

**The canon of pedagogical grammar for ELT:  
a mixed methods study of its evolution,  
development and comparison with evidence on  
learner output**

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## Abstract

The teaching of grammar plays a key role in English Language Teaching (ELT). Pedagogical grammars such as *English Grammar in Use* and the *Azar-Hagen Grammar Series* are mainstays within the profession, their enduring appeal confirmed by the recent publication of fifth editions of both. Furthermore, most ELT coursebooks use structural syllabuses – essentially, lists of grammatical items to be taught – as a ‘primary organizing principle’ (McDonough, Shaw and Masuhara, 2013, p. 34). Yet how is the grammatical content of such ELT materials decided? And in the case of coursebooks, how is it decided in which order, and at which level, the grammar points should be taught? O’Keeffe and Mark (2017, p. 466) argue that over time a ‘canon’ of pedagogical grammar has evolved, which is ‘perpetuated and sustained through materials and examinations.’ However, what exactly is the nature of the system that perpetuates and sustains this canon? How, when and where did the canon develop? And does the canon reflect empirical evidence on the development of grammatical competence of learners of EFL?

This thesis addresses these questions in three ways. Firstly, a thematic analysis of interviews with ten key figures in ELT publishing on the question of grammatical content in teaching materials is presented. Secondly, an analysis of the treatment of three areas of grammar – conditionals, relative clauses and future forms – in grammars and coursebooks from the 17th century to the present is carried out. Finally, the current coursebook consensus on how and when to teach different aspects of these three areas of grammar is compared with empirical evidence on the use of grammar by learners, in the form of the English Grammar Profile. The analysis shows that the process of evolution of pedagogical descriptions of these areas of grammar was slow, and largely undocumented. The ELT professionals interviewed frequently referred to the existence of a strong consensus on grammatical content and ordering that must be respected, the need to follow successful competition titles, the importance of market research and user expectations, the influence of school and state institutions, and the need to avoid commercial risk by diverging too much from the consensus and expectations. The comparison between the coursebook consensus and data from the EGP reveals some areas of agreement between the two, but also that learners are often able to produce grammatical structures before they are typically taught in coursebooks, and can often produce a wider range of grammar than is typically covered in coursebooks.

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Finally, thanks to Anita, Sofia and Leo, for never letting me forget what’s most important.

## Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

Signed: 

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Grammar in teaching, learning and history

The focus of this study is grammar, and, more precisely, the grammar that is used for teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study of grammar has a long, and often controversial history. The word itself comes to English from the Greek γραμματική ('of or pertaining to letters or literature'), as part of the phrase γραμματική τέχνη. In the classical world, the study of grammar was an extremely wide discipline; according to the Oxford English Dictionary, it included 'textual and æsthetic criticism, investigation of literary history and antiquities, explanation of allusions, etc., besides the study of the Greek and Latin languages' (OED, 2019a), while Michael (1970, p. 74) gives two principle meanings in Greek: the phonetic and metaphysical values of letters, including accentuation and pronunciation, and 'the skill required to know your letters, to read and write'. The Greeks, of course, were not the first to study language in this way; scholars in Ancient India had been carrying out linguistic analyses of Sanskrit centuries before this (Allan, 2015, p. 12).

The study of grammar has long been considered important in education. It was one of the three 'literary arts' taught in Ancient Greece and this syllabus was later adopted by the Romans and continued through medieval times (Barton and Hudson, 2002). In many English-speaking countries, however, the teaching of grammar as part of mother-tongue school education had fallen out of fashion by the middle of the twentieth century, due to widespread discontentment with the prescriptivist approach to its teaching that had thus far been used (Crystal, 2017b, p. 218). By the end of the century, however, the pendulum had swung back the other way – at least in the UK – with grammar reintroduced to school syllabuses following the publication of the new National Curriculum in 1988 and the 'Cox Report' a year later (Crystal, 2017a, p. 11).

Broadly speaking, 'grammar' is considered in this thesis to be the underlying system that governs the composition of a given language; Chapter 2 will outline a number of different of key grammatical theories. This thesis is primarily concerned with 'pedagogical' grammar, that is to say, grammatical explanations written and used

for the teaching and learning of a foreign language; further definitions and aspects of pedagogical grammar will also be discussed in Chapter 2. The teaching of grammar as a part of language teaching has had an equally turbulent history to that of mother-tongue teaching. The explicit study of grammar was central to the 'grammar-translation method' used in schools from around the turn of the 18th century, which involved the systematic teaching of grammar points, typically (de)contextualised in individual sentences (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004, p. 152). A century later, however, the Reform Movement revolutionised foreign language teaching, with its proponents arguing that teaching should be based on three principles: the prioritisation of spoken language, the use of texts, not sentences, as input, and the use of an oral methodology, i.e. speaking the target language in class (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004, p. 189). None of these necessarily required the abandonment of the teaching of grammar altogether, but it was now no longer a, or the, central learning aim. The role of grammar was brought further into question in the 1970s, with the development of ideas of 'communicative competence' (Hymes, 1972), and the 'communicative approach' to language teaching. During this period, some were arguing for the complete abandonment of grammar teaching, but just two decades later such a proposal was already confidently being described as 'a manifest absurdity' (Candlin, 1994, vii).

## 1.2 The grammar canon in English Language Teaching (ELT)

The pedagogical grammar of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is probably the most extensive of any language. Scores of pedagogical grammars are available and most coursebooks themselves provide extensive grammar reference sections. There is also no shortage of resources offering grammatical explanations for learners of EFL for free online. The totality of grammar rules and descriptions for EFL is characterised by O'Keeffe and Mark as a 'smörgåsbord of items', with a mix of syntactical analysis and description and 'thematic and functional clusterings' (O'Keeffe and Mark, 2017, p. 466). Teachers, materials writers and syllabus designers seem to be in very broad agreement about what should be included in this smörgåsbord (Ellis, 2006, p. 88; O'Keeffe and Mark, 2017, p. 466; Thornbury, 2013), suggesting the existence of a 'canon' of grammar for EFL, a term also used by both Ellis (2006) and O'Keeffe and Mark's (2017). The 'canon of pedagogical grammar for

ELT' under examination in this thesis is therefore the commonly agreed upon totality, or catalogue, of grammar items used to teach EFL; an example of the canon – or one version of it – can be found in Appendix 1, in the form of a summary of the grammatical content of all levels of *New English File*, a popular coursebook series.

While some detailed accounts of the history of ELT have been produced (for example, Howatt and Widdowson (2004), Howatt and Smith (2014), Richards and Rodgers (2001)), it is not entirely clear where the canon came from. There is not, and never has been, an ELT 'ruling body' setting out how or what should be taught; nor has there ever been an equivalent for English of linguistic 'regulating' bodies like *Académie française* for French, the *Real Academia* for Spanish or the *Accademia della Crusca* for Italian. Consequently, no official document exists that presents to practitioners or learners a list of grammatical structures that should be taught, or the order in which they should be taught. Instead, a number of different institutions and organisations exert influence on ELT pedagogy: these range from publishing houses, organisations such as the British Council, and examination boards and education ministries. In the absence of any kind of overarching controlling body, it can be summarised that the activities of these institutions are responsible for the strong, shared understanding of which grammatical structures learners need to study, and in which order.

### 1.3 Rationale for the study

Given its ubiquitousness, there would seem to be very good reasons for investigating the teaching of grammar in the ELT profession. To a great extent this does indeed occur; the field of Second Language Acquisition research regularly investigates the questions of how grammar is acquired by language learners and how the learning of grammar (and often lexis) can best be supported in the classroom (see Loewen and Sato (2018) for a recent overview of issues and research on instructed second language acquisition).

The overwhelming focus in research, however, has tended to be on 'how' to teach rather than 'what' to teach (Sheen, 2003, pp. 60–61). The question of which grammar points should be taught for a given language is not typically addressed, and when such issues are explored, the responses tend to be speculative or inconclusive. For example, Rod Ellis, in answering the question, 'What grammar

should we teach?’ in his (2006) review of issues in the teaching of grammar, discusses different grammatical models that can be employed, and some (often problematic) principles that can be used to select grammar points. Overall, however, he defines the question of the choosing which grammar points to teach as ‘controversial’ (p. 87) and ‘very problematic’ (p. 89); the most concrete advice offered is that grammatical content could be based on typical learner errors (*ibid.*), but whether this is an approach that has ever actually been used to create a pedagogical grammar syllabus – including the ELT ‘canon’ – is unclear. In short, even though there have been criticisms of relatively specific aspects of the canon (see Section 3.5), the bulk of its content seems to be accepted somewhat unquestioningly.

The aim of this study is therefore to complement the existing body of research on how to teach grammar with an investigation into the canon of grammar that is actually employed in the teaching of EFL. In particular, it aims to explore where the canon of ELT grammar originally came from and how it evolved over time. Furthermore, it also investigates why there is currently such a strong consensus on the content of the canon. Finally, it aims to assess the canon, by comparing it to empirical evidence, in the form of the ‘English Grammar Profile’ (see Section 4.4 for a full description), on the grammar that learners of EFL actually produce. As we will see, a key characteristic of any pedagogical grammar, at least when its content is put into operation in teaching materials and/or language courses, is how its content should be sequenced. One aspect of this comparison is therefore an analysis of any differences between how content is ordered in the ELT grammar canon, and the order at which learners appear to start producing the grammar.

This thesis takes the position that, given the lack of an overarching organisation for ELT, evidence on the consensus on grammar for ELT is most readily and reliably found in published teaching materials. A key data source is therefore EFL grammars and coursebooks; sales of the latter can reach hundreds of thousands a year (Gray, 2002; Littlejohn, 1992), and in many cases a coursebook is used simultaneously as a *de facto* syllabus and exam specifications document (Harwood, 2014; Mares, 2003). Furthermore, the thesis takes the position that in order to fully understand the nature of the existing consensus, it is necessary to seek out the views and

experience of those who are involved, or have been involved, in the production of ELT coursebooks.

#### 1.4 Locating the study

This study is, at its core, about ‘practice’, that is to say, ‘the actual application or use of an idea, belief, or method, as opposed to the theory or principles of it’ (OED, 2019b). As we have seen, it focuses on what is an under-researched area of investigation: the ‘what’ of grammar teaching, something that has been relevant in my own career as a teacher, examiner and also materials writer and editor. The contemporary ELT profession has inherited a widely accepted tradition – a grammar canon, operationalised across levels. A practitioner needs to know, however, what this tradition is based on and whether it offers a valid basis for teaching. Given the paucity of sources addressing these questions, this study draws on different, but overlapping, domains of enquiry, to provide a framework for investigation. These are presented in Figure 1.1 below.

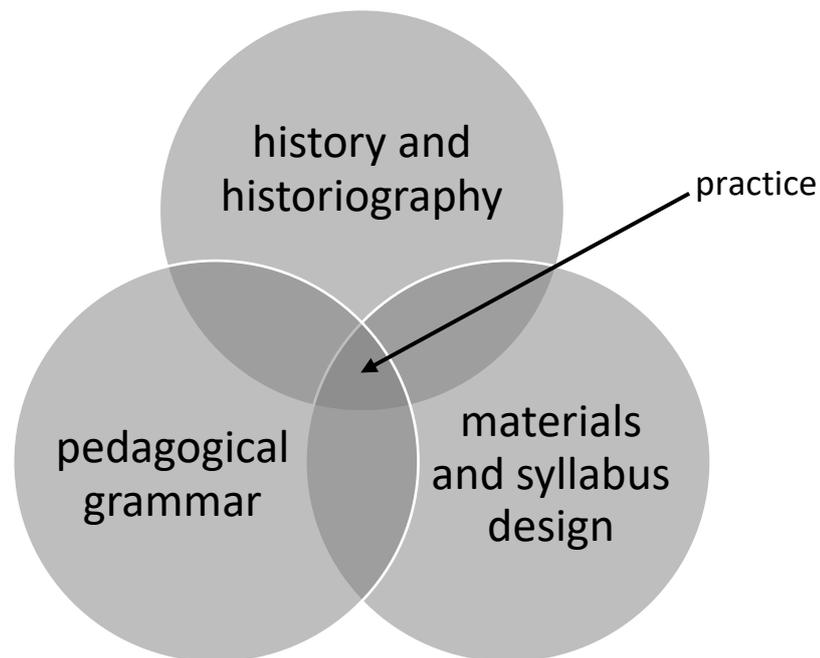


Figure 1.1: Diagram showing domains of enquiry relevant to this study

This study is in part a historical one. It seeks to provide an account of how the canon of grammar used in the teaching of EFL evolved, in the belief that this can tell a practitioner something about suitability of the canon when put into practice in the classroom today. It also an account of pedagogical grammar, seeking to investigate questions of the utility of grammatical descriptions and the teachability of grammar

in the classroom. Finally, given the primacy accorded to primary sources (that is to say, published teaching materials, in particular, coursebooks) it is also a study on materials design and syllabus design, including the opinions and experiences of those actually involved in this enterprise, that is to say in the practice of ELT publishing. While the study is not located in any one of these three domains, all three are crucial in providing the practitioner-oriented account at its core.

## 1.5 Research questions and thesis structure

The research questions under investigation are:

1. How, when and where did the consensus on the ELT grammar 'canon' develop?
2. What is the nature of the canon today, and the system that perpetuates and sustains it?
3. Does the canon reflect empirical evidence of how grammatical competence develops in learners of EFL?

Although all three questions are closely related, this study will use mixed methods to address them. Of particular importance are primary sources (in other words, published teaching materials); a content analysis of both historical and contemporary teaching materials will therefore be used, in part, to address both questions 1 and 2. This will be supplemented with an analysis of interview data with professionals working within the ELT publishing industry. Finally, aspects of the consensus will be assessed through a comparison with data from the English Grammar Profile in order to address question 3.

The remainder of the thesis is structured in the following way. **Chapter 2** outlines different definitions of grammar and presents a review of the literature on pedagogical grammar. As discussed above, there has been only very limited research on the origins of the content of the ELT grammar canon, and **Chapter 3** therefore presents a historical account, based on primary sources, of the evolution of grammatical accounts of English up to the mid 20th century, starting with early descriptive accounts and finishing with the development of pedagogical accounts in the first half of the 20th century.

**Chapter 4** sets out the data sources and methodology in detail. **Chapters 5** and **7** present a thematic analysis of the interview data, helping to address the question of how the canon developed, and how and why it is sustained and perpetuated. **Chapters 6** and **8** present case studies of three areas of grammar, in order to i) trace their evolution up until contemporary pedagogical accounts, through an examination of primary sources, ii) establish the current consensus on how they should be covered in a syllabus in contemporary coursebooks; and iii) to compare this consensus to empirical data from the English Grammar Profile. **Chapter 9** returns to the research questions, presents conclusions and discusses the limitations of the study.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 The scope of this chapter

This chapter provides a review of literature related to grammar used in language learning and teaching. It will begin with a discussion of different types of grammar, before moving on to examining the literature on pedagogical grammar, including the concept of levels, sequencing, and perspectives on this from Second Language Acquisition research.

Ideally, this chapter would also provide an overview of how the pedagogical grammar for EFL evolved – essentially, when, where, under which conditions – including a discussion of the decisions made by the professionals involved in its development. However, no such accounts appear to exist to provide this information. For example, Howatt and Widdowson's (2004) *A History of Language Teaching* contains an overview of early grammatical descriptions of English, and accounts of important publications on grammar up until the present, but little specific discussion on the content or evolution of pedagogical grammar. Eli Hinkel's (2016) chapter 'Prioritizing Grammar to Teach or Not to Teach' makes and reviews recommendations on selecting pedagogical grammatical content, but does not account for the system widely in use in English. This is not to criticise such studies, but simply to point out that that the focus in the literature on ELT pedagogical grammar tends to either provide only an overview of current and historical practice, or discuss how a grammatical syllabus *could* be constructed, rather than *is* constructed.

The focus of this chapter, then, will primarily be on secondary sources related directly and indirectly to the construction of pedagogical grammar, generally from a 'neutral' rather than language-specific point of view. This will be complemented in Chapter 3 by an exploration of the development of the grammar of English, including contemporary pedagogical accounts, with a focus mainly on primary sources.

### 2.2 Grammar and grammars

The meaning of the word 'grammar' has shifted significantly over the years. As we saw in Chapter 1, the original Greek term covered a wide range of disciplines, and over the centuries the meaning has changed significantly, becoming progressively

narrower and closer to the modern conception of the term, such as that provided in the *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*: “a description of the structure of a language and the way in which linguistic units such as words and phrases are combined to produce sentences in the language” (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, p. 230). However, this comparatively narrow definition is still relatively recent; many grammars of the nineteenth century still included discussions of prosody (Michael, 1970, p. 24), and the full definition from the *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* itself states that a description of grammar ‘may or may not include the description of the sounds of a language’ (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, pp. 230–231).

Even today, the word ‘grammar’ can mean different things. One variation is the countable form of the noun, meaning ‘a book describing the grammar of a language’; the *Oxford English Dictionary* attests this usage for the first time in 1530. A further basic distinction is often made between descriptive and prescriptive grammars, with the former attempting to describe actual usage, and the latter attempting to influence it. Prescriptive grammars are argued to have a strong sociolinguistic element; the knowledge of prescriptive grammar rules bestows membership of a particular social class (Carter and McCarthy, 2006, p. 6, Pinker, 1994, p. 374). Prescriptive grammars, style guides, and, more generally, discussions about grammar in newspapers and the internet often cover areas such as spelling, punctuation, register and word choice, even though these would not necessarily be considered by linguists to be aspects of grammar. For example, King’s (2011) *Collins Improve Your Grammar* claims to cover ‘the thirteen gremlins of grammar, from apostrophes to verbs’, while Shriver’s (2012) *Grammar for grown-ups* asks the reader, on its back cover blurb, ‘Do you know how to use semicolons, where to put apostrophes and when to use commas? Do you know the difference between *affect* and *effect*, *if* and *whether*, or *who* and *whom*?’. To descriptive and prescriptive grammar can be added pedagogical grammar, the grammar of language learning and teaching. Pedagogical grammars combine aspects of both descriptive and prescriptive grammars, and will be discussed in detail in Section 2.4 below.

### 2.3 Grammar in linguistics

Within the discipline of linguistics, there are further grammars, with some of the key theories outlined in Table 2.1, on the following page. We will return to some of these later in this chapter.

Grammatical framework	Key references
Generative grammar – mentalistic grammar, focused on phrase structure and syntactic movements: ‘competence can be represented [...] as a system of rules that we can call the grammar of his language’ (Chomsky, 2013, p. 124)	Chomsky, 1965
Dependency grammar – word-based grammar, ‘in which the verb is considered to be the central and most important unit’ (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, p. 149)	Sgall <i>et al.</i> , 1986
Emergent grammar – grammar exists not because of underlying rules in the mind, but emerges through use and interaction	Hopper, 1987
Word Grammar – grammatical knowledge is knowledge of words: ‘language is nothing but a network – there are no rules, principles, or parameters to complement the network.’ (Hudson, 2007, p. 2)	Hudson, 2007
Cognitive grammar – grammar is a part of cognition and all grammatical elements are meaningful: grammar is ‘an essential aspect of the conceptual apparatus through which we apprehend and engage the world’ (Langacker, 2008, p. 4))	Langacker, 1987
Construction grammar – central unit of analysis is syntactic constructions; the meanings of the words within a structure ‘fuse with the semantics of the construction itself’ (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, p. 113)	Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor, 1988
Systemic Functional grammar – explains language with reference to its function in social contexts; describes different grammatical possibilities from the point of view of choice: ‘the reasons why the speaker produces a particular wording rather than any other in a particular context’ (Thompson, 2004, p. 9)	Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014
Pattern grammar – views grammar and lexis as inherently interconnected; individual lexical items such as verbs and nouns can be ‘described in terms of the pattern(s) that they typically occur with’, based on corpus analysis (Hunston, Francis and Manning, 1997, p. 209))	Hunston and Francis, 2000

Table 2.1: Key theories of grammar

## 2.4 Pedagogical grammar

A grammar used in the teaching of a foreign language is a pedagogical<sup>1</sup> grammar. This term appears to be comparatively young, appearing in the *ELT Journal* for the first time only in 1972 ('Readers' Letters', 1972). As can be seen in Figure 2.1, a google Ngram analysis (Michel *et al.*, 2011) for 'pedagogical grammar' shows a sharp increase in the frequency of appearance of the term in books firstly in the 1960s, and then again in the 1970s.

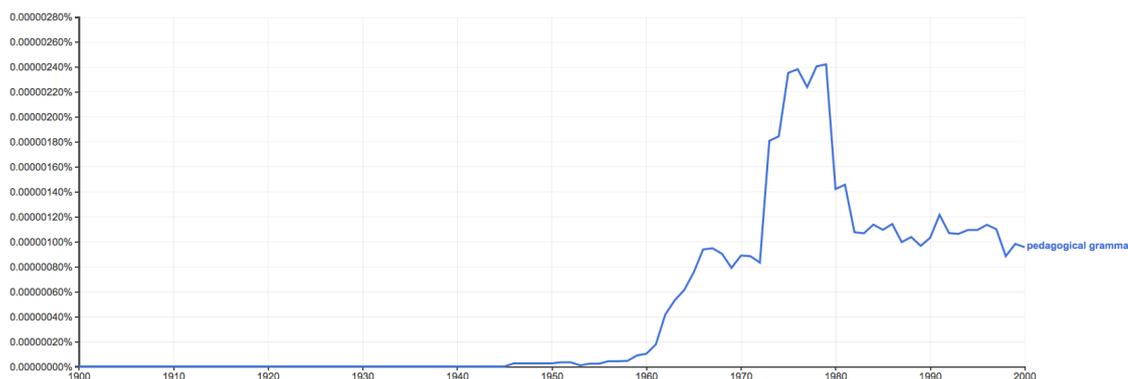


Figure 2.1: Google 'Ngram' for the term 'pedagogical grammar'

### 2.4.1 Definitions

The exact definition of pedagogical grammar has been described as 'slippery' (Little, 1994, p. 99). Pedagogical grammars have been characterised in a number of different ways, including the following:

- as a form of grammatical description to be used by teachers rather than learners, (Corder, 1975, cited in Chalker (1994, p. 32))
- as the 'types of grammatical analysis and instruction designed for the needs of second language students' (Odlin, 1994, p. 1)
- as the 'framework of definitions, diagrams, exercises, and verbalized rules which may help a learner to acquire knowledge of a language' (Allen 1974, cited in Wang (2003, p. 64))
- as, essentially, a textbook that teaches the grammar of a foreign language (Greenbaum, 1987)

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<sup>1</sup> Both 'pedagogic grammar' and 'pedagogical grammar' appear in the literature. There do not seem to have been any attempts to distinguish them; Swan, for example, states that he does not distinguish semantically between the two, but 'prefer[s] the shorter word' (1994, p. 55). The more frequent of the two is 'pedagogical grammar' rather than 'pedagogic grammar', and will be used in this thesis

- grammatical descriptions that are ‘practical, selective, sequenced, task-orientated, etc.’ (Leech, 1994, p. 17)
- ‘a grammar developed for learners of a foreign language’, drawing on i) descriptive models of grammar, ‘which can be incorporated into pedagogical reference grammars and teaching materials and formulated in ways which make the description accessible to the learner’ and ii) theories of second language acquisition, ‘which will provide the basis for classroom methodology’ (Newby, 2000, p. 459)

So while there is agreement in the literature that pedagogical grammar aims to assist language learning, there is disagreement on whether discussions of it should also consider processes of grammar teaching, and on whether it is for teachers or learners (or both). The use of the term ‘pedagogical grammar’ in this thesis is largely aligned with the first part of Newby’s definition; pedagogical grammar is understood as descriptions of grammar written for learners of EFL, incorporated in teaching materials. We shall now examine what form it is said that these descriptions of grammar should take.

#### 2.4.2 Pedagogical grammar: characteristics

Like Newby, Swan states that pedagogical grammars should probably be based on descriptive grammars, rather than on theoretical accounts, as the latter ‘have not been shown to work well’ (Swan, 2013, p. 565). Johnson argues that such a position may be considered problematic by those who believe that external descriptions of grammar should resemble the internal representation in the learner’s brain; his own position, however, is that pedagogical grammar is an *aid* to learning but not the *object* of it, and that there is therefore no logical need for descriptions to represent internal representations as the former should lead to the latter (Johnson, 1994, p. 125).

Swan also states, like Leech (1994), that pedagogical grammars are necessarily selective in content, as language learners simply cannot learn (and teachers cannot teach) all the grammar of a language in the time they have available:

[A] pedagogic grammatical description of a language is necessarily fragmentary. Time constraints do not allow language learners to learn, or their teachers to teach, anything approaching the whole of a language. [...] While a descriptive grammar will aim at complete

coverage, a pedagogic grammar will consequently miss out or simplify material of lesser practical importance. (Swan, 2013, 565)

One difficulty here is the question of how, and by whom, it is to be ascertained exactly which materials are of 'lesser practical importance'.

Swan argues that the selectivity should be informed, at least in part, by a consideration of what learners already know: pedagogical grammars should aim to impart knowledge 'which learners do not already possess, glossing over or leaving out what they already know by courtesy of their mother tongue.' (Swan, 2013, p. 565). Such detail to be 'left out' might include the very concept of verbs and nouns, basic word order of English for learners whose first language is Mandarin (both Mandarin and English are SVO languages), and English prepositions for learners whose first language is Swedish (ibid. p. 565–566).

Towell also argues for grammatical content based on L1–L2 differences, particularly those that are likely, according to the experience of the grammar author, to be problematic for learners: 'Authors [...] therefore select the items to present on the basis of a contrastive awareness of where the two languages differ, modified by experience as to which differences create genuine learning difficulties' (Towell, 2016, p. 1). James, too, favours the framing of pedagogical grammar accounts through the lens of the L1, but for a different reason: he argues that learners themselves strongly desire to 'be shown the [foreign language] in terms of their [native language]' (1994, p. 208). In terms of teaching materials, this would clearly require the publication of many different versions of grammars aimed at different L1 groups.

#### 2.4.3 Rules, content and descriptions

It is suggested, then, that pedagogical grammar should be essentially descriptive, not theory based, should contain information both on form and meaning, and should be aimed at learners, possibly – and perhaps preferably – taking into account their first language. What, though, should be the general characteristics of the rules and descriptions found within pedagogical grammars? This section will attempt to outline responses to this question, although Newby (2000, p. 459) notes that there has been comparatively little development of theory on how pedagogical descriptions – particularly rules – should be formulated .

Swan (1994) offers six 'design criteria for pedagogic language rules', as follows:

- truth: Swan argues that it is desirable that rules be true, although this requirement at times will conflict with other criteria;
- demarcation: This mainly refers to predictive value. Swan states that rules should 'show clearly what are the limits on the use of a given form', and should hence provide learners with a basis to predict when to use one form or another;
- clarity: Rules should be clear and avoid 'unsatisfactory terminology';
- simplicity: Rules should be simple, even if at times this may lead to 'some trade-off with truth or clarity' (p. 48). Swan argues simplicity is one way in which pedagogical grammars differ 'sharply from general-purpose descriptive rules';
- conceptual parsimony: Pedagogical grammarians should consider the concepts and terminology with which the target learners are familiar and explanations should be written with this in mind;
- relevance: Every explanation given should answer a 'question, real or potential, that is asked by a learner, or that is generated by his or her interlanguage'. Consequently, a pedagogical account of grammar is likely to be 'fragmentary' and 'partial' rather than 'complete'. Selectivity therefore goes beyond contrastive analysis, and considers what learners want to know and what they are perceived to want to know.

Swan's conception of 'demarcation' represents an important characteristic of pedagogical grammars compared to descriptive grammars: learners need pedagogical grammars to tell them when and how to choose between two formally correct possibilities, something which descriptive grammars do not necessarily do. A similar observation is made by Williams (1994), who contrasts 'constitutive' rules with 'communicative' rules. An example of the former is fixed word order (for example in phrases such as 'my name' or in the *be* + *-ing* structure), the third person singular *-s* in the present simple, or the unacceptability of the sentence 'I am eat'; these are formal areas of grammar which learners must simply learn. In contrast, the correct choice between the sentences 'I didn't eat at midday' and 'I don't eat at midday' is not, for Williams, a matter of formal correctness, but of 'communicative

grammar rules'. A parallel contrast is that of Carter and McCarthy's (2006, pp. 6–7) 'grammar as structure' and 'grammar as choice'. Both types of 'rule' (formal and communicative) or grammar are likely to be useful to foreign language learners, and providing sufficient coverage of the latter type may represent one of the challenges of producing a pedagogical grammar.

Also related to the question of demarcation is Johnson's argument (1994, p. 124) that pedagogical rules should be both 'generalisable' and 'proceduralisable'. Generalisability is important because learners need to be able to go beyond the small subset of language to which they have been exposed; a good pedagogical grammar explanation will therefore tell a learner how to form, for example, the present perfect of any verb, rather than only of a limited number of verbs. Rules should be proceduralisable in the sense that they should be formulated in such a way that the language they instruct on can eventually be produced by the learner automatically, without conscious attention to the rule. The desired 'transformation' here is from 'declarative knowledge' to 'procedural knowledge', and pedagogical grammar should, for Johnson, be able to aid this process.

Swan's criteria also suggest that the content of pedagogical grammar may not always be completely accurate, and that there may often be underlying reasons for this (of which the authors themselves are probably aware). Furthermore, the question of selectivity is again raised; there may be features of language that can be described but that at the same time might not actually be of use to learners, and pedagogical grammarians, for Swan, should be ready to disregard these. The difficulty here is perhaps in how to establish with confidence what is of use to learners, particularly when teachers, grammarians, administrators, and indeed the learners themselves, have become used to the status quo.

To these difficulties can be added James' assertion that the areas of grammar that are comparatively easily to teach and explain 'perhaps do not need to be explained because they are so obvious', whereas the more complex areas, those that would learners would benefit most from being taught, are more difficult to explain. Evidence for this comes from a study by Zhou (1991), which reports that Chinese learners appeared to learn from explicit instruction of the English passive (a comparatively easy area of grammar for Chinese learners of English as Chinese uses

a parallel structure to front topics) but not from the teaching of the use of auxiliary *do* and of the morphology of tense and aspect. Such a phenomenon, if generally true, perhaps interacts with both Swan's criteria of simplicity (the most complex areas of grammar may be difficult to explain adequately because of the need for simplicity), and conceptual parsimony (if one is to bear in mind learners' familiarity, or otherwise, with particular concepts, it will presumably be more difficult to write explanations of grammar that relate to concepts with which learners are not familiar).

#### 2.4.4 Sequencing of grammar points

A further characteristic of pedagogical grammar compared to other grammatical accounts is that the various elements of which it is made up need to be sequenced, most obviously when pedagogical grammar is included in a coursebook series. This is in contrast to descriptive grammars, whose entries can be organised alphabetically, by area of grammar or so on, as users of such works are only ever likely to need to access specific sections irregularly, rather than reading them from cover to cover. Sequencing is not typically described in the literature as a property of pedagogical grammar itself; possibly it is perceived as simply a by-product of grammatical content being published in print, for use in classrooms, rather than as an inherent property of pedagogical grammar itself. However, the sequencing of grammar across coursebook levels (often referred to as a 'scope and sequence') and, in some cases, grammar practice titles is a firmly established practice and can therefore be seen as a key element of contemporary pedagogical grammar for English.

An early title to make use of a graded syllabus was Ollendorf's *New Method*, a series of books produced for many learning different languages. According to Howatt and Widdowson, Ollendorf's title was innovative in that it introduced areas of grammar one by one, with different aspects of each area often split across several chapters, unlike grammar translation courses, which tended to introduce entire paradigms at the same time (2004, p. 163). The principles with which grammar was graded across the whole books was, for Howatt and Widdowson, 'convention and 'logic' – for example, present is taught before past, and both before the imperative.

E. Creagh Kittson's 1918 *Theory and Practice of Language Teaching: with Special Reference to French and German* is another comparatively early title to address the question of grading. In line with the approach taken by Ollendorf, Kittson argues for the gradual introduction of areas of grammar:

Familiarity with grammatical forms must develop slowly. To 'know' a grammatical form is to be able to use it freely ; it will be undesirable therefore to introduce the pupil to too many forms at once. The language must unroll itself before him gradually. (1918, p. 104)

However, there is nothing explicit in Kittson's discussion that suggests that any particular kind of organisational principle should be employed when deciding the order; presumably any order could be used, so long as it avoided introducing too much grammar at the same time.

By contrast, Harold Palmer, in his 1921 *The Principles of Language-Study* offers a more nuanced explanation of what gradation should consist of. After an initial characterisation of sequencing (or 'gradation', using Palmer's choice of term) in general as 'passing from the known to the unknown by easy stages' (1921, p. 113), Palmer sets out some more specific criteria that can be used for the sequencing of grammar:

Certain moods and tenses are more useful than others; let us therefore concentrate on the useful ones first. In a language possessing a number of cases, [...] we will select them in accordance with their degree of importance. As for lists of rules and exceptions, if we learn them at all we will learn them in strict order of necessity. In most languages we shall probably find certain fundamental laws of grammar and syntax upon which the whole structure of the language depends; let us first learn these essentials and leave the details to a later stage. (1921, p. 115)

For Palmer, then, sequencing should take into account usefulness, importance and necessity, prioritising the 'essentials' over the 'details'. While Palmer's assertions seem to constitute common-sense advice, he does not go into any more detail about what exactly would characterise a 'useful' grammatical structure and how, and by whom, it should be identified; similar doubts can be levelled against the other characteristics he lists. There are parallels here in modern discussions; we saw above that a general characteristic of pedagogical grammar is that it should be selective, but it is ultimately the subjective decision of the grammar writer to decide what to select.

Palmer also stresses the importance of adopting ‘the right sort of gradation’, warning against what he calls ‘false grading’ (1921, pp. 115–116). For example, he argues that it would be wrong to avoid teaching irregular verbs before regular verbs in the belief that the former are more difficult, as ‘some of the most useful words in most languages are very irregular’. Perhaps surprisingly, it is only in the context of this description of ‘false grading’ that Palmer specifically mentions the idea of difficulty. It is not clear whether he rejects altogether the use of perceptions of difficulty in sequencing grammar, or just in the specific case of irregular verbs; it may actually be the case that difficulty is what he has in mind when talking of the teaching the ‘essentials’ before the ‘details’. In any case, Palmer’s sequencing principles, while commonsensical, appear to leave a great deal open to the interpretation of the individual teacher or materials writer.

More recently, questions of sequencing have been revisited, typically as part of wider discussions of ‘syllabus design’ or ‘curriculum design’. David Nunan, in his 1988 *Syllabus Design*, notes that grammatical syllabuses were, and still are, the most common type in language teaching, and items are sequenced ‘according to grammatical notions of simplicity and complexity’, with the most ‘rigid’ syllabuses introducing items one by one, each item needing to be mastered before the next step can be taken (1988, p. 28). Nunan does not attempt to define how grammatical simplicity or complexity can be ascertained, but he does note that grammatical difficulty does not necessarily equate to learning difficulty – for example, the third person -s in the present simple is described as grammatically ‘fairly straightforward’, but ‘notoriously difficult for learners to master’ (1988, p. 33).

Jack Richards and Keith Johnson also discuss grammatical sequencing in some detail, converging on five main principles (Johnson, 2001; Richards and Rodgers, 2001), as follows:

- simplicity and centrality
- learnability
- frequency
- linguistic distance
- communicative needs

Like Nunan, neither Richards nor Johnson attempt to define the terms ‘simplicity and centrality’, just as Palmer did not elaborate on what exactly ‘the essentials’ and ‘the details’ of a language are. The inclusion now of frequency as a criterion possibly reflects the ease with which frequency counts can be made using corpora; indeed, the fact that the present simple is more frequent than the present continuous has been used as a justification for teaching it first, even though there is a pedagogic argument for starting with the present continuous<sup>2</sup>. With ‘linguistic distance’, we are returning to the question of the differences between the L1 and target language; these differences can be used not only as a basis for selecting items, as we saw above, but also for sequencing them within a syllabus. ‘Communicative need’ echoes to an extent Palmer’s concept of necessity, Richards noting that ‘some structures will be needed early on and cannot be postponed, despite their difficulty’ (Richards, 2001, p. 13).

Finally, the principle of ‘learnability’ relates to the claimed existence of an ‘internal syllabus’ – the idea that learners acquire structures in a natural order, regardless of the order in which they are taught, and that this natural order should be reflected in teaching materials. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.6, but it is worth noting at this point Richards assertion that ‘little reliable information on acquisition sequences has been produced that could be of practical benefit in planning a grammar syllabus’ (2001, p. 12)

One difficulty with ordering is that no single principle can be entirely satisfactory. A syllabus designer may use a number of different principles, which may themselves at times be in conflict with one another (for example, those of ‘simplicity and centrality’ and ‘communicative needs’). It is therefore likely that the design of any structural syllabus will have involved the materials designer weighing up the various principles and deciding, case by case, which principle to prioritise. The existence during the writing process of competing demands and the need for compromise has been reported by a number of different materials authors (see, for

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Alexander (1990, p. 45); a suggested order for a beginner level course is to teach the verb *be* with adjectives and nouns, followed by *have got*, then the present continuous (comparatively straightforward if the forms of *be* are known), and then finally the present simple (comparatively less straightforward as it requires *do* support in negatives and questions).

example, Johnson, 2001; Bell and Gower, 1998; Mares, 2003; Timmis, 2014; and McGrath, 2013).

## 2.5 Competency levels

Once sequences of pedagogical grammar are put into operation, in teaching materials and/or in the classroom, the nature of the sequence that has been decided on changes. Teaching materials tend to be published at a number of levels, or if only one title is published, a level for it will likely be indicated. Similarly, language courses themselves are also typically described as being for learners of a particular level. Consequently, the grammar sequence decided on can no longer simply be thought of as a single list of grammar points, sequenced relative to one another, but as a series of grammar points allocated to particular levels. Hence, a beginner level course of coursebook will contain the first chunk' of the grammar points in the sequence, an elementary level course or coursebook will contain the next chunk, and so on.<sup>3</sup>

The question of levels clearly goes beyond just the teaching of grammar. However, since any level system will impact on how the teaching of grammatical items is organised, we might ask whether there is an optimum number of levels, and, for a specific language, whether particular areas of grammar should be taught at particular levels. The literature on pedagogical grammar is however generally silent on the issue. Clearly the practical need to divide learning into stages, in language courses and teaching materials, is a key reason for the development of the idea of levels. However, this section will also speculate that examinations and teaching frameworks such as the Common European Framework (also known as the CEFR, discussed later in this section) have also had an influence in cementing the perception of levels in practitioners.

The basic premise of levels – that learners gradually progress through levels of competency on their way to whichever level of ability they eventually ascertain –

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<sup>3</sup> In this regard, there is often a distinction between pedagogical grammar books published at multiple levels, and coursebooks. The former tend to be organised in an A-Z format or by area of grammar (Chalker, 1994), so the order of presentation from first page to last does not constitute a sequence based on the principles discussed above. By contrast, particularly at lower levels, coursebooks both sequence grammar across levels but also within them. For example, the first unit of *Headway Beginner Student's Book* (Soars and Soars, 2013a) covers *am/are, my/your*, and *This is ...*, whereas the final unit covers *going to* and present continuous for future reference.

seems to be widely accepted. Brindley (1999) argues that 'It would seem reasonable enough to assume that learning a language consists of an evolution through progressive levels of mastery, each approximately more closely to the target' (p. 116). What is more, according to Brindley, it should be possible to describe language competence at these different levels: 'a cross-sectional of description of typical behaviours at each level would by definition constitute a picture of the developmental process over time.' (ibid.). Very often, such descriptions are offered by examination boards, although Brindley himself notes that the empirical basis of rating scales, if it indeed exists, is rarely provided (ibid. p. 117).

At least from a British and European perspective, the gradual expansion of the levels at which Cambridge examinations of English are offered may have been influential in developing the perception of levels for EFL. The examinations originally known as the Lower Certificate (now 'Cambridge English: First', aligned to B2 in the CEFR) and the Certificate of Proficiency in English (now 'Cambridge English: Proficiency', aligned to C2 in the CEFR) are long established, with the former first introduced in 1913, and the latter in 1939 (Weir, 2013, p. 4). Additional examinations aligned to A2, B1 and C1 were introduced in 1994, 1980 and 1991 respectively (ibid.), meaning that Cambridge's 'main suite', that is to say their 'General English' exams, are offered at five levels.

The reason for the 'expansion' from two to five levels is argued to be social and economic, with a perceived need 'on the part of intergovernmental agencies in Europe to define language teaching and learning goals more precisely and to make a start on delineating the stages of progression across the language proficiency spectrum' (Weir, Vidakovic and Dimitrova-Galaczi, 2013, p. 421; a similar point is also made by North and Schneider, 1998, p. 217), and was made possible thanks to insights from research in applied linguistics and pedagogical developments, which allowed examination boards to achieve 'a more explicit specification of the constructs underlying their English language tests at differing levels of proficiency'. (Weir, Vidakovic and Dimitrova-Galaczi, 2013, pp. 421–422). In this sense, it seems that defining of levels by Cambridge to a certain extent went hand in hand with political and societal demands for them to be defined.

There appears to be no single explanation as to why Cambridge English examinations came to be offered at five levels, rather than six, or eight or twenty. Weir et al (2013, pp. 426–444) discuss in detail the various elements that make up the constructs for the five levels in the different papers of Cambridge examinations (for example, the text types and exercise types featured in reading paper, task demands in the speaking paper, and the changing cognitive demands made in the listening paper at different levels) and how these are said to reflect the cognitive processes involved in language use. Yet they do not explain what, if anything, the five levels actually represent overall.

Moving outside of Europe, the USA has an equally long history of language assessment, with various entities currently setting standards and offering certifications. The Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale is highly influential, even in Europe (North and Schneider, 1998, p. 217), and describes competence in ‘foreign languages’ (i.e. not English) at six levels, from 0 to 5. The labels 0+, 1+, 2+ etc. can also be used ‘when proficiency substantially exceeds one skill level and does not fully meet the criteria for the next level’ (Interagency Language Roundtable, n.d.). The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) offers its own set of ‘proficiency guidelines’, based on the ILR scale, which set out bands of proficiency at five levels (Swender, E., Conrad, D. J., Vicars, R., 2012). The lower three of these levels are themselves divided into three sub-levels, creating a total system of 11 levels. Specifically for English, the TOEFL examination offered by the English Testing Service (ETS) has been in existence since the early 1960s. Candidates taking the test simply receive a score out of 120 (the examination is not offered at different levels as such), but ETS provides an interpretation document which divides the scores for the four papers which make up the overall examination into either three or four bands (for example, for the Reading paper there are three bands – Low, Intermediate and High, whereas for the Speaking paper there are four – Weak, Limited, Fair and Good) (Educational Testing Service, 2014).

An independent (at least ostentatiously) development to the setting of levels by examination boards was the creation of the Common European Framework for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001, 2017). The CEFR is widely used within Europe and beyond (Chalhoub-Deville, 2014; Hulstijn, 2014) and is also influential within

the ELT publishing industry, in that there is an increasing tendency for ELT coursebooks to align themselves with CEFR levels (Timmis, 2015, p. 128). The framework is based on a system of six levels, A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, to describe learners' competence in a foreign language; competence is itself defined through the use of 'can do' statements, setting out what learners can do at the different levels. As in the ILR scale, 'plus levels' are sometimes identified in the CEFR, with, for example, the A2 level divided into A2.1 and A2.2 (or A2 and A2+) (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 32). Conversely, as suggested by the alphabetic labelling system, the six levels themselves represent three 'broad levels': 'Basic User' (A1, A2), Independent User (B1, B2) and Proficient User (C1, C2) (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 23).

The theoretical motivation for the use of levels in assessment and course design has not been without question. For example, the ACTFL guidelines have been criticised in that they are not based on research into how languages are actually acquired (Kramsch, 1986; Savignon, 1985). As for the CEFR, Hulstijn (2007, 2014) has underlined the fact that the scaling of the CEFR descriptors (the 'can do' statements) was based on judgements by teachers and experts, not on learner data. He also points out that there is no empirical evidence that learners actually progress up through the CEFR levels as they are defined. The choice of six levels in the CEFR has also raised questions. The use of six levels is described in the CEFR as reflecting a 'a wide, though by no means universal, consensus on the number and nature of levels appropriate to the organisation of language learning and the public recognition of achievement' (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 22–23); as Chalhoub-Deville (2014, p. 250) notes, this suggests that 'tradition, politics and practical demands' played a significant role in deciding on the level system.

The use of scales and bands has also been called into question from a psycholinguistic point of view. Bialystok relates language proficiency to processing skills, arguing that it is a mistake to conceive of proficiency quantitatively:

Language proficiency is not a single achievement marking some quantitative level of progress with language learning. Rather, it is the ability to apply specific processing skills to problems bearing identifiable cognitive demands.' (1991, p. 75)

One consequence of this, for Bialystok, is that a learner may 'exhibit a range of proficiency with the language that is determined by the impact of the task demands

on the processing abilities of the learner' (ibid.). In other words, not all aspects of an individual's language proficiency are likely to fit neatly into a single descriptive proficiency band. Related concerns were also expressed by John Trim, a key figure in the development of the CEFR, who noted his original reluctance to using the word 'level' in the original 'threshold' description<sup>4</sup> from which the CEFR eventually grew, and also his reluctance to provide competency descriptions at multiple levels, as was eventually carried out in the CEFR. However, again, practical and political considerations won out:

We used the term 'level' originally despite deep misgivings concerning the concept. We could see no reason to break the process of language learning into a series of steps and did not like the image of learning poured into an empty vessel, with skills and knowledge like sand in an hourglass. [...] Over time, it became apparent that our reasoning took little account of the realities of the social organization of language learning. State education systems were organised into primary, lower secondary and upper secondary, further and higher educational sectors, and their interfaces called for assessments of proficiency that would provide objectives for one sector and starting points for the next. Similarly, the major institutions of adult education had to cater for large numbers of students at different stages of development, to sort them into financially and organizationally viable groups with realistic common objectives. (Trim, 2012, p. 28)

In conclusion, despite the theoretical concerns, proficiency levels serve important practical purposes. Furthermore, given the influence of examinations on teachers and teaching, in addition to documents such as the CEFR and the ACTFL scales, it seems likely that the construct of the proficiency level is readily perceived by learners, teachers and course designers, even if they do represent an 'oversimplification of the language learning process' (Brindley, 1999, p. 134), and even if the precise system of levels set out by various entities is rarely explained in detail and often appears to be at least to a certain extent arbitrary.

