the role of grammar instruction in the teaching of writing - whether grammar and writing should be taught separately, or in an integrated manner in the English Language (EL) writing class (for example, Andrews et al., 2004; Jones et. al., 2013; Locke, 2009; Myhill et. al., 2021b; Weaver, 1996). Numerous studies have been conducted on the relationship between explicit grammar teaching and writing development.

In general, studies which investigated the discrete teaching of grammar and writing on writing development have concluded that grammar instruction minimally benefits writing development (for example, Andrews et. al., 2006, Bateman & Zidonis, 1966; Elley et. al., 1976). Such an approach to teaching grammar and writing separately largely adopts a prescriptive view of grammar, where the focus is on grammar rules, and the correct and accurate use of grammatical structures. On the other hand, the limited studies which have examined the impact of grammar instruction within the context of writing have largely concluded that contextualized grammar teaching within writing does benefit writing development (for example, DiStefano & Killion, 1984; Jones et. al., 2013; Weaver, 1996). Such an approach to teaching grammar and writing in an integrated manner in the writing class adopts a descriptive view of grammar, where connections and relations between linguistic choices and the meanings they shape and construct are established. This approach views grammar as a meaning-making resource.

The objective of this paper is to describe an action research (AR) project aimed at contributing to this debate through five Singapore teachers' reflections on integrating grammar and writing in the writing class in a Singapore primary school. In Singapore, the Ministry of Education's (MOE) English Language syllabuses (2010 and 2020) aim to develop students into effective language users, and recognize that in order to do this, there needs to be a balance between form and function. One of the guiding principles of the syllabuses "recognises language as a means of

making meaning, and of representing those meanings to others in communication" (Tan, 2016, p. 9). It is also explicitly stated in the syllabuses that students will need to "learn the grammar of the language in the contexts of the various types of texts" (Tan, 2016, p. 10). While the syllabuses seem to advocate the teaching and learning of grammar in the context of texts, with the view of language as meaning-making, most Singapore primary schools still adopt the practice of teaching grammar and writing separately, during different lesson periods. This results in the lack of explicit links being made between the role of grammar as a meaning-making resource within texts and writing.

This project arose out of a concern of these five teachers (and many others elsewhere) that while their students performed reasonably well during grammar lessons and in grammar tasks done in isolation, they struggled with the effective use of grammar within writing tasks. The teachers hence recognized "gaps between what [was] actually happening in [their] teaching situation and what [they] would ideally like to see happening" (Burns, 2010, p. 2), motivating them to engage in an AR project, in collaboration with an EL academic from a local university, who is one of the authors of this paper. The project involved the teachers going through an AR process to revise existing Primary 5 (P5) writing instructional materials by making explicit links between grammar as a meaning-making resource and writing.

This paper hence seeks to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are teachers' thoughts on teaching grammar and writing in an integrated manner in the EL writing class?

Research Question 2: Are there benefits to teaching grammar and writing in an integrated manner in the EL writing class?

Literature Review

View of grammar

Generally, there are two views of grammar – a prescriptive view and a descriptive view of grammar. The difference between these two views of grammar is fundamental to the debate on whether grammar and writing should be taught separately or in an integrated manner. The difference between these views is critical to the role of grammar in writing.

The prescriptive view of grammar focuses on the rules of grammar, and on how language should be used. The attention is on the correctness, and accuracy of grammar use. This prescriptive view of grammar emphasizes the targeting of errors – whether in avoidance or remediation. When such a prescriptive view of grammar is used in the classroom, grammar teaching will then focus on grammar rules, errors, and grammar drills. The role of such a prescriptive view of grammar in writing is thus limited to the correct use of grammatical structures – where language is viewed as a system of different structures and the focus is on how words, sentences and texts are put together (Carter and McCarthy, 2006). Such a prescriptive view of grammar adopted in the EL classroom would then largely result in grammar and writing being taught separately.

