

Communicative Grammar with Games for the Young Learner

Games are a perfect authentic context for presenting grammar to young learners!

During the presentation, we will:

- examine three lively, communicative grammar games that help build grammar competence and speaking confidence in children
- explore developmentally appropriate ways to focus on grammar

These grammar games can be adapted for all ages.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



Wendy Coulson



Wendy has been teaching English, developing curriculum, and training teachers for over 25 years, with the last 14 focusing on young learners and low-resource classrooms. She lives in central Mexico and has also worked in the United States, Hungary, Jordan, and Colombia, where she worked as a U.S. Department of State English Language Fellow.

Wendy has a Master's in TESOL and Applied Linguistics from Indiana University and a Master's of Education in Bilingual Education with a concentration in Special Education from the University of Illinois at Chicago.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



Communicative Grammar with Games for the Young Learner



© 2019 by Wendy Coulson. *Communicative Grammar with Games for the Young Learner* for the Office of English Language Programs. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License, except where noted. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



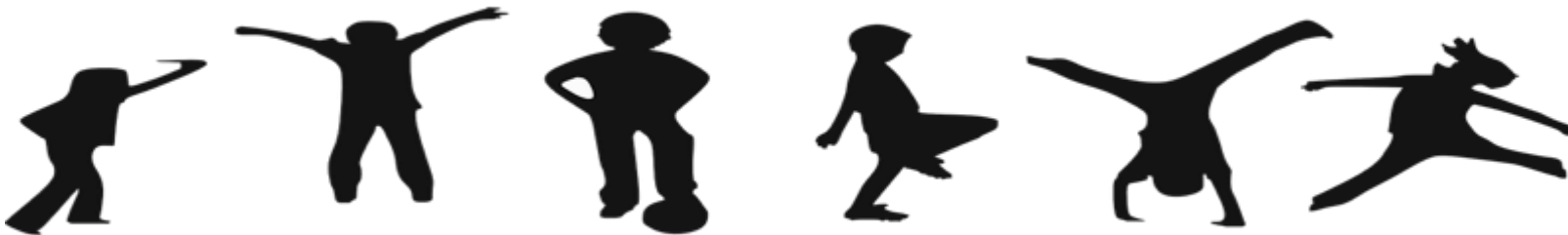
Before we begin, I'd like to hear from you!

- Where are you from?
- What ages/grades do you teach?



Agenda

1. What is authentic communication for YLs?
2. What grammar should I teach?
3. How do I 'teach' grammar to YLs?
4. Three communicative grammar games
5. Q&A



What are characteristics of Young Learners?

How do they learn?



Young Learners...

- Imitate
- Aim to please
- Are energetic, spontaneous, and curious
- Are ego-centric
- Have limited attention spans
- Love predictability
- Have partial knowledge of world and L1
- Learn through social interactions
- See language as a whole



Children are 'inside' the language.



Scaffolding

Providing just enough support so that students can complete a task or goal successfully

Examples:

- Chunks
- Choral response
- Gestures
- Routine
- Repetition



Scaffolding Examples:

Ways to Scaffold	Examples
Chunks	Is it blue?
Choral Response	Every child says the chunk or chant together.
Gestures	Use facial expressions and hand movements to cue participation. Point to the color blue.
Routine	Play game in same way, in the same order.
Repetition	Children repeat questions until they guess.



What activities did you enjoy as a child (ages 6 – 10)?

What types of language production did this activity require?

