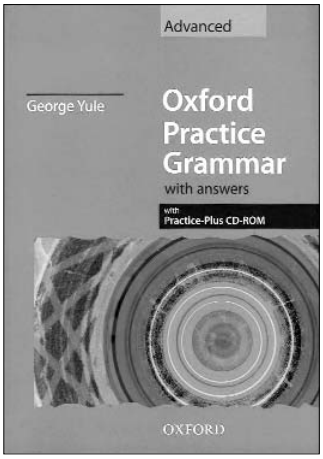
OXFORD PRACTICE GRAMMAR ADVANCED

George Yule
Oxford University Press, 2006



The *Oxford Practice Grammar Advanced* belongs to a series of three books (the others are *Basic*- suitable for elementary and pre-intermediate levels, and *Intermediate*). They can be used in the classroom or when students want to work independently to increase their knowledge of English grammar. The topics covered in each book are listed in the Contents page at the front of each book and in the Index at the back. This series of books includes an interactive CD-ROM at each level so that students can practice in alternative ways: take part in spoken dialogues, record and listen to their own voice, recognize and correct written mistakes, etc.

The book can help students to prepare for CAE, CPE, TOEFL and other advanced exams. It is divided into seventeen units providing a complete review of the grammar of contemporary English. *Oxford Practice Grammar Advanced* covers the following grammatical points: 1. Sentences, 2. Tenses, 3. Modals, 4. Negatives and Questions, 5. The Passive, 6. Articles and Nouns, 7. Determiners and Quantifiers, 8. Pronouns, Substitution and Ellipsis, 9. Adjectives and Adverbs, 10. Prepositions, 11. Infinitives and Gerunds, 12. Reporting, 13. Noun clauses, 14. Relative clauses, 15. Conditionals, 16. Adverbial clauses and 17. Connectors and Focus Structure.

Each unit starts with an explanation of the grammatical aspect under study and examples plus a number of exercises to practice on the same page or on the facing page. The grammatical points are described with detail and in a very clear way; all the exercises are numbered in all the topics. At the end of each unit we can find a two-page test that gives students the opportunity for more practice at the same time as they can check how much they have learned. Within each unit, there are separate sections on specific features, such as the uses of the passive, or some of the main problem areas, such as the use of the present perfect or the past simple.

The answers to all the exercises and the texts are provided at the end of the book in the Answer key (page 220) so that students can work with the book independently. On page 242 there is an Exit Text with 34 questions where students have to choose the right answer among four to check all the grammatical points covered in the book. On pages 263-264 the author offers an appendix with the main ideas related to regular and irregular verbs and a list of the most common irregular verbs. There is also a glossary (page 265) explaining the meaning of all grammatical terms used.

This book can be used by students working alone, in study groups or while attending classes. The main ways in which this book can be used are the following:

– It can be used as a reference guide for clear and concise explanations of particular points of English grammar. It is very pedagogical because each explanation is followed by examples of correct use in context, with advice on common errors to avoid.
– The book can also be used as a workbook in which students complete their exercises with their answers and then they can check if the answers are correct in the Answer key provided at the end of the book.
– It is also possible to use the *Oxford Practice Grammar Advanced* as a textbook, beginning on the first page and working at your own pace to the end. The different units are not presented in order of difficulty, but follow a sequence similar to that used in many textbooks.

The first exercise of each topic consists of reading and doing some activities related to a complete text that is presented right at the beginning of the unit. These texts are newspaper

reports, interviews, narratives, magazine articles, etc. Sometimes these texts are used in other exercises related to the main grammatical point of the unit.

The exercises show real examples in context so that students learn to use language in context and are familiar with language in different registers. Apart from this, the book proposes using dictionaries to complete some exercises, which is very good, because students learn to see the dictionary as a very useful tool in their learning practices and an essential tool to expand their vocabulary.

