



Teaching English Grammar

What to Teach and How to Teach it

Jim Scrivener

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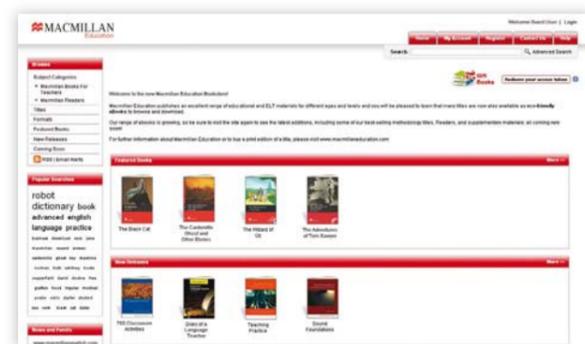
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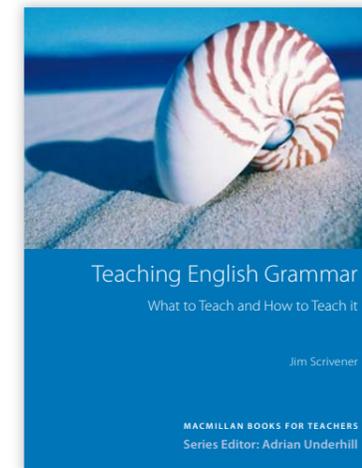
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Teaching English Grammar

What to Teach and How to Teach it



The perfect companion for both trainees and teacher trainers following courses such as the Cambridge CELTA, and the Trinity Certificate in TESOL, as well as teachers who are unsure of how to present grammar or those who are looking for new ways to present it.

Teaching English Grammar aims to combine language information and methodological help in a straightforward, authoritative way and thus help English language teachers prepare and deliver grammar lessons within their syllabus.

The book provides teachers with an authoritative and practical handbook on teaching grammar and helps to make preparing grammar lessons easy and straightforward.

Key Features:

Presents concept questions, timelines and other useful insights to help teachers prepare lessons – using language suitable for students rather than academic prose.

Provides ideas and templates to help teachers create and use practice activities for students.

Grammar-to-go: Teachers can read the relevant section and prepare a lesson for tomorrow.

The perfect companion for trainee and newly-qualified EFL Teachers, as well as teacher trainers.

About the author:

Jim Scrivener



Jim Scrivener has worked in many different countries, including two years in Kenya, three in the U.S.S.R. and seven in Hungary. He has been Head of Teacher Training for International House Hastings, Director of Education for IH Budapest and is currently Head of Teacher Development for Bell International, where he designed the Online Delta course. He was leader of the team that designed the Euro exams and has been actively involved with Cambridge ESOL exams.

He is married to Noémi and has two adult sons, Alex and Ben, and a young daughter, Maisie. He can be very boring about Bob Dylan if you give him half a chance.

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Form

too + adjective

He's too ill to come in today.
The crates were much too heavy to carry.
I was too shy to ask her to dance.
The water was too cold for a shower.

too + adverb

He ran much too slowly.
She played too dangerously.

adjective + enough

He wants to join the army when he's old enough.
The teachers aren't strict enough for this class.

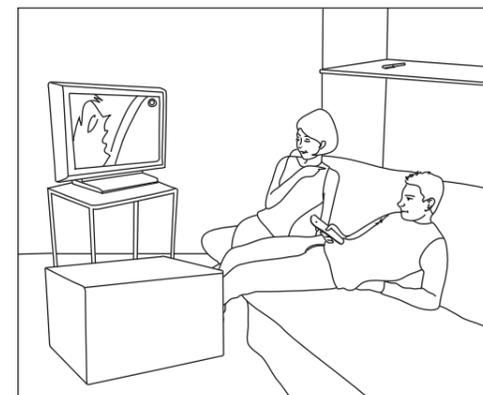
adverb + enough

He told me I hadn't been working hard enough to pass the exam.

enough + noun

We have enough food for everyone.

Presentation



Excuses, excuses

- 1) Draw two characters on the board: a girl and her lazy boyfriend lazing on a sofa.

- 2) Use the pictures to help elicit and build a dialogue in which one person keeps asking for help and the other always has a reason to refuse.

A: Could you help me move this box, please?

B: It's too heavy to lift.

A: Could you bring me the pen from that shelf, please?

B: It's too high for me to reach.

A: I want to watch the news. Turn the TV on please.

B: It's too late for the news.

