Longman English Grammar

L. G. Alexander

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Consultant: R. A. Close, CBE

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Louis Alexander was born in London in 1932. He was educated at Godalming Grammar School and London University. He taught English in Germany (1954–56) and Greece (1956–65), where he was Head of the English Department of the Protypon Lykeion, Athens. He was adviser to the Deutscher Volkshochschulverband (1968–78) and contributed to the design of two important English examinations in German Adult Education. He was a member of the Council of Europe Committee on Modern Language Teaching (1973–78) and is one of the authors of *The Threshold Level* (1975) and *Waystage* (1977). These modern syllabuses are the basis of many communicative language courses. He is also one of the authors of *English Grammatical Structure* (1975), a basic syllabus for grading structures for teaching/learning purposes. In 1986–88 he was adviser to the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate for the Cambridge Certificate in English for International Communication.

Louis Alexander is best known as the author of innovative works like *First Things First* (1967), which set new standards in course-design. He has written:

Courses, such as *New Concept English* (1967), *Look, Listen and Learn* (1968–71), *Target* (1972–74), *Mainline* (1973–81), *Follow Me* (1979–80) and *Plain English* (1987–88).
Language Practice Books such as *A First Book in Comprehension* (1964), *Question and Answer* (1967) and *For and Against* (1968).
Readers, such as *Operation Mastermind* (1971), *K's First Case* (1975), *Dangerous Game* (1977) and *Foul Play* (1983).

He created the blueprint for the self-study series in modern languages, *Survive . . .* (1980–83) and has published language courses in the field of computer-assisted language learning.

The *Longman English Grammar* is the culmination of more than thirty years' work in English as a foreign language.

Acknowledgements

A grammar takes shape over a long period of time, evolving in version after version. An author's ideas must be challenged repeatedly for the work to develop. It is a process which does not end with publication, for, of course, a grammar can never be complete or completed.

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Only a comparison of the successive drafts of this work with the final text could reveal how great is my debt to these commentators – though they certainly will not agree with many of the decisions I have made! I take full responsibility for the book that has finally emerged and lay sole claim to its imperfections.

A grammar taxes the resources of a publisher as much as it strains the abilities of an author. I would like to thank my publishers for their faith and unstinted support while the work was in progress. Specifically, my thanks are due to my publisher, Michael Johnson, for his constructive advice and for the exercise of his formidable managerial skills; to Paul Price-Smith for designing the work with such zest and imagination; to Joy Marshall for her superlative editing and amazingly retentive memory; to Tina Saunders and Joy Cash for photocopying, collating and dispatching recurring mountains of paper; to Ken Moore of the computer department and Clive McKeough of the production department for resolving the innumerable technical problems involved in computer-setting from disks.

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L. G. A.

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Introduction

Aims and level

Grammatical descriptions of English which are addressed to learners are often oversimplified and inaccurate. This is the inevitable result of lack of time in the classroom and lack of space in course books and practice books. Badly expressed and inaccurate rules, in turn, become enshrined in grammar books directed at teachers and students. The misrepresentation of English grammar gives a false view of the language, perpetuates inaccurate 'rules', and results in errors in communication. It is against this background that the *Longman English Grammar* has been written.

The primary aim of this book is to present a *manageable* coverage of grammar at intermediate and advanced levels, which will serve two purposes:

1 To present information which can be consulted for *reference*.
2 To suggest the range of structures that a student would need to be familiar with receptively and (to a lesser extent) productively to be able to communicate effectively.

In other words, the book aims to be a true pedagogical grammar for everyone concerned with English as a foreign language. It attempts to provide reasonable answers to reasonable questions about the workings of the language and to define what English as a Foreign Language *is* in terms of grammar.

Rationale

Many learners approach the study of English already in possession of a fair knowledge of the grammar of their own languages. They are the product of their own learning traditions, which have often equipped them with a 'grammatical consciousness'. Native-speaking teachers of English gradually acquire the grammatical consciousness of their students through the experience of teaching, so that they, too, learn 'English as a foreign language'. This book assumes the existence of such a consciousness. The grammar has been written, as it were, through the eyes of the user. It has been informed by the common errors made by learners and as a result has been written as precisely as possible for their requirements. This awareness of the learner will be apparent in the way the book has been organized and written, and in the use of technical terms.

Organization

Complex forms of organization, often found in modern grammars, have been avoided. Before they begin the study of English, many students are familiar with the idea of sentence formation and word order and the

idea of 'parts of speech': the use of nouns, verbs, prepositions, and so on. And this is the pattern this grammar follows. A glance at the Contents pages will give the user an overview of the way the book has been organized.

