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Exploring Grammar in Writing

upper-intermediate and advanced

with answers

Rebecca Hughes

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Introduction

Philosophy

Why not *what*

This book aims to provide students with insights about the interplay of language, texts and audience. Grammar is presented as a tool for living communication between writers and readers. Grammar in writing is about communicating ideas appropriately to different audiences and understanding their needs: it is living grammar. Using largely real examples from a wide range of contexts, the book challenges the learner to ask *why* the writer chose a structure, rather than simply analyse *what* the writer used.

Factors influencing grammar and style

Rather than thinking of written language in the abstract, the book analyses the impact of the following types of factor on grammar and style:

- whether something is written to be kept as a record or written to be thrown away (*Unit 1: Everyday notes* or *Unit 17: Packaging* versus *Unit 4: Policies and agreements* or *Unit 10: Encyclopaedias*)
- whether the writer is writing for an anonymous, global readership or for a close personal friend (*Unit 16: Newspaper stories* or *Unit 18: Advertisements* versus *Unit 2: Greetings cards* or *Unit 7: Informal letters and e-mails*)
- whether the text is written primarily to inform or instruct or for a very different function (*Unit 6: Hobby Books* or *Unit 9: Technical Manuals* versus *Unit 8: Catalogues* or *Unit 14: Direct Mail*)

In each unit these contextual and functional factors are related to one or two typical language features which the texts tend to show. For instance, because newspaper stories are interested in the where, when, who, what and why of an event, they will usually be rich in adverb phrases locating and explaining circumstances. These stories are limited in terms of space, and so they will also contain devices to shorten the message, for example specific prepositional phrases used as a shorthand for longer clauses. Crucially, this book aims to link easily grasped real-world writing constraints and influencing factors with an explanation of the grammar featured in these same contexts.

Approach

An inductive, awareness-raising approach informs the book. Clear summaries reinforce key points, but the tasks themselves first ask the student to think about why a structure or word choice has been made in that particular context. This is particularly clear in the *Think about why* tasks, but the majority of the material is written with this questioning approach in mind.

The book is intended to have features which appeal to both analytical and more communication focused learners. Standard grammatical terms are used as far as possible, and any terms which may be unfamiliar or need revision are in the glossary. Many of the tasks ask the student to locate and analyse a particular grammatical structure in context. However, the tasks are also intended to move beyond these sentence level insights, to encourage debate over why one form has been used over another.

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Level

The tasks are designed to be carried out by students at upper-intermediate or advanced levels. It is assumed that the student has a productive writing skill around a strong 5.0 in IELTS and a reading ability slightly above this. However, the combination of work on accuracy and on style and register means that this is also excellent supplementary material for higher level students, including those on CAE or CPE courses.

The data

This book is based on a broad cross-section of authentic material written in English. The data for the book are taken from a wide variety of texts, and are in many cases from the Cambridge International Corpus.

New technologies are challenging our conception of texts as the process of writing takes place more and more within the context of electronic media. In addition to more familiar types of writing, such as letters and published texts, this book examines the influence of the medium of production on some of the newer genres of writing that are emerging (for example, e-mail messages or internet pages).

The book incorporates some of the more ephemeral and marginal types of writing which are produced in English, such as notes and cards. These texts are of particular interest for an advanced learner of English, since they are genres which can be very challenging to produce but which are in everyday use.

The design of the units

The material is designed for both class and self-study use. Each unit follows the same pattern and deals with one broad category of texts. Section A provides an example of the text type along with an opening task which asks the student to relate a main idea from the unit to their own life experience. This can be used in class for a warm-up phase, or to orient the self-study user. The opening section ends with a *Think about why* task which prompts the student to think about a key feature of the text type and relate this to a language point.

Section B provides the main language points of the unit, presented in the context of the text types in question. The tasks here are intended to be awareness-raising and provoke some discussion. Summary boxes draw together the language points raised. Students are given the opportunity to practise items in section C. In some cases students may need to return to section B and review the summaries in the light of the more productive tasks. In section D there are follow-up tasks which are designed as mini language awareness projects on the topics being discussed or for more extended writing practice.

The tasks in sections A, B and C have clear answers which are provided in the key, but the successful use of the book does not only lie in getting through the material efficiently and checking your answers are right. In teaching from these materials, it is the discussion generated by prompts for thinking about why which provides the most meaningful language learning experiences.

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