## 2.6 Second Language Acquisition perspectives

The review thus far has in a sense assumed that foreign language teaching necessarily involves the explicit teaching of grammar, and that this grammar should

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<sup>4</sup> The 'threshold level' was a concept developed in the 1970s, 'a metaphor which is designed to capture the notion of "crossing over" from the dependency of a learner to the self-sufficiency of a trained language user' (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004, p. 338). The term 'threshold' is used in the CEFR to describe the B1 level.

be graded across competency levels. However, it must be acknowledged at this point that within the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), the question of the explicit teaching of grammar is a controversial one. A complete discussion of research on the teaching of grammar in SLA is beyond the scope of this section. However, an overview will be provided, with a particular focus on the question of syllabus design and sequencing.

Crucial to discussions on the value of the explicit teaching grammar is the question of 'interface', essentially the relationship between explicit and implicit knowledge. Three positions are identified: no interface, strong interface and weak interface.

The 'no interface position' makes a distinction between learning and acquisition; the former is the development of an explicit, conscious knowledge of grammar rules and the latter the implicit knowledge actually needed to speak and use a language (Krashen, 1982). Explicit knowledge, in this model, cannot lead to implicit knowledge, and knowledge a grammar rule can at most function as a what Krashen terms a 'monitor'. Krashen's 'monitor hypothesis' posits that 'formal rules, or conscious learning, play only a limited role in second language performance' (ibid. p. 16) and learners can only use conscious rules in language production if they have time, are focussing on form and know the rule fully (ibid.). Given the time requirement when attending to explicitly learned grammar rules, the 'monitor' is said to be most likely to be useful in 'writing and prepared speech' (ibid. p. 90). Explicit grammatical knowledge, overall, is argued to be peripheral to the mastery of a language, and language learners are instead said to simply need sufficient comprehensible input, as with this they will be able to unconsciously acquire the rules of a language. Clearly, if this position is accepted, then pedagogical grammar of the type discussed above is not required. However, there does nevertheless appear to be a role for the grading of grammatical material: learners are to be provided with input slightly above their competency level (the so-called 'i+1'), and this presumably requires teachers to grade and sequence the material used as input based on judgements of difficulty.

The strong interface position draws on skill-acquisition theory (DeKeyser, 2015). The fundamental idea is that the learning of a language – or at least some aspects of it – is similar to the learning of many other skills: 'the learning of a wide variety of

skills shows a remarkable similarity in development[.] [T]his [...] can be accounted for by a set of basic principles common to the acquisition of all skills.' (ibid. p. 94). There are three stages of skill acquisition: i) the cognitive stage, in which learners acquire knowledge *about* a skill; ii) the associative stage, where this declarative knowledge becomes procedural knowledge (essentially, knowledge of how to do something); and finally, iii) the autonomous stage, in which, through large amounts of practice, the behaviour related to the skill is displayed fluently and spontaneously – so called 'automatization'. The strong interface position posits that explicit knowledge 'plays a *causal* role in the development of procedural knowledge' (DeKeyser, 2015, p. 103); at the level of grammar, this means that developing declarative knowledge of grammar will subsequently help develop procedural knowledge of it. This theory appears to be compatible with language learning based around a graded, structural syllabus – each area of grammar can be taught and practised like any other skill.

Finally, the weak interface position also sees a connection between explicit and implicit knowledge, but argues that the relationship is weaker than that suggested by skill-acquisition theory (Ellis, 1993). While the explicit study of grammar can increase the speed of learning and improve grammatical accuracy, explicit knowledge can only lead to implicit knowledge if the learners are 'developmentally ready to incorporate it' (Ellis, 1993, p. 98). The phrase 'developmentally ready' relates to the hypothesis of an 'internal syllabus' – the claim that there is natural order of acquisition which remains impervious to instruction. There are two main sources for this claim: firstly, Dulay and Burt's (1974) morpheme study, which appeared to show that all learners of English acquire grammatical morphemes in largely the same order; secondly, Pienemann's processability theory (Pienemann, 1989), which suggests that certain syntactic structures are acquired in a predictable order in a number of languages.

Ellis' position is that a structural syllabus can still be used, but that its aim should not be to develop an explicit knowledge of language, but an implicit one, which, it is argued, will help learners *notice* features of the language when they are exposed to them that might otherwise be ignored. The 'noticing hypothesis' was first proposed by Schmidt, who stated that 'what learners notice in input is what becomes intake

for learning' (Schmidt, 1995, p. 20). Ellis makes various suggestions for how a structural syllabus could be organised, including 'traditional' criteria such as usefulness and difficulty. The crucial difference is that the aim, when each item in the syllabus is covered in a lesson, is not instant or gradual mastery of the item in question, but the facilitation of the learning of the item further down the line.

Returning to the question of 'natural order', an additional suggestion might be to base a structural syllabus on the order in which learners are said to acquire the grammar. This has thus far not been possible; as Richards (2001, p. 12) notes, 'little reliable information on acquisition sequences has been produced that could be of practical benefit in planning a grammar syllabus'. Part of the reason for this is that the results of the research are somewhat fragmentary, with a limited number of morphemes and syntactic patterns studied (DeKeyser, 2015, p. 102). In addition, there is the question of how easy it is to ascertain, in a language class, the learning stage of each learner, and then, assuming that not everyone in the class is at the same level, deciding what to teach (Ur, 2019, p. 8). Furthermore, recent studies (Luk and Shirai, 2009; Murakami and Alexopoulou, 2016) have called into question the validity of the original morpheme studies, suggesting that the claimed 'universal' order of acquisition is to a great extent L1 dependent, while DeKeyser has noted that most studies on acquisition order use data from learners acquiring the language implicitly (often children), with very large amounts of exposure (2015, p. 102) – learning conditions that do not apply universally in language teaching.

Both the strong and weak interface position seem to be compatible with the practice of using some kind of sequenced, structural syllabus. The strong interface position suggests that grammatical learning *can* occur in a teaching programme that follows a pre-determined list of grammar points to study; it would therefore make sense to order the items on the list using principles such as those discussed in Section 2.4 above. The weak interface position does not seem to require a radically different approach to syllabus design; a logical system of ordering also seems to be desirable, but there should not be the expectation that learners will actually start to *use* the grammar in the order in which it is taught. The no-interface position does not endorse the explicit teaching of grammar, but theorists such as Krashen imply that grading is required in the input material used for teaching.

A different perspective is offered by Michael Long, who advocates what he calls an analytic syllabus – learners are exposed to input that is as authentic and natural as possible, and then have ‘to *analyze* the input, and thereby to induce rules of grammar and use’ (Long, 2015, p. 20). Long argues for language programmes based around a syllabus of tasks, not grammar structures. In lessons, the learners’ attention should be drawn *reactively* to any language problems, including grammatical ones, that emerge – what Long describes as a ‘focus on form’ (Long, 2015, p. 27). Because this focus is reactive, no pre-planned grammatical syllabus is possible. Long argues that concentrating on the areas of language that emerge while learners are completing tasks increases the likelihood that the focus ‘will be synchronized with the learner’s internal syllabus, developmental stage, and processing ability’ (ibid.), although he does not explain why this is the case.

The kind of syllabus advocated by Long reflects a further distinction that can be made in syllabus design: ‘lockstep’ (Ferguson, 2001; Robinson, 2011) versus individualised learning. A course which makes a use of a pre-determined list of structures to cover presupposes the idea that learners can progress in ‘lockstep’, that is to say all at the same speed, and all acquiring the same knowledge at the same time. Such an approach does not take into account the inevitable variation in the rate of acquisition; by comparison, it is argued that analytical syllabuses, with their reactive focus on learner needs, offer greater opportunities for individualised language use and learning (Ferguson, 2001, p. 94).

While there is disagreement in the positions described above on the design and use of syllabuses, one observation that can be made is that there is no disagreement on the grammar to be taught. Those who take the position that an explicit focus on grammar can be helpful do not feel the need to discuss which pedagogical grammar points should be covered, or indeed the nature of the rules themselves. Even with Long’s formulation, where the grammar to be studied is that which emerges spontaneously while the learners complete tasks, it is often the teacher’s role to identify which grammar should be focussed on, and his or her decisions seem likely to be influenced by his or her own knowledge and experience of grammar; in most cases, this knowledge and experience will presumably be of established accounts of pedagogical grammar. In this sense, the literature on SLA does not attempt to

address the question of which grammar should be taught, but more when it should be taught (if indeed it should at all), and how.

## 2.7 Summary

As we have seen, there exists an extensive body of research on pedagogical grammar. Views have been put forward on how pedagogical grammars should be structured, how the elements of which they are made up can be selected, how the rules and descriptions related to these elements should be written and presented, and how these elements can be sequenced. The perspectives examined from Second Language Acquisition research focus again on the types of syllabus employed, but all appear to presuppose the existence of at least some kind of list of grammar points relevant for learners, even if this is never used as an ordering principle for teaching or is never seen by learners.

However, judging from published teaching materials such as coursebooks, there already exists a strong consensus on the teaching of grammar for EFL in terms of the items selected for teaching, and the order in which they are taught. The literature reviewed above can aid an understanding of this in only a very limited way, as it does not set out to explain why the ELT grammar canon at present is the way it is, but rather discusses how it – or indeed, the pedagogical grammar for any language – should be. For an explanation of the nature of the grammar canon for EFL, we need to look elsewhere. Chapter 3 therefore attempts to fill, in part, this research gap by providing a historical account, supported by primary sources, of the evolution of EFL pedagogical grammar.

### 3 Canon and consensus: an evolutionary perspective

The literature review in the previous chapter was able to provide a general outline of issues related to pedagogical grammar, including the question of levels. However, as was discussed, there is very little research that directly addresses the content of pedagogical grammar for EFL either as it is now, or how it developed historically. More generally, there is no existing framework for explaining the existence of a canon of pedagogical grammar or for exploring where it came from. This thesis takes the position that in order to understand the consensus that has emerged on pedagogical grammar for ELT, it is necessary to consider primary sources – particularly grammars and coursebooks – and its stakeholders, such as authors, publishers, and teachers. As we will see in the coming chapters, the latter form what is at times a somewhat disparate group, with often competing interests, that nonetheless aggregate to form a consensus.

As a first step in providing a complete picture of the nature of the ELT grammar canon, this chapter will therefore outline how the traditions of grammatical description of the English language have evolved, up until, and including, the period known as the ‘Great Tradition’ (Linn, 2006). This will involve both examining primary sources and providing an overview of the historical context in order to gain a fuller understanding of its nature and evolution.

#### 3.1 Early accounts and Latin influence

The first formal description of English grammar is said to be William Bullokar’s 1586 *Pamphlet for Grammar* (Linn, 2006, p. 74). Bullokar based his description on Lily’s Grammar – a description of Latin grammar, written in English and first published in 1540 under a different name. Bullokar’s intention in producing his description seems to have been to show that the English language was rule based and could be analysed in the same way as Latin (*ibid.*). However, even within Bullokar’s work there appear to be doubts as to how sophisticated the rule system in English actually is: ‘As English hath few and short rules for the declining of words, so it hath few rules for joining words in sentence or in construction (Bullokar, 1586 cited in Michael, 1970, p. 467). Doubts about whether English actually had syntax continued in works until the last decades of the eighteenth century (Michael, 1970, p. 468).

The influence of Latin – the language of science at the time – on English grammars during the period was strong, and its influence did not extend merely to the choice of metalanguage used to talk about grammar. Rather, descriptions of English grammar were presented through the framework of Latin grammar, meaning that the structure of the English language was made to fit around structural categories used for Latin. The influence of Latin can be clearly seen in Bullokar’s treatment of English nouns, for example, where he claims the existence of a case system within which nouns are ‘declined with five cases in both numbers’ (1586, cited in Linn, 2006, p. 74) whereas in reality, nouns in English at the time were marked only for number and possession, as in modern English.

Attempts were made to present English grammar through the prism of Latin well into the 18th century. Perhaps the clearest example of just how inappropriate such an approach could be is the almost comical table reproduced below, which appears in John Sterling’s 1735 *A Short View of English Grammar*, showing the supposed ‘declination’ of the adjective ‘wise’:

	<i>Nom.</i>	<i>Voc.</i>	<i>Acc.</i>	<i>Gen.</i>	<i>Dat.</i>	<i>Abl</i>
<i>Singular</i>						
Masculine	wise	wise	wise	wise	wise	wise
Feminine	wise	wise	wise	wise	wise	wise
Neuter	wise	wise	wise	wise	wise	wise
<i>Plural</i>						
Masculine	wise	wise	wise	wise	wise	wise
Feminine	wise	wise	wise	wise	wise	wise
Neuter	wise	wise	wise	wise	wise	wise

(cited in Michael (1987, p. 319))

While the influence of Latin in the teaching of English grammar in this period was in part the result of reverence towards the classical language, and of the simple following of an educational tradition going back centuries, there were two other contributing factors. Firstly, in this period there was believed to exist a kind of universal grammar (not to be confused with Chomsky’s universal grammar) which governed most or all languages:

'A further difficulty [...] was the generally accepted view that the grammars of modern European languages, and of Latin, ancient Greek and Hebrew, were variations of a general grammar common to most languages, and even of a universal grammar common to all.'  
(Michael, 1987, 319)

With such a viewpoint, it made sense to base descriptions of previously undescribed languages such as English on developed systems to describe Latin and Greek. So strong was the influence from Latin that many supposedly English grammars in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were in effect simultaneously grammars of both English and Latin (ibid.).

Secondly, there were very practical reasons for using Latin as a starting point for descriptions of English. In the seventeenth century, pedagogical grammars of English as a foreign language began to emerge (Linn, 2006, p. 75), and it seems apparent that the authors of such works made references to Latin equivalents as a way of explaining English grammar to foreigners, who were expected to already have a firm grounding of Latin grammar (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004, p. 96). The following example from Ben Jonson's *English Grammar* (an early pedagogical grammar, which will be discussed in more detailed in Section 3.2.1) is instructive:

"The futures are declared by the infinitive and the Verb, *shall*, or *will*:

as *Amabo: I shall, or will love.*

*Amavero* addeth thereunto *have*, taking the nature of two divers

Times; that is, of the Future and the time Past:

*I shall have loved: or*

*I will have loved.*

The Perfect times are expressed by the Verb *have*: as,

*Amavi. Amaveram.*

*I have loved. I had loved.*

*Amaverim* and *Amavissem* add *might* unto the former Verb: as,

*I might have loved."* (Jonson, 1640/1909, p. 35)

The number of grammars of English published increased exponentially over the centuries. In the first 100 years after the publication of Bullokar's title, just over 100 were published, which increased to 270 new titles by the end of the 17th century (Linn, 2006, p. 75). In the 18th and 19th centuries, the market exploded. In the 19th century alone, 856 were published, hence the title of Ian Michael's chapter on 19th century titles, 'More Than Enough English Grammars' (Michael, 1991).

Critical in this later period was the widening readership of grammars; instead of works aimed mainly at (Latin speaking) scholars, grammars were now produced for a wide variety of users, and explicitly marketed as such. One example of this is Cobbett's *A Grammar of the English Language, In a Series of Letters* (originally published in 1818), which included the sub-title "Intended for the Use of Schools and of Young Persons in General; But More Especially for the Use of Soldiers, Sailors, Apprentices, and Plough-boys. To which are Added Six Lessons Intended to Prevent Statesmen from Using False Grammar and from Writing in an Awkward Manner" (O'Keefe and Mark, 2018, p. 140). Titles aimed at such specific readerships were not uncommon; as Michael notes:

'It was commonplace for a would-be grammarian to argue that local needs were subtly different to the needs of learners elsewhere or that the analysis of a particular grammatical point was erroneous in all competing grammar books, and so a new work was needed.'  
(Michael, 1991, p. 12)

We must suppose from the increasing number of publications that by the 19th century, descriptions of English grammar had reached a high level of maturity and confidence, if not always agreement amongst themselves (Michael, 1970, *passim*). Whereas four hundred years previously no grammar of English had existed, hundreds of titles were now available, and a 'canon' of English grammar was now being established.

### 3.2 Descriptions in 'traditional' grammars

This section will not attempt to provide a full account of exactly how grammar has been treated in grammars over the centuries. Ian Michael's (1970) account of grammars up until 1800 runs to over 600 pages, and, as noted above, 856 grammars were published in the 19th century alone (Michael, 1991, p. 12). However, as Michael (*ibid.*) notes, many of these titles – particularly in the 19th century – were

extremely derivative of one another, so any title chosen for analysis is likely to be broadly representative of the majority of the titles.<sup>5</sup>

This section will therefore briefly examine two titles. Ben Jonson's *The English Grammar* (1640/1909) is chosen as an example of a very early pedagogical grammar, and because Jonson himself is a key figure in English Literature in the 17th and 18th centuries; Lindley Murray's *English Grammar* (1795/1823) is chosen as it was both hugely successful both in the USA and Britain, and was also highly influential on titles that followed it (Michael, 1991, p. 15)<sup>6</sup>. The following accounts attempt to summarise the grammatical contents of the grammars. Any notes or descriptions that deal exclusively with features of language that are now archaic (for example, third person plural *-en* verb endings) are not included. Jonson's *English Grammar* (1640).

Jonson's *English Grammar* runs to just 149 pages in the edition examined. Of these, the first 75 pages deal with the letters of the English alphabet, as was common in grammars of this period (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004, p. 96). This section covers pronunciation (ostensibly of the letters themselves, although in reality the section provides a phonemic inventory), making comments on etymology and comparisons with contemporary languages. The remainder of the book is closer to what a modern day reader would likely expect of a 'grammar'.

What is remarkable about Jonson's grammar is how familiar many of the language points chosen for description would be to a contemporary teacher of English as a Foreign Language. Jonson's grammar contains: nouns, including plurals and possessive forms; articles; a range of pronouns, including possessive pronouns, relative pronouns and reflexive pronouns are included; comparative and superlative forms; the passive; a wide range of linking words; and instructions on word order, including clause-final prepositions. What is perhaps most obviously lacking for a pedagogical grammar is explanations of usage, for example when to use one tense rather than another, or when to prefer the passive voice over the active. Also missing are a treatment of modal verbs, which are mentioned, seemingly in

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<sup>5</sup> The question of the evolution of individual areas of grammar will be examined in Chapter 8, which presents case studies of three areas of pedagogical grammar and traces their evolution from descriptions in historical accounts, up to their description in modern, ELT materials.

<sup>6</sup> Both titles are also included in the case study analysis in Chapter 8.

passing, as part of a focus on the correct form of verb required ‘when two verbs meet together’ (1640/1909, p. 131), and a focus on conditional forms or sentences. Finally, while the section on ‘syntax’ is large, the coverage is patchy and says little about overall sentence structure in English.

Some aspects of Jonson’s analytical system might surprise the modern reader. Particularly hard to understand from a contemporary perspective is the division of parts of speech into those that are marked for number, and those that are not, influenced by the theories of the 16th century French scholar, Pierre de la Ramée (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004, p. 97). Furthermore, his consolidation of nouns and adjectives into a single part of speech – ‘substantives’ – would be surprising to readers used to contemporary grammatical descriptions, although the categorisation of nouns, pronouns, adjectives and anything else that could be perceived as noun-like goes back to the Middle Ages.

On the other hand, some of the apparent peculiarities could conceivably be used in contemporary ELT grammar descriptions; for example, it might be helpful for learners to study irregular past and past participle forms in groups – as Jonson presents them – rather than as just part of a list, as is typical in modern pedagogical materials, even if the idea of dividing up English verbs into different conjugations seems at first sight nothing more than an attempt to force English verbs into a Latin framework.

### 3.2.1 Lindley Murray’s *English Grammar* (1823)

Murray’s grammar (1795/1823) is divided into four sections: orthography, etymology (including parts of speech), syntax, and a final section that combines prosody and punctuation. In reality, the section on etymology includes a large amount of grammatical description that would today be considered outside the realm of etymology.

At 309 pages in the edition examined, Murray’s work is over double the length of Jonson’s. Its aims as a schoolbook for L1 English children are reflected in its content. For example, no attempt is made to distinguish the meanings of different modal forms when they are covered; a brief note later (p. 90) states that ‘learners will readily perceive’ the difference, suggesting an intended readership of native speakers. Also present are warnings against ‘errors’ that seem likely to be features

of dialect or vernacular forms; for example, one section covers the misuse of double comparatives (e.g. *worser conduct, more superior*), although this had been considered elevated style at the time of Shakespeare (González Díaz, 2003). Elsewhere readers are warned not to confuse irregular past forms and past participles (e.g. 'He would have spoke'). The overall tone of the work is also noteworthy. The examples given are frequently moralistic or deal with issues of good governance, self-control etc., for example 'The old romans governed by benefits more than by fear.' or 'I shall hereafter employ my time more usefully.' On the penultimate page of the book, in an address to 'young students', Murray writes that he 'was influenced by a desire to facilitate your progress in learning, and, at the same time, to impress on your minds principles of piety and virtue' (Murray, 1795/1823, p. 306).

Despite the fact that his title was aimed at native speakers, Murray describes in great detail aspects of English that a native speaker would reasonably be expected *not* to need instruction in. The section on syntax, defined by Murray as consisting of concord ('the agreement which one word has with another, in gender, number, case, or person') and government ('that power which one part of speech has over another, in directing its mood, tense, or case') runs to over 70 pages. Elsewhere, a note in the section on the 'infinitive mood' advises that '[i]t may not, however, be generally proper for young persons beginning the study of grammar, to commit to memory all the tenses of the verbs'. So while the book is written with native speakers in mind, the book's aim often seems to be to 're-teach' them the language. The peculiarity of a school subject in which native speakers are expected to study the verbs of their mother tongue is noted by Michael: 'The pupils perforce surrendered to the authority and learnt by heart techniques designed to teach them linguistic skills which, unknown to them and their teachers, they already possessed. Such a situation, if it were unfamiliar, would be regarded with astonishment' (Michael, 1991, p. 11).

At the same time, Murray is on occasions surprisingly progressive, or at least, non-prescriptive. For example, Murray notes that 'none' can be either singular or plural, in contrast to modern prescriptive accounts, which tend to view a plural verb form as incorrect. Similarly, phrase-final prepositions are said to prevail 'in common

conversation, and [...] the familiar style in writing' (Murray, 1795/1823, p. 173), instead of being proscribed altogether. In the work, we also find suggestions that a strong consensus on how to treat certain areas of English grammar was being, or had already, developed. In the section on imperatives, Murray heads off potential criticism of his inclusion of *let* + subject + verb as first and third person imperatives, appealing to common practice as a justification for conclusion: 'the practice of our grammarians is so uniformly fixed, and so analogous to the languages, ancient and modern, which our youth have to study, that it would be an unwarrantable degree of innovation, to deviate from the established terms and arrangements.' (p. 30).

As discussed above, the proliferation of titles during this period indicates a maturity and growing confidence in grammatical descriptions of English. However, with the exception of a limited number of titles, including Jonson's grammar, the grammars produced before the twentieth century were aimed at native speakers of English. Murray's grammar, while lengthy, contains much that would be found in a modern pedagogical grammar, but also contains many gaps. So, while the use of articles is included, there is no discussion of countability of nouns; pronouns and possessive forms are covered in detail, but not quantifiers; the uses of different tenses are discussed, but conditional forms with *if* appear only as part of a discussion of the subjunctive. A range of modal verbs is included (although they are not labelled as such, or, indeed, named at all as a group), but Murray makes no attempt to explain their meaning.

Commenting on grammar-translation courses, Howatt and Widdowson (2004, p. 162) note the predominance of "'local" problems such as making verb agree with their nouns', at the expense of observing 'important regularities in complete sentence units', and the same observation could be made about much of the grammatical coverage in Murray. His is arguably not a particularly ambitious work – the intention never appears to be to provide a full account or description of English grammar, but rather is to clear up doubts in marginal cases. Indeed, Murray himself states that there is little point in grammarians attempting to influence established usage, and that they should instead instruct only on dubious points:

With respect to anomalies and variations of language, thus established, it is the grammarian's business to submit, not to remonstrate. [...] Cases which custom has left dubious, are certainly within the grammarian's province. Here, he may reason and

remonstrate on the ground of derivation, analogy, and propriety; and his reasonings may refine and improve the language[.]’ (Murray, 1795/1823, p. 145)

In short, in the centuries after Bullokar’s 1586 pamphlet, a tradition of grammatical description of English emerged and became established, primarily through the publication of grammars aimed at native speaker scholars and school children. Yet this was a special kind of grammar – not necessarily comprehensive, often prescriptive, and certainly not aimed with the non-native speaker in mind.

### 3.3 ‘The Great Tradition’: late 19th and early 20th century grammars

At the end of the 19th century, important changes were taking place in the field of language teaching, and in linguistics in general. The so-called ‘reform movement’ involved both efforts to reform secondary school language teaching in Europe, with an increased emphasis on spoken ability and a move away from grammar and literature, and also the introduction of the ‘Natural Method’ in the USA (also variously known as the ‘Berlitz Method’ and the ‘Direct Method’), with its focus on the teaching of conversation. At the same time, the emergence of the science of phonetics provided language teaching theorists with additional tools for the teaching of spoken languages.

During this period, a number of new grammars of English were also produced, forming what has been termed ‘The Great Tradition’ (Chalker and Weiner, 2003, p. 189). Grammars of type are often referred to as ‘scientific’, in contrast to the traditional, school grammars discussed above. The word ‘scientific’ was chosen by Henry Sweet, one of the most famous grammar authors of the time, in the preface of his 1892, two-volume *A New English Grammar*, and is representative of what Linn describes as the professionalisation of language teaching in the nineteenth century, and the results of the work of ‘an international community of English scholars, working together to advance understanding of the language’s structure’ (2006, p. 79). Gone was the opinionated, righteous tone of the older grammars, replaced by a more scientific, evidence-based and descriptive approach.

In addition to Sweet’s work, there are a number of other well-known and important grammars from this period, including Nesfield’s 1898 *English Grammar Past and Present*, Palmer’s 1924 *A Grammar of Spoken English On a Strictly Phonetic Basis*, Jespersen’s 1909–1949 *Modern English grammar on historical principles*, Poutsma’s

1904–1929 *Grammar of late modern English*, Krusinga's 1909–1932 *Handbook of present-day English* and Zandvoort's 1945 *A Handbook of English grammar*. As may be immediately apparent from the names of the authors, the latter four titles were all written by non-native speakers of English. In fact, to these titles might be added Maetzner's somewhat older *An English grammar: methodical, analytical and historical*, published in 1874, which Sweet used as a basis for his own, better-known grammar (Linn, 2006, p. 14)<sup>7</sup>. Aarts goes as far to argue that 'until 1972 [the publication of Quirk et al's *A Grammar of Contemporary English*] the major descriptions of English had been written by non-native grammarians' (1988, p. 163).

The prevalence of grammars written by non-native speaker grammarians might be surprising to those acquainted with modern, pedagogical grammars of EFL. However, it is significant beyond simply being a 'fun fact': the involvement of non-native speakers in writing grammars may have been a key step in the development of grammatical accounts of English – particularly pedagogical ones – due to the insights that non-native speaker grammarians may have gained by virtue of having learnt the language as a foreign language. Comments to this effect can be found in an anonymous review, from 1949, in the ELT journal, of Zandvoort's *A Handbook of English Grammar*. In praising the book, the review notes that while learners might expect that British authors would provide the most comprehensive grammars of English, it was in fact 'Continental scholars' that produced the most useful grammars:

Most of the others [i.e. grammar books not written by non-native speaker grammarians from mainland Europe] were written for those with English as their mother tongue, and do not meet the special needs of those to whom English is a foreign language. Throughout the book the author is able to explain and illustrate points of usage which no English [sic] author, writing for English people, would think of referring to. [...] It is on such points as these, to which the Englishman gives no conscious thought because usage comes to him without the need for reflection, that the Continental investigator of our language can be and is so helpful. ('Book Reviews', 1949b, pp. 53–54)

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<sup>7</sup> Poutsma, Krusinga and Zandvoort were all Dutch; the tradition of English grammars being written by Dutch grammarians goes back to 1586 (Linn, 2006, p. 17).

A similar sentiment can be found in an article by A. S. Hornby's in the *ELT Journal* on the structure *for + (pro)noun + to + infinitive*<sup>8</sup>. In his discussion, Hornby states that 'English' grammarians 'pay little attention to' the structure. Harold Palmer's grammar (described in Section 3.7 below) is said by Hornby to 'dismiss' it 'in four lines'. By contrast, Hornby argues, in 'grammar books written by European scholars we find that the construction has received a great deal of attention' (Hornby, 1951a, p. 121). Concluding, Hornby says that the structure 'is common enough to merit more attention than it receives in English grammars and books on composition.' (Hornby, 1951a, p. 124).

In short, then, the grammars of the Great Tradition – often written by non-native speakers – played a special, and key, role in developing a modern understanding of the grammar of English, both from the point of view of the content of descriptive grammars, and also in terms of the content of pedagogical accounts. This sentiment is confirmed by the contemporary grammarian Michael Swan, who notes that '[m]uch of what we know about English grammar was established by early twentieth-century scholars from Jespersen (1909) onwards' (Swan, 2013, p. 565).

### 3.4 Pedagogical grammar for ELT

We can now turn to the history of pedagogical grammar for ELT. As discussed, the principal focus of this section will be on primary sources. However, two additional steps will first be taken. Firstly, since ELT publications are seen as the clearest representation of the consensus on ELT pedagogical grammar, an overview of studies on the nature of the ELT publishing industry will be provided. Secondly, as the period described is a long one, a brief, and more general, historical overview of the period until examination will be presented.

### 3.5 The nature of the ELT publishing industry

Although ELT publishers produce a variety of materials, it is coursebooks that are said to be the most influential and receive the most attention in the literature, and this section will focus mainly on their characteristics and on discussion investigating their production. Sales of popular coursebook series reach hundreds of thousands a

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<sup>8</sup> An example of the structure is 'It is necessary for me to do it'. The combination of accusative pronoun and *to + infinitive* is sometimes known, including in other languages, as the *Accusativus cum infinitive* (or ACI).

year (Gray, 2002; Littlejohn, 1992), and in many cases a coursebook is used simultaneously as a de facto syllabus and exam specifications document (Harwood, 2014; Mares, 2003). What, then, is the nature of the publishing industry that produces these products?

ELT publishing is often described as being inherently conservative, favouring tried and trusted approaches over innovative ones. Littlejohn argues that the aim of publishers 'is largely to replicate the design characteristics of existing market leaders' (1992, p. 235), meaning that the amount of variation between titles is likely to be limited, while Burton states that publishers essentially have no interest in promoting change, and simply do their best to provide markets with the kinds of materials they want: 'publishers investigate current practices through market research, and produce materials to best facilitate these existing practices.' (2012, p. 97). On the question of grammatical content in particular, Ellis notes that most grammatical syllabuses are very similar and have changed little over the years, the reason for this being that 'it is safer to follow what has been done before' (2006, p. 89). This sentiment is echoed by Stranks, who describes grammatical content in many ELT publications as 'comfortingly familiar', reflecting an attitude in those who make decisions on the choice of syllabus and books to use as 'better the devil you know than the devil you don't' (2003, p. 338).

The explanation for these conservative tendencies is said to be the commercial imperatives that most publishers operate under. The investment costs of producing coursebooks is extremely high, and publishers are therefore under pressure from shareholders not to jeopardise them by producing materials that may not sell well (Amrani, 2011; Bell and Gower, 2011; Littlejohn, 1992; Maley, 2003; Tomlinson, 2011)<sup>9</sup>. Littlejohn describes this need to avoid risk as being '[a]t the heart of the premises adopted in the commercial publication of a main course [i.e. a coursebook]' (p. 221).

An interesting account explaining an author's perspective on these commercial imperatives is Mares (2003), who describes his own journey from a novice writer

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<sup>9</sup> There appears to be a contrast here with some other types of publishing. A literary publisher, for example, takes a far lower risk in publishing a novel by an unknown author because it will incur only limited – if any – costs while the author writes a manuscript.

with 'enthusiasm and unfettered idealism of youth' (2003, p. 136) to a more experienced author who understood that publishers wanted material that was 'new and different, but not too new and definitely not too different' (2003, p. 137). In terms of grammar, this more experienced writer also accepted that market requirements – mediated by marketing departments – meant that he would need to write materials using a graded grammar syllabus, even if this did not, in his opinion, match research findings on language acquisition, and at times seemed arbitrary:

[We] were told that the grammar syllabus needed to be graded accordingly, apparently to precedent, which as far as we could tell meant that the simple past could not be addressed until around Unit 7. This seemed odd to us, but apparently it was a market constraint.' (Mares, 2003, p. 137)

Accounts directly from publishers are more limited, but do shed some light on the issues. Amrani's 'insider' description of the processes employed by publishers to pilot and evaluate materials also contains some more general observations on the publishing processes; one issue identified by Amrani is the difficulty of creating materials to be used by many different groups of learners in different markets (the same observation is made by the author accounts of Bell and Gower (2011), and McCullagh (2010)), with a publisher only being able to make 'educated guesses' (Amrani, 2011, p. 271) on learners' likes and dislikes. Like Littlejohn and Burton, Amrani also notes the need for a publisher to consider the 'commercial attractiveness' of a product, but claims there is no contradiction between having such a focus and producing quality, pedagogically sound materials: 'Publishers are also aware that they have a responsibility to deliver high-quality materials which will teach language students effectively, so that their reputations as professional experts in materials development are maintained.' (2011, p. 269). Littlejohn is less optimistic, arguing that "Satisficing" or the finding of solutions which are "good enough" will be evident in both the pedagogic aspects of the materials and in the production aspects.' (1992, p. 221).

As we have seen, a frequent theme to emerge from author accounts of the writing process is the sense of needing to work to requirements imposed by a publisher. Amrani's account offers an interesting counterpoint to this, suggesting that, rather than being the source of the restrictions, publishers are themselves restricted by external factors: 'course content, approach and task design is often already

established by exam syllabus guidelines or standards [...] [P]ublishers have less of a free hand than previously as there are clearly defined international market expectations which they now need to work within to secure course adoptions.' (2011, p. 268). On the actual topic of her chapter – the piloting and evaluation of materials – Amrani notes that development cycles of products have become much shorter, leaving less time for testing of books, including how their content is sequenced: '[M]ost publishers are now working to development cycles of only two or three years. This leaves little if no time for full piloting [...]' (2011, p. 268). Presumably such time restrictions would tend to increase the attraction of tried and tested syllabus structures that have been known 'to work' previously.

Overall, the picture to emerge is of an ELT publishing industry that has very specific needs and operates under a number of restrictions. The high investment costs associated with the production of coursebooks means that risks have to be eliminated, or at least limited as much as possible, in a way that is presumably not true for all types of publishing; the consequence of this is a tendency towards conservatism, a preference towards the publication of materials that are similar to those that have already seen commercial success. Simultaneously, publishers need to consider the needs of many different markets, many of which sometimes have apparently arbitrary requirements. Published materials are therefore the result of compromise between different actors and different needs. They must also tread carefully when considering innovation, preferring the 'minimally evolutionary' to the revolutionary (Littlejohn, 1992, p. 206). As far as grammar is concerned, the pressure to produce materials that are similar to those already on the market leads to the use of graded grammatical syllabuses populated with tried and trusted structures, using a tried and trusted sequence.

In terms of grammatical content, a number of studies – often using empirical, corpus evidence – have criticised the presentation and description of various aspects of grammar in ELT publications. Examples of such studies include Barbieri and Eckhardt's account of coverage of reported speech in coursebooks (2007), Conrad's (2004) discussion of the (lack of) coverage in coursebooks of *though* as a 'linking adverbial', Shortall's (2007) discussion of the representation of present perfect, Gabrielatos' (2006), Jones and Waller's (2011) and Maule's (1988) critiques of the

traditional coursebook treatment of conditional sentences, and Holmes's (1988) analysis of the (mis)representation of doubt and certainty in coursebooks. Equally significant are areas of language that have never established themselves in the ELT grammar consensus but which nonetheless seem to have pedagogic value, for example, the features of 'spoken grammar' identified by Carter and McCarthy (1995), or 'pattern grammar' (outlined in Section 2.3); it has been claimed that the explicit teaching and practice of the latter would encourage understanding, accuracy, fluency, and flexibility in learners' language output (Hunston, Francis and Manning, 1997).

### 3.6 Historical overview

This section will set out an overview of developments in grammar coverage in ELT publishing – particularly in terms of coursebooks and pedagogical grammars – in what Howatt and Widdowson (2004) refer to as the 'modern era' of ELT, that which began around 1900. According to Howatt and Widdowson, the start of the 20th century was the period in which ELT started to become 'an autonomous profession with a distinctive contribution to make to language education' (2004, p. 231), and it is in this period that a pedagogical grammar for EFL emerged. In order to provide as full and rich an account as possible, this section will provide a historical review in two main parts; firstly, four historical 'threads' will be set out, to provide an overview of events in the 'background' (in the background from the point of view of the evolution of grammar). Secondly, a number of key titles in the history of pedagogical grammar for ELT will be examined.

The four threads to be set out are as follows:

- Palmer, Hornby and the work at IRET
- The USA: Structuralism and the audiolingual approach
- New input from linguistics
- Modern pedagogical and descriptive grammars

These threads reflect in part the framework used in Howatt and Smith (2014), focussing, however, on those areas particularly relevant to the question of pedagogical grammar content. The threads are not intended to provide a purely linear, chronological account, as they overlap both in time and in content. However, the intention is to establish a basic picture of events and trends in ELT publishing

and the ELT industry, through which the analyses in the rest of this thesis can be viewed.

3.6.1 Palmer, Hornby and the work at the Institute for Research in English Teaching  
Section 2.4 discussed British teacher and scholar Harold Palmer's ideas on 'gradation' – how grammatical material should be sequenced in foreign language teaching. Our discussion of the British 'thread' in the history of ELT grammar also begins with Palmer.

In the early stages of the 'modern' era of ELT, there was inevitably a lack of a strong, theoretical base in terms of pedagogy. In addition, there was also a lack of consensus on or knowledge of exactly *what* aspects of the English language should be taught to learners of EFL. In terms of grammar, there had been, as we have seen, a long (and infamous) tradition of English grammar taught to English-speaking schoolchildren; however, as we saw in Section 3.3 above, the study of English grammar had recently been revolutionised by the new, scientific grammars of the 'Great Tradition'.

One of the first people to address the issue of *what* needed to be taught to learners of EFL was Palmer, in his 1921 title, *The Principles of Language Study*. The book discusses a wide range of issues related to language learning and teaching, but of most interest to us here is his discussion of grammar and the content of grammars. In the first chapter, in which he discusses the question of the unconscious learning of a language, Palmer asks the following questions:

Do you say *I go always there* or *I always go there*? You certainly use the latter form. Why? Have you ever been told that a certain class of adverbs (among them the word *always*) is placed before and not after the verb? Have you been told that there are twenty-three exceptions to the rule, and have you ever learnt these exceptions? [...] In what cases do you replace the word *far* by the expression *a long way*? What are the precise laws governing the respective uses of *went* and *did go*? Which are the English 'postposition's, if any? In what cases do we use nouns unpreceded by any article or other determinative word? What is the exact difference between *had you* and *did you have*? (Palmer, 1921, pp. 38–39)

Continuing, Palmer states that these examples 'are not contained in any manual of English grammar nor even taught as a school subject' (p. 39). Although Palmer's intention here is to demonstrate to (L1 English) readers that they have no explicit knowledge of many areas of their own grammar, and must therefore have learned such 'rules' unconsciously, he is also indirectly making the case for the need for a

pedagogical grammar of EFL; it seems likely that the examples chosen emerge from his own direct experience of the kinds of problems his own learners of EFL had experienced, and his point that ‘manuals of English grammar’ do not address them shows that published accounts of grammar for learners were limited. As we saw above, it was very often non-native speaker grammarians who were able to move grammatical accounts of English along from those aimed at native speakers, to those covering areas of grammar likely to be useful for learners of EFL.

Palmer published his own pedagogical grammar, *A Grammar of Spoken English*, in 1924, and this is described in Section 3.7 below. However, the ‘flavour’ of pedagogical grammar that Palmer is more commonly associated with is that of ‘patterns’. The idea is to identify the ‘grammatical peculiarities pertaining to individual words’ (Palmer, 1938, p. 3) – essentially the syntactic context(s) in which they appear, or typically appear – and use these as a basis for teaching and practice. In his *A Grammar of English Words* (1938), Palmer focuses on the typical patterns associated with 1000 words; for the verbs included among these, Palmer identifies 27 patterns which each verb can be used with. So, for example, the verb *sort* is said to use ‘V.P. 4’ and ‘V.P. 6’ (= verb patterns no. 4 and 6), which are as follows:

4. Verb X Direct Object

[...]

6. Verb X Direct Object X Adverbial Complement

(Palmer, 1938, xvi)

There was a strong synergy between content and methodology with patterns. In a much earlier publication, Palmer had explained the use of ‘substitution tables’, such as the following:

<i>I</i>	<i>saw</i>	<i>two</i>	<i>books</i>	<i>here</i>	<i>yesterday.</i>
<i>You</i>	<i>put</i>	<i>three</i>	<i>letters</i>	<i>there</i>	<i>last week.</i>
<i>We</i>	<i>left</i>	<i>a few</i>	<i>keys</i>	<i>on the table</i>	<i>on Sunday.</i>
<i>They</i>	<i>found</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>good ones</i>	<i>in this box</i>	<i>this morning.</i>

(Palmer, 1916, v)

For Palmer, such substitution tables are a way of practising language and a tool for learners to create novel sentences; he describes substitution as a ‘process by which

any authentic sentence may be multiplied indefinitely by substituting any of its words or word-groups by others of the same grammatical family and within certain semantic limits.' (ibid. p. iv). The above table can be used, according to Palmer, to create '4096 perfectly rational sentences' (ibid. p. v). At the level of classroom pedagogy, use of substitution tables and drills typically involved the learners repeating whole sentences spoken by the teacher, with the sentences at first unchanged, and then after with various elements being changed in order to create 'novel' sentences (see King (1959) for a detailed account of different possible techniques).

Palmer's work and research on patterns had started while he was director of the Institute for Research in English Teaching (IRET) in Tokyo, Japan<sup>10</sup>. Upon Palmer's return to the UK, the directorship of the institute was taken over by colleague A. S. Hornby, who continued the work. The fruits of the research can be found in a large number of Hornby's publications; for example, his 1954 reference guide to verb, adjective and noun patterns, *A Guide to Patterns and Use in English*, became a standard reference work for materials writers (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 38). Unlike Palmer, Hornby did not consider these patterns to be a type of 'grammar', a word which he seemed to believe had negative connotations, harking back to the traditional school grammars discussed in Section 3.2. Hornby preferred the term 'structure', and discussed the difference in the introduction to *The teaching of structural words and sentence patterns: stage one*, a resource book for teachers setting out both the patterns to teach and how to teach them:

Structures are closely related to grammar, but not to traditional grammar. [...] Contrasts of position are far more important in English than inflected forms of words. Such terms as nominative, accusative, and dative, necessary for Latin grammar, are of little or no value in the study of English, and quite unnecessary in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language' (Hornby, 1959, pp. x-xi)

Another interesting aspect here is that in 1959, Hornby still felt it necessary to point out that Latin terms such as *dative* are unnecessary for English, and particularly for EFL, suggesting that it was not widely or universally understood that there was a need for a specific, pedagogical grammar for EFL.

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<sup>10</sup> See Smith (2004) for a full account of the activities of IRET, and the different figures involved.

Smith argues that Palmer's *A Grammar of English Words*, and Hornby's *A Guide to Patterns and Use in English* were 'corner-stones' of ELT in the subsequent decades (2004, p. 169). Elements of the approach have certainly retained a role in the contemporary ELT grammar catalogue, although in a limited way – typically, coursebooks do not go beyond covering verb combinations, for example verb + *-ing* form, verb + infinitive and verb + *to* + infinitive (Burton, 2012). The approach also bears many similarities to the Pattern Grammar approach of Hunston et al (see Section 2.3); Hanks argues that the way patterns can now be identified using modern corpus linguistics has brought things 'full circle', with a focus on patterns now allowing new theories of language to be developed:

Modern corpus tools such as these bring us full circle, back to Hornby's original vision of patterns of word use and word meaning. It is now possible to examine that vision in the light of massive bodies of evidence. Not only does this lead inexorably to new theoretical insights into the nature of language, it also make it possible to develop new kinds of dictionaries [...]  
(Hanks, 2008, p. 89)

Hornby had also been also a key figure in the launch, in 1946, of the *ELT Journal*. Originally titled simply *English Language Teaching*, the journal was funded by the British Council. The aims of the journal, at least early on, appear to have been partly to provide a means by which teachers at British Council centres around the world could remain in touch with each other, and with the British Council headquarters, and also to provide means of 'ongoing teacher training' (Smith, 2004, p. 213). The tone of articles in the ELTJ in the 1940s and 1950s tended to be 'prescriptive' (Smith, 2004, p. 213), reflecting the formative role intended for the journal. Of particular interest to this discussion is the regular feature, 'Question Box', in which readers could send in queries; initially the responses were anonymous, whereas later on A. S. Hornby was identified as 'responder'. The feature ran until the early 1980s, and, at least initially, published questions were frequently (pedagogical) grammar queries. The following five examples are representative in content and style of many others of the same period:

Will you please explain the difference between *each* and *every*. ('The Question Box', 1947, p. 111)

Is it possible to give any general rules for the use of the helping verb *do* in the formation of the negative and interrogative? ('Question Box', 1948, p. 25)

We usually say: "Have you read this book?" Is it wrong to say: "Did you read this book?" If it is not wrong, what difference is there? (Hornby, 1951b, p. 30)

Must *any* always be used in interrogative and negative sentences? Can *some* ever be used? (Hornby, 1953a, p. 138)

Are there any rules about the use of infinitives and gerunds after verbs indicating like and dislike? (Hornby, 1953b, p. 27)

From a contemporary perspective, many of the questions in the *Question Box* feature appear rather simple – answers to the five questions listed above could be found easily in coursebooks or grammar practice books, or simply online. Most contemporary teachers could probably answer them simply from their own experience of teaching (and possibly learning) EFL. Yet the fact that such ‘simple’ questions were asked and, perhaps more importantly, that it was considered worthwhile publishing answers to them, are a further indication that teachers in this period often did not have extensive grammatical knowledge, and that a strong consensus on ELT grammar had yet to be formed, but was in development. It also suggests that the scientific grammars discussed in Section 3.3 above were perhaps not widely available to many teachers (although see also Quirk (1957) for a discussion of how the scientific grammars were in any case lacking useful, prescriptive accounts for learners of the kind provided in the answers in the *Question Box* feature).