The descriptive view of grammar, on the other hand, focuses on how language is actually used, in different contexts and settings. In contrast to the prescriptive view of grammar, where the emphasis is on accuracy of grammatical structures, the descriptive view of grammar emphasizes grammatical choice – the linguistic possibilities. The descriptive view of grammar is a rhetorical view of grammar that focuses on how grammatical choices construct meaning in text, where text is "a process of making meaning in context" (Halliday and Mathiessen, 2004, p. 3). Grammar is thus viewed as a meaning-making resource within written texts and as such, writers are able to make grammatical choices in creating meaning (also discussed for example in Cullen, 2008 and Richards and Reppen, 2014). Carter and McCarthy

stress "the grammar of choice is as important as the grammar of structure" (p. 7).

Grammar instruction and writing development

Debates over the role of grammar instruction in writing development have abound over the years. The debate has largely been whether the teaching of grammar and writing should be done separately, or in an integrated manner to benefit writing development. A prescriptive view of grammar is usually adopted in the approach to teaching grammar and writing separately, while a descriptive view of grammar is adopted in the approach to integrating the teaching of grammar and writing for writing development.

Most studies and reviews which have investigated the impact of teaching of grammar and writing separately on writing development have largely concluded that grammar instruction has minimal benefits to writing development (for example, Andrews et.al., 2004, 2006; Bateman & Zidonis, 1966; Elley et. al., 1976; Hinkel 2008). For example, Andrews et al. (2004) concluded after a systematic in-depth review of ten studies of the effects of grammar teaching (in particular, syntax) on writing development, that the teaching of syntax has "virtually no influence on the writing quality or accuracy of 5-16 year-olds" (p. 4). The study done by Bateman and Zidonis (1966), for example, looked at the effects of a transformational grammar course on language growth in secondary school students, and came to the conclusion that there were benefits in increasing the number of grammatical sentences, and reducing sentence-construction errors in writing, but fell short of concluding that this benefitted overall writing development.

However, Jones et al. (2013) argue that these studies have largely studied the teaching of these two areas discretely and have then sought to make links between these two areas, resulting in the conclusion that grammar teaching minimally benefits writing development. Myhill et al. (2012b) point out that there is much difficulty with such research as these studies investigate whether

explicit, isolated grammar teaching, such as the parsing of sentences, has an impact on writing. They argue that such an approach of teaching of grammar and writing discretely is unlikely to improve writing as there is a lack of integration between the two. They stress that the value of grammar is when it is taught within the context of writing, leading to contextualized grammar teaching. Contextualized grammar teaching, that adopts a descriptive view of grammar, involves establishing connections and relations between linguistic choices and the meanings they shape and construct. Such an approach of grammar instruction in the context of writing would be more beneficial for writing development (as supported by for example, Calkins, 1980; DiStefano & Killion, 1984; Kolln, 1981; Weaver, 1996)

There have been limited large scale studies contextualizing the teaching of grammar within the context of writing, where meaningful connections are made between grammatical structures and the expression of meaning and content in writing. In 2012, Debra Myhill and her team (reported in e.g. Myhill et al., 2012a; Jones et al., 2013) conducted a large-scale study which investigated the impact of contextualized grammar teaching on students' writing performance. The results of her study suggested that explicit, contextualized grammar instruction in the context of writing lessons does positively impact students' writing development when grammar is meaningfully linked to writing demands (Myhill et al., 2013). A descriptive view of grammar was adopted in the study, with a focus on how language works in different contexts.

Inspired by Myhill et al. (2012b)'s suggestion that "a writing curriculum which draws attention to the grammar of writing in an embedded and purposeful way … is a more positive way forward" (p.30), the project team set out to revise a specific writing unit within the school's existing P5 writing instructional materials to embed explicit, contextualized grammar components with the view of grammar as a meaning-making resource for writing. The focus was to introduce to students, ways of creating different meanings in written texts using different grammatical structures. In this

way, students would view grammar as choice and be empowered with the knowledge to make grammatical choices in expressing various meanings in their writing, taking on authorial responsibility (Jones et al., 2013).