It is also very interesting and helpful that this book uses different types of exercises such as: find and correct the mistakes, choose the best option out of two or three given, complete some sentences, find the incorrect sentences, true or false, match the two halves of each sentence; sometimes students are asked to write complete sentences, to create a short version of a text, etc. As we can see from the different activities proposed, in some cases the exercises are controlled practice and other times students have to write adding their own ideas. It is also interesting that in some exercises students are asked to complete a table so that they get a good outline of the main grammatical points of the unit.

There are editing exercises in each unit in which students have to read through a paragraph, checking for grammatical mistakes and providing corrections where necessary. These exercises are very useful because they help students to develop their ability to write longer texts in English with increased grammatical accuracy. Apart from this, in some exercises students are asked to find and correct the mistakes in short texts or to complete sentences in a dialogue, which is very important because, in this way, students work not only at sentence level but also at text level.

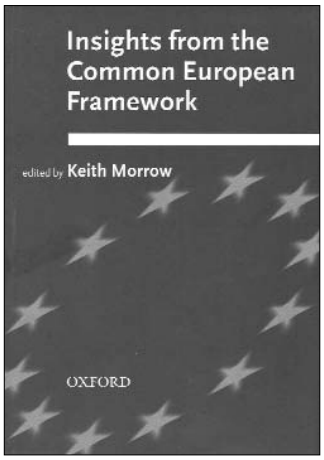
In my opinion, the weakest point of this book is that it has very few visuals and very few colours that would make it more reader friendly.

I would like to congratulate the author for writing such a complete grammar to help students learn some of the main grammatical aspects of the English language, and for selecting different kinds of exercises that help to make the learning process entertaining.

MARIA MARTINEZ LIROLA

INSIGHTS FROM THE COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK

Keith Morrow (ed.)
Oxford University Press, 2005



The full title of the Common European Framework (CEF) is *The Common European Framework of Reference for Language – Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. The CEF itself represents the cultural aims of the Council of Europe and it may be said that the present volume comes as the result of some forty years of language teaching sponsored by the Council.

The Council of Europe, based in Strasbourg, is the oldest European political organization: over forty countries are here grouped together, twenty or more from Central and Eastern Europe. To understand its attitude to language teaching amongst its members we must remember that the Council's aim is to announce to the world the common "European identity". This means showing values that are shared amongst its members rather than stressing differences in culture. The contributors to the present volume, coming from England, Ireland, Switzerland, Italy, Poland, Finland and Spain, all share the belief that it is only through language that one country can recognise another's culture and particular values.

The quarterly *ELT JOURNAL*, edited by Keith Morrow, a teacher and teacher-trainer who is also the editor of the present volume, has already published much material in the field covered in this book, articles attempting to form a link between the practical concerns of those teaching English as a second or foreign language and such disciplines as education, linguistics, psychology and sociology.

It can be said that the ideas found in the ELT Journal and in the CEF volume have been in circulation for some forty years. It is only in recent years, however, that the crucial need for communication and understanding between members of the European Community has come to be recognised as of paramount importance, and only very recently that the role of languages has been seen as crucial for this. The linguistic diversity of the continent is a natural obstacle when countries are being encouraged to look beyond their own frontiers in an effort to understand others. Citizens, it is firmly believed, must be exposed to other languages. This does not mean for the CEF a continuation of the conservative way of learning a foreign language, as in the past. Previously, another language was learnt, as it were, in a vacuum, with great emphasis placed on a firm foundation of grammar and a steady progress from an elementary level to an ever greater complexity. Now the emphasis is on immediate practical application in a world that is outside the classroom, primarily the world of work and business. Individuals are now encouraged to study by themselves and to limit their study of a language to only that which is a tool for practical communication. This means that grammar, as we have said, is given a less important role and oral, rather than written, forms of communication are emphasised. This means a complete break with traditional forms of language learning and has made the CEF and its suggestions highly criticised in some areas.

