

An advanced high intermediate textbook for ESL students is, *Applied English Grammar*, by Byrd & Benson. It begins with a questionnaire for the learner to ascertain their language needs as well as a diagnostic test. The book offers grammar in context and promises to give teachers the materials to help their students develop their English and become fluent. Included is a project for the student to keep a Grammar Journal and self-analyze in other ways. Self-analysis includes topical questionnaires of errors and plans to correct these errors as well as a journal of self-correction. This grammar text also focuses on spoken and written grammar such as chapters on irregular verbs and prepositions. The goal as stated by the authors is to help the student to improve fluency and accuracy for future university studies.

Chapter 7 entitled "Questions and Commands," gives an analysis of yes/no questions, tag questions and information questions. The authors state several purposes of questioning and the chapter header states that the student will require the use of questions in class and with their professors. Motivation to learn Lightbrown & Spada claim is "by making the classroom a supportive environment in which students are stimulated...and most importantly where students can experience success"(Lightbrown & Spada, 1999, p. 185). I would be fearful as an ESL student with this introduction that I might not be able to learn to ask questions correctly; hence I would fail at the task.

The yes/no question is explained by saying the word order is changed from a sentence, the intonation is changed, and one must use a question mark. It does not explain however how to change the word order. Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman explain in Chapter 11 of their book that there are yes/no questions with auxiliary verbs, be and other verbs. Saying change the "word

order” is not as clearly defined as Celce-Murcia & Larsen Freeman’s invert the subject and verb explanation. Concerning motivation Celce-Murcia & Larson-Freeman say “despite the “question” label...they are common enough, though, that ESL/EFL students should be able to recognize them and learn how to respond to them appropriately” (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999, p.259). This understanding to me is more motivational and success oriented.

In the section on information questions the author expands the explanation more but supplies only one rationale for a tag question by “adding a tag to a statement” (Byrd & Benson, 2001, p. 191). I thought it seems like a lot is assumed about the knowledge of the learner with this statement. One statement of Celce-Murcia & Larson-Freeman’s book, “a tag question is a question attached to a statement...something is being asserted to which the listener is invited to respond,” (Celce-Murcia & Larson-Freeman, 1999, p. 261) is more of an explanation even without the five page treatment the authors give tag-questions.

This seems to be a focus on formS approach where “pedagogical materials seem to be linguistically motivated” (Doughty & Williams, 1998, p. 18). The interesting thing to me is the inclusion of commands in this chapter. It seems the organization of the chapter would not include commands. In the questioning section, one exercise asks the student to analyze the questions in the dialog of a skit by listing the types of questions (reduced, or complete). It seems to be a type of explicit form enhancement activity. I understand that chapter enhancement is enhancement of a particular linguistic feature, such as indefinite objects; when the learners have trouble acquiring the form. Determining the type of question does not isolate a particular simple form.

Each set of practice questions in this text are in the form of paired activities. In their chapter about proposals for classroom teaching Lightbrown & Spada cite a study on the dynamics of pair work of adult ESL learners in Australia by Naomi Storch. Four patterns of

interaction included dominance and passivity on the part of one or both of the learners. The pairs that work the best are “collaborative” where the pair are engaged in each other’s ideas and “expert-novice” where one learner is stronger but supports the weaker learner. Storch found that learners who participated in the collaborative and expert-novice pair maintained more of their second language knowledge over time (Lightbrown & Spada, 1999, p.153). It would be incumbent on the ESL teacher to ensure the dynamics of pair work in the classroom to achieve the optimal outcome.

This grammar book has many good examples to explain its context. The main problem is that sometimes the explanations are ambiguous or scant. The ESL teacher could avoid the ambiguity by cross referencing other materials. The slant seems to be that the ESL teacher is a native speaker or very proficient. The text does use a variety of examples to allow for student practice in context such as conversations, authentic passages, and opportunities for creative writing using the forms presented. Many opportunities for practice are offered in each chapter making it a good usable book for grammar study.