Overall, we can see Palmer and Hornby as two key figures in the move towards the modern understanding and consensus of pedagogical grammar; however, we should also note here that the activities of IRET did not relate exclusively to grammar and involved other key figures beyond Palmer and Hornby (for example, the textbook author Lawrence Faucett also worked there for a period (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004)). We can now turn to our second thread, which has its origins in the USA.

### 3.6.2 The USA: Structuralism and the audiolingual approach

The outbreak of the Second World War effectively put an end to the activities of IRET in Japan. Palmer, on his return to the UK, was unable to find sufficient support for the creation of a similar institute in his home country, and the focus for research on how to teach languages scientifically shifted to the USA, more specifically to the

University of Michigan and the figure of Charles C. Fries (Howatt and Smith, 2014, p. 87).

The basis of the research carried out at Michigan rested on the structural approach to linguistics. Described by Richards and Rodgers as a 'reaction to traditional grammar', the structural approach sought to analyse language 'according to different levels of structural organization', viewing spoken language as primary (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 54). This meant identifying the different elements underlying a particular language (phonemes, morphemes and elements of syntax) and establishing their relationship to each other. The formation of elements was said to be rule-governed, and any level could be described in detail (ibid.).

Much of the fundamental ideas of structural linguistics date back to Ferdinand de Saussure's work at the beginning of the 20th century (Joseph, 2015, p. 431). One significant idea inherited from Saussure was the distinction between syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes of language. Joseph offers the example of the phrase 'Crime pays'. In this sentence, 'pays' and 'crime' have a syntagmatic relationship: in English, 'crime', as subject, comes before 'pays' the verb, and the third person singular -s form of 'pays' is a result of the fact that 'crime' is singular. At the same time, 'crime' is in a paradigmatic relationship with the words 'criminal', 'misdemeanour' and 'legality', among many others. Similar observations about paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations could be made at other levels, for example at the level of phonemes. This underlying foundation appears to have matched neatly both with the research at IRET (on sentence patterns) and with existing pedagogy: as described above, language teaching based on the use of pattern drills, as advocated by Palmer, and then subsequently by Fries and colleagues, practises both entire paradigms (through the repetition of entire sentences), and also teaches syntagmatic choice (through the replacement of single elements in sentences in order to produce new sentences). This is what eventually became known as the 'audiolingual' approach<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Contemporary accounts often suggest that audiolingualism was developed as a result of the application of findings from behavioural psychology (see, for example, Richards and Rodgers's account (2001, pp. 54–55) of the theory of learning in audiolingualism). Howatt and Widdowson (2004, p. 306), however, argue that the idea that researchers at Michigan 'applied behaviourist

In addition to practice based on sentence patterns, another key element of audiolingualism was the 'contrastive analysis' (CA) hypothesis, set out by Robert Lado in his (1957) *Linguistics across cultures*. The hypothesis stated that many production errors in language learners could be explained as a result of differences between the L1 and the L2 (although, as Swan (2007) notes, the claims that the CA hypothesis posited that *all*, or even *most*, errors are explainable in this way are a misrepresentation of the CA position). The logical consequence of this for the grammatical content of learning materials was that they should be designed with specific L1 groups in mind, targeting the differences between the L1 and target language. For Fries, this meant potentially very different materials – and grammatical content – would be needed for different L1 groups of learners: '[A] different set of teaching materials must be prepared for each linguistic background. [...] [The features of English] present very different problems for those whose native language is German and those whose native language is Japanese.' (Fries, 1959, p. 44). There therefore needed to be strict synergy between the activities of the researcher and the materials designer, with the former carrying out research directly relevant to the latter.<sup>12</sup>

Pit Corder's work on error analysis at the University of Edinburgh was also highly influential. Growing out of the CA hypothesis, Corder's hypothesis was that errors – previously seen as a sign of failure – were actually an indication of success (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004, p. 335), evidence of the process of acquisition. Errors, then, were not the result of the transfer of 'habits' from the L1, but examples of underlying hypothesis testing (Long, 2011, p. 379), what Thomas terms an 'on-going dynamic processes of grammar-building' (Thomas, 2004, p. 178). Corder's insight led in turn to Selinker's concept of 'interlanguage' – the idea of the 'independent systematicity'

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psychology to language teaching [...] is a rather doubtful claim', partly because Fries made no reference to it in his (1945) monologue *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language*, but also because a 'listen and repeat' approach does not sit particularly well with the complexity of behaviourist theory. Howatt and Smith (2014) argue that references to behaviourist psychology were 'added in' later by advocates of the approach and language laboratories associated with them, presumably to boost its credentials.

<sup>12</sup> At the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan, where both Lado and Fries were employed, this appears to have been the case for a period: the institute carried out research and also ran language courses using teaching materials developed in house.

(Thomas, 2004, p. 179) of a learner's grammar, which is both 'different from both the first language and the target language but is nevertheless a natural language'.

The CA hypothesis slowly became discredited – possibly due to its links with the similarly discredited behaviourist approaches to language learning and teaching (Swan, 2007, p. 416). However, its influence on the content of teaching materials has been preserved to an extent, although not as an overarching principle. This influence can be seen in publications produced specifically for particular local markets, by both local and international publishers, which often contain sections focussing on specific problem areas for groups of L1 speakers, or prioritise grammar points that are likely to be problematic for the target users. Some modern pedagogical grammars also contain advice aimed at specific L1 groups; for example Swan's *Practical English Usage* (2005) contains multiple references to aspects of language of interest to 'people who speak some languages' (see, for example, entries on 'actual(ly)', 'eventually', articles and present perfect).

The latter half of the 20th century marked a period of significant change in how grammar was conceived in academia in the US. Fries' grammar, *The Structure of English*, had been based in part on a 250,000 word corpus of recorded telephone conversations (Biber, 2012, p. 243) but with the rise of Chomskyan linguistics, this data-driven approach was replaced by a theory-driven approach, and traditional, descriptive grammars were considered old-fashioned (Linn, 2006, p. 84). The new accounts of grammar, in the Chomskyan tradition, were far more narrow in scope, focussing on specific aspects of English grammar, to an extent that the word 'grammar' no longer meant what it had done just decades earlier (Linn, 2006, p. 84).

### 3.6.3 Later developments

The accounts in the previous sections show the gradual development of a solid base of pedagogical grammar – what Smith describes as the 'standardization of English as a foreign language' (2004: p. 71). Materials writers in the second half of the century therefore 'inherited' a sizeable body of work on EFL grammar, including a new kind of analysis based on patterns, which simply was not in existence fifty years previously. This section will outline five developments in the last fifty years that appear to have had an influence on grammar in ELT: i) the concept of 'communicative competence'; ii) ideas on functions and notions, iii) research on

cohesion, and iv) the development of materials for English for Specific Purposes; v) research in the field of corpus linguistics. Some of the account here loosely follows that in Howatt and Widdowson (2004, 326-250).

Dell Hymes' concept of 'communicative competence' (Hymes, 1972) was an attempt to 'enhance' (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004, p. 330) Chomsky's famous distinction between 'competence', a speaker's underlying linguistic knowledge, and 'performance', the language he or she actually produces, possibly affected by 'slips of the tongue' and related phenomena (Radford, 2004, p. 2). Hymes suggested that beyond 'formal competence' (essentially, knowledge of grammar, semantics and so on), it was also necessary to consider 'sociolinguistic competence' (understanding the relationship between context and language, in addition to the ability to use and respond to 'speech acts' such as a requests, complaints etc.), 'discourse competence' (the ability to start, end and organise language in speech) and 'strategic competence' (being able to use strategies to compensate for areas of weakness) (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, p. 91). Hymes' ideas, when they reached the UK in the mid 1970s, are said to have 'caught the spirit of the times' (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004, p. 330); this period had seen the emergence of the communicative approach, the 'conviction that language teaching should take greater account of the way that language worked in the real world' (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004, p. 326)<sup>13</sup>.

A concrete result of this increased focus on communication was the introduction, later in the decade, of teaching materials organised around notions and functions (Nunan, 1988). The essential idea was to identify segments of communicative situations and 'how they built into full-scale conversations' (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004, p. 89); this meant identifying the different notions and functions present in a conversation, and then working out the kind of language typically used to realise them. Essentially, this was nothing new – the link between formal grammatical categories such as interrogatives to functional categories like 'asking questions' had long been clear, but such links were now applied more widely, with categories such as 'asking for things' and 'making suggestions' identified (ibid.), and

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<sup>13</sup> Just as movements for and against the teaching of grammar in ELT seemed to mirror trends in mother-tongue teaching (see Chapter 2), the communicative approach reflected more general trends in education at the time (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004, p. 326).

then language used to realise such categories presented and practised in teaching materials. Titles such as Van Ek's (1976) *The Threshold Level* and Wilkins' (1976) *Notional Syllabuses* were published, in theory allowing the creation of syllabuses based not on grammar structures, but on the notions and functions themselves. Coursebook series to make extensive use of notions and functions including *Strategies* (Abbs, Ayton and Freebairn, 1975) and *Functions of English* (Jones, 1981).

Another implication of the communicative approach was the importance of considering language beyond the limits of individual sentences. This notion of discourse and cohesion was set out in publications such as Halliday and Hasan's (1976) *Cohesion in English* and appears to have been quickly taken on board by materials authors, with such features of language becoming part of the grammar canon. For example, coursebook series published in the late 1970s and later, such as *Strategies* (first edition published in 1975), *Streamline* (first editions published 1978–1981) and *The Cambridge English Course* (first editions published 1984–1987) all cover an extensive range of linking words and phrases. The difference is striking when compared to slightly older series such as *New Concept English* (first published in 1967) or *Kernel Lessons* (first editions published 1971–1972), which teach almost none.

Whereas the first two developments essentially made it possible for materials designers to add new features of language to the canon, the third development – courses and materials for the teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) – was more a question of focus. An ever-increasing understanding of the needs of learners outside the classroom lead to titles which 'specialised' in particular topic areas. While initial attempts at identifying such subject-specific language could be 'a matter of informed, or inspired, guesswork' (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004, p. 355), the emergence of the discipline of genre analysis and the compilation of large, subject- or content-specific corpora made it possible to systemically analyse and identify language which should be prioritised in teaching materials. Part of the language identified was grammatical structure; as Hyland notes, focussing specifically on the teaching of writing, 'the grammar we teach and the ways that we teach it need to be clearly related to the kinds of writing students are expected to do in their target contexts' (Hyland, 2003, p. 123). While this may not have had an

influence on general English coursebooks, it is possible to detect a difference in focus in the grammatical content of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) coursebooks, with a greater focus on noun phrases, for example, reflecting corpus evidence of their importance in academic writing.

Finally, the development of large, and easily searchable corpora in the 1980s has had a profound effect on how people think about language (Aston, 2008), and the information available to materials writers and teachers. From early on, corpus linguists made the argument that their findings should have a key role to play in ELT. For example, John Sinclair, in 1985, proclaimed that ‘We are teaching English in ignorance of a vast amount of basic fact,’ and that, as a result of findings from corpus linguistics, ‘we must expect substantial influence on the specification of syllabuses, design of materials, and choice of method.’ (Sinclair, 1985, p. 252).

However, while the effect of corpus linguistics on learner dictionaries has been strong (Burton, 2012; Hunston, 2002), the effect on the grammatical content of ELT materials has been modest. While the literature has suggested different reasons for this, including questions of whether corpus data taken outside its original context is still authentic (Prodromou, 2003), or whether non-corpus data might be favoured over corpus data for pedagogical reasons (Carter, 1998; Cook, 1998; Shortall, 2007), such considerations may not actually enter into the decision making process of materials designers. Burton (2012) found that many coursebook writers simply do not have the time or training to use corpora, do not have access to corpora, and, in some cases, report having little interest in or motivation for using them. And while corpus linguistics may have something to tell us about the accuracy of current grammatical representations, publishers are likely to be hesitant about changing or updating grammatical descriptions (which are considered by teachers around the world to be, in the words of Sinclair, ‘the facts’ about grammar)<sup>14</sup>. One exception to this is the *Touchstone* series, which is overtly marketed as being corpus informed, and whose authors made reference to corpora both to prioritise grammar content

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<sup>14</sup> One overtly corpus-based coursebook series published in the 1980s, the *Cobuild English Course* (Willis and Willis, 1988), was not commercially successful (Gray, 2016; Groom, 2012); this may have discouraged other publishers from producing similar titles.

and inform the grammatical descriptions given (see McCarthy (2004) for a detailed account with examples).

#### 3.6.4 Modern descriptive and pedagogical grammars

The second half of the twentieth century also saw the return of descriptive grammars, which appear to have fallen out of fashion for a period with the emergence of Chomskyan linguistics (Linn, 2006, p. 84). Perhaps the best known of these is Quirk et al's 1972 *A Grammar of contemporary English*, which, in 1985, was updated, becoming the *Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. Described by Linn as being, still today, 'universally accepted as the first port of call for information about English grammar' (2006, p. 86), it was also exceptional in being the first grammar of its type to be written by native speakers (with the exception of Jan Svartvik, one of the four co-authors). One significant difference is the scope of coverage: the focus is on syntax and morphology, with no reference to phonological or historical issues. Another significant title in the period is the highly successful *A Communicative Grammar of English* (Leech and Svartvik 1975), aimed, at least in part, at learners of EFL, and with a strong focus on communication. Linn argues that, along with Halliday's systemic functional approach, Leech and Svartvik's grammar has helped to put communication 'firmly at the heart of English grammars for non-native and native speakers alike at all levels' (2006, p. 87).

A parallel development, starting somewhat earlier, was publication of new pedagogical grammars for EFL. Allen's *Living English Structure* (1949) appears to be the first of its kind, and will be described in more detail in Section 3.7.2 below. This is very different in style from Palmer's 1924 grammar, with more user-friendly explanations and practice activities which would not look out of place in a modern grammar practice book. Among Allen's successors was Thomson and Martinet's (1960) *A Practical English Grammar*, which contained somewhat more detailed explanations compared to Allen's work. Both titles have a more modern, commercial feel, more direct and less wordy and academic than older grammars.

As the century progressed, the number of pedagogical grammars published increased exponentially, in a way somewhat reminiscent of the explosion of school grammars in the 19th century. However, book reviews from the time sometimes give the indication that the establishment of a canon of structures and explanations

for ELT was still very much in progress in this period and that authors were working out the best ways to interpret and use the comprehensive descriptions given in the titles of the 'Great Tradition'. For example, an anonymous 1949 book review in the *ELT Journal* ('Book Reviews', 1949a) of the title *Notes on Learning English* criticises its explanations of the use of *used to* and of the differences between *can* and *could*, comparing the former unfavourably with that in Jespersen's *Essentials of English Grammar*. It seems inconceivable that a modern ELT grammar could leave itself open to criticism from a reviewer in this way – the consensus is now so well established and easily accessible and there is simply little room for debate on pedagogical rules and descriptions.

ELT publishers today produce a large number of pedagogical grammars. At the time of writing, there are 18 grammar titles in Cambridge University Press's ELT catalogue, 11 in Oxford University Press's catalogue, and five in Pearson's catalogue. The actual number of pedagogical grammar books produced by these publishers is far higher, as many of these titles are made up of several offerings at different levels. Some are also produced in special versions for particular groups of learners (for example, Cambridge publishes special Italian, French, Spanish, German, Thai, and North American editions of its *Essential Grammar in Use* title (Linn, 2006, p. 87)), representing another parallel with 19th century school titles, which were frequently marketed as being suitable for particular groups of learners (Michael, 1991, p. 12).

Perhaps the best known, particularly in parts of the world where British English is taught, of the contemporary grammars is Cambridge University Press' *Grammar in Use* series. The series is published at three levels, two of which, including the original *English Grammar in Use*, are written by Raymond Murphy. *English Grammar in Use* was in 2019 published in a new, fifth edition, and is marketed by Cambridge University Press as 'the world's best-selling grammar series for learners of English' ([www.cambridge.org/gb/cambridgeenglish/catalog/grammar-vocabulary-and-pronunciation/english-grammar-use-5th-edition](http://www.cambridge.org/gb/cambridgeenglish/catalog/grammar-vocabulary-and-pronunciation/english-grammar-use-5th-edition), accessed 30 March 2019). An equivalent for American English is the *English Grammar Series* by Betty Azar and Stacy Hagen, published by Pearson Education.

The publishers of both series make little effort to describe or outline the grammatical contents: Azar-Hagan is said to offer 'comprehensive coverage of

English grammar’ (<https://www.pearson.com/english/catalogue/skills/azar-hagen-grammar.html>, accessed 30 March 2019), while *Grammar in Use* is simply described as a ‘grammar series’ and a ‘grammar reference and practice book’ ([www.cambridge.org/gb/cambridgeenglish/catalog/grammar-vocabulary-and-pronunciation/english-grammar-use-5th-edition](http://www.cambridge.org/gb/cambridgeenglish/catalog/grammar-vocabulary-and-pronunciation/english-grammar-use-5th-edition), accessed 30 March 2019). The content of titles such as these appears to be so well known and well established that no explanation of their contents or approach is required; it appears sufficient to simply say ‘English grammar’ or ‘grammar reference’ in an ELT title for the content to be obvious. Furthermore, both series are marketed as being suitable both for self-study for integration in classrooms with other courses<sup>15</sup>, emphasising that they belong firmly to the established ELT consensus on grammar.

### 3.7 Selected pedagogical titles

This section will examine three pedagogical titles, in order to provide a ‘snapshot’ of grammar teaching materials across the period under consideration. The aim of the section is to provide an outline of the nature and content of the three titles, and hence an insight into the thinking and consensus on pedagogical grammar at the time. It also serves to support the analysis presented in Chapters 6 and 8, as the titles selected are also used in the case studies.

The titles examined are as follows:

- *A Grammar of Spoken English On a Strictly Phonetic Basis* (Palmer, 1924/1955)
- *Living English Structure* (Allen, 1947/1959)
- *A Practical English Grammar* (Thomson and Martinet, 1960/1969)

Palmer’s *A Grammar of Spoken English On a Strictly Phonetic Basis* is chosen as one of the earliest pedagogical grammars of English; as we saw in Section 2.4, Palmer had advanced clear thoughts on the teaching of grammar, including the importance

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<sup>15</sup> For the Azar-Hagen series: ‘Each level can be easily adapted to your curriculum and complement other course materials.’ (<https://www.pearson.com/english/catalogue/skills/azar-hagen-grammar.html>, accessed 30 March 2019); for the *Grammar in Use* series: ‘It’s perfect for self-study, but also ideal for supplementary grammar activities in the classroom.’ (<https://www.cambridge.org/be/cambridgeenglish/catalog/grammar-vocabulary-and-pronunciation/english-grammar-use-5th-edition>, ([www.cambridge.org/gb/cambridgeenglish/catalog/grammar-vocabulary-and-pronunciation/english-grammar-use-5th-edition](http://www.cambridge.org/gb/cambridgeenglish/catalog/grammar-vocabulary-and-pronunciation/english-grammar-use-5th-edition), accessed 30 March 2019)

of grading, so it is instructive to see how he put these thoughts in practice. Allen's *Living English Structure* is selected as it appears to have been a key piece in the jigsaw in terms of the development of pedagogical grammar for English, and to have achieved great commercial success (with a fifth edition published as recently as 2009). Finally, Thomson and Martinet's *A Practical English Grammar* also appears to have been highly successful commercially (latest edition printed in 2017) and widely used. The latter two titles were mentioned several times by informants during the interviews (see Chapter 7). Each publication was examined in terms of overall content, including any relevant insights provided by introductions or prefaces, as well as style.

### 3.7.1 *A Grammar of Spoken English On a Strictly Phonetic Basis* (1924)

The introduction to *A Grammar of Spoken English* states that the principle target audience of the book are learners of English as a Foreign Language (albeit already at a high level), or teachers of it:

Now this *Grammar of Spoken English* is intended to be used chiefly (but not exclusively) by foreign adult students of English, and by all teachers of spoken English. The fact that it is written *in English* shows that it is not intended to be put into the hands of beginners; it is designed to help (a) those who are already able to understand written English, and (b) the English teachers who serve as the medium of instruction in living English speech. (Palmer, 1924/1955, xxx-xxxii)

What is interesting, though, is that, with the phrase 'but not exclusively', Palmer also leaves the door open for native speakers as users. A modern pedagogical grammar such as Murphy's *Grammar in Use* would be highly unlikely to describe itself in this way, and indeed, Palmer's grammar is considered by some to form part of the Great Tradition (Linn, 2006, p. 15), arguably placing it closer to a title like Leech et al's *Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* than Murphy's grammar. However, it does go to show that the line between native speaker grammars and pedagogical grammars had, in this period, perhaps not become fixed as it is today.

Palmer does not include a list of references or explain in any way the sources of his own grammar. However, he does make occasional in-text references to other grammars, most frequently to Sweet's *New English Grammar*. Palmer states the following in the introduction to his grammar:

'[T]he foreign student will find *a selection* [emphasis added] of what the author considers to be the most useful grammatical categories of spoken English. [...] A serious endeavour has been made to give proportionate treatment to each subject according to its importance' (Palmer, 1924/1955, xxxiii).

His intention seems therefore to have been in part to provide a bridge between the longer, more scholarly grammars such as Sweet's, and the needs of learners of English as a foreign language, by choosing and explaining those areas of grammar he felt most important<sup>16</sup>. Palmer also makes clear that his grammar is descriptive not prescriptive, spending several pages in the introduction citing Sweet in support, to justify his focus on 'the standard of usage' (1924/1955, pp. xxxvi–xxxvii).

Arguably, Palmer's explanations are not always particularly clear. We can take as an example Palmer's coverage of articles. Overall, Palmer is remarkably equivocal, stating that 'in many cases such distinctions [i.e. between the use of definite and indefinite articles] *can hardly be formulated at all*, and the English usage *can only be acquired by dint of continual observation and imitation*' (Palmer, 1924/1955, p. 50). It seems unlikely that a contemporary grammar would so quickly 'throw in the towel' in trying to provide an explanation, suggesting that the development of a set of rules for this area of ELT grammar was in its infancy. The utility of a title for a learner also seems to be limited by the lack of index (there is, instead, a 17-page table of contents to navigate) and practice activities.

Nevertheless, Palmer's work has been described as 'groundbreaking', and constituted the major body of work for which Palmer was subsequently awarded a D.Litt. by Tokyo Imperial University (Smith, 2004, p. 137). One atypical aspect of the title is both the lengthy focus of the part of the book (one of four) on a full range of phonological issues (including phonemes, stress, features of connected speech and intonation), and Palmer's subsequent decision to give all example words and sentences in phonetic script only<sup>17</sup>. Palmer's grammar also makes extensive use of

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<sup>16</sup> Palmer's 'selection' includes the answers to those questions he posed in his (1921) *Principles of Language Study* (see Section 3.6 above).

<sup>17</sup> The question of whether or not phonemic transcriptions should be used in teaching materials was one area of disagreement during this period: 'teachers influenced by phoneticians like Sweet believed that transcribed texts were essential, but others remained unconvinced, and their use fell from favour (Howatt and Smith (2014, p. 83)). Palmer states that the use of 'phonetic spelling' is 'the only

tables (particularly notable are the 12 pages of verb conjugations (p. 134–145), and six pages of syntactical patterns (p. 221–227)), many of which are reminiscent of the substitution tables found in his earlier publications (see Section 3.6 above).

### 3.7.2 Allen's Living English Structure (1947)

From a contemporary perspective, W.S. Allen's *Living English Structure* in some ways seems unremarkable – its combination of grammar explanations and practice exercises can now be found in scores of publications (including in the *Grammar in Use* and Azar-Hagen series discussed above). However, this is one thing that set it apart from pedagogical grammars of the era – as we have just seen, Palmer's *Grammar of Spoken English* contained no practice exercises. Equally significant is the way the explanations are written, with a more user-friendly approach adopted; compare, for example, Allen's 'streamlined' explanation of the past perfect, compared to that in Palmer's grammar:

The *Past Perfect* tense is related to a moment in the past in the same way that the *Present Perfect* is related to the present moment, i.e. it describes an action completed before some special past moment we have in mind. (Allen, 1947/1959, p. 145)

A sharp distinction is made in English between *pastness* and *anteriority*. An action is considered to be, and is treated, as *past* when it is associated with a point (or a series of points) of time situated entirely in the past. When, however, the action is not so associated with such points of time, but is considered merely to have taken place before (*i.e.* anterior to) another given point of time, it is expressed by one of the *Perfect Tenses*. (Palmer, 1924/1955, p. 272)

There are a number of the section titles in the book which would be unfamiliar to modern eyes, for example, 'emphatic connectives', 'phrase openings' and 'accepted phrases'. A single section covering the 'present tense' would also be unusual now, with modern grammars typically separating out the present simple and present continuous. Also of note is the lack of a discreet, labelled focus on articles; they are instead covered in the section on countable and uncountable nouns, the first in the book. On the whole, though, the contents list is similar to that of contemporary pedagogical grammars. An index at the back aids navigation.

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possible procedure to follow when dealing with the spoken form of a living language whose orthographic and phonetic systems are mutually at variance' (Palmer, 1924/1955, pp. 33–34).

The choice of the word 'structure' instead of 'grammar' in the title is interesting. How much, if at all, Allen was influenced by structural linguistics or Hornby's conception of 'structure' is unclear – *Living English Structure* was published three years before Fries' *The Structure of English*, and a 1959 review in the *ELT Journal* of a special schools version of *Living English Structure* criticises it for having a 'misleading' title: 'there is no special emphasis on "structure" in the sense in that word is commonly used nowadays' ('Book Reviews', 1959, p. 85). Nevertheless, Stannard Allen's introduction makes it clear that he believes that he is moving away from the idea of 'grammar' as it was widely understood at the time:

'An English schoolboy does "grammar" as an analytical exercise, but the foreign student needs to learn the mechanics of the language. Most existing grammar books are designed for the English schoolboy, and even a large number of those that are intended for foreigners have not managed to free themselves entirely from the purely analytical point of view.' (Allen, 1947/1959, vii)

This is followed by an assertion that the book is descriptive rather than prescriptive – again, a clear attempt to distance the title from older grammars:

'Teachers will find in this book a great deal that is unconventional, perhaps even revolutionary, for it does not pretend to tell the student what he OUGHT to SAY in English, but tries to show him what is ACTUALLY SAID.' (Allen, 1947/1959, vii)

The genesis of the title is unclear; Allen provides a list of 'some useful books for further reference' in the introduction (1947/1959, x), including various grammars from the Great Tradition, along with Fries' *The Structure of English*, which certainly implies that he had read at least some of them and that they informed his work. In the introduction, he states that many of the exercises 'are based on the results of personal "structure-counts" [...] carried out while listening to the speech of educated English people over considerable periods.' (p. vii–viii), suggesting the contents were based on a certain amount of personal research. It is known that Allen was a teacher at the British Council (Hornby, 1966; Smith, 2005), so it also seems possible that some of the content may originally have been material that he and/or colleagues developed for British Council courses. This would go some way to explaining how he was able to create a work that appears to be so much more accessible and practically orientated compared to what had come before.

Another aspect of note is that the title contains a grading system for the practice exercises. Each one is labelled as being for Elementary (“Up to 1 ½ or 2 years of English”), Intermediate (“Up to about the standard demanded for the University of Cambridge Lower Certificate in English”), or Advanced (“Up to about the standard demanded for the University of Cambridge Proficiency in English Examination”). To a certain extent the content is also graded, with certain explanations and footnotes placed with the more advanced exercises. This represented a further departure from older titles like Palmer’s, and presumably increased the book’s usefulness, meeting students’ and teachers’ need for practice material differentiated for competency level.

### 3.7.3 Thomson and Martinet’s *A Practical English Grammar* (1960)

Thomson and Martinet’s grammar is very much in the same style as Allen’s, but is more detailed and comprehensive. Thomson and Martinet is actually the shorter of the two, at 275 pages compared to 349 in Allen, but the dimensions of the pages are larger, and, more importantly, the book contains only grammatical descriptions, explanations and examples, with the exercises provided in two separate practice books, allowing more detailed explanations. Like Allen’s *Living English Structure*, there is a detailed index at the back.

The overall contents list would be very familiar to a modern reader, with none of Allen’s more ‘esoteric’ section headings included. Compared to Allen’s title, a number of additional grammar points are included. These include, among others, a dedicated section on articles, a section on conjunctions and a much longer and more detailed section on comparatives. Although Thomson and Martinet do not make any specific claims about level, in the Preface they seem to position the book as being appropriate for more advanced learners, stating that ‘[t]his grammar aims to be particularly helpful at the point where the more complicated structures of spoken and written English are first being acquired’ (Thomson and Martinet, 1960/1969, Preface).

There is perhaps less to say about this title than Allen’s because the style is now familiar: the explanations are streamlined and learner focussed, like in Allen, something which the writers refer to in the preface (‘the style and organization of the Grammar facilitate the student’s comprehension and make the information he

or she requires readily accessible' (Thomson and Martinet, 1960/1969, Preface)). The preface, however, also contains the remarkable claim that 'Obsolete structures and irrelevant concepts from Latin grammar have been given the briefest treatment or are bypassed completely' (Thomson and Martinet, 1960/1969, Preface). It is not clear which parts of the book this comment relates to, and while the writers' intention here seems to be to paint their title as being modern and as having left behind the contents of traditional grammars, the implication that *some* obsolete structures and irrelevant concepts from Latin *are* in fact included, albeit briefly, is incredible, and would probably be unthinkable in a modern pedagogical grammar. Once again, it seems to indicate that in the mid-20th century, the delineation between traditional school grammars and modern pedagogical grammars was not clear to all. As we saw in Section 3.6, just two years previously, A.S. Hornby had been at pains to emphasise that Latin terms like 'accusative' and 'dative' were not very relevant for ELT grammar.

#### 3.7.4 Summary

The three titles examined provide a partial account of the evolution of grammatical treatments for EFL, and it is possible to trace certain trends. Firstly, it is notable that all three titles are at pains to distance themselves from older, prescriptive grammars; Palmer and Allen actively set out the case for basing their descriptions on usage. Secondly, there is a clear move towards a learner-focussed approach, with more concise explanations, along with indexes, provided by Allen, and Thomson and Martinet. Finally, the provision of practice exercises – within the book in the case of Allen, and as an accompanying title in case of Thomson and Martinet – appears to indicate a move away from substitution as a teaching methodology. Although he does not explicitly state it, the lack of exercises in Palmer's title appears to be due to the fact that he viewed the correct form of language practice as using substitution tables: 'the chief function of a grammar book [is] to furnish the student with a selection of those categories which will enable him to perform the greatest number of useful substitutions' (Palmer, 1924/1955, xxxii).

#### 3.8 Levels in ELT

We can now turn to the question of levels. As discussed in Section 2.5, the construct of the 'proficiency level' is not unproblematic, and has developed under different

influences, such as the levels examinations are offered at, the practical need to organise learners into different classes and to publish materials at more than one level, and social factors and perceptions related to language learning. The level system used in ELT, and by the ELT publishing industry, should be seen as operating within this overall context, with the addition of other influences.

In the first half of the twentieth century there was a limited consensus on levels. ELT coursebook series were typically published at either three or four levels, as can be seen in Table 3.1. However, these levels related primarily to the main preoccupation of the period: lexis. A key interest of researchers such as Palmer at this time was the question of vocabulary selection rather than grammar selection, and the compilation of word lists was the driving force behind the way many coursebooks were divided into lessons<sup>18</sup>. For example, Lawrence Faucett’s *Oxford English Course* (published in 1933) was divided into four levels, with a vocabulary ‘radius’ of 500 words taught in each (Smith, 2004, p. 441), an approach subsequently adopted by other coursebook series, such as C. E. Eckersley’s *Essential English for Foreign Students* (1955).

<b>Coursebook</b>	<b>number of levels</b>
<i>New Method</i> (Michael West, 1926–1938)	4
<i>Oxford English</i> (Laurence Faucett, 1933)	4
<i>Essential English</i> (C. E. Eckersley, 1938–1942)	4
<i>Oxford Progressive English</i> (A. S. Hornby, 1954–1956)	3
<i>New Concept English</i> (L. G. Alexander, 1967)	4
<i>Kernel Lessons</i> (Robert O’Neill et al, 1971–1978)	3
<i>Strategies</i> (Abbs & Freebairn, 1975 / 1977–1982)	1 (first edition) / 4 (multi-level edition)
<i>Cambridge English Course</i> (Swan & Walter, 1984–1987 / 1990–1992)	3 (first edition) / 4 (second edition)
<i>Streamline</i> (Hartley & Viney, 1978–1982)	4
<i>Headway</i> (Soars & Soars, 1986–present)	2 (eventually increasing to 6)

Table 3.1: Number of levels in coursebook series over the decades

The level systems in these early coursebooks, then, do not appear to relate to a conception of overall language competency, but strictly to the acquisition – or

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<sup>18</sup> The research on vocabulary eventually led to the 1936 *Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection* (also known as the ‘Carnegie Report’, and eventually published, in 1953, under the more familiar name *General Service List of English Words*).

perhaps simply presentation – of lexis; indeed, Alexander argues that the idea of a syllabus ‘as we know it today, did not begin much before the early sixties’ (1990, p. 35). As the 20th century progressed, however, grammar (or ‘structure’) started to (re)gain prominence and feature more prominently in coursebook syllabuses. Initially, while there was sometimes talk of the ‘order of presentation’ of grammar points in publications of the time (see, for example, Hornby (1959)), there is little sense in this period of the idea of certain structures ‘needing to be taught’ at certain levels as there often is now. In fact, Alexander argues that in the 1930s to 1950s, grammar was simply covered for its own sake, requiring ‘no justification and [...] seen to have little if any bearing on communication’ (1990, p. 39); he identifies Allen’s *Living English Structure* as the first ‘conscious effort to teach control of grammar’.

In the second half of the century, however, a consensus emerged that courses should be built around ‘a graded syllabus of structural patterns to ensure systematic step-by-step progress’ (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004, p. 300), and this went hand in hand with the establishment of a level system. The publication in 1975, by a group of four prominent coursebook authors, including Alexander, of *English Grammatical Structure* (Alexander *et al.*, 1975), may have gone some way to formalising this. Described in its introduction as ‘an inventory of sentence patterns and grammatical structures which has been compiled for the purposes related to the teaching of English as a foreign language’ (Alexander *et al.*, 1975, v), this was essentially a catalogue (running to 245 pages) of pedagogical grammar points, with notes and example sentences, divided into six ‘Stages’ (in other words, levels). It was aimed at, among others, the writers of textbooks, graded readers, tests, and teachers. Along with Hornby’s (1954a) *A Guide to Patterns and Usage in English*, it is said to have been highly influential on the grammatical content of coursebooks since its publication (Richards, 2016, p. 120).

However, even in the second half of the 20th century, when the notion of levels was well established, it is not always clear how coursebook levels might relate to current coursebook levels or CEFR levels. For example, the back-cover blurb of the ‘intermediate’ level Student’s Book of the three-level coursebook series *Kernel Lessons* (1971–1978) describes itself as being ‘specially designed for the ‘faux

debutant' or post-elementary student', whereas in modern parlance, a 'post-elementary student' would use a 'Pre-intermediate' level coursebook. The accompanying Teacher's Book seems to confuse the issue even more, describing the level as being for 'a) Intermediate students who are fresh from an intensive beginners' course; b) What the French call 'faux debutants'; in a modern coursebook series, there would be two levels ('Elementary' and 'Pre-Intermediate') between a Beginner level and an Intermediate level. Similarly, L. G. Alexander's four-level *New Concept English* course 'jumps', from a modern perspective, from Intermediate level (*First Things First*, level three of four) to Advanced level (*Fluency in English*, level four of four) without the now canonical 'Upper Intermediate' level in between. A further confusing (at least from a contemporary perspective) example is the four-level *Strategies* series; the third level, called *Developing Strategies* is described as being for 'intermediate students', but then the fourth level, itself called *Intermediate Strategies*, is also described in the same way.

None of this is to suggest that the grading or level systems employed by these series was faulty, but rather to emphasise that the current six-level system, which is so engrained in publications<sup>19</sup>, is really a very recent development. The first major coursebook series to have been published at six levels appears to have been *Headway*. However, this series was in fact originally published only at two levels (Intermediate and Upper Intermediate, in 1986 and 1987 respectively), before an advanced level was added, and then the three lowest levels. The expansion to six levels occurred only because of the (commercial) success of the original two levels ('An Interview with Liz and John Soars', 2011), and was not originally planned. It therefore appears to be the case that the now ubiquitous use of six levels is simply a case of following the commercial precedent set by the *Headway* series, rather than a reference to some kind of pedagogical or theoretical foundation, or other

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<sup>19</sup> Although we should note that American English coursebooks are typically published at four levels, with an (ostentatiously) separate series covering the top two levels; an example of this is *Interchange*; four levels from 'Intro' to 'Level 3'), which can be paired with *Passages* (two levels – Level 1 and Level 2 – described as taking learners from high-intermediate to advanced). McCarthy (personal communication, 17 June 2019) describes this as publishers 'hedging their bets and not committing to [levels] five and six until they see that 1–4 are successful'.

frameworks such as the CEFR, the ILR or the level system of Cambridge examinations<sup>20</sup>.

### 3.9 Overview

This chapter has outlined the tradition of grammatical descriptions of English, from the first grammar in the 16th century, to modern descriptive, theoretical and pedagogical accounts, referring principally to primary sources. We saw that at the beginning of the ‘modern’ era of ELT, teacher writers were able to draw on detailed, scientific accounts of English grammar, selecting from and moulding their contents to provide learners with accounts of what the former perceived to be latter’s needs.

As discussed, the current consensus on pedagogical grammar for EFL is a relatively contemporary development, particularly in how the contents are operationalised across the six-level system typically employed by ELT coursebooks. This ‘recentness’ might come as a surprise to those who regard grammar teaching and the use of grammar syllabuses in ELT as ‘traditional’. If anything, the range of grammatical content typically included in ELT materials has increased, with ever more detailed pedagogical accounts being published, and the addition to the canon in the last few decades of grammatical features related to discourse.

What the account has shown, however, is that there is only a relatively limited understanding of the nature of ELT pedagogical grammar. While a number of studies have critically examined a small subset of the areas of grammar which make up the current consensus, there has been no attempt to trace the evolution of its content, or to examine how its rules and descriptions have evolved over the last 100 years (compare for example, Michael’s (1970) *English Grammatical Categories*, which spends 640 pages analysing the categories used by English grammars only up until 1800).

This lack of understanding is compounded by the fact that commercial publishing does not typically involve citation of sources. Only very early pedagogical grammars, for example Palmer’s *Grammar of Spoken English* referred to sources, and then only

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<sup>20</sup> An alternative view might be that since publishers respond to commercial demand, the six-level system must reflect the desires communicated by the different markets for which the publications are produced, and this in turn must reflect the needs of schools and teachers in terms of splitting up the learning process.

sporadically. The result is that the decisions taken on the content of the grammatical canon have invariably taken place 'out of sight'. Writers – including those who have written pedagogical grammars – have explained over the years the principles with which particular items have been, or should be, chosen, focussing on concepts such as usefulness, centrality and so on, but the decision-making processes behind individual works, including those that appear to have been cornerstones in the history of ELT pedagogical grammar, such as Allen's *Living English Structure*, were never recorded. We simply do not know exactly why the content of the grammar canon is as it is, and why, given that there appears to be a great deal of subjectivity involved in such decisions, there is so little variation across both coursebooks and pedagogical grammars. Nor do we have an account of how, if at all, grammatical descriptions in ELT materials have changed over the years. As we have said, the current consensus on ELT grammar extends to the assignment of levels to grammar points, with little variation across coursebook series in this respect.

There therefore appears to be a need for both a more in-depth analysis of primary sources, to provide a more complete picture, and, simultaneously, an investigation in the perspectives and experiences of those involved in creating and sustaining the consensus on ELT grammar. The following chapter will detail the mixed-methods approach taken to collect and analyse the data presented in the rest of this thesis in an attempt to provide a fuller account of the questions under consideration.

## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate the nature and evolution of the current consensus on the grammar syllabus used in the teaching of EFL, and to compare it to empirical data on the grammar learners use at different competency levels, in the form of the English Grammar Profile. It investigates three research questions:

1. How, when and where did the consensus on the ELT grammar 'canon' develop?
2. What is the nature of the canon today, and the system that perpetuates and sustains it?
3. Does the canon reflect empirical evidence on the development of grammatical competence of learners of EFL?

This chapter sets out the research methods used to address these questions.

Given the absence of any official ELT 'governing body', it has been argued that the consensus on grammar in ELT is most easily found in published teaching materials, particularly pedagogical grammars and coursebooks. However, this thesis takes the position that for a full understanding of the current nature of the consensus, it is also necessary to consider the figures and stakeholders who have a key role in shaping it, in having shaped it, and in maintaining it.

In order to investigate the nature of the consensus from these two perspectives – evidence of the consensus in the form of published teaching materials, and the point of view of those involved in shaping and maintaining it – two main research methods are used:

1. interviews with figures within the world of ELT publishing, and transcription and thematic analysis of these
2. 'case studies' of three areas of pedagogical grammar, examining:
  - a) how, if at all, their treatment has changed in grammars and coursebook materials over the years
  - b) how their treatment in contemporary materials compares to empirical evidence from the English Grammar Profile (EGP)

There is not a one-to-one relationship between the research methods and the research questions listed above, as both the thematic analysis and part a) of the case studies relate to the question of the evolution of the canon. Figure 4.1 below illustrates the relationship between research questions and research methods.

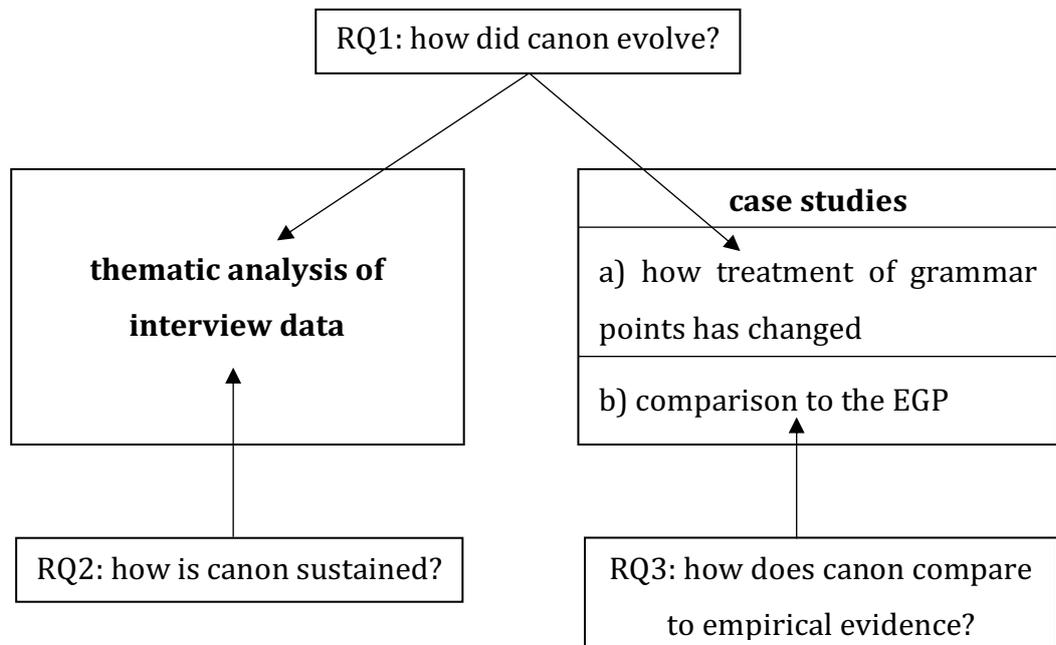


Figure 4.1: Relationship between research questions and methods

In addition to the research methods shown in the diagram, the discussion of primary resources in Chapter 3 also plays a role in establishing the context and providing a certain amount of insight into the evolution of the canon.

This chapter will now outline the research methods used and data collected in more detail.

#### 4.2 The value of qualitative and historical research

The original intention of this study was to carry out a broadly quantitative investigation, by reference to coursebooks, the makeup of the consensus on ELT pedagogical grammar, and compare this to the EGP. However, during the research I became interested in how the six-level system currently used in contemporary coursebooks had come into existence. My own experience in ELT began in 2000, when most series were published at six levels, and I had never questioned this system when I worked as a teacher, and nor when I worked in ELT publishing both as an editor and an author. Subsequently, I began to contact, informally, friends and

colleagues who I thought might have insights into the evolution of the level system, in addition to, more speculatively, some experienced ELT authors.

I immediately felt that the results of this informal information-gathering exercise were fascinating and that the insights deserved to be recorded, given that I was unable to find any similar account of the issue in the literature. Consequently, I made the decision to change the scope of the study and reformulate my research questions. After considering both the gaps in the literature, and the information I had received in the informal data-gathering exercise, I decided on the research questions stated above, reflecting the iterative approach described by Freeman (2009, p. 28).

As we have seen, very little research has been carried out on the history and evolution of the pedagogical treatment of English grammar<sup>21</sup>, compared to, for example, the history of traditional, prescriptive accounts, or of more modern descriptive accounts, such as those that make up the 'Great Tradition'. Furthermore, there has been little research on the factors that have helped shape the development of treatments of ELT pedagogical grammar, or that sustain the current consensus on it. When investigating 'uncharted areas' such as these, qualitative research is often said to be particularly useful (Dörnyei, 2007; Heigham and Croker, 2009), hence the decision to use interviews and case studies as research methods.