We have referred to the suggestions of the CEF. It is important to note that it is made clear that contributors to this book all attempt to construct a bridge between theory and practice. There are no "laws" laid down here, only "insights", which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as "penetrations with the understanding into character and circumstances". In his introduction, Keith Morrow says:

> *"Everyone involved in language teaching/learning is involved in a journey of*

some kind. The CEF does not prescribe the route you should take, but it gives you details of the topography so you can plan your own – or so you can look again at the one you normally take to see if it is still the best."

Each contributor presents us with their own particular experiences, the route they have found most advantageous for themselves. There is nothing dogmatic here, no syllabus designs or classroom methodology. The CEF sets out a range of options, enabling one to find similarities and note differences between courses and examinations. As we have said, great importance is given to private study and the contributors' wish is that teachers, course designers, developers of curricula and examination boards should compare their present practices with what is described to see if their present techniques should be modified, developed or rejected.

The book itself is divided into four sections:

1. Helping learners to learn: portfolios, self-assessment and strategy instruction.
2. The CEF in course design and in teacher education.
3. Finding out what learners can do.
4. Designing syllabuses and materials.

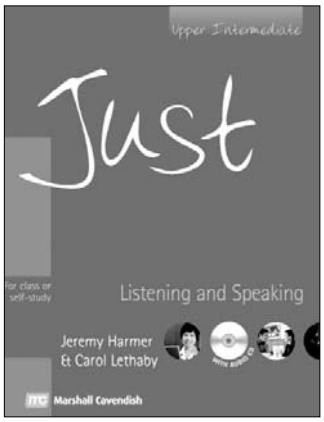
In conclusion, we have to say that this is not a book for the faint hearted. The writer of this review has found some difficulty in grasping everything that is being said. In the modern world, however, the global village where many languages shake hands, there is certainly a need for a fresh look at how foreign languages are taught and learnt. It is also of the utmost importance to ask, as the CEF does, why a language is learnt, for what purpose will the new tongue be employed? It is hard for traditionalists to make a break with the customs of the past in language-learning but few would argue with the CEF's statement that the need today is for language as a form of communication, a way to break down the barriers between one nation and another. Ultimately, shared languages must make for greater sympathy towards a culture that is not our own.

The bottom line is that language learning must now be seen not as an end in itself but as a tool with a specific purpose. The world is changing rapidly and we, both students and teachers, must adapt to those changes or die. Such is evolution. The CEF tells us that language, like knowledge itself, is not eternally fixed, it is something that must be modified to meet the needs of the labour market: the world of work and business. And that is a fact of life.

MERVYN SMALE

JUST LISTENING AND SPEAKING. UPPER INTERMEDIATE

Jeremy Harmer and Carol Lethaby
Marshall Cavendish ELT, 2005



Just Listening and Speaking (Upper Intermediate) by Jeremy Harmer and Carol Lethaby can be used in class under the guidance of the teacher or as a self-study book to give the student extra support in these two skills.

The book is divided into two main parts. Part A contains 18 listening exercises. Many of the exercises use two listening tracks in the completion of the task, although there are also some that include one track and others with three. Some of the titles of the listening exercises are: "Telling a joke", "What photographs remind us of", "The radio lecture", "The paranormal", "The driving lesson", "Gladiator", "Storyteller", and "In an art museum". Each listening exercise is different but all of them begin with a more extensive task geared toward activating the students' knowledge of the topic or simply to get them thinking about it. The exercises then move from extensive to intensive through tasks that deal with such areas of language as: vocabulary, comprehension, "chunking", and expressing opinion.

Listening 10, "The driving lesson", for example, begins with a look at the names of different parts of a car. The next task involves the listening track. This particular listening task is quite unique in that we only hear the driving instructor's side of the conversation. We have to imagine what the driving student, Mr. Radinski, is saying. Upon listening to Mr. Radinski's driving lesson, the student is asked to respond to True or False questions. Using the same listening track, the student then draws a map showing their comprehension of the events. Then, the student is asked to listen again and provide the words that Mr. Radinski must have said but that we did not hear. Rounding out the lesson, the final task requires the student to match verbs associated with driving (adjust, release, select) with the appropriate complement (the steering-wheel, the brake, neutral).

