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.

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An Introduction

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CONTENTS

List of Figures and Tables   x
List of Exercises   xii
List of Special Topics   xiii
Preface   xv
Acknowledgements   xix

1 The Study of Grammar   1
1.1 What is Grammar?   1
1.2 Prescriptive and Descriptive Approaches to Grammar   4
1.3 Grammar in Real-World Contexts   12
1.4 The Study of Grammars   15
   1.4.1 Grammar of Non-Standard Dialects   17
   1.4.2 Grammar in First Language Acquisition   19
   1.4.3 Grammar in Language Disorders   20
1.5 Final Comments   22
Summary   23
Website   24
Homework Assignment   24
Suggestions for Further Reading   24
Questions   25
Revision   27

2 Word Structure   29
2.1 Introduction to Word Structure   29
2.2 Inflectional Morphology   33
2.3 Derivational Morphology   41
   2.3.1 Prefixation   41
   2.3.2 Suffixation   44
2.4 Compounding   50
2.5 Conversion and Back-Formation   55
2.6 Non-Morphemic Word-Formation Processes   59
   2.6.1 Clipping   59
   2.6.2 Blending   60
   2.6.3 Acronym-Formation   61
   2.6.4 Reduplication   63
Summary   65
## 3 Major Word Classes

### 3.1 Introduction to Major Word Classes

### 3.2 Nouns and Pronouns
- **3.2.1 Common and Proper Nouns**
- **3.2.2 Count and Non-Count Nouns**
- **3.2.3 Abstract and Concrete Nouns**
- **3.2.4 Collective Nouns**
- **3.2.5 Personal Pronouns**
- **3.2.6 Possessive, Demonstrative and Reflexive Pronouns**
- **3.2.7 Reciprocal, Indefinite, Interrogative and Relative Pronouns**

### 3.3 Verbs
- **3.3.1 Morphological Features of Verbs**
- **3.3.2 Tense, Finite and Non-Finite Verbs**
- **3.3.3 Lexical and Auxiliary Verbs**
- **3.3.4 Modality, Aspect and Voice**
- **3.3.5 Verbs Have, Be and Do**
- **3.3.6 Classes of Lexical Verbs**

### 3.4 Adjectives
- **3.4.1 Absolute, Comparative and Superlative Adjectives**
- **3.4.2 Attributive and Predicative Adjectives**
- **3.4.3 Words Before and After Adjectives**
- **3.4.4 Post-Positive Adjectives**

### 3.5 Adverbs
- **3.5.1 Function and Meaning of Adverbs**
- **3.5.2 Morphological Features of Adverbs**
- **3.5.3 Words Before and After Adverbs**
- **3.5.4 Real-World Uses of Adverbs**

### Summary

## 4 Minor Word Classes

### 4.1 Introduction to Minor Word Classes

### 4.2 Determiners
- **4.2.1 Definite and Indefinite Articles**
- **4.2.2 Numerals and Quantity Words**
- **4.2.3 Possessive and Demonstrative Determiners**
- **4.2.4 Lara’s Use of Determiners**
Contents

4.2.5 Order of Determiners 136
4.2.6 Determiners in Children with Language Disorder 136
4.3 Prepositions 141
  4.3.1 Meaning of Prepositions 141
  4.3.2 Simple and Complex Prepositions 143
  4.3.3 Words Before and After Prepositions 143
  4.3.4 Prepositions in Lara and Ella 143
  4.3.5 Prepositions in British and American English 146
4.4 Conjunctions 148
  4.4.1 Coordinating Conjunctions 148
  4.4.2 Subordinating Conjunctions 149
  4.4.3 Subordinating Conjunctions in Children 150
Summary 156
Website 156
Homework Assignment 156
Suggestions for Further Reading 157
Questions 158
Revision 159