Much of the qualitative research undertaken in this study is 'historical'. In his paper setting out a case for the 'historiography of applied linguistics', Smith argues that existing accounts tend to over-rely on secondary sources or simply on 'hearsay or handed-down mythology' (2016, p. 75), and recommends the use of primary evidence as much as possible. In addition, he notes a common focus on 'the development of theories in the abstract rather than paying much attention to practice', arguing for attempts to be made for accounts that ascertain the impact of such theories 'on practice' (2016, p. 79), including, for example, on learning materials. For this reason, this study makes frequent use of the analysis of published teaching materials – both historical and contemporary – and indeed, some insights

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<sup>21</sup> In fact, according to Smith, research in anglophone countries into the history of ELT in general has been 'sparse overall' (Smith, 2016, p. 74).

from this analysis of primary research were already presented in Chapter 3, and will also feature heavily in the case studies.

In addition to the main data collection methods described in the sections below, much of the research in this thesis is built in part on archive work carried out at the ELT Archive, held at the University of Warwick. I made two visits to the archive, which, along with discussions with its curator, Dr. Richard Smith, were crucial in developing a solid understanding of the overall historical context of the primary sources analysed. Smith himself argues that a researcher should ‘immerse’ her- or himself in primary sources (Smith, 2016, p. 82), quoting the historian Keith Thomas’ account of the ‘craft’ of historical research: ‘[immersing] myself in the past until I know it well enough for my judgment of what is or is not representative to seem acceptable without undue epistemological debate’ (Thomas (2010, p. 37), cited in Smith (2016, p. 76).

Qualitative studies in the field of applied linguistics have become more common over the last decade or so (Pfenninger and Navracsics, 2017, p. 6). However, as Edge and Johnson (1998a) note, those conducting qualitative studies need to provide accountability for the claims they make. The following sections therefore outline the data collection and analysis methods used with the interviews and case studies carried out in this study.

#### 4.3 Interviews and thematic analysis

In order to investigate the issues underlying i) the historical development of the current consensus on ELT grammar, including the level system, and ii) how the current consensus is maintained, it was decided to carry out interviews with a number of key figures in ELT publishing. As we have said, in this thesis the grammatical contents of coursebooks are essentially used as a proxy for mainstream practices and beliefs and consequently it was decided to use, as informants, only people who had direct experience of coursebook production. Although some of the informants who eventually took part in the study also had experience in writing pedagogical grammars, it was primarily their experience of writing coursebooks that was sought, as it is in coursebooks that we see grammar syllabuses employed across multiple levels, considered in this thesis to be a key characteristic of ELT pedagogical grammar (see Section 2.4). Interviews were favoured over other

collection methods, such as questionnaires, because of the complexity of the issues under investigation and the need to gain a rich account of the production of ELT teaching materials – in other words, ‘an understanding of the lived world from the perspective of the participants involved’ (Richards, 2009, p. 187).

#### 4.3.1 Recruiting informants

It was decided that the full cohort of informants should be made up of two broad groups: i) people who had experience of producing contemporary coursebooks, and ii) people who had experience of producing coursebooks before the 1990s. This decade was used somewhat arbitrarily as a cut-off point, with coursebooks from the mid-nineties onwards – the period when the six-level system came into use – deemed as no longer being ‘historical’.

For the historical research, I favoured authors, and for the contemporary period, ‘publishing professionals’ – this umbrella term is used to refer to someone who works, or has worked, within ELT publishing, in a role that would allow the significant insight into the creation of coursebooks, particularly in terms of the choice of (grammatical) content. The decision to focus on this group of professionals rather than authors for the investigation into contemporary practice was made on the basis of my own personal experience – having worked both as an author and an editor – of the publisher-led approach currently favoured in the industry, which itself is echoed in many of the studies discussed in Section 3.5. A number of the ‘publishing professionals’ who currently work in ELT publishing do so as both editors and authors, so it was felt that the contemporary author perspective would in any case be represented.

Potential informants were identified either because they are well-known, high-profile figures within the ELT (publishing) industry, or on the personal recommendation of friends, colleagues and my supervisors. Recruitment was conducted via email; this consisted either of a direct approach using publicly available email addresses, or approaches via friends and colleagues. In all, ten informants were contacted and all ten agreed to be interviewed. Informants were asked whether they wanted to remain anonymous, and two chose this option. As a consequence, references to specific countries, colleagues and titles mentioned by these two informants have been anonymised where necessary.

The final list of interviewees is as follows:

1. Michael Swan: ELT coursebook and grammar author
2. Liz Soars: ELT coursebook author
3. Bart Ullstein: sales and marketing professional at Longman ELT division in the 1970s
4. Ingrid Freebairn: ELT coursebook author
5. Peter Viney: ELT coursebook author
6. Jack Richards: academic and ELT coursebook author
7. Diane Hall: ELT publisher, editor and coursebook and grammar author
8. anonymous informant: highly experienced ELT publishing professional with international experience
9. Adam Gadsby: Director of Strategic Partnerships, Cambridge University Press; ex-editorial director at Pearson Education
10. anonymous informant: ELT coursebook author (and former publishing professional)

In this list, informants 1–6 represent the group of people who have experience of the historical period, whereas informants 7–10 are those with experience of the contemporary period. However, the distinction between each group was not black and white, as some of the first set of informants are still active today as authors, and some of the second set are authors in addition to being publishing professionals.

#### 4.3.2 Interview questions and format

As discussed in Section 3.5, various author accounts of the writing process already exist, in addition to a smaller number of publisher accounts, but these tend to address rather broad issues in the publishing process. By comparison, the interviews in this study were intended to address a very specific area of investigation – how and why decisions are made on the choice of level system, on grammatical content, and on the level assignment of this grammatical content. Consequently, it was decided to carry out semi-structured interviews (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136) – this involves the preparation of a set of questions which are asked to all participants, but using an interview format that is ‘open-ended’, with the interviewee ‘encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner’ (ibid).

Six questions were devised that would allow the area of investigation to be adequately explored, but at the same time would be open enough to allow a certain amount of digression. In line with Dörnyei (2007, p. 136), two slightly different sets were created for the authors and publishing professionals, to reflect their differing roles in and experience of the writing and publishing process, as follows:

### **Questions for authors**

1. How was it decided that [title X] would have [x] levels?<sup>22</sup>
2. How did you decide which grammar points to include in the coursebook series? Where did they come from?
3. How did you decide at which level to include this grammar?
4. Did you include or exclude any grammar content that you would have preferred not to? What happened?
5. In terms of the choices you made about grammar – both selection and the level it is included in – have you even been influenced by developments outside of ELT?
6. Is there anything I should have asked but didn't? Or anything else you'd like to add?

### **Questions for editors**

1. In your experience, how does a publisher or author decide how many levels to publish of a new coursebook series?
2. In your experience, how does a publisher or author decide which grammar points to include in a new coursebook series? Where do they come from?
3. In your experience, how does a publisher or author decide at which level to include each grammar point?
4. Do you feel that there is any space for innovation in terms of the number of levels a coursebook series is published at? What about in terms of the grammar points included? Why (not)?

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<sup>22</sup> Here, 'title X' and 'X' were replaced by the name of a coursebook series written by the informant, and the number of levels it was published at.

5. In your experience, has there been any influence from outside of ELT on the choices made about grammar in coursebook production – either in terms of selection of grammar to be taught or the level it is included at?
6. Is there anything I should have asked but didn't? Or anything else you'd like to add?

Questions 1–3 were designed to explore, respectively, the issues of the choice of number of levels, overall grammatical content, and level allocation of each grammar point. Question 4 was quite differently worded in the author and publishing professional versions of the questions, but was intended to address the same issue: the strength of influence from the publisher to conform to expectations, and whether it is possible to resist this. Question 5 was intended to explore influences from outside ELT on grammatical content, while the closing question was designed to allow 'the interviewee to have the final say' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 138).

The interviews were all single sessions, and took place on a one-to-one basis. They were conducted in person, using Skype, or over the telephone, depending on the preferences and availability of each interviewee. Each interview was recorded and then transcribed, using *NVivo for Mac* software. There was no set time limit, but each interview lasted from around 45 minutes to one hour.

#### 4.3.3 Ethics

Ethical clearance for carrying out the interviews was sought from and granted by the Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee. This set out the steps taken to ensure that interviewees would take part in the research in informed way and would be treated ethically; the steps were as follows:

- Potential informants were sent a 'recruitment email' (see Appendix 2) asking for their participation, with an overview of the research project;
- In the event of a positive response, further contact was made in order to fix the time and venue of the interview; the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 3) and 'Informed Consent Declaration' (Appendix 4) were attached, and informants were asked to sign the latter before the interview (in the case of interviews over Skype or telephone, they were asked to send a signed copy via email);

- At the beginning of each interview, each informant was asked whether they wished to remain anonymous, and this decision was recorded.

As per the information on the Participant Information Sheet, recordings and transcripts were kept on a password protected hard drive.

#### 4.3.4 Coding and thematic analysis

After transcription, a thematic analysis of the interview data was carried out. A thematic analysis is a method for 'identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Themes are typically coded in the data – in this case, transcripts of the interviews – using specialised software, which can in turn be used to assist with analysis. The software used in this thesis was *NVivo for Mac*.

The approach to coding and thematic analysis was informed by the procedure set out in Braun and Clarke (2006) and Attride-Stirling (2001). Braun and Clarke (2006, pp. 87–93) suggest a six-stage process as set out below, and this was broadly followed:

1. becoming familiar with and transcribing the data
2. generating initial codes
3. searching for themes
4. reviewing themes
5. defining and naming themes
6. producing the report

A key feature of many thematic analyses is the creation of a 'thematic network', essentially 'a way of organizing a thematic analysis of qualitative data' (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 387). Creating a thematic network involves the identification of a hierarchy of themes, with 'basic themes' subordinate to 'organising themes', which are in turn subordinate to 'global themes' (ibid. pp. 388–389). This technique was applied to the data in this study, with, firstly, the identification of basic themes, followed by their grouping into organising themes, and finally the identification into global themes. Appendix 5 presents a screenshot from NVivo showing part of an example transcript with coding.

Thematic analysis is necessarily subjective and interpretative (Attride-Stirling, 2001). However, its 'exploratory and explanatory power' rests on 'methodological rigour at all stages of the research process' (ibid. p. 403). In the case of the analysis presented in this study, a number of steps were taken to ensure methodological rigour. Firstly, a choice needed to be made between a deductive and inductive approach to thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2006). The former involves the researcher primarily analysing particularly relevant parts of the research using their preconceived ideas for codes, based on previous research, or their own experience or theoretical position. An inductive approach is 'bottom up': the researcher analyses the data according to the themes that naturally emerge, rather than attempting to fit the data into pre-existing models or frameworks. The current study takes a broadly deductive approach to coding and analysis, as my own experience in publishing, and the literature reviewed, led me to expect certain themes to emerge, and it was felt that this would be a useful base to begin the analysis from. However, it was felt important to also employ an inductive approach at times, in order to identify any unexpected themes and code them. In fact, a great many of the themes discussed in the thematic analysis were unexpected to me and would have not been identified had a purely deductive approach been employed.

Secondly, there was the question of how to identify a theme. Here, a slightly flexible approach was taken. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 91) recommend first identifying 'candidate themes', before later deciding whether there is enough data to support them as individual themes, and this was adopted as an approach. However, the thematic analysis carried out in this study is somewhat different from most thematic analyses, in that experienced experts within the field were sought out, and were asked specific questions on topics that have thus far received relatively little attention in the literature. Within the data, in addition to 'themes' there are often highly significant answers and explanations, and these were felt to be extremely important in the context of the research. Because of this, the analysis at times takes into account data mentioned once by a single informant, which in other thematic analyses might be excluded because of insufficient coverage across informants. Attention was paid to coding the issues emerging from the responses, rather than simply the responses themselves. As Braun and Clarke, note, little or no useful

analysis can be carried out if questions put to informants are subsequently recorded as themes (2006, p. 86).

After my own initial analysis, the themes and the thematic network being developed were shared with and reviewed by another researcher with specialist expertise in thematic analysis, but who had no experience in ELT. The feedback received was useful in ensuring that choices made on themes were robust, particularly as the analyst consulted was not likely to be influenced by the status and reputation of the informants interviewed. Subsequently, the themes and network were also reviewed by a further two analysts, both of whom were experienced in ELT. Overall, it was felt that while the thematic analysis was by necessity subjective and interpretative, it was at the same time rigorous.

Chapters 5 and 7 present the thematic network and thematic analysis. Themes are discussed in turn, and are supported by informant quotes that relate to them. Generally, all the quotes identified as representing a single theme are presented, and, indeed, incidences where informants appear to disagree with one another were considered to be part of the richness of the data and were not excluded from the discussion.

#### 4.3.5 Overview

Although case studies are perhaps most commonly associated with studies of people, the approach can be with used with any clearly defined entity (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 151). In this thesis, a case study approach was used with 'grammar points' – single areas of grammar contained in a pedagogical grammar account. As with qualitative research in general, case studies are said to be particularly appropriate when exploring previously unexplored territory' (Hood, 2009, p. 86).

Stake (2003) distinguishes between intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies. The first type is typically undertaken because 'the researcher wants better understanding of this particular case' (p. 136), while the second is undertaken 'to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization' (p. 137). Finally, collective case studies are those that involve the analysis of multiple cases simultaneously, 'because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases' (p. 138). The actual cases chosen in a collective case study 'may or may not be known

in advance to manifest some common characteristic' (ibid.). The case studies in this thesis combine the aims and elements of both intrinsic and collective case studies. The three grammar points chosen – described below – are important ones in the canon, typically taught at several levels and in more than one lesson per level, and an analysis of their evolution, and a comparison of their treatment in coursebooks to empirical evidence on their use in the EGP was felt in itself to be a useful exercise. However, it was also hoped that an analysis of the three areas of grammar would provide insights that could potentially be generalisable to the grammar canon as a whole, and might reveal something interesting about its evolution and nature.

The three areas of grammar chosen were as follows:

1. conditionals
2. relative clauses
3. future forms

These were chosen for two reasons. Firstly, all three were mentioned by one or more informant during the interviews, suggesting that they are significant areas of grammar within the overall ELT grammar syllabus. Furthermore, they appear to carry a certain weight within coursebook grammar syllabuses, with each one taught over several lessons, and covered at more than one level. Finally, they represent slightly different types of grammatical structure: conditionals and relative clauses are essentially syntactic, or syntagmatic, patterns, whereas the collection of future forms taught can be considered as paradigmatic 'items'. They are also representative of elements of Williams' (1994) 'constitutive' and 'communicative' rules: all have syntactic elements that students must simply learn (e.g. verb forms in conditionals and future forms, and choice of relativizer and word order in relative clauses), but also 'communicative' elements (the different meanings expressed by the different types of conditional sentence, the difference between defining and non-defining relative clauses, the difference between the various future forms).

#### 4.3.6 Tracing evolution

Chapter 3 set out an account of the evolution of accounts of English grammar since the first grammar of English in the 16th century, through traditional grammars, the Great Tradition and then finally pedagogical accounts. One of the two objectives of

the case studies was to follow the treatment of the three areas of grammar along approximately the same path, finishing with contemporary coursebooks.

The titles chosen for this exercise were as follows, divided by type:

‘Historical’ grammars (‘traditional’ and ‘Great Tradition’):

- Jonson’s *English Grammar* (1640/1909)
- Murray’s *English Grammar* (1795/1823)
- Jespersen’s *Essentials of English Grammar* (1933)

‘Historical’ Pedagogical grammars:

- Palmer’s *A Grammar of Spoken English* (1924/1955)
- Allen’s *Living English Structure* (1947/1959)
- Thomson and Martinet’s *A Practical English Grammar* (1960/1969)

‘Historical’ coursebooks:

- Eckersley’s *Essential English* (1938–1942)
- Hornby’s *Oxford Progressive English* (1954–1956)
- *English Grammatical Structure* (Alexander *et al.*, 1975)<sup>23</sup>
- *Streamline* (Hartley & Viney, 1978–1981)
- *Strategies* (Abbs & Freebairn, 1977–1982)
- *The New Cambridge English Course* (Swan & Walter, 1990–1993)
- *Headway* (Soars & Soars, 1986–)

Chapter 3 discussed the reasons for focussing on Jonson’s and Murray’s grammars, and also the three ‘historical’ pedagogical grammars. Jespersen’s *Essentials of English Grammar* is chosen as a representative of the Great Tradition. A condensed version of Jespersen’s four-volume *Modern English Grammar*, it is chosen over the latter because the shorter format made it more suitable for analysis, and also because it is third in a list of ten grammars in the list of ‘useful books for further

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<sup>23</sup> This is not, in fact, a coursebook, but, as described in Section 3.8, is an inventory of grammatical items created for coursebook writers (among others). Given the fact that the authors were high-profile coursebook authors of the time, it is taken to be representative of the consensus on grammatical content in the period.

reference' provided by Allen in his introduction to *Living English Structure* (Allen, 1947/1959, x).

A selection of coursebooks was chosen to cover the twentieth century up until the early 1990s, reflecting the rough cut-off point used in the thematic analysis. No series earlier than Eckersley's *Essential English* was found to have a clear, grammatical syllabus<sup>24</sup>. The coursebook series were chosen on the basis of them having been written by well-known figures in ELT, having been published by major, international publishing houses, and having had commercial success. The latter criterion is not easily established, but can be surmised by the fact that many were published in more than one edition and that the authors went on to write other coursebook series.

The process of examining the grammatical content of the titles was relatively straightforward. Contents pages or indexes were used to locate the relevant material within each book. With older titles this was at times more problematic, as terminology is often different from that used in modern ELT accounts. For example, Palmer uses the term 'adverbials of condition, supposition, etc.' for what ELT now calls 'conditionals', while Hornby uses the term *willingness* to refer to a number of uses of *will*. Nevertheless, it was always possible to find the relevant sections. The coverage of each grammar point was analysed in terms of i) the level at which it was taught, ii) the content of the coverage (e.g. the uses of *will* taught, or the types of conditional sentence taught) and the wording of the rules and explanations given.

#### 4.3.7 Establishing and testing the contemporary consensus: pilot study

As discussed in Section 4.2 above, the original intention of this research was to investigate the makeup of the consensus on ELT pedagogical grammar, and compare this to the English Grammar Profile. This was to consist of a much more detailed comparison between the two, covering all the most significant areas of grammar included in coursebooks. Consequently, at an early stage of the project, it was decided to carry out a pilot study to inform the methodology to be used, and this will now be discussed.

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<sup>24</sup> As we saw in Section 3.8, the main preoccupation towards the beginning of the 20th century was on vocabulary selection and control, so this is perhaps not surprising.

#### 4.3.7.1 *Establishing the consensus*

One key concern identified before carrying out the pilot study was how exactly to establish that a particular area of grammar was included at a particular level of a coursebook series. ELT coursebooks are complex products. A typical coursebook is between 160 and 184 pages, and is made up of a series of chapters or 'units', each containing a series of lessons. Many of these lessons have grammar teaching at their heart, with the grammar presented through some kind of written or spoken text, followed by controlled practice activities and then, typically, final speaking activities designed to practise some or all of the grammar presented. However, most coursebooks also have a language reference section at the back of the book, containing more detailed explanations of the grammar covered in the lessons and, often, extra practice activities for this grammar. Consequently, a particular 'grammar point' can appear in a coursebook in a number of different ways, including as follows:

1. the grammar point appears in the presentation text within the main lesson pages, is practised in further activities in the lesson pages, is explained in detail and practised again in the language reference section at the back of the book, and is practised further, often orally, in the rest of the lesson
2. the grammar point does not appear in the presentation text, but is explained in the language reference section and grammar reference at the back of the book and is practised further, often orally, in the rest of the lesson
3. the grammar appears only in the language reference at the back of the book, and is practised there in controlled exercises, but not in any subsequent activities in the lesson
4. the grammar point is explained in the language reference at the back of the book, but is not practised anywhere

While it seems reasonable to claim that a grammar point is 'included' or 'taught' in a lesson in scenarios 1 and 2 above, it is harder to make a similar claim for the situations in scenarios 3 and 4. The pilot study represented an opportunity to explore this problem.

It was decided that the pilot study should be based on an examination of a limited number of coursebook series and areas of grammar. The titles in question were all levels of the following series:

- *New English File* (Second Edition) (Oxenden et al, 2004–2010)
- *face2face* (First Edition) (Redston et al, 2005–2009)
- *Language Leader* (First Edition) (Cotton et al, 2007–2010)
- *New Cutting Edge* (First Edition) (Cunningham et al, 2003–2005)

The second decision was which grammar points to examine. The final decision was to investigate the following:

- present perfect simple
- comparisons (comparative and superlative forms, *as ... as*)
- *can*
- *could*
- conditionals

These areas of grammar were chosen to cover a range of types of grammar point, in order to help inform the ultimate choice for the main study, and the methodology itself. Present perfect simple was selected as an example of a tense/aspect form, comparisons because there are a large number of ‘micro’ level teaching points associated with this area of grammar, the modals *can* and *could* to include modal forms, and conditionals because they constitute an area of ELT grammar pedagogy which has been widely discussed in the literature.

One decision that needed to be made early was a ‘cut off point’ for deciding that an item should be considered part of the ELT grammar consensus. As four coursebook series were under consideration, it was decided that if a particular grammar point was included in one level of two of the four series, it would be considered as part of the consensus for that level. Although 50% was by necessity an arbitrary cut off point, and arguably no easier to justify than using a cut-off point of 25% or 75%, it was felt that it would be a useful starting point – if a large number of well-established grammar points were excluded from the canon using this cut off point, the figure would clearly be too high, whereas if many obscure points were included, it would be too low.

#### 4.3.7.2 Designing the comparison

The planned comparison was between the established consensus and empirical evidence from the English Grammar Profile (EGP). This is a searchable database (available for free online at: [englishprofile.org/english-grammar-profile/egp-online](http://englishprofile.org/english-grammar-profile/egp-online)) containing over 1000 grammar competency statements across competence levels in English. These statements are based on an analysis of the Cambridge Learner Corpus, a 55.5 million word corpus made up of over 200,000 English language exam scripts written by students taking Cambridge English exams in 215 countries around the world, and are calibrated according to the six levels of the CEFR (see O’Keeffe and Mark (2017) for a description of the methodology used to create the statements).

The statements in the EGP are categorised into ‘Supercategories’ and ‘Subcategories’; for example, the ‘present perfect simple’ is a Subcategory within the Supercategory ‘Past’. When a search is made – either for a Supercategory, a Subcategory, or simply a free search – a list of competency statements is displayed. Figure 4.2 shows the first ten statements for the Subcategory ‘present perfect simple’.

SuperCategory	SubCategory	Level	Can-do statement	Example	Details
PAST	present perfect simple	A2	<b>FORM/USE:</b> TIME WITH 'FOR' Can use the negative form with 'for' to talk about a past event or action which hasn't occurred again in the period of time up to now.	Example	Details
PAST	present perfect simple	A2	<b>FORM/USE:</b> WITH 'YET' Can use the negative form with 'yet' to talk about events which are expected to be completed at some point in the future.	Example	Details
PAST	present perfect simple	A2	<b>FORM:</b> AFFIRMATIVE Can use the affirmative form 'have' + '-ed' with pronouns 'I' and 'we', and with a limited range of verbs.	Example	Details
PAST	present perfect simple	A2	<b>FORM:</b> NEGATIVE Can use the negative form 'haven't' + '-ed' with 'I' with a limited range of verbs.	Example	Details
PAST	present perfect simple	A2	<b>FORM:</b> QUESTIONS Can use the question form 'have you' + '-ed' with with a limited range of verbs.	Example	Details
PAST	present perfect simple	A2	<b>FORM:</b> WITH ADVERBS Can use the present perfect simple with a limited range of adverbs in the normal mid position.	Example	Details
PAST	present perfect simple	A2	<b>USE:</b> EXPERIENCES Can use the present perfect simple to talk about experiences up to now.	Example	Details
PAST	present perfect simple	B1	<b>FORM/USE:</b> DURATION WITH 'SINCE' Can use the present perfect simple with 'since' to talk about duration.	Example	Details
PAST	present perfect simple	B1	<b>FORM/USE:</b> WITH 'ALREADY' Can use the present perfect simple with 'already' to emphasise that something is done, often before the expected time. ► adverbs	Example	Details
PAST	present perfect simple	B1	<b>FORM:</b> AFFIRMATIVE Can use the affirmative forms with a range of pronouns and nouns and an increasing range of verbs.	Example	Details

Figure 4.2: Competency statements from the EGP for ‘present perfect simple’

The purpose of the comparison with the EGP was twofold. The primary intention was to compare the level assignments in coursebooks with those reported in the EGP: for example, in the case of future forms, at what level do coursebooks typically teach the *going to* future and at what level do learners produce it, according to the EGP? In addition, from my basic familiarity with the EGP, I also expected that there would be some uses identified in the EGP that were not typically taught in coursebooks, and that this would form part of the comparison.

One of the first issues raised by the pilot study in the comparison between the consensus and EGP was how to match the levels in the two data sets. There are a number of problems related to this. Firstly, the B1 level in the CEFR is split into two coursebook levels. There is support for such a division in the CEFR document, which suggests that the six main bands can be split (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 31–33), including a ‘strong threshold B1+’ band (p. 34), but the EGP makes no such distinction. Secondly, the C2 level is not covered in any of the coursebooks, and this appears to be standard practice. Consequently, the C2 level needs to be discounted in the comparison.

A third problem is that not all coursebook levels are mapped to CEFR levels in a consistent and ‘clean’ way. For example, the back cover of the Beginner level of *New English File* states that it covers the whole of the A1 level, but the next level, Elementary claims to cover two thirds of the A1 level and all of the B2 level. Similarly, the Intermediate level is said to cover all of the B1 level and a third of the B2 level; the Upper Intermediate level then claims to cover all of B2. The *face2face* series is similar, but with slightly different overlaps and claims of level coverage. On the other hand, *New Cutting Edge* indicates a one-to-one relationship between coursebook level and CEFR level (e.g. Beginner = A1, Elementary = A2 etc.).

One way to overcome this problem would have been to choose only coursebook series with such straightforward coursebook level – CEFR level correspondence, but this would have excluded some of the best-selling titles. In addition, my own experience in ELT publishing was that the mapping of coursebook to CEFR often comes late in the process, typically *after* a book has been written, and is sometimes little more than a marketing exercise. Private communication with colleagues working within ELT publishing confirmed my experiences, suggesting that claims

made by publishers about CEFR levels may not always be reliable. Consequently, for the purposes of the comparison it was decided to assume a one-to-one relationship as set out in Table 4.1. In addition to the reasons outlined above, it was felt that this was justifiable if claims made by the coursebooks series in terms of *completion* of levels are considered; for example, since *New English File Elementary* claims to cover two thirds of A1 and all of A2 this means that it aims to help learners achieve competency at the A2 level, and can be matched in this way. Similarly, if *New English File Intermediate* claims to cover all of B1 and a quarter, but not all, of B2, the aim of the book must be to achieve competency at B1.

Coursebook level	CEFR level
Beginner/Starter	A1
Elementary	A2
Pre-Intermediate	B1
Intermediate	
Upper-Intermediate	B2
Advanced	C1

Table 4.1: Assumed coursebook-CEFR correspondences

#### 4.3.7.3 Carrying out the comparison

The grammar points chosen were examined one by one. The first step was to examine the relevant EGP entries. Following this, each coursebook series was examined one by one – across all levels – noting both when the forms and uses reported in the EGP occur, and also recording any details not included in the EGP. A spreadsheet was created using Microsoft Excel in order to record the data (see Figure 4.3). The relevant EGP data was recorded on the right of the sheet, divided by CEFR level. On the left, a separate column was created for each coursebook series, and the data from the coursebooks was aligned, where possible, with the EGP entries while the analysis was carried out. Finally, between the four columns for the four coursebook series and the columns related to EGP, a column for the canon was created. When a particular grammar point was represented across two of the four data sources, it was added to the canon column. A different tab in the spreadsheet was used for each area of grammar examined.

After the details from the coursebooks were entered into the spreadsheet, the entries for the EGP column were colour coded. Entries that were not attested at all

in the grammar canon were coloured red; entries that appeared in the canon earlier than in the EGP were coloured blue, and entries that appeared in the canon later than in the EGP were coloured green. This provided a clear, visual representation of where the canon agreed and disagreed with the EGP, and the nature of any disagreement.

#### 4.3.7.4 *Issues and insights*

The greatest difficulty during the pilot study was the question of identifying inclusion of a grammar point in a coursebook. As discussed in Section 4.4.3.1, there are a number of different permutations of how a particular grammar point could be included in a particular coursebook lesson. In the end, it was decided to separate out coverage in main lesson content and in a language reference sections. If a grammar point was included only in a language reference section, it was recorded but placed in parentheses. When calculating whether or not to include an item in the canon, entries in parentheses were counted as being only worth ‘half’. For example, if an item appeared in the language reference section of three coursebook series, but never in the main grammar lessons, this item would be calculated as having been included an overall 1.5 times ( $3 \times 0.5$ ), and consequently would not be included in the grammar canon. This somewhat arbitrary system was felt to reflect the level of importance given by an author or publisher to a particular area of grammar in the teaching materials examined.

An additional difficulty to emerge was the issue of a grammar point appearing at more than one level. Repetition across coursebook levels occurs frequently – one level of a coursebook often treats only one or two micro-level points of an area of grammar, and the following level then revises these and adds one or two usages, and so on as the level increases. For example, the *New English File* series covers present perfect at four levels, from Elementary to Upper-Intermediate (A2–B2), as shown in Table 4.2.

The difficulty here is on how to assign a level for a grammar point that is taught at one level and then revised at the following level (for example, ‘past experiences’, which is taught at three levels, Elementary to Intermediate). On the one hand, if something needs to be revised, then it may be the case that the writers or publishers

	NEF 2nd edition	face2face 1st edition	Language Leader 1st edition	New Cutting Edge 1st edition	Canon	EGP
<b>Beg</b>	+ - ? asking/giving permission + - ? possibility					<b>A1</b> + - ? possibility + - ? requests + - ? offers + - ? ability
<b>Ele</b>	ability requests possibility	possibility	ability possibility In explanation only: permission	ability possibility examples showing what is allowed / not allowed	ability possibility what is allowed / not allowed / permission	<b>A2</b> permission <b>B1</b>
<b>Pre-Int</b>	-	-	ability	possibility (permission)		
<b>Int</b>	can't deduction ability, possibility	can't deduction ability, possibility permission	can't deduction possibility	permission	can't deduction ability, possibility permission	can be general truths can you believe ... ? negative questions limited range of adverbs
						<b>B2</b> can't deduction
						general truths
						increasing range of adverbs reproaches and appeals
<b>Upp-Int</b>	can't deduction (revision) can't have deduction	can't deduction can't have deduction	can't have deduction	can't have deduction general possibility	can't have deduction	<b>C1</b> can't have deduction
<b>Advanced</b>	can't / can't have deduction	can't / can't have deduction (PREVIEW) permission	can't have deduction	(ENDMATTER) possibility, ability, permission, present deduction can request verbs of perception	can't have deduction	<b>C2</b> wide range of adverbs ***** can + passive ***** I can't say, as you can see, I can tell you (emphasis) in rhetorical questions for reflection

Figure 4.3: Spreadsheet from the pilot study, recording coverage of *can*

Elementary	past experiences
Pre-Intermediate	past experiences with <i>ever/never</i> with <i>just, yet</i> and <i>already</i> states that started in the past and continue now, with <i>for</i> and <i>since</i>
Intermediate	past experiences with <i>ever/never</i> with <i>just, yet</i> and <i>already</i>
Upper-Intermediate	past events that are important in the present

Table 4.2: Coverage of present perfect in *New English File*

of a coursebook believe it will not be mastered until this higher level. On the other hand, many Upper Intermediate and Advanced level coursebooks include sections that synthesise various areas of grammar covered earlier; for example, *Cutting Edge Advanced* contains a section that reviews and synthesises a number of different uses of perfect forms, including present perfect simple. In the end, it was decided to always record every level at which a grammar point was covered, and to consider this a characteristic of coverage in the canon.

Although the aim of the pilot was to inform methodology rather than produce data on specific areas of grammar, and the number of coursebook series examined was small, some useful data was also gathered. One of the main observations from both the data collected and also the process of collecting it was that pedagogical grammar as presented in coursebooks can be divided into two levels: micro and macro. For example, returning to one area of grammar examined in the pilot – the present perfect – the right-hand column of Table 4.2 showed that at each coursebook level, one or more ‘details’ was taught. It was decided to conceive of these details as ‘micro-level’ grammar points, and the overall focus as a ‘macro-level’ grammar point.

The pilot suggested broad agreement between coursebooks on the macro-level points to be taught, and when to teach them, but less agreement with the micro-level points. Here, a distinction was made between ‘disagreement’ and ‘lack of agreement’ – the former, uncommon in the data, was the teaching of a micro-level point at one coursebook level in one series, but at another level in another series; the latter, far

more common, was the teaching of one micro-level grammar point in one coursebook, but not at all in the other. This was interesting as it suggested that the totality of micro-level grammar points could be conceived as a ‘pool’ from which coursebooks choose when teaching a macro-level grammar point. At this point, a metaphor may be helpful: macro-level grammar points are ‘dishes’, and there is broad agreement in coursebooks about which dishes should be included. However, in the preparation of each dish, different combinations (all equally valid) of ingredients can be used – the micro-level grammar points. The canon at the micro-level is therefore not so much a ‘must-teach’ list of grammar points, but a list of forms, uses and so on that a materials designer can choose from when teaching a macro-level grammar point. This insight fed into the way the data was treated in the final comparison, to which we can now turn.

#### 4.3.8 Design of comparison used in the case studies

##### 4.3.8.1 Choice of coursebooks

The selection criteria used for choosing the final set of coursebooks were similar to those for the historical coursebooks: the titles should all be published by international publishing houses and should be commercially successful. The coursebook series should be aimed at adult learners, as the Cambridge Learner Corpus, on which the English Grammar Profile is based, consists of examination scripts produced by candidates sitting examinations aimed at adult learners, and should be published at the canonical six levels.

It was also decided to include an ‘American English’ coursebook as part of the final selection, as it had been suggested to me that American English coursebooks might take a different approach to grammar. As Jack Richards had been included as an informant for the interviews, it was decided to use his series, *Interchange* and *Passages*<sup>25</sup>.

The list of coursebooks analysed can be found in Table 4.3. It should be noted here, however, that while the coursebooks chosen were felt to be largely representative of the majority of General English coursebooks for adults, they do not necessarily

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<sup>25</sup> American English coursebook series are typically published at four levels, with a separate series covering the top two levels; this is the case with *Interchange* and *Passages*.

represent all coursebooks. Some coursebook series – for example, the 1980s *Cobuild English Course* and, more recently, *Innovations*, have taken a somewhat different approach to grammar coverage.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Year of publication</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
<i>New English File</i> (2nd edition) (Oxenden <i>et al.</i> ; Oxenden and Latham-Koenig; Oxenden, Latham-Koenig and Seligson)	2005–2010	Oxford University Press
<i>face2face</i> (1st edition) (Cunningham, Bell and Redston; Redston; Redston and Cunningham; Redston, Cunningham and Tims)	2005–2009	Cambridge University Press
<i>Headway</i> (4th edition) (Soars and Soars; Soars, Soars and Hancock)	2009–2015	Oxford University Press
<i>New Cutting Edge</i> (1st edition) (Cunningham and Moor; Cunningham and Redston)	2004–2010	Pearson Education (Longman)
<i>Interchange</i> (3rd edition) (Richards; Richards, Hull and Proctor) + <i>Passages</i> (2nd edition) (Richards and Sandy)	2004–2005, 2008	Cambridge University Press

Table 4.3: coursebooks analysed in final case studies

#### 4.3.8.2 Method of comparison to coursebooks

The approach taken to analysis was broadly in line with that which had been used in the pilot study. Grammar points were examined one by one, and a spreadsheet was used to record the data, in exactly the same way as in the pilot, including the use of brackets to indicate that a grammar point was covered only in grammar reference material at the back of a book. Additionally, a ‘notes’ column was created, in order to record any observations about a particular micro-level grammar point, or coverage of it in a particular coursebook.

The principal difference in approach, compared to the pilot study, was that the quantitative measure used for establishing membership of the canon was almost entirely abandoned. Conceiving of the totality of micro-level grammar points as a ‘pool’ or list of potential ingredients meant that it was felt that any micro-level grammar point identified had inherent value for the research, even if it was found just in one single coursebook. For convenience, a column in the spreadsheet was still created for the canon, and was completed for any macro-level grammar point found

in more than one coursebook, with an indication of frequency placed in brackets, as can be seen in Figure 4.4 below. However, it was expected that even micro-level points found in only one coursebook would be included in the analysis and discussion when appropriate<sup>26</sup>.

face2face 1st edition	Headway latest edition	Interchange 3rd edition, Passages	New Cutting Edge 1st edition	Canon
going to: personal plan or intention	going to: intention		going to: old idea (endmatter: present intentions)	going to intention (3/5)
going to: prediction based on present evidence			(endmatter) going to: predictions based on some evidence in the present	going to prediction (2/5)
will: prediction not based on present evidence	will: prediction		will: prediction (prediction based on our own beliefs and expectations)	will prediction (3/5)
	present simple: future fact based on a timetable		present simple (endmatter: regular timetable)	present simple (2/5)
present continuous: arrangement with other people or organisations	present continuous: arrangement between two people		present continuous: arrangement (endmatter: something we have arranged for the future)	present continuous arrangement (3/5)
will: decision made at time of speaking	will: spontaneous decision		will: new idea (endmatter: decision made at the moment of speaking)	will: decision at time of speaking (3/5)

Figure 4.4: Part of spreadsheet entry for future forms at Level 5

One added complication of using the American English *Interchange* and *Passages* series was that they are not mapped to CEFR levels at all. Because of this, and given the lack of complete agreement between coursebook series on CEFR level mapping, it was decided not to refer to coursebooks by CEFR level, but simply to label them as Levels 1–6, with Level 1 representing the lowest level the series was published at, and Level 6 the highest. This did not affect the overall mapping of the coursebook levels to CEFR levels for the comparison to the EGP, however. The final system was therefore as in Table 4.4:

Coursebook level	CEFR level
Level 1	A1
Level 2	A2
Level 3	B1
Level 4	
Level 5	B2
Level 6	C1

Table 4.4: Final coursebook level – CEFR level alignment

## 4.4 Conclusions and preview of analysis and discussion

### 4.4.1 Fitting together the research methods

As we have seen, the three research questions under investigation in this thesis are:

<sup>26</sup> For example, only one coursebook series – *Passages* – teaches the future perfect continuous, but, this itself seeming remarkable, it is mentioned in the discussion.

1. How, when and where did the consensus on the ELT grammar 'canon' develop?
2. What is the nature of the system that perpetuates and sustains it?
3. Does the canon reflect empirical evidence on the development of grammatical competence of learners of EFL?

The research questions addressed in this thesis have necessitated the use of two very different research methods: a thematic analysis of interview data, and a comparison of teaching materials with a database of corpus-based level descriptors.

The first research question is addressed by an analysis of the coverage, in 'historical' teaching materials, of three macro-level grammar points: conditionals, relative clauses and future forms, and also by the thematic analysis of interview data with ten informants from the world of ELT publishing. The second question is addressed by the same interview data, while the third is addressed by a comparison of the consensus found in contemporary coursebook series with empirical data on learner language use in the form of the English Grammar Profile. While the two methods of data collection and analysis were very different, they were felt to be complementary, and, as we shall see, at times it was possible during the analysis to triangulate data collected using one method with data collected using the other.

#### 4.4.2 Preview of following chapters

The following four chapters present the data collected, with analysis and discussion. We start with an analysis of the contemporary situation, before moving on to the question of evolution.

**Chapter 5** presents the first part of the thematic analysis of the interview data, focussing on the organising themes 'internal influence/input' and 'external influence/input'. Here the internal/external distinction is based on the difference between influence and input coming from, or perceived by the informants to come from, the actors involved in the production of coursebooks, i.e. the authors and publishers. External influences and input are those that are, or are perceived by the informants to be, external from those actors.

**Chapter 6** turns to the case studies. It sets out the current consensus on the three grammar points in the five coursebook series listed in Section 4.4 above, comparing

them to the evidence reported in the EGP. As we shall see, there are examples of both convergence and divergence, and some implications of this are discussed.

Having established the contemporary situation, **Chapter 7** turns to the question of how we have arrived here. It presents the remainder of the thematic analysis, focussing in particular on the organising theme of 'ELT past and present'. This discusses the basic themes 'changing roles', 'changing practices' and 'origins of the level system'. In terms of the evolution of the grammatical tradition, then, it addresses in part the question of the origins of the level system, but also discusses how practices and roles have changed in ELT publishing, in ways that are said to have had an impact on the nature of the consensus on grammar.

Finally, **Chapter 8** outlines the historical evolution of the three grammar points, based on their treatment in the teaching materials under examination. Particularly evident in this process is the gradual move from traditional, more prescriptive treatments, to modern, pedagogical ones, and a move towards greater homogeneity – essentially, towards a consensus.

The reason for beginning by considering the present is that this largely reflects the perspective both of the researcher and the informants. My own teaching career began in 2000, and I feel – for better or for worse – very much part of, or even a product of, the contemporary consensus on grammar teaching. Furthermore, all but one of the informants interviewed are still currently working in ELT, and their perspectives in the main were generally contemporary ones, although often shaped by the past. Overall, this thesis is primarily an examination of the contemporary situation, not a chronological, historical account. It takes the contemporary consensus as a starting point, considering the question of evolution as essential in truly understanding the present consensus, but not subordinate to it.

## 5 Thematic analysis 1: shaping grammatical content

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter explains and introduces the thematic analysis carried out on the data collected in the interviews, and goes on to set out a part of it. The entire thematic network under analysis can be seen in Figure 5.1 below. As discussed in Chapter 4, this network is a representation of the hierarchy of themes identified during coding, with ‘basic themes’ subordinate to ‘organising themes’, and these in turn subordinate to ‘global themes’.

An analysis of the interview data revealed two broad, global themes: ‘input and influence’ and ‘ELT past and present’. The first relates to factors perceived by the informants to have an influence on, or provide some kind of input into, the structure and content of grammar syllabuses for EFL. The second relates to differences between the past and present in ELT, and in particular the ELT publishing industry, or changes that informants have experienced; again, these changes or differences are those that appear to be, or to have been, influential in some way on the structure and content of grammar syllabuses.

This chapter focuses on the first global theme: ‘influences and input’; the second global theme will be discussed in Chapter 7. However, one complication that became apparent while carrying out the thematic analysis of the themes was the difficulty in separating out contemporary issues from historical ones: that is to say, the questions of how the ELT grammar canon evolved and how it is sustained. The fundamental reason is that there is no clear cut off point between the period of time in which the canon evolved, and the ‘modern’ period in which the canon has become established and no longer changes. In addition, all but one of the informants selected for their ability to provide insight into pre-1990s coursebooks remain active in coursebook writing in the present, or have remained so until recently. As a consequence, this chapter may occasionally make reference to comments made that relate to past practice, just as Chapter 7 may occasionally make reference to comments made that relate to current practice.

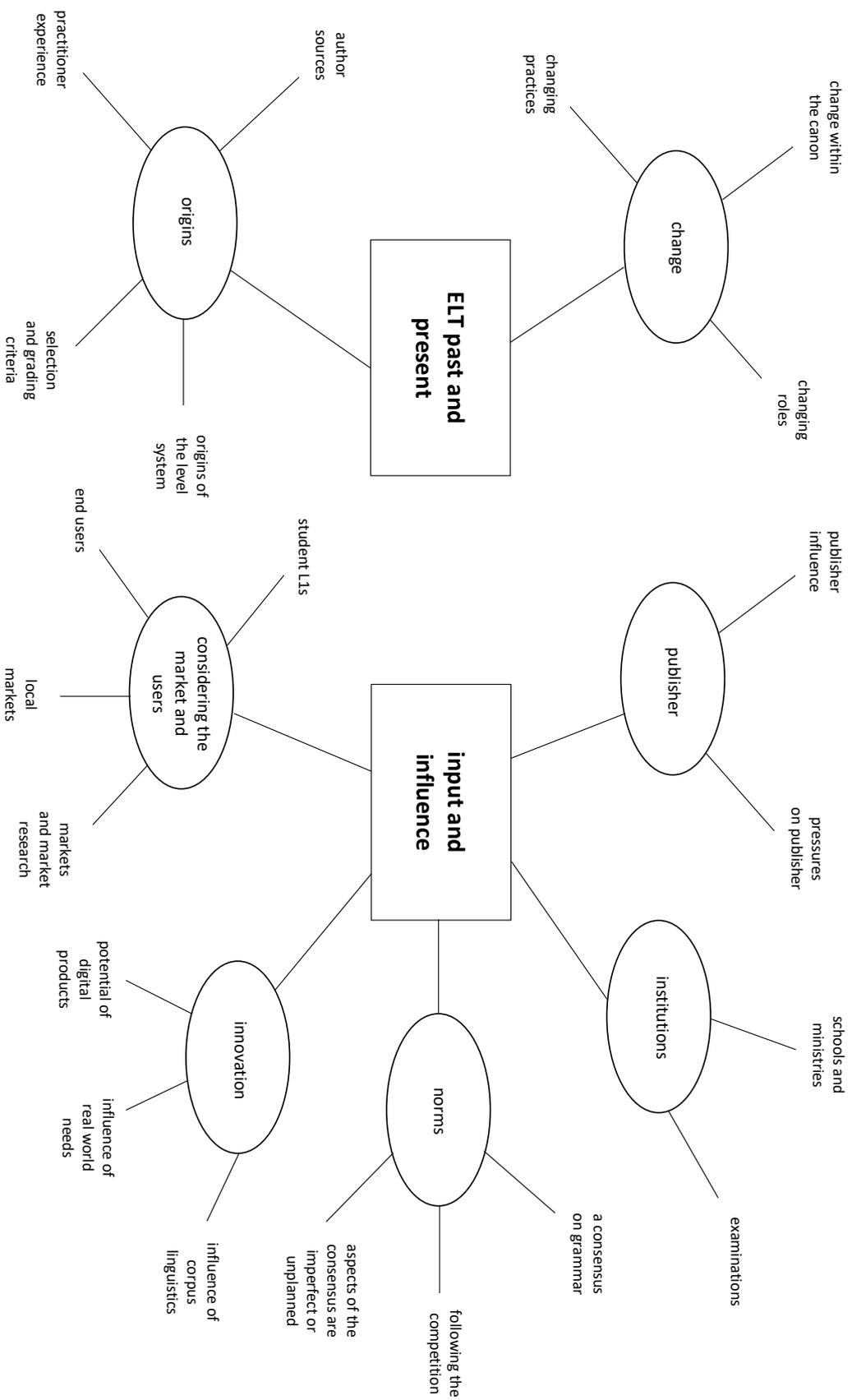


Figure 5.1: Thematic network

For the sake of brevity and clarity, the analysis presented below and in Chapter 7 uses initials rather than full names to refer to the informants. The list of initials is as follows, including the codes used for the two anonymous informants used instead of names.