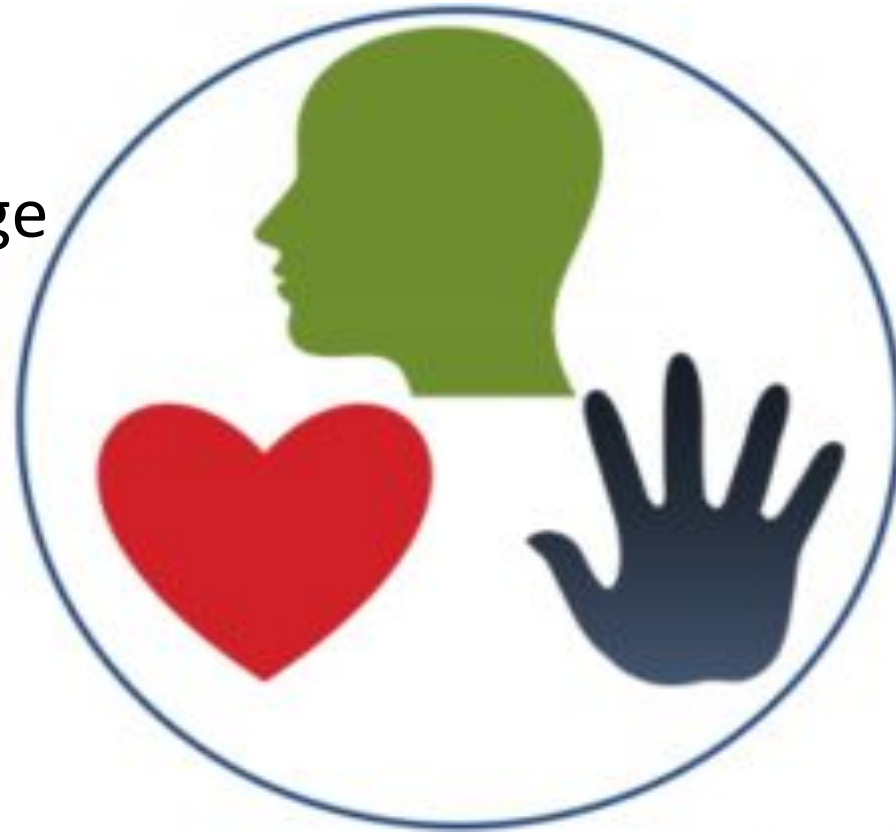
Authentic Communication for Young Learners (YLS)



Children learn through play.

Intellectual Activities,
Thinking about Language

Poetry, Rhymes,
Songs and Stories



Movement and Play

1. What is authentic communication for YLs?

Authentic communication for YLs is any activity and/or content appropriate for age and socio-cultural experience.

For example, children that are 7-8 years old tend to pay more attention to the **sound and music** of the language.



2. What grammar should I teach?



A word cloud featuring various English grammar terms. The words are arranged in a cluster, with some appearing larger and more prominent than others. The colors of the words include orange, purple, blue, red, green, and yellow. The terms include:

- ing/to...
- like
- remember
- be
- see
- stop
- would like
- infinitive
- Gerund
- continue

Which grammar?

- Choose a set of vocabulary words
- Find or create a meaningful task in which you can practice the vocabulary
- Provide **chunks**, or **fixed phrases**, for the children to use as they participate in the task
- Think about where you will start and where you want to go

3. How do you 'teach' grammar to children?

1. **Expose**: Provide rich oral language experiences.
 - Songs, poems, games, stories, rhymes, etc.
2. **Automatize**: Use chunks, chants, drills, songs, rhymes and games
 - Routine and repetition using grammar structures
3. **Notice**: Have children notice patterns and/or contrasts.
4. **Focus on Form**: Create tasks for selecting and practicing.

Questions for You:

- Should we teach grammar indirectly or directly?
- At what age do you start teaching grammar? Why?



Chunks or Performance Pieces = Fixed Phrases

- **Chunks** are groups of words that can be found together in language.
 - They are the building blocks of language for young learners.
 - Teachers support, or scaffold, active participation through chunks.

Example:

Is it yellow?

Yes, it is. No, it isn't.

Game 1: The Mystery Bag



Game 1: The Mystery Bag Instructions

1. Choose an object related to your unit.
2. Put the object in a bag.
3. Have one child come to the front with you.
4. Have the children ask 10 yes/no questions with a chunk.

For example:

Is it fuzzy?

Yes, it is. / No, it isn't.

Does/Can it fly?

Yes, it does. / No, it doesn't.

5. Allow the children to guess after 10 questions.

Vocabulary to Grammar through Meaningful Tasks

Vocabulary

- Animals

Meaningful Task

- Guessing Game: The Mystery Bag

Chunks

- Is it yellow?
- Does it have four legs?