A: Make me a cup of coffee please,

B: I'm too tired to get up.

- 3) Get students to practise repeating and acting out the dialogue. Encourage lively intonation.

Variation

You can adapt the conversation to also include examples of *enough*. (*Could you help me move this box, please? It's too heavy to lift. I'm not strong enough.*)

Practice

Why can't he do it?

Find pictures showing people in problem situations (a small child trying to reach a sweet on a high shelf). Ask why he can't do what he is trying to do. (*The shelf's too high. He's not tall enough.*) Hand out some new pictures to pairs and get them to discuss and agree reasons.

Anecdote

Tell an anecdote about yesterday including all the things that went wrong. Get students to tell you the missing *too* sentences. 'I went to the bank but it was shut' (*You were too late*). 'I saw a nice new widescreen TV that I wanted but I didn't buy it' (*It was too expensive. It wasn't cheap enough*). 'I bought a cup of tea at a stall but it was horrible' (*It was too cold. It wasn't hot enough*).

Mime

Mime different mini-situations and get students to say the sentences: wipe your brow and shade yourself from the sun (*It's too hot*), try and fail to pick up a bag (*It's too heavy*), look at your watch and look panicky (*It's too late*), run for the bus and fail (*I can't run fast enough*), look worn out (*I'm too tired*). Hand out cards with sentences for students to mime for each other to guess.

Offers game

Ask students to offer you things spontaneously – or they could prepare a list first – or you could provide one. Refuse each offer with a *too* sentence. (*A book*) 'No, thanks. It's too boring.' (*A free holiday in Barbados*) 'No, thanks. It's too far away.' (*Money*) No, thanks. It's too little. Afterwards, reverse roles, offering things to students – then get students to repeat the game in pairs.

Questions

Ask 'Can you pick up an elephant?' (*No*) 'Why not?' (*It's too heavy*) 'Can you run a hundred kilometres?' (*No*) 'Why not?' (*I'm not fit enough*) 'Can you eat twenty hamburgers?' (*No*) 'Why not?'

Reasons

'Tell me a place in this town / country / world that you don't like. Give me some reasons why you don't like it.'

'Tell me a kind of food you don't enjoy. Give me some reasons why you don't enjoy it, etc.'

What's wrong

Think of ten reasons that a class might complain about a course (*The lessons are too long. The exercises are too boring. The room isn't big enough*).

Variation

Imagine you are in a terrible restaurant / museum / shopping mall / sports centre / hotel. Ask to speak to the manager and complain about lots of things.

Concept questions

- **It's too hot.** Is the weather hot? (*Yes*) Is it very hot? (*Yes*) Are you happy that it's hot? (*No*) Is it hotter than you like? (*Yes*) Would you prefer it to be cooler? (*Yes*)
- **It's too heavy for me to carry.** Is it heavy? (*Yes*) Is it very heavy? (*Yes*) Can I carry it? (*No*) Why not? (*It's very heavy*) Can someone else carry it? (*Perhaps*) Who might be able to carry it? (*Someone stronger than me!*)
- **Bob is old enough to join the army.** Can Bob join the army now? (*Yes*) What is the minimum age to join the army? (*18*) Is Bob 18 or older? (*Yes*) Is he younger than 18? (*No*) Is he too young to join the army? (*No*)

Meaning and use

Too

We use *too* to say that something has more of something (an adjective or adverb) than is good, suitable or normal. In most cases, the sentence has a negative meaning.

- If Mary says that a suitcase is *too heavy* – she means that it has more weight than is good (and, for example, she isn't able to pick it up and carry it).
- If Janos says that the lecturer spoke English *too quickly* – he means that the speed of the lecturer's English was faster than was good (and, for example, he couldn't easily understand it).

Using *too* adds an element of personal opinion to a statement. *It's hot* sounds like a reasonably objective description of the weather. Compare that with *It's too hot*. This also says that the weather is hot but adds in a strong personal opinion that the quantity of heat is more than is good (for the speaker).

The word *much* intensifies the adjective or adverb. Each of these sentences is stronger than the one before.

It's crowded.

It's too crowded.

It's much too crowded.

Too . . . to sentences can be used with positive meanings but this is rarer.

That dessert was too delicious to leave on my plate.

