Complex Text in ESL Grammar Textbooks: Barriers or Gateways?

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How helpful are ESL grammar textbooks for academic ESL students? Do these textbooks' graphic presentations of content impede students' ability to access that content? We don't know; ESL reading research has been primarily involved in continuous text geared toward content areas rather than the non-continuous, complex text often found in language textbooks.

This article suggests that teachers assess prospective textbooks by comparing real-life users' actual knowledge to authors' assumed student knowledge. Through an examination of charts and page excerpts from two ESL grammar textbooks, it demonstrates that access to the pedagogical knowledge demands sophisticated formal knowledge because of the various graphic devices and discourse forms used. The article concludes by recommending research to learn how students navigate through a grammar textbook's graphic presentation of content.

INTRODUCTION

Academic ESL students want textbooks because they provide content and management for learning both inside and outside the classroom, according to Hutchinson (in preparation, reported in Hutchinson and Hutchinson, 1994/1996). These students depend on homework assignments or self-study from a textbook for extending language learning beyond classroom time. The textbooks often assigned are grammar textbooks, based on a survey of the leading academic ESL textbooks sold by publishers (Lesikin, 1995). But are these textbooks helpful?

In order for students to make use of a grammar book with practice activities successfully, there must be a match between: what the author assumes the student knows, and what the student actually knows.

To use the book successfully, first the student must comprehend the grammar explanations and examples. This may be difficult if the student's schemata for content and/or form are different from the author's. (Carroll & Eisterhold, 1983)

Content schemata relate to a person's background knowledge about events, objects and situations; *formal* or *rhetorical schemata* relate to a person's knowledge of the rhetorical or discourse structures found in different types of texts. This paper primarily addresses aspects of formal schemata.

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Research into ESL student knowledge in relation to *continuous* text, whether authentic or simplified, academic or narrative has received attention. Based on these research findings (e.g. Carrell and Wise, 1997; Chen and Graves, 1995; Devine, 1987) and those on strategy use (e.g. Anderson, 1991), experts have been able to make recommendations to help prepare ESL students for academic texts encountered in secondary and post-secondary content classes (e.g. Shih, 1992; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). But ESL students typically experience ESL textbooks before or simultaneously with content-area textbooks. These ESL textbooks, especially for the study of grammar, contain primarily *complex* text rather than *continuous* text to convey pedagogical knowledge to learners.

Information in ESL textbooks, especially grammar textbooks, is presented in a variety of discourse forms:

- individual words
- sentence fragments
- individual sentences
- groups of sentences
- paragraphs

There are also a variety of layout features which make the text visually complex:

- headings
- abbreviations
- charts
- bulleted, enumerated and alphabetized lists
- bold and italicized typefaces

Typical academic content-area textbooks such as those in history, may have text broken by headings, charts and illustrations too, but contain primarily extensive passages of expository text or narrative text. Brown suggests that the complex text found in some ESL textbooks may pose comprehension problems. He says, "Both the production and comprehension of language are a factor of our ability to perceive and process stretches of discourse, to formulate representations of meaning from not just a single sentence but referents in both previous sentences and following sentences." (Brown, 1994: 235) ESL students may need particular skills and formal schemata to process this type of complex text.

POTENTIAL GRAPHIC BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND FORMAL SCHEMATA

Research has shown that some graphic devices and discourse forms typically found in text materials demand skills that are learned and may also be culturally specific. Certain graphic devices may lead to misreading (Levin and Lesgold, 1978; Schallert, 1980) and errors (Conrad and Hull, 1967) for native English speakers and thus decrease comprehension and reading speed for native speakers.

Later research with non-native English speakers suggests that because some graphic devices demand perception and interpretation skills that may be culturally specific (Pettersson, 1982; Travers and Alvarado, 1970), ESL students need to be taught to use them in order to benefit from them (Levin, 1979). Carrell found that teaching ESL students a text's rhetorical structure prior to reading improves comprehension (Carrell,1985 and Brooks, Dansereau, Spurlin and Holley, 1983). This suggests that aspects of complex text are not readily understood by ESL students but can be learned through instruction. Some academic ESL students are poor readers in the L1 because of inadequate schooling and minimal exposure to family literacy, and for this reason also have difficulties reading in the L2 (Carson, Carrell, Silberstein, Kroll, and Kuehn, 1990).