The next sections in this paper are as follows: the section on the teaching context will provide the context within which the AR project was conducted; the methodology section will lay out in detail the process of the AR project; the section on revising the instructional materials will provide context for the results and discussion section; the results and discussion section will share the reflections of the teachers on this process of integrating grammar and writing in the EL writing class, and discuss the significance of the teachers' reflections to this debate; and the conclusion will end the paper with some concluding remarks.

The Teaching Context

The AR project took place in a local primary school in Singapore where the medium of instruction is the English Language. This local primary school has a range of students from low, middle to high progress children. In this school, for the P5 classes, weekly, there are twelve EL periods of thirty minutes each. In general, teachers take 2.5 weeks of about thirty periods to complete teaching an English unit. They use a thematic text as a springboard to teach grammar, vocabulary, comprehension as well as skills in listening, reading, speaking and writing. To follow up on students' learning, teachers set assignments to check on students' mastery of the skills. Writing is always done last to wrap up the learning for the unit. Writing skills are explicitly taught through the lesson ideas given in the writing instructional materials that comprise teaching slides, handouts, activity sheets and checklists. To help students generate ideas for writing, teachers engage them in pre-writing tasks that tie in with the theme and following that, students move on to write a composition. Teachers then mark students' work and provide feedback for improvement.

Methodology

    Participants

        The two P5 classes selected to participate in this project were two middle-progress classes of 39 students each. These two classes were selected as their respective EL teachers were keen to participate in this project.

    Instruments

        The EL departments in local primary schools in Singapore usually develop their own writing instructional materials. These are shared with EL teachers as guidelines to teach their students. The team of five teachers wished to evaluate their existing P5 writing instructional materials, with the aim of revising these by embedding within the writing instructional materials, explicit and contextualised grammar components.

    Procedure

    Data collection from existing writing instructional materials

        A particular writing unit on the theme of friendship in the existing P5 writing instructional materials, to be used in Term 2 of that particular school year, was first reviewed by the EL academic collaborator. The two P5 teachers of the two target classes followed the said writing unit closely, using the existing instructional materials (teaching slides and activities) to teach the classes the writing unit. Both the P5 teachers then set their students the required writing task on the theme of friendship after completing the teaching of the writing unit. The writing task was done in class, as per the school's usual procedures.

        Forty random compositions were collected (twenty from each class) by the respective P5 teachers. These unmarked compositions were anonymized (each composition was assigned a number) before being handed over to the project team as data for grammar coding and analysis of the grammatical structures used by the students in their writing. Following an AR approach, a primary focus of the project team was to critically understand, through teacher inquiry, how their students used (or not)

particular grammatical structures in the expression of content and meaning in their writing.

Professional development for teacher inquiry

In order for the teachers to grammatically code and analyse the grammatical structures used by the students in their writing, the EL academic conducted 3 professional development sessions of between 2 to 3 hours that covered the necessary grammar content knowledge needed for the detailed grammatical coding and analysis of the students' writing. The project team agreed to specifically focus on the grammar areas of noun phrases, sentence structures and the use of adverbials in writing in this project as a start to this endeavour of making explicit links between grammar and writing in the writing classroom. During these sessions, the teachers grammatically coded and analysed several compositions to ensure that there was clear understanding of the grammar content knowledge and consistent grammatical coding. The teachers then proceeded to grammatically code and analyse the compositions that were assigned to them, in terms of the use of noun phrases, sentence structures and the use of adverbials by the students in their writing.

Revision of existing instructional materials

The grammatical coding process led to the teachers' deeper understanding of how students use noun phrases, sentence structures and adverbials in their writing. Based on this greater understanding, the project team discussed how the existing P5 writing instructional materials could be enhanced in terms of content, strategies and teaching materials to explicitly help students to improve on their use of noun phrases, sentence structures and adverbials in their writing. The project team identified spaces within the existing writing instructional materials that allowed for opportunities to explicitly integrate grammatical structures within writing. The project team then set out to revise the next writing unit on the theme of sportsmanship in the writing instructional materials. In this way, the revision of the writing

instructional materials was driven by the actual needs of the students, identified through teacher inquiry of students' writing practices and styles.