The main chapters are followed by an Appendix, which contains useful lists (e.g. of phrasal verbs) that would otherwise clutter the text and make it unreadable. Or they contain detailed notes on e.g. prepositions, dealing with such problems as the similarities and differences between *over* and *above*, which there is not normally room for in a grammar of this size.

Style

Writing about language is difficult because the object of study (language) is also the medium through which it is discussed. There has been a conscious avoidance of passive constructions so that the descriptions of how the English language works are as simple and direct as possible, given the complexity of the subject.

The usual sequence in each section is to present *form* first, followed by *use*. Paradigms, where they occur, are given in full, in traditional style, as this may be the way students have already encountered them in their own languages. These are often followed by notes which focus on particular problems. 'Rules' are descriptive, rather than prescriptive, and are written as simply and accurately as possible.

Technical terms

The book defines common technical terms, such as *noun, verb*, etc. that are probably familiar to the user. While it avoids complex terms, it does introduce (and define) terms which are necessary for an accurate description of what is happening. The index uses the symbol D to refer the user to the point where such terms are defined. An intelligent discussion of English requires the use of terms like *determiner, stative verb, the causative, the zero article*, and so on. If we avoid such terms, descriptions will be unnecessarily wordy, repetitive and/or inaccurate. For example, to speak of 'the omission of the article' in e.g. 'Life is difficult' is a misrepresentation of what happens. We *actively* use the zero article here; we do not 'omit' anything.

Retrieving information

Page headings and numbered subsections indicate at every point what features of the language are being discussed. Users can make their own connexions through the extensive cross-referencing system, or they can find what they want in the detailed index.

Ease of use

Attempting to write a grammar that is up-to-date, accurate and readable is one thing; making a book out of the material is quite another. Through careful presentation and design, we have tried to create a work that will be a pleasure to use. We also hope that it will prove to be a reliable and indispensable companion to anyone interested in the English language.

Pronunciation and spelling table

consonants

symbol	key word	other common spellings
p	**p**en	happy
b	**b**ack	rubber
t	**t**ea	butter walked doubt
d	**d**ay	ladder called could
k	**k**ey	cool soccer lock school cheque
g	**g**et	bigger ghost
tʃ	**ch**eer	match nature question cello
dʒ	**j**ump	age edge soldier gradual
f	**f**at	coffee cough physics half
v	**v**iew	of navvy
θ	**th**ing	
ð	**th**en	
s	**s**oon	city psychology mess scene listen
z	**z**ero	was dazzle example (/gz/)
ʃ	fi**sh**ing	sure station tension vicious chevron
ʒ	plea**s**ure	vision rouge
h	**h**ot	whole
m	su**m**	hammer calm bomb
n	su**n**	funny know gnaw
ŋ	su**ng**	sink
l	**l**ed	balloon battle
r	**r**ed	marry wriggle rhubarb
j	**y**et	onion use new Europe
w	**w**et	one when queen (/kw/)
x	lo**ch**	

vowels

symbol	key word	other common spellings
iː	sh**ee**p	field team key scene amoeba
ɪ	sh**i**p	savage guilt system women
e	b**e**d	any said bread bury friend
æ	b**a**d	plaid laugh (*AmE*) calf (*AmE*)
ɑː	f**a**ther	calm heart laugh (*BrE*) bother (*AmE*)
ɒ	p**o**t	watch cough (*BrE*) laurel (*BrE*)
ɔː	c**augh**t	ball board draw four floor cough (*AmE*)
ʊ	p**u**t	wood wolf could
uː	b**oo**t	move shoe group flew blue rude
ʌ	c**u**t	some blood does
ɜː	b**ir**d	burn fern worm earn journal
ə	cupb**oar**d	the colour actor nation danger asleep
eɪ	m**a**ke	pray prey steak vein gauge
əʊ	n**o**te	soap soul grow sew toe
aɪ	b**i**te	pie buy try guide sigh
aʊ	n**ow**	spout plough
ɔɪ	b**oy**	poison lawyer
ɪə	h**ere**	beer weir appear fierce
eə	th**ere**	hair bear bare their prayer
ʊə	p**oor**	tour sure

eɪə	pl**ayer**
əʊə	l**ower**
aɪə	t**ire**
aʊə	t**ower**
ɔɪə	empl**oyer**

from *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*

Symbols and conventions

AmE	American English
BrE	British English
Not * *	likely student error
Ø	zero article
( )	optional element
/ /	phonetic transcription
[>]	cross-reference
[> App]	Appendix reference
D	definition of technical terms (used only in the index)
' (as in 'progress)	stress mark

