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978-0-521-56844-9 - Exploring Grammar in Context: Upper-Intermediate and Advanced

Ronald Carter, Rebecca Hughes and Michael McCarthy

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Exploring Grammar in Context

*upper-intermediate
and advanced*

Ronald Carter, Rebecca Hughes
and Michael McCarthy



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To the student

Exploring Grammar in Context (upper-intermediate and advanced) is designed for self-study use by a student working alone or for class use with a teacher.

This book:

- distinguishes, where relevant, between written and spoken English.
- uses real spoken and written texts, wherever it is instructive to do so. Many of the examples used are drawn from the 100 million word Cambridge International Corpus. A corpus is a collection of authentic examples of language stored in very powerful computers and used to exemplify the language as it is actually spoken and written.
- offers grammatical description and texts at upper-intermediate to advanced level, assuming as a starting point at least an intermediate level of knowledge. Some features of grammar will already be known but will be explored in greater depth.
- has a full **Answer key**, and explanations in the **Observations** sections.
- has **Reference notes** giving you further detailed information and real examples of the most important features of English grammar.
- emphasises the element of **choice** in grammar as well as **rules** for correct structures. For example there is an emphasis in many places on learning how to choose the appropriate grammar according to how informal or formal a context is.
- gives you opportunities to work out rules for yourself and to work out what is the most probable choice in particular contexts. This is called inductive learning.
- gives you opportunities to do further work by encouraging greater language awareness and by developing the ability to observe closely language form and language in use.

To the teacher

What does this book do?

Exploring Grammar in Context (upper-intermediate and advanced) does two things. It focuses on core areas of grammar, such as tenses and articles and gives the learner the opportunity to work in depth with these topics through a series of exercises. Secondly, it offers detailed Reference notes which give authentic examples of a wide range of uses of the core features.

What is grammar in context?

Exploring Grammar in Context is a guide to some key features of English grammar. *Exploring Grammar in Context* is different from traditional grammar books because many of the examples are taken from real contexts of grammar in use. These authentic examples show speakers and writers using the language to communicate in a wide variety of contexts.

Like most grammar books, which often illustrate grammatical forms by means of single sentences, several of the examples in this book involve single sentences. But in this book the emphasis on grammar **in context** means that the examples also frequently contain several sentences or short conversational extracts and show grammar at work across the boundaries of the sentence or the individual speaking turn. The book regularly draws attention to **grammar as choice** and gives the learner opportunities to exercise grammatical choice in relation to particular contexts in which the language is used.

What is a grammar of choice?

Exploring Grammar in Context makes a distinction between **grammar as structure** and **grammar as choice**. **Grammar as structure** means: what rules does the learner need to know in order to use this form effectively? An example of a structural rule would be, for example, that in ellipsis a modal verb normally attracts the repeated verb *have*, as in:

- A: Has she taken it with her?
 B: She may have, I'm not sure.

In such a case as this, **grammar as choice** means: when is it normal to use ellipsis? Are some forms of ellipsis more likely to be used in spoken than in written modes? Are the forms linked to greater or lesser degrees of intimacy and informality? For example subject ellipsis in expressions such as 'Looking forward to seeing you', 'Don't know' and 'Think so' is largely the speaker's/writer's choice.

In this book both **grammar as structure** and **grammar as choice** will be treated. But the grammar of choice will be as important as the grammar of structure.

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What do we mean by corpus?

Many of the examples in the book are taken from a multi-million word computerised corpus of spoken and written English called the Cambridge International Corpus (CIC). This corpus has been put together over many years and is based on real examples of everyday English, written and spoken. At the time of writing the corpus contained over 100 million words of English.

A unique feature of CIC is a special corpus of spoken English – the CANCODE corpus. CANCODE stands for Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English and is a unique collection of five million words of naturally-occurring, mainly British, spoken English, recorded in everyday situations. The CANCODE corpus has been collected throughout the past six years in a project involving Cambridge University Press and the Department of English Studies at the University of Nottingham. The CANCODE corpus is part of CIC. Dialogues and spoken examples are laid out as they actually occur in CANCODE recordings. Except where there may be misunderstandings, interruptions, overlaps, pauses and hesitations are indicated.