This third edition of, *Focus on Grammar: An Integrated Skills Approach*, by Jay Maurer, is a Level 5 or advanced level grammar book for ESL students. It presents each chapter with grammar in context from authentic sources; gives a grammar presentation with examples; presents focused practice called “controlled exercises”; and lastly gives the student communication practice using open ended activities. *Focus on Grammar*, claims to provide both “controlled” and “communicative” exercises for students to be able to function in the structures that are taught.

The first section of each chapter called, *Grammar in context*, purports to show structures in a natural context with an authentic text but the section on *focused practice*” uses sentences which isolate the grammar being taught in the chapter. First, the text is presented as in Chapter 12 on “Adjective clauses with prepositions and Adjective Phrases” The instructions are to read the text after each title of the chapter is presented. As an ESL student I would wonder what was an adjective phrase or clause and try to guess what they were and wonder if I was supposed to find them. I would feel this way in every chapter, although the textbook is presented in the same format every chapter.

Fotos, in her chapter on ‘Structure based interactive tasks for the EFL Grammar Learner’ defined a three part grammar lesson saying,

there is a strong case for a grammar lesson that has the following three parts: (1) explicit grammar instruction, preferably at the beginning of the lesson; (2) communicative activities containing many usages of the instructed form and (3) summary activities to focus learners’ attention on the grammar form they were instructed on and then encountered communicatively” (Hinkel & Fotos, 1999, p. 138)

These chapters do not present the grammar at the beginning of the lessons. The lesson of Unit 12

on adjective clauses and phrases, does have communication practice with listening, information gap activities, group discussion, and picture discussion. The summary activities include writing and a test. Focused practice is text with adjective phrases removed and listed as number problems for treatment to create the work with clauses. I, as a native English speaker was trying to think of what I should be looking for with each chapter. It would make sense to place explicit grammar instruction at the beginning but as a teacher one could simply skip ahead to the grammar instruction first before reading the authentic passage.

The focused practice includes selected sentences from the text with the selections in the target form. From a perspective on enhanced/unenhanced input, White explains that enhancing a linguistic feature can help the learners acquire it. Typographical enhancement would be bolding, enlargement, and underlining. There are two problems with this input enhancement. The first is that in each chapter the text itself is not enhanced but the form is presented after the grammar explanation. Second, as described by a study on typographical enhancement by White, “since PD’s (possessive determiners) were the target linguistic feature, they were enlarged more than the subject and object pronouns” (Doughty & Williams, 1998, p. 90). The enhanced form seemed to be one form only not an entire clause. Recently, in my Spanish two classes, I enhanced the imperfect verb of an authentic text. I have not found any supportive research for the enhancement of more than one form, i.e. a clause.

Interesting to me was a small error in the explanation of a problem. The question was stated “when David and Elizabeth were telephoned, what occupations were they pursuing?” (Maurer, 2006, p. 26) The more colloquial would be ‘were called’ in lieu of telephoned. I believe the attempt is to word the question like the text is worded. I believe the current use of the language is more apropos. Another question based on the text is “Why did the committee

recommend a woman in New York State?” which in context with the connecting clause: “who they thought would make him a good wife” makes sense. The question should read “Why did the committee recommend a woman *from* New York State” (Maurer, 2006, p. 26). This would seem like a minute detail but I believe that the author was wording the question closely to the text so as not to detract from the main issue of the chapter, but my argument is that we are teaching English grammar. A woman “in” or “from” the state is different in meaning, slightly. Perhaps the author could treat the colloquial issue by this way: telephoned (called). That would at least give the astute student an alternative explanation and retain the authenticity of the text.

