

GRAMMAR
—IN—
CONTEXT

Proficiency Level English

Hugh Gethin



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Grammar in Context

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Collins ELT: London and Glasgow

Collins ELT
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London W1X 3LA

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Introduction

For the learner

If you are the kind of learner for whom this book has been written, you will have learnt English intensively for months or less intensively for years. You will now be in contact with the language as it is used by British, American and other native speakers in conversation, on radio and television, in letters, books or newspapers. You yourself may be using the language socially or in your work; you may be studying it full- or part-time; you may be preparing for an examination such as the Cambridge Proficiency.

Whatever you are doing, you will have some academic background and some acquaintance, although it may be only slight, with grammatical concepts. With the help from time to time of a good dictionary or a teacher, you will be able to read this and the rest of the book with adequate understanding. In short, you will have reached an advanced level in English but you will still be learning it with a view to improving it as a means of communication, both written and spoken.

Apart from vocabulary, idiom and pronunciation, what you will still be learning is grammar, which is the way the vocabulary organises itself or, in other words, how the language works. A lot of grammar you will already know, such as the general order of words, basic tenses and verb forms, the making of questions and statements. Some of this, however, will have been imperfectly learnt, while there will be some grammar that you do not know at all. It is for this purpose, then, that the book has been written: to review the grammar that you may know imperfectly and to teach the grammar that you need to know but do not. (You may know it in the sense that you have heard or seen it used but not in the more important sense that you can recognise it and can use it yourself.) How does the book set out to achieve this?

Examples

The way a language works is best shown first by example, and so nearly every section of the book begins with examples of the grammar dealt with in that section. Since language is normally organised for intelligent communication, and is not a collection of unconnected utterances, the examples in each section are as far as possible connected to form a discourse or 'story' to show grammar in use and not just as 'naked' grammar lying about doing nothing. From these examples you should be able to get quite a good idea of how the language works.

Explanation

In order thoroughly to understand the examples, however, you will need some help in clarifying the way the language works; and to make understanding and learning easier you will probably feel the need for rules. To answer these needs as far as possible, an explanation follows the examples. It is linked for reference purposes to the examples by numbers and letters, so that you do not have to go through the whole explanation to clarify a certain example. This should be of particular advantage in review sections such as those on verb tenses (1B) and relatives (8A), where you may find that your existing knowledge makes some of the explanation unnecessary. In any explanation of grammar, descriptive terminology is unavoidable, and this is not introduced here for its own sake. Sometimes you will recognise the terms used through your own language, but in any case their meaning is illustrated in the examples and, if necessary, explained in a footnote.

Exercises

Having, through the examples and the explanation, understood the grammar involved, you now have to practise and test your knowledge. The exercises, like the examples, are as far as possible organised as discourse so that you can use the grammar you are learning in a meaningful context. It is important, therefore, to read out or to rewrite the whole text and not just the portion that needs changing. To help you prepare for some of the exercises, there are study lists towards the end of the book, placed there to make it easier for you not to refer to them while actually doing the exercises. If you find the exercises too difficult, you should return to examples, explanation or lists, and also if necessary to your dictionary, for better preparation.

Order of contents

The numbered sections of the book are in an order that can be followed to advantage, but are sufficiently independent of each other to be taken in the order that best answers your needs. However, the subsections A, B etc. build upon each other, and should be done in the order given.

Indexes

There are grammatical and word indexes that refer you by section number and letter to the relevant explanations, which, as mentioned above, are themselves linked with the examples.

Key to exercises

So that you can correct your answers to the exercises yourself, there is a key to them at the end of the book.

For the teacher

It is through what I have already said to the learner that I can best introduce the book to a teacher. In continuation I should like to add the following.

Rationale

This book has come into being, over many years of teaching and organising courses, in response to the need of post-intermediate students to feel bedrock beneath them. Learners at this level may be superficially fluent and able to cope socially in the language, but often flounder in a slough of words when more exact communication, written or spoken, is required of them. Those who meet the challenge and make further progress are usually those who not only need but actively demand a fuller understanding of grammar. At the stage we are talking about, this demand can best be met through the medium of English itself.

