

Working with English Grammar

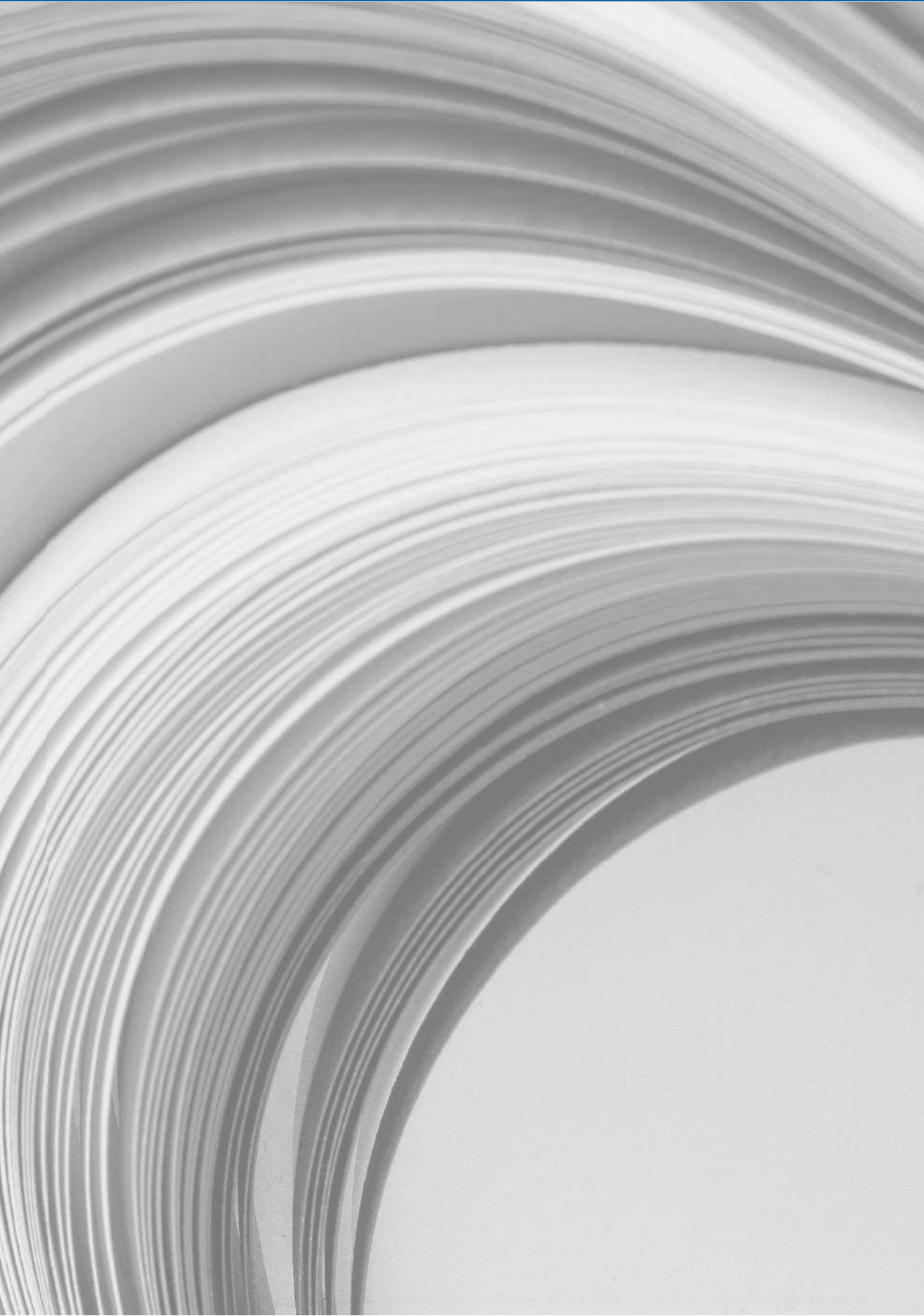
An Introduction

This clear and concise introduction offers students of linguistics and English language a comprehensive overview of English grammar, including word structure, major and minor word classes, phrases, clauses and sentences. Based on twenty years' teaching practice, Louise Cummings adopts a unique approach of using three real-world contexts – first language acquisition, language disorders and non-standard dialects – as a pedagogical tool to make grammatical concepts meaningful to students and to improve engagement and understanding. In seven accessible chapters, students are encouraged to develop the analytical skills they require to give a comprehensive description of the grammar of the English language. A range of supportive learning aids is used, including:

- Learning objectives and section 'key points' summaries.
- Varied examples from world Englishes and print media.
- Homework assignments, exercises and revision questions.
- Targeted further reading suggestions and 'special topics' boxes.
- A glossary of 300 entries.
- An extensive range of online resources for instructors and students, including a test bank of 140 multiple-choice questions, useful links and an answer key.

LOUISE CUMMINGS is Professor in the Department of English at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She is the author or editor of over ten books, most recently *Communication Disorders* (2014), *Pragmatic Disorders* (2014), *The Cambridge Handbook of Communication Disorders* (Cambridge, 2014), *Case Studies in Communication Disorders* (Cambridge, 2016) and *Research in Clinical Pragmatics* (2017).

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An Introduction

Louise Cummings
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PREFACE

This book aims to give students a comprehensive introduction to the grammar of English. It is designed primarily for students with little or no prior knowledge of English grammar, many of whom will be studying grammar as part of a Linguistics, English Language or TEFL/TESOL degree. The text is also suitable for students who are preparing themselves for AS and A-Level English Language qualifications. Other readers of the volume include individuals who wish to increase their knowledge of English grammar for professional or personal reasons. Speech and language therapists, school teachers and translators are just some of the many individuals who must have a sound working knowledge of grammar in order to conduct their professional roles. This book will make an important contribution to the development of that knowledge.