The existence of a spoken corpus means that several of the examples in this book can enable us to describe differences between spoken and written grammar and to highlight differences between grammar in informal and formal contexts of use. The CIC corpus contains a wide variety of different texts. Examples in this book are therefore drawn from contexts as varied as: newspapers, popular journalism, advertising, letters, literary texts, debates and discussions, service encounters, formal speeches and friends talking in a restaurant.

Corpus examples also help with illustrations of authentic everyday vocabulary in use. Less common words are explained in special footnotes.

What is an inductive approach to learning grammar?

Exploring Grammar in Context encourages an inductive approach to grammatical rules and principles, rather than relying exclusively on the presentation–practice–production approach of many traditional grammar books.

Grammatical rules can sometimes be best explained by means of a single sentence and a rule which can then be applied to other examples. Sometimes it is helpful to learners for the sentence to be invented or for the authentic language to be modified in order to illustrate the rule. This practice is found in *Exploring Grammar in Context*. However, the main focus in the book is on helping learners to work out grammatical rules for themselves. This inductive approach to learning grammar often involves providing lots of examples so that patterns of usage can be seen. Of course, within such patterns certain forms are either right or wrong and rules have to be learned. However, the examples can also show that some forms are more probably used in one context rather than another, or that there are choices which depend on whether you are writing or speaking or whether you want to sound more or less formal. *Exploring Grammar in Context* helps learners of English to make their own choices and to understand what those choices mean.

The approach in the book therefore helps learners to learn more inductively, to notice more and to be more aware of the uses of language. It fosters learner autonomy,

encouraging learners to be more independent and to develop some of the skills they need beyond the classroom when they work on their own and when the teacher isn't present. An upper-intermediate level of English is assumed throughout.

Are there new types of tasks for inductive learning and for a grammar of choice?

In *Exploring Grammar in Context* teachers and students will find a variety of traditional exercise types (for example: gap-filling, rewriting, cloze, multiple choice) alongside tasks and activities which involve problem-solving, observation, awareness-raising and more inductive and text-manipulating activities. In general, tasks and exercises are chosen to suit the activity, though in those parts of the book which are particularly concerned with a grammar of choice there is more emphasis on awareness-raising and on helping learners notice and to work out what the choices help them to express.

Towards a discourse grammar of English

This book combines traditional and innovative approaches to English grammar. It is traditional in its attention to correct forms and structures and innovative in its attention to appropriate choices and to the illustration of such choices through a wide variety of different texts.

However, several grammars make use of texts for illustration. What is different about *Exploring Grammar in Context*? In this book the idea is not to take a text and then extract atomised, grammatical points from it. Rather, the texts in *Exploring Grammar in Context* serve a steady, inductive unfolding of core grammatical features in use. The place, distribution and sequencing of the grammatical feature in its text is as important as its actual occurrence. This book is innovative, therefore, in bringing in insights from the fields of text and discourse analysis, rather than merely using texts for exemplification. Where appropriate, and by no means throughout the whole book, our emphasis is on the relationship between formal choice and contextual factors. In parts the book represents a first step towards a context-based or 'discourse' grammar of English.

In what ways is this book an advanced grammar?

Exploring Grammar in Context is not a survey of all the more advanced or problematic uses of English. Even in a book of this length it is not possible to cover all the aspects of advanced uses of grammar. The focus in the book is on core grammatical features. Sometimes this means that learners will meet uses of grammar with which they are unfamiliar; sometimes it means that they will revisit familiar ground.

The features covered in the 25 units are all core in that they are particularly sensitive to spoken and written contexts and because they can exhibit differences between speech and writing and between formal and informal usage. They are core because such sensitivity to context is especially apparent when real examples are explored in texts which go beyond a single sentence or a single utterance.

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Some topics in *Exploring Grammar in Context* such as articles and modals or noun phrases will have been studied already by most upper-intermediate learners. In addition to introducing new grammatical areas, this book encourages learners to go more deeply into a topic and to explore a wide range of uses and functions of particular points of grammar in extended texts. It helps learners to recycle material and to come to know it better. Looking at grammar in context gets us to look at familiar topics in new ways.

Introduction

The structure of the book

The book is divided into five parts.

Part A: Tenses in context

The units in this section cover a wide range of uses of core tenses in a variety of spoken and written contexts.