- MS** Michael Swan: ELT coursebook and grammar author
- LS** Liz Soars: ELT coursebook author
- BU** Bart Ullstein: sales and marketing professional at Longman ELT division in the 1970s
- IF** Ingrid Freebairn: ELT coursebook author
- PV** Peter Viney: ELT coursebook author
- JR** Jack Richards: academic and ELT coursebook author
- DH** Diane Hall: ELT publisher, editor and coursebook and grammar author
- APP** anonymous publishing professional: highly experienced ELT publishing professional with international experience
- AG** Adam Gadsby: Director of Strategic Partnerships, Cambridge University Press; ex. editorial director at Pearson Education
- ACA** anonymous coursebook author: ELT coursebook author (and former publishing professional)

## 5.2 Global theme: input and influence

All participants discussed a number of different factors which appeared to have, or could have, an influence on or input into grammar content. These were divided into five organising themes, as follows:

- publishers
- norms
- institutions
- considering the market and users
- possibility of innovation

### 5.2.1 Organising theme: publishers

#### 5.2.1.1 *Basic theme: influence of publishers*

While the role of author is clearly crucial in the production of coursebooks, it is significant that it was the interviewed authors, not publishing professionals, that

primarily commented on the role of the author. The main exception was BU, whose involvement in ELT publishing ended in 1979. Far more common, from both the authors and publishing professionals interviewed, were comments on the role of the publisher, and the reasons for this role, in shaping the content and structure of the grammar syllabus.

An extremely common theme to emerge from the interviews was ‘publisher influence’. Many comments outline the overall power publishers have in mapping out and deciding on grammatical content for coursebooks. The following excerpts, from two coursebook authors and two publishing professionals, are typical:

BU: [N]ow it appears that the publishers are the driving force, who put together teams that agree with their ideas.

APP: I think generally the publisher decides these days[.]. [...] [P]ublishers control scope and sequence these days, or want control over it.

ACA: The publisher has the final say on everything.

PV: I think it is much more publisher led now than it ever was. [...] I remember the internet group, ‘ELT writers connected’. And you’d listen to authors of a different generation [i.e. authors writing contemporary coursebooks], and they didn’t have a choice of how to design a syllabus. They’re told to follow Council of Europe levels and this publisher has a very strong idea of the syllabus before they start writing.

In addressing the question of how decisions are made on grading grammatical structures, AG refers to specific programmes at two publishers to standardise the grammar syllabus, putting decisions out of the hand of individuals, whether they be authors or editors.

AG: [I]t depends on the publisher and how they’ve gone with it, because the attempt at Pearson was to have a standard Pearson syllabus which would be used across all courses, so your variety is in the topic and content and digital configuration and all that, but let’s not reinvent the grammar syllabus every time we publish a new course. Here at CUP it’s moving in that direction because of things like the EGP, and there’s more of a structure there. [...] Publishers are sort of laying out the grid, you need structure and so on[.]

### 5.2.1.2 *Basic theme: pressures on publishers*

From the interview data, it became clear that publishers suffer from a range of pressures, and have a range of needs, and these are often the motivation behind their desire to influence the structure and content of the grammar syllabus. This echoes one of the key issues raised in Amrani's (2011) account, discussed in Chapter 3: while authors often perceive restrictions or pressure from publishers, the publishers themselves perceive themselves to be operating under similar pressures. The most significant issue appears, unsurprisingly, to be financial in nature: a number of informants discussed the need for publishers to avoid commercial risk. APP mentions this several times, in relation to three different aspects of coursebook production.

APP: [On the selection of grammar points] [T]here's a kind of standard menu these days of grammatical expectations at any one level, and I think people are unwilling in general to risk moving far away from it because I think that might put the series at risk and therefore make nonsense of the investment[.]

APP: [On the grading of grammar points] I think publishers are unwilling, understandably, to risk doing anything that deviates too much from the norm, because it's too much of a commercial risk.

APP: [On the possibility of innovation in the grammar syllabus] I also think that, thinking commercially, as you know a course is a massive investment and will inevitably have digital media attached to it these days, often given away free. And publishers are not willing to deviate much from the norm.

She also points to how commercial pressures might affect decisions on how many levels to publish: a publisher will be less likely to want to publish a particular level of a coursebook series if sales are not predicted to be high for that level.

APP: Publishers, if your sales at top levels, whatever those top levels might be, are 20% of what they are at Pre-Intermediate and Intermediate level, the publisher is going to be reluctant to invest in something for a small number of users.

This practice is confirmed by DH:

DH: I've certainly come across a number of courses where the publishers will start off with the four core levels, well maybe there are five core levels, I don't know, but they'll start off with four, going from maybe Elementary to Upper Intermediate,

because they're the ones that sell most. ... [T]hen, if the course goes well, they'll start tacking on, they'll put on an Advanced, and possibly a Proficiency, and they'll go down lower and do a starter. And that happened with *Total English*, it happened with *Keynote*, it happened with *Language Leader*, they only did the Advanced later on, so some of it is down to the commercial aspect of sales, what they think will sell.

IF and PV both also explain how commercial factors are likely to be priorities in any decision making processes on grammar content.

IF: Longman are a commercial enterprise, they want to sell copies, so they don't really decide what is the most teachable route. It's what the markets want, probably more, than what actually is easiest to teach in the classroom.

PV: I think the investment levels now are so huge that no publisher would dare to do it [publish a series] without backing it up with research[.]

JR reflects on a coursebook series, released at approximately the same time as his own, which was both very different from other courses and commercially unsuccessful. The fact that innovation of this kind can be a commercial risk explains, for JR, why publications are unwilling to innovate to any great extent:

JR: [T]hat course completely bombed – it just never took off at all. So it was trying to do something totally different. So publishers are very cautious about trying to do something that is very different for that reason.

Another key issue is the need to publish multiple levels – typically four out of six – of a coursebook series simultaneously, in order to be able to offer a viable product to the markets. The consequence of this is that syllabus planning needs to be carried out in advance of writing the content, probably by the publisher itself, given that various different authors and author teams may be working on different levels. PV explains the basic context and result, as he sees it.

PV: The other things is they all want simultaneous introduction of all four levels. [...] But it [...] doesn't let stuff grow when you do that, because you grow a syllabus in a way.

AG describes the same basic phenomenon.

AG: That's the thing – you can't have that, Brian [Abbs] and Ingrid [Freebairn] working their way through it [a series of coursebooks]. You've got different pairs working on different levels, you've got to bring out five levels at once, or whatever,

so there's no way you can do it [i.e. come up with a new grammar syllabus] in that kind of way, because you'll drop things between the levels, or get them in the wrong place. There isn't time to unpick it again, and so 'oh shit, no actually that bit doesn't work, we'd better put it in the level below'. You've got to get your structure right at the beginning and then fill it in.

It is noteworthy that AG presents this practice as inevitable and essential in avoiding problems, rather than lamenting the inability to 'grow a syllabus' discussed by PV. This disagreement is not untypical of the different perspectives held by authors and publishers.

PV also offers an interesting perspective, admittedly not confirmed by other informants, on how a very physical publishing pressure, the fact that print books are made up of 'signatures' – 'booklets' typically of 16 or 32 pages – might have a very direct effect on the number of units that can be included within an individual title, and, consequently, on the content of a syllabus:

PV: I have a feeling, knowing how OUP work, that the magic number 96 for profitability on the number of pieces of paper was a major influence in the length. I think the number 96, and multiples of 16 on top of this, might explain a lot about syllabus design. Yeah, I think they wanted 96 pages, with indexes and everything.

## 5.2.2 Organising them: norms

### 5.2.2.1 *Basic theme: a consensus on grammar*

An extremely common basic theme associated with the organising theme 'norms' was 'a consensus on grammar'. All informants currently involved in the production of coursebooks made reference to the absolute imperative of closely following the existing consensus on grammar; APP puts the situation clearly: 'Publishers are not willing to deviate much from the norm'.

AG, in two different parts of the interview, mentions the existence of a consensus to be followed both in the level system and the grammatical content.

AG: I think with general adult courses it's become the norm to publish six levels, generally.

AG: I still think that the teachers will look first at the grammar syllabus and see if fits their 'folk expectation', and 'Does it have the things that I expect to cover at this level and if it doesn't, I'll use something else'.

Key in AG's account is the idea of 'expectation' – the need for those involved in producing coursebooks to follow existing norms is explained by the fact that they are expected to do so. The words 'expect' and 'expectation' are both used by a number of other informants – both authors and publishing professionals:

APP: I think there's a kind of standard menu these days of grammatical expectations at any one level.

IF: [W]e would have looked at Louis, Robert and other ones [coursebook syllabuses], and decided, 'OK, that's what is expected at this level' – that you start with present and past, etc., etc., and then you go on.

MS: [In response to being asked why he would refer to the consensus version of grammar, even if he disagreed with it.] Well, because that's what readers expect. If readers think there are three kinds of conditional, because that's what they've been learning all their lives, teachers particularly, and then along comes this madman, who says there are two main categories of conditional, obviously you don't take him seriously – everyone knows there are three conditionals.

JR: So partly it [decisions on matching grammar points to levels] was guided by the editors and also just looking at expectations, seeing things like, for example, the present perfect must appear at level 1, and the past tense, and so on.

When subsequently asked whether the need to follow expectations and consensus was troublesome to him as an academic, JR's reply suggests there was simple no other viable option:

JR: It didn't bother me particularly because there wasn't [sic] too many other reference points really. So, you know – common practice was probably a good way to go, because if one departed too much from it, you're likely to lose your target audience.

At times, the existence of norms appears to be so accepted as to lie almost undetected. For example, DH, in describing the use of a four-level system in the 1980s, describes the consensus on the level system in terms of acceptance rather than expectation:

DH: It just seemed to be accepted. I don't remember there ever having been a discussion – going back to the first ones [coursebooks] I worked on, I don't remember there being a discussion of why it was four levels.

Similarly, while ACA does not mention expectation explicitly, the reference to the need to 'do what everybody else does' appears to amount to the same thing:

ACA: People want familiar, but done in a fresh way. So you do what everybody else does. [...] In terms of the six level system, the markets want six levels. That's the message. [...] When they've suggested adding a level, it's not been a goer. Six levels is what the institutions want.

On the other hand, LS, when discussing the merits or otherwise of including the structure *have got* in a grammar syllabus, talks explicitly about the role that pressure 'within ELT' has on the likelihood of its inclusion:

LS: [And with *have got*, where's the pressure coming from?] The pressure comes from within ELT. Somewhere many, many years ago within ELT, somebody made the discovery that in the English language we say 'I've got a cat', that we use *have got* in informal English. Which of course, we do. But for some reason ... it's interesting as well, the things that aren't given prominence to in grammar syllabuses, isn't it?

The quotations reported above tend to refer to norms and expectations in somewhat abstract terms; for example, LS refers to pressure 'within ELT', without explaining how this might be manifested. The second basic theme, by contrast, referred to one specification vehicle for the promulgation of norms on the grammatical content of coursebooks: other coursebooks.

#### 5.2.2.2 *Basic theme: Following the competition*

The practice of referring to competition titles was reported by a number of informants. Other coursebooks appear to play a key role in setting and maintaining norms associated with the level system, grammar selection, and level assignment of grammar points, confirmed by three coursebook authors.

ACA: A lot of it is historic. You put in the grammar points that other coursebooks do. Because if you don't, your title will seem deficient.

IF: We would have used [in designing the grammar syllabus], I guess, Robert's syllabus, or we would have looked at Louis, Robert and other ones<sup>27</sup>, and decided, 'OK, that's what is expected at this level' – that you start with present and past, etc., etc., and then you go on.

PV: Let's take *Kernel Lessons* to start with. Because that was our bible, for everybody. Robert O'Neill [author of *Kernel Lessons*] was the great. [...] Robert and Bernie [Hartley – PV's co-author] worked together for years. And Bernie was very, very heavily influenced by Robert.

DH and AG both describe the process of surveying competition titles during the writing of a coursebook series – a crucial early step in the production of a new series.

AG: I know when they started a new course like *SpeakOut* at Pearson or *Empower* at CUP, one of the things you do at the beginning is look at all the other courses and sort of decide on a structure.

DH: [Interviewer: How do you decide on the grammar points to include and where do they come from?] I think from other books! And it just seems to be ... I don't think they're even taken, I've never known a course where it's just taken lock, stock and barrel from another course, obviously you wouldn't do that, but generally it's a sort of survey of courses for the same market, at the same level, etc. and looking at what they cover. [...] [Interviewer: And how do you decide which levels to include the grammar points at?] Much as the above.

APP makes similar points on deciding on both the level system and grammar content.

APP: I think the number of levels is determined by the competition, to some extent market research, market feedback. [talking about the selection of grammar points] I think generally the publisher decides these days, and very much with an eye on the competition, on the established competition, on the successful competition.

Later in the interview, APP appears to confirm the idea of coursebooks as being the physical manifestations of the norms and consensus:

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<sup>27</sup> In private communication (19.10.2017) following the interview, IF clarified that at this point in the interview she was referring to 'the Scope and Sequence followed by the two leading Longman authors at that time: Louis Alexander in *New Concept English (First Things First, Practice and Progress, Developing Skills and Fluency in English)* and by Robert O'Neill in *Kernel Lessons Intermediate, Kernel Lessons Plus*'.

APP: Because the competition, to be fair, gives people ... you know, if it's successful competition, that means they probably haven't got their grammar totally wrong, that it meets the expectations of the teachers, and in terms of level, exactly the same.

Finally, PV mentions a specific coursebook series which he feels has had a strong influence on subsequent publications:

PV: I think the great shame is that because of the – this is not a criticism of *Headway* – the huge success of *Headway* has made people try to clone it ever since.

### 5.2.2.3 Basic theme: aspects of the consensus are imperfect or unplanned

A key motivation for carrying out research on factors underlying the development and perpetuation of the consensus on the ELT grammar syllabus is that its origins have not been documented, and nor have decisions made over the years on its content and structure. There therefore always remains the possibility that the system that has evolved is not completely fit for purpose, or at very least, has never been formally planned. This unplanned nature of the grammar consensus emerges from a number of informants, particularly in terms of the level system, but also in terms of the choice of grammar points.

In terms of level, LS makes it quite clear that the six levels that the coursebook series *Headway* was eventually published at were not originally planned:

LS: It was never decided that *Headway* would have six levels. It grew to six levels over the years. It evolved. [...] We didn't end up with six levels until the year 2000, in fact. Even though the original two-book series came out in 86.

As we saw above, this process is explained by DH, who notes that commercial opportunities may ultimately be the key factor in decisions on the number of levels to publish:

DH: I've certainly come across a number of courses where the publishers will start off with the four core levels [...] going from maybe Elementary to Upper Intermediate, because they're the ones that sell most. [...] [T]hey'll do those, and then, if the course goes well, they'll start tacking on, they'll put on an Advanced, and possibly a Proficiency, and they'll go down lower and do a starter. [S]o some of it is down to the commercial aspect of sales, what they think will sell. This is talking about the current situation, rather than where it all originated from.

In terms of the level system being in some way imperfect, AG describes several different contexts in which a six-level coursebook series does not appear to match the needs of the teaching programme:

AG: I remember doing research in Spain and Italy about what do they do and need, quite a few places use an Upper Intermediate level from one course, and then another Upper Intermediate level from a different course because it's not enough either in level or number of hours to take them to a C1 Advanced level. [...] There are more and more different situations, so, universities in Turkey have got to get from A1 to B2 in 30 weeks, and they use two and a half or three levels of the course during that year, and ideally they'd like something that fits exactly with their needs.

Four informants also made reference to situations in which the level system of a coursebook series had to be modified in some way, again indicating that the predominant six-level system found in ELT coursebooks and ELT in general is somewhat ad hoc in nature:

BU: Louis [Alexander] did it [i.e. established a level system] entirely from his experience teaching in a private secondary school in Greece, with precious little market research. And the result of that was he originally did four books, which took you from First Principles, First Things First, to Cambridge Proficiency and beyond. And that was how it was launched. However, within four years of its launch, *First Things First* had been split into two, and *Practice and Progress* had been split into two, so you ended up with a five-year<sup>28</sup> course to Cambridge Lower, which sort of mirrored what was supposed to be going on in secondary schools. So you'd start at 11 and you'd get Lower at 16.

APP: [W]hat happened, certainly 15, 20 years ago, let's say 20 years ago, was that publishers would go ahead and publish something at non-absolute beginner level, and they would sort of gulp a year or two later, and say, 'Oh dear, people are having difficulty with this level – we need to publish a starter level, or an intro level, or whatever'.

LS: And in some markets, [...] they just didn't have the class time available and they didn't move at the necessary speed to do anything like getting through one level of the book in one year, which I think what I think was originally perceived as what

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<sup>28</sup> In personal communication, the informant confirmed he had misspoken, and that the split described actually created a six-level series.

was going to happen. So [...] we did split editions [...] so we had 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, and if there had been the market for it, the third advanced level might also have turned into 3A, 3B, so we would have ended up, we had potentially a six-level course.

While the six-level system is now well established in major coursebook series, innovation does still appear to be possible. Both AG and DH mention series which have, or will have seven levels:

AG: I think OUP with *English File* in Spain added an extra level to try and bridge that gap [i.e. between Upper Intermediate and Advanced]. I think one of the reasons why I think OUP did that with *English File*, to make an extra level in Spain, was because the 'escuelas oficiales', the EOIs, have seven levels in their system and they want something that fits with their system, and they're a big part of the market in Spain.

DH: I'm just thinking 'seven' – *Keynote* has got five already and two are coming out. So *Keynote* will have seven. It's got Advanced and Proficiency already, and it's going lower.

However, despite this apparently potential for flexibility, it is worth considering a further comment made by AG when asked whether there was a norm that writers and publishers felt the need to follow in terms of levels.

AG: I think that's what the customers are looking for, but it doesn't fit perfectly and it does give them problems.

It therefore seems that, despite the fact that the current six-level system may not be ideal in many situations, the pressure of conformity to established practice means that six levels are generally maintained.

In terms of the precise grammatical content in a coursebooks series, IF and PV, referring to older coursebook series, both note that the content of each series evolved slowly, and was not planned from the beginning.

IF: [R]ight up to *Blueprint* [a coursebook series] and the others, we would do one level at a time and publish that[.] [I]t was very, very much, as it happened as we wrote.

PV: I don't think we ever sat down and mapped out four levels. We mapped out Level 1, and then we mapped out Level 2. Until we finished Level 2, we didn't start thinking about Level 3. I'm sure we did it a level at a time. And then we would have learnt things, and you would also have tested it.

As discussed in the previous two basic themes, in modern titles there is little variation on content. AG refers to this consensus as a ‘folk syllabus’ for grammar – with the implication being that its contents may not themselves be well founded:

AG: There is this kind of recognised ‘folk syllabus’ that you teach the present before you teach the past, and you do the conditionals at a certain points and so on.

Other informants also suggested at imperfection in terms of the grammar chosen for inclusion, particularly in terms of how certain grammar points are prioritised over others. For example, LS discusses her perception that too much focus is placed on ‘have got’ in British English courses; conversely, she also discusses areas of grammar that are often ignored in American English versions of coursebooks.

LS: [Interviewer: Did you ever include or exclude any grammar contents that you would have preferred not to?] It usually happens more with the American editions, where they’re so kind of hell-bent on saying they don’t say this, but in fact, they do. It’s like they have this thing about *have got*. Mind you, I do think that British syllabuses are a bit too wound up about *have got*. [...] Myths build up within the English Language Teaching world about what isn’t used. I remember one big thing – again it was the Upper Intermediate, we were doing this thing of ‘bound to happen’ as a related verb, modal, you know – and working with the American editor, ‘No, we would not say that in American English’. And in fact, amazingly enough, probably because we’d just been using it, he used it a few sentences later. Things like that. [...] You do wonder with certain things in the language whether they’re worth spending time on[.]

An alternative perspective on the question of prioritising certain grammar points was offered by PV, in talking about how another author, Robert O’Neill, selected grammar for inclusion in his coursebooks. According to PV, O’Neill prioritised grammar points that had clear learning outcomes in a single lesson – referred to by PV as those that have a ‘ding factor’ – over others. This, according to this informant, leads to certain areas of grammar receiving more attention than they should.

PV: [Robert O’Neill’s] selection criteria for [*Kernel Lessons*] *Intermediate* was ... I used to say it all had a ‘ding’ factor. [...] [I]t’s the ding factor that students go, ‘Ah, I’ve got it’. And all the things in *Kernel Lessons Intermediate* have a ding factor, where you’ve done the contrasts between two grammatical points, and then you, ‘Ah, that’s right – I’ve got it.’ And the ding factor thing that I began to think of in

recent years was how comparatives and superlatives is flogged to death in every textbook. And it's flogged to death because it has a major ding factor.

An interesting counterpoint to the question of consensus in ELT is offered by JR, who notes that his own experience of publications for less widely learned languages do not seem to reflect any kind of consensus:

JR: I think basically books for uncommonly taught languages are based entirely on the intuition of the writers because there's no tradition. The same is true of Cantonese. I did a study when I was in Hong Kong looking at textbooks for the teaching of Cantonese, and we found there was almost no, or very limited overlap in terms of grammar or vocabulary from one book to the other, so they again had no ... not a convention in terms of publishing materials for Cantonese. So each writer basically made it up on his own or on her own.

JR's assertion that the reason for the lack of consensus is the lack of tradition seems reasonable. One can speculate that should Cantonese become more widely taught, with a larger number of publications, a consensus might slowly evolve as to the content and sequencing of content.

### 5.2.3 Organising theme: institutions

The third organising theme was 'institutions', relating to how external institutions can have an influence on the grammar covered in coursebooks. This organising theme contains two basic themes:

- schools and ministries
- exam boards

#### 5.2.3.1 *Basic theme: schools and ministries*

The influence of schools and ministries of education was mentioned by a number of informants. APP describes the influence of state school syllabuses in different parts of the world on the makeup of grammatical syllabuses, and how that interacts with the expectations of teachers.

APP: [Talking about the influences on selection of grammar points for a coursebook series] Prescriptive syllabuses. I'm thinking really at school level here.

APP: [Talking about how grammar points are assigned to levels] Throughout Latin America, for example, all the school systems have pretty prescriptive syllabuses. In

Asia, they don't appear to prescribe, but I think they do prescribe, I think that they definitely determine expectations among teachers.

ACA reports similar influences, this time on the level system, mentioning, like APP, South America, and also the high school system in Italy.

ACA: The decisions come mostly from market research, from how the market is structured. So, for example, the *biennio* [first two years of high school], or the *triennio* [final three years of high school] in Italy. In other countries, there are also key, large institutions, like university systems. Or large, binational centres in South America. So what you publish reflects their structures. And it also reflects what the Ministries of Education want.

The influence of state institutions does not appear to be a new phenomenon; it was also reported by informants when talking about titles from the 1970s and 1980s. IF speaks in detail of the influence of the school system in Italy on the grammatical content of a coursebook series, sometimes putting the influence in a negative light.

IF: And then we went back and did [levels] 1 and 2 [of the *Blueprint* coursebook series], again influenced by the *scuola media* [sic] in Italy because [...] they wanted to build in not only as much grammar as possible, but also as much culture as possible, which didn't really seem to match up with the grammar they'd done. So you might do a little bit of this, that and the other and present continuous and then you'd have a whole section on the Romans in the past tense, so it wouldn't really match up to the language they'd been studying. [...] And the other trouble with Italy at the time was that they always believed that they had to start again when they go into *biennio*. They would start from scratch again – they never seemed to be this sort of progression upwards that one would feel that they had done *Discoveries* before, now let's see if we can use that as the starting point and go upwards. But no, you had to then go back right at the beginning as if they'd never done it before.

IF also describes how different school systems around the world might, unsurprisingly, not always be in total agreement.

IF: You'd always get slight conflicts between what they wanted to cover. [...] [W]hat they wanted to cover by the end of book 1 was always slightly different between the different countries. Some didn't want more than the present tense in book 1, for instance – you didn't really want any past. Whereas others say, 'No, we've got to cover the present, past tense, past simple' by the end of book 1. [...] But it might have

pleased Poland if they hadn't done it by the end – so to please them, we would probably go with them rather than lose their market. That made sense for us.

A final comment worth noting is made by BU, who again makes a clear the link between coursebook syllabuses and education ministry syllabuses, but also notes that the creators of both might be the same people.

BU: [I]f you were doing the *Living English for Jordan* in the occupied parts of what is now called Palestine, those books were tied to the Jordanian ministry syllabus, which were pretty explicit about what was taught at each level. Though that was very often originally written by the people who wrote the courses. So they would be commissioned to work out something for introducing English throughout the secondary school system in Jordan.

In this case, the coursebook series mentioned is not a contemporary title, and it is unclear whether similar situations still occur.

#### 5.2.3.2 *Basic theme: examinations*

As well as schools and ministries of education, examination boards – and the exams they produce – were identified by many informants as institutions that can have a strong influence on the content of coursebook grammar syllabuses.

Both DH and AG link exams to the likely priorities of end users of coursebooks – teachers and learners. AG argues that changes to the content of coursebook grammar syllabuses are unlikely, as teachers will always want content that is aimed at the exams their students are studying for.

AG: [Interviewer: In terms of selection of grammar, is there any space for innovation there?] Not while we've got exams, I think, because there'll always be the wash back effect, teachers will want to teach for the exam.

DH makes a similar point, but from the point of view of learners, suggesting also that the way learners prioritise exams may eventually lead to changes to the contents of coursebooks, presuming coursebooks do not currently offer the most expedient route to passing the exam.

DH: It's how these different things work together, what are the exam requirements that they're leading to, because for most students that's the most important thing, they want to get into university, or they can only complete their degree because they've got a certificate that says they're B1, even if they're doing an engineering

degree. And then what's the shortest and most effective route to get there. Whether that means that the publishers will start to take all that on board and change their courses – I think it will take time, but it will happen.

APP also makes a similar link between student ambition to pass exams and the grammar syllabus – this time linking exams to the level system.

APP: I think exams and requirements and sort of ambition about exams determines nature of level and number of levels.

In general, though, it is the link between examinations and the content of grammar syllabuses that was mentioned most frequently. APP makes the link between the pressure of exams on the specific content of a grammatical syllabus, arguing that such a pressure will exist even if a particular examination board does not explicitly set out a list of required grammar structures for a particular exam:

APP: Anything exam orientated [has an influence] because even if Cambridge expresses its grammar in a way which avoids mentioning grammatical terms<sup>29</sup>, 'You need to be able to blah, blah, blah', there is an implicit, I think, knowledge of a certain level of grammar and I think that coursebooks have managed to tease out of Cambridge exams what grammar points are expected.

This claim appears justified. DH mentions specific exam practice titles that she refers to when deciding on grammatical content for a coursebook series, if that series may be used prior to a course that prepares learners for an exam.

DH: What I refer to are *the Cambridge Grammar for FCE, CAE*, etc. [practice books to prepare candidates for the exams]. I just use those as a reference for what's expected in the exams and therefore if you're producing courses at a particular level, potentially leading to an exams course, these are the structures we need to cover.

In the quotations above, the influence of exams is described in neither positive nor negative terms. However, IF, when discussing areas of grammar that in retrospect she would choose to focus on less, suggests that she and her co-author felt obliged to include reported speech in their coursebooks, purely because it is frequently tested in examinations.

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<sup>29</sup> Cambridge English publishes specifications for each level (A2–C2) of its General English examinations. A grammatical inventory is included in the specifications for the A2 (Key) and B1 (Preliminary) exams, but not for exams at B2, C1 and C2.

IF: There are certain things, bits in the syllabus, you think, ‘Why did we ever include that?’ [...] Reported speech, it’s one of those things that we had to include, because it’s always there in exams, and of course you listen to young people today, you realise they don’t use it at all in speech.

The effect of exams on the grammatical content of coursebooks appears clear. However, according to APP the reverse may also be true: successful coursebooks may have potentially fed into exam syllabuses over the years.

APP: I suppose corpuses and the sort of technical things like the CEFR may have influenced ELT grammar but then the coursebooks and the CEFR and the exams all work in concert with each other anyway [...] Probably books that were published that are established [i.e. have been commercially successful] affected the exams anyway, so I’m sure there was cross fertilisation.

#### 5.2.4 Organising theme: considering the market and users

The next organising theme identified in the interview data was ‘considering the market and users’. Publishers, as commercial operations, naturally consider the market they are selling into and the end users of their products, and this was reflected in comments in the interviews.

##### 5.2.4.1 Basic theme: markets and market research

A knowledge of the target market is clearly a requirement for the development of any product, and that includes the grammar syllabus of coursebook series. APP, ACA and JR all mention the markets and market research as having an influence on the level system.

APP: I think the number of levels is determined by the competition, to some extent market research, market feedback. [...]

ACA: In terms of the six level system, the markets want six levels. That’s the message. [...] When they’ve suggested adding a level, it’s not been a goer. Six levels is what the institutions want.

JR: Originally, actually, [*Interchange*] had three levels, and when it came out we realised that there was a demand for a lower level because in some markets what was then level 1 was a bit too high, so I wrote it. [...] [A] sort of three-stage syllabus was sort of extremely common I think at the time, so I think we were just following what the market suggested.

APP notes that the needs of the market can mean publishing titles at particular levels that lead to only a limited amount of profit; a full range of levels is required for a product to be viable even if some of those levels are unlikely to sell well.

APP: [I]f your sales at top levels, whatever those top levels might be, are 20% of what they are at Pre-Intermediate and Intermediate level, the publisher is going to be reluctant to invest in something for a small number of users. On the other hand, a publisher would argue, 'Well until you've got an Advanced level, the suite of levels doesn't appear complete'. [...] [W]ithout that advanced level, the earlier levels might not stand up to scrutiny.

The most common form of market research referred to was reviewers. Reviewers are typically teachers or school administrators who comment on manuscripts or parts of manuscripts before the book is published. Publishers often commission reviewers in important markets to produce reports on the manuscript; their feedback is then used to shape the final product. The influence of reports on the writing of one coursebook series is outlined by IF.

IF: And we were driven by reports early on. For [the coursebook series] *Snapshot*, they would do reports for each level, on the syllabus that we'd produce and decide whether they'd liked it or not but it wasn't until [the coursebook series] *Sky*, I think, later on, and [the coursebook series] *Upbeat*, that we actually did focus groups, so we'd actually go into the markets and talk to teachers before we actually produced the syllabuses.

APP also confirmed the influence of reviewers – among other influences – in contemporary coursebook production.

APP: I think the author might, will have input [on the grammatical points to be included in a series], as will reviewers maybe[.]

APP: [Talking about how it is decided which grammatical points to include at which level] Again, I've got competition, reviews, to some extent syllabuses if they're prescriptive[.]

Not all informants presented reviewers in a positive light. PV suggests that publishers rely on too small a group of reviewers, and compares the feedback from reviewers to the apparently more useful and relevant feedback he received from

colleagues when writing the original version of a coursebook, in the form of in-house language school materials.

PV: Publishers going all round the world to ask people over dinner what they thought about it [i.e. a manuscript] ... [For us] it was actually people who we were sat in the staffroom with us who'd just used it telling us what was wrong. The other problem with it is that publishers do so-called research and I had to do this 10, 15 years ago, and you go to Spain, and you have lunch with a guy who tells you that he had lunch with Longman last week, and he's having lunch with Cambridge next week, and Macmillan the week after. So they're all researching with the same group of people in different countries.

Later on in the interview, PV neatly summarised his views as follows:

PV: I think the investment levels now are so huge that no publisher would dare to do it without backing it up with [market] research, but the research is dubious.

#### 5.2.4.2 *Basic theme: local markets*

Some local markets can be large and important enough that their needs are directly reflected in coursebooks. This can take three forms: market specific materials can be produced; global products can be produced with a specific market or markets in mind; and existing global products can be adapted for local markets. In the latter situation, the original global product may nonetheless be influenced by the needs of the local market, in order that the subsequent adaption be as quick and cheap as possible. IF describes writing a coursebook series where this was the case – the requirements of the Italian market influenced the original global product, in ways that the authors were not totally comfortable with.

IF: When we started with [the coursebook series] *Discoveries*, it was Italy – Italy had been the main market for us all the way through. [...] They've taken each of our courses and adapted them according to what they felt they wanted. So we were quite driven after that by what the markets wanted, and Italy in particular. [...] [S]o we felt very much driven by Italy, and as you probably know, they like to cover a lot of grammar, and they like to do it in groups, group sort of criteria, so they'll do 'some' and 'any' together, and then they'll do present perfect with 'ever', and then 'for' and 'since', and then present perfect continuous, and they would want to do that all together. Whereas our feeling was, 'this isn't how learners will learn it – it's too complicated, we were much more into wanting to recycle – so there were conflicts.

We wanted more a cyclical syllabus, but when it came to them, what they wanted, we were driven slightly by Italy, and so we did group things together that we wouldn't possibly normally have wanted to do. They did their own versions, always slightly different from the global versions, but it did inform the syllabus to a certain extent.

Similarly LS describes how the requirement of a local market led to changes at a global level. However, in this case, the influence is presented more positively – the need for a low-level coursebook for a particular group of users of *Headway* in Germany eventually led to the introduction of a global Beginner level of the series, and subsequent modification of the syllabus for the previous lowest level, Elementary.

LS: [W]hat happened with Germany was we got news from the *Volkshochschule* in Germany who were using *Headway* that they needed something of a much more lower level, because they had a lot [...] of adult students actually who couldn't speak a word of English. So there was somebody out there called Briony Beaven [...] and she put together a kind of thing that was for German use only, a very, very basic beginner book. [...] So when John and I came to actually write a beginners book, which we did with the second editions of the whole series, [...] we would look at what Briony had done and remind ourselves all the time that we were not, now that we'd been writing for quite a while, going to get carried away with showing our brilliant knowledge and skills as trainers and all the rest of it, we would really stick with that. [...] We then went back to the Elementary, and when we did a new edition of the Elementary, we rewrote the first two units of that to reflect the fact that there was now a Beginner *Headway*.

Conversely, when producing a product for a specific market, a publisher and author team may decide to include more generic features than the local market requires, in the hope of selling the product outside of the main target market. DH describes her experience of this phenomenon as an author: a level system was chosen in the hopes of making sales in a number of different markets, but in doing so it did not reflect the requirements of the main target market.

DH: [T]hinking back to when I did *Pacesetter* many years ago, which was principally for Turkey, but of course it had to take in other countries as well, it was when Turkey had the system of 'super lise', and they had 28 hours of English teaching a week,

[...]we still did four levels, and we still did four levels in four books, but they were all taught in the same year. In reality three ended up being taught in the same year and the fourth one sort of disappeared, but it was just odd that as we were aiming mainly for that market, why didn't we do something a bit more appropriate to that market? Obviously the reason was that this was OUP and they were hedging their bets, and they were expecting it to be able to sell elsewhere, but in the end it did become a bit too Turkey orientated and it didn't do very well elsewhere.

#### 5.2.4.3 *Basic theme: end users*

As well as discussing market research, many informants talked specifically about how they considered the end users of their books – teachers and learners – when making decisions on grammatical content. Many of these comments also relate to the idea of norms and consensus, discussed in Section 5.2.2 above, but are distinguished in that they contain specific references to users rather than to the concept of norms in a more abstract sense.

LS frames the potential influence of considering end users in a generally positive light, and seems happy to include grammar content on the basis that this is what users – in this case learners – appear to want and enjoy doing.

LS: You do wonder with certain things in the language whether they're worth spending time on, but then going back to those 'grammar options'<sup>30</sup>, that would be exactly the kind of thing that an advanced student would want to know about, you know, what is it about 'suggest' that it can go with the gerund, but you can 'suggest that he did', and 'suggest that he do', and all the rest of it. So, that would have been a classic kind of thing you'd have had to hone up for. [Interviewer: So students like that kind of thing.] They love it, yeah. They become, at that level, a lot of the time they're just basically interested in the language and they know a hell of a lot more about it, loads more about it.

AG's description of how teachers are likely to prioritise grammar content over other language areas are similar, and reflect in many ways LS's reflections reported earlier on the preference shown by learners towards optional grammar courses over other

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<sup>30</sup> Optional grammar courses offered at the language school where LS taught for many years. See Section 7.2.1 for a fuller explanation.

available courses. However, as discussed above, his use of the word 'folk' implies that this preference may not necessarily be well founded.

AG: I still think that although if you looked at a coursebook 30 years ago and opened the contents page, it would give you a list of grammar structures, now you get this great grid of topic, grammar, functional language, pronunciation, whatever else it might be, I still think that the teachers will look first at the grammar syllabus and see if fits their 'folk expectation', and 'Does it have the things that I expect to cover at this level and if it doesn't, I'll use something else'.

In terms of the specifics of a grammar syllabus, PV recalled conversations with his contemporary Louis Alexander, who, according to PV, made choices on the ordering of elements within a grammatical syllabus considering the context in which the learners were using the books – in this case, school children in a non-English speaking country. The grammar syllabus for such children, the argument goes, can be very different from a syllabus for adult learners in an English-speaking country.

PV: Alexander used to say, 'Well, the whole thing about "you need to be able to go out and communicate immediately", is based on language schools in England'. He said, 'If we're teaching abroad, then what's the problem?' He said, 'You should teach logically because immediate communication is not important'. In the first year they're going to get to the present simple whatever you do, so why does it have to come first because it's more frequent?

However, it should be noted that Louis Alexander's titles were written in the 1960s and 1970s. Referring to contemporary times, AG suggests that one group of end users – teachers – can often have very fixed ideas about the content and order of a grammar syllabus.

AG: Certainly from speaking to people in Italy, there is no official ministry grammar syllabus as to what you have to teach, but the teachers there have got a very strong idea what they've to teach, and when, so I think I've seen that quite a lot.

This is echoed in JR's observation that not following teachers' expectations in terms of sequencing grammar items can be problematic:

JR: [If] you don't sort of follow what teachers expect, then you get some problems. So quite a lot of it had to do with getting the idea, well, teachers will expect this in level

1, or teachers will expect this in level 2, or not ... save this for level 3 and so on. So that kind of discussion went on quite a lot.

#### 5.2.4.4 Basic theme: student L1s

A number of informants mentioned how student L1s are often an important consideration in deciding grammar syllabuses. It seems uncontroversial to suggest that different L1 groups may find certain aspects of grammar more difficult or easier compared to other L1 groups, and publishers appear to take this into account when possible.

AG: There are some things that come in a natural sequence, that you're going to teach the present perfect and know they won't get it right for a long time, and at some point later you'll move on to the past perfect. And some things, depending on the nationality, they'll get very easily or they won't.

Similar to IF's comments on how the grammar in global coursebooks are influenced by the need to produce subsequent localised versions as easily as possible, DH makes very similar observations in relation to learner L1s.

DH: I think if you come into market specific materials there might be particular structures that are problematic for particular language speakers and they come in earlier, or they come in later, depending on their approach, like articles in Polish, they obviously always want to see articles addressed because it's one of the issues. So that could have, if you're doing a course that's got some market-specific versions but also a global version, that could have an influence on the global version. It's cheaper to bring 'mustn't' in a bit earlier because of German, though we don't really publish for Germany that much, or I suppose, with Spain, because they've got a continuous form, they probably find the continuous easier than French would, for example.

MS suggests that, unsurprisingly, teachers have for a long time been highly knowledgeable of the areas of grammar likely to be priorities or problematic for particular groups of L1 learners, based on their own experience teaching them. He explains that he was able to make use of this mainly in market specific materials, and his popular grammar title, *Practical English Usage*.

MS: We all knew, us experienced EFL teachers in the 60s, we all knew, or lots of us knew, what kind of grammar points mattered for learners of English. A fair number

of us knew it on a specific level, in that they had worked in Japan, or Germany, or Italy, or wherever, and they knew what problems, as you [i.e. the researcher] certainly know, speakers of that language have. [...] That was something that I wasn't able to exploit very much, except in supervising spin offs of some of my books for particular national markets and was able to get them up to a point in *Practical English Usage*, because there I could put in a fair amount of stuff that was broad-spectrum cross linguistic.

The experiences and views expressed by the informants suggest that Swan's design criterion of 'relevance' (discussed in Chapter 2), and the Contrastive Analysis hypothesis (discussed in Chapter 3), appear to be influential to a certain extent in syllabus design.

#### 5.2.5 Organising theme: innovation

While the previous two organising themes have identified the role of external factors in perpetuating existing practice and sustaining the consensus on grammar, the final organising theme under the same global theme suggests that innovation can nonetheless occur as a result of influences from outside the world of ELT publishing.

##### 5.2.5.1 Basic theme: influence of corpus linguistics

ACA argued that findings from corpus linguistics have the potential to influence the grammar consensus, but that this is likely to be in terms of adding to the syllabus rather than changing it.

ACA: Corpora give us the opening to do so [i.e. to modify the grammar syllabus]. We can say, 'This is how this structure is used'. But this is addition rather than deletion. There are always some things that are considered essential and must be included. So as an example, if I were sticking close to a syllabus where frequency was the most important thing, I probably wouldn't teach short answers at first, when you first present a tense. But there's an expectation that they'll be there, so you include them.

However, a number of informants argued that corpus linguistics does have the potential to modify, rather than simply add to, the consensus. For example, AG notes the potential for corpus evidence on language use in different situations to influence the content of the ELT grammar consensus.

AG: You've got to sort of match the situation that people are aiming for and, so there is more evidence of corpus-based spoken grammar or conversational strategies and turn taking or how to disagree with somebody or some that sort of thing. It started off with situational dialogues twenty years ago of ordering a coffee or buying a stamp and things have moved on, and that affects the grammar to a degree.

AG also notes an increasing awareness of register thanks to corpus-based research. The monolithic ELT grammar syllabus maybe need to be modified to match the needs of different groups of learners in different communicative situations.

AG: I worked with Geoff Leech and Doug Biber on *the Grammar of Spoken and Written English*, where it was using corpus evidence of how language is really used in, we picked four genres of speaking, newspapers, fiction and academic prose, and then looked at where did we use this structure, how, why, looking beyond just 'here's the rule', and trying to understand how frequent it is and so on, and then McCarthy has done similar things with Ron Carter, looking at the corpus that they've got. So, that kind of influence of linguistics and evidence has been steadily growing for the last 40 years [...] It depends what your purposes are, if you need to be able to write academic journals then that's very different to somebody who needs a lot of spoken English but hardly needs to write in a foreign language.

Register is also noted by DH as having a potential influence on how individual grammar points are treated.

DH: I suppose in terms of something like the use of 'may', which would probably generally come into a course with 'will', talking about future speculation, whereas actually it's probably more often used in Academic English for uncertainty, isn't it, but it's something that I would now want to bring in at a higher level of a course, in its sense, in its use in Academic English, and that's something that has only come about through corpus linguistics really. [Interviewer: So, register?] True, yes, because that probably wasn't taken into account in earlier courses.

DH also notes some aspects of the grammar consensus that have already been modified as a result of findings from corpus linguistics.

DH: With the advent of corpora I think there have been some changes that have come about through corpus research. The obvious one is thinking back to the situational approach or whatever, of 'I'm giving you this pen', the fact that going back to books like *Streamline* and those around that time, probably later as well, the

very first structure to be taught was always present continuous because it was easy, you could show it in the classroom, and that switched after the advent of corpora and the realisation that we hardly ever use it for the present anyway, that then the present simple became the first structure to be taught. I think the same applies with the use of the future as well, because I think it always used to be that the 'will' future was presented before anything else and I think now we probably tend to use 'going to' as the first point of future use.

MS, in email communication after the initial interview (personal communication, 30.01.2017), was another to identify research by corpus linguistics as having had an influence on the grammar consensus.

MS: Work on the grammar of speech by discourse analysts and others (Mike McCarthy springs to mind) has given us a lot of useful information which we've been able to incorporate, where appropriate, in teaching and reference materials. The same goes for discourse structure in general.

#### 5.2.5.2 *Basic theme: influence of real world needs*

Another external factor that some informants mentioned as potentially leading to innovation in ELT grammar was the contexts in which language learners are learning and using English. For AG, increasingly awareness of specific contexts for language use – particularly between non-native speakers – may lead to grammatical content being rethought.

AG: I think there's scope for more focus on the language you really need, and how do you get that, how much do people want to master all English grammar structures, versus, 'actually what I need to do is, I'm a Brazilian, I want to be able to do business with people in Asia, and I want to be able to have a conversation over dinner, and I want to be able to do a Skype meeting where I can contribute and understand what's going on'.

APP, by comparison, makes the connection between real world needs and the level system rather than grammar content in itself. She links the university requirements in many European countries to possible changes in coursebook level systems:

APP: In Spain, and it might be true in other European countries as well, in order to graduate in any subject at university you have to a B1 level in any foreign language, and of course the favourite is English. So that might be making a difference to the number of levels, or perhaps more to the point, where the levels begin. Do they begin

at absolute beginner, starter level, or do they begin at post-beginner? And if they begin at post-beginner, it will be interesting to see if, in a couple of years' time, those publishers decide, 'Oh, we are going to produce a beginner or starter level'.

DH makes a very similar observation, about predictions that were made on changes to the level system likely to occur as a result of the end of Eastern Block in Europe and increased teaching of English at primary school.

