

Marie Gray

STS English (KS3) Assignment: Grammar

The aims of the first half of the session were to:

- a) Review and consolidate knowledge about grammar
- b) Connect grammar to speaking, reading and writing
- c) Establish some consistency in the use of terms
- d) Develop knowledge of word choice.

Grammar is generally considered to be a tedious aspect of English to learn, by us and by the children. It was asked, why then do we study grammar?

David Crystal said that grammar was the study of how we make sentences. As sentences tell you the meaning of the conversation or story, it is important to ensure the words are taken in context. This leads to a need for Standard English as ambiguities are avoided and common rules laid. However, to criticise the use of local dialects would be discriminatory. As an example, 'I never did nothing' would be a double negative in Standard English, but generally it is understood what is meant by this. The reason for endorsing teaching of Standard English would be because it is more transferable. The further argument by teachers is that children will not know which words to choose to express themselves if they are not first taught the official way to speak and write.

Word choice, modification, sentence construction, punctuation and cohesion were then considered in more detail.

This was an interesting session as I know how I should speak and write, yet I don't always use it, for example when writing a letter to a close friend. This is because I intend to express my personality, which ultimately incorporates phrases and common words used in my area. Traditionally, Standard English was complex (Davison and Dowson, 1998) whereas now regional dialects are recognised within it. Common words are there to avoid confusion, for example 'minging' would be fully understood by some of you, yet would be completely alien to the rest! Within the classroom, it is useful to recognise this as a teacher because the children may see nothing wrong in the way they are writing or speaking because that may be the only way they have ever heard anyone speak. It is important that they understand the need for a more formal way of expressing themselves, when applying for certain jobs for instance or if they intend to move from an area to another, whilst knowing that other ways of speaking and writing can express different class, region and feelings.

Cox (*cited* in Davison and Dowson, 1998) stated that the only way children would learn to use language would be to practically explore through looking at their own reading and writing and exploring why they had used that particular word or sentence. In English lessons this is an interesting idea and from experience would say that this does make the pupil think and consider whether this was the best way of expressing what they wanted to say. However, in the context of the Geography classroom, I would say that this is much more difficult. The words used are technical and subject specific, so unless they are expressing a personal opinion, it is expected that they will use a more traditional form of language. I know that I have corrected grammar in

terms of even saying to a pupil that using 'reckon' and 'I bet' isn't acceptable in a written report.

After this session I was forced to think about grammar and how I would teach it in future. I think that Cox made a good point and exploring it through their poetry and creative writing would be the most effective way of learning how to use language within an English lesson. However, in terms of other subjects, it is necessary to have a common way of writing because there are already several terms that are likely to be confusing to others reading it, thus there must be some common ground within the language for the written (or spoken) work to be understood.