We use *too* to:

- give reasons why you don't want to do things – or can't do things.
I can't help you – it's too difficult.
- give reasons why things didn't happen or happened in a certain way or to make excuses.
We left early because it was too hot
I thought I could do it but it was too difficult for me.
- make complaints.
This food is too dry.
- show that you are angry, upset or disappointed.
It's much too hot in here. Can't you turn the heating down?
- explain that things didn't match your predictions or live up to your expectations.
Sorry I'm late. The bus left three minutes too early and I missed it.

Enough

We use *enough* to say that something is sufficient – as much as you need. In negative sentences, it means that there is not sufficient – less than you need.

Many positive *too* sentences can be changed into negative *enough* sentences.

The shirt was too small → *The shirt wasn't big enough.*

Similarly, you can often express a parallel meaning.

The box was too heavy for him to pick up → *He wasn't strong enough to pick up the box.*

Pronunciation

The strong forms of *too* and *to* are the same. The weak forms are pronounced differently.

too /tu:/

to /tə/

If *much* isn't used, the main stresses are likely to be either on *too* and the main verb.
It's too hot for me to drink.

The main stress could be on the adjective / adverb and on the main verb.

It's too hot for me to drink.

If *much* is used, it is likely to take a main stress.

It's much too hot for me to drink.

Taking secondary stresses into account, many sentences using this structure have a definite on / off rhythm.

It's much too hot for me to drink!

Watch out for these problems . . .

- **Students use *too* instead of *very*:** ~~*X I liked your food too much.*~~ ~~*X She is too happy.*~~ Students often wrongly assume that they are used to make a exaggerated positive meaning. Consider this sentence: ~~*X The museum was too interesting.*~~ Although this is a possible English sentence, it may sound strange from a student. Learners often use sentences like this with a positive intention, but to a listener it sounds as if the museum was more interesting than was good and that the speaker had a problem with this. The sentence would sound more natural if the speaker added to the sentence: *The museum was too interesting to visit in just one hour.* Now it is clear that the negative meaning is associated with having to leave the museum, not with the museum itself.
- **Students use *too much* instead of *too*, *really* or *very*:** ~~*X I like this ice cream too much.*~~ (*I really like this ice cream.*) ~~*X She was too much rude to me.*~~ (*She was too rude to me* or *She was very rude to me.*)
- **Students get the word order of *much too* mixed up:** ~~*X He's too much tired to go out.*~~

23 Present simple: affirmative

Form

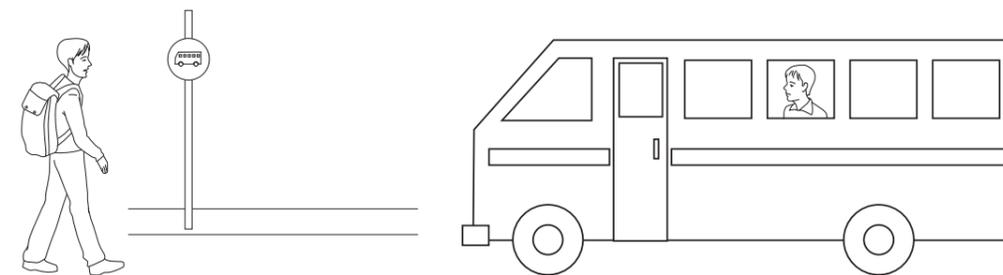
I / You / We / They	live	in Prague.
He / She / It	lives	

There is an -s ending on the verb for third person singular.

The -s ending and spelling

- We use -es when the base form ends in /s/, /z/, /ʃ/ or /tʃ/.
discusses; rises; washes; catches.
- We use -ies (to replace the y) when the base form ends in a consonant followed by y.
fly → flies, carry → carries.
- Note also.
go → goes, do → does, have → has.

Presentation



Daily routines

- 1) Tell or elicit a story using board pictures or flashcards getting students to repeat each sentence.

Diego wakes up every day at 7.30. He gets up at 7.45. He has a shower, brushes his teeth and puts on his clothes. He leaves his house at 8.15. He walks to the bus stop and waits for the number 166 bus, etc.

- 2) Ask students to recap and retell the whole story at various points.

- 3) Elicit a second very similar story for a different character (*Brigitte wakes up every day at 10 . . .*).

Variation: weekly routines

Joanna drives to London every Thursday. She meets her mother and they play tennis together. She sleeps at her mother's house. She drives back home on Sunday morning, etc.