Although there are several EFL books dealing with grammar at this level, they have not all got exercises under the same cover. Also I have thought it to be very well worthwhile to try and put the grammar into more homogeneous contexts than are found in other books. The object thereby is not that learners should lose sight of the grammar as such (which happens in some books) but that they should see it used in examples in a contextual situation, and therefore in a more meaningful way, than they would in unconnected sentences. Where possible I have extended this treatment to the exercises. Thus the book, and thus its title.

Use

As already pointed out to the learner, the order followed by the main sections of this book is a recommended one only. The extensive cross-referencing that is provided should allow you to integrate the book into the rest of your teaching programme in any order required. Whichever section is selected for teaching, it is of course most important that you should thoroughly acquaint yourself beforehand with its examples, explanation and exercises.

Most of the grammatical categories that I have used will be familiar to you. I have departed from the traditional ones only where, after experiment and discussion, it has been apparent that there are better ways (at least at this level of teaching) of presenting the grammar of the language. Instances are the division of verb use into the categories of 'fact' and 'non-fact' and the incorporation into the passive of an auxiliary form. The examples and explanation of each section should soon put you in the picture regarding the categories used.

Depending on the time available and the depth of study required, the exercises may be done in class, orally or in writing, or as homework for later checking and comment.

Weighting

The book does not set out to be a comprehensive grammar of English. Some grammatical features, such as independent prepositions, have been considered familiar enough to the post-intermediate learner to be used in examples and exercises without grammatical comment. Others, such as verb tenses and relative pronouns, are not dealt with from scratch but are extensively reviewed and presented as a working unit.

The emphasis throughout is on the essential unit of discourse, which is the contextualised sentence; the relation between grammar and meaning is never forgotten. The aim is that serious learners should acquire, without the need for systematic structural analysis, a knowledge of the English sentence so that they can get its grammar and its meaning right not only in exercises but in their own connected speech and writing. In several years' use of this material, my colleagues and I have seen this aim achieved.

Style and usage

Closely connected with grammar is the question of style. Grammatical transformations and substitutions can involve changes between informal and more formal language. Where I have thought it necessary I have drawn attention to such changes by pointing out that certain uses are more formal than others, but have avoided extremes of style one way or the other and have generally embedded the grammar in moderately informal language identified by the use of colloquial contraction (*I'm, isn't* etc.). The absence of such contraction from the examples or exercises usually means either that the grammar requires the language to be more formal (as in some of the material on relative pronouns) or that contraction (as in the earlier sections on verb tenses) might obscure what was being exemplified.

Under this heading it is convenient to refer briefly to the question of British against American English. The grammar dealt with here is that of British English, but in saying that I am not aware of any differences sufficiently important to make it invalid as the grammar of an English speaker amongst Americans. Any problem caused by its use in the USA would be as nothing compared to its misuse there or in Britain, since in all important aspects the grammar of English is common to both 'languages'. Such uses as *like* for *as*, *than* after *different*, or *just* with the past tense are mentioned in this book, but not as linguistic differences because, although characteristic of American, they occur this side of the Atlantic as well.

1 Verb tenses

1A The past tense of certain verbs

Examples

- 1 What time did the sun *rise*? → The sun *rose* just after five o'clock.
Just after five o'clock.
- 2 Did it *shine* into the room? → Yes, it *shone* into the room.
Yes, it did.

Note: Under 17A you will find a study list of the forty verbs used in the following two Exercises. Although they are all quite common verbs their past tenses often cause difficulty, and you are advised to familiarise yourself with them first, so that you can do the Exercises with little hesitation and with appreciation of their meaning.

Exercises

Combine the question and the answer to make a complete statement as shown in the Examples above.

1

- 1 How far did the car skid?
Nearly thirty metres.
- 2 Why did the driver tread on the accelerator?
Because he thought it was the brake.
- 3 Did the accelerator stick wide open?
Yes, it did.
- 4 What did the car hit?
A lamp-post.
- 5 What did they bind the driver's wound with?
A piece of shirt.
- 6 How long did the passenger's nose bleed for?
Quite a long time.
- 7 Where did the passenger lie down?
On the pavement.
- 8 Where did the driver wake up?
In hospital.