We have seen that complex graphic presentation of content requires perception, interpretation and literacy skills in the mother tongue. Even more so then does the ESL learner need help with texts which utilize unusual layout and text forms. Without these the ESL student will not be able to access the information in the grammar book efficiently. This will affect the student's ability to learn independently of a teacher. Many hours of engagement are needed to learn a language, especially for academic purposes. A textbook that students cannot use at home for further study may not be the most suitable textbook for ESL.

SELECTING AN APPROPRIATE TEXTBOOK: ANALYSING A TEXTBOOK'S ASSUMED STUDENT KNOWLEDGE

When selecting a textbook it might be helpful to view it from the stance of the textbook author. Who are the *intended* students? What does the author assume they know in terms of formal schemata? This evaluation process can be based on an examination of the variety of discourse forms, typographic features and layouts used in the book. A textbook's suitability for a particular group of ESL students would depend on the *accessibility* of its pedagogical knowledge.

While academic ESL students are not homogeneous, coming with disparate educational backgrounds and skills, if the teacher is aware of the students' learning backgrounds, she/he can help to make the textbook accessible. After this sort of textbook analysis, teachers could assess their students' actual knowledge and fill in the gaps in their formal schemata, where necessary.

In order to discover what aspects of complex text found in particular ESL textbooks are part of the students' actual knowledge, as teachers and researchers we might pose the following questions:

- Can our students read particular illustrations such as charts and diagrams presented by the author?
- Can they understand the relationship between a specific illustration and the accompanying learner task(s) in order to make use of the illustration as a learning tool?
- Can students recognize and comprehend explanations presented in particular and limited syntactic chunks in the textbook?
- Can students distinguish between examples and explanation in the presentation?
- Do students understand the messages implied in the use of particular typographic conventions such as bulleted items, boldface and/or italicized typefaces and of abbreviations such as *e.g.*, *etc.* and *i.e.* within specific presentations of content?

Instruction in a textbook's use may need to be part of our syllabuses in order to overcome potential barriers to comprehension. Since there are no industry-wide textbook standards for using particular typographic features, layouts and discourse forms, any one textbook typically and consistently follows its own conventions from one chapter to another. Therefore teachers may only have to instruct students on gaps in their formal knowledge in regard to the particular conventions used in one or two chapters in an adopted textbook.

COMPLEX TEXT IN CHARTS: A CASE STUDY OF ONE ESL GRAMMAR TEXTBOOK

Many ESL textbook authors supply charts and diagrams to present, explain and illustrate grammar forms, functions and rules. In order to comprehend the information supplied on a particular chart or to understand the relationship of a chart to its accompanying tasks, students would have to be familiar with similar charts, graphic devices and rhetorical forms. Comprehending a chart's content is based on a student's prior experience of reading similar charts. We will briefly examine two of the charts from the middle chapter in the intermediate-level textbook *Fundamentals of English Grammar* (Azar, 1992) to gain a sense of the potential graphic barriers for students unfamiliar with the manner of presenting content.

The Charts in One ESL Grammar Textbook

A boxed-in chart follows every subtitle in each of the eight sections of the middle chapter and thus demarcates the beginning of each chapter section. Three other boxed-in charts occur elsewhere in the chapter giving a total of eleven charts. Each chart focuses on one language structure related to count/non-count nouns or articles. The charts are different from one another in complexity, layout and in both quantity

18. *glass* Framed paintings are usually covered with _____ to protect them.
19. *iron* _____ (is, are) necessary to animal and plant life.
20. *iron* _____ (is, are) used to make clothes look neat.

8-5 USING UNITS OF MEASURE WITH NONCOUNT NOUNS

(a) I had some tea. (b) I had **two cups of** *tea*. (c) I ate some toast. (d) I ate ***one piece of*** *toast*.	To mention a specific quantity of a noncount noun, speakers use units of measure such as *two cups of* or *one piece of*. A unit of measure usually describes the container (e.g., *a cup of, a bowl of*) the amount (*a pound of, a quart of*),* or the shape (*a bar of soap, a sheet of paper*).