DH: Also, the fact that a few years ago, I'm probably going back into the 90s, when the Berlin wall fell, and suddenly there was this huge market opening up in Eastern Europe etc., it was thought that it wouldn't be necessary for very long to produce starter or elementary levels, because everybody was learning English at primary school. Because English started coming into the school system in eastern Europe as well as well as Western Europe, and, yeah, the advent of teaching English at primary school would mean that by the time students got into secondary school, or by the time they started learning as adults in language schools, they'd already have a basic grounding and be able to come into a pre-intermediate level.

However, these predictions, according to DH, did not come to pass.

DH: But that doesn't seem to have happened! That's been said since the 90s, in 25 years it hasn't happened so I don't think it's going to happen!

As well as changes in policy possibly having effects on the level system, or at least on the relative demand for instruction at particular levels, APP also argues that political events, such as the arrival of refugees, may be similarly influential.

APP: I remember years and years ago, I lived in a European country where there were a lot of asylum seekers from eastern Europe and Africa, and they needed, from scratch, English, or the language of the country that they were in. So I suppose what's happening in the world could affect the level at which a course begins, and the number of levels, therefore.

#### *5.2.5.3 Basic theme: potential of digital products*

Another potential source for innovation identified by AG is the advent of digital products. Once a print course is published, it is by nature impossible to change without being reprinted; courses delivered digitally, or example online, allow for a greater deal of flexibility.

AG: Once you get into fully digital, then you can have just the first four units for a short course, or the last two units of one level and the first two units of the next, if that's what fits your students' level. It can become much more flexible.

When asked whether such an approach might lead to a rethink on the level system, AG frames the possible effects as being more on matching learners' individual needs. So while the level system is likely to be sustained, it may be that courses delivered digitally will be less constrained by it.

AG: I think we've got people coming to us asking for different ways of chopping things up, and shorter courses, and if there are different ways of assessing better what students' real level is, and students' strengths and weaknesses, then you can match it more, because having a warehouse full of books is pretty inflexible.

While this organising theme contains ideas suggesting the potential for innovation, it is important for these comments to be considered in light of the content of the other organising themes in the section. The potential for innovation exists within an environment of a number of powerful factors that tend towards maintaining rather than modifying the norms. Any innovation is likely, if it happens at all, to be subtle and slow. This point is made by two of the informants who themselves identified the potential for innovation elsewhere in the interviews.

AG: I think a lot of the adult courses like *English File* are still global and that will carry on, and I think people are very nervous about innovating there[.]

ACA: I think you can change market requirements but with baby steps, not huge leaps. If you have too much innovation, you can get a negative reaction. So instead, you need incremental changes. [...] [Y]ou can make small adjustments, for example, in [coursebook series] we delayed the present continuous. We also introduced the continuous for speech reporting, and the past tense for politeness.

According to APP, innovation was possible in the past, but is far less likely to occur in the contemporary context.

APP: I think that when authors had a lot more influence over courses, when expectations were really being set, there was probably more room for innovation. But I think that there is less room now.

As we said at the beginning of the beginning of this chapter, differences between the past and present constitute the second global theme in this thematic analysis, and

will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7. Before turning to the past, however, the next chapter of this thesis will present part of the case studies undertaken, presenting the contemporary consensus on the three areas of grammar under consideration, and comparing them to the empirical evidence from the EGP.

## 6 Case studies 1: consensus and the EGP

### 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the thematic analysis of the interview data relating to contemporary coursebook production. This chapter turns to the question of grammar coverage in contemporary coursebooks and presents the treatment of three areas of grammar – conditionals, relative clauses and future forms – in five coursebook series, before comparing them to the descriptors in the English Grammar Profile.

Unless otherwise stated, examples of structures given in brackets are invented for the purposes of this analysis.

### 6.2 Case study A: conditionals

#### 6.2.1 Coursebook consensus

‘Conditional sentences’ are here taken to mean sentences containing two clauses, with the event or state contained in the main clause being dependent on the subordinate clause for its realisation. Excluded from the analysis was, for example, the use of *if only*; however, other conditional clauses, such as those using inversion (e.g. ‘Should you have any questions, ...’), or words such as *supposing* (e.g. ‘Supposing you got lost, ...’) are considered.

Coverage of conditionals is summarised in Table 6.1 below (numbers refer to the level at which the structure is covered; only main lesson content is included). All five coursebook series examined contained significant coverage of conditional forms, across multiple levels, but in no case earlier than Level 3. The treatment of conditional sentences is largely based on the categorisation scheme outlined below:

‘Zero conditional’: *If you heat water to 100 degrees, it boils.*

‘First conditional’ (or Type 1 conditional): *If it rains, we’ll stay at home.*

‘Second conditional’ (or Type 2 conditional): *If I had more time, I’d do more sport.*

‘Third conditional’ (or Type 3 conditional): *If you had asked me, I would have helped you.*

	<b>Zero conditional</b>	<b>1st conditional</b>	<b>2nd conditional</b>	<b>3rd conditional</b>
<i>New English File</i>	5	3, 4 (with unless), 6	3, 4, 5, 6	4, 5, 6
<i>face2face</i>	4	3, 4 (with unless), 6	3, 4, 5, 6	4, 5, 6
<i>Headway</i>		3, 4 (with unless), 6	3, 4, 6	4, 5, 6
<i>Interchange/Passages</i>		3, 4 (with unless)	3, 4	4, 5
<i>Cutting Edge</i>		3, 4 (with unless)	3, 4, 5	4, 5

Table 6.1: Overview of coverage of canonical conditional structures at different coursebook levels

All five coursebook series examined are in agreement on the teaching of these three paradigms, even though *Interchange* and *Cutting Edge* do not use the terms ‘first conditional’, ‘second conditional’ and ‘third conditional’. However, it should be noted that coursebooks allow a certain amount of variation in the three forms, especially in endmatter<sup>31</sup> grammar explanations; for example, *face2face Upper Intermediate* states that both *might* and *could* can be used instead of *would* in both Type 2 and Type 3 conditionals (p. 119). The ‘zero conditional’ is taught in only two of the five coursebook series examined: one at Level 4 (*face2face*) and one at Level 5 (*New English File*).

In terms of grading and progression, the numbering of the conditional system appears to reflect the perceived difficulty of the structures: first conditionals are taught first, followed by second conditionals and finally, third conditionals. However, as noted above, the zero conditional is taught less consistently, and, in the case of the coursebook series examined here, not before the first conditional has already been covered.

The first conditional form is taught in all five Level 3 coursebooks, before – but at the same level as – the second conditional form is taught. Three of the five series covered *might* as an alternative to *will* in first conditionals, and two of the five also included *may*. Four of the five series also covered the ‘subjunctive’ use of *were* in the grammar endmatter.

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<sup>31</sup> The word ‘endmatter’ is a publishing term, referring to material at the end of a book, after the main chapters.

Level 4 is characterised by repetition and extension. 'Unless' is taught in four of the five series as an alternative to 'if not' in the first conditional, and in two series, a combination of present simple and *might* is also covered. In the case of the second conditional, the modal *could* is introduced as an alternative to *would*, although mainly only in the grammar endmatter. The subjunctive use of *were* is covered within the main lesson pages of three of the series; three titles also teach the phrase 'If I were you'. At this level, the 'third conditional' is also introduced for the first time. In addition to 'would have' in the main clause, a majority of the titles also teach 'could have', although only two of these in the main lesson pages.

There is less consistency across titles at Level 5. Three of the five series repeat the second conditional, and all five repeat the third conditional, with two of the five also covering past continuous as part of the third conditional paradigm. The so-called 'mixed conditional', combining the form found in the *if* clause in a second conditional with that found in the main clause in a third conditional, or vice versa, is covered in the main lessons in only one coursebook series, but also the endmatter grammar in two further series. Two of the series provide a group of alternatives to 'if', for example *as long as*, *imagine*, *provided*, and *supposing*; a further series covers this at Level 6.

Level 6 also shows a large degree of inconsistency. Three of the five coursebook series revise the three archetypal conditional forms, and three also contain a focus on mixed conditionals. Beyond this, there is little agreement across the titles examined, with one – *face2face* – focussing on additional verb form variations (for example *going to*, past perfect continuous and past continuous in the *if* clause), another – *Interchange* – covering inversion with *had*, *were* and *should* as alternatives to *if* (e.g. *Had I known, ...*; *Were you to help me, ...*; *Should you require any information, ...*) and a third – *New English File* – covering alternatives to *if* such as *provided*, *providing*, *on condition that* and *supposing*, as well as inversion with *had*. *New Cutting Edge* covers no conditional forms at all. The lack of agreement at the top two levels echoes McCarthy's (2015) observation that there is limited agreement on grammar at advanced levels compared to lower levels.

### 6.2.2 Comparison to the EGP

In terms of a general development sequence, the EGP in some ways follows the consensus. The EGP reports that learners are able to produce the ‘first conditional’ and ‘second conditional’ – including sentences with both *would* and *could* in the main clause – and the ‘third conditional’ at B1. This matches the levels at which coursebooks typically teach these patterns, although this comparison is arguably skewed by the fact that B1 is spread over two coursebook levels; typically, Type 3 conditionals are covered at Level 4 for the first time, compared to Level 3 for Types 1 and 2.

There is also agreement, in terms of level assignment, between the EGP and the coursebooks examined in the following areas:

- the use of *unless*
- present simple + *should* combinations (e.g. ‘If you feel ill, you should see the doctor.’), although these are present in only two of the five series examined)
- inversion with *should*

There are, however, also a number of areas of disagreement. It is noteworthy that overall the four canonical conditional types (zero/first/second/third) are far fewer in number than the 27 patterns identified in the EGP, although, as noted, coursebooks do at times cover variations on the four key paradigms. One of the variations, however, is ‘mixed conditionals’, which are not identified by the EGP at all. This is perhaps unsurprising, given that these forms have been shown to also occur rarely in native speaker corpora (Gabrielatos, 2003, 2006), suggesting that there are few situations in which the paradigms are likely to be needed.

Other differences relate to level assignments and the use of variations on the Type 1/2/3 system. Firstly, the EGP shows that A2 level learners are capable of producing ‘zero conditionals’ at A2, whereas the coursebook series examined do not teach conditionals at all before B1, and, as discussed above, the zero conditional is covered inconsistently. Similarly, the EGP shows that learners can produce the non-canonical combinations of present simple + *can* (EGP example: ‘You can get to my house if you take the number 35 bus.’), present simple + imperative at A2 (EGP example: ‘If you need more information, call me.’); these ‘variations’ are also taught

in coursebooks only inconsistently. Conversely, some of the coursebooks examined teach third conditionals with *might have* and *could have* in the main clause at B2, but the EGP shows that learners do not typically use these forms until C1.

Finally, the EGP identifies a number of further functions and uses that are not taught at all in any of the five coursebook series examined, as follows:

- at A2, the use of 'If you want/like/prefer' as a hedge
- at B1, the use of ellipted 'If so', and 'If not'
- at C1, the use of *should* in the *if* clause
- at C1, the use of ellipted *if* clause (e.g. *if needed, if requested*)
- at C2, the phrases 'whether or not', 'were it not for', 'if it were not for'

In summary, there is some degree of agreement between the consensus and the EGP with respect to sequence in which the 'core' paradigms used in teaching conditional forms – the 'first', 'second' and 'third' conditionals – are taught and produced. However, the EGP also reveals that learners are able to use a limited number of conditional forms at A2, before any kinds of conditional are taught in coursebooks. Some of these forms are not typically taught at all in coursebooks. At C1 and C2, the EGP provides further evidence of use of conditional forms that do not fit into the standard ELT typology. Finally, learners do not seem to use, or need to use, 'mixed conditionals' at any level, perhaps calling into question their relevance for teaching.

### 6.2.3 Discussion

Contemporary ELT treatments primarily involve the prescription of three monolithic sentence paradigms containing *if* clauses, instead of a focus on verb forms. The effect of this, arguably, is an increase in complexity (two verb forms must be learnt for every conditional 'type'), and a decrease in flexibility (other verb form combinations are seen as variations from a core form, and either left until higher levels or ignored completely).

Overall, however, the EGP shows that learners are able to use a far wider variety of verb combinations than the three core paradigms typically taught in coursebooks, and that, in some cases, they start to use them earlier than they are typically taught. On the other hand, mixed conditionals – one of the few variations on the Type 1/2/3 system allowed in the ELT system – are not identified by the EGP, echoing

Gabrielatos' (2003, 2006) findings that this form is attested only rarely in native speaker corpora. However, it must also be noted that written language proficiency exams, of the sort that the data used in the EGP derives from, may not necessarily offer the learners the opportunity to use these structures, even if they are known.

### 6.3 Case study B: relative clauses

#### 6.3.1 Coursebook consensus

Compared to conditional sentences, there was comparatively less consensus on relative clauses across the five coursebook series examined. However, there was complete agreement on the teaching of the two relative clause types – defining and non-defining relative clauses, as follows:

Defining relative clause: *That's the person who I spoke to yesterday.*

Non-defining relative clause: *The Prime Minister, who returned to London last night, is expected to make a statement later today.*

The former are typically said to identify or define the noun phrase which forms their antecedent, whereas the latter are typically said to simply add 'extra information' but do not help identify it.

These two relative clause types are, like the three conditional types, somewhat canonical in pedagogical treatments. However, the historical account presented in Chapter 8 will show that this binary distinction has not always been followed. As recently as the 1960s, articles in the ELT Journal also questioned the distinction (e.g. Sopher (1969); Morris (1969)); since the publication of these articles, however, articles focussing on relative clauses in the same journal have tended to focus on how they should be taught (see, for example, Pearce (1975), Chiu-ming (1983), Nakamori (2002)), rather than on how they should be analysed, suggesting that in recent decades, the binary distinction has become strongly fixed in the consensus.

In the example of the non-defining clause given above, the relative clause appears in a mid position in the sentence. However, it is also possible for non-defining clauses to appear at the end of the main clause or sentence, as follows:

*I live in Girona, which is in Catalonia.*

ELT accounts seem to strongly favour examples with the relative clause in mid-sentence position. For example, in *Headway Upper Intermediate*, the two lesson pages dealing with relative clauses (pp. 62–63), 10 of the 17 (59%) non-defining clauses are mid-position; in *face2face Upper Intermediate* (pp. 32–33), mid-position relative clauses make up 10 of 16 (63%) of the non-defining clauses; in *New English File Intermediate* (pp. 92–93, 140–141), the figures are 8 out of 10 (80%). In Yamashita's (1994) study, however, 68 of 98 (over 75%) of non-defining clauses found in a sample of 330 relative clauses in the Lancaster/IBM corpus occur in *end*-position (p. 82), suggesting that ELT accounts seriously misrepresent actual usage.

It is not clear why mid-position clauses are favoured in ELT grammar treatments; one possible explanation is simply that with mid-position clauses, the difference between defining and non-defining clauses can be made more obvious by constructing sentence pairs differing only in punctuation to demonstrate the difference<sup>32</sup>. Additionally, examples of mid-position non-defining clauses may simply be, and have been historically, more immediately available to grammarians and materials writers, by nature of their relatively high frequency in written texts.

One particular variant of sentence-final non-defining relative clause is what are sometimes known as 'comment clauses' – non-defining clauses whose antecedent is the entire previous clause (or indeed, a whole previous stretch of discourse or even conversation turn (Tao and McCarthy, 2001)), rather than just a single noun phrase within it. These clauses typically offer a comment on information given previous, as follows:

*We went for a meal last night, which was nice.*

This latter type of relative clause is particularly common; McCarthy and Tao's (2001) study found that over 70% of non-defining clauses in a sample of the CANCODE and CSAE spoken corpora were 'comment clauses'<sup>33</sup> of this type (p. 662), sometimes even occurring across speaker turns in conversation (p. 671).

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<sup>32</sup> For example, in *Headway Advanced*, learners have to discuss the difference between pairs of sentences such as 'My sister, who's a flight attendant, is actually scared of flying,' and 'My sister who's a flight attendant is actually scared of flying.' (p. 68)

<sup>33</sup> Or 'continuative', using the terminology adopted by Tao and McCarthy.

A key part of coursebook coverage of relative clauses is the choice and selection of relative pronouns and adverbs (for example, *that*, *which*, *where*, *whose*). The coursebooks examined all teach a variety of these across levels, including the ‘zero pronoun’<sup>34</sup> – the non-use of a pronoun when it is the object of the relative clause:

That’s the man [ ] I met.

Table 6.2 below summarises coverage of relative clause types. In the five coursebook series examined, there is broad agreement that defining relative clauses should be taught before non-defining relative clauses. At Level 3, four of the five series teach defining relative clauses with *who*, *that*, *which*, with three also covering *where*, at Level 3, with none covering non-defining clauses. Level 4 is similar, with all coursebooks covering defining relative clauses, and only two of five teaching non-defining relative clauses. At this level, three of the coursebook series also add *whose* as a relative pronoun, although of these three, one covers this only in the endmatter. The zero pronoun is also covered for the first time at this level, in all but one series.

	Defining	Non-defining	Clauses with ‘zero’ pronoun
<i>New English File</i>	3, 4, 5	4, 5	4, 5
<i>face2face</i>	3, 4, 5	5	4, 5
<i>Headway</i>	3, 4, 5, 6	5, 6	4, 5, 6
<i>Interchange/Passages</i>	3, 4, 5	4, 5	–
<i>Cutting Edge</i>	4, 5	5	4, 5

Table 6.2: Overview of coverage of relative clause types at different coursebook levels

A further element of the coverage at Levels 3 and 4 concerns the potential choice between *that* and *who* in defining relative clauses with a person as antecedent, and between *that* and *which* in those with a thing as antecedent. *New English File* only overtly teaches the use of *who* and *which*, noting in the endmatter only that *that* can also be used. In contrast, *face2face* and *Cutting Edge* both state, in the endmatter, that it is more usual to use *who* and *which*, rather than *that* (with *New English File* also noting, however, that the use of *that* is also correct). The relative pronouns

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<sup>34</sup> Coursebooks do not typically use this term, preferring to explain that the pronoun can be omitted in certain contexts; as we shall see, historically the phrase ‘contact clause’ was often used to describe a relative clause in which the zero pronoun is used.

*which* and *who* are therefore foregrounded in the coverage of three out of the five coursebook series examined; this seems to constitute an ‘echo’ of older accounts of relative clauses, which, as we shall see in Chapter 8, often either proscribed the use of *that* or treated it as a less likely choice. Evidence from corpora suggests that, at least in the context of conversation and fiction, *that* is used slightly more frequently than *who* and *that*.<sup>35</sup>

At Level 5, all five series revise defining relative clauses, with four adding *what* as a relative pronoun (e.g. *This is what you need*). Non-defining relative clauses are also covered in all the coursebooks analysed. There is a degree in variation in the choice of relative pronouns and adverbs included, with, for example, *Headway* and *face2face* teaching only *who* and *which*, while other series also include one or both of *when* and *where*.

Level 5 is also characterised by a large number of small details covered, inconsistently across the coursebooks analysed, in endmatter grammar sections. *Headway*, for example, mentions the preference for *that* after *all*, *some(thing)*, *every(thing)*, *any(thing)* and *only*, and also after *It is* (e.g. ‘It is a film that will be very popular.’ (p. 149)). In contrast, *face2face* notes that *when* can be omitted ‘when the time reference is clear’ (e.g. ‘Tomorrow is the day (when ) I get my exam results.’ (p. 122)), and that that non-defining relative clauses are more common in written English, ‘particularly in stories and more formal types of writing’ (p. 122)<sup>36</sup>. The fact that this latter, important characteristic of non-defining relative clauses is often ignored, or at best left to endmatter explanations, would appear to be a weakness in standard ELT accounts.<sup>37</sup> Two of the five series also cover ‘comment clauses’ in the

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<sup>35</sup> According to Biber et al (1999, pp. 610–611), the frequency of *that* as pronoun in defining relative clauses is slightly higher than both *which* and *who* combined in conversation, and also in fiction. Given that *that* can be used for both persons and things, this suggests a slight preference for *that* in this context. In news, *that* is slightly less frequent than *which* and *who* individually, suggesting a strong preference for the latter two pronouns; academic writing demonstrates a strong preference for *which*. The findings seem to suggest a preference for *who* and *which* only in formal written contexts.

<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, there are few concrete research findings on this, possibly due to the fact that distinguishing relative clause types in spoken data – which of course lacks punctuation – is not always straightforward (Tao and McCarthy, 2001). Miller and Weinert (1998, p. 107) note that non-defining clauses are generally infrequent in spoken English; conversely Rafajlovicova’s small corpus-based study states that the occurrence of defining relative clauses increases as the formality of text type decreases (2011, p. 23).

<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the lack of focus on the register associations of non-defining relative clauses is a particularly surprising oversight given that many older grammars – see, in particular, the discussion of the treatment in Allen (1947/1959) in Chapter 8 – made the point clearly.

endmatter; this patchy coverage, again only in the endmatter, of a significant area of usage appears to constitute a further area of weakness in the ELT account, given the frequency of the structure in spoken language.

A further peculiarity at Level 5 is found in the endmatter of two coursebook series – *Headway* and *New Cutting Edge*, both of which contrast the use, in non-defining clauses, of phrase-initial prepositions (e.g. ‘The privatization of the railways, **to which** the present government is committed, is not universally popular.’ (*Headway* p. 149)) and phrase-final prepositions (e.g. ‘He talked about theories of market forces, which I’d never even heard **of**.’ (*Headway* p. 149)), noting that the latter are associated with a more formal register. What is interesting is that the possibility of using phrase-initial prepositions in defining relative clauses is not covered, including at other levels, even though it is equally possible. As with the advice on the choice between *that* and *who/which*, this may simply represent an echo of coverage in older grammars; as will be seen in Chapter 8, Stannard Allen’s (1947/1959) *Living English Structure* only presents clause-initial prepositions as being possible in non-defining clauses.

At Level 6, relative clauses are covered in two of the five series examined. *Headway* essentially revises the previous work, adding – in the endmatter only – *what* as a relative pronoun and comment clauses. *Cutting Edge* covers the use of abstract nouns with relative clauses (e.g. *reason why, situations where, the way in which*), in a focus has perhaps more to do with improving lexical, rather than grammatical, competence.

### 6.3.2 Comparison to the EGP

A first comparison of the treatment in the canon to EGP immediately reveals a striking difference. The EGP shows that learners are able to accurately produce both defining and non-defining relative clauses at A2, a level earlier than they are typically taught in coursebooks. More specifically, learners at A2 produce:

- defining relative clauses with *who* as subject, and *which* and *that* as subject and object
- defining relative clauses with the ‘zero pronoun’

- non-defining relative clauses with *which* as subject and object, and *who* as subject

The non-use of *who* as object in defining and non-defining clauses is not easily explainable, beyond speculation over opportunities of use<sup>38</sup>.

At B1, the EGP shows that learners are able to produce defining clauses with *when* and *where*. The latter is typically taught in coursebooks at the equivalent level, whereas relative clauses with *when* are only covered in one of the five coursebooks examined at any level. There are two further descriptors that do not match the coverage at Level 3 of coursebooks:

- defining clauses with '(the reason) why' (this is covered by one coursebook at Level 5 and one at Level 6, both in the endmatter)
- defining relative clauses with 'the person who/that, the thing that, the (only) one who/that' as a focusing device (EGP example: 'The thing that was great is that the weather was really warm and it didn't rain.')

By contrast, the EGP shows that learners can only use *whose* only in a very limited way at B1 – in the phrase 'whose name' – and that they do not start to use it more generally until B2. Coursebooks, however, generally teach *whose* at Level 4, a level earlier than the EGP suggests learners use it widely.

Finally, the EGP shows that learners at B2 level are able to produce both defining and non-defining clauses with clause-final prepositions, which mirrors the coverage in Level 5 coursebooks. However, while the EGP shows that learners are able to use comment clauses ('evaluative clauses' in the EGP) at B2, only two of the five coursebooks examined cover this at all, and this only in the endmatter, as discussed above. The EGP shows no development in the use of relative clauses at C1 or above, even though two Level 6 coursebooks teach them.

Overall, the comparison between the coursebook consensus and evidence from the EGP suggests that coursebooks may be teaching many aspects of relative clauses later than learners are actually ready to use them, and indeed – given the range of

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<sup>38</sup> Relative clauses in which the relative pronoun is subject are more frequent than those in which it is the object (Roland, Dick and Elman, 2007, p. 355), which would possibly be the lack of use of *who* as object at A2.

relative clauses produced by A2 level learners – later than learners feel the need to use them. The one exception to this is the relative pronoun *whose*, which learners appear to be able to use in a variety of contexts at a level higher than it is typically taught. Furthermore, a highly frequent use of non-defining relative clauses – comment clauses – is attested in the production of learners at B2, but covered inconsistently, and typically covered only in the endmatter of coursebooks.

### 6.3.3 Discussion

We have seen that contemporary accounts of relative clauses focus invariably on the binary defining / non-defining distinction, with a strong preference for mid-position relative clauses in non-defining clauses. It is not for lack of awareness of this fact that mid-position non-defining clauses receive the most focus – most descriptions in coursebooks clearly state that the structure is associated with formal, written contexts. However, learners simply receive limited exposure to end-position clauses – particularly comment clauses – and are given few chances to practise them.

With the exception of clauses with *whose*, the comparison with the EGP finds principally that learners use relative clauses earlier than they are taught, and that they start to use both defining and non-defining clauses, including mid-position ones, at the same competency level, whereas these are typically staggered across two different levels in coursebooks. This would suggest that relative clauses are both important and useful, and could be taught earlier than they currently are typically covered in coursebooks, including, of course, final-position non-defining relative clauses.

## 6.4 Case study C: future forms

### 6.4.1 Coursebook consensus

For the purposes of this analysis, the section will consider ‘future forms’ as those that are used to express future time from the perspective of the present (excluding, as a consequence, those structures such as *was going to* that are commonly referred to as ‘the future in the past’), and that are generally identified in ELT accounts as future forms (excluding, as a consequence, modal verbs such as *may* and *might*, even though they may be used to refer to events in the future). The term ‘continuous’ is preferred, even to refer to the content of titles which use the word ‘progressive’.

One characteristic of all the contemporary coursebooks examined is that they favour the term ‘future form’ or functional labels such as ‘intentions’ over the term ‘future tense’. As we shall in Chapter 8, there has been a shift over the years from the idea of English having a ‘future tense’ – invariably *will* and *shall* – to the idea of it having a number of different forms used to talk about the future in different contexts and for different reasons, and the choice of terminology in contemporary coursebooks reflects this. However, the consensus and agreement that exists on the teaching of future forms has come relatively recently. There are comparatively recent articles in the ELT journal discussing the uses of different future forms, and attempting to set out what should be taught to learners of English. For example, Close (1970a, 1970b) reviews the coverage in older titles, such as in Jespersen’s grammar, and outlines a four-way classification system for futurity; Tregidgo (1980) discusses the uses of *will* and *shall* in contemporary English, recommending teaching points up to Intermediate levels; and Locke (1986) discusses three different uses of the future continuous (in line with those given, for example, in Allen), criticising the coverage of the form in many ELT accounts.

There are five canonical future forms taught by all five coursebooks examined: i) *will* (and occasionally, *shall*) future, sometimes also called ‘simple future’, ii) *going to*, iii) the present continuous with future time reference, iv) the future perfect and v) the future continuous. Within these five structures, different uses or functions are generally identified, although not always consistently. In some cases, more than one function is identified for each future form, and these are generally separated out within explanations, or even across lessons. The principle uses and functions associated with the five forms are as follows:

i) *will*

- to make predictions
- to make offers, promises and requests, and decisions made at the time of speaking

ii) *be going to*

- to talk about plans and intentions

- to make predictions with present evidence
- iii) present continuous: to talk about arrangements
- iv) future perfect: to talk about an action that is completed before a certain future time
- v) future continuous (*will + be + -ing* form)
- to talk about an action that will be in progress at a certain future time
  - to talk about an action that will happen in the normal course of events

The coverage of the five structures is summarised in Tables 6.3 and 6.4. In addition to the five main future forms, additional structures are sometimes covered, including the present simple (e.g. ‘The bus leaves at 6pm’), *to be to* (e.g. ‘The prime minister is to make a statement tonight.’), and other forms such *be due to*, *be about to*, *be likely to* etc. These are covered less consistently across the five series.

	<i>will</i> (predictions / future facts)	<i>will</i> (promises, decisions etc.)	<i>be going to</i> (plans)	<i>be going to</i> (predictions)
<i>New English File</i>	3, 4	3, 4	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 4
<i>face2face</i>	3, 4, 5	4, 5	2, 3, 4, 5	4, 5
<i>Headway</i>	4, 5, 6	3, 5, 6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	(endmatter only)
<i>Interchange/Passages</i>	3, 4	2	1, 2, 3	3
<i>Cutting Edge</i>	3, 4, 5, 6	5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	6

Table 6.3: Overview of coverage of *will* and *be going to* at different coursebook levels

	present continuous	future perfect	future continuous
<i>New English File</i>	3, 4, 6	5	5, 6
<i>face2face</i>	3, 4, 5	5	5
<i>Headway</i>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	5, 6	5, 6
<i>Interchange/Passages</i>	2	4, 5	4
<i>Cutting Edge</i>	3, 4, 5	5, 6	6

Table 6.4: Overview of coverage of present continuous, future perfect and future continuous at different coursebook levels

While all five canonical structures are covered, there is a large amount of variation in the order in which they are taught. The situation is made more complicated by

the fact that this area of grammar is one that is taught, in one way or another, at every level of every coursebook series; as a consequence, many of the five forms are taught at more than one level, and in the case of some series, at all six levels. This seems partly related to the way future forms are taught in coursebooks: often as individual items at lower levels, and then combined with and compared to other future forms at higher levels<sup>39</sup>. Beyond this, it appears that the prevailing consensus is simply that future forms constitute an area of grammar which needs frequent revision and repetition.

Four of the five coursebooks series teach a future form at the lowest level, and in all cases this is the *going to* form to talk about plans and intentions. In addition, *Headway* also teaches the future use of the present continuous, and *English File* also teaches *going to* to make predictions – two levels earlier than the other coursebook series.

At Level 2, all five series teach *going to* for plans and intentions, while three of the five series add present continuous. A single title – *Interchange* – also covers *will* for requests (for example, *I'll have a small salad.* (p. 89)), although this is part of a wider focus with *would* and is not 'signposted' as being a future form.

Level 3 typically contains a more in-depth focus on present continuous, *will* for predictions, and *going to* for both plans and intentions, and predictions with present evidence. In addition, three of the series examined also cover other uses of *will*, typically in requests, promises, and offers, although the exact terms used vary from coursebook to coursebook. It appears, then, that at this level learners are perhaps expected to be familiar with a range of future forms, but to be unsure of exactly when to choose one over another. Interestingly, Level 3 is the only level at which *will* is covered at all in *New English File*; it is unclear why this particular form is so comparatively neglected in this series, and even whether this is an oversight or a conscious choice. In any case, the fact that a fourth edition of the series is currently in production does not suggest that users are overly concerned.

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<sup>39</sup> For example, at the lowest level, *English File* teaches two different uses of *going to* in two separate lessons. At the next level, these uses are repeated, again in separate lessons. At Level 3, *going to* and present continuous are taught in a single lesson, with two separate lessons for two different uses of *will*. Then, at level 4, there is a single lesson in which *going to*, present continuous and *will/shall* are revised and compared.

Level 4 is very similar to Level 3. All five series teach *will* for predictions, four out of five teach *going to* for plans, and the present continuous, while three teach *going to* for predictions and *will* for promises, offers and instant decisions. *English File* and *Interchange* are unusual in teaching *Shall I/we* and future perfect/continuous respectively.

Level 5 is characterised by the addition of the future perfect and continuous. The former is taught in all five series, and the latter in four of the five; the exception is *Interchange*, which already taught the future continuous at Level 4. All four of the coursebook series that teach the future continuous focus on its use to talk about an action in progress at a specific moment in time in the future. Only one series – *face2face* – teach its use to talk about an action that will happen ‘in the normal course of events’ within the lesson; the remaining three explain this use in the endmatter, however. The explanation in *Headway* states that this use of the future continuous is ‘uncoloured by ideas such as intention, decision, arrangement, or willingness.’ *Passages* also teaches the future perfect continuous, the only book from the five series examined to do so, at any level.

In addition, Level 5 typically contains further repetition of *going to* for intentions (three out of five courses), *going to* for predictions (two out of five), *will* for predictions (three out of five), present continuous (three out of five), and *will* for decisions made at the time of speaking. Two of the coursebook series also teach the use of the present simple to talk about future events based on a timetable.

Finally, Level 6 is characterised by further repetition of future forms from previous levels, although the highest level of *Passages* contains no future forms at all. However, as with the other areas of grammar examined at this level, there is only a limited degree of agreement between the different coursebook series. This is particularly the case when considering the forms covered explicitly within the lessons. The coverage is as follows, with both those titles that teach the form directly in the lesson and those that cover it only in the endmatter given in brackets:

- *will* to express willingness (1/5 in main lesson; 1/5 in endmatter only)
- *will* for predictions (3/5 in main lesson)
- *will* for decisions made at the time of speaking (3/5 in main lesson)
- present continuous (3/5 in main lesson)

- *going to* for intentions (3/5 in main lesson)
- *going to* for predictions with present evidence (1/5 in main lesson; 1/5 in endmatter only)
- future perfect (2/5 in main lesson)
- future continuous (3/5 in endmatter only)

It seems, therefore, that while the coursebooks are in agreement on the need to revise future forms already taught at lower levels, they are not in agreement on which particular forms should be revised.

Finally, *to be to* and other similar forms are added in four of the series (although of these, one in the endmatter only). The present simple assumes greater importance, covered in three of the examined titles.

One oddity in the explanations in the coursebooks related to the use of *going to* is a rule stating that the verb 'go' is not typically used with the *going to* form (so *going to go* is said to be impossible or unlikely). This rule is included in the endmatter of Levels 2, 3 and 4 of *face2face*, and also features in the endmatter in *New English File* and *Headway* at Level 3. As we shall see below, the rule has a long history, going back at least to Palmer's (1924/1955) pedagogical grammar, although Palmer himself states that the restriction applies both to *go* and *come*<sup>40</sup>. It is possible that the rule was true in Palmer's time, but no justification is given for it in modern materials, although it does not appear to be true<sup>41</sup>. However, whether or not the rule was ever

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<sup>40</sup> This supposed restriction is also mentioned in, among others, Alexander's (1988) *Longman English Grammar*, Thomson and Martinet's (1960/1969) *A Practical English Grammar*, Foley and Hall's (2003) *Longman Advanced Learner's Grammar* (2003), and Eastwood's *Oxford Guide to English Grammar* (1994), which extends the supposed restriction to 'verbs of movement' in general. Interestingly, the rule is not mentioned in three of the most well-known contemporary pedagogical grammars, Azar's *Understanding and Using English Grammar* (2016), Murphy's (2012) *Grammar in Use* and Swan's (2005) *Practical English Usage*. Swan himself, in personal communication, stated that he had never even heard of the rule. Furthermore, as will be seen below, Jespersen actually uses the possibility of the phrases 'going to come' and 'going to go' as proof that *going to* itself no longer implies movement.

<sup>41</sup> According to a lemmatised frequency list for the BNC (available at [www.kilgarriff.co.uk/BNClists/lemma.num](http://www.kilgarriff.co.uk/BNClists/lemma.num)), the verbs *go* and *say* are reasonably close in terms of frequency (249540 vs. 333518 respectively). The frequencies for 'going to go' and 'going to say' are 606 and 584 respectively, suggesting that *going to* does not restrict the frequency of the verb *go* any more than it does the verb *say*. Similarly, the overall frequency in the BNC of the verb *come* is 151871, close to the frequency of *give*, which is 131417. When combined with *going to*, the frequencies are 310 and 353 respectively, again suggesting no restrictive effect of *going to* on *come* over *give*. Furthermore, 'go' is the fifth most frequent verb to appear after 'going to' in the BNC 2014, while 'come' is the tenth most frequent.

true, what is perhaps most interesting is that way such a rule appears to be able to echo across generations, repeated again and again and considered ‘correct’ perhaps simply because it is in print.

#### 6.4.2 Comparison to the EGP

A comparison to the EGP of the level allocations in the canon is particularly problematic due to the repetition of structures across levels in coursebooks. As discussed above, *going to*, for example, appears at every level of *Headway* and it is therefore difficult to make direct comparisons to coverage in the EGP. On the other hand, many of the EGP entries themselves extend over several levels; for example, the EGP shows that learners are able to use the present continuous at A2 to talk about the future arrangements with a limited range of verbs, at B1 with an increasing range of verbs, and at B2 with a wide range of verbs. Other future forms show development in terms of learners’ ability to use them for an increasingly wide range of functions; for example, at A1 learners use *will* to talk about plans and intentions, at A2 to show willingness and to make requests, and at B1 to make predictions. The canon treatment may therefore be reflective of the fact that future forms seem to be an area of grammar that learners develop competence in slowly and over time. That said, the overall picture in the EGP is often markedly different from the treatment of future forms in the canon.

While most coursebook series teach *going to* for plans at Level 1, the EGP does not indicate that learners can use it at A1. Instead, the EGP shows that at A1, learners are able to use *will* in the affirmative to talk about plans and intentions; this, however, is not a use of *will* typically taught in coursebooks, and many of the examples in the EGP seem closer to those that might be described as ‘promises’ in coursebooks<sup>42</sup>. At A2, there is some agreement between the EGP and the canon – coursebooks at Level 2 generally teach the present continuous and *going to* for plans and intentions, and these are attested in the EGP at A2 (the former, with a limited number of verbs, and the latter, only in affirmative and interrogative questions, however). Yet the EGP also shows that A2 learners are also able to use a number of

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<sup>42</sup> The two examples given in the EGP of this usage are ‘I will bring some music to the dinner’ and ‘I will see you tomorrow’.

other future forms beyond *going to* and present continuous, at least a level earlier than that at which they are typically taught, as follows:

- *going to* for predictions, only with the verb *be* (this use is not normally taught until B1)
- questions with *will* and *shall* to make requests (taught in only a single coursebook series, *Interchange*)
- *will*, including in the negative at this point, to express willingness (typically not taught until C1), and to talk about plans and intentions
- *Shall I ...?* to make offers and *Shall we ...?* to make offers (taught in only a single coursebook series, *New English File*, at Level 4)
- present simple to talk about timetabled events (typically taught at B2 and C1)
- the affirmative form of *shall* in the first person (not covered at all in the canon)<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps most surprising of all is that the future continuous, typically taught at C1, is also attested at A2 (in the affirmative, to talk about future arrangements) – a structure not normally taught in coursebooks until Level 6. The EGP addresses this unexpected inclusion in a note: ‘Although it is surprising to see this structure at A2, there is a lot of clustering around certain collocations (e.g. ‘will be waiting’), and therefore there is enough evidence of its successful use in simple contexts concerning time and place to merit its inclusion at A2.’

At B1, the EGP is in some ways in line with the canon. At this level, learners are able to use *going to* for predictions (beyond only with the verb *be*), *going to* for intentions (including negative forms) and the present continuous. However, these forms and uses are also covered in the canon at lower levels, arguably making the agreement less convincing. On the other hand, at B1 learners start to use *will* to make predictions, mirroring its position in the canon, although the use of *will* to talk about ‘fixed plans, often with times and dates’ attested at this level in the EGP does not feature in the canon at all; in addition, learners at B1 also use *shall* to talk about

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<sup>43</sup> The two examples given in the EGP (‘We shall start tomorrow at 2 o’clock.’ and ‘I shall be free on Sunday at 6 o’clock in the evening.’) might, however, be characterised as somewhat stilted.

plans and intentions, similarly not present in the canon. Finally, the EGP shows that learners at B1 can use the negative form of the future continuous; as stated above, this is typically taught only at Level 5, equivalent to B2.

There is a similar picture at B2, in that the EGP and the canon appear to converge, but this is again partly due to the fact that many of the future forms are covered at multiple levels within the canon. The EGP and canon agree on the future perfect, which learners start to use (in positive and negative forms only) at B2, and the equivalent coursebook level, Level 5. The EGP also shows learners able to use a wide range of verbs with the present continuous, including in questions to ask about plans, while the future continuous can be used with both *will* and *shall*, and in the negative.

In contrast, the EGP shows that learners can use the future perfect continuous, something that is taught by only one of the coursebook series examined (*Interchange*, at the equivalent level in the canon). The EGP also shows learners using the future continuous as a polite question form, in place of the present simple or future simple' (EGP examples: 'How long will you be staying?'; 'Will you be needing anything else?'), which is covered in the endmatter sections only of three of the coursebook series at Level 6. The fact that B2 level students are able to make use of this as a pragmatic device suggests that it could be given a more prominent role in coursebooks. Finally, the EGP identifies the use of 'due to', 'be about to' and 'be to', typically not taught until Level 6. It also identifies the use of the phrase 'on the point of', not covered at all in the coursebooks examined.

C1 shows learners using *going to* with an increasing range of adverbs, the use of the future perfect with adverbs, and the use of *shall not*. In addition, two pragmatic uses of the future perfect are identified: as a politeness strategy (EGP example: 'I hope I will have reassured you.') and to make assumptions (EGP example: 'As you will have heard, this year's work experience programme in Britain was in general a success.'). Neither of these uses are included in any of the coursebooks examined, but, as we

shall see in Chapter 8, the latter was covered in an early pedagogical grammar, but has seemingly been forgotten over the years.<sup>44</sup>

The development of learner competence with future forms continues to C2, where learners are able to use the future perfect in question forms, *going to* with a wide range of adverbs, *shall* for 'long term intentions' (EGP example: 'I shall always remember it as the city of lights.') and for predictions in informal contexts. None of these are covered explicitly at any level of the coursebook series examined. Finally, at this level learners are able to use the future perfect continuous – produced at B2 with a purely temporal focus (EGP example: 'I will have been working for my company for one year by the end of the June.') and only covered in one coursebook series – to make assumptions (EGP example: 'I do not think that this aspect is really necessary because it is supposed (sic) that you will be an adult for that moment and you will have been studying very hard to occupy that job'). The EGP notes the low frequency of this form in the data.

#### 6.4.3 Discussion

The contemporary ELT account of future forms seems relatively advanced and comprehensive – a large number of forms and uses are covered, in stark contrast, for example, to the way conditional sentences are taught. The coverage of future forms is characterised by repeated teaching across levels; even though this is also the case, to an extent, with the other two areas of grammar examined, with future forms it is particularly noticeable. This contradicts the oft-levelled criticism (see, for example, Mares (2003), Jolly and Bolitho (1998)) that coursebooks employing a structural syllabus are based on the (unfounded) premise that a single grammatical form can be acquired in a single lesson, with linguistic competence built up, 'brick by brick' in this way. In fact, at least with the grammatical forms examined, it seems clear that course designers understand the need for a grammatical structure to be taught more than once.

The implications of the comparison between the consensus and the EGP is hard to judge overall for exactly this reason – coursebooks teach many future forms at more

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<sup>44</sup> See McCarthy (2015) for a discussion of this use of the future perfect, and how it might be useful to advanced level learners.

than one single level, meaning a comparison to the EGP competency statements is harder to carry out. However, we have seen again that there is evidence of learners being able to use forms before they are typically covered in coursebooks (for example, *going to* for both plans and predictions); the EGP also shows that learners can use *Shall I/we* for offers and suggestions, something which is not typically covered in coursebooks. Furthermore, various apparently useful pragmatic uses of future forms are identified in the EGP but not typically taught, for example the use of *will have* to make assumptions, and of the future continuous to ask polite questions.

## 6.5 Conclusion

The overall situation presented in the three case studies is somewhat mixed. We have seen that there is a certain amount of variation in the coverage in the coursebooks examined, but this is limited mainly to which micro-level grammar points are covered and at which level, rather than more fundamental differences; the coverage of future forms seems to show the greatest overall variation in this sense, but there is still very broad agreement about what should be taught, and that the future perfect and future continuous should be covered only at higher levels. The comparison with the EGP shows very often that learners are able to use many structures before they are typically taught in coursebooks, and, more generally, that they are able to use a far wider range of structures than are normally covered in coursebooks. Possible reasons for this and implications will be discussed in Chapter 9.

Having discussed, in this and the previous chapter, the contemporary situation, we will now turn, in the next two chapters, to the question of the evolution and development of the ELT grammar canon.

## 7 Thematic analysis 2: the past and the present

### 7.1 Introduction

The thematic analysis in Chapter 5 discussed the global theme of ‘influences and input’ – these were primarily contemporary phenomena that informants reported as influencing the grammar content of coursebooks. This chapter completes the analysis of the interview data by discussing the second global theme identified, ‘ELT past and present’; this relates to opinions and experiences discussed by the informants that relate to differences between the past and present in ELT – particularly in the ELT publishing industry – and to changes they explicitly report having observed.

### 7.2 Global theme: ELT past and present

Two organising themes were identified under the second global theme: ‘origins’ and ‘change’. The first relates to the origins of the level system, but also to decisions made by authors on content. The second relates to changes practices and roles within the ELT publishing industry reported by the informants.

#### 7.2.1 Organising theme: origins

Chapter 5 painted a picture of decisions on grammar content and organisation being largely out of the hands of individual authors – and also of the publishers, even if this was not the perception of the authors – with grammar syllabuses largely being based on factors such as the content of successful competition titles, perceptions of norms, and perceived demands and needs of target markets. However, when talking about older coursebook series, many of the informants were able to talk about quite different sources and influences. These will be discussed here, along with references to the origins of the level system.

##### 7.2.1.1 Basic theme: author sources

Many authors discussed the sources they made use of when making decisions on grammar content. BU mentions *Living English Structure* (Allen, 1947/1959) as being an influential title on the development of the ELT grammar syllabus over the years.

BU: [M]y guess is, this is a guess, is that the Stannard Allen *Living English Structure* is really the sort of key that was used for 20 years plus.

The same title is also mentioned by PV, along with *English Grammatical Structure* (Alexander *et al.*, 1975), as playing significant roles in his and his co-authors writing of coursebooks:

PV: Now what we discovered at this point when we were looking at the syllabus was *English Grammatical Structure*. As Bernie [Harley, his co-author] said, it was a bible, it was brilliant. I suppose we used earlier grammar books as well. [...] Bernie adored *Living English Structure*. And *Living English Speech*. A companion pronunciation one. Bernie adored both books, and would refer to them frequently when we were doing stuff. And he would say it was the first modern ELT book.