Practice

Spelling and pronunciation

Make sure your students get some basic activities that focus on spelling and pronunciation, including all the differently spelt -s endings (especially -s, -es, y → -ies) and pronunciations (/s/, /z/ and /ɪz/). Simple discrimination and sorting games are often suitable; write three columns on the board labelled /s/, /z/ and /ɪz/ and call out verbs. Students should come to the board and place the word in the correct column (with discussion, listening to teacher's model again and teacher feedback where useful).

Diary

Make a diary of someone's daily / weekly routine using single words for entries (*tennis, shops*). Elicit sentences about the routine. (*He goes to the shops every Thursday.*) Get students to make their own diaries and repeat the task in pairs, using *I go. . . .*

Soap opera

Create an imaginary 'soap opera' with varied stereotypical characters. Elicit from students the different lifestyles and routines of these characters. (*Anita works at the laundrette. She smokes 50 cigarettes a day.*)

Spot the lies game

Read out ten present simple sentences about yourself. Eight should be true and two false (*I read three newspapers every day*). Students must guess which sentences are false.

Guess the job

Read out sentences describing a person's life. (*I walk a lot. I carry a heavy bag. I knock on doors.*) Who can guess the job first?

Link to collocations

Teach the present simple alongside common verb–noun collocations for household routines (*She cleans the windows / tidies the toys / makes the beds*).

Concept questions

- **Ildiko works in the bank.** Has Ildiko got a job? (*Yes*) What is her job? (*She works in the bank*) Does she work there on Monday? (*Yes, probably*) Tuesday? Wednesday? etc. Is she in the bank NOW? (*Maybe, we don't know*)
- **Henri plays football.** What sport does Henri like? (*Football*) Does he play often? (*Probably*) Is he playing football NOW? (*Probably not – but we don't know*)
- **Ice melts at 0°.** Is this a fact? (*Yes*) Is it always true? (*Yes*) Was it true last week? (*Yes*) Was it true ten thousand years ago? (*Yes*) Will be it be true in the year 3000? (*Yes*)

Meaning and use

Core meaning

Things which we think of as generally true and unlimited in time ie without a beginning or an ending. Despite its name, the present simple can actually refer to the past, present and / or future (and it isn't very simple).

Uses

We use the present simple to talk about . . .

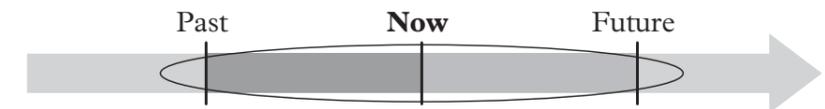
- 1) Habits, routines, repeated actions: things that are done *usually, often, regularly, occasionally, sometimes*, etc and things done on certain days or occasions.
I always get the eight o'clock train.

*I usually play in defence.
The Blue Café closes on Mondays.*



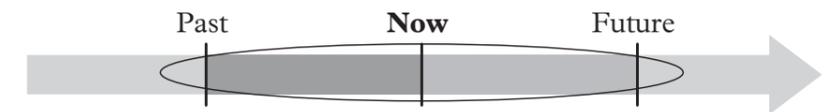
- 2) Permanent situations, truths and things believed to be true: things that happen all the time. Things that seem permanently true and don't have any obvious beginning or end.

*Here the land rises and falls in gentle hills.
The river flows in a south-westerly direction.
My sister lives next door.*



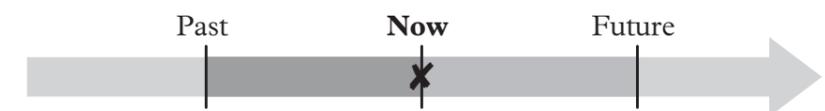
- 3) States, senses and feelings that are generally true, using verbs such as *believe, know, live, have, feel, like, taste*, etc.

*We live at 23 Brookfield Avenue.
I feel sorry for him.*



- 4) States, senses and feelings that are happening around now – *believe, know, have, feel, like, taste*, etc.

*Your hair feels so soft.
This tea tastes funny.
I don't trust Hillary.*



- 5) Timetabled or planned events in the future.

*The match starts at 3 o'clock.
The London train gets in at 10.05.*

- 6) The future after the words when or if (when *will* cannot be used).

*Just buzz me when the client arrives.
I can send it to you by email if you give me your address.*

→ Unit 57 First conditional

7) Newspaper headlines (to make a past event seem more 'live').

President bans Union

8) Live commentary especially of sports events.

Beckham kicks to Ronaldo.

9) Jokes and anecdotes.