- 9 Who did they lay the blame on?
The other driver.
- 10 How much did they sue him for?
Twenty thousand pounds.
- 11 When did he quit his job?
Straight after the accident.
- 12 Why did he flee the country?
To escape the law.
- 13 Did anyone shed any tears when he left?
No, no one.
- 14 Where did he seek refuge?
In Australia.
- 15 Did he dig for gold there?
Yes, he did.
- 16 Did he strike any gold?
Hardly any.
- 17 Did he grow rich?
No, grass.
- 18 Where did he sow grass?
Wherever he could.
- 19 Why did he saw down trees?
To make a fence for sheep.
- 20 What did he feed the sheep on?
Bananas, of course!

2

- 1 Why did Sheila's lip swell up?
Because a wasp stung her.
- 2 How did Ken split his trousers?
Climbing over a fence.
- 3 Did Toby bet that Ken could not sew them up himself?
Yes, he did.
- 4 Did Ken sew them up himself?
Yes, he did.
- 5 How did Helen slit the envelope open?
With her enormously long fingernail.
- 6 How did Marilyn speed up her typing?
By going to evening classes.
- 7 How much did Zena bid for the Chinese vase?
A couple of hundred.
- 8 When did she fall?
Going down the stairs.
- 9 How did she feel about breaking the vase?
Terrible.

1B VERB TENSES

- 10 Did she hurt herself?
Yes, her wrist.
- 11 Where did all the water flow?
Downstairs.
- 12 Why did Helen fly out of the room in a rage?
Because of what her father said.
- 13 What did her father forbid her to do?
Go out with Denis.
- 14 How did her father deal with her?
By stopping her monthly allowance.
- 15 Why did Denis stroke Helen's hand?
To try and calm her down.
- 16 What rumour did Helen's friends spread?
That she was going to get married.
- 17 What did Marilyn weave her rugs on?
The looms over there.
- 18 How much did she raise her prices by?
Fifteen per cent.
- 19 When did the question of a bank loan arise?
At the directors' meeting.
- 20 When did they broadcast the news?
Just now, on the BBC.

1B Tense use for fact: review

Introductory note: Verb tenses in English fall into two main categories: those used for **FACT** and those used for **NON-FACT**. By fact we mean what we treat* as real or quite possible. Non-fact is what is supposed† or wished for, which is either unreal or improbable. Here are some examples:

I became Managing Director five years

ago.

FACT

I'll soon be sixty.

FACT

I wish I were Managing Director!

NON-FACT: WISH

Then I'd have an office on the top
floor.

NON-FACT: SUPPOSITION

Fact is directly related to time, and so generally is the tense use. Non-fact has no direct relationship with time and neither has the tense use. Non-fact tense use is dealt with in sections **1D** and **1E**. Tense use for fact is reviewed in this section and in **1C**. In section **1F** both kinds of use are compared and summarised.

*Treat as real, because fact in this sense includes fiction.

†Or **HYPOTHETICAL**, a term used in some grammar books together with **HYPOTHESIS**, which in this book is called **SUPPOSITION**.

You should already be familiar with English tenses and to a large extent with their use, and so what follows immediately below is in the nature of revision so that you can refresh and exercise your knowledge. The Examples set out tenses for fact, together with their English names, divided into the SIMPLE and the PROGRESSIVE form (called CONTINUOUS in some books). The Explanation draws attention to the more important points regarding their use. The three Exercises deal first with the present and past tenses, then with tenses relating to future time, and finally with all tenses.

Examples

	TENSES (SIMPLE)	
I (1) <i>became</i> Managing Director five years ago. I (2) <i>had been</i> Personnel Manager for three years and (3) <i>joined/had joined</i> the firm in 1970, so I (4) <i>have been</i> here for fifteen years. I (5) <i>work</i> in an office on the top floor. I (6) <i>retire</i> in five years. I think I (7) <i>will/shall</i> go and live in the country. I (8) <i>will/shall have been</i> with the firm for twenty years by then.	PAST PAST PERFECT PAST/PAST PERFECT PRESENT PERFECT PRESENT PRESENT (FUTURE USE) FUTURE FUTURE PERFECT	a b a, b c d e f, r g, r
	TENSES (PROGRESSIVE)	
I (9) <i>was still working</i> at eight o'clock yesterday evening. I (10) <i>had been working</i> since early morning. We (11) <i>have been working</i> very hard at the office lately as we (12) <i>are negotiating</i> an important contract. Tomorrow I (13) <i>am flying</i> to Milan. (14) <i>Will it still be raining</i> like this when I get back, I wonder? I hope not, because I (15) <i>am going to take</i> a few days off as soon as I can. I (16) <i>'ll have been working</i> non-stop for over three weeks.	PAST PAST PERFECT PRESENT PERFECT PRESENT PRESENT (FUTURE USE) FUTURE <i>going to</i> FUTURE PERFECT	s h j k l m n, r p q, r