Approach of this Text

This volume examines the grammatical features of Standard English. However, the emphasis throughout is on a descriptive approach to the study of grammar rather than on the grammatical forms that prescriptive grammarians believe speakers and writers should use. Many other grammar textbooks also claim to pursue a descriptive approach to the study of grammar but include only devised examples for the purposes of explanation and illustration. These examples have their place in the study of grammar. But that study is all the richer and more revealing when an examination of the actual grammatical forms that speakers and writers use is conducted alongside it. It is for this reason that the grammar of speakers of non-standard dialects of English, of typically developing children who are acquiring their native language and of individuals with language disorders will be discussed throughout this book. Not only are the grammatical forms used by these speakers worthy of academic study, but they are also an engaging route into an examination of the grammar of Standard English.

As well as taking a descriptive approach to the study of grammar seriously, these three applications of grammar serve another important purpose for student readers. When they are first exposed to the study of grammar, students are often

‘switched off’ by a subject that they consider to have little relevance to the real world and to issues that are of interest to them in their lives. I believe there is much that linguists can do to dispel this impression of grammar among students. When students come to university for the first time, they are often exposed to a range of non-standard dialects. Each of these dialects has its own grammatical features which sets it apart from Standard English. Students are often interested in these differences even if they do not know how to describe them. The language of young developing children is inherently interesting to students, particularly to those who are considering careers where they will work directly with children. They may note the grammatical errors that young children make and even wish to know how to characterise them. Finally, most students are concerned about family members and friends who have some disruption of their language skills on account of illness, disease or injury. They may be keen to learn more about the grammatical impairments that occur in children and adults with language disorders but may have no means of initiating this type of inquiry. By integrating these three examples of ‘grammar in action’ throughout this book, it is hoped that students can see the relevance to their lives of this most important branch of linguistics.

Features of this Text

The book has been written in clear, accessible language which will be readily understood by students of all levels. It also contains several educational features which will facilitate student learning. For clarity, these features are listed below:

Learning aids for students

- Learning objectives at the start of each chapter.
- Key points boxes at the end of each section which summarise main points.

Enrichment material

- Special topics boxes which allow students to explore aspects of grammar in further detail.
- Real-world examples from children and adults with language disorders, children who are acquiring English as a first language and speakers of non-standard dialects and World Englishes.

Applications

- Exercises with answers for use in the classroom and independent study. These exercises occur at the end of each section and allow students to apply their knowledge of concepts as soon as they are introduced.
- Over 80 revision questions with answers. These questions appear at the end of each chapter and provide students with further practice for course assessments.
- Homework assignments for each chapter provide students with structured activities to be completed between classes.

- End-of-chapter exercises allow instructors and students to establish if there has been sufficient learning for progression to the next chapter to occur.
- A website (www.cambridge.org/eng-grammar) with 140 self-test questions and answers. These questions can be used as a test bank for instructors or as a self-test resource by students.

Useful tools

- A glossary with 300 entries.
- Bold terms throughout the text which relate to entries in the glossary.
- Annotated suggestions for further reading.
- A detailed index.
- Figures and tables.
- Website with links to grammar resources.

Each of these features has been included to ensure that students have a self-contained resource which does not require supplementation with other texts and material. The combination of these features sets this volume apart from other textbooks in grammar. Many of these textbooks omit one or more of the features of this volume (e.g. a glossary) or include less well-developed versions of these features (e.g. questions with no answers). The decision to include each pedagogical feature has been motivated by my experience of teaching grammar to undergraduate students over the past 15 years. This experience has taught me that these features can play an important role in encouraging students to engage actively in their learning. They can also overcome several challenges that instructors confront in the teaching of grammar to university-level students. These challenges include the need to address a wide range of material in compressed, semester-long courses, and the requirement to support student learning outside of the classroom. The pedagogical features of this book provide students with maximum exposure to grammatical points and the scaffolding that is necessary to support independent study. Students who use this book can be confident that this wide range of features has something to offer their particular style of learning.

A Flexible Organisation

Instructors and students who use this book are not compelled to follow the chapters in the order in which they have been presented. Many instructors have a preference to begin the study of grammar at the level of sentences and work through progressively smaller units of grammatical analysis. Also, some students may find it easier to study grammar and understand its concepts when these are first presented in the context of sentences. The book has been written with these teaching and learning preferences in mind. Each chapter is sufficiently self-contained that there will be no detriment to an instructor's course or a student's learning if the chapters are taught and read in an order other than the one adopted. To derive

maximal benefit for students from the book’s pedagogical features, instructors may find it helpful to embed tasks and other activities within seminars, or to make the completion of these exercises a requirement on obtaining course credit. For their part, students will more readily develop an understanding of grammar when all tasks are attempted in full before consulting answers and when home-work assignments are seriously addressed. When used in the ways suggested, this book will reward the investment of time and effort.

A Final Note

Finally, I want to convey in this book not only the importance and relevance of grammar to different aspects of life, but also the passion and interest that grammar can generate in those who commit to studying it. I hope I have succeeded in both aims. If students hear a child’s grammatical error with a new level of understanding, or become more inquisitive about the grammatical features of a non-standard dialect of English as a result of reading this book, then I believe these aims will have been achieved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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