The next section on the revision to the writing instructional materials briefly illustrates, how based on the analyses and general findings of the use of noun phrases, sentence structures and adverbials by the students in their writing, the project team set out to revise the next writing unit in the writing instructional materials. This section is included to better illustrate the revision process involving the integration of grammar in writing, that the teachers went through. This section will hence better contextualise the results of this study, which are the teachers' reflections on this AR project integrating grammar and writing in the writing class.

Reflection on the action research process

Upon completion of the project, the five teachers in the project team were asked to write up reflections on their experience and benefits of being involved in such an AR project. The reflection questions focused on the professional development sessions aimed at strengthening their grammar content knowledge, the teacher inquiry of student compositions which involved grammatical coding, and the revision of the instructional materials. The reflections were closely read and re-read by the researchers before words, phrases and sentences that held some form of lexical or grammatical relations between them and repeatedly emerged in the data, were highlighted. The reflections were found to be centred around four categories of enhanced subject content knowledge, better understanding of students' writing, improved teaching practices and enriched instructional materials.

Revision of the Writing Instructional Materials

    General findings in the data

The following are some of the general findings of the analysis of the use of noun phrases, sentence structures and adverbials in the data that were used as the basis for revising the

writing unit on sportsmanship in the writing instructional materials.

Noun Phrases

Noun phrases were analysed in relation to the use of premodifiers and postmodifiers to modify (or not) head nouns (see Alsagoff, 2009, p. 53). It was found that students tend to predominantly write noun phrases with only premodifiers. Typically, the structure is of determiner + head noun (e.g. *the boy*) or determiner + adjective + head noun (e.g. *the hardworking boy*). It was found that students rarely used postmodifiers to develop their noun phrase structures. There was the lack of the use of postmodifier structures like preposition phrases, relative clauses, non-finite clauses and postpositive adjectives (Alsagoff, 2009, p. 60). Using postmodifiers would inadvertently communicate more information about the head noun of the noun phrase. For example, using a relative clause would expand a noun phrase like 'the hardworking boy' to 'the hardworking boy <u>who always completed all his homework</u>' to describe or give more information about the head noun 'boy'. It was found that when students did use postmodifiers, they typically only used preposition phrases, for example, 'the boys <u>in the field</u>'. This finding triggered the question '*How to create awareness of the use of postmodifiers and how to encourage the use of the other structures for postmodification?*'

Sentence Structures

It was found that students did in fact use a variety of sentence structures of simple, compound and complex sentences. However, when compound sentences were used, most of them used the coordinating conjunctions of 'and' and 'but'. There was a lack of variation in the use of coordinating conjunctions to express various relations. When complex sentences were used, run-on sentences or fragments often resulted. These findings posed the questions of '*How to encourage the use of other conjunctions to express various relations of meanings? How to consciously raise*

awareness of the use of run-on sentences and the ways to avoid these?'

Adverbials

Adverbials which function to provide additional information about an action or event (Alsagoff, 2009) are useful in writing to elaborate on the 'whens', 'wheres', 'whys' and 'hows' of the main verb in a clause. It was found that generally students did use adverbials. However, the adverbials used were largely adverb phrases and preposition phrases in terms of form and were limited to answering questions of how (the highest count), when and where in terms of function. The students hardly used other forms like noun phrases and adjective phrases as adverbials. This finding prompted the question '*How to encourage and consciously raise awareness of the use of the various forms of adverbials to answer the questions of WHEN, WHERE, WHY and HOW of the main verb in a clause?'*

Building on the existing instructional materials

A review of the existing writing instructional materials revealed that there were several valuable and useful strategies introduced to students to guide them along in writing their compositions. The project team wanted to build on some of these writing strategies in the existing writing instructional materials like for example, *Sentence Expansion*, where students were encouraged to add adjectives, add adverbs, add clauses and so forth, and *Show not Tell.* Examples of sentences that were 'expanded', and sentences that 'show' and not just 'tell' were provided in the existing writing instructional materials to the students. For example, a sentence similar to the following sentence was 'expanded' to 'show' and not just 'tell'.

