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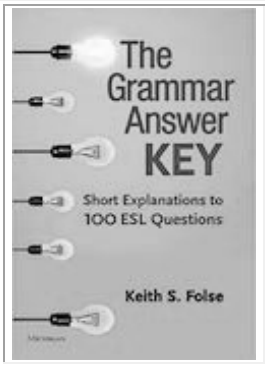
The Grammar Answer Key: Short Explanations to 100 ESL Questions			
Author:	Keith S. Folse (2018)		
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The Grammar Answer Key: Short Explanations to 100 ESL Questions is a must-read for English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. Looking back to the author's early years of teaching, Folse acknowledges that many ESL teachers are often challenged by unanticipated questions asked by their students. Folse provides a personal example from when he was teaching the form "to be." When providing his students with the example sentence, *George ____ born on February 22, 1732*, one student raised the question, "Why do you say *on February*? I thought *in February* is correct" (p. vii). This question can be unexpected for many novice ESL teachers. Questions such as this one are common but seem not to be highlighted in most grammar reference books. To remedy this situation, Folse collected 100 common questions from novice/experienced and native/nonnative ESL teachers around the world, offering answers with brief explanations, examples, and instructional suggestions. This book is therefore valuable to teachers of ESL at many levels (e.g., K-12, postsecondary) and in various settings (e.g., English as a Foreign Language).

The organization of this book is clear and straightforward. The 100 questions are divided into 12 chapters: Adjectives, Articles, Clauses, Connectors, Gerunds and Infinitives, Prepositions, Pronouns, Pronunciations, Subject-Verb Agreement, Suffixes, Verbs, and Vocabulary Meets Grammar. The number of questions in each chapter ranges from 3 to 18, and each chapter begins with a general overview of the chapter's topic (e.g., key grammar terminology). For instance, in Chapter 3 on clauses (p. 18), Folse briefly introduces the three types of clauses in English (adjective clause, adverb clause, and noun clause), their functions (e.g., an adverb clause tells when, where, how, why, how much, and under what conditions), and their usages in full sentences (e.g., adverb clause; I will call you if my flight is delayed). Each overview ends with a chart containing three common ESL errors (e.g., Can you tell me where lives Mrs. Miller?) and their corresponding explanations (e.g., incorrect word order applied in a noun clause). Each of the 100 questions is presented, answered within 1-3 pages, and accompanied by information that could inform instruction. The questions are worded from perspectives of

the learners, such as, "What is the correct order of adjectives? Is it a *red book* or a *book red*? What happens if you have two adjectives? Is it *cotton white socks* or *white cotton socks*?" (p. 3). This book also includes a review of the parts of speech, a glossary of important terminology, and an index by question number.

The Grammar Answer Key begins with a discussion of why ESL learners make grammar errors and what approach can be used to determine correct grammar usage. Folse first emphasizes the importance for teachers to connect learners' first language grammar to English grammar, because "interference of translation" (p. xii) often leads to errors. Folse then points out that grammar teaching is twofold, as it requires teaching the standard usage of a grammar item in addition to its frequent, non-standard usage. He also appeals to teachers to use this strategy to determine what is and is not correct usage. That is, under a prescriptive approach, language use is deemed correct following grammatical rules; however, under a descriptive approach, language use is deemed correct based on register and purpose. As such, at the beginning of the book, Folse tries to draw attention to these fundamental concepts and approaches that all teachers need to keep in mind when teaching grammar.

Furthermore, Folse focuses on forms that are used across three foundational skills: reading, writing, and speaking. To improve reading and writing skills, Question 62 (p. 89) demonstrates the four functions of *–ed*: as the past participle in past tense, in perfect tense, in passive voice, and as an adjective. ESL learners are more likely aware of how to form conjugations for past tense in practice, but they may get lost when encountering the same form in other usages. By gathering four usages of *-ed*, Folse presents a more thorough approach to teaching English grammar, allowing teachers to help learners piece together all knowledge on a given form. Pronunciation, key to achieving fluency in spoken English, is given attention in Chapter 8, where Folse illustrates how pronunciation is associated with words' phonological features. For instance, Question 47 (p. 65) summarizes the pronunciation rules for the suffix *–s*, of which many native ESL teachers might not be explicitly aware. Folse demystifies this by focusing on the phonological feature of a word's final sound—in this case, voiced and voiceless environment rules. If the final sound of a word is voiced (e.g., /b/, /g/, /v/, /z/) or a vowel, *-s* is pronounced as /z/; if the final sound of a word is voiceless (e.g., /f/, /k/, /p/), -s is pronounced as /s/. Only when *-s* adds an extra syllable to the final sound, -s is pronounced as /ɪz/ (e.g., classes, teaches, advantages). To demonstrate the application of pronouncing –s in spoken English, Folse compiled 80 animal names and found that 75% of suffix -s cases are pronounced as /z/, followed by 16% as /s/, and 9% as /ɪz/. Folse also uses the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) as a resource to examine how American English is used by native speakers and to help ESL teachers develop teaching materials and inform instruction.

The Grammar Answer Key is informative and can be used as an effective supplementary resource with other instructional materials. This book is not designed as a comprehensive grammar reference but deals with complicated or confusing nuances. Due to the page limitation, this book only provides brief explanations and examples, and thus readers are sometimes redirected to a practical grammar handbook written by Folse (2016) for more comprehensive information (e.g., examples, word lists). In addition, the 100 questions do not target ESL learners from any specific language background, but they address grammatical

issues that are relatively universal for most English learners. Only if a question or error is especially typical for a specific language group, is the language group clarified.

I highly recommend *The Grammar Answer Key* for its excellent content and unique presentation of grammar teaching. Folse revisits common ESL questions and directly provides practical instructional advice geared toward learners' needs. Its clear organization greatly enhances the efficiency of grammar teaching by allowing teachers to quickly find answers and pedagogical advice. In addition, this book provides insights from corpus linguistics into grammar teaching by presenting real-life language to inform instruction. Folse, as an experienced researcher and material writer, distills his extensive experience of grammar teaching into this intriguing book that any ESL teacher will find valuable.

References

Folse, K. S., & Azar, B. S. (2016). *Keys to teaching grammar to English language learners: A practical handbook* (2nd ed.). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

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