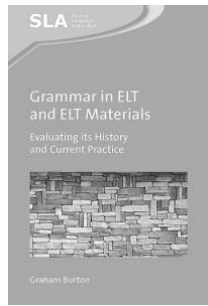


## Grammar in ELT and ELT Materials: Evaluating its History and Current Practice (Second Language Acquisition, 164)

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<b>Grammar in ELT and ELT Materials: Evaluating its History and Current Practice (Second Language Acquisition, 164)</b>		
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Graham Burton (2023)</b>	
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The teaching of grammar in ELT has evolved from the grammar-translation method to communicative language teaching, where the focus of grammar teaching is not entirely on language forms, but rather involves learners in the pragmatic and functional uses of authentic language for meaningful purposes (Brown & Lee, 2015). Despite its evolution, exact rules on what grammatical structures to teach and the order in which they should be taught have never been fully addressed due to a lack of consensus from experts in the field. English language teachers may then rely on intuitions about what grammatical point is important without any empirical evidence. In response, Graham Burton’s book *Grammar in ELT and ELT materials* investigates the current and historical practice of pedagogical grammar in ELT and ELT materials, especially for general English teaching. The book also presents interviews with ELT authors and publishing professionals to explore evidence on how learners use grammar and current classroom practices.

Structured in eight chapters, the book aims to address three key points. First, the book seeks to investigate the development of a shared consensus of the collection or set of grammar points that are considered essential and universally recognized as important within the field of ELT; that is to say, the canon of pedagogical grammar. Second, it aims to explore the nature of the canon and the extent to which there is a mutual understanding within the ELT profession and

industry regarding the canon. Finally, Burton questions whether the canon reflects empirical evidence on how grammatical competence develops in English language learners.

Following a brief introduction introducing key terms, the concepts and characteristics of pedagogical grammar are discussed in Chapter 2. This chapter also explores how pedagogical grammar should be sequenced, how grammatical items are organized in the syllabus as a series of grammar points allocated to particular levels, and empirical studies from ELT publishers regarding materials production. Chapter 3 attempts to identify the pedagogical grammar found in modern coursebooks and investigate the nature of the ELT grammar canon by exploring the historical aspects of its evolution from the 16th century until modern descriptive and pedagogical accounts. Chapter 4 then considers the perspectives and experiences of key figures through interviews, factors behind the existence of a contemporary canon, and how the canon is maintained.

Following this, Chapter 5 gives an overview of the ‘origins’ of the initial material found in standard ELT grammar syllabi to the level system used by coursebooks. In addition, this chapter also explores the ‘changes’ in practices and roles within the ELT publishing industry. Chapter 6 sheds light on contemporary language teaching by investigating how modern coursebooks handle three grammar areas (i.e., conditionals, relative clauses, and future forms). Burton compares the presentation of these areas with empirical data through a searchable database known as English Grammar Profile (EGP), comprised of more than 1000 grammar competency statements across competence levels. After examining the canon today, Chapter 7 explores how the coverage of three grammar areas has changed over centuries in historical grammars from Jonson's 17th-century grammar to late 20th-century coursebooks. Ultimately, the last chapter returns to the three questions from Chapter 1 and inspects how they have been addressed within this book. Overall, Burton concludes that the evolution of grammar in ELT materials, influenced by practitioners and market expectations, has led to homogeneity and limited innovation, necessitating a balance between market demands and empirical evidence, critical analysis, and potential change based on learner corpus data for progress in the field.

*Grammar in ELT and ELT Materials: Evaluating its History and Current Practice* is an empirical account that relies on both primary and historical sources in investigating the development of grammar teaching in ELT. The book is structured well and exposes teachers to the background context of studies to enhance their understanding. The discussion and findings from this book make an important impact by supporting teachers in considering empirical evidence about which grammatical content should be taught and in what sequence. Several chapters throughout the book may be useful for teachers due to their exploration of practical underlying theories of ELT pedagogical grammar, specifically on how to sequence and select the grammar content (i.e., Chapter 2) and the flourish of ELT grammar through different angles involving well-known publishers and institutions (i.e., Chapter 3-4). Moreover, the use of EGP as stated in Chapter 4 also can be beneficial for local ELT materials writers in considering the grammatical content to be included in the coursebooks. Finally, Chapter 6 is beneficial for editors and publishers in terms of how to publish a coursebook series by taking into consideration the grammatical content in previously successful titles.

Despite its strengths, a few drawbacks should be considered. As a part of the empirical work, most interviewees came from native English-speaking countries or from European publishers. This selection suggests that the book might overlook broader contexts, instead focusing on global coursebooks sold by popular publishers without including the voices of local publishers.

Further, the book only considers a small range of English coursebooks for historical analysis, whereas an analysis of a larger range might have presented different results. Moreover, the book involves a limited number of interviewees which are considered as publishing professionals in ELT (e.g., Jack C. Richards, Michael Swan, Peter Viney, etc.). As a result, it may not fully represent the majority of professionals working in the area.

In this regard, this book still offers deep coverage of grammar development over time involving the perspectives of widely known professionals in the ELT field. This book is an interesting and useful reference for teachers, ELT materials writers, and publishers as a part of consideration in their adoption of English grammar content. Presenting the fundamental concepts, historical contexts of the investigation, and various studies focusing on canon and area of grammar taught in the textbook, this book is suitable for anyone who is seeking ways to develop learners' grammatical competence in English.

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### **About the Reviewers**

**Shofiyah** is a graduate student in Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia, majoring in English Education. Her dedication lies in contributing to teacher professional development, with research interests in English for Young Learners and Materials Development. ORCID ID: 0009-0000-6209-7846 <shoficia@gmail.com>

**Muhamad Laudy Armanda** is currently pursuing a master's degree in the English Language Education Study Program at Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia. His research interests include Instructional Design in ELT, Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), and Digital Language Literacy. ORCID ID: 0009-0005-8636-3842 <laudy787@gmail.com>

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### **Reference**

Brown, H.D. & Lee, H. (2015). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to Language Pedagogy*. Pearson Education.

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