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1 The sentence

Sentence word order

1.1 Inflected and uninflected languages

Many modern European languages are **inflected**. Inflected languages usually have the following characteristics:

1 Nouns have endings which change depending on whether they are, for example, the subject or object of a verb.
2 There are complex agreements between articles, adjectives and nouns to emphasize the fact that a noun is, for example, subject or object, masculine or feminine, singular or plural. The more inflected a language is (for example, German or Greek), the more complex its system of endings ('inflexions').
3 Verbs 'conjugate', so that it is immediately obvious from the endings which 'person' (first, second, third) is referred to and whether the 'person' is singular or plural.

English was an inflected language up to the Middle Ages, but the modern language retains very few inflexions. Some survive, like the genitive case in e.g. *lady**'s** handbag* where *lady* requires ***'s*** to show singular possession, or like the third person in the simple present tense (*I work – He/She/It work**s***) where the ***-s*** ending identifies the third person, or in the comparative and superlative forms of many adjectives (*nice, nice**r**, nice**st***). There are only six words in the English language which have different subject and object forms: *I/me, he/him, she/her, we/us, they/them* and *who/whom*. This lack of inflexions in English tempts some people to observe (quite wrongly) that the language has 'hardly any grammar'. It would be more accurate to say that English no longer has a grammar like that of Latin or German, but it has certainly evolved a grammar of its own, as this book testifies.

In inflected languages we do not depend on the word order to understand which noun is the subject of a sentence and which is the object: the endings tell us immediately. In English, the order of words is essential to the meaning of a sentence. We have to distinguish carefully between the subject-group and the verb-group (or **predicate**). The **predicate** is what is said about the subject, i.e. it is all the words in a sentence except the subject:

subject group	**verb group (predicate)**
The dog	*bit the man.*
The man	*bit the dog.*

As these examples show, a change in word order brings with it a fundamental change in meaning, which would not be the case if the nouns had endings. This means that English is far less flexible in its word order than many inflected languages.

1.2 The sentence: definitions of key terms

No discussion of the sentence is possible without an understanding of the terms **finite verb**, **phrase**, **clause** and **sentence**.

A **finite verb** must normally have:
– a **subject** (which may be 'hidden'): e.g.
__He__ makes. __They__ arrived. __We__ know.
Open the door. (i.e. *__You__ open the door.*)
– a **tense**: e.g. *He __has finished__. She __will write__. They __succeeded__.*

So, for example, *he writes, she wrote* and *he has written* are finite, but *written*, by itself, is not. *Made* is finite if used in the past tense and if it has a subject (*He made this for me*); but it is not if it is used as a past participle without an auxiliary (*made in Germany*). The infinitive (e.g. *to write*) or the present and past participles (e.g. *writing, written*) can never be finite. Modal verbs [> Chapter 11] are also finite, even though they do not have tense forms like other verbs: e.g. *he must (wait), he may (arrive)* , as are imperatives: e.g. *Stand up!* [> 9.51–56].

A **phrase** is a group of words which can be part of a sentence. A phrase may take the form of:
– a **noun phrase**: e.g. *a tube of toothpaste.*
– a **prepositional** (or **adverbial**) **phrase**: e.g. *over the bridge.*
– a **verb phrase**, e.g. a single verb-form: *built (in stone)*, or a combination of verbs: e.g. *will tell, have done.*
– a **question-word** + **infinitive**: e.g. *what to do, when to go.*

A **clause** is a group of words consisting of a **subject** + **finite verb** (+ **complement** [> 1.9] or **object** [> 1.4, 1.9] if necessary).

A **sentence** which contains one clause is called a **simple sentence**:
Stephen apologized at once. [> 1.7]
Or it may contain more than one clause, in which case it is either a **compound sentence** [> 1.17]:
Stephen realized his mistake __and__ (he) apologized at once.
or a **complex sentence** [> 1.21]:
__When__ he realized his mistake, Stephen apologized at once.

A **sentence** can take any one of four forms:
– a **statement**: *The shops close/don't close at 7 tonight.*
– a **question**: *Do the shops close at 7 tonight?*
– a **command**: *Shut the door!*
– an **exclamation**: *What a slow train this is!*

A sentence is a complete unit of meaning. When we speak, our sentences may be extremely involved or even unfinished, yet we can still convey our meaning through intonation, gesture, facial expression, etc. When we write, these devices are not available, so sentences have to be carefully structured and punctuated. A written sentence must begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop (.), a question mark (?) or an exclamation mark (!).