5 Phrases 163
5.1 Introduction to Phrases 163
5.2 Noun Phrases 165
  5.2.1 Heads in Noun Phrases 165
  5.2.2 Pre-Modifiers in Noun Phrases 167
  5.2.3 Post-Modifiers in Noun Phrases 168
  5.2.4 Noun Phrases in Lara and Ella 169
  5.2.5 Functions in Noun Phrases 173
5.3 Verb Phrases 174
  5.3.1 Pre-Modifiers in Verb Phrases 174
  5.3.2 Pre-Modifiers in Children with Language Disorder 177
  5.3.3 Post-Modifiers in Verb Phrases 180
  5.3.4 Functions in Verb Phrases 183
5.4 Adjective Phrases 187
  5.4.1 Pre-Modifiers in Adjective Phrases 187
  5.4.2 Post-Modifiers in Adjective Phrases 188
  5.4.3 Adjective Phrases in Children with Language Disorder 188
  5.4.4 Functions in Adjective Phrases 189
5.5 Adverb Phrases 191
  5.5.1 Pre-Modifiers in Adverb Phrases 191
  5.5.2 Post-Modifiers in Adverb Phrases 193
  5.5.3 Adverb Phrases in Adults with Alzheimer's Dementia 193
  5.5.4 Functions in Adverb Phrases 196
5.6 Prepositional Phrases 197
  5.6.1 Post-Modifiers in Prepositional Phrases 198
  5.6.2 Pre-Modifiers in Prepositional Phrases 199
  5.6.3 Other Phrases and the Prepositional Phrase 199
  5.6.4 Prepositional Phrases in Lara and Ella 200
  5.6.5 Functions in Prepositional Phrases 203
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Website</strong></td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homework Assignment</strong></td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suggestions for Further Reading</strong></td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions</strong></td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revision</strong></td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6 Clauses 212

- 6.1 Introduction to Clauses 212
- 6.2 Functions in Clauses 214
- 6.3 Finite Subordinate Clauses 221
  - 6.3.1 Declarative Subordinate Clauses 223
  - 6.3.2 Interrogative Subordinate Clauses 225
  - 6.3.3 Relative Clauses 227
- 6.4 Non-Finite Subordinate Clauses 233
  - 6.4.1 Bare Infinitive Clauses 233
  - 6.4.2 To-Infinitive Clauses 235
  - 6.4.3 –ing Participle Clauses 239
  - 6.4.4 –ed Participle Clauses 244

### 7 Sentences 255

- 7.1 Introduction to Sentences 255
- 7.2 Declaratives 258
  - 7.2.1 Structure of Declaratives 258
  - 7.2.2 Function of Declaratives 260
- 7.3 Interrogatives 262
  - 7.3.1 Yes–No Interrogatives 262
  - 7.3.2 Wh-Interrogatives 266
  - 7.3.3 Function of Interrogatives 271
- 7.4 Imperatives 273
  - 7.4.1 Structure of Imperatives 273
  - 7.4.2 Function of Imperatives 275
- 7.5 Exclamatives 278
  - 7.5.1 Structure and Function of Exclamatives 278

### Summary 283

- **Website** 284
- **Homework Assignment** 284
- **Suggestions for Further Reading** 284
- **Questions** 285
- **Revision** 288
Contents

Answers  291
Appendices  332
    Appendix 1  332
    Appendix 2  334
    Appendix 3  336
    Appendix 4  338
    Appendix 5  341
Glossary  342
Bibliography  366
Index  368
FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures
2.1 Branches of morphology 32
2.2 Morphological milestones during language development based on Brown (1973) 36
4.1 The order of determiners in the noun phrase 137
6.1 A main clause and its subordinate clauses 222