*Weight measure: *one pound = 0.45 kilograms/kilos* Liquid measure: *one quart = 0.95 litres/liters*
four quarts = one gallon = 3.8 litres/liters

☐ **EXERCISE 8:** Use the words in the list to complete the sentences. Use the plural form if necessary. Some sentences have more than one possible completion.

bar	*gallon*	*piece*	*sheet*
bottle	*glass*	*pound*	*spoonful*
bowl	*loaf*	*quart*	*tube*
cup			

1. I drank a ***cup*** of coffee.
2. I bought two ***pounds*** of cheese.
3. I bought a _____ of milk at the supermarket.
4. I drank a _____ of orange juice.
5. I had a _____ of toast and an egg for breakfast.
6. I put ten _____ of gas in my car.
7. I had a _____ of soup for lunch.
8. I need a _____ of chalk.
9. I drank a _____ of beer.
10. I bought a _____ of margarine.
11. There are 200 _____ of lined paper in my notebook.
12. There is a _____ of fruit on the table.
13. I used two _____ of bread to make a sandwich.
14. I bought one _____ of bread at the store.

Figure 1: *Fundamentals of English Grammar: Azar (1992)* The Smallest Chart]

and type of language information. Because these charts occur so regularly, are a distinctive pedagogical feature and are linked to the exercises that follow them, they seem important for a student to understand and use. There are no instructions to accompany the charts nor are they presented to students in a preface or guide. We can conclude that the author assumes that teachers instruct students in their use, or that comprehension of these charts is part of the *assumed student knowledge* i.e. part of the students' formal schemata.

In the next section we will consider some of the underlying skills students may need in order to use this book for self-study purposes. We will discuss the smallest and largest charts in the book. In the smallest chart (see Figure 1), the typographic features are:

- words in bold (e.g. **two cups of**, line 2, left-hand section of box),
- words in bold and italics (e.g. ***one piece of***, line 5, left-hand section of box)
- words in italics (e.g. *tea*, line 4, left-hand section of box)
- sentences preceded by letters in parentheses in alphabetical order, each beginning at the same left position (e.g. *(a) I had some tea*, lines 1-4, left-hand section of box)
- a paragraph (right-hand section of box)

The graphic devices are:

- a boxed-in area on the left containing the list-like sentences
- a boxed-in area on the right containing a paragraph
- an asterisk (*) (line 4) and footnote on the right-hand side of the box

The writing conventions are:

- the abbreviation e.g.
- a word or phrase(s) within parentheses (e.g. line 3, right-hand section of box)
- no e.g. abbreviation to introduce a word or phrase(s) (e.g. line 4, right-hand section of box)

Students must know they have to read across the vertical line dividing the boxed-in area in order to perceive that the bold or bold and italicized words in the sentence examples on the left are the same as words on the right (e.g. **two cups of** in line 2, on the left = *two cups of* in line 2, on the right). Students are expected to comprehend that the two language items **two cups of** and ***one piece of*** are highlighted in slightly different ways on the left and that the difference in highlighting indicates their differences as units of measure.

The right side of the chart presents *a cup of* as describing the container (line 2). Students must see that **two cups of**, the example on the left (line 2), does likewise. In addition, while the right side also presents two other categories of units of measure, the amount and the shape (line 4), the language item presented on the left side, ***one piece of*** (line 6), is not given as an example in either category. Students would have to determine whether ***one piece of*** describes the amount or the shape of the non-count noun *toast* (line 6, left).

- Students must understand that the itemized sentences on the left are language examples that correspond to the information on the right and that the letters of the alphabet preceding each sentence on the left (lines 1, 2, 4, & 5) serve the purpose of itemizing the sentences.
- Students must recognize that the parentheses containing the abbreviation *e.g.*, and a list of expressions are language examples of the word immediately preceding it (line 3, on the right). The parentheses followed by a list of expressions without the abbreviation *e.g.* serve the same purpose (line 4, on the right).
- Students must know that the asterisk (line 4, on the right) signals a note containing relevant information (lines 7 & 8).
- Finally, students must know that they should look for this information outside the boxed-in area of the chart and are expected to understand the information supplied in the note.

The largest chart in the chapter (see Figure 2) is similar but has a more complex layout and contains examples that use a wider range of layout features:

- top and side headings contain uppercase, bold words (e.g., line 2 & column 1, respectively)
- single and double vertical lines (e.g., columns 3 & 4, respectively)
- single horizontal lines (e.g., between lines 12 & 13) which intersect to create squares and rectangles filled with sentences
- sentences with words in bold italics (e.g., column 2, line 3)
- some words in italics alone (e.g., column 7, line 4)
- a letter in parentheses after the word *In* (e.g., column 5, line 18)
- letters in parentheses as sentence subjects (e.g., column 3, line 21) or a symbol in parentheses in mid-sentence (e.g., column 3, line 27)
- etc.

