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*Iranian Journal
of
Language Teaching Research
(Book Review)*



An Introduction to English Grammar (4th ed.), Gerald Nelson (with Sidney Greenbaum), Routledge, London and New York (2016) Xiii + 335 pp., ISBN: 978-1-138-855549-6 (pbk).

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An Introduction to English Grammar was first published in 1991, with a second edition in 2002 and a 3rd in 2009. The 4th (current) edition enjoys a new section on 'Words' in chapter 9. The book is divided into two major parts: Part one is entitled Grammar, composed of four chapters and Part two is concerned with the applications of grammar, and includes five chapters, each with two sets of exercises. The first set is for self-studied or classroom use, while the second set, advanced exercises, is meant for classroom discussions or essay writing. This new edition by Nelson (and the late Greenbaum) provides an overview of nearly all aspects of English grammar.

The first chapter of the book looks at different parts of a simple sentence and analyses sentences in terms of form and function. It also deals with issues such as direct and indirect object. 'Word Classes' is the title given to chapter two. The writer classifies the nouns into open and closed classes. While the former class refers to classes open to new words such as nouns, the latter refers to classes of words that are limited such as pronouns, in that one can rarely add new words to this class of words.

Chapter three is about the structure of phrases and different phrase types. After discussing them in detail, the author explains the structural complexity of noun phrases. While describing verb phrase, the author draws readers' attention to aspect of verb (perfect and progressive) and mood as well as phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs.

Chapter four is an endeavor to shed more light on the definition of sentence. After rejecting some already known definitions such as "complete thought" and "string of words beginning with

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capital letter and ending with full stop", the book offers the idea of regular sentence as compared to irregular sentence. The author defines regular sentence as the one that conforms to the major sentence patterns discussed in the first chapter. As usual this chapter is also concludes with usual exercises followed by advanced exercises needing class discussions.

Chapter five on usage problems kick starts section II, the applications. The chapter mostly focuses on subject-verb agreement. Moreover, the chapter clarifies the confusion between adjectives and adverbs through exemplifications. Absolute constructions as nonfinite or verbless adverbial clauses with their own subjects along with dangling modifiers bring the chapter to an end. Writing styles and effects produced by varying choices of style and structures are the main focuses of chapter six. The chapter reminds the reader of the difference between conversation and writing and the opportunities available to recheck resources of hand writing before making the final decision about writing. Next the terms "end focus" and "front focus" are elucidated for the readers with some examples for each one. Then the importance of clarity in writing is emphasized via rephrasing vague and clumsy sentences. Pronoun references, consistency in pronoun agreement and tense are issues brought to light by providing unclear, faulty and vague sentences accompanied with their modified and corrected forms.

Chapter seven, 'English in Use', is a rather bulky one which explores outstanding features of register varieties. The registers examined include conversations, sport commentaries, email, text messages, on line chat rooms and message boards. The part dealing with chat rooms, message boards and tweets is rather a brand new topic, rarely tackled in grammar books. Nelson interestingly differentiates them by referring to each one's key features. The language of literature and its manipulation by the author to create the intended effect wraps up the chapter.

Punctuation is the main focus of chapter eight. Here, the punctuation rules for different types of sentences, sentence fragments, phrases and clauses with a wide variety of examples for each of them are introduced. Direct speech and indirect speech for the first time appear in this chapter only to remind punctuation rules related to them. There is no mentioning of tense or pronoun changes that occur in statements, imperatives or question sentences, while changing direct speech into indirect. The writer reiterates some general rules of punctuation related to direct speech, and citations. The author winds up the chapter by the punctuation rules related to vocatives, interjections, and genitive of nouns.

Chapter nine is concerned with the study of word structure and the rules related to combining parts of a word to create meaningful lexical items. First, free and bound morphemes are introduced through examples with criteria to distinguish them. Morphemes are classified into derivational and inflectional. Moreover, the chapter tackles the problem of discrepancy between spelling and pronunciation. By giving some examples, from historical perspective the author looks at the causes of such differences. Subsequently, spelling variants of some words for British and American English are presented. Then the author offers some general and specific rules for spelling of words along with the exceptions to the rule. A long list of homophones brings the chapter to an end.

Like any other book about grammar, the book at hand has its own advantages and shortcomings. Thus it is up to the reader to weigh the weak points and strong points of the book. Flipping through the book and at first glance one may not find thorough explanation of some general grammatical points. And indeed the author does not live up to the claims and promises made at the very beginning of the book. Allegedly the book is for the beginners. However, one can find some advanced grammar issues like cleft sentences and absolute constructions in the book. At the same time the writer turns a blind eye to some general topics and pivotal ones such as conditional sentences. Since some simple grammatical issues are presented along with complex issues, one may find a sort of fluctuation regarding the target audience of the book.

Moreover, the title of the book is misleading in that the reader, seeing the title, expects to find answers to some of his unanswered questions about grammar. Yet paging through the book the reader encounters diverse topics, particularly those related to style and register, morphemes, word formation, spelling acronyms and abbreviations. In fact, from section two, the book's concern is style and writing rather than grammar. Besides, most of the topics can be dealt with in separate books. For instance, in books like Anne Farid's "A Vocabulary Workbook" or John Kirkman's "Good Style".

As the author himself reiterates, the book is mostly in line with the "Comprehensive English Grammar of the English Language" by Quirk et al. The only difference between these two is that Quirk's book can be considered as a grammar reference book which works like a grammar dictionary while Nelson's book is not. In comparison with books about grammar available on the market that provide mastery over grammatical rules such as "Oxford Practice Grammar" by George Yule and Thomson's "A Practical English Grammar" the book cannot satisfactorily meet the needs of those interested in a variety of grammatical points. The exercises at the end of each chapter especially advanced ones are mostly food for thought which need brooding over. Since the first section of the book handles grammar issues and the second one writing ones, the title "Grammar and Writing" best suits the book. The most eye-catching shortcoming, I believe, is the lack of sufficient exercises for each topic and lack of answer key for advanced exercises in particular.

Since the book has got its own merits, it will be unfair not to mention the strong point of the book. With detailed glossary at the end of the book the author presents a brief yet meticulous comprehensive explanation of the technical terms for those wishing for a bird's eye view of some specific grammatical terms. Besides, a fruitful index for readers looking for any particular information about grammatical topics is offered at the final pages of the book. It has some quite brand new parts rarely seen in other grammar books for instance some examples from new media such as Facebook and Twitter are analyzed from a grammatical perspective. Consequently, it is an endeavor to shed light on features of the new means of communication while trying to differentiate them delving deep into their key features. The book is an invaluable guide for those keen on grammatical aspects of writing and punctuation. The nice variation in the exercises provides the opportunity for the teacher to choose from usual or advanced exercises according to the level of the students. Some delicate points about usage, collocation, style and suffixes are delicately pinpointed and brought to the surface for the readers obsessed with writing problems. Some complex points of English grammar are clearly and thoroughly explained. The book can be

an ideal resource for self-study. It is also a worthwhile book for any EFL teacher to have in his collection. It is not meant to be used as a systematic instruction book at schools. Nevertheless university lecturers may take the advantage of it as supplementary material for courses in grammar and writing or advanced courses in writing.

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