MS, IF, LS, and JR all recall making reference to specific titles in order to inform the grammatical content of their own writing; again, both *Living English Structure* and *English Grammatical Structure* appear to have been key influences:

MS: [When asked to specify the grammar books he reported having consulted] [T]he principal authors were Krusinga, Curme, I must have read Jespersen, Erades, who wrote together with Krusinga. [...] The other source of information was, as far as I was concerned, Stannard Allen's book *Living English Structure*. [...] I say this, and it might not be completely literally true, and I do say it – I learnt all my grammar from that book when I was starting out. [...] Student grammars: at some point during my early teaching, the Thompson and Martinet *Practical English Grammar* showed up, and while it's a fairly awful grammar, it did cover the kind of consensus points, the things that my students were getting wrong, were often explained in that grammar. Later, and I don't have a date for this, Alexander's *Longman Student's Grammar* came out, was good. [...] When I was doing my checklists for what was going to go in *Practical English Usage* and subsequently what was going to go in to the *Cambridge English Course*, I was effectively looking at everything there was, supplementing the consensus that was in my head and in the books I'd used by going to other things like the T series. And *English Grammatical Structure* was one of them. [...] [A]mong sources I went to for teaching material and my checklists that went into them, Hornby's *Guide to Patterns and Usage in English* was, I thought, a brilliant book[.] [...]

IF: [There was] something called *OPEAC*, *Oxford Progressive English Alternative Course*, which did things like 'a', 'and', 'some', 'any' to begin with, and then structurally heavy, globulous, structurally progressive, 'one-bit-at-a-time', and it was linear and everything like that. I didn't use it to teach, but I used it to refer to.

LS: The basic thing was ... well, obviously, there are always ... I love Michael Swan's grammar. I love his *Practical English Grammar*. For me, when I first started teaching, that was the bible, you know? But there are loads of grammar books that you consult all the time actually, to see, but you still have to make the decision out of your own experience as to what it is you feel is worthwhile to put in a coursebook, if you're writing a coursebook. You're consulting all the time, you're reading all the time, you're looking all the time[.]

JR: Yeah we went through things like that, was it L.G. Alexander? I seem to recall a big chunky Longman book that laid out a syllabus, I think Alexander, R. A. Close [Interviewer: *English Grammatical Structure?*] Yeah, that one, that was one of them, plus, sort of seeing what was in the other books.

Finally, DH, reports referring to some specific titles in her role as both coursebook author and editor.

DH: Exams come into it [...] [W]hat I refer to are the *Cambridge Grammar for FCE, CAE*, etc.. I just use those as a reference for what's expected in the exams and therefore if you're producing courses at a particular level, potentially leading to an exams course, these are the structures we need to cover.

Both JR and DH above are referring to their use of sources to inform relatively recent (in the case of JR) and contemporary (in the case of DH) titles. While the importance of this may be less important than in the past in shaping an overall syllabus, the informants comments suggest that one of the roles of coursebook authors in the writing process is, unsurprisingly, to carry out research on grammar in order to make informed decisions. It also suggests, again unsurprisingly, that there is, and has long been, a large body of work on pedagogical grammar for EFL for coursebook authors to refer to.

#### 7.2.1.2 Basic theme: practitioner experience

Most ELT coursebook authors were invariably teachers themselves at some point, and many of the coursebook authors interviewed made reference to how their own classroom experience affected decisions on grammar content in the material they were writing. For example, BU refers to the influence of the teaching experience of the coursebook author Louis Alexander on the level system of his first coursebook series, published in the 1960s.

BU: That [decisions on the level system] was done in sort of general discussion with teachers in private schools around the globe. And Louis [Alexander] did it entirely from his experience teaching in a private secondary school in Greece, with precious little market research. And the result of that was he originally did four books, which took you from *First Principles*, *First Things First*, to Cambridge Proficiency and beyond. And that was how it was launched.

BU describes a similar process in the matching of grammar points to levels within a coursebook series.

BU: [Interviewer: How does a publisher or author decide at which level to include these grammar points?] They relied much more on the author, who tended to tell the publisher. And that came out of experience.

LS mentions the important of experience both as a teacher and teacher trainer in driving decisions on which grammar points to cover – the latter being particularly important in terms of understanding the needs of teachers from different countries:

LS: [Interviewer: How did you decide which grammar points to include in *Headway*?] In general, it is absolutely and utterly based on experience. Right the way through. [...] It is from experience ... [Interviewer: But could you explain what you mean by 'experience'?] Experience as teachers, experience of using other materials, obviously, a whole range of coursebooks, but more than anything, it's your experience in the classroom with students. By that time as well, of course, we were training a lot of foreign teachers, not just native speakers, and it's also what you learn from them, foreign English teachers, about their particular countries and their particular problems and what causes them particular difficulties when they're teaching. It's cumulative, really.

LS also recalls an experience as a teacher at a particular language school, which led her and her co-author to believe in the importance of a full and explicit grammar syllabus in a coursebook series.

LS: [O]ne of the things that most influenced the whole thing of grammar – although it's come to haunt us because people go on about *Headway* and grammar as if it's the only thing there [...] was at International House when we worked there, they had, at the end of each morning, they had an hour's what was called an 'hour option'. And they had wonderfully trendy things like 'communicative games', or they had ones focussed on vocabulary. [Interviewer: Sorry, this is for students?] For students,

which students did. The students would sign up for these things, and they had discussion groups, conversation groups, and they also had a grammar group. And the one that students stood in queues for was the grammar option.

MS also refers clearly to the role of experience, this time in the allocation of grammar points to level.

MS: [I assigned level to grammar points] on the basis of experience – these seem to be things that it's good to teach to my Elementary students, these are things that I found myself having to teach to my Proficiency students. [...] [W]ith beginners – unless you're Rod Ellis – you feel that you need to teach a certain number of basic structures for them to be able to communicate. And you know what these structures are – you know you're going to teach present tenses, simple past, and some way of talking about the future, how to make nouns plural, a bit of basic word order. We know what they are. Everybody knows what you teach beginners, pretty much. Higher up, it's a bit up for grabs. You're probably going to run over the main bits of tense use and relative clauses and so on. But it does depend a bit on who you're teaching.

#### 7.2.1.3 Basic theme: selection and grading criteria

A number of authors also discussed the criteria for the selection and grading of grammar points that they have used during the writing process. Again, these mainly refer to older titles.

For example, IF refers to how 'usefulness' was the most important criterion at the beginning of her writing career.

IF: Obviously usefulness was our prime one when we started off – this is what we wanted, we definitely wanted to be able to say 'do you like', and 'I like' and 'would you like', so that we really decided was useful.

However, later other criteria became more important, because of a growing realisation of teacher preference for what was easiest to teach in the classroom.

IF: It was very much more teachability in the end. Because we didn't do the present continuous in *Starting Strategies* to begin with. We decided it wasn't nice to do the present continuous – who ever uses the present continuous? And it was ridiculed in lectures, 'I am writing on the blackboard', and all that stuff. But eventually it came round that teachers did want, they expected the present continuous to be there

because it was very easy to teach. The teachability became one of the criteria that we had to use in terms of determining the grading.

In the interview, IF also discusses the use of frequency as selection criteria, admitting, however, that considering frequency alone can be problematic.

IF: Frequency to a certain extent was a useful criterion that made us make certain decisions. But on the other hand we went wrong, I think, in *Starting Strategies* because we looked at frequency of colours, and 'black' and 'white' were the ones that came up so we always had 'Would you like a coffee? Was it black or white?' And we didn't teach the other colours, but you can't just introduce two colours and not introduce the other colours. So the idea of grouping was important but our first idea was 'we must go with frequency'.

LS also mentions frequency when asked to explain order criteria, picking up on IF's discussion of whether present simple or present continuous should be taught first.

LS: The big debate as well is when you bring in the present continuous. In the days of structural syllabuses, right at the beginning, the big argument was because you taught the verb 'to be' you would then teach the present continuous because it used the verb 'to be'. But of course, in fact, it's not nearly as useful as the present simple, which has a much, much – I believe it's the widest used tense in the English language.

Like IF, LS also discusses usefulness, along with the idea of delaying structures that are difficult to 'get your mouth around', implying that complexity is also a key criterion.

LS: So you wouldn't preclude [present perfect continuous] because it's darn useful for somebody way, way down to use, but you're not going to do a big deal, blimey Moses, the level where they need that, they don't also need all the subtleties of use between the present perfect continuous and present perfect simple. [Interviewer: What would make you not want to choose, let's say present perfect continuous, why wouldn't you do that with a beginner group?] Partly because you can't get your bloody mouth around it! [...] certainly with something like the present perfect continuous ... [makes sound of somebody stumbling over sounds while trying to speak].

Finally, MS also mentions the same basic criteria – frequency, usefulness, complexity – as being important in choosing content for a grammar syllabus, but noting that these criteria may at times be in conflict with each other.

MS: We all knew more or less that you taught present tenses before unreal past conditionals. That the future perfect progressive didn't come in your first year. [Interviewer: But why? It seems so obvious to say it but why did you know that?] Alright, it seemed because, to take the future perfect progressive as an example, it's rare, and it's complex and it's not very useful. [Complex, meaning?] I don't want to get into the question of how you define complexity in linguistics, alright? I've been there ... Let me leave that with you! [I'm just curious – I'm not asking you to give a definition, but since you used the word, I just wondered if you had a sense ...] OK, it's a structure with several bits – how about that? The same way as question formation with lexical verbs is complex. On the other hand, it's not rare and it's useful. So these criteria – off the top of my head, these are the three important ones – useful, frequent, complex – they fight quite often.

In addition to referring to other sources, it seems that authors are also aware of a number of issues that need to be considered in order to be able to make informed choices on the selection and ordering of grammar points.

One of the most surprising insights to emerge came from PV. In Chapter 5, we saw that 'Student L1s' was identified as a theme, with some of the informants mentioning considering the L1 groups of potential users in their writing. PV, however, takes a step further, suggesting that the overall grammar content found in major coursebook series published in the 1970s and 1980s – many of which first came into existence as in-house teaching materials in private language schools in the UK – are explainable in terms of the student L1 makeup of students at the language schools where the writers worked.

PV: [I]f you look at *Kernel Lessons*, it is based on the problems of Swiss-German speakers. If you look at the things that are highlighted, they're all things that German speakers find difficult, because [author] Robert [O'Neill]'s main thing was German, with a little bit of French and Italian, because Eurocentres was a Swiss school. So if you took German, French and Italian, that was the problem, those were the languages. At Anglo [Continental School of English in Bournemouth], probably our biggest nationalities were Spanish speaking and Portuguese speaking, because we did big deals with Latin America. *Streamline* never took into consideration the problems of Arabs. We sold very well in Japan! But we never took into consideration problems of Arabs – even when we were teaching *Streamline*, all Arab classes when

they started did *First Things First*<sup>45</sup>. *Streamline* was too hard for them, if they were zero beginners with non-Roman alphabet. [...] So I think that's a major consideration, that all these things were developed in private [schools] ... they were all, apart from *Strategies* was Ealing, which is a state college, but *Cambridge English Course* is Swan Schools, which is private, *Kernel* is Eurocentres, which is private, there's loads of stuff from Bell School, which is private, Anglo Continental was private. They were all private language schools. With particular student groups. I think *Streamline* may have been more successful because Anglo Continental had much wider student groups than any of the opposition. [...] [W]e probably had a wider nationality range than the competition. And that might influence us as well of course.

If PV's hypothesis is correct, the ramifications are potentially huge. The grammar syllabuses for major coursebook series of the 1970s and 1980s, which, due to the forces described in Chapter 5, became part of a global ELT grammar consensus, were initially designed for very specific groups of learners with specific L1s and, hence, with very specific priorities and problems. They were never, again assuming PV is correct, intended to be used by a wider group of learners, or indeed expected to become de facto standard references for future materials design.

#### 7.2.1.4 Basic theme: origins of the level system

The origins of and changes to the level system over the years were also commented on frequently. A number of informants trace the evolution of the competency level system used in ELT coursebooks to the typical number of school years around the world. BU argues that this actually dates back to colonial times.

BU: I think you actually have to go back to the origins of how the analyses are done, to colonial school publishing. [...] If you look at – and I think I told you – Eckersley was in four books, and then became five. Direct, Gatenby was five [...] I don't know what the original thinking of it was but my guess is that it was seen as sort of 11 to 16. Because language wasn't really taught before the secondary cycle. [Interviewer: So it's all linked to school years?] It's all linked to school years, yeah.

BU also confirms the influence of school years during the period – the 1970s – that he was involved in ELT publishing.

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<sup>45</sup> A different coursebook series, written by Louis Alexander.

BU: In my day, [the level system of a coursebook series] was entirely built on the market they were trying to go into, which was either a state secondary system, or the parallel private language schools, which tended to teach in parallel year groupings to the secondary schools.

BU makes the same link to school years when talking about L. G. Alexander's 1960s coursebook *New Concept English*. Originally published at four levels, two levels were eventually themselves split into four, creating a six-level publication, similar, although not identical<sup>46</sup>, to the modern six-level coursebook system:

BU: Louis did it entirely from his experience teaching in a private secondary school in Greece, with precious little market research. And the result of that was he originally did four books [...] And that was how it was launched. However, within four years of its launch, *First Things First* had been split into two, and *Practice and Progress* had been split into two, so you ended up with a six-year course to Cambridge Lower [the examination now known as Cambridge First], which sort of mirrored what was supposed to be going on in secondary schools. So you'd start at 11 and you'd get Lower at 16.

A six-level system is also mentioned by MS, but with a different origin – the split of each of three broad levels into two.<sup>47</sup>

MS: When we started [writing coursebooks], effectively you had three levels in teaching, where I did my teaching – Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced classes – and you tended to split them into Lower and Higher Elementary, Lower and Higher Intermediate and even two levels of advanced. So the six-level division was actually pretty much inherent in my teaching experience.

DH also discusses the increase in number of levels, noting a shift from a minimum of four levels in older titles, to the specific example of a contemporary coursebook series actually published at seven levels, to reflect seven secondary school years.

DH: I think there are more levels now. Thinking back to the courses I worked on in the 80s, it was definitely four – you didn't think beyond four. And now, four does

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<sup>46</sup> Similar, rather than identical, as BU reports that the six books took learners to 'Cambridge Lower', whereas typically the fifth level ('Upper Intermediate') of a modern series would, in theory, bring learners to the level required to pass Cambridge First, as the fifth level is typically described as leading to competence at B2 level, the level attested by Cambridge First.

<sup>47</sup> This is remarkably similar to the origin of the six levels of the CEFR (see Chapter 2).

seem to be the minimum<sup>48</sup>. And I suppose, going back into the school system, thinking of the last secondary course which I worked on, which was *Prepare!* for Cambridge [University Press], that was seven levels, which was specifically to fit into lower and then upper secondary.

She also notes that the number of hours allocated per level matches is – by accident or design – the number of typically allocated to a subject in a year at secondary schools.

DH: I suppose when you think about it, levels are usually worked out in terms of hours, or they're mapped to a certain number of hours, which neatly fall into the numbers of hours accorded to a particular subject in school systems across the world.

In her interview, IF also links levels to school years in the same way. In fact, so close did the relationship between book level and school year appear to be in her eyes that it became apparent during the interview that she was using the term 'book 1' to refer to a school year, something which required clarification.

IF: Some didn't want more than the present tense in book 1, for instance – you didn't really want any past. Others say, 'No, we've got to cover the present, past tense, past simple' by the end of book 1. [...] But it might have pleased Poland if they hadn't done it by the end, so to please them, we would probably go with them rather than lose their market. That made sense for us. [Interviewer: And when you talking about doing something "by the end of 'book 1'", that presumably means by the end of a school year.] Yes.

### 7.2.2 Organising theme: change

The second organising theme relates to change – informants talked at length about change in practices in ELT publishing, and change in the roles of those working in ELT publishing. However, we will start with content – the fact that the content of the ELT grammar canon *has* changed over the years.

#### 7.2.2.1 Basic theme: change within the canon

We finished the discussion in Chapter 5 with the following comment from APP on the limited possibility of innovation in the ELT grammar syllabus:

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<sup>48</sup> See excerpts from the same informant in Section 5.2 on the idea of four or five 'core levels'.

APP: I think that when authors had a lot more influence over courses, when expectations were really being set, there was probably more room for innovation. But I think that there is less room now.

A number of informants, when discussing older titles, mentioned the possibility of making changes to the consensus, or innovating in some way. For example, MS talks about his own role in 'padding out' the content of the grammar canon over the years.

MS: I remember spending a lot of time in the 60s/70s supplementing the standard inventory with additional points that I thought important but which weren't generally covered – this mostly in more advanced teaching and materials production. This stuff got into *Practical English Usage*, which is used quite a bit by materials writers and others, so I may have personally padded out the general consensus a bit.

MS also states that since the 1980s, he and other authors have expanded the consensus further by including coverage of spoken grammar and discourse structure:

MS: And from the 80s onwards, we've all added treatments of points of spoken grammar and discourse structure that didn't figure much in earlier syllabuses. So: I stick to my claim that we still teach what we taught then at pretty much the same levels (with some improvements), and that the most important topics were already pretty well covered; but it needs saying that we now also teach (or may decide to teach) a whole lot more.

One particular area of historical innovation appears to be closely related to the idea of notional/functional syllabuses discussed in Chapter 3. MS, PV and IF all talk about teaching certain grammar structures, such as 'would like', earlier, as fixed phrases, than they might have been taught in older titles, because of their usefulness in communication:

MS: We swam upstream against some of the consensus in doing the *Cambridge [English] Course* on the basis of usefulness. So a structure which other courses might not bring in till Level 2, whatever that means, we were having students do functional situational communicative things at Level 1, which required at least specific incidences of a kind of structure we weren't going to focus on from a grammatical point of view. To simplify it, we would teach as an idiom or fixed phrase or small item something we looked at it in more detail at a much higher level.

PV: *Streamline* was based on *English Grammatical Structure*, but Bernie [Hartley] and I decided that we would use communicative elements like teaching ‘would like’ very early, because they’re a set phrase and so on. So we changed it, and we added the ‘everyday conversations’, which were formulas and set expressions. So we deviated in that way, but on the pure logic we followed *English Grammatical Structure*.

IF: I think the first unit of ‘white’ *Strategies*<sup>49</sup>, the present, the verb ‘to be’, it did ‘would you like a’, ‘would you like to’, ‘I like’, ‘So do I’, ‘Nor do I’. And that was in the first lesson, so, you know, we decided this is what they wanted to be able to do, to invite people, offer things, invite, that’s what we thought was important communicatively.

#### 7.2.2.2 *Basic theme: changing roles*

Changes in the relationship between author and publisher were mentioned frequently in the interviews. The most common differences referred to by informants were changes in the role of authors, and the changes in the relationship between publisher and author. In the past, according to AG, authors had far more control of the content of the books they were writing, leading to greater variation. Control now seems to be much more in the hands of the publishers.

AG: In days gone by, it used to be the authors who’d have much more control of that, and so you get more variety and individuality. That happens a lot less now because publishers are sort of laying out the grid.

APP makes a similar observation, suggesting that the reason for this is that this ‘variety and individuality’ is now a commercial risk.

APP: In the early days of ELT, when it was becoming a business in its own right, I think the authors had a lot of influence, a lot of say. And I think the balance has tipped towards the publisher. And the publishers like to have much more control than, say, forty years ago, over the contents. [...] And since there are so many commercial considerations when a publisher publishes, the publisher is likely to take less risk than at the beginning of ELT, when authors were free to establish, or freer, what the perceived progression and the perceived number of levels of a course should be.

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<sup>49</sup> ‘White’ strategies was the first, single-level edition of the book, published with a white cover.

Another explanation for the shift in control, in addition to the financial reasons given by APP, is related to expertise. According to BU, in the past publishers simply did not have the expertise to make decisions on content in-house, as the editors who worked for them did not have any teaching experience.

BU: I have also to say, without being rude to my predecessors, because they were all very bright people, very few of the editors had any ELT experience when they started. They were publishing people, so they relied very heavily on people like Bill Allen, Reg Close is another name – these are Longman names – so the editor would work with them.

However, once editors with teaching experience started to work for publishers, the situation began to change.

BU: But gradually the editors in the publishing houses, whether it was Sue [Ullstein] or her original boss Mark Lowe, or others, had their own experience and therefore ... Sue Jones was another one, who was sort of bringing their own teaching experience and/or marketing experience. [...] There used to be these star authors, like Louis [Alexander], or Robert O'Neill or Brian Abbs or whatever. And they in a way drove what the publishers did, rather than the other way round. Whereas now it appears that the publishers are the driving force, who put together teams that agree with their ideas.

The greater autonomy enjoyed by authors in the past appears to be confirmed by the accounts given by IF and PV, both of whom wrote coursebooks, or started writing coursebooks, in the 1970s.

IF: *Strategies* was still very much 'us', that's Brian [Abbs, co-author] and me deciding what the syllabus would contain, what structures would be at each level[.]

PV: The era I come from, we designed the syllabus. We had no publisher input on the syllabus at all. Nobody at OUP ever said, 'Are you going to do this?', or 'Why haven't you done that?'. Never happened. Nowadays of course authors will be given a syllabus before they start. [...] [A]nd that's what authors are complaining about, that the publisher dictates the syllabus. We were in a day when the publisher didn't dictate the syllabus and OUP never ... I can't remember OUP ever making a syllabus suggestion to us.

PV presents the situation in which current coursebook authors work as being very different.

PV: Nowadays of course authors will be given a syllabus before they start. I remember the internet group, 'ELT writers connected'. And you'd listen to authors of a different generation, and they didn't have a choice of how to design a syllabus.

Not all authors portray the influence of publishers and editors in such a negative light, however. JR is clear about the positive influence he felt his editors had on the design of the original syllabus for *Interchange*:

JR: [Speaking about how it was decided at which level to include each grammar point] I think we also had a very good editor at New York. We had two very good editors in New York who were quite skilled in ... had published a lot of courses at other publishers. One of the main ones was Mary Vaughn, who, um, I think she'd been with Prentice Hall, and I'm not sure who else. But she had a remarkable grasp of exactly what went where in different courses, and she worked particularly with me on the Intro level.

In addition, MS presents a somewhat different picture, with very little pressure or influence perceived to be exerted by the publisher, even when he was co-authoring a course published as recently as 2011.

MS: [Interviewer: But did you feel at some point a pressure to include the full aspect of them [i.e. grammar points] within a grammar syllabus?] Scarcely. One of my editors of the recent series that Catherine [Walter] and I did, the *Oxford English Grammar Course*, [...] wanted a bigger list of useful prepositional phrases than I felt, in a purist sort of way, was really required in a grammar book. But it's what teachers are looking for, and if teachers want it and students want it, then we'd better have it. And that's a not-very-serious kind of pressure. I've had very little pressure in any area from any publisher.

We might speculate here, however, that the status of the informant as an author might somewhat 'insulate' him from the kinds of pressure felt by other authors. Furthermore, the title he discussed is a pedagogical grammar series rather than a coursebook series.

#### 7.2.2.3 Basic theme: changing practices

A large number of references were made to how practices within ELT publishing have changed over the decades. One area related to the makeup of the grammar syllabus; in the past, debates on selection and ordering appear to have been common. One such debate was presented in Section 7.2.1.3, with both LS and IF

discussing potential reasons for teaching present continuous before present simple, or vice versa. The same debate is also mentioned by PV, whose recollection seems to suggest a change in expectations from users of coursebooks, with arguments for changes in sequencing being made because of frequency:

PV: When I was first going round [doing book promotions], people were starting to say, 'Why are we teaching the present continuous first? The present simple is higher frequency than the present continuous.'

Similarly, MS mentions an example of a specific change to the consensus on grammar that occurred since he started teaching – the teaching of the use of the past tense for distancing. Overall, however, the picture he paints is one of gradual change.

MS: [T]he consensus was never turned on its head. Things got done better, new uses of structures started getting taught up to a point. [Interviewer: Could you give me an example of that?] Yeah. Use of past tenses for social distancing, or what I call distancing. Like 'Did you want to pay now?' I don't remember that being around in the first teaching materials that I had, I got interested in it and at some point this would have appeared in teaching materials. I would certainly have been teaching it or encouraging the teachers who worked for me to include it in their teaching before it got into print.

IF describes her first coursebook – which was highly commercially successful – as being highly innovative. It is notable that it was successful despite the fact that it was a reaction against – in other words, *intentionally different from* – other available courses at the time. This is in stark contrast to the kind of conformity discussed in Section 5.2, particularly under the basic theme 'Following the competition'.

IF: *Strategies* was an experiment, and for some reason it was a success. People liked the idea of doing communicative English, it was a reaction against all the other courses that were available, and it took off. [...] [I]t covered everything, you know – we had everything from the first present simple up to, I think, the third conditional in one book, which is unheard of nowadays

As we discussed above, the potential for innovation has been much reduced in recent years, and many of these debates have disappeared, apparently under the weight of norms and consensus.

Another change to publishing practices relates to market research. While clearly authors and publishers are always likely to have considered their target market and target users when developing products, it appears that market research played a much more limited role in the past, as evidenced by the following comment from PV:

PV: We never did research to start with, we just did it. Major difference. That would be true of the Soars [i.e. Liz Soars and her co-author John Soars], that would be true of Abbs and Freebairn, too.

BU provides more detail on the move, in the mid to late 1970s<sup>50</sup>, to market-research based product design, giving his opinion on the (at least partially negative) consequences of this.

BU: When I moved into the market department – or set up the marketing department, there was no such thing – I very much argued that we should move more to providing what the market wants, away from whatever plopped onto an editor’s desk, or he thought there might be a need for. And at the time that I dared to suggest this, I was almost sent to Coventry for writing a paper for a management meeting, based on that idea. And it seems to me now that that idea has been totally adopted and I sort of feel that maybe creativity is crushed.

It is worth recalling at this point IF’s description – already discussed in Chapter 5 – of experiences working on a later coursebook series, *Discoveries* (published in the mid- to late 80s) when the influence from a particular market became stronger.

IF: But when we started with *Discoveries* [...] we were quite driven after that by what the markets wanted, and Italy in particular – and Longman are a commercial enterprise, they want to sell copies, so they don’t really decide what is the most teachable route, it’s what the markets want, probably more, than what actually is easiest to teach in the classroom. There’s a bit of a conflict[.] [...] [O]ur feeling was, ‘this is isn’t how learners will learn it – it’s too complicated, we were much more into wanting to recycle – so there were conflicts. We wanted more a cyclical syllabus, but when it came to them, what they wanted, we were driven slightly by Italy, and so we did group things together that we wouldn’t possibly normally have wanted to do.

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<sup>50</sup> This time period was not stated explicitly during the interview, but was confirmed later via email.

IF's account, particularly the shift that occurred between writing her first coursebook and then writing subsequent titles, shows how the influence of market research can sometimes be far from welcome, with requirements from the market dictating choices on grammar, sometimes in conflict with the views and wishes of the authors.

A final shift in practice relates to the question of publishing all levels of a new coursebook series at once, as discussed in Section 5.2.1.2 above. In the past, there was no apparent requirement from publishers or users for this, as explained by AG, in general terms, and IF, in reference to specific titles she wrote.

AG: [F]ifty, twenty years ago, people would start by publishing an intermediate level and then they would work up and down from there, publishing with the same team of authors writing one level a year and eventually five years later you'd have a complete course.

IF: [R]ight up to *Blueprint* and the others, we would do one level at a time and publish that[.]

The reasons for this change in practice are outlined by PV, and essentially revolve around the risk of delays that publisher are unwilling to take.

PV: [T]hey used to say, 'We've got to have all four levels, because schools won't trust that all four levels will be ready unless we publish them on the same day', whereas we said, 'Well, start on Level 1, by the time you get to September we'll have Level 2 out', you know.' And by the time you get to September the year after, we'll have Level 3', and people trusted you. But then of course things went wrong with printing, and people got caught a couple of times, which is why publishers then said 'we have to have all four levels out simultaneously'.

The ramifications of this change were discussed in Section 5.2.1.2: publishing multiple levels at the same time means working with multiple author teams, and this in turn makes top-down control of syllabus by a publisher more likely, to avoid potential overlaps or omissions. For PV, this is an undesirable outcome:

PV: [I]t also doesn't let stuff grow when you do that, because you grow a syllabus in a way. I don't think we ever sat down and mapped out four levels. We mapped out Level 1, and then we mapped out Level 2. Until we finished Level 2, we didn't start

thinking about Level 3. I'm sure we did it a level at a time. And then we would have learnt things, and you would also have tested it.

On the other hand, IF paints exactly the same phenomenon in a slightly more positive light, with the need to consider a whole series at the same time meaning she and her co-authors had to concentrate on planning out all levels.

IF: [B]ut it got to something like *Sky* and *Upbeat* [two coursebook series published since 2000], you had to do all four at the same time. They wouldn't accept – the market – that you did one book a year and publish that, so it really made us concentrate on the syllabus and you paid much more attention to it as the courses progressed. And decided in advance exactly what would come into each unit of each course. Which we never did before, it was very, very much, as it happened as we wrote.

### 7.3 Summary

The thematic analysis from the point of view of past and present paints a picture of significant changes in the last fifty years, with a shift away from individuality and variation, with a move towards publisher control (although, as we saw in Chapter 5, the publishers themselves perhaps feel just as restricted as authors). At the same time, it has also been a period of change within the canon, with changes in the level system and also in the content of the canon.

Chapter 8 will now return to the case studies, and will examine how the three areas of grammar analysed evolved in the titles selected for analysis.

## 8 Case studies 2: evolution

### 8.1 Introduction

Having reviewed the thematic analysis related to changes in practices in ELT publishing over the decades, we can now turn to the question of how the three macro grammar areas discussed in Chapter 6 (conditionals, relative clauses and future forms – chosen as all were mentioned during the interviews, all carry weight within coursebook grammar syllabuses, and because they represent both syntagmatic, patterns and paradigmatic ‘items’) have evolved in descriptive and pedagogical accounts. This chapter sets out how the treatment of the three grammar points evolved, from early descriptive accounts to modern pedagogical ones. The investigation considers both the overall content, but also the way explanations and rules are worded and even, at times, examples chosen to illustrate these.

Our account of the evolution of the canon here can go back further than the recollections of the informants that were interviewed – as discussed in Chapter 4, we will trace the treatment of the three areas of grammar back to Jonson’s 17th century grammar, up until late 20th century coursebooks. The choice of books in which the evolution is traced was described in Section 4.4.2: titles were chosen to represent different time periods – traditional grammars, the Great Tradition, and then finally pedagogical accounts, including in 20th century coursebooks up until the 1990s. The account of each of the three grammar points is presented chronologically.

### 8.2 Case study A: conditionals

#### 8.2.1 *English Grammar* (Jonson, 1640/1909)

Jonson makes a brief reference to conditional forms in a section on conjunctions, stating that *if, unless* and *except* are conjunctions of ‘conditioning, by which the part following dependeth, as true, upon the part going before’ (p. 109).

#### 8.2.2 *English Grammar* (Murray, 1795/1823)

Murray discusses conditional sentences in some detail, in part of a discussion of the ‘general’ requirement of the subjunctive after the words ‘*if, though, unless, except, whether &c.*’ (p. 178). Much of Murray’s rules and examples reflect historical

differences in English; one key observation is that the subjunctive should be used in the *if* clause ‘when futurity is denoted’ (e.g. ‘If he do but touch the hills, they shall smoke’ p. 179) but not in other cases (e.g. ‘If he thinks as he speaks, he may safely be trusted.’ p. 181). Murray also notes a form of the conditional found in the consensus: inversion with *were* in place of the *if* clause. Murray gives the example, ‘Were there no difference, there would be no choice.’, arguing that this exhibits ‘a peculiar neatness’ (p. 186).

Missing in Murray’s treatment overall is a discussion of the various time references – beyond the present/future distinction with conjunctive forms discussed above – that are reflected in the contemporary ELT typology. The examples given include, among others, ‘second’ and ‘third’ conditionals, but Murray does not attempt to explain the difference in meaning, focussing instead on verb form. One final curiosity is Murray’s claim – without evidence – that the use of the subjunctive after the conjunctions under discussion is an incidence of ellipsis; for Murray, the *if* clause in the sentence ‘If he succeed and obtain his end, he will not be the happier for it’ is simply a shortened version of ‘If he should succeed and should obtain his end ...’, with ellipsis of *should*.

### 8.2.3 *Essentials of English Grammar* (Jespersen, 1933)

Not unlike Murray, Jespersen’s main focus appears to be on verb form; there is no overall focus on conditional sentences or any attempt to categorise different patterns. He describes the use of past tenses to refer to hypothetical structures after *if*, a use he calls the ‘preterit of imagination’ (p. 255), giving as an example ‘If I had money enough, I should pay you.’ (p. 254). Jespersen’s main observation is that such meanings are contrary to reality: ‘In all such cases we deny the reality or possibility of certain suppositions’.

Elsewhere (p. 371), in a section on clauses, he gives additional examples of non-hypothetical conditional sentences (e.g. ‘If he comes back, what are we to do?’), as well as parallel examples which do not make use of ‘if’ (for example, the words and phrases *suppose*, *supposing*, *unless*, *as long as*, *provided*, *in case*), as found in contemporary ELT coursebooks. He also offers an example of a sentence with *if* which ‘does not really imply a condition: “If the offer was rejected, it was because people distrusted him”’ (p. 371). Finally, like Murray, and many modern

coursebooks, Jespersen outlines the use of inversion of subject and *had*, *were* and *should* as an alternative for an *if* clause (p. 371).

#### 8.2.4 *A Grammar of Spoken English* (Palmer, 1924/1955)

Palmer's analysis is more comprehensive than those already discussed. Palmer uses the term 'adverbials of condition, supposition etc.' to describe sentences with *if* (along with *provided*, *providing*, *supposing*, *as long as*, *unless* 'etc.' (p. 254)), and uses a system of categorisation that identifies six kinds of conditional sentence (with two of the six themselves divided into two sub-types). The categorisation system is as follows:

- Type 1: Implying little more than mere Concomitance  
Examples:  
(1a: referring to present time) *If I go to bed early, I get up early the next day.*  
(1b: referring to Past time (or in Indirect Speech)) (I said that-) *If I went to bed early, I got up early the next day.*
- Type 2: Implying Simple Condition  
Examples:  
(2a Referring to Future Tense) *If I go to bed early, I shall get up early tomorrow.*  
(2b In Indirect Speech) *I said that if I went to bed early, I should get up early the next day.*
- Type 3: Implying a Higher Degree of Supposition  
Example: *If I went to bed early, I should get up early tomorrow.*
- Type 4: Implying a still Higher Degree of Supposition  
Example: *If I were to go to bed early, I should get up early tomorrow.*
- Type 5: Implying Contingent or Fortuitous Circumstances  
Example: *If you should (happen to) meet him tomorrow, will you tell him to come?*
- Type 6: Implying Circumstances Dependent on Consent  
Example: *If it wouldn't be inconvenient to you, I should like you to come before lunch.*

In addition, Palmer notes that the order of clauses can be reversed, in addition to the possibility of using inversion with *should* and *were* instead of *if*, noting that 'this construction is rather literary' (p. 256).

Palmer's system, with its six 'Types' covering eight uses is complex, but does not seem unreasonable. It is interesting, however, to note that Palmer readily identifies, in his Type 1, the use of past time to refer to the past rather than to hypotheticality, something which is ignored in the ELT Type 1/2/3 system, but has been shown to be common in native speaker usage (Gabrielatos, 2003, 2006; Jones and Waller,

2011). However, in what appears to be an oversight, Palmer does not include conditionals that refer to hypothetical past events (i.e. 'third' conditionals, in the modern ELT system).

#### 8.2.5 *Living English Structure* (Allen, 1947/1959)

Allen's title is the earliest examined to use the standard, contemporary ELT typology, noting that 'English can express *three* important ideas with "if"' (p. 152).

Allen's categorisation system is therefore as follows:

1. Main clause–future; "if" ... present. (Likely or probable.)
2. Main clause–conditional; "if" ... past. (Unlikely or improbable; imaginary.)
3. Main clause–conditional perfect; "if" ... past perfect. (Impossible.)

Allen gives examples of the Type 1 conditional with both *will* and *shall*, with the preference for *shall* in the first person reflecting norms which elsewhere he describes as 'antiquated' (p. 117); *should* is also used instead of 'would' in the Type 2 conditional with first person. It is noteworthy that Allen uses the word 'conditional' to refer to the verb form in the main clause (i.e. the combination of *would* + base form) rather than to the overall structure, which he calls 'conditions and unreal past'; this appears to reflect the focus of earlier grammars on verb form rather than pattern. It is also interesting that the words 'unlikely' and 'improbable' are given to describe the meaning of the Type 2 conditional, a somewhat inaccurate description that is also often found in contemporary ELT materials but that contrasts with explanations given in reference grammars (for example, Carter and McCarthy (2006, p. 748) use the phrase 'possible or hypothetical'; Quirk and Greenbaum (1973, p. 325) use the term 'unreal'; and Huddleston and Pullum (2002, p. 748) describe such sentences as those that '[entertain] the condition as being satisfied in a world which is potentially different from the actual world').

In a later explanation to accompany 'Advanced' exercises, Allen outlines a further four conditional forms, as follows (pp. 161–162):

- a) *cause and effect*  
Example: *Oil floats if you pour it on water.*
- b) use of *should* to emphasize 'a doubtful view of Conditional type 1'  
Example: *If I should die, think only this of me.*
- c) use of *will* and *would* 'where the consent of another person is sought'  
Example: *If you will wait a moment, I'll fetch a chair.*

- d) use of *were to*, after *if*, and *would*, *could* or *might* in the main clause to create 'greater improbability in Conditional Types 1 and 2'  
Example: *If you were to come tomorrow, I might have time to see you.*

Furthermore, like Palmer and Jespersen, Allen also lists a number of additional alternatives to *if* (*unless, as if, if only, supposing, suppose, provided, providing, as long as*), although without any comment on meaning (p. 162). He also notes the possibility of inversion with *should* and *had*, noting that it is 'more literary' (p. 161). The inclusion of the additional patterns a)–d) makes it clear that Allen was aware of the existence of a far greater number of possibilities than those represented by the Type 1/2/3 system he first presents. However, the overall organisation of the section effectively foregrounds the three-way system and presents it as the main 'facts'; anything else is presented as detail, relevant only to 'Advanced' students. If Allen had pedagogical reasons for emphasizing the patterns covered by the Type 1/2/3 system over other patterns, he does not explain them.

#### 8.2.6 *A Practical English Grammar* (Thomson and Martinet, 1960/1969)

Thomson and Martinet's section on conditionals also presents a very full picture of conditionals, but again with the three-type model presented first. The opening statement is blunt: 'There are three kinds of conditional sentence: each kind contains a different pair of tenses' (p. 131). Like Allen, Thomson and Martinet use the words *probable, improbable* and *impossible* to describe the meaning of Types 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Unlike Allen, they do not include *shall* and *should* as options in the main clauses of Type 1 and 2 conditionals, and also split Type 2 conditionals into two senses (although with no change in verb form):

- i) 'when we don't expect the action in the **if**-clause to take place'
- ii) 'when the supposition is contrary to known facts' (ibid.)

Like Allen, however, Thomson and Martinet also describe a large range of alternatives to the three conditional types presented initially. Their additional explanations focus on the use of *will, would* and *should* in *if*-clauses (p. 133), including in requests (e.g. 'If you will/would kindly wait a moment I'll ask the manager to speak to you. '), to describe willingness or lack of willingness (e.g. 'If he'll listen to me I'll give him some advice.' / 'If he won't come we'll ask someone else. '),

and to ‘imply that the action in the **if**-clause, though possible, is unlikely’ (e.g. ‘If anyone should ring up say that I’ll be back at eight.’).

Thomson and Martinet then go on to outline ‘possible variations of the tense rules’, in which they describe a further *seven* variations of the Type 1/2/3 system<sup>51</sup>. Given that so many variations are identified, it is unclear why Thomson and Martinet call the three original paradigms ‘tense rules’ at all. Finally, and in line with the grammars previously discussed, Thomson and Martinet also discuss the use of *unless, provided (that) and supposing* in place of *if* (adding *but for* as an additional possible variation) and inversion with *had, should* and *were*.

#### 8.2.7 *Essential English* (Eckersley, 1938/1967, 1940/1967, 1941/1967, 1942/1967)

Eckersley’s *Essential English* was published at four levels (Books 1–4). He covers conditionals only in Book 3, as summarised in Table 8.1.

<b>Essential English: conditionals</b>				
	<b>Book 1</b>	<b>Book 2</b>	<b>Book 3</b>	<b>Book 4</b>
<b>Zero</b>	–	–	–	–
<b>Type 1</b>	–	–	Yes (called Open conditions)	–
<b>Type 2</b>	–	–	Yes (called Subjunctive Present Conditionals)	–
<b>Type 3</b>	–	–	Yes (called Subjunctive Past Conditionals)	–
<b>Other</b>	–	–	Type 2/3 with <i>should</i>	–

Table 8.1: Conditionals in *Essential English*

Eckersley uses the terms ‘Open condition’ for Type 1 conditionals (learners only see the present simple + *will* combination; *shall* is not included), and ‘Subjunctive Conditionals’ for Type 2/3 conditionals. Like Palmer, Eckersley also uses the term ‘adverbial condition’ at times.

The choice of the term ‘subjunctive’ is revealing; as in the older grammars, the primary focus is on the verb form rather than the overall sentence pattern. Mr Priestley, the teacher character in the series, explains that ‘The Subjunctive Mood is used in Conditional Clauses implying a negative’ (p. 77); in other words, a Type 2

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<sup>51</sup> These include what is now called the zero conditional, the combination of two past simple forms with past reference, the use of imperatives, *may* and *can* in the main clause with Type 1 conditionals, the use of *might* and *could* in the main clause in Type 2 conditionals, mixed Type 2 and Type 3 conditionals, and the use of present perfect in the *if* clause in Type 1 conditionals.

conditional typically talks about something that is counter-factual, and this is achieved by the use of a subjunctive verb form. In the context of the book, an explanation revolving around the concept of the ‘subjunctive mood’ works because the only examples of the structure given until this point all contain *were* in the *if* clause. However, the explanation seems harder to sustain once examples are given with verbs other than ‘be’ in the first or third person singular – such verbs are of course indistinguishable from their past simple forms.

Eckersley goes on to make a distinction between Present Subjunctive Conditionals and Past Subjunctive Conditionals, exactly along the lines of Type 2/3 conditionals. The overall system is summarised in the following table:

		<i>Principal Clause</i>	<i>Conditional Clause</i>
	OPEN CONDITION	he will learn	if he <i>works</i> ( <i>Simple Present</i> )
S U B J U N C T I V E	PRESENT CONDITIONAL	he would learn	if he <i>worked</i> ( <i>Simple Past</i> )
	PAST CONDITIONAL	he would have learned	if he had <i>worked</i> ( <i>Past Perfect</i> )

Table 8.2: Conditional system in *Essential English* (from Eckersley (1941/1967, p. 88))

### 8.2.8 *Oxford Progressive English* (Hornby, 1954b, 1955, 1956)

Hornby’s *Oxford Progressive English* was published at three levels (Books 1–3). Conditionals are covered at all levels, as can be seen in Table 8.3.

Hornby uses the term *if*-clauses, although the analysis often also includes the verb form in the main clause. In Book 1, the focus is on zero conditionals and combinations of present simple + *can* (e.g. *If you have money, you can buy things.* p. 51). In Book 2, a mix of Type 1 and Type 2 conditionals are covered (p. 30–31). A few pages later, as part of a focus on the past perfect, an example of a Type 3 conditional is also given, but with no clarification or explanation of meaning. Finally, in Book 3, the focus shifts to the use and non-use of *will* in the *if*-clauses of Type 1

conditionals: readers are told that *will* is not generally used, but there is also an explanation of how both *will* and *would* can be used in *if*-clauses making requests<sup>52</sup>. Hornby also covers the use of *suppose* and *supposing* as an alternative to *if* clauses (p. 24).

<b><i>Oxford Progressive English: conditionals</i></b>			
	<b><i>Book 1</i></b>	<b><i>Book 2</i></b>	<b><i>Book 3</i></b>
<b>Zero</b>	yes	–	–
<b>Type 1</b>	–	Yes (called <i>if</i> -clauses)	Yes (focus on non-use of <i>will</i> )
<b>Type 2</b>	–	Yes (called <i>if</i> -clauses)	–
<b>Type 3</b>	–	Yes (one example)	–
<b>Other</b>	present simple + <i>can</i> combinations	–	Requests with <i>will</i> and <i>would</i> in the <i>if</i> -clause <i>supposed/supposing</i>

Table 8.3: Conditionals in *Oxford Progressive English*

Eckersley and Hornby's treatments can perhaps be seen as something of a bridge between the verb-focussed approach associated with older grammars, and the paradigm-focussed approach that was to come. Eckersley refers to 'conditional clauses' (i.e. he appears to be primarily interested only in the verb form in the *if* clause), rather than conditional sentences, and uses the word 'conditional' only to describe Type 2 and 3 conditionals. However, his coverage revolves around the Type 1/2/3 paradigm, even if he does not use the numbering system, and he explains the meaning of conditional sentences as a whole. Similarly, Hornby uses the term *if*-clause, but his analysis also considers verbs in the main clause. Hornby does not, however, follow the Type 1/2/3 system closely, and, as noted above, does not attempt to explain the meaning of a Type 3 conditional when he gives one as an example. This uncertainty and inconsistency was to disappear in the following decades, with a complete shift to a focus on a limited number of sentence paradigms and their meanings.

#### 8.2.9 *English Grammatical Structure* (Alexander et al., 1975)

*English Grammatical Structure* covers conditionals at three levels, as can be seen in Table 8.4. Alexander et al cover a variety of structures, but the primary focus is again

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<sup>52</sup> Examples given are 'If you'll look at this sketch, you will see that ...; and 'If you would help me, we could finish the work before supper.' (p. 120).

the Type 1/2/3 system, with Type 1 conditionals, including *shall*, covered at Level 3 (of 6), Types 2 and 3 covered at Level 4, and other combinations and ‘variations’ covered at Level 6.