8-6 GUIDELINES FOR ARTICLE USAGE

C1

	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
	USING *A* OR Ø (NO ARTICLE)		**USING *A* OR *SOME***
SINGULAR COUNT NOUNS	(a) ***A dog*** makes a good pet. (b) ***A banana*** is yellow. (c) ***A pencil*** contains lead.	A speaker uses ***a*** with a singular count noun when s/he is making a generalization. In (a): The speaker is talking about any dog, all dogs, dogs in general.	(j) I saw ***a dog*** in my yard. (k) Mary ate ***a banana***. (l) I need ***a pencil***.
PLURAL COUNT NOUNS	(d) Ø ***Dogs*** make good pets. (e) Ø ***Bananas*** are yellow. (f) Ø ***Pencils*** contain lead.	A speaker uses no article (Ø) with a plural count noun when s/he is making a generalization.* In (d): The speaker is talking about any dog, all dogs, dogs in general. Note: (a) and (d) have the same meaning.	(m) I saw ***some dogs*** in my yard. (n) Mary bought ***some bananas***. (o) Bob has ***some pencils*** in his pocket.
NONCOUNT NOUNS	(g) Ø ***Fruit*** is good for you. (h) Ø ***Coffee*** contains caffeine. (i) I like Ø ***music***.	A speaker uses no article (Ø) with a noncount noun when s/he is making a generalization.* In (g): The speaker is talking about any fruit, all fruit, fruit in general.	(p) I bought ***some fruit***. (q) Bob drank ***some coffee***. (r) Would you like to listen to ***some music***?

*Sometimes a speaker uses an expression of quantity (e.g., ***almost all, most, some***) when s/he makes a generalization: *Almost all dogs make good pets. Most dogs are friendly. Some dogs have short hair.*

Figure 2: *Fundamentals of English Grammar: Azar (1992)* The Largest Chart]

Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
	USING *THE*	
A speaker uses ***a*** with a singular count noun when s/he is talking about one thing (or person) that is not specific. In (j): The speaker is saying, "I saw one dog (not two dogs, some dogs, many dogs). It wasn't a specific dog (e.g., your dog, the neighbor's dog, that dog). It was only one dog out of the whole group of animals called dogs."	(s) Did you feed ***the dog***? (t) I had a banana and an apple. I gave ***the banana*** to Mary. (u) ***The pencil*** on that desk is Jim's. (v) ***The sun*** is shining. (w) Please close ***the door***. (x) Mary is in ***the kitchen***.	***The*** is used in front of: singular count nouns: *the dog* plural count nouns: *the dogs* noncount nouns: *the fruit* A speaker uses ***the*** (not ***a***, Ø, or ***some***) when the speaker and the listener are thinking about the same specific thing(s) or person(s). In (s): The speaker and the listener are thinking about the same specific dog. The listener knows which dog the speaker is talking about: the dog that they own, the dog that they feed every day. There is only one dog that the speaker could possibly be talking about. In (t): A speaker uses ***the*** when s/he mentions a noun the second time. First mention: *I had **a banana** . . .* Second mention: *I gave **the banana** . . .* In the second mention, the listener now knows which banana the speaker is talking about: the banana the speaker had (not the banana John had, not the banana in that bowl).
A speaker often uses ***some**** with a plural count noun when s/he is talking about things (or people) that are not specific. In (m): The speaker is saying, "I saw more than one dog. They weren't specific dogs (e.g., your dogs, the neighbor's dogs, those dogs). The exact number of dogs isn't important (two dogs, five dogs); I'm simply saying that I saw an indefinite number of dogs."	(y) Did you feed ***the dogs***? (z) I had some bananas and some apples. I gave ***the bananas*** to Mary. (aa) ***The pencils*** on that desk are Jim's. (bb) Please turn off ***the lights***.	
A speaker often uses ***some**** with a noncount noun when s/he is talking about something that is not specific. In (p): The speaker is saying, "I bought an indefinite amount of fruit. The exact amount isn't important information (e.g., two pounds of fruit, four bananas and two apples). And I'm not talking about specific fruit (e.g., that fruit, the fruit in that bowl.)"	(cc) ***The fruit*** in this bowl is ripe. (dd) I drank some coffee and some milk. ***The coffee*** was hot. (ee) I can't hear you. ***The music*** is too loud. (ff) ***The air*** is cold today.	

