

# **Book Review:**

## ***Advanced Grammar in Use by Martin Hewings***

### ***Cambridge University Press, 2015 (pp.294)***

***Sureepong Phothongsunan***

Theodore Maria School of Arts

Assumption University, Thailand

Email: sureepong@hotmail.com

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Learners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are by and large motivated to study a great deal outside classrooms where they can study on their own, cultivating knowledge of interest at their leisure and convenience. As a trend towards self-study prevails today, selecting a book or text that meets any needs for personal development is a choice that learners have to astutely make especially for highly developed learners to an extent that the chosen text augments and compliments their existing knowledge.

One of the domains of English language learning which poses a challenge to ESL and EFL learners alike is grammar. In fact, all languages have grammar, and every language has its own grammar. Grammar is always considered an essential part of learning a foreign language, especially English. Most ESL and EFL learners learn English language rules at the early learning stage and even for advanced learners, the study of grammar plays an important role in language learning all along no matter how proficient in English learners appear to be (Zhang and Yang, 2010). Learners who have an understanding of English grammar see and understand how sentences are patterned and how they are used for proper and effective communication Likewise, for language teachers, grammar is an area of knowledge that linguists and language educators study (Freeman, 2003).

Acknowledged as a self-study reference and practice book for advanced learners of English for both students and teachers, *Advanced Grammar in Use* by Martin Hewings from the start appeals to those interested in bettering their grammatical knowledge. Especially, with a purposeful glare by the edge of 'd' in "Advanced" on its cover, it insinuates development or progress in the use of grammar expected to gain from exploring this text. In a nutshell, this book is highly suitable for advanced students wishing to reskill or upskill their knowledge of upper-level grammar. Though written mainly as a self-learning material for reference and practice, it very well may be used to support classroom teaching by teachers. As an English teacher, when I first came across this book, I felt drawn into skimming through and finally buying it. I could say it was a first great impression.

This grammar series is actually one of the best-selling at present equipped with answers and an eBook. Using the same grammar explanations and exercises as in the printed text, the eBook version makes it even greater for learning grammar at fingertips as learners can listen to examples to strengthen listening skills and improve pronunciation. Doing

exercises, saving answers and checking them with an answer key are electronically doable in addition to bookmarking pages and adding notes.

Advanced Grammar in Use comes in proportionate 100 units. Each of the units emphasizes the particular use of a grammatical form. All of the units are placed under fourteen relevant headings such as Tenses, Modals and Semi-modals, Linking verbs, Passives, and Questions, with two pages allocated per unit. Interestingly, each unit is presented in the same format, explanations and examples on the left page and practice exercises on the right, making it simple to follow and comply.

It is noticed that the units are not arranged according to level of difficulty; as a result, it is not necessary to work through them in sequence. Instead, if the reader knows which grammar points pose difficulty, such units can be found and dealt with instantaneously. As a warm-up to refresh the understanding of the unit concerned, the reader can also go through any related material in the Grammar reminder found at the back of the book which well summarizes basic information about some important areas of grammar, which allows the reader to revisit language areas they have already learned.

One notable strength of this grammar material is that the writer has worked with the Cambridge International Corpus (CIC) and the Cambridge Learner Corpus to learn more about language in use and about the common mistakes made by English learners. Therefore, with this information, the grammar explanations and examples in the book are said to reflect accurate and updated language use and problematic areas for learners. Also, using word boxes, the most typical words found in certain grammatical patterns are illustrated every so often.

Ideal for supporting learners preparing for IELTS and other standardized test, this text comes with further sections including appendices and glossary. Information about irregular verbs and passive forms are provided in two appendices while some practical explanations of grammar terms have been included in the glossary where the reader is introduced to both technical and non-technical grammar terminology. The study planner given in the form of challenging multiple choices can be used to test and identify which units to be studied first at the reader's discretion. Then, there are useful additional exercises to further practice grammar points following the references at the bottom of the right page of each unit. This is clearly an option in case the reader prefers to practice certain grammar points extensively.

Another feature that this text has is answer keys of every practice exercise in all units in addition to those of the study planner and the additional exercises. Comments on some of the answers will also be found. The last section of the text contains indexes which can be used to find the grammar or term needed.

Having claimed to meet the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) at C1 and C2 levels which indicate effective operational proficiency in English and English mastery respectively, the text is considered academic and cognitively demanding, requiring its user's English usage to good effect at a level of performance and the capacity to deal with unfamiliar topics. Thus, it is no exaggeration that the book would be suitable for advanced learners of English as the name suggests. In my view, intermediate and lower-level learners could be overwhelmed due to their lack of familiarity with complex grammatical structures, appropriacy and sensitivity.

For language teachers, there are various approaches to utilize this book to benefit students. Teachers can present the explanations on the left page of each unit and then use the exercises for practice in the classroom. Otherwise, they can begin with the exercises and

refer to the left page when learners encounter difficulties. It is advisable that some units be set for self-learning if certain learners experience problems and require further revision. One other option for teachers is to develop class activities based on the explanations given on the left page of each unit and use the related exercises to evaluate learners' learning outcomes.

To sum up, this is one well-developed resourceful book that upper-level learners of English should have to sharpen their grammatical competency constantly. It would also prove to be handy if language teachers opt to own it as a teaching supplement. Even though some can find the book price rather high and above average, they would surely not be displeased with the ample contents within. In my view, the writer's endeavors in publishing this book are commendable and the next edition of the book is anticipated with pleasure and enthusiasm.

### References

- Freeman, D. L. (2003). *Teaching Language from Grammar to Grammar*. Canada: Heinle.
- Zhang, S., & Yang, X. (2010). Grammar in Language Teaching and Language Learning. *Journal of Cambridge Studies*, 5 (1), 32. <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM>