

Book Review

BASIC GRAMMAR IN USE 2ND EDITION

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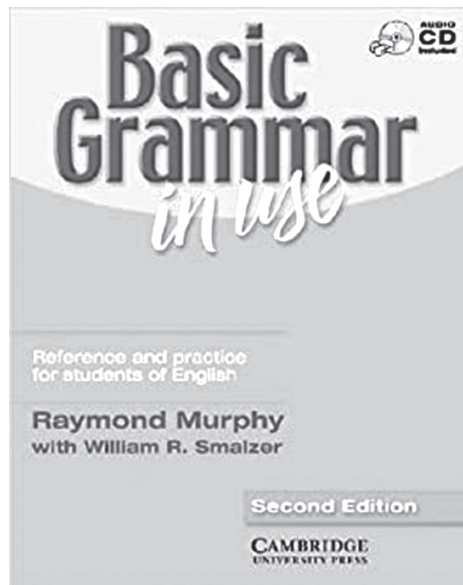
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(Source: Murphy, R. 2002)b

The Basic Grammar in Use 2nd Edition book is a self-study reference and practice for students of English Grammar in Use Series by Murphy, Raymond under Cambridge University Press 1989, 2002. It was first published in 1989, and the Second edition was in 2002, and its 22nd printing was in 2008. The book has several versions: (1) student's book with answers and audio CD, (2) student's book without answers and audio CD, (3) workbook with answers, and (4) workbook without answers. Since it was known for its

simplicity it became one of the world's best-selling grammar series for learners of English, especially for 2nd language learners, Cambridge made two bilingual versions, Korean and Japanese where it is widely used.

Introduction

Material evaluation is necessary to ensure both learning and teaching to be effective. Being an English Instructor teaching grammar to EFL students is always a challenge because grammar is often misunderstood in the language teaching field. The misconception exists that grammar is an assemblage of arbitrary rules about static structures in the language as in linguistic, grammar (from ancient Greek *grammatike*) of a natural language is defined as a set of structural constraints on speakers' or writers' composition of clauses, phrases, and words. Oswald Handfling also mentioned on his article "Does Language Need Rules" that it is often assumed that language is largely a matter of rules; that a proper understanding of language can only be achieved by considering it as a rule-governed activity. Others, on the other hand has questionable claims are that the structures do not need to be taught, learners will acquire them on their own (Krashen, *Second Language Acquisition*, 1981), or if the structures are taught, the lessons that ensue will be boring. For this,

proficiency-based and communicative teaching approaches at times unduly limit grammar instruction. This is where choosing good materials is important. The material **Basic Grammar in Use** book is useful as a textbook or as a reference of those beginning to low-intermediate foreign students. Most EFL students whom I have experienced teaching, such as students from Korea, Japan, and Thailand learn grammar as a structure-based system. If at all possible it is best to learn grammar through in-depth memorization of the rules, repetition of the usage of the agreements of the rules, and comprehensive logical analysis of sentences and the combination of all, according to the behaviorist approach in second language learning by Watson and Skinner The book shows very comprehensible rules that are suitable to basic learners and presents good comparisons especially in verb tenses that are helpful for students to grasp the differences in the usage of tenses of the verb. The book contains copious exercises that train students in internalizing the concept of the rules. I personally believe

that grammar should not be taught with structures alone yet as for building foundation in a structured based approach this book is a useful reference.

Content

The type of linguistic description employed in the book is structural. The language points the material covers are Grammar Rules and their comparisons. The book does not bluntly reveal what theories of learning it uses, though the book is patterned into a structural description of language. The book is suitable for a range of levels from commencing to low-intermediate learners.

Nevertheless, the book has been made for students are in their earliest stage of a beginners' course, this book should not be used from the first day of the course for absolute beginners. It is as well be used by lower-intermediate learners whose grammar is not as good as other aspects of their English or who have problems with specific areas of basic grammar. The book cover areas of grammar that are commonly taught at beginning levels, i.e, learners with very little English, but not for complete beginners. The book comprises reference and practice exercises in one volume. As the author of the book stated in the introduction, the

forms utilized in the book are those which are most used and customarily accepted in standard spoken North American English. A few native speakers may regard a number of these usages "incorrect", For example: "*She wet her hair before washing it*" - British English" versus "*She wetted her hair before washing it*" - American English but in this book, they are treated as standard.

Every Unit within the book begins with the grammatical structure. These rules are highlighted or boxed for emphasis and proper illustrations are made for better understanding. After the principles are presented, sample sentences are given highlighting the word(s) that ought to be remembered. The grammar point is presented and explained along with sample sentences on the left-hand-page and the corresponding exercises are on the right. The explanations are addressed to the beginning learners and are therefore simple and short, i.e., They read a lot.. There are usually four exercises per unit and each activity incorporates a sample answer to guide the student. The book usually provides one or more of these following types of grammar exercises: mechanical and meaningful drills. For mechanical drills; students can complete the exercise without attending to meaning in which each prompt has only

one correct response. For example, “Mike waited for the train this morning. He *will wait* for the train tomorrow morning, too.”

