Review

Modern English grammar: Morphology and syntax (a review)

Original work by Olga V. Alexandrova and Tatiana A. Komova published by Academy 2013
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It is not an easy job to write a new course-book on theoretical grammar entitled *'Modern English Grammar: Morphology and Syntax'*. This course-book addresses a topical issue, as it requires the authors not only to have the highest level of scientific competence, but also creativity and an innovative approach to the presentation of educational material.

The specific feature of the course-book by Olga V. Aleksandrova and Tatiana A. Komova, which distinguishes it from any other course-book on a similar subject, is its form and principles of educational material presentation. In the preface, the authors write that it is addressed to foreign students of English, not to native speakers, and that it is important for teachers to overcome the biased attitude of their students to theoretical grammar as super complex. The content of the course-book is well organised, with the material well matched to the topics, with the methodological and general linguistic aspects of English morphology and syntax developed coherently. The authors have adopted a training model that can be used to teach the appropriate skills and competences with results conducive to practical results that will achieve productive theoretical applications. In doing so, the authors quote reliable sources, use well-defined scientific language, and deploy domain-specific terminology. The sections of the course-book *'Modern English Grammar: Morphology and Syntax'* are logically interrelated; research evidence is present in sufficient volume and is confirmed by quotes and references to scientific publications.

The course-book is clearly the fruit of long, hard work by the scholars and lecturers who have researched it and it is topical both in content, in form, and in its pedagogical concept. The editors

have accumulated a vast amount of information in the field of the theoretical grammar of the English language and provided teachers with the opportunity to select from the abundance of topics on offer, corresponding to the level of linguistic competence and interests of the students. This way, learners receive exceptionally engaging and useful information.

The course-book can be of great help for lecturers, especially beginners, in their preparation for lectures and seminars on theoretical grammar. The course-book is suitable for both the transition to the two-tier system of higher education in Russia and for training young scholars.

The target reader of this course-book is not a passive recipient gaining a certain body of knowledge but an intelligent, inquisitive, and active learner for whom this work should become a guide not only in mastering the educational material on theoretical grammar, but also in their further research.

The authors also demonstrate to the students the logic of scientific analysis, the path the researcher is following – from problem statement to its solution. Working with the course-book, the students can master the conceptual and terminological apparatus of theoretical grammar, become aware of modern methods of linguistic research, compare different scientific concepts and

define their explanatory power, learn to compress information, formulate conclusions and independently express their opinion on the grammatical phenomena under study, choose a particular research methodology to analyse theoretical and empirical material and illustrate various propositions of particular linguistic material.

Undoubtedly, the advantage of this course-book is that it offers a model for dynamic, active development of English theoretical grammar and the application of the acquired knowledge to practice.

The course-book is aimed at different levels of theoretical background of students in higher education institutions studying philology and contains the systematised description of every grammar phenomenon of the English language, while its differentiated approach provides the implementation of such principles in education as continuity and succession. Along with students of linguistics, it can also be useful for students majoring in political sciences, art and humanities taking English as the main subject.

This course-book consists of two parts: Part 1 on Morphology and Part 2 on Syntax and Discourse.

The description of the grammatical material in the course-book is preceded by a preface, in which

the authors specify the basic idea of the course-book – to connect the already existing facts about grammatical units with their use in authentic oral and written speech.

The course-book contains 14 thematic sections, which allow the students to see how separate words combine to form the phrases and sentences of which our chain of speech consists. It describes the range of key words relevant to a particular topic, the definitions of the basic concepts, and includes excerpts from the works of well-known researchers offered for comparison and discussion. It also offers examples of linguistic analysis of some grammatical phenomena. Attention is drawn to the wide study of the morphology and syntax phenomena studied in the course-book in close connection with text categories (coherence, referentiality, modality, etc.).

The general list of topics include:

MORPHOLOGY:

1. Morphology, its definition and its place among other grammar issues
2. Categorisation in morphology
3. Parts-of-speech classification
4. Morphology and syntax

These sections help understand the nature and function of synthetic and analytical forms in English.

SYNTAX AND DISCOURSE:

1. The subject of syntax
2. The ultimate and the consummate units of speech
3. Minor syntax
4. Syntax and prosody
5. Syntax and punctuation
6. Simple sentence and its parts
7. Multiple sentences
8. Predication
9. Parenthesis
10. The pragmatic approach to the study of grammar

This section covers the peculiarities of English prosody and punctuation, which show the syntactic construction of speech as well as demonstrate the correlation between syntax and pragmatics, syntax and stylistics and other areas of linguistics.

The consistency of the material in the course-book is a decisive factor in understanding the specific features of English grammatical structure, increasing students' awareness of English sentence structure and enabling them to perform syntactic and discourse analysis.

The course-book is clearly organised. It is logically structured to include sections and subsections thus ensuring detailed presentation of materials, as, for instance, in Chapter 6. *The Simple Sentence and*

its Parts, which includes the following sections.

6.4 Syntactic diremes

6.4.1. Completive bond

6.4.2. Copulative syntactic bond

6.4.3. Predicative bond

6.4.4. Content plane

6.4.5. Prosody and punctuation

Drawing on this structural arrangement, the learner can easily track all the sections and subsections required, which is obviously one of the great merits of this course-book.

Another obvious advantage is that it consistently shows the multifaceted nature of grammatical phenomena, proves the admissibility and sound reasoning for the plurality of their interpretations.

The authors cite a wide range of linguistic literature in the field of theoretical grammar, which has recently appeared. This allows concentration on the extremely important pedagogical idea of traditions in the development of linguistics, the close connection between the classical interpretations of the phenomena under discussion and their latest interpretations in theoretical grammar.

'Modern English Grammar: Morphology and Syntax' can be used not only as a teaching guide but also as a reference book on the subject. The structure and layout of the material involves a rigid learning progression.

The course-book can be used not only in class under the teacher's supervision, but also for self-study to consolidate and develop the knowledge and skills acquired earlier.

The choice of grammatical material is a strong recommendation for the professional community. It is generally difficult to choose from the wide range of grammatical material the issues that will help provide practical literacy in written and oral speech in the majority of communicative situations, but the authors have succeeded in this challenging task. The arrangement of material according to grammatical topics (as is usual in theoretical works and reference books) makes this course-book universal and is not only in the framework of a systematic study of English grammar, but also in working over individual, including rather narrow, issues in accordance with students' academic competence, the needs of specific groups of students and the goals of the training process.

The course-book is user friendly for the purpose of revision before examinations and concludes with a detailed alphabetical index.

Another strong point of the course-book is that it includes examples, all centred on authentic lexical

material. The use of this course-book in the group for preparing for a candidacy examination in English or in the process of independent preparation for entrance and candidate examinations, as well as for the revision of grammatical material and the acquisition of the skill of reading difficult authentic texts, will undoubtedly prove to be useful and effective. In compiling the course-book, the authors took into account the new requirements for the vocational training of philologists based on the implementation of modern pedagogical methods. It is a high-quality product, explaining some of the most difficult issues of English morphology and syntax in an exhaustive but clear way. Its precise targeting of the topics and exercises and its effective organisation make extremely engaging material to work with. The first edition has already been tested for several years at various Russian universities with good results.