Part B has four different sections of speaking exercises. The types of speaking exercises are: "Reading aloud", "Taking part", "On your own", and "Speaking and writing".

In the "Reading aloud" section we find tasks that deal with punctuation, intonation, pace, and stress. The student is asked to read a poem, read a story, read the news, and read an automatic message for a telephone answering machine. Through using the book and a tape recorder, the student gains practice in all of the skills mentioned above.

In "Taking part", the tasks are even more interactive in the sense that, instead of recognizing rising or falling intonation or filling in the correct punctuation, the student must put part of the script in order or choose the correct response to a particular utterance. For example, in the first exercise, the student is asked to place the interviewer's questions in the appropriate gaps. Then, in exercise B, the student arranges the interviewee's replies, thus providing the student practice in both sides of an interview.

As the title indicates, the third speaking section, "On your own", gives the student more freedom and independence in their speaking practice. The topics are: a celebrity telephone interview, a job interview, telling a story, decorating a room, making a presentation, and a survey. For each topic, the student is guided through the steps necessary to complete the task. Some of the exercises involve the use of the audio CD, as in the case of the interviews where the student must respond to the interview questions. In Part A, the questions are included in the task, although not necessarily

in the same order, but in Part B, which simulates a job interview, the student does not have a preview of the questions. Other tasks, such as making a presentation or a survey, do not include the listening element but the student is asked to make a recording of the completed task that they can then analyze and improve upon.

The last section, "Speaking and Writing", takes a look at the differences in spoken and written English. The student is asked to change spoken utterances into the written form, to decide whether certain phrases are more 'speaking-like' or 'writing-like', to match the speaking and written forms in terms of meaning, to analyze entries from a dictionary, and to distinguish between informal conversation and formal written forms. The last activity is a bit different and has to do with how speakers use redundancy, hesitation, and direction change. A listening task is used to demonstrate examples of each of these aspects within a monologue. The student is then asked to transform the "speaking-like" text to a more formal written form.

Most of the speaking exercises in the first two sections are related to a listening activity found at the front of the book. The number of the listening exercise and the page number are indicated at the end of the task.

An audioscript and answer key are also provided at the end of the book and the audio CD is located in a handy pouch on the inside of the back cover of the book.

Just Listening and Speaking is easy for students to follow and use. The instructions are clear and the tasks within each exercise build upon each other, challenging the student a little more each time. The practice the student gains is also very thorough, as many language skills are covered from correct punctuation to direction change during speaking or practice in telling a joke.

Another aspect of the book that stands out is the diversity of topics and exercises included. The topics chosen are interesting and real. The tasks are presented in a variety of ways and give the student practice in a range of skills. One example is in Listening 10, "The Driving Lesson", in which we only hear one side of the conversation. This creative twist makes the exercise more challenging and more interesting as it is a break from the norm. There are many examples of creative twists such as this in this book.

To sum up, *Just Listening and Speaking* has a clear format that is easy for students to use and the variety of its topics and creative twists appeal to students. These qualities make the book an excellent resource for students to use on their own outside of class, possibly with the loose guidance of the teacher.

MICAELA CAREY

RECIPES FOR TIRED TEACHERS. WELL-SEASONED ACTIVITIES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

Chris Sion
Alta Book Centre Publishers, 2004



This book, although aimed at teachers, is *"dedicated to all those language students throughout the world who are just sitting there in class..."*. Perhaps it would have been more apt to have dedicated it to all those *language teachers* throughout the world who are just sitting there in class. I liked it. Pulling heavily on the imagery and layout of a cookbook full of recipes organised into appropriate categories, this is a useful language teaching resource jam-packed with tried-and-tested activities. As with most cookbooks it has its fair share of bog standards -well-known and relatively unimaginative activities- but it is certainly comforting, when struggling for ideas, to flick through and be reminded of favourites, as well as inspired by new ones.