Part B: Modals in context

The units in this section cover a wide range of modal forms in a variety of different spoken and written contexts. The units also explore some forms which are not conventionally considered under the heading of modals.

Part C: Choosing structures in context

In this section a range of grammatical structures which contrast in use and function, are explored. The units explore the meanings and effects open to users when one structure rather than another is chosen.

Part D: Around the noun in context

In this section a further range of structures, some familiar and some less familiar, are examined with a focus on differences and contrasts in the ways they are used.

Part E: Exploring spoken grammar in context

The units in this section explore aspects of grammar which are likely to be found in contexts of naturally-occurring speech. The emphasis is on raising awareness as much as it is on practising and using forms. Some learners may choose not to, or not have an opportunity to use some of the forms of spoken grammar which are explored but it is important that the effects and functions of the choices are understood.

Organisation of the units

Each unit of the book is designed with the following main structure:

A Introduction

One or two exercises based, where possible, on examples which are designed to orient you to the unit as a whole. Some exercises are more information-based and some are more task-based. The examples generally contain authentic data. For some students the material may be new; for others the material will provide opportunities for revision.

B Discovering patterns of use

The topics and tasks in this section look at typical patterns of grammar in context. An **Observations** section helps you to understand rules and exceptions, ordering of elements and similar features which relate to the examples.

C Grammar in action

This contains topics and tasks which are more based on data and which explore more fully grammar patterns in use and in context. Attention is also given to idiomatic patterns and uses in everyday language. Where appropriate, a further **Observations** section, which focuses on speaker/writer choices, is included.

D Follow-up

This consists of tasks which are more open-ended, some of which may involve mini-projects, exploring further data for more extensive study in class or outside the classroom or alone. The section ends with a **Summary** which draws together the main points of the whole unit.

Further exercises

At the end of each unit there are further exercises which give more extensive practice in using or showing awareness of the aspects of grammar covered in the unit. Answers to these exercises are given at the back of the book but wherever relevant, explanations are also given alongside answers.

Answer key

Answers to tasks and exercises in each section of the unit are given in the key in the back of the book. Some of the tasks are open-ended and do not have answers which are either correct or incorrect. The key therefore offers suggested answers in these cases. The **Observations** section of the book also gives fuller explanations, where appropriate. A key symbol (🔑) indicates places where the answer key needs to be consulted. Where this is not used, the **Observations** section should be consulted.

Other features

Reference notes

Reference notes give further detail and examples for the topics covered in each unit. They have the following main purposes:

- to extend observations and descriptions made in the relevant unit.
- to offer further examples, where possible, from the CIC/CANCODE corpora.
- reference, that is, for reading in class or for self-study, or for referring to when you have a question about usage.

There are no accompanying exercises in the Reference notes section.

Glossary

A glossary provides guidance and definitions of grammatical terms which are likely to be less familiar to you.

Using the book

Exploring Grammar in Context can be used either in class or for self-study. The book is designed to be worked through from beginning to end but you may follow individual units in any order. Exercises can be done separately and answers and suggested answers checked at the back of the book. The reference notes can also be read and used independently, although they do assume knowledge of the topics covered in the individual unit to which they refer.

When working through each unit different routes are available:

- If the **Introduction** section is found to involve mainly revision, then it is possible to go straight to the **Grammar in action** section.
- It is also possible to work through **Discovering patterns of use** and then to go straight to the exercises; or to concentrate on the **Grammar in action** section before moving on to work through the **Reference notes**.
- **Follow-up** tasks are more likely to be carried out outside the classroom but the ground can be laid by doing the exercises in the unit first.
- The book is organised so that there is a steady progression from **Introduction** to **Discovering patterns of use** to **Grammar in action** to **Follow-up** to **Exercises** to **Reference notes**. But there is no pre-determined direction and you can **choose your own route** through the material.

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About the authors

Ronald Carter is Professor of Modern English Language at the University of Nottingham. He has published extensively and internationally in the fields of educational, literary and applied linguistics.

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Michael McCarthy is Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Nottingham and is widely known internationally for his work on discourse analysis, vocabulary and English language teaching.

All three authors of *Exploring Grammar in Context (upper-intermediate and advanced)* share extensive experience of teaching English in schools, colleges and universities at all levels and in many different parts of the world.