Explanation

a PAST SIMPLE refers (1, 3) to a definite time in the past or 'then' (*five years ago, in 1970*). The time itself is not always mentioned:

~ Thomas Edison invented the electric light bulb.

See also c below.

- b PAST PERFECT SIMPLE refers (2) to indefinite time until (*for three years*) then or before* then. It may also refer (3) to a definite time (*in 1970*) before then.
- c PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE refers (4) to indefinite time before or until (*for fifteen years*) now. It can not refer to definite time or 'then' (not 'I've joined the firm in 1970'). But it may be used with several words to refer to 'before now':
- He has *just* told me that he has *recently* been made Managing Director and has *already* been busier than he has ever been *before*.
- Recently* and *just (now)* also occur with the past tense:
- The man you just spoke to/spoke to just now recently became our Managing Director.
- d PRESENT SIMPLE refers principally (5) to what exists or occurs habitually (*I work*) in our present lives or nowadays. In this use it refers to repeated, not single, events:
- When do you go to London? – (I go) On Fridays/Every Friday.
- e PRESENT SIMPLE (FUTURE USE) refers (6) to a future that is planned, usually through regulations, programmes, timetables etc. (compare m below). In this use it may refer to single events:
- When (according to your travel schedule) do you go to London? – (I go) On Friday/Next Friday.
- f FUTURE SIMPLE is used for the future when there is no definite plan or intention (but see p below), or if there is a condition attached (1C). It often occurs with *think* (7), *expect*, *wonder*, *perhaps*, *probably* etc. But it is used for a planned future when the verb has no progressive form (see s below):
- I'll have my new car next month.
- g FUTURE PERFECT SIMPLE usually refers (8) to indefinite time (*for twenty years*) before or until then in the future (*by then*). But like the past perfect and unlike the present perfect, it may sometimes refer to definite time:
- I'll be tired when I arrive, because I'll have had an exam the day before.
- h PAST PROGRESSIVE refers to what was IN PROGRESS in the past. When this was over a PERIOD of time, either the progressive or the simple form may be used with no essential difference in meaning:
- Yesterday I was working/worked from eight in the morning until nine at night.
- But for what was in progress at a POINT in time (9) only the progressive form can be used. (See also l below.)

* As, for example, in 'I'd acted as Managing Director several times before (then).' *Several times before* and *for three years* are both indefinite because they do not answer the question *When ... ?* Compare *five years ago*, in 1970.

- j PAST PERFECT PROGRESSIVE** refers (10) to what was in progress until then. If the activity itself did not last until then, its effect did:

I couldn't shake hands as mine were dirty; I'd been working on my car.

- k PRESENT PERFECT PROGRESSIVE** refers (11) to what has been in progress until now. It may be used with *just*, *recently* or *already* (see c above), but not with *before* (*I've worked* (not have been working) *here before*).

- l PRESENT PROGRESSIVE** refers to what is in progress now (12) or at repeated time points nowadays:

They're always/often/never watching television when I visit them.

Compare 'They always/often/never (= start to) watch television when I visit them.' *Always* or *continually* may be used with the present or past progressive without reference to time points:

They're/They were always watching television.

This is for repeated activity that, usually, because it annoys us, claims our attention to such an extent that it seems to be always in progress.

- m PRESENT PROGRESSIVE (FUTURE USE)** refers (13) to a future that is planned, usually as a particular arrangement rather than as part of a programme etc. (see e, n).

- n FUTURE PROGRESSIVE** refers (14) to what will be in progress at a future time point (*when I get back*). It is also used when we anticipate something without actually arranging it. Compare the following (with reference to e, m):

(According to my travel schedule) I don't return until next week.