In addition to ***some*, a speaker might use ***several, a few, a lot of,*** *etc.* with a plural count noun, or ***a little, a lot of,*** *etc.* with a noncount noun. (See Chart 8-1.)

Figure 2: *Fundamentals of English Grammar: Azar (1992)* The Largest Chart]

Azar uses these complex graphic presentations to designate different relationships in meaning which students must understand in order to use the chart for learning. For example, the single vertical lines designate areas of information more closely related than areas marked off by double vertical lines. The chart is spread across two pages so that the language examples in column 4 on the left-hand page relate to the explanations in column 5 on the right-hand page.

Students must understand that one vertical line is a weaker boundary than two vertical lines and must ignore the spine. Because the spine of the book is usually a strong boundary, unsavvy students may not read across it to connect the examples on the right-hand side of the left page with the corresponding explanations on the right page.

To summarize, this analysis of the smallest and largest charts in *Fundamentals of English Grammar* suggests that the availability of the information in the charts is dependent on students having the skill to interpret the graphic devices and understand the range of typographic features and writing conventions used. The graphic variations and differences in information from one chart to another create different degrees of complexity in terms of graphic features and accessibility of the subject matter. The more complex the chart, the more knowledge of graphic devices students may need to access the chart's information. In addition, the variations between charts may require students to figure out the conventions of each individual chart. Access to the complete pedagogic knowledge in the text depends on the student's ability to decode these conventions.

A CASE STUDY OF RHETORICAL FORMS AND TYPOGRAPHIC FEATURES IN ONE ESL GRAMMAR TEXTBOOK

Complex Text on Pages With Grammatical Explanation

Instead of charts or diagrams, some textbook authors provide pages containing explanatory information and illustrations of grammar forms, functions and rules. Like charts and diagrams, these pages typically consist of non-continuous, complex text containing a variety of graphic devices and rhetorical forms. Understanding the information on these pages is based in part on a student's prior experience with reading these types of graphic presentations of content. These pages, such as the explanation-and-example pages in the intermediate-level textbook *Grammar in Use* (Murphy, 1989), may also have potential barriers for students unfamiliar with these types of complex graphic presentations.

The format of each chapter in *Grammar in Use* is consistent: each contains several units devoted to topics related to a chapter's grammatical focus. These units are marked by a heading and are numbered consecutively from the beginning of the book. Each unit is then subdivided into one explanation-and-example page paired with one facing exercise page.

UNIT 49

Auxiliary verbs in short answers/ questions, etc.: So/Neither am I, etc.

a

Can you swim? I **have** lost my key. He **might** not come.

In these sentences **can, have,** and **might** are *auxiliary* (= helping) verbs.
We often use auxiliary verbs when we don't want to repeat something:
- "Are you working tomorrow?" "Yes, I **am**." (= I am working tomorrow)
- He could lend us the money, but he **won't**. (= he won't lend us the money)

Use **do/does/did** for simple present and past short answers:
- "Does he smoke?" "He **did**, but he **doesn't** anymore."

b

We use auxiliary verbs in short questions:
- "It rained every day during our vacation." "**Did** it?"
- "Ann isn't feeling very well today." "Oh, **isn't** she?"
- "I've just seen Tom." "Oh, **have** you? How is he?"

These short questions (**Did it?, isn't she?, have you?**) are not real questions. We use them to show polite interest in what someone has said, and they help to keep the conversation going.

Sometimes we use short questions to show surprise:
- "Jim and Sue are getting married." "**Are they?** Really?"

c

We also use auxiliary verbs with **so** and **neither**:
- "I'm feeling tired." "**So am I**." (= I am feeling tired too)
- "I never read newspapers." "**Neither do I**." (= I never read them either)

Note the word order after **so** and **neither** (*verb* before *subject*):
- I passed the exam and **so did Tom**. (*not* so Tom did)

Nor can be used instead of **neither**:
- "I can't remember her name." "**Nor** can I. / **Neither** can I."