This bear walks into a petrol station and says . . .

Using the present simple to talk about things happening NOW

Other than uses (4) and (8) above, the present simple does not usually refer to things happening NOW. We normally use the present progressive for actions happening NOW and for events 'around now' that are limited in duration with a beginning and end.

→ Unit 30 Present progressive contrasted with present simple

Pronunciation

The -s ending

We pronounce the third person singular -s ending in three different ways: /s/, /z/ and /ɪz/.

- /s/ when the base form ends with unvoiced consonants: /p/, /t/, /k/, /f/ (*slips, waits, likes, laughs*).
- /z/ when the base form ends in a vowel or one of these voiced consonants: /b/, /d/, /g/, /v/, /ð/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /l/, /r/ (*sees, knows, rubs, rides, digs, gives, breathes, hums, grins, rings, calls, stirs*).
- /ɪz/ when the base form ends with /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/. We also use the -es spelling (*misses, fizzles, washes, catches, judges*).
- *Does* is pronounced /dʌz/ or /dəz/. *Says* is pronounced /sez/.

Contractions

If your students are learning British English pronunciation, teach the contracted forms (*don't, doesn't*) as the standard forms – rather than introducing the uncontracted forms (*do not, does not*) first and only later showing the contraction.

Watch out for these problems . . .

- **Students use present progressive instead of present simple:** ✗ *I am smoking a lot.* ✗ *He is living in China.*
- **Students omit the third person -s ending:** ✗ *Maria like chocolate.* ✗ *He work in a cafe.* Idea: Students will omit the -s ending. Don't worry that you taught it badly; it's simply something that takes a long time to become natural. Try gentle reminders when they forget: drawing an 's' shape in the air with

your finger, saying 'ssss' or pointing at a large 's' on a poster you've placed next to the board.

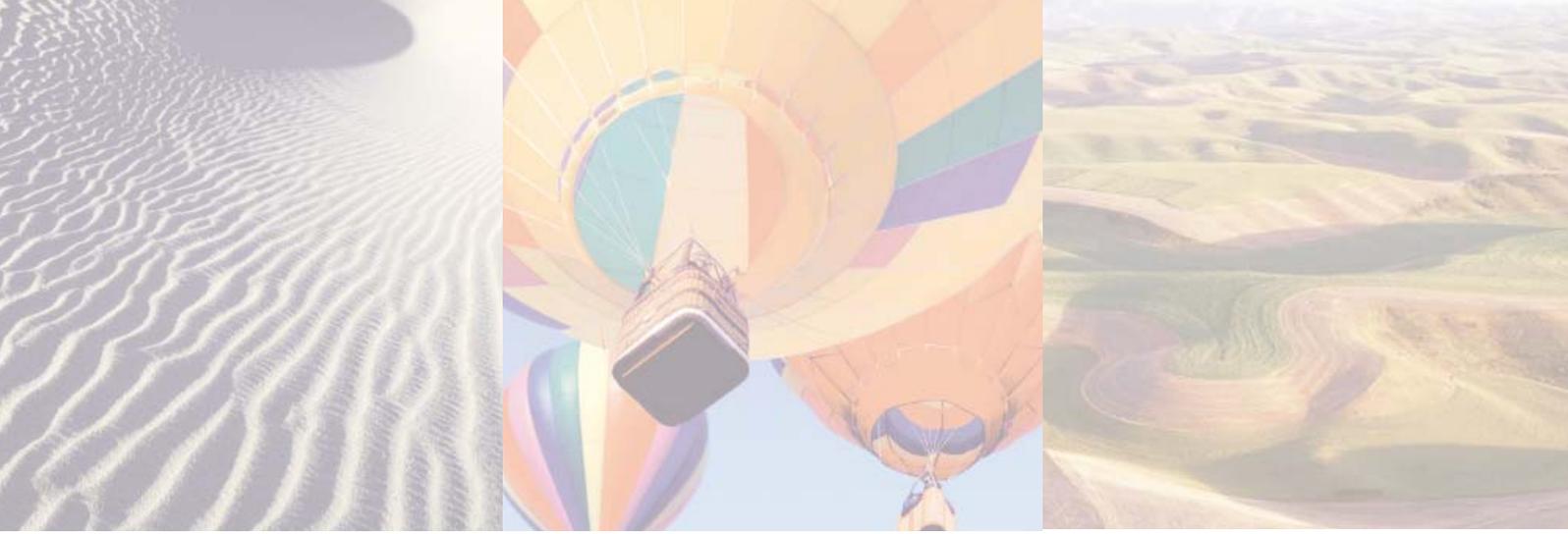
- **Students add an unnecessary auxiliary verb:** ✗ *I am live here.*
- **Students use *do* and *does* unnecessarily:** When used by low level students, auxiliary *do* / *does* is usually inappropriate in affirmative present simple statements: *She does walk to school.* However, it is, in fact, possible if the speaker wants to emphasise the truth of what he is saying, especially to disagree with a previous speaker: A: *Omar doesn't live in London.* B: *He does live there!* NB The auxiliary verb (*do/does*) is stressed.
- **Students mispronounce the -s ending:** The distinction between /s/ and /z/ is not typically a problem for speakers of many mother tongues (maybe because it's actually harder to say the endings with the wrong phoneme – and it doesn't make a big difference to communication even if you get it wrong). However, the /ɪz/ ending does cause some trouble. Students may use it to pronounce many -s endings eg *cook* /kʊkɪz/ *walks* /wɔ:kɪz/. Idea: Help them by pointing out that words like *cooks* and *walks* are one syllable but they are using two.