I'm not returning until next week. (That's the particular arrangement.)

I shan't be returning until next week. (That's what I anticipate.)

The distinction between these uses is not a strict one.

- p *Going to*** is used for intention (15), before we have made a definite plan. For sudden intention (when we make up our mind on the spur of the moment) it is usually replaced by the future simple. Compare with Example 15 the following:

I'm taking a few days off next week. (I've already arranged it.)

So you're going to Wales. What a good idea! I'll take a few days off and come too. (I've suddenly thought of it.)

(Again the distinction between the uses is not strict.) *Going to* is also used when we are convinced something is going to happen, either (i) because it has already started to happen or (ii) because of what we know of the circumstances. In the second use (ii), but not in the first, *going to* can alternate with the future simple tense:

i She's going to (not will) have a baby.

ii She's going to find/will find it difficult to carry on working.

To express the future from the point of view of the past, *going to* may be used with *was/were*:

He was going to take a few days off; I hope he managed it.

- q FUTURE PERFECT PROGRESSIVE is similar in principle to j and k above, but with reference to what will have been in progress until then in the future (16).
- r *Will* AGAINST *shall* IN FUTURE TENSES: The question of which to use is not an important one. Apart from the fact that they are often contracted and therefore indistinguishable (16), it is seldom incorrect to use *will* with all persons (*I, we* as well as *she, you* etc.). For an exception, see 12Bb.
- s NON-USE OF PROGRESSIVE FORMS: When there is nothing in progress or happening, such as when we **think** (= believe) or **have** (= possess) something, progressive forms are not used:

i I think Ken has two cars. Am I right?

Compare:

ii I'm having (= taking) a holiday next month. I'm thinking of (= contemplating) going hang-gliding. Am I being rash?

In general, verbs such as *think/believe* or *have/possess* which describe states of mind, ownership etc. (how things are) do not have progressive forms (i), while verbs (the majority) such as *have/take* or *think/contemplate* which describe some sort of activity or process do have them (ii). The verb *be* commonly refers to states like that of *belief* and so is most often used in a simple form (i), but it may occur in the progressive to relate to something in progress like *contemplating* (ii). Verbs of perception like *see* and *hear* generally have no progressive forms either, but they too may have other meanings:

Sheila's seeing (= consulting) a doctor about her cough.

I've been hearing a lot (= getting a lot of news) about her lately.

Exercise i

For each verb in brackets, choose one of the following tenses: the PRESENT, PRESENT PERFECT, PAST OR PAST PERFECT, in either the SIMPLE OR PROGRESSIVE form. If there is an adverb before the bracket, note the position it should have in a PERFECT OR A PROGRESSIVE tense by referring to c and l in the preceding Explanation.

Brenda Pearl (1 join) our firm ten years ago. She (2 work) for the previous five years with an advertising company and (3 acquire) much useful experience. For the first eight years with us she (4 work) in the Sales Department, and (5 work) there when I (6 become) Managing Director. Since then she (7 work) as my personal assistant, and (8 prove) herself to be outstandingly capable on many occasions. She (9 work) on the top floor, in an office next to mine, but at the moment (10 work) in London on a special assignment.

When the North and South finally (11 lay) down their arms in 1865 at the end of the American Civil War they (12 fight) for over four years and the South, which (13 win) several battles but (14 lose) the war, (15 be) economically exhausted. It (16 be) a tragedy that Abraham Lincoln, who (17 lead) the North to victory and (18 be) now ready to be generous to the South, (19 not|survive) to make the peace. Five days after General Lee (20 surrender) at Appomattox, Lincoln (21 be) assassinated.

Denis always (22 ring) me up when I am in the shower or washing my hair. The last time it (23 happen) I (24 not|answer) the phone. I (25 learn) afterwards that someone (26 ring) me up that day to offer me a job which they then (27 offer) to someone else. I just (28 tell) Denis that he (29 be) to blame for the fact that I (30 miss) a golden opportunity.

'What (31 do|you) with yourself lately? I (32 not|see) you for over a month.'

'I (33 be) in Stockholm since I last (34 see) you.'

'Really? How long (35 be|you) there and what (36 do|you)?'

