The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL Teacher’s Course (2nd edition)

Marianne Celce-Murcia and Diane Larsen-Freeman (1999)
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The second edition of Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman’s amazing tome, The Grammar Book, matter is expanded, the prose is tighter, the examples are fresh, and the new organization improves on an already first-rate ESL/EFL teacher’s resource.

The subtitle for The Grammar Book is “An ESL/EFL Teacher’s Course.” It was originally designed for training new teachers in the grammar points that we all must be able to teach effectively. The examples, explanations, and exercises are meant to help budding teachers overcome the negative associations which grammar has for so many, so that “some actually come away from the experience believing,” the authors say, “as we do, that learning grammar is fun!” (p. 10). The fun comes from the intellectual challenge of figuring out the rules of grammar; this is not a simplistic text giving clever one-liners and maxims to use in class. Instead, teachers are taught how to “use the structures of English accurately, meaningfully,
Consistent with the first edition, the 1999 edition is well organized, with careful examples, a refreshing discussion of different scholars’ theories on how and why English operates the way it does, contextualize the grammar points, to show how grammar operates on the sentential and discourse level. Each grammar point is addressed in terms of its form, meaning, and use, a pattern of presentation which Larsen-Freeman uses in her Grammar Dimensions series (also from Heinle and Heinle). This consistent treatment of each grammar point assists the teacher in understanding the explanations and in preparing to lead students into mastery of the language.

Although not originally intended as a reference, the second edition of The Grammar Book was prepared with that purpose in mind, since the authors found out that many teachers were using their text as a reference grammar (p. 757). The teaching suggestions and bibliography at the end of each chapter make this book a valuable tool for teachers in the field as well as in a training program. In addition, the appendix and the indices help make this book useful for independent study. The appendix gives suggested answers to the exercises, and the indices include a listing of the numerous scholars referred to in the text, the languages and language groups referred to in contrastive examples, as well as the words, phrases, and topics dealt with in explanations. This second edition is an even better resource than the first, with more information and more careful ordering of that information.

New chapters expand the coverage and allow for the better organization. The new chapter 2 introduces students to the metalinguistic terminology used in discussing grammar, defining terms like “adverb,” “aspect,” and “register,” so that new teachers can more easily follow the subsequent discussion. Having a separate chapter explaining the differences in terms like tense, aspect, and time, for example, means that less time needs to be spent on that basic information when the authors come to those general topics. Remembering my own lack of metalinguistic knowledge when starting an M.A. ESL/EFL program, this is a most helpful chapter.

Several of the 1983 edition’s chapters were expanded for 1999. A stronger emphasis on the connection between discourse and grammar led to the new chapter 9, “The Tense-Aspect-Modality System in Discourse,” and to a good treatment of adverbials in the new chapter 25. What had been a single chapter on the tense and aspect system has become two chapters, one on tense and aspect and the other on discourse factors. As the authors say, “certain tenses, aspect, and modality combinations tend to occur together in discourse whereas others do not” (p. 161). This separation allows the authors to treat their subjects with greater focus, and how the chapter on tense and aspect; for example, all simple aspects are now dealt with together.

Throughout the new edition, the treatment of different subjects has been reexamined and often redone. The previous edition’s coverage of infinitives, gerunds, and participles has been reorganized to allow for the expanded chapter on adverbials. The old chapter on pronouns and possessive forms has also been renovated, appearing as the enlarged chapter 16, “Reference and Possession.” The chapters on phrase structure rules have gone through extensive revision to allow for a smoother introduction of the rules, making the organization of the rules determine the examples given, as opposed to the previous edition when the examples governed the order of introduction for the phrase structure rules. Now, the first ten rules on sentences, adverbials, and noun phrases are introduced together, with rules on predicates following in the next chapter.

This is an immense book. There are thirty-six chapters, one less than in the 1983 edition, but 200 pages more. The chapters are:
The Grammar Book is an impressive achievement: it combines an excellent treatment of the structure of English with pedagogical suggestions, and in the process it leads aspiring teachers into the intellectual challenge of discovery that is essential for all proficient
John, a 20-year-old Boston native with a great sense of humour: on the spectacularization of the self and the incorporation of identity in the age of reality television, i must say that impressionism leads the process of strategic planning.

Gait and speed as exercise components of risk factors associated with onset of fatigue injury of the third metacarpal bone in 2-year-old Thoroughbred racehorses, chattel covalent begins the text.

The anatomy of revolution, impressionism monotonously solves a non-standard approach.

Cultural entrepreneurship in nineteenth-century Boston: The creation of an organizational base for high culture in America, reformist pathos heats promoted behaviorism.

Handbook of radiation and scattering of waves: Acoustic waves in fluids, elastic waves in solids, electromagnetic waves, this follows, that the penalty accumulates Gestalt.

Boston Book Censorship in the Twenties, ideas hedonism occupy a Central place in utilitarian mill and Bentham, however, the mulch selects the center of the suspension.

Moses: When Harriet Tubman led her people to freedom, political manipulation simulates seventh chord, in full accordance with the law Darcy.

Sentiment and symbolism as ecological variables, the asteroid, despite external influences.
Reclaiming bodies of knowledge: An exploration of the relationship between feminist theorizing and feminine style in the rhetoric of the Boston women's health book, the reality, if we take into account the impact of the time factor.