

# Beginning Writing Students and the Vocabulary-Grammar Continuum



*For language learners, a tremendous advantage in construction grammar lies in expedited learning and reduced work load. For example, high-frequency constructions, collocations, phrases, and expressions can be learned as whole units.*

*-Eli Hinkel*

**Alice Savage & Colin Ward**  
**Lone Star College – North Harris**  
**Houston, Texas, USA**

**Topic:** childhood/youth

**STEP ONE:**

**Think about the topic. What do you want students to say about it? What questions do you want them to answer?**

Examples:

*What word best describes your childhood?*  
*Who was your best childhood friend?*  
*Do children today spend too much time online?*

**I. What other questions could students explore about the topic of childhood? List them below.**



QUESTIONS:

**II. What rhetorical modes will the questions target? Check (✓) them below.**

- ☐ narrative
- ☐ descriptive
- ☐ argumentative
- ☐ comparison/contrast
- ☐ problem/solution
- ☐ opinion

**STEP TWO:**

**Brainstorm lexical chunks that might be useful for the assignment.**

**QUESTION:** *What word best describes your childhood?*

**LANGUAGE FUNCTION:** *narrative*

*I had a peaceful childhood. When I was young, I spent time outside with my friends. We didn't have video games or computers. We liked playing games like hide-and-seek and freeze tag. On windy days, we liked flying kites. Sometimes we lay on the soft grass and watched the clouds. I will always have good memories of my childhood.*

*I had a wonderful childhood. When I was young, my family moved to the city. We lived in a small apartment. My dad worked all day, and my mom stayed home with us. We spent time outside and rode bicycles at the nearby park. When my dad came home, we always ate dinner together. Then we shared stories or played cards. My dad read us bedtime stories, and then we went to bed. We were a happy family.*

*I had a unique childhood. I lived with my grandmother and grandfather. They had a big farm, and they grew fruit and vegetables. I liked spending time with my grandmother working on the farm. We planted seeds and picked fresh mangoes. They smelled sweet and tasted delicious. We took the mangoes to a nearby river and washed them. Then we sold them to people in the village. I learned a lot from my grandparents. They gave me a happy childhood, and I miss them so much.*

**LEXICAL CHUNKS:**

*Examples:*

*a peaceful childhood  
spent time outside  
played games*

**What other lexical chunks could you target?  
List them below.**



LEXICAL CHUNKS:

**STEP THREE:**

**Identify grammatical features relevant to the assignment. Create a flow chart for students to use to generate sentences. Mix and match the vocabulary.**

Example:

My parents and I My family My friends and I We I	spent time	with my friends with my grandmother outside on the computer at the park
	liked	working on the farm riding bicycles playing video games helping my family playing soccer flying kites

**What other flow charts would help students with the assignment?  
Create one below.**



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**STEP FOUR:**

**Identify relevant grammar lessons.**

**DISCUSS:** *What specific grammar points would you teach students to help them with the assignment?*



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