Tables
2.1 The stems and roots of words 30
2.2 Grammatical functions of bound inflectional morphemes in English 34
2.3 One child’s morphological errors between 22 and 34 months 38
2.4 The morphological errors of a man with deep dyslexia 47
2.5 Semantic relations in noun–noun compounds expressed by children with specific language impairment 52
3.1 Lara’s use of proper and common nouns 75
3.2 Count and non-count nouns used by a typically developing child called Ella 77
3.3 Personal pronouns in English 80
3.4 Possessive, demonstrative and reflexive pronouns in English 83
3.5 Lara’s use of possessive, demonstrative and reflexive pronouns 84
3.6 Reciprocal, indefinite, interrogative and relative pronouns in English 86
3.7 Some irregular verbs in English 89
3.8 Errors in the inflectional morphology of verbs in a typically developing child (Lara) and children with specific language impairment 90
3.9 Lara’s utterances with omitted auxiliary verbs 96
3.10 Di-transitive verbs in utterances produced by a typically developing child (Lara) and children with specific language impairment 104
3.11 Inflection for grade in regular and irregular adjectives 110
3.12 Adjectives which do not inflect for grade 111
3.13 Lara’s use of the adjective big 112
3.14 Lara’s use of utterances containing adverbs 118
4.1 Lara’s use of determiners 134
4.2 Use of determiners by children with specific language impairment 138
4.3 Prepositions in two typically developing children 144
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure/Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Use of subordinating conjunctions by typically developing children and children with specific language impairment</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Use of noun phrases by two typically developing children</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>The order of auxiliary verbs</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Verb phrases of children with specific language impairment</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Use of different types of lexical verbs by children with specific language impairment</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Use of adjective phrases by children with specific language impairment</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Use of adverb phrases by adults with Alzheimer's dementia</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>Use of prepositional phrases by Lara and Ella</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Eight clause patterns</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Clause patterns in Lara’s utterances</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Relative pronouns in English</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Use of to-infinitive clauses by adults with dementia</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Exclamatives used by Lara’s mother, father and grandfather</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXERCISES

2.1 Allomorphs of the past tense morpheme 31
2.2 Lara’s noun morphology 39
2.3 Morphological structure 44
2.4 Derivational suffixes in language disorder 48
2.5 Compounding 51
2.6 Conversion 56
2.7 Blending 62
3.1 Collective nouns 79
3.2 Lara and personal pronouns 82
3.3 Lexical and auxiliary verbs 93
3.4 Lara and lexical verbs 99
3.5 Lara and intensive verbs 106
3.6 ‘Got’ and ‘gotten’ in American English 108
3.7 Lara and the adjective big 114
3.8 Derivation morphology of adverbs 117
4.1 Determiners in Alzheimer’s dementia 133
4.2 Prepositions in specific language impairment 142
4.3 Lara and coordinating conjunctions 149
4.4 Subordinating conjunctions in Alzheimer’s dementia 154
5.1 Heads in noun phrases 166
5.2 Verbs in children with specific language impairment 180
5.3 Post-modifiers in the verb phrase 184
5.4 Adverb phrases in Alzheimer’s dementia 196
5.5 Prepositional phrases in children with specific language impairment 204
6.1 Spotting clauses 214
6.2 Clause patterns 219
6.3 Lara and declarative subordinate clauses 224
6.4 Use of interrogative subordinate clauses by Lara and her parents 226
6.5 Use of relative clauses by Lara and her family 230
6.6 Bare infinitive clauses 234
6.7 –ing participle clauses 241
7.1 Lara and sentence function 257
7.2 Tag questions 266
7.3 Lara’s use of wh-interrogatives 271
7.4 Imperatives 277
## SPECIAL TOPICS

1.1 African American Vernacular English  
1.2 American and British English  
2.1 Zero plural and past tense markers in Asian and Caribbean English  
2.2 Morphology in Australian youth language  
3.1 Past tense and past participle in non-standard dialects  
3.2 Passive sentences in aphasia  
3.3 Lexical and auxiliary *be* in a non-standard dialect  
3.4 Intransitive verbs in Australian English  
4.1 Article use in different varieties of English  
4.2 Grammatical features of Hong Kong English  
4.3 Expressive language in aphasia  
5.1 Negative forms in non-standard English dialects  
5.2 Grammatical features of New Zealand English  
5.3 Adjective phrases in talk about food  
6.1 Clause patterns in Alzheimer's dementia  
6.2 Clauses in children with specific language impairment  
7.1 Declarative sentences in children with specific language impairment  
7.2 Echo sentences  

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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 homework 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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