Not . . . either can be used instead of **neither** and **nor**:
- "I don't have any money." "**Neither** do I." *or* "I don't **either**."

d

I think so / hope so, etc.
We use **so** in this way after a number of verbs, especially **think, hope, guess, suppose,** and **I'm afraid:**
- "Is she Canadian?" **"I think so."**
- "Will Eric come?" **"I guess so."**
- "Has Ann been invited to the party?" **"I suppose so."**

The negative form depends on the verb:

I think so	**– I don't think so**
I hope so / I'm afraid so	**– I hope not/I'm afraid not**
I guess	**– I guess not**
I suppose so	**– I don't suppose so** *or* **I suppose not**

- "Is she Italian?" **"I don't think so."**
- "Is it going to rain?" **"I hope not.** (*not* I don't hope so)
- "Are you going to drive in this snowstorm?" **"I guess not."**

Figure 3: *Grammar In Use: Murphy (1989)* Sample Explanation-and-Example Page]

Each explanation-and-example page as on page 98 from Unit 49 (see Figure 3), is divided into sections which are prominently marked by a white letter of the alphabet in a small black square. Adjacent to each section marker is a section heading that uses a variety of layouts, rhetorical forms and typographic features. Each section heading is followed by additional explanations and examples which use complex text.

The layout of an explanation-and-example page is designed to guide a student through the unit's pedagogical content and is important for students to comprehend. Although no instructions are provided, *Grammar in Use* is intended as a classroom text or for independent study. We can conclude that the author assumes student comprehension of the layout and text conventions used.

I limit my discussion here to examples from a section on question forms. Through this discussion, we will see the formal knowledge students need to use the textbook independently.

The section headings accompanying the section markers, extracted, are:

a. **Can** you swim? **I have** lost my key. He **might** not come.

b. We use auxiliary verbs in short questions:

c. We also use auxiliary verbs with **so** and **neither**:

d. **I think so / hope so**, etc.

The section headings use a variety of short rhetorical forms (individual sentence forms, clauses and phrases, the abbreviation *etc.*) and typographic features (bold typeface, a box, slash). Besides serving as section headings, these headings function as either examples (a and d) or explanation (b and c).

While both section headings a and d are language examples, their graphic presentations are different. In section heading a, three unrelated sentences are presented in a boxed-in chart; whereas, in subheading d, two bold phrases are connected by a slash (/) and followed by the abbreviation *etc.* Students must discern that both are examples, although presented differently.

Section headings b and c, which function as explanations, are sentences ending with colons. Students must know that a colon indicates that the subsequent information is linked to a sentence message in a manner distinct from information following a sentence ending in a period.

Language examples and explanations are also presented within sections and follow a consistent format. These explanations begin at the left margin while examples showing question/response or statement/question pairs are indented and follow a square, black bullet (■). Students must know that each bullet acts as a meaning separator delimiting the context of each paired example. In section d, though, in presenting paired examples of a general rule which are not question/response or statement/question, the bullet is omitted. Instead, the positive form is placed at the left margin—the same position as explanations—and its pair, the negative form, follows it but is preceded by a dash (–), thus distinguishing these paired examples as different types of pairs. It would be helpful for students to recognize this distinction.

Other typographic forms are used which students must understand such as quotation marks around sentences used to distinguish a meaningful exchange between two speakers in contrast to no quotation marks around sentences serving as one speaker's utterance, the use of parentheses and equal sign (e.g. = I am working tomorrow) to explain meaning, sentence examples in boxes without quotation marks which represent disassociated-in-meaning examples. Understanding the layout and typographic features employed makes students aware of distinctions.

While the author uses a consistent overall layout for the explanation-and-example pages throughout the textbook, the rhetorical forms and layout from one section to another are not consistent, even when similar kinds of content are presented. This non-systematic correspondence requires students to understand these different presentations in order to access the information. We can see this if we look at section a, p. 98 and section a, page 100 (excerpted in Figure 4 below) which both begin with first lines of disassociated-in-meaning examples similar in rhetorical form and layout.

PAGE 98

a. **Can** you swim? **I have** lost my key. He **might** not come.

In these sentences **can**, **have**, and **might** are *auxiliary* (= helping) verbs.

We often use auxiliary verbs when we don't want to repeat something:

- "Are you working tomorrow?" "Yes. I am." (= I am working tomorrow)
- He could lend us the money, but he won't. (= he won't lend us the money)

Use **do/does/did** for simple present and past short answers:

- "Does he smoke?" "He **did**, but he **doesn't** anymore."