Example:

(a) The boy ran on the track.

(b) The determined boy who was perspiring profusely ran on the long, winding track.

(c) The determined boy who was perspiring profusely ran quickly on the long, winding track.

(d) The determined boy who was perspiring profusely ran quickly on the long, winding track, occasionally turning to check that his competitors were not catching up.

Even though the above examples were provided as reference to guide students in sentence expansion, no explicit grammatical structures to guide the students on how to get from sentences (a) to (b) to (c) to (d) were provided. For example, the students were not explicitly guided as to how and where to add more adjectives, adverbs and clauses to expand the sentences given in the follow-up activity sheet.

The following illustrates briefly how explicit grammatical structures and cues were then included in the revised writing instructional materials to help students use the writing strategies of *Sentence Expansion* and *Show not Tell.*

Noun Phrases

In the revised writing instructional materials, the following noun phrase table was introduced, as shown in Figure 1 (adapted from Alsagoff, 2009, p. 61).

Table 1. Noun Phrase Table

PREMODIFIER			HEAD NOUN	POSTMODIFIER
Determiner	Adjective	Noun		Preposition phrases, relative clauses, non-finite clauses, postpositive adjectives
The		boy		
the		track		

With the introduction of this noun phrase table, students would then have a grammatical structure to guide them in expanding a head noun. The revised writing instructional materials included teaching slides and activities to teach students what premodifiers and postmodifiers are and their various possible structures using the various slots in the noun phrase table (as shown in Figure 1). Teaching ideas for various activities to expand head nouns with the use of premodifiers and postmodifiers were also included in the revised writing instructional materials, to use once students are familiar with the concepts of premodifiers and postmodifiers. With this knowledge of a noun phrase table, students would then have a grammatical structure to guide them in expanding a sentence, through the expansion of head nouns, to show and not just tell, as in Figure 2.

(a) The <u>boy</u> ran on the <u>track</u>. → (b) **The determined <u>boy</u> who was perspiring profusely ran on the long, winding <u>track</u>.**

Table 2: Expanding a head noun

PREMODIFIER			HEAD NOUN	POSTMODIFIER
Determiner	Adjective	Noun		Preposition phrases, relative clauses, non-finite clauses, postpositive adjectives
The	determined		boy	who was perspiring profusely
the	long, winding		track	

The noun phrase table is a structure that students could use as a guide in providing content to describe a character, a place or an event, to show and not merely tell. This noun phrase table is akin to the 'Great Noun Phrase Generator' suggested by Myhill et al. (2012b, p, 36). Such a grammatical structure provides a scaffolding for students to use "noun phrases to paint intensely descriptive images" (Myhill et al., 2012b, p. 35). In this way, grammar is used as a meaning-making resource in writing.

Adverbials

In the revised writing instructional materials, teaching slides and activities on what adverbials were included. The materials teach that adverbials are grammatical structures that provide more information about the main verb in a clause. Teaching materials on the forms adverbials can take like noun phrases, prepositional phrases, non-finite clauses and so on were included in the revised instructional materials. Materials to teach students the function of adverbials to answer the questions of when, where, why and how of the main verb of a clause were also included in the revised instructional materials.

For example, by asking the questions of when, where, why and how of the main verb 'ran' in (a), students are guided on how to expand their sentences, to show and not just tell.

> *e.g.* *How did the boy run?*
> *The determined boy who was perspiring profusely ran* **quickly** (adverb phrase) *on the long, winding track,* ***occasionally turning to check that his competitors were not catching up*** (non-finite clause).
> *e.g.* *Why did the boy run?*
> *The determined boy who was perspiring profusely ran* **quickly** (adverb phrase) *on the long, winding track* ***because he wanted to win the trophy*** (clause with a subordinating conjunction).