Recipes for Tired Teachers has stood the test of time for over two decades albeit with a change of publisher and fresh look in 2004. The original activities were individually developed by a group of teachers at summer sessions in Canterbury, England, with a combined teaching experience gained all over the world. The editor, Chris Sion, has successfully blended the different styles and "voices" of the authors into a consistent mixture which is pleasant to the palate.

The 81 photocopiable activities span across all learning levels and are divided into eight units (though you can cut this cake in several different ways): Group Dynamics, Creative Writing and Thinking, Reading and Writing, Listening, Role Playing, Structures and Functions, Vocabulary (Lexis), and Fun and Games. An alternative to this Table of Recipes is an Index directing the reader to: Instant Recipes (activities that require no preparation), Recipes by Level, and Recipes by Language Function.

Each teaching activity, much like recipes in a cookbook, is laid-out on a single page using a standard format (with any corresponding tables, grids, charts, etc., on following pages). Two prominent boxes follow the activity name and number; one indicating *Materials* and the other preparation required *Before Class* (if any). With a quick glance at the outside margin of each activity page, one immediately ascertains recommended level(s), time required to complete the activity, (illustrated by a pie-chart depiction of a clock face), the language functions used and, where relevant, the number of days over which the activity should take place.

A description of the different stages to the activity is outlined in the main body of the page using between three and eight numbered paragraphs. Finally, the name of the author of the activity with, in most cases, a prominent Author's Note (illustrated with an eye-catching index-card pinned to the page at an angle) containing tips on how to adapt the activity to different circumstances, or pitfalls to avoid.

I must admit that at first I found the imagery of the cook and his/her cookbook somewhat *over*cooked and I still find the continual reference to the activities as recipes irritating, but having sat down to write this review I find myself surprised and seduced by the ease and breadth to which the metaphor is applicable, evocative and therefore effective.

While the front cover is glossy, bold and alluring, with an effective use of three colour tones and attention-seeking design techniques, I found the interior (in black and white only, with no pictures or illustrations aside from those to be used in the activity) a bit dry and unexciting. This is not

a riveting textbook (nor is it intended to be), though the front cover with its dominating cartoon illustration of a fat, happy Chef uncovering an apple on a silver platter, (symbolising the tradition of grateful students giving Teacher an apple at the end of the course) might have you think so. It's a well organised hot-pot of ideas - a reference book for teachers - and as such, the contents require that you approach it with a certain degree of personal motivation and interest.

Although within the brief Introduction to the book Chris Sion indicates that *Recipes for Tired Teachers* can be adapted for any age group, I would suggest that it's most useful for teaching adults. Brief, self-contained and well categorised, the activities may be used in many ways. They are especially useful for teachers seeking to introduce an occasional change of pace and content or fill a free half-hour, but they can also be blended to create a complete syllabus.

The collection of activities includes icebreakers, role-plays, story telling, creative thinking and group dynamics exercises, etc. Many activities focussing on group interaction and personal reflection would appeal to teachers and/or students interested in psychology.

As a Psychology graduate myself, I can't help smiling when I remember a particular lesson in which I used activity number one in the book, *You Are What You Will* with a small group of University of Granada Psychology lecturers. The students first imagine another life. In this new life they can take the form of an animal, plant or object. After a few minutes the students are asked to say what they are and describe themselves. The other students are encouraged to ask anything they like about the new personality, its function, background, feelings and so on. After each student has revealed and described their new identities, the students then analyse what they have learned about themselves and each other. You can just imagine how we managed to turn an exercise originally designed to take 30 to 60 minutes into a two-hour-long feast of psychoanalysis. And to this day, I don't think there's a class that goes by in which no reference is made to the discussion prompted by that activity.

Recipes for Tired Teachers is clearly a successful and useful teaching resource. Somewhat to my disappointment it can't bake the cake for you and requires a certain investment of time, energy and creativity. However, offering -as it does- a good range of tasty treats you can knock up in a few moments alongside more elaborate time-consuming meals to be made "con amore", it will certainly spice up your tired old lessons if not your tired old being. Enjoy!

CAROLINA WILSON