For the meaningful drills, every prompt has only one correct answer, and students must put their attention to the meaning to complete the exercise. For example: Where are Mike’s papers? They are in his bag. (Students must understand the meaning of the question to answer, but only one correct answer is possible because all of them know where George’s papers are). Mechanical drills are the least useful because they carry a little resemblance to real communication. These do not require learners to learn anything; they only entail parroting of a pattern or rule. On the other hand, meaningful drills can help students develop an understanding of the workings of the rules of grammar because they require students to make form-meaning correlations. By the fact that it has one correct answer, it makes its resemblance to real communication limited.

Since the book is intended for beginners, the drawback is that there aren’t communicative drills involved.

Examples and exercises use restricted vocabulary so that the book can be used at low to the middle level. There are additional exercises at the end part of

the book with answers. These exercises provide mixed practice bringing together grammar points from several different units mainly those concerning verb forms. A *Study Guide* with an answer key is also provided to assist students to decide what unit to study and an *Answer Key* is also available for teachers who would prefer it for their students.

For example, additional exercise

1.1 _____ . *Can you close the window, please?*

A. *I cold* B. *I’m cold.*

C. *I have cold* D. *It has cold*

If you do not know the answer, you can see a note on which Unit of the book the learner should study.

For EFL beginner students this book might be appealing for they are accustomed to this kind of approach. The use of the deductive approach represents a more traditional style of teaching in which the grammatical structures or rules are dictated to the students first (Rivers, Wilga M., Temperley, Mary S.,1978).

As a result, the rules are introduced and learned first, only after that the students can apply them. For example, if the structure to be presented is present continuous, the teacher would begin the lesson by saying, “Today we are going to

learn how to use the present continuous structure”. Then, the rules structure would be outlined and the students would complete exercises, in a number of how, to practice using the structure. (Goner, Phillips, and Walters, 1995) In this approach, the teacher is the center of the class and is responsible for all of the presentations and explanations of the new material.

Organization

There are one hundred sixteen (116) units in the book and each focuses on a particular area in grammar. The material is arranged into grammatical categories such as tenses, questions, and articles. The book should not be worked through from beginning to end, units are not ordered according to difficulty, and should therefore be selected and used in the order appropriate for the learners. The units are listed in the *Contents* and there is a *Comprehensive Index* at the end of the book.

Each unit has an identical format consisting of two facing pages. Seven Appendices are dealing with passive and active forms, irregular verbs, short forms (contractions), spelling, and two-word (phrasal) verbs. It might be useful to draw students’ attention to these.

This evaluated material is the second edition of *Basic Grammar in Use*. There are sets of additional exercises included. To be specific, thirty-three (33) additional exercises are provided in this section of the book.

At the back of the book, there is a *Study Guide* to help the students, an *Answer Key* and finally, there is an audio CD available for use in this book.

Adaptability

Since the material is intended for basic students to lower intermediate, there are limitations on how the information and exercises were created. It focuses on the idea of forming a habit based on the grammatical structures given. The vocabulary words used and the format are made simple for beginner learners to comprehend with ease.

The book can be used by students alone or as supplementary course material. When used as course material, the book can be used for immediate consolidation or later review and remedial work. It can be used by the whole class or by an individual student who needs extra help and practice.

Using the left-hand pages may be desirable in some cases (presentation and explanation) in class, but it should be taken

into consideration that these have been written for individual study or reference. In most cases, it would probably be better to present the grammar point in whatever way the teacher may prefer, with exercises being done for homework. For later reference, the left-hand page is then made available for students.

Some teachers choose to reserve the book for review and remedial work. For instance, individual students or groups of students can be guided to the appropriate units for self-study and practice. Given that the book, in my experienced and friends teaching in Korean and Japanese academies, is usually used by EFL students studying in an academy where man-to-man classes or a maximum of 5 students in group classes take place, the use of this book can be thoroughly maximized

Style

How the author made use of simple, clear explanation, and innovative format suits the level of the learners makes the book appealing to the students. The use of ethnic names such as, Japanese, Koreans, Mexicans, and etc. and familiar words somewhat made the student feel that the book is intended for them to use.

The book avoided oversimplified

conception and tries to have various examples that would go with intercontinental learners. The use of illustrations, drawings, pictures, and diagrams are exploited well to foster more the ability to perceive and explain the meaning of the concept.

Summary

Basic Grammar in Use book has assisted me, as EFL/ESL instructor build a good grammar foundation for my EFL and ESL students. In my years of experience, using various materials to enhance English language proficiency still boils down to students' strong grammar foundation. I have used different materials teaching grammar and yet nothing has impressed me as much as this book. Most books may have a good theoretical explanation yet fail to give good exercises in vice versa. The book made my life easier and I have never even once heard any complaints nor negative comments from my students about this book. Most of them were able to understand its simple instructions and exercises and some even have developed 'the love' in grammar.

I applaud the book's simple to complex sequence of the exercises. The previous topic found in the book is in prerequisite of the next one which makes it more comprehensible to the learners. For

instance, with the Present tense topic, the first part is focusing on rules on how to make affirmative and negative sentences followed by exercises, and additional topics is the rules on forming simple present questions followed by exercises.

The book is a good springboard for learning, which makes it an effective reference book not only with the beginning students but to those who have attained a higher-level as well.

In conclusion, therefore, I could say that the material is indeed useful to our learners. The material used for instruction plays a great role in the teaching and learning process yet it must not hinder teachers to be creative. Learning is dynamic so the approaches will always depend on who the learners are. The teachers should never limit their teaching on the materials at hand for the context of the lessons can be learned in various ways.

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