These guiding questions would allow the students to adopt a more structured approach in trying to expand their sentences, to

show and not merely tell, in their writing. As adverbials would be taught after the lessons on noun phrases, the teachers and students would also be able to draw on past knowledge of grammatical structures/forms like noun phrases, prepositional phrases and non-finite clauses introduced during the lessons on noun phrases, allowing the reinforcement of grammar content knowledge.

Results and Discussion: Teacher Reflections on the AR Project

After the revision of the writing instructional materials, the five teachers were asked to reflect, on paper, on their experience and the benefits of this AR project in integrating grammar in writing. Analysis of the teacher reflections on their experience of integrating grammar and writing centred around four main benefits – enhanced subject content knowledge, better understanding of students' writing, improved teaching practices and enriched instructional materials (NB: Italics in reflections are authors' own for emphasis).

Enhanced subject content knowledge

The teachers reflected that the grammatical coding process enhanced their subject (grammar) content knowledge, which is needed as part of their ongoing professional development as practising teachers.

Teacher A*:* The coding process has enabled me to *sharpen my saw in this area.…* The professional dialogues with the team … never fail to address my concerns and *deepen my learning in grammatical knowledge.*

Teacher B*:* As a teacher, I grew to be *more proficient in analysis of grammar* as far as essays are concerned and I learnt putting myself through the endless hours of sifting through the grammar reference books and being advised by my PI [who was the EL academic on the project].

Such an AR project that involved professional development sessions, allowed the teachers to develop their subject content knowledge of grammar. It is also powerfully acknowledged by

Myhill et al. (2012a), drawing from the findings and outcomes of their large scale study, that

> limitations in LSK [linguistic subject knowledge] meant that some teachers struggled to make meaningful links for students between a linguistic feature and its effect or purpose in a specific text. Conversely, where teachers had greater command of the LSK, they were better able to make purposeful connections between grammar and writing and were more confident managing discussion about effects and possibilities. Teachers with confidence in LSK helped writers shape text creatively; teachers who lacked confidence provided formulaic recipes for success (p. 161).

As such, it is the case that only teachers who themselves are confident with their knowledge of grammar and the principles of teaching grammar in a contextualized manner in writing (Myhill et al., 2012b) will be able to create and implement such writing instructional materials that integrate grammar as meaning-making in writing successfully.

Better understanding of students' writing

The teachers also reflected that the grammatical coding process and the discussions of the findings allowed them to better understand their students in terms of their use of grammar within writing – students' grammar competency and proficiency, and their writing abilities and struggles.

Teacher B: All that time I spent [coding] made me *stronger in knowing my pupils writing and how they wrote, what they wrote*.

Teacher C: Grammatically coding the students' scripts [referring to compositions] *heightened my awareness of my students' proficiency in using grammar … to enhance their writing*.

Teacher E: This then led me to reflect and understand similar struggles that our pupils would have faced like me and the type of scaffolding needed. *Pupils who struggle with writing need to have extremely clear structures to support and guide them.* The findings helped me *understand clearly our student's*

language ability and knowledge and ways to rectify the gaps to level up our pupils.

It is to be pointed out here that it is only with enhanced subject content knowledge that there is heightened awareness of students' grammar competency and proficiency, and their writing abilities and struggles. Only teachers who are confident in their grammar content knowledge will be able to appreciate students' writing development in terms of the use of varying grammatical structures to express meaning and content, beyond just noticing grammatical errors in writing (Gordon, 2005).

Improved teaching practices

In their reflections, the teachers also highlighted that the AR project influenced their own teaching practices in the EL writing classes that they teach.

Teacher A: There is definitely greater clarity now and I find myself *better able to cater to students' learning needs by helping them see a connection between grammar and writing.*…

Teacher B: The findings helped us to *understand what remediation we need to address and what long-term teacher focus we need to adopt* so as to ensure that the students who leave the school has a clearer and better understanding of the English grammar.