One-word or abbreviated utterances can also be complete units of

meaning, particularly in speech or written dialogue: e.g. *All right!, Good!, Want any help?* . However, these are not real sentences because they do not contain a finite verb.

1.3 Basic word order in an English sentence

Although variations are possible [> 1.6], the basic word order in a sentence that is not a question or a command is usually:

subject group	**verb group (predicate)**				
subject	**verb**	**object**	**adverbials** [usually optional > 7.1]		
			manner	**place**	**time** [> 7.19.1, 7.22]
I	*bought*	*a hat*			*yesterday.*
The children	*ran*			*home.*	
The taxi-driver	*shouted at*	*me*	*angrily.*		
We	*ate*	*our meal*	*in silence.*		
The car	*stopped*		*suddenly.*		
A young girl with long black hair	*walked*		*confidently*	*across the room.*	

1.4 Word order: definitions of key terms

A **subject** is normally a noun, pronoun or noun phrase; it usually goes before the verb. The verb must 'agree' with the subject, so the subject dictates the form of the verb (e.g. *I wait, John waits, I am, you are, I have, the new edition has*). This 'agreement' between subject and verb is often called **concord**. An **object** is normally a noun, pronoun or noun phrase; it usually goes after the verb in the **active**. It can become the subject of a verb in the **passive** [> 12.1–2]:

	subject	**predicate**
active:	*They*	*drove* ***him*** *away in a police car.*
passive:	***He***	*was driven away in a police car.*

A sentence does not always require an object. It can just be:
- **subject** + **verb**: *We all laughed.*
- **subject** + **verb** + **adverb**: *We laughed loudly.*

Some verbs do not take an object [> 1.9–10].

1.5 Making the parts of a sentence longer

We can lengthen a subject or object by adding a clause or a phrase:
- lengthening the **subject**:
  The man *ran away.*
  The man who stole the money *ran away.*
- lengthening the **object**:
  I bought ***a raincoat****.*
  I bought ***a raincoat with a warm lining****.*

1.6 Some common variations on the basic word order

We normally avoid separating a subject from its verb and a verb from its object [e.g. with an adverb > 1.3], though there are exceptions even to this basic rule [> 7.16]. However, note these common variations in the basic subject/verb/(object)/(adverbial) order:

- questions [> Chapter 13]:
  Did you take *your car in for a service?*
  When did you take *your car in for a service?*
- reporting verbs in direct speech [> 15.3n.4]:
  'You've eaten the lot!' ***cried Frank*** *.*
- certain conditional sentences [> 14.8, 14.18.3]:
  Should you see him*, please give him my regards.*
- time references requiring special emphasis [> 7.22, 7.24]:
  Last night *we went to the cinema.*
- ***-ly*** adverbs of manner/indefinite time [> 7.16.3, 7.24]:
  The whole building ***suddenly*** *began to shake.*
  Suddenly*, the whole building began to shake.*
- adverbs of indefinite frequency [> 7.40]:
  We ***often*** *played dangerous games when we were children.*
- adverb phrases [> 7.19.2, 7.59.2]:
  Inside the parcel *(there) was a letter.*
- adverb particles (e.g. *back*) and *here, there* [> 7.59.1]:
  Back came *the answer – no!*
  Here/There is *your coat.* ***Here/There it is.***
- negative adverbs [> 7.59.3]:
  Never*, in world history,* ***has there been*** *such a conflict.*
- 'fronting':
  Items in a sentence can be put at the front for special emphasis:
  A fine mess *you've made of this!*

The simple sentence

1.7 The simple sentence

The smallest sentence-unit is the simple sentence. A simple sentence normally has *one* finite verb [but see 1.16]. It has a subject and a predicate:

subject group	**verb group (predicate)**
I	*'ve eaten.*
One of our aircraft	*is missing.*
The old building opposite our school	*is being pulled down.*

1.8 Five simple sentence patterns

There are five simple sentence patterns. Within each of the five groups there are different sub-patterns. The five patterns differ from each other according to what (if anything) follows the verb:

1 subject + verb:
My head aches.

2 subject + verb + complement:
Frank is clever/an architect.
3 subject + verb + direct object:
My sister enjoyed the play.
4 subject + verb + indirect object + direct object:
The firm gave Sam a watch.
5 subject + verb + object + complement:
They made Sam redundant/chairman.