Teaching tip: verb tables

The verb form used in present simple is the base form is also known as the 'infinitive without *to*'. Base forms are listed in the first column of a standard verb table.

1	2	3
buy	bought	bought
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate	eaten

Draw students' attention to such verb tables in their coursebook or grammar book (they are usually in the back). Point out that the first column shows the base form and can help them select verbs, form the present simple and spell them correctly.

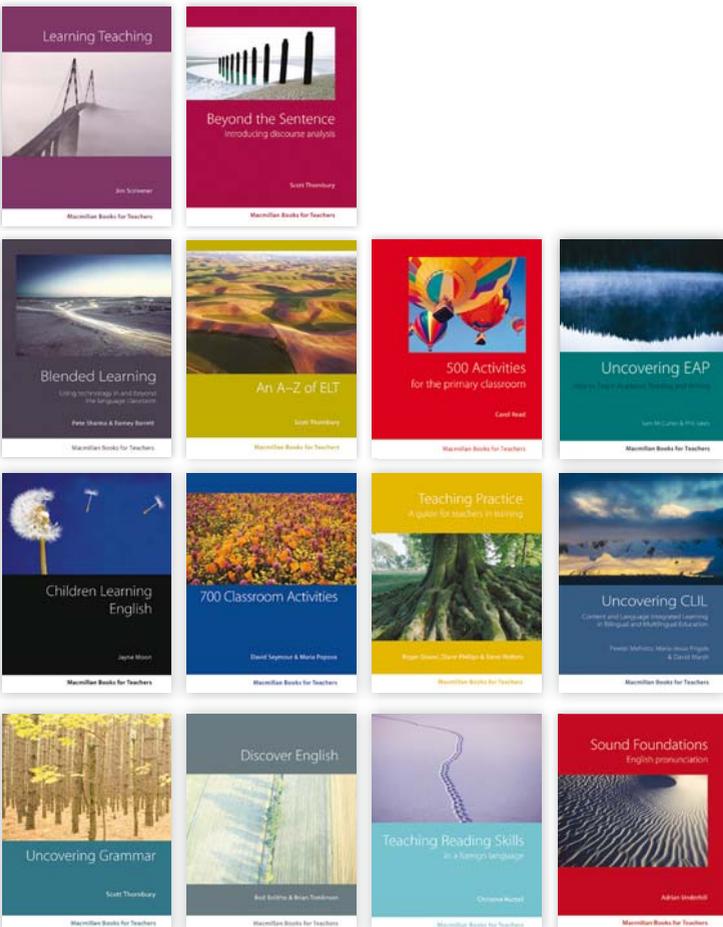


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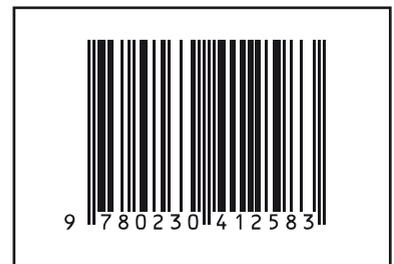
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Our series editor is Adrian Underhill
 Adrian works with educators in many countries on the development of continuous professional learning programmes, humanistic education, interpersonal skills and storytelling in organisational development. He is a training consultant and coach in leadership development.




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