'Nearly three weeks. I (37 do) some research at the Royal Library. I think I already (38 tell) you that I (39 work) on a book about Scandinavia.'

'Yes. How (40 go|it)?'

'Not so bad. I (41 hope) to have it in the hands of the publisher by the end of the year.'

Peter (42 live) in Nodnol, the capital of Mercia. At least, that's where he (43 live) when he last (44 write). In his letter he (45 invite) me to visit him, but as I (46 have) no answer to my last two letters I (47 wonder) whether I should go or not. I also (48 have) no reply from the consulate about the Mercian visa I (49 apply) for two weeks ago. Although I (50 be) born in Mercia, I no longer (51 have) a Mercian passport.

(On the telephone): Yes, I'm at Georgina's house this evening. What (52 do|I) here? I (53 babysit). She and her husband (54 go) to a party. Four – four children. They (55 be) usually rather wild. I (56 babysit) here once when they all (57 start) screaming. But they (58 be) very good at the moment. I can see the youngest now in the room next door: she (59 eat) a huge box of chocolates that Georgina (60 give) me before she (61 leave). The others (62 find) a tin of paint and happily (63 paint) the walls of the kitchen. They (64 assure) me that they (65 do) this before and that their mother and father (66 have) no objection then. I only (67 hope) they (68 tell) me the truth. One of them (69 get) himself in a bit of a mess. I (70 try) to clean him up with paint remover, but so far without much success.

Exercise 2

This exercise covers the tenses and forms used for future time, namely the SIMPLE OR PROGRESSIVE FUTURE, FUTURE PERFECT and PRESENT tenses, and the

going to form. For each verb in brackets use one of these. Instructions for any adverb in front of the bracket are in principle the same as for Exercise 1.

I hope Brenda still (1 work) for me when I retire in six years' time. She (2 retire) herself a few years afterwards, because she then (3 be) sixty. She (4 work) for the firm for twenty years by then and (5 qualify) for the firm's full pension. She says that when she retires she (6 work) as a business consultant. She probably (7 earn) more money doing that than she does now. At the moment she is in London on a special assignment, but she (8 come) back tomorrow, so if you look in then I (9 introduce) you to her. (10 tell|I) her you may come?

I (11 see) Willie tomorrow at our weekly Japanese class, so I (12 tell) him what you have just told me. He (13 be) very pleased to know that you have passed your music exam. What (14 do|you) next? (15 prepare|you) for the higher grade?

According to this timetable for my business trip to Brazil for the firm, I (16 be) due in Rio on the fourteenth and (17 leave) for São Paulo on the seventeenth. That (18 not|give) me enough time to visit the three factories that are listed: they (19 need) at least a day each. Incidentally, when (20 meet|I) our representative in São Paulo? There's no mention of that here. And I see that I (21 be) due back in Britain on the twenty-second, which (22 mean) only forty-eight hours in Brasilia, which in my opinion (23 not|be) enough. (24 be|you) free any time this afternoon? Three-thirty? Good. So (25 be|I). Could I discuss my Brazilian programme with you then?

'I hear that Marilyn (26 go) to the States shortly. What (27 do|she) there?'
'She (28 promote) her firm's products.'
'How (29 do|she) that?'
'She (30 demonstrate) them to selected retail outlets. I am sure she (31 do) extremely well.'

Sir James and Lady Blenkinsop (32 be) married for thirty years next March. They (33 celebrate) their wedding anniversary with a dinner party at Blenkinsop Hall on the seventeenth. I don't think it (34 be) a particularly stylish affair, but I am sure a lot of good food (35 be) served. Sheila, Ken and Willie have been invited and (36 go). Marilyn was invited too, but can't go because she (37 leave) for the States by then. Helen and Denis say they (38 go) – if they're invited! I haven't been invited yet, but I can't go anyway, as I (39 work) on a job in Glasgow at the time. (40 go|you)?

'Do you think there (41 be) an election next month?'
'There definitely (42 be) one; they've just announced it on the radio. They haven't given a date, but it probably (43 be) on the second Thursday.'
'Who do you think (44 win)?'
'I don't know who (45 win). But the Government (46 lose).'
'This time tomorrow I (47 take) my driving test. Wish me luck!'