PAGE 100

a. You're not working late, **are you?** It was a good film, **wasn't it?**

Are you? and **Wasn't it?** are *tag questions* (= mini-questions that we put on the end of a sentence). In tag questions we use the auxiliary verb (see Unit 49). For the present and past use **do/does/did**: They came by car, **didn't they?**

Figure 4: *Grammar In Use: Murphy (1989)* Two Explanation-and-Example Pages Compared]

Lines 2 through 4 on page 100 are written as continuous discourse—a string of four sentences which presents explanation of grammar terminology, grammar usage and a sentence example of the grammar usage. Lines 2-7 on page 98 contain the same kinds of information; however, here they consist of typographically marked, complex text. The first sentence about grammar terminology ends before the right margin (line 2), but the second sentence about grammar usage occupies the next line, instead of following the first sentence in succession as on page 100. And instead of incorporating the sentence examples into the sentence string as on page 100, they are on indented, bulleted, separate lines.

We can also see unsystematic correspondence in the presentation of like content if we look at the last two lines in both sections. Note that both sections on different pages not only provide similar kinds of information but also similar details and could be written in a like manner. For example, both direct the student reader to use the same three helping (auxiliary) verbs *do*, *does* and *did*. The dissimilar graphic presentation of content in these two sections demonstrates the kinds of formal knowledge students must have in order to comprehend and access similar information presented in different ways.

Students must be able to recognize and interpret the complex presentations such as the different discourse forms, section headings, layouts and typographic devices in order to access the textbook's pedagogical knowledge. The inconsistent use of discourse forms, the use of different graphic markers, the use of section headings and the presentation of similar messages worded dissimilarly and embedded in different sentence structures could impede students from understanding the typographic signals used in the layout of this text.

CONCLUSION

By viewing both textbooks from the stance of each textbook author, we can attempt an answer to the two questions I posed earlier: Who are the intended students? What does the author assume they know in terms of formal schemata?

Without a teacher mediating student use of charts or explanation pages and in the absence of instructions or information in a textbook itself, the presence of a variety of charts and other forms of presentations containing a range of graphic features suggests that students must know how to read these complex graphic presentations of content, that they can figure out a chart's or page's content by examining it, that they are familiar with the graphic features and how they function so that students can distinguish between examples and explanation. The intended students must also have the comprehension skills to make connections between sets of explanation and examples and from one set to other sets on a chart or page.

Azar's *Fundamentals of English Grammar* focuses primarily on grammatical usage while Murphy's *Grammar in Use* focuses on grammatical, social and semantic usage. Both authors seem to expect students to learn usage through examining rule-like information and language examples, and chiefly by slotting correct forms into fill-in-the-blank-type exercises. Both stress accuracy in language production and emphasize an analytical approach to language learning. They assume that the intended students are analysers: that they learn English by focusing on the close study of grammatical explanations and not on a communicative use of the language. Hence both authors perceive the intended users of their respective textbooks as having strong analytical, reading and study skills.

Azar's intended students for Fundamentals of English Grammar are students who are skilled at extracting pertinent information from highly typographically marked charts in order to compare discrete grammatical relationships. They are students who can read with attention to detail, not only because of the complex graphic presentation of the grammatical content, but because of the content itself. They are students who have a sophisticated sense of the fluidity of particular grammar terms.

Murphy's intended student for *Grammar in Use* would ideally be a student with an already strong grammatical background because of (1) the presence of a broad range of aspects, modalities and tenses of verbs; (2) the greater focus on what structures look like than how or when to use them; and (3) the undifferentiated presentation of social, semantic and grammar usage.

Each book requires an assortment of different reading skills because of the range of graphic presentations of information, which in each book is distinct. The authors assume different but broad student prior knowledge of complex text, much of it related to highly formal academic reading experience.

Would ESL students of diverse educational backgrounds working alone be able to access the pedagogical knowledge in these textbooks? Observing students using these textbooks in self-study situations may be informative. The use of think-aloud protocols with students from a range of educational and cultural backgrounds could reveal the accessibility of a textbook's pedagogical knowledge and might supply clues to the kinds of strategies needed to comprehend typographic and linguistic features characteristic of its complex text. In the meantime, I hope this discussion demonstrates the need for ESL teachers to understand the knowledge that may be necessary to carry out tasks in textbooks we intend our students to use without our assistance.

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