The examples listed above are reduced to a bare minimum. To this minimum, we can add adjectives and adverbs:
His old firm gave Sam a beautiful gold watch on his retirement.

1.9 Sentence patterns: definitions of key terms

Any discussion of sentence patterns depends on a clear understanding of the terms **object** [> 1.4] (**direct** or **indirect**), **complement**, **transitive verb** and **intransitive verb**.

A **direct object** refers to the person or thing affected by the action of the verb. It comes immediately after a transitive verb:
*Please don't annoy **me**.*
*Veronica threw **the ball** over the wall.*

An **indirect object** usually refers to the person who 'benefits' from the action expressed in the verb: someone you give something *to*, or buy something *for*. It comes immediately after a verb:
*Throw **me** the ball.*
*Buy **your father** a present.*

A **complement** follows the verb *be* and verbs related to *be*, such as *seem* [> 10.23-26], which cannot be followed by an object. A complement (e.g. adjective, noun, pronoun) completes the sense of an utterance by telling us something about the subject. For example, the words following *is* tell us something about *Frank*:
*Frank is **clever**. Frank is **an architect**.*

A **transitive verb** is followed by an object. A simple test is to put *Who(m)?* or *What?* before the the question-form of the verb. If we get an answer, the verb is transitive [> App 1]:

	Wh-	**question-form**	**object**
*I met **Jim** this morning.*	*Who(m)*	*did you meet?*	– ***Jim**.*
*I'm reading **a book**.*	*What*	*are you reading?*	– ***A book**.*

Most transitive verbs can be used in the passive. Some transitive verbs consist of more than one part: e.g. *listen to* [> Apps 28–30, 32–33, 37].

An **intransitive verb** is not followed by an object and can never be used in the passive [> App 1]. Some intransitive verbs consist of more than one part: e.g. *touch down* [> App 36]:
*My head **aches**. The plane **touched down**.*

Some verbs, like *enjoy*, can only be used transitively and must always be followed by an object; others, like *ache*, are always intransitive.

Verbs like *open* can be used transitively or intransitively [> App 1.3]:
– verb + object (transitive): *Someone **opened the door**.*
– verb without object (intransitive): *The door **opened**.*

1.10 Pattern 1: subject + verb
My head** + **aches

Verbs used in this pattern are either always intransitive or verbs which can be transitive or intransitive, here used intransitively.

1.10.1 Intransitive verbs [> App 1.2]
Examples: *ache, appear, arrive, come, cough, disappear, fall, go.*
*Quick! The train'**s arrived**. It'**s arrived** early.*
Some intransitive verbs are often followed by an adverb particle (*come in, get up, run away, sit down,* etc.) or adverbial phrase:
– verb + **particle** [> 7.3.4]: *He came **in**. He sat **down**. He stood **up**.*
– verb + **adverbial phrase** [> 7.3.3]: *A crowd of people came **into the room**.*

1.10.2 Verbs which are sometimes intransitive [> App 1.3]
Many verbs can be used transitively with an object (answering questions like *What did you do?*) and intransitively without an object (answering the question *What happened?*): *break, burn, close, drop, fly, hurt, move, open, ring, shake, shut, understand*:
– with an object: *I **rang the bell**. I **rang it** repeatedly.*
– without an object: *The phone **rang**. It **rang** repeatedly.*
Other examples:
*The fire **burnt** furiously. Your essay **reads** well.*
Sometimes the object is implied:
*William **smokes/eats/drinks** too much.*

1.11 Pattern 2: subject + verb + complement
Frank** + **is** + **clever/an architect

The verb in this pattern is always *be* or a verb related to *be*, such as *appear, become, look, seem, sound* and *taste* [> 10.23–26].

1.11.1 Subject + 'be' + complement
The complement may be:
– an **adjective**: *Frank is **clever**.*
– a **noun**: *Frank is **an architect**.*
– an **adjective** + **noun**: *Frank is **a clever architect**.*
– a **pronoun**: *It's **mine**.*
– an **adverb of place or time**: *The meeting is **here/at 2.30**.*
– a **prepositional phrase**: *Alice is **like her father**.*

1.12 Pattern 3: subject + verb + direct object
My sister** + **answered** + **the phone

Most verbs in the language can be used in this pattern [> App 1.1]. The direct object may take a variety of forms, some of which are:
– a **noun** [> 2.1]: *We parked **the car** in the car park.*
– a **pronoun** [> 4.1]: *We fetched **her** from the station.*

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