Teacher D: I always thought writing is something that could not be 'taught'… that it was a style and one had to have a flair for it. But *there is a certain method of showing students how they can vary their writing using different grammatical and sentence structures* … we were inadvertently training students more in content but not in actual writing skills. But looking at the scripts [referring to compositions], I think *there is a need to teach students to be aware of the way they write their sentences to offer a variety of grammatical structures to make their story less 'flat'.*

Teacher D's comments on "the need to teach students to be more aware of the way they write…" suggests that teaching students necessary grammatical structures with the view of grammar as choice, gives more ownership to students (Myhill et

al., 2012b) in how they create and design their texts (Myhill et al. 2013).

Enriched instructional materials

The teachers also reflected on the importance of explicitly integrating grammar and writing in writing instructional materials to guide students in their writing classes.

Teacher C: As an English Language teacher, I am now better equipped to help my students improve in their writing. Now I know that *teaching of content should include Grammar and this is one area which the school's current Writing Package is lacking.*

Teacher E: *Pupils who struggle with writing need to have extremely clear structures to support and guide them.*… This is also where I found the slides and lesson plans that we had written for the Primary 5 pupils very helpful. This is probably *the greatest takeaways from this project. A clear and well-structured P5 writing package to guide our pupils.*

Through this AR project in integrating grammar and writing, the teachers seem to echo Fearn and Farnan's (2007) view that grammar teaching positively influences writing development when grammar and writing are taught within one instructional context. In integrating grammar in writing, there are benefits to both teachers and students, as identified above.

Conclusion

From the teachers' reflections, it is evident that the AR project went beyond just revising and enriching the writing instructional materials. The teachers realized that it is important to help students see the link between grammar and writing, to see grammar as a meaning-making resource that students are able to draw on in making linguistic choices in their writing. The project also created an increased awareness of the importance of teachers' own grammar content knowledge that was needed for the effective teaching of grammar within the teaching of writing (Myhill, 2018).

This AR project more importantly highlighted to the teachers that going forward, grammar and writing should not

always be taught discretely, but in an integrated manner. The benefits to both teachers and students in integrating grammar and writing in the EL writing class as highlighted above contributes to the debate whether grammar and writing should be taught separately or in an integrated manner. The benefits highlighted seem to support and call for a teaching pedagogy that integrates grammar instruction in the context of writing – from instructional materials to teaching practices.

In addition, this project illustrates "how AR can throw a light on our teaching practices and improve an unsatisfactory situation" (Burns, p. 4). It was through an AR project that the teachers enhanced their subject content knowledge, grew more aware of their students' writing abilities, struggles and level of grammar knowledge and revised writing instructional materials to address, and most importantly realized and deepened their belief that there are benefits to integrating grammar and writing in class. Actual engagement in action research is key in teachers being enlightened in their subject content knowledge (or lack of) and pedagogical practices.

The Authors

Christine Anita Xavier, the corresponding author, is a lecturer at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She teaches on both the pre-service and in-service courses, specialising in pedagogical grammar. Her research focuses on the intersections between theory and practice in the areas of pedagogical grammar and English language variation and use. Her special interest area in both research and teaching is on grammar as a meaning-making resource.

Hing Mui Hong is the Lead Teacher for English Language in Keming Primary School. She was previously the Head of the English Department, overseeing the Primary English curriculum and assessment, as well as the professional development of the English teachers. She was a recipient of the Inspiring Teacher of English Award in 2018 and a finalist of the President's Award for Teachers in 2019. She can be reached at hing_mui_hong@moe.edu.sg.

Willy A. Renandya is a language teacher educator with extensive teaching experience in Asia. He currently teaches applied linguistics courses at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He has given more than 100 presentations at regional and international ELT conferences and published extensively in the area of second language education. His works can be viewed/downloaded from his website: www.willyrenandya.com.   He can be reached at willy.renandya@nie.edu.sg.

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