Activity vs. Task

A 'grammar sensitive' teacher must:

- highlight,
- bring out and
- sequence grammar to create a task.

Is this grammar?

Vocabulary	Grammar Chunk
Colors	Is it red?
Classroom objects	Is it a green pencil/marker/crayon?
Adjectives	Is it a small blue pencil?
Animals	Does it have four legs? Does it live in the desert? Does it fly? Does it eat meat?
Comparatives	Is it bigger than a desk?

Game 2: Where is the crayon?

1. Choose an object to hide.
2. Have the children tell you 3 places to hide the crayon. Use the chunk: We can hide the crayon (in the teacher's bag).
3. Have one child leave the room, another guard the door and one hide the crayon.
4. After the crayon is hidden, call the child to the room.
5. Have the class ask him/her: Where is the crayon?
6. Have the child guess with: Is it (behind the books)?

Grammar Chant

**Next to, Under
Next to, On
Next to, In front of
Next to, Behind
Next to, Right
Next to, Left
Next to, Up
Next to, Down**

Chunks: Where is the crayon?
Is it in/under/behind the _____?



Grammar is Tied to Vocabulary

Vocabulary	Grammar Chunk
Prepositions	Is the crayon in the drawer?
Classroom furniture/objects	Is the crayon on the bookshelf?
Descriptive adjectives	Is it under the blue and white basket?
Possessives	Is it in Isabella's pocket?

Game #3: What Am I Doing?

1. Say the **grammar chant with movement**.
2. Select **one child to sit in the chair** and **one child to act out a movement**.
3. The actor **acts out a movement behind the chair**.
4. The **class asks**: "What is she doing?"
5. The **child in the chair asks**: "Is she standing?"
6. The **class responds**: "Yes, she is." OR "No, she isn't."
7. The child in the chair has **three guesses**. If she doesn't guess it, she asks the class: "What is she doing?" The class answers: "She's eating!"
8. Repeat with new children.

Grammar Chant:

I'm standing, I'm sitting,
I'm writing, I'm knitting.

I'm reading, I'm counting,
I'm swimming, I'm shouting.

I'm eating, I'm drinking,
I'm talking, I'm thinking.

I'm giving, I'm taking,
I'm sweeping, I'm baking.

I'm laughing, I'm looking,
I'm washing, I'm cooking.

I'm driving, I'm rowing,
I'm kneeling, I'm growing.

Jaffke, 2001

Sample chunky dialogue

A= actor(s) V= volunteer C= class

A: (Eating)

C: What is she doing?

V: Is she sitting?

C: No, she isn't.

What is she doing?

V: Is she giving?

C: No, she isn't. What is she doing?

V: Is she counting?

C: No, she isn't.

V: What is she doing?

C: She is eating!



Grammar Opportunities

Vocabulary	Grammar Chunk
Affirmative statements	I am sitting.
Questions, present	Am I sitting? Yes, you are. No, you aren't. You're standing.
Pronouns	Is he/she sitting? Are we sitting? Are they sitting?
Furniture	Is she sitting on the (teacher's) chair?
WH-questions	What am I doing? Where is she sitting?
Past	Was he sitting? Yes, he was. No, he wasn't.

A 'grammar sensitive' teacher must:

- **Highlight** - Is it...?
- **Bring out** - Daily active participation
- **Sequence grammar to create a task** -
Is it yellow? Is it old? Is it a pencil?

Which activities will you use?



Game 1: The Mystery Bag



Game 2: Where Is the Crayon?



Game 3: What Am I Doing?

References

- Cameron, Lynne. (2001). Teaching English to Young Learners. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hunter, Robin. (2004). Madeline Hunter's Mastery Teaching: Increasing Instructional Effectiveness in Elementary and Secondary Schools. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Jaffke, Christoph. (2001). Rhythms, Rhymes, Games and Songs for the Lower School. Gerlingen, Germany. : Drucktuell.

Thank you!

Email: americanenglish@state.gov

americanenglishwebinars.com

americanenglish.state.gov

facebook.com/AmericanEnglishatState

facebook.com/AmericanEnglishforEducators



AMERICAN ENGLISH