This grammar book presents each unit with grammar in context by using colorful and interesting passages to read. Writing, information gap, formS practice as well as fill in activities are used. Listening activities and communication practice are also provided. Very intriguing lessons such as the use of “bumper stickers” to suggest noun clause formations make this book an inviting method of learning English. This text applies the concepts of focus on meaning, form, and formS, to give the student a comprehensive approach to English language study.

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Lane's, *English as a Second Language*, by Richard R. Lane, Ph.D. states it is different because it "offers the learner a step-by-step, cumulative approach that unlocks the logic of English" (Lane, 2009, v). Lane claims that "traditional approaches were grammar based...then came the communicative approach, which spawned audio-lingual methods seeking to teach the living language" (Lane, 2009, v). Lane's approach claims to be a logical approach with the purpose of being cumulative. Vocabulary is selected for usefulness not frequency, and Lane also does not include phrases or idiomatic verbs until he states the learner can use them.

Interesting is that all five chapters are entitled "Romeo and Juliet" without an explanation of the reason for the titles. Chapter one gives a word list and instructs the learner to draw a picture for the word and put the word in their own sentence. Forty-eight words are listed, without alphabetical order, with a sentence alongside of the word containing usage of the word. Next a chart of possessive adjectives and possessive pronouns is followed by a column of twelve sentences using possessive adjectives and twelve sentences using possessive pronouns. The sentence containing the possessive adjective is changed into a sentence using possessive pronouns to the right of each of the twelve sentences. Next, "while" is presented in a twelve line conversation by groups of three and "able" is presented in a variety of sentences.

Readings are presented without an explanation of the purpose for the readings. Items that are underlined have no explanation of what the connection is to the grammar being presented. Certain words are emboldened which is probably the vocabulary that is presented in the beginning of each chapter. The main problem to me is that section after section is presented without any explanation of what purpose the selection is serving.

This book seems confusing by its absence of explanation for the chapter titles to its presentation of grammar in charts, and no explanation for anything. Contextual sentences follow the reason of the naming of the chapters. The chapters are named *Romeo and Juliet* apparently because the reading is a narrative of the events of the play by Shakespeare. The reader or student has to assume the author wrote these passages because it does not state who the author is. Lane originally stated the purpose of this volume was usefulness so I believe that is the reason for including examples of writing business letters, envelopes, and advertisements in the paper for home and car sales.

This text is confusing, mainly because absolutely no explanation and few instructions are given. The main point the author is trying to make is that it is logical. The author definitely uses a formS based approach because there are detailed explanations given for the grammatical concepts. It appears also that Lane has a focus on meaning because he seems to want the ESL student to learn “incidentally (i.e. without intention, while doing something else) or implicitly (i.e. without awareness) from exposure to comprehensible target language samples” (Doughty & Williams, 1998, p. 18). If this is Lane’s intent then “an increasing amount of evidence suggests that older learners no longer have the same capacity as young children to attain native norms in a new language simply from exposure to its use; that is there appear to be maturational constraints on language learning” (Doughty & Williams, 1998, p. 20). He is claiming the learner can just learn these forms and vocabulary without intervention.

Some of the sentences are similar to the audio-lingual method of the seventies. They present the same sentence with one form altered. This seems to be another issue since audio-lingual is a form of repetition of models. Overall this book seems to be confusing and the teacher will be the one to make sense of it in the classroom. The text seems to have no organization but

the text is presented with the vocabulary at the start of each lesson. If the text is for improving the student with an interlanguage already it seems that the vocabulary is simplistic. If the text is for the newly arriving immigrant the text seems complicated and the grammar explanations are complicated. It was interesting to me to encounter this text because it was very puzzling. In referencing “consciousness raising” techniques Doughty & Williams say “recognizing that sequential categorical mastery of items in the (overt or covert) grammatical syllabus is an unrealistic goal” (Doughty & Williams, 1998, p. 17). Lane purports that these items can be learned in sequence, cumulatively, apparently without any explanation at all. I find this explanation to be erroneous since the method of the text is confusing and the presentation is inconsistent.

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