Book Review: Ilse Depraetere and Chad Langford(2019edn). *Advanced English grammar: A Linguistic Approach:* London: Bloomsbury

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As the number of English grammar books grows, so does the search for words to distinguish one from another. A quick look at titles shows that many labels have already been used: *advanced, functional, practical*, *real*, and even *The*, all of them descriptors which could apply equally well to this one. Potential buyers will have questions about a grammar book labelled "advanced" and "a linguistic approach". How "advanced" is the content and for whom is it intended?

The introduction to the first edition (repeated here) expands on the intended readership and approach. The original targets were the authors' own students at the University of Lille (France) for whom they wanted something less "overwhelming" (p.viii) than many existing grammar books and yet something that showed "a logical system underlying the rules they were learning by rote" (ibid).This review aims to consider the book in the light of its stated readership and claims.

The content moves from attention to form and function in the first chapter to information about discourse in the sixth. Each of the (mainly) lengthy chapters is divided into clearly signalled sub-sections and concludes with exercises for which answers are not provided. As well as the chapters which form the body of the book, the authors have added a number of appendices. In the chapter by chapter "list of sources and examples" (pp.340-343) most references are websites, in keeping with the target 21st century student users. There is also a three-page traditional bibliography for the content sources. A twelve-page list of irregular verbs is categorized in three ways: alphabetically, then on the basis of form, and finally according to whether the verbs have both regular and irregular forms. The same words appear in each list, all selected by the criterion of "usefulness… rather than exhaustiveness" (p. 346).This original idea should speed up the readers' search. The book ends with both a lexical and a subject index. It's hard to think of a reference category that's been omitted.

Interestingly, the first chapter's title, "Getting started: Forms and functions", parallels Chapter 1 in another recent Bloomsbury book on second language acquisition (Nava and Pedrazzini, 2018) where the title is "Form, meaning and use". In the present case the chapter terms frequently used in talking about language form are printed in **bold** and then defined. Words such as morphology, semantics and others are explained in user-friendly language. Then parts of speech are explained and illustrated, including the fact that many English words belong to more than one category: 'name', 'drink', 'work' and so on. The examples could not be more up to date, with mention of Prince Harry's wedding and a 2018 earthquake in Indonesia. Pedantic teachers will have fun with the authentic sentences in the final exercise where students are invited to say "to what extent… [items] can be considered a mistake". They might also enjoy debating (perhaps with other teachers) whether they agree with every use of the asterisk (*) to indicate an ungrammatical sentence.

Chapter 2 is devoted to "The verb and its complements", starting with a reminder of the difference between lexical and auxiliary verbs. One effect on a native-speaker of the mass and variety of examples is to wonder how anyone ever masters English as a second language. Pity the poor learner who corrects a native speaker for saying "So who did shoot the doorman?" (p. 49). ("Isn't it meant to be 'Who shot the doorman?' ?)

It's the turn of "The noun and the noun phrase" in Chapter 3. It's hard to think of what more could have been said in this 70-page chapter. As well as the clear explanations in the body of the text I found myself intrigued by the details in some of the footnotes. It would be interesting to ask native speakers with which animals they tend to use 'he' or 'she' to distinguish the gender as opposed to those which they consider, in the authors' words, "animals whose sex is unknown or unimportant" (p. 108). Later in this chapter I discovered a detail which had never occurred to me before: some *–ible* and *–able* adjectives can "in certain contexts" follow the noun in the noun phrase. Their example was "the only option possible" (p. 146). What those contexts are was not spelled out, so I shall have to start listening.

Chapter 4 deals with "Aspect and tense". Once again the word "advanced" in the book's title comes into its own. Using lists, tables and simple graphics the authors clarify complex points. As an example of lists, eight distinct tenses are presented in three columns, one each for labels, examples and descriptions as in (P. 176):

Future perfect tense *will have talked* (*will + have +* V + -EN)

Later in the chapter the advice that "it is useful to appeal to three time points" (p. 204) when analysing any tense, is illustrated with a graphic that uses lines and a curved arrow to link the moment of speech with the reference time and the event time. (If this words-only explanation is hard to follow then that shows the usefulness of the graphic.)

Chapter 5, "Modals and modality" provides answers to students who want to know how and how often we say (or avoid saying) certain verb combinations. Turn to Page 259 if you are arguing with advanced students, or maybe even with colleagues, about which of the following are "perfectly grammatical" but usually avoided.

She *oughtn't* to tell him the truth.
Should she tell him the truth?
Oughtn't she to tell him the truth?
(Try not to be side tracked by the actual meaning.)

Finally, Chapter 6 deals with "Discourse" in a shorter than average 24 pages. A helpful start summarises what has already been covered and then moves on to deal with the two types of cohesion markers:grammatical and lexical. As explained, both serve the same purpose. One sentence in the sub-section on "intra-sentential connecting devices" (pp.331 ff) might either encourage or discourage students who are considering majoring in linguistics. "Linguists have come up with some incredibly fine-tuned taxonomies for the different ways sentence adverbs can be used." (p. 333). Read on for a summary of the battle between descriptive and prescriptive linguists.

To test the validity of the word "advanced" in the book's title, I decided to try out one or two questions, based on the book's examples, on non-teaching friends. "Would you say x or y more often?" "Which of these sentences would seem "wrong" to you?" The fact that their answers failed to match up with the authors', not to mention that they were bored by my questions before the coffee was half finished, suggested to me that indeed, this book is for serious students who want to think in depth about the forms and usage of our language.

Will the book attract readers who already have a copy of the 2012 edition? Bloomsbury Academic's well deserved reputation for publishing up-to-date books related to second language acquisition could be one draw card. The interesting writing style and contemporary examples could be another. In their introduction to this second edition the authors speak of hoping to share their own "sense of excitement … for English and for language in general" (vii). It is not for a reviewer who is a teacher rather than a student to judge whether this has been achieved, but the authors seem to have gone a long way towards that goal. Maybe a journal could one day publish a review from a student user.

REFERENCES

Nava, Andrea and Pedrazzini, Luciana (2018). *Second language acquisition: Principles from practice*. London: Bloomsbury.