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Exploring Grammar in Context: Grammar Reference and Practice, Upper-intermediate and Advanced. By Ronald Carter, Rebecca Hughes and Michael McCarthy. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 286 pp.

Exploring Grammar in Context is an excellent language-learning textbook that incorporates certain core aspects of grammar and discourse. This book utilizes a context-based approach and presents a framework to facilitate the learning of those core grammar aspects when they occur in real life contexts. The intended readers or users of the book are EFL/ESL learners with upper intermediate to advanced levels and teachers of EFL/ESL. However, Southeast Asian language teachers can benefit from exploring this book because this particular EFL/ESL book has based its language instructional activities on established linguistic theories and pedagogical approaches. In addition, Southeast Asian language teachers can use the language exercises and activities in the book as models for materials development for intermediate and advanced classes, as well as for constructing theories in Southeast Asian language teaching. Since answer keys to the exercises are provided at the end of the book and grammar explanations are included in the **observations**, **summary** and **reference notes** sections, the book can be used both for self-study (intermediate level proficiency is required) and as a pedagogical textbook for a classroom setting.

Different from traditional grammar books, this book has many examples from real contexts of grammar in use. These examples are from a corpus of everyday spoken and written English called CIC (i.e. Cambridge International Corpus) that contains over 100 million words. The unique part of CIC is a special corpus of spoken English called the CANCODE (Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Oral Discourse in English) consisting of five million words of everyday British spoken English, recorded in everyday situations. The CIC itself consists of a wide variety of written texts drawn from contexts such as newspapers, popular journalism, advertising, letters and literary texts. As a result, the combination of written texts and the selected spoken data from

CANCODE, such as debates and discussions, service encounters, formal speeches and friends talking in a restaurant, provides authentic and representative exemplars used in the book for inductive learning of grammar in use.

The book has five parts: Part A, *Tenses in context*, explores the uses of core tenses in a variety of spoken and written contexts. Part B, *Modals in context*, discusses the uses of modals in a wide variety of written and spoken discourse. This unit also explores the uses of other modal forms that relate to how they express certainty or necessities. Forms such as ‘seem,’ ‘tend,’ and ‘need’ are not usually included in the discussions of modals in other textbooks. Part C, *Choosing structures in context*, explores the meanings and effects of structures such as If- and WH-constructions, passives and pseudo-passives or what Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) call ‘have’ or ‘get’ passives, and the focus is on what happens when one structure rather than another is chosen. Part D, *Around the noun in context*, focuses on differences and contrasts in the ways articles, complex noun phrases and prepositions are used. Finally part E, *Exploring spoken grammar in context*, emphasizes some aspects of grammar which are highly context-bound, for instance, direct and indirect speech, ellipses, and discourse markers. Even though there are definitely linkages across the five sections, the chapters allow and encourage users to learn and study different topics of interest. Within the chapters themselves, the users do not need to follow the steps in order to find certain information since some of the illustrations or grammar observations are reviewed in the succeeding chapters. Readers can go straight to the discussions of grammar aspects that are new to them. In every chapter, there are activities tied to grammar in action in the form of more traditional exercises such as gap-filling, rewriting, cloze test, and multiple choice, as well as less traditional exercise tasks and activities involving problem-solving, observation, awareness-raising, and more inductive and text-manipulating activities.

As the authors also point out, the book does not cover all elements of grammar and their relationships to language concepts. It covers only certain aspects of grammar sensitive to different use across modality and registers that are necessary to communicate competence. Even though the **observations**, **summary** and **reference notes** sections include the explanations of the core grammar as a subtext of structure and grammar of choice, the explanations are rather limited. Therefore, learners should not rely merely on this text for grammar reference. For a more complete and comprehensive discussion of grammar, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman’s *The Grammar Book* (1999) can supplement the gaps in this book. Furthermore, EFL/ESL teachers can use some insights from McCarthy’s *Spoken Language and Applied Linguistics* (1998) in order to integrate grammar into spoken discourse and thus maximize the use of *Exploring Grammar in Context* for teaching and learning purposes.

The book raises individual learners’ awareness and understanding of grammar in use. However, the book lacks interactive exercises that would make it possible for learners to put the knowledge of grammar into real use. In other words, with some guidance from this book, learners might be able to identify context-sensitive grammar elements and the grammar choices that speakers or writers make in their production; however, it does not

give learners enough chances to produce longer pieces of discourse either in written or spoken English. For this reason, this book can be a textbook used in conjunction with other resource books. Since this book relies heavily on British English and there is no discussion of dialect differences whatsoever, learners and teachers should be aware that some utterances are pertinent mainly to British English.

The real strength of the book is the relationship between a grammar of choice and contextual factors. It gives reasons for why certain grammar forms are appropriate in certain contexts. Thus, it discusses the following issues: When is it normal to use certain grammar structures? Are some forms of grammar more likely to be used in spoken than in written modes? Are the forms linked to greater or lesser degrees of intimacy and informality? The book does not leave out grammar as structure (the rules the users of the language need to know for effective use of the language), however, and treats this as equally important. This book gives a new perspective on the exploration of discourse in teaching and learning grammar and trains readers to be mini-discourse analysts by raising their awareness and understanding of how grammar use and context integration are important in language learning. Therefore, I highly recommended *Exploring Grammar in Context* for self-study and classroom use.

References

- Celce-Murcia-M., and Larsen-Freeman, D. 1999. *The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL Teachers Course*, 2nd ed. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- McCarthy, M. 1998. *Spoken Language and Applied Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Editor's note: Rhodalyne Gallo-Crail is the Book Review Editor. If you would like to consider reviewing a book for *JSEALT*, please contact our book review editor via email at TL0RQC1@wpo.cso.niu.edu To view the Guidelines for Book Reviews, click on the submissions button of this journal.