<b>English Grammatical Structure: conditionals</b>						
	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Level 5</b>	<b>Level 6</b>
<b>Zero</b>	–	–	Yes but not named.			
<b>Type 1</b>	–	–	Yes, with <i>shall</i>	–	–	
<b>Type 2</b>	–	–	–	–	Yes	
<b>Type 3</b>	–	–	–	–	Yes	
<b>Other</b>	–	–	Past simple + past simple. Variation of Type 1 with <i>going to</i> and present continuous	–	Variation of Type 3 with <i>could have</i>	21 non-Type 1/2/3 alternatives

Table 8.4: Conditionals in *English Grammatical Structure*

There is some innovation, however. The section at Level 3 includes, without naming them, both ‘zero conditionals’ and past simple + past simple combinations alongside the Type 1 conditional structures. The inclusion of zero conditionals at this early point effectively ‘promotes’ them to a higher position in the hierarchy of structures to be taught, transforming them from an extra detail (as in Allen, and Thomson and Martinet) to a more central focus. Also included is a note in the section to explain that *will* is ‘replaceable by *going to*’, and also by present continuous, in certain contexts. It seems significant, however, that this observation is framed in terms of ‘replacement’: *will* is still presented as the standard choice, with other options to be considered variations of this standard.

Type 2 conditionals are described as being ‘non-fact’, instead of ‘unlikely’ as in the earlier grammars, and include the use of ‘should’ in the main clause with an imperative meaning. Examples of Type 3 conditionals include the use of *could have* and *might have* in addition to the archetypical *would have* (p. 132–133). In a separate section, still at Level 4 of 6, the use of *provided, providing, on condition that, even if, whether* and *supposing* in Type 1 and 2 clauses is also treated in detail (e.g. p. 127), along with the use of *unless*.

Finally, Level 6, contains the sections ‘conditional sentences with tense sequences other than those in type 1, 2 and 3’, ‘conditional sentences with progressive aspect in one of the clauses’, and ‘variations on the form of *if*-clauses’. Across these three sections, a total of 21 conditional sentences are shown, none of which fit into the classic Type 1/2/3 system<sup>53</sup>.

The sheer depth of analysis contained in *English Grammatical Structure* on conditional forms is remarkable considering that it predated the evolution of computerised corpus-based analysis by around a decade. However, what is perhaps equally remarkable is the desire to identify so many different patterns and suggest a developmental sequence that splits them across multiple levels. It is hard to understand, for example, why learners are expected to be capable of learning and producing Type 1 conditionals at Level 3, but not capable of using present perfect in place of present simple in this structure until three levels later. Furthermore, the question remains as to why exactly the patterns found in Type 1/2/3 conditionals are foregrounded, while all the other patterns identified are treated as less important and, in the main, left until higher levels.

#### 8.2.10 Late 20th century coursebooks

The coverage of conditionals in *Strategies* (Abbs *et al.*, 1982; Abbs and Freebairn, 1977, 1979, 1980) is summarised in Table 8.5, and *Streamline* (Hartley and Viney, 1978, 1979, 1982, 1985) in Table 8.6.

Both *Streamline* and *Strategies* generally follow the Type 1/2/3 conditional system, with some variations. Neither covers the ‘zero conditional’. In *Streamline*, Type 1 conditionals are covered midway through *Streamline Connections* (Level 2 of 4) and Type 2 conditionals towards the end of the same level. *Streamline Destinations* (Level 3 of 4) then revises and extends Type 1/2 conditionals, adding *unless* and *if*

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<sup>53</sup> These include: present perfect in the *if*-clause in Type 1 conditionals (p. 207); past simple + *will* combinations (p. 208); past simple + present perfect combinations (p. 208); what are now known as ‘mixed conditionals’, i.e. combinations of Type 2 and Type 3 conditionals (p. 208); *if* clauses with *would/should* (p. 208); the use of continuous forms in either the *if* clause or the main clause (p. 209); conditionals with ‘if it weren’t for’ (p. 217); conditionals with ‘but for’ (p. 217); inversion with *had* and *should* (p. 217); and conditionals with *if + be + to* (e.g. ‘If we are to do all this today, I shall protest very strongly.’) (p. 217).

not, before moving on to Type 3 conditionals, including *unless*. All three paradigms are then revised in *Streamline Directions* (Level 4 of 4).

<b>Strategies: conditionals (1977–1982)</b>				
	<i>Starting</i>	<i>Building</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Studying</i>
<b>Zero</b>	–	–	–	–
<b>Type 1</b>	–	–	Yes	Yes
<b>Type 2</b>	–	–	Yes	Yes
<b>Type 3</b>	–	–	Yes	Yes
<b>Other</b>	–	<i>Do you mind if ...?</i>	–	–

Table 8.5: Conditionals in *Strategies*

<b>Streamline: conditionals (1978–1985)</b>				
	<i>Departures</i>	<i>Connections</i>	<i>Destinations</i>	<i>Directions</i>
<b>Zero</b>	–	–	–	–
<b>Type 1</b>	–	Yes	Yes, with <i>unless</i>	Yes
<b>Type 2</b>	–	Yes	Yes, with <i>unless</i>	Yes
<b>Type 3</b>	–	–	Yes	Yes
<b>Other</b>	–	–	–	<i>as long as, if ever/only and in case</i>

Table 8.6: Conditionals in *Streamline*

In the *Strategies* series, learners first encounter conditional forms in the second level of four, *Building Strategies*; reflecting the functional emphasis of the series, this is in the context of what are called, ‘conditionals with permission’ (e.g. *Do you mind if ...*). At the next level, Types 1, 2 and 3 are covered, with a slight variation in that Type 1 conditionals with *can* in the main clause are also included. At the highest level, *Studying Strategies*, the three forms are revised, with the addition of *as long as, if ever/only and in case*.

*The New Cambridge English Course* (Swan and Walter, 1990a, 1990b, 1992a, 1992b), summarised in Table 8.7, covers conditional forms across all four levels.

Perhaps the biggest difference between this course and the other treatments so far discussed is the question of terminology: Swan and Walter do not use the numbered system for conditionals, favouring terms such as ‘open’, ‘hypothetical’, ‘unfulfilled’ and ‘past’. However, while the terminology is different, the paradigms are the same, and the coverage across the four levels retains the familiar progression from Type 1 conditionals at the lowest level, with the addition of Type 2 and 3 conditionals from

Level 2 onwards. Level 3 includes a degree of variation, with *could have* and *might have* covered alongside *would have*. Level 4 repeats Type 3 conditionals, in a wider focus on ‘perfect conditionals’. Zero conditionals are not covered.

<b>The New Cambridge English Course: conditionals (1990–1992)</b>				
	1	2	3	4
<b>Zero</b>	–	–	–	–
<b>Type 1</b>	Yes (‘conditional structures’)	Yes (“if clauses (open)”)	–	–
<b>Type 2</b>		Yes (“if clauses (hypothetical)”); <i>If I were you ...</i> )	Yes (“hypothetical if clauses with simple past and <i>would</i> ”)	–
<b>Type 3</b>		Yes (“unfulfilled past conditionals” / “past conditional tense”)	Yes (“past conditionals”), with <i>would/might/could have</i>	if ... would have
<b>Other</b>	<i>Do you mind if ...?</i>	use of <i>if</i> and <i>when</i>	–	–

Table 8.7 Conditionals in *The New Cambridge English Course*

Finally, coverage in the first edition of the *Headway series* (Beaven, Soars and Soars, 1995; Soars and Soars, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1993) is shown in Table 8.8

<b>Headway (first editions): conditionals (1986–1995)</b>					
	<b>Beginner/Elementary</b>	<b>Pre-intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Upper-Intermediate</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>Zero</b>	–	–	Yes	–	–
<b>Type 1</b>	–	Yes	Yes	–	–
<b>Type 2</b>	–	Yes	Yes	–	–
<b>Type 3</b>	–	–	–	Yes	–
<b>Other</b>	–	–	–	–	Mixed conditionals

Table 8.8: Conditionals in *Headway*

The original two *Headway* books use the Type 1/2/3 system, with the addition of the zero conditional. The zero conditional and Types 1 and 2 were covered at Intermediate, with Type 3 delayed until Upper Intermediate. As the series expanded, eventually reaching six levels, the coverage changed; Types 1 and 2 were added to Pre-Intermediate, and ‘mixed conditionals’ were covered at the Advanced level.

With regard to terminology, *Headway Intermediate* describes Type 1 conditionals as expressing ‘real conditions’, and Type 2 conditionals as expressing ‘unreal conditions’, with the explanation that a Type 2 conditional is unreal because ‘It is

possible in theory but improbable in practice' or 'It is an impossible speculation' (p. 49). The Zero Conditional is explained only in the grammar reference at the back of the book. Interestingly, within the lesson on conditionals in *Headway Intermediate*, there is an example of a variation beyond the Type 1/2/3 system: learners see numerous present simple + imperative combinations in instructions for completing a questionnaire (e.g. 'If you are 63 or over and still working, add 3.') (p. 50). This is not explained. At Upper Intermediate, Type 3 conditionals are described as expressing 'imaginary situations about the past ... contrary to the facts' (p. 97).

#### 8.2.11 Discussion

The evolution of the teaching of conditional forms appears overall to adhere to the following steps, reflecting what we will see is a more general trend of a move in focus from item to pattern:

- a focus, particularly in earlier grammars, on verb form, particularly that of the verb in the *if* clause when it is a 'subjunctive'
- the development of a categorisation system for conditional sentences, combining a focus on verbs with a focus on longer, overall patterns
- a 'fixing' of the three-way paradigmatic analysis first found in Allen's *Living English Structure*, with the treatment of any conditional forms that do not conform to one of the three types as 'variations' from them
- the establishment of a teaching sequence of the conditional types across levels, Type 1 and 2 conditionals taught at the beginning or towards the beginning of a course, Type 3 conditionals after this, and other 'variations' at the highest level

Based on the coverage in Jonson and Murray, conditional forms do not seem historically to have been associated with a large number of prescriptive rules. Instead, it is in ELT that prescriptivism has increased, and this occurred in combination with the change in focus from item (verb form) to pattern (conditional paradigm). Contemporary ELT treatments involve the prescription of three monolithic sentence paradigms containing *if* clauses instead of a focus on verb forms, with the effect being, arguably, an increase in complexity (two verb forms must be learnt for every conditional 'type'), and a decrease in flexibility (other verb form combinations are seen as variations from a core form, and either left until higher levels or ignored completely).

### 8.3 Case study B: relative clauses

#### 8.3.1 *English Grammar* (Jonson, 1640/1909)

Relative clauses are mentioned only in passing in Jonson's *English Grammar*, and what limited coverage there is focuses primarily on relative pronouns and adverbs, not the relative clause as a whole. Jonson reports the existence of one (and only one, by implication) relative pronoun – *which* (p. 89) – although he later notes that *that* is also 'used for a relative' (p. 123). He observes that at times the relative pronoun can be omitted, which he notes was barbarous in Greek and Latin, but 'the Hebrews notwithstanding use it' (p. 116). He also gives examples in which '[a]dverbs stand instead of relatives' (for example, *where* in the sentence 'And little worth is fairness in certain in a person, where no virtue is seen.' (p. 135)).

#### 8.3.2 *English Grammar* (Murray, 1795/1823)

What Murray has to say about relative clauses is expressed with reference to relative pronouns. He explains the difference in use, for example, between *who*, *which*, *that* and *what*, noting the 'declination' of *who* into *whose* and *whom*, and also *which* into *whose* (p. 55), although the latter is later argued to be not 'generally pleasing' (p. 138). Further general comments include the explanation that relative pronouns 'serve to connect sentences', and always go before the verb in the relative clause, even if they are the object of the verb (p. 116).

Most of Murray's discussion, however, consists of the outlining of rules and observations on a large number of small, 'local' points related to syntax. Some, although by no means all, would not look out of place in a modern pedagogic description, and include the following:

- after superlatives, and the word 'same', *that* is preferred over *who* or *which* as a relative pronoun (p. 136)
- with an antecedent that is both person and thing, it is possible only to use *that*, not *who* or *which* (e.g. The woman, and the estate, *that* became his portion were too much for his moderation.' (p. 136))
- the use of *which* rather than *who* after words such as 'faction, 'the court', 'the cities' etc., even though they refer to groups of people (p. 137)
- the fact that relative pronouns do not show number, and are therefore sometimes ambiguous, e.g. in the phrase 'the disciples of Christ, whom we imitate', where 'whom' could refer to both 'disciples' and 'Christ' (p. 138)

- the use of ‘where’ as a relative adverb in relative clauses, which Murray says is ‘an imitation of the French idiom’ that ‘it would be better to avoid’ (p. 171)
- omission of the relative pronoun, as in ‘This is the man they love’, compared to ‘This is the man *whom* they love.’ (p. 190); however, Murray does not explain exactly when this can happen and argues that while it is ‘intelligible, and is allowable in conversation and epistolary writing [...] in all writings of a serious and dignified kind, it ought to be avoided.’ (p. 275)
- the need to avoid separating the antecedent and relative pronoun; the example given, ‘It is folly to pretend to arm ourselves against the accidents of life by heaping up treasures, which nothing can protect against but the good providence of our Creator,’ is argued to be better rendered as ‘It is folly to pretend, by heaping up treasures, to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, which nothing can protect us against. & c.’ (p. 266)

A final point of interest is a comment that Murray makes on structures with *it*, as follows: ‘It is and it was, are often, after the manner of the French, used in a plural construction’ (p. 138). Murray gives the following example of the structure:

‘It is either a few great men who decide for the whole, or it is the rabble that follow a seditious ringleader’ (p. 138).

Today, ELT pedagogical grammar uses the term ‘cleft sentence’ for this structure (whether the *it* is used to refer to a singular or plural noun phrase), but in Murray’s time the structure does not appear to have been identified as a grammar point in itself and given a name, and is thus treated simply as a specific use of a relative clause.

As discussed in Chapter 3, it was Murray’s stated aim to set out guidance particularly in ‘cases which custom has left dubious’, so it is not a surprise, and is consistent with many other chapters, to see so many details discussed. The focus, overall, though, is clearly on these micro issues rather than the overall pattern or meaning; furthermore, these micro issues primarily revolve around pronouns – individual grammatical items rather than the longer structure of the relative clause. While Murray perceives the difference in use suggested by the use of a comma before a relative pronoun, he seems unable to describe it with clarity, stating only that ‘when two members, or phrases, are closely connected by a relative, restraining the general notion of the antecedent to a particular sense, the comma should be omitted.’ (p. 238)

### 8.3.3 *Essentials of English Grammar* (Jespersen, 1933)

Jespersen covers relative clauses in detail. At times the terminology and analysis is close to that found in modern ELT pedagogical grammar, but at other times there are large differences. Perhaps the most fundamental is the overall categorisation system, which, ‘with regard to form’, divides relative clauses into three types, as follows (p. 359):

- clauses with one of the two *wh*-pronouns, *who* and *which*
- clauses without any connecting word: contact-clauses<sup>54</sup>
- clauses with one of the connecting words, *that*, *as*, *but*.

This system differs from contemporary ELT treatments in a number of ways. Firstly, relative clauses without a relative pronoun (‘contact clauses’) are treated totally separately, whereas in modern ELT descriptions this phenomenon is simply framed as a potential feature of defining relative clauses. Secondly, Jespersen conflates relative clauses with *that* with other clauses using the co-ordinators *as* and *but* (arguing, in fact, that the word *that* should be considered a ‘relative conjunction or particle’ (p. 362)) in a way that does not happen in ELT accounts. Finally, Jespersen’s system does not distinguish between defining and non-defining clauses. This is not to say that Jespersen does not describe this difference – he does, in detail, but the difference is not described as being a question of form or type. Jespersen’s note that in written non-restrictive clauses ‘a comma, often comes before a *wh*-clause, especially if it is continuative<sup>55</sup>’ (p. 359), is interesting; the use of the comma, invariably mandated in ELT materials and in contemporary style guides, is not, in Jespersen’s judgement, an absolute requirement, and does not appear to have been historically<sup>56</sup>. This perhaps explains why he did not consider the difference between defining and non-defining clauses as being a question of form.

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<sup>54</sup> Jespersen also notes that these were considered by Dr Jonson to be a ‘colloquial barbarism’, mirroring Murray’s concerns. (p. 360)

<sup>55</sup> In *Essentials of English Grammar*, Jespersen does not actually define ‘continuative clauses’. However, his explanation of them in his longer work, *A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles* (1909, pp. 109–114) shows that they are equivalent to what are commonly called ‘comment clauses’ in ELT accounts.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Jonson’s (1640/1909) non-use of commas in what appear to be defining contexts on pages vi and vii of his grammar.

While a full account of Jespersen's coverage is beyond the scope of this summary, some other noteworthy points include the following:

- an explanation that the belief that the relative pronoun *that* is taking over from *who* and *which* is wrong<sup>57</sup>; according to Jespersen, the historical process was actually the opposite, with *who* and *which* 'gaining ground at the expense of *that*' (p. 359)<sup>58</sup>
- 'double restriction': the use of a relative clause inside another relative clause (e.g. 'Can you mention any one that we know who is as talented as he?' (p. 358))
- the high frequency of contact clauses, including when the relative clause begins with *there is* (p. 361), and when the relative pronoun is, or would be, the predicative in the relative clause (p. 361)
- the placement of a preposition of place at the end of a relative clause (p. 365), and situations when this is not possible (p. 366)

Finally, like Murray, Jespersen briefly discusses what are now known as 'cleft sentences' (e.g. 'It is the wife that decides.' (p. 358)) as part of his analysis. Jespersen's commentary revolves around the fact that the relative clause in such structures does not restrict the noun phrase (e.g. the wife), but the word *it*. However, as with Murray's coverage, perhaps the more interesting point is that he refers to these structures simply as 'sentences that are introduced with *it*' (p. 358), suggesting that the structure at this point still had not been identified as a 'grammar point' in the way that it is in modern pedagogical treatments.

#### 8.3.4 *A Grammar of Spoken English* (Palmer, 1924/1955)

Palmer's treatment divides relative clauses into two types (p. 211), seemingly reflecting contemporary coverage but with different terminology:

- determinative use (equivalent to 'defining relative clauses')
- parenthetical use (equivalent to 'non-defining relative clauses')

A peculiarity of Palmer's treatment, however, is that he uses brackets, rather than commas, in his examples of 'parenthetical use', for example in the following two sentences:

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<sup>57</sup> Jespersen gives as an example an article in the *Spectator* magazine which 'complains of the injury done recently to the two pronouns *who* and *which* by the "Jacksprat" *that*'.

<sup>58</sup> In many modern style guides, yet another position is taken: the use of *that* is described as mandatory in defining clauses, with *who* and *which* used only in non-defining clauses. This goes back at least to Fowler's (1926) *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, in which this exact advice is given (p. 685).

The letter wasn't important, but the parcel (which came this morning) was very important.

The school (where I used to teach) is just over there. (p. 211)

There is no suggestion within the text that Palmer is suggesting the use of brackets as the correct punctuation with non-defining clauses; however, he does not mention the use of commas at any point. The effect of the choice of punctuation, and also the somewhat ambiguous nature of the examples, is such that it is not entirely clear whether Palmer's 'parenthetical use' does in fact equate to the modern 'non-defining relative clause'.<sup>59</sup>

Palmer identifies three types of 'relative connectives': relative pronouns (*that, who, which*), the 'relative determinative *whose*', and relative adverbs (*when, where, why, as*). Palmer notes that *that* is the most common of the relative pronouns, but claims that the use of *who* or *which* 'gives greater precision' and is also 'considered more elegant, especially when referring to persons' (p. 212). No explanation is given as to why *who* and *that* are more precise or are considered more elegant, but this comment appears to reflect a common belief in the superiority of *which* and *who* over *that*, as can be seen in part in Jespersen's own commentary, discussed above. Palmer also briefly describes the use of *whom* in 'literary English or in ceremonious speech' (p. 212), and notes that 'relatives standing for Direct Objects are usually omitted' (p. 211).

Curiously, and adding to the confusion outlined above about what exactly Palmer's 'parenthetical use' refers to, there is no note to explain that the pronoun *that* is not used in non-defining clauses – something that would be unthinkable in a modern pedagogical grammar.

#### 8.3.5 *Living English Structure* (Allen, 1947/1959)

Allen's coverage of relative clauses aligns more or less with contemporary pedagogical accounts. He states from the start that the best way to approach the 'apparently haphazard system of relatives' is by dividing them 'in their two main groups of defining and non-defining relatives' (p. 222), arguing that defining

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<sup>59</sup> A complication here is that all the examples given in Palmer's grammar are in phonemic script only; however, in other cases he does use standard punctuation within these transcriptions, including commas, so this seems to be unlikely as an explanation for the ambiguity.

relatives should be taught first as they constitute ‘by far the greater number of relatives in general use’. Allen’s explanation of the difference between the two types of clause is familiar to contemporary eyes: a defining clause ‘cannot be omitted, since without it we cannot define [the noun it refers to]’ (p. 223); in contrast, a non-defining clause ‘can be left out without any material damage to the sense’ (p. 227). He also notes the use of the comma, or, in speech, a pause before a non-defining clause (p. 227).

Allen’s treatment extends Palmer’s by separating out non-defining relative clauses into those that appear mid-sentence and those that appear at the end of the sentence or clause. Allen calls these ‘parenthetical’ and ‘connective’ clauses respectively, giving the following examples:

**parenthetic:** My wife, who lives in New York, has just written me a letter.

**connective:** He has two sisters, who work in the Ministry.

The coverage explains that non-defining relative clauses are quite frequent in writing (p. 227), but that ‘the non-defining relative is not heard in spoken English, except as a connective’ (p. 233), adding that the idea of parenthetical and supplementary remarks ‘is achieved by simple conjunctions [...] or by various speech devices for introducing parentheses and asides [...]’. When giving a further example of a parenthetical non-defining clause, Allen states clearly that ‘the above sentence would never occur in spoken English, but is quite a normal written English construction’. This analysis shows greater insight than that found in the coursebook consensus discussed in Chapter 6, which, as we saw, overrepresents mid-position non-defining clauses at the expense of sentence final clauses.

There are some peculiarities, however, in how Allen deals with relative pronouns and relative clauses with prepositions. He presents his system in a format somewhat reminiscent of classical grammars (p. 222–3):

A. *Defining Relative.*

		<i>People</i>	<i>Things</i>
Subject	. .	who, [that]	that, [which]
Object	. .	(that)	(that)
Preposition	. .	(that) ... preposition	(that) ... preposition
Possessive	. .	whose	of which [whose]

B. *Non-defining Relative.*

Subject	.	.	..., who ...,	..., which ...,
Object	.	.	..., whom ...,	..., which ...,
Preposition	.	.	..., preposition + whom ...,	..., preposition + which ...,
			[..., who(m) ... preposition],	[..., which ... preposition],
Possessive	.	.	..., whose ...,	..., of which ..., [..., whose] ...,

The pronouns in parentheses are those that can be omitted; those in square brackets are ‘acceptable alternatives’ which Allen says are ‘*not* recommended for active teaching’ (p. 222).

Allen’s system is at times puzzling as it is not clear what leads him to recommend some forms but not others. He states that ‘custom prefers *who* in the subject for persons’ (p. 223), but does not explain why the use of *which* to refer to things as the subject of a relative clause is acceptable, but should not be taught. Similarly, he proscribes clause-final prepositions in non-defining clauses, but not in defining clauses, without giving a reason. The most plausible explanation seems to be that Allen was simply trying to present a simple, streamlined system, albeit one that does not tell the whole story. In other parts of his analysis, there appears to be a certain amount of unfounded prescriptivism: Allen’s analysis does not recognise at all the use of *which* as object in defining clauses, *who* as object in non-defining clauses, the use of *whom* in defining relative clauses (he states, without evidence, that *whom* belongs exclusively to the non-defining relative p. 228), or the use of prepositions before relative pronouns in defining relative clauses.

Allen’s treatment is very detailed, and contains a number of additional points, including the following:

- ‘double control’ (pointing out the ‘error’ in ‘The book of which you spoke and recommended to me’, which, according to Allen, should be rendered as ‘The book you spoke of and recommended to me’ (p. 238))
- a warning not to move the adverb away from the verb in ‘inseparable adverbial phrases’ (he argues that ‘we cannot say’ ‘The courage he faced his enemies with’, as the word *with* is inseparable from the verb *faced*.) (p. 240)
- the use of *that* as a ‘short cut’ in ‘clauses of relative type’ (p. 239), as follows:

- ‘ellipse’ (e.g. ‘He did it in the way (that) [= in which] I should have done it myself.’)
- to indicate time (e.g. ‘by the time (that) you have finished’) and place (e.g. ‘I’ll go anywhere (that) you want me to.’)
- in forms with introductory *it*, without using the name ‘cleft sentence’ or identifying the structure as a ‘standalone’ grammar point
- the use of relative *as* after *as*, *same*, *such*, and *so*
- the partitive use of *of* (e.g. *I have two friends, both of whom are on holiday at the moment.*) (p. 240)
- ‘double relatives’ (p. 238), equivalent to Jespersen’s ‘double restriction’
- the need to use *that* (not *who* or *which*), or to omit the pronoun entirely, when it is predicative (e.g. *She’s not the woman she was before she married.*) (ibid.)
- the invariable use of *that*, rather than *who* or *which*, before *there is* (ibid.)
- the use of *that*, rather than *who* or *which*, after *all* (ibid.)
- the explanation that *wh*- pronouns were originally only used in interrogative clauses, and only later started to be used in relative clauses<sup>60</sup> (p. 236)

It is noteworthy that the final eight points in the above list are also discussed in Jespersen’s *Essentials of English Grammar*. In fact, not only are many details shared by both books, but there are even some strikingly similar example phrases and sentences; for example, Jespersen offers, ‘It was all he could do to keep from screaming’ (1933, p. 361) as an example of a contact clause, while Allen has ‘It was all (that) I could do to keep myself from laughing’ (1947/1959, p. 238) in his own title.

#### 8.3.6 *A Practical English Grammar* (Thomson and Martinet, 1960/1969)

Thomson and Martinet’s treatment feels a step closer to modern accounts, while still retaining some aspects of the older descriptions outlined above. It is perhaps significant that the title of the chapter is ‘relative pronouns’ rather than ‘relative clauses’, suggesting a focus on item rather than pattern. Despite this, the authors actually begin with a definition of defining relative clauses – a focus on overall meaning – before discussing relative pronouns. The definition characterises defining relative clauses as those which ‘describe the preceding noun in such a way as to distinguish it from other nouns of the same class’, a somewhat opaque

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<sup>60</sup> Like Jespersen, Allen refers to Dr Jonson’s assertion that connective relatives are a cultural barbarism and mentions the same article as Jespersen that called *that* a ‘Jacksprat’.

definition which is, however, arguably improved by the sentence that follows, ‘A clause of this kind is essential to the clear understanding of the noun’ (p. 31).

Thomson and Martinet set out the relative pronouns used in a similar style to Allen, focussing on case, and noting that ‘accusative’ pronouns are often omitted in defining relative clauses (p. 31):

[For defining relative clauses]

For persons:	Nominative:	<b>who that</b>
	Accusative:	<b>whom who that</b>
	Possessive:	<b>whose</b>
For things:	Nominative:	<b>which that</b>
	Accusative:	<b>which that</b>
	Possessive:	<b>whose of which</b>

(p. 31)

[For non-defining relative clauses]

	<i>Nominative</i>	<i>Accusative</i>	<i>Possessive</i>
<b>a</b> for persons:	<b>who</b>	<b>whom, who</b>	<b>whose</b>
<b>b</b> for things:	<b>which</b>	<b>which</b>	<b>of which, whose</b>

(p. 34)

While the manner of presentation is similar to Allen’s, there are some significant departures. Firstly, the idea of ‘not actively teaching’ nominative *that* and *which* for people and things respectively is not mentioned; furthermore, both ‘accusative’ (to use Thomson and Martinet’s choice of terminology) *who* and *whom* are included for people, as is ‘accusative’ *which* for things. Finally, the use of *whose* as a possessive form for things is also included. In a further innovation from the previously discussed materials, *what* is identified as a relative pronoun (described as meaning ‘the thing that/the things that & c’ (p. 33)). These differences seem to suggest a move away from the somewhat prescriptive ‘straightjacket’ of Allen’s system.

Thomson and Martinet’s analysis does, however, contain its own prescriptive elements. Learners are told that, as far as the choice between *who*, *whom* or *that* is concerned, *whom* is the ‘technically correct accusative form’, even though this ‘is considered very formal and seldom used in spoken English’ (p. 51). Similarly, it is also argued that ‘in technically correct English the preposition is placed before the relative pronoun’, with *whom* used instead of *who*, even though ‘in informal speech

[...] it is more usual to move the preposition to the end of the clause.’ In both cases it is the form associated with a formal, written register that is considered ‘technically correct’, with other forms presented as deviations from this. This is particularly clear in the description of the structure of relative clauses with prepositions, where the authors state that in informal speech, ‘it is more usual to *move* the preposition to the end of the clause’ (p. 32, emphasis added), suggesting a default position, which is then modified in spoken language.

As with the previously examined titles, Thomson and Martinet also make reference to the structure ‘*it is/was* + noun/pronoun + relative clause’ (p. 34). The structure still does not have a name, but Thomson and Martinet do offer a clear explanation of use, stating that it is used ‘when there has been some query or misapprehension about the subject of an action’ (p. 34). This is arguably clearer than many modern explanations that talk simply of *emphasising* the subject<sup>61</sup>.

Thomson and Martinet’s primary focus when discussing non-defining relative clauses is on those in mid-position, noting that ‘this construction is fairly formal and more common in written than in spoken English’ (p. 34). However, the examples given often contain topics or seem related to contexts far more likely to be found in spoken English<sup>62</sup>. This is compounded by the statement that ‘a preposition is normally placed before the relative, **whom**, *though it is possible in conversation* to use *who(m)* and *move the preposition to the end of the clause*’ (p. 35, emphasis added), repeating the now familiar idea that spoken language is some kind of modification of written standards, and also suggesting that non-defining clauses of this type are actually used in spoken language after all.

At the end of the section, Thomson and Martinet also cover, using approximately the same terminology as Allen, ‘the connective relatives’ *who* and *which* – in other words, sentence-final non-defining relative clauses – noting that ‘which’ can refer back to the whole clause rather than just a single noun phrase in it (p. 36). To finish, there is an emphatic reminder of ‘the importance of commas in [non-defining]

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<sup>61</sup> For example, *Headway Advanced* simply says, about the use of cleft sentences, that with them ‘[w]e can emphasize different parts of the sentence according to which element is the most important’ (p. 150).

<sup>62</sup> For example, the word *this* in ‘This sherry, which I paid 25/- for, is awful’ (p. 35) seems to imply the immediacy of spoken interaction, not written prose.

relative clauses'. This forms an interesting contrast to Jespersen's observation, only half a century earlier, that the comma is 'often' used in this context.

### 8.3.7 *Essential English* (Eckersley, 1938/1967, 1940/1967, 1941/1967, 1942/1967)

Eckersley covers relative clauses as part of a more general focus on subordinate clauses; he refers to them as 'adjective clauses', and they are covered in Book 3 (of four), as illustrated in Table 8.9.

<b><i>Essential English: relative clauses</i></b>				
	<b><i>Book 1</i></b>	<b><i>Book 2</i></b>	<b><i>Book 3</i></b>	<b><i>Book 4</i></b>
<b>Defining</b>	–	–	No distinction between defining and non-defining clauses.	–
<b>Non-defining</b>	–	–		–
<b>Pronouns</b>	–	–	Use of <i>which</i> , <i>who</i> , <i>that</i> and <i>whom</i> . Use of <i>as</i> as a relative pronoun after 'the same'. Omission of relative pronoun.	–
<b>Other</b>	–	–	Advice to keep relative pronoun as close as possible to antecedent.	–

Table 8.9: Relative clauses in *Essential English*

With the exception of a single practice exercise, they are not found in Book 4. The section in Book 3 contains only defining relative clauses, although one example – 'Joe Marsden who looks after Lucille's car is a very good mechanic' (p. 56) – appears to be a non-defining clause. The lack of commas suggests that either Eckersley did not consider them essential in non-defining clauses, or that he did not make a distinction at all between defining and non-defining clauses.

Eckersley states that a relative pronoun may be omitted 'if it is in the objective case' (p. 57), with the reference to case in line with the early pedagogical grammars examined, and also suggesting a focus on individual words rather than the overall structure of the relative clause; as we have seen, contemporary explanations explain this phenomenon in terms of the pronoun being omitted if it is the *object of the relative clause*. Also present, in large, bold type, is the 'general rule' to 'Put the relative pronoun as near as possible to its antecedent' (p. 57); this rule, which would not seem out of place in a style guide or traditional school grammar, repeats Murray's own advice (p. 266) but is not typically included in modern pedagogical treatments.

8.3.8 *Oxford Progressive English* (Hornby, 1954b, 1955, 1956)

Hornby covers relative clauses in Books 1 and 2, as shown in Table 8.10. In Book 1, only defining clauses are covered. Hornby's treatment seems to be in part based on Allen's account, or at least to share a common source: like Allen, Hornby presents *that* as a the 'default' relative pronoun as subject for 'things' and 'animals', with *which* given in brackets, and *who* is suggested as the default for 'persons', with *that* given in brackets (p. 102). Similarly, *that* is presented as the default in all cases (things, animals, persons) when the relative pronoun is the object; unlike Allen, Hornby gives *whom* and *which* as alternatives in such cases, whereas these are completely ignored by Allen in this context.

<b><i>Progressive English: relative clauses</i></b>			
	<b><i>Book 1</i></b>	<b><i>Book 2</i></b>	<b><i>Book 3</i></b>
<b>Defining</b>	Yes	Yes	–
<b>Non-defining</b>	–	Yes	–
<b>Pronouns</b>	<i>that, which, who, whom, whose, where</i>	Use (and omission) of <i>that, which, who, whom, whose and where</i>	–
<b>Other</b>		–	–

Table 8.10: Relative clauses in *Oxford Progressive English*

In discussing the use of relative clauses with prepositions, Hornby follows Allen in suggesting the use of *that* with the preposition placed in a clause-final position (e.g. 'This is the hotel (that) I stayed in. '; 'The man (that) I lent my dictionary to hasn't brought it back.'). However, he also gives 'preposition + *which*' and 'preposition + *whom*' as alternatives, which Allen's system only allows in non-defining clauses. Hornby always places the relative pronoun in brackets when the use of the zero pronoun is possible, but does not explain this.

In *Book 2*, there is a detailed explanation of both defining and non-defining clauses; the exposition runs to four pages, making it one of the longest grammar sections in the book, and suggesting that Hornby considered it an important area of study at the level. The style is very much in line with pedagogical grammars, and the content

matches Allen’s descriptions quite closely<sup>63</sup>. However, as in *Book 1* there are some differences from Allen’s system: *which* is given, in brackets, as an option for prepositional object for things in defining clauses (Allen only allows *that*), and *whom* is suggested for the prepositional object for people (again, Allen only allows *that*).

### 8.3.9 *English Grammatical Structure* (Alexander et al., 1975)

As can be seen in Table 8.11, *English Grammatical Structure* covers relative clauses at Levels 3, 4 and 5 (of 6). Defining relative clauses are taught first, at Levels 3 and 4, with non-defining relative clauses left to Level 5.

<b>English Grammatical Structure: relative clauses</b>					
	<b>Level 1/ Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Level 5</b>	<b>Level 6</b>
<b>Defining</b>	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	–
<b>Non-defining</b>	–	–	–	Yes, including those that ‘refer to the whole previous clause’	–
<b>Pronouns</b>	–	<i>that, which, who(m); ‘zero’</i>	<i>that, which, ‘zero’, who(m); whose, when, where, why</i>	as previous levels	–
<b>Other</b>	–	clause-final prepositions	<i>the way in which;</i> prepositions before relative pronouns (with note on register); <i>all that</i>	quantifier + <i>of</i> + relative pronoun	–

Table 8.11: Relative clauses in *English Grammatical Structure*

The authors appear to largely abandon the pronoun systems adopted in Allen and in Thomson and Martinet. At Level 3 of *English Grammatical Structure*, the relative pronouns *who*, *that* and *which* are presented as being equally possible as both the subject and object in defining relative clauses. The ‘zero pronoun’ (i.e. no pronoun) is presented as the default as the object, with *who*, *whom* or *that* presented as alternatives. Clause-final prepositions are also presented. Level 4 extends the

<sup>63</sup> For example, in defining relative clauses, *that* is suggested as the primary pronoun to be used for things, with *which* given in brackets, and *who* is suggested as the pronoun to be used for people, with *that* given in brackets. In non-defining clauses, *whom* (not *who*) is the only option given for people. Furthermore, while an example of a clause-final preposition in a defining relative clause is given without comment, reflecting Allen’s scheme, the equivalent structure in a non-defining clause is described as being ‘in informal style’, possibly due to Allen’s decision to put this in square brackets (meaning ‘not recommended for active teaching’).

coverage, including defining relative clauses with the relative pronouns *whose*, *whom* and *which* and, subsequently, *(the time) when*, *(the place) where*, *(the reason) why*, and *(the way in) which*. The pronoun *whom* is noted to be ‘more appropriate in formal talk or writing’ (p. 140), as is the use of a preposition before *whom*. Finally, like Jespersen and Allen, the authors state that the pronoun *that*, rather than *which*, should be used after *all*.

Level 5 recapitulates the previous coverage, adding non-defining relative clauses (p. 168). It is noted that in non-defining clauses, the use of a relative pronoun is obligatory, and there are examples of comment clauses; Alexander et al do not name them, but simply note that they ‘refer to the whole previous clause’. Finally, examples of quantifiers + *of* + relative pronoun combinations are given (for example, *both of which*, *all of whom*, *neither of which* etc.).

Overall, *English Grammatical Structure* appears to represent a departure from the approach in Eckersley and Hornby, in splitting the coverage across levels, in particular dealing with defining and non-defining clauses at different levels, and dividing relative pronouns and adverbs into groups, each dealt with separately. As we saw in Chapter 6, this is an approach that endures in the current consensus.

### 8.3.10 Late 20th century coursebooks

There are a number of similarities in the coverage in *Streamline*, *Strategies* and *The New Cambridge English Course*, as can be seen in Tables 8.12–14.

<b><i>Strategies: relative clauses (1977–1982)</i></b>				
	<b><i>Starting</i></b>	<b><i>Building</i></b>	<b><i>Developing</i></b>	<b><i>Studying</i></b>
<b>Defining</b>	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Non-defining</b>	–	–	–	Yes
<b>Pronouns</b>	–	<i>who</i> and <i>which</i>	<i>who, whose, where</i>	<i>who, which, that, whose, where</i>
<b>Other</b>				

Table 8.12: Relative clauses in *Strategies*

<b>Streamline: relative clauses (1978–1985)</b>				
	<b>Departures</b>	<b>Connections</b>	<b>Destinations</b>	<b>Directions</b>
<b>Defining</b>	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Non-defining</b>	–	–	Yes	Yes (included in exercises)
<b>Pronouns</b>	–	<i>that</i> , omission of relative pronoun	<i>who, which, that where, whose, whom</i>	<i>where, whom, which, when, who</i>
<b>Other</b>	–	–	use of <i>with</i> and <i>-ing</i> instead of relative clause	preposition + <i>whom/which; of which, of whom three, many of whom</i>

Table 8.13: Relative clauses in *Streamline*

<b>The New Cambridge English Course: relative clauses (1990–1992)</b>				
	<b>Book 1</b>	<b>Book 2</b>	<b>Book 3</b>	<b>Book 4</b>
<b>Defining</b>	–	Yes	Yes	Yes (“identifying”)
<b>Non-defining</b>	–	–	–	Yes (“non-identifying”)
<b>Pronouns</b>	–	<i>that, who, where, zero</i>	<i>that, zero</i>	<i>zero, whose, who(m), which</i>
<b>Other</b>	–	end position of pronoun	end position of prepositions in relative clauses	reduced relative clauses

Table 8.14: Relative clauses in *The New Cambridge English Course*

Common to all three is the way that defining and non-defining clauses are split across levels, as is common practice in contemporary courses. All three ignore relative clauses at the lowest level, while teaching defining relative clauses at the second level. *Streamline* is the only series to teach non-defining clauses at the third level, but all three teach defining clauses again at that level; *Streamline* and *Strategies* also cover a larger number of relative pronouns. At the highest level, all three teach both defining and non-defining relative clauses.

The first edition of *Headway* covers relative clauses only at the highest two levels, as illustrated in Table 8.15. Learners at Upper-Intermediate are told that ‘we leave out relative pronouns whenever possible, especially in spoken English’ (p. 73). The endmatter coverage is interesting in that learners are told that *that* is not as common as *who*, and that *which* is not as common as *that*, when the subject of

defining relative clauses (p. 118); this is exactly in line with Allen’s advice from some thirty years earlier to not ‘actively teach’ these forms.

<b>Headway (first editions): relative clauses (1986–1995)</b>					
	<b>Beginner/ Elementary</b>	<b>Pre- intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Upper- Intermediate</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>Defining</b>	–	–	–	Yes	Yes
<b>Non- defining</b>	–	–	–	Yes (only in endmatter)	Yes
<b>Pronouns</b>	–	–	–	who, that, whom, which, whose, what, why, when, where, zero	–
<b>Other</b>	–	–	–	end position of prepositions	–

Table 8.15: Relative clauses in *Headway*

### 8.3.11 Discussion

Some of the same observations made about conditional forms can be applied to relative clauses. It is again possible to observe a shift in focus from item to pattern, with older grammars focussing mainly on the correct choice of relative pronoun, and almost completely ignoring different types of relative clause and their functions. This is perhaps epitomised in Murray’s treatment, which – as is often the case in his work – goes over a large range of very specific details on usage, such as the correct choice of relative pronoun when the antecedent is both a person and a thing, without any attempt to provide an overall account of relative clauses<sup>64</sup>.

Jespersen’s grammar shows a clear move towards an attempt to account for the relative clause as a whole, although the fact that he feels compelled to defend the use of *that* as a relative pronoun, criticising those who erroneously claim that it is in some way ‘taking over’ from *what* and *who*, is perhaps illustrative of the influence that older, prescriptive accounts and views still held. The twentieth century pedagogical grammars progressively take a more balanced approach, focussing both on the relative clause as a whole and also on choice of pronoun. At times, preference for written standards or older prescriptive attitudes still emerge, however, for

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<sup>64</sup> This should not necessarily be taken as a criticism. As we have said, Murray makes it clear that his role as a grammarian is to set out rules in such ‘dubious’ cases.

example Thomson and Martinet's statement that the 'technically correct' position of a preposition in a relative clause is before the relative pronoun, or Palmer's claim that the relative pronouns *who* and *which* offer 'greater precision'<sup>65</sup>. In general, though, the prescriptive style found in older treatments gradually disappears. As in all three case studies discussed in this chapter, it is at times possible to see direct influence between titles in terms of wording or examples, for instance in the example sentences given by Jespersen and Allen of contact clauses, discussed above. Furthermore, *English Grammatical Structure* appears to have been a key title in defining how coverage of relative clauses can be spread over levels, influencing later titles (see also the characterisations by many informants reported in Chapter 7 of it being a highly influential title).

The gradual evolution towards current treatments has involved the adoption of a binary distinction between defining and non-defining relative clauses as the key categories in analysis, despite the fact that historically different divisions were made. One of the key features of non-defining clauses – the use of commas – does not seem to have been universally accepted or seen as important. Allen's description of the system of relative clauses in English as 'apparently haphazard' (1947/1959, p. 222) seems to sum up the inconsistencies in grammars of the early twentieth century; however, immediately after this description he says that relative clauses are 'best approached by teaching them from the beginning in their two main groups of *defining* and *non-defining* relatives' (ibid.), perhaps also signalling the beginning of a new approach, which has endured. Subsequent pedagogical grammars express little or no doubt about how relative clauses should be categorised or analysed; the grammar is fixed.

#### 8.4 Case study C: future forms

##### 8.4.1 *English Grammar* (Jonson, 1640/1909)

Jonson uses the term 'times' to refer to tense (p. 91), identifying three times possible with English finite verbs: present, past and future. He states that '[t]he futures are

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<sup>65</sup> Indeed, claims – apparently without foundation – that the pronoun *that* is less commonly used than *who* and *which* appear in the contemporary coursebook series *face2face* and *Cutting Edge*

declared by the *infinitive*, and the *verb shall*, or *will*' (p. 132), and also (p. 133) gives examples of the future perfect, which he does not name<sup>66</sup>, but explains as 'taking the nature of two divers[e] times; that is, of the *future* and the *time past*.'

#### 8.4.2 *English Grammar* (Murray, 1795/1823)

Murray, like Jonson, identifies (p. 75) two futures, which he calls the 'first future' and the 'second future', as follows:

- first future: *The sun will rise to-morrow.*
- second future: *I shall have dined at one o'clock.*

Murray also briefly mentions *going to*; in discussing an account in the Encyclopaedia Britannica which identifies twelve English tenses, Murray states that he disagrees with the account's description of 'going to' as an 'inceptive present', saying that 'nothing can be more obvious, than [...] "I am going to write," is a future tense'. However, he does not discuss its use in any more detail.

#### 8.4.3 *Essentials of English Grammar* (Jespersen, 1933)

Jespersen makes a clear distinction between tense and time, describing the former as universal and independent of language, and the latter as language dependent and often associated with meanings beyond time, for example person and mood (p. 230). In the chapter on tense, Jespersen only mentions the future briefly, noting, like Jonson, that the present tense is sometimes used to refer to future time, 'chiefly when something is settled as part of a programme or agreement' (p. 239). Perhaps surprisingly, the use of the present continuous with future reference is not mentioned, although Jespersen does give one example of it, alongside example sentences with *will* + infinitive and *will* + 'the expanded infinitive' (the 'future continuous', in modern ELT terminology), claiming the following differences in meaning:

- 'people will come' speaks only vaguely of the future
- 'people are coming' speaks of the immediate future
- 'people will be coming' refers to the coming as near, though not exactly immediate (p. 267)

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<sup>66</sup> As he does elsewhere, instead of name, Jonson simply gives what he considers the equivalent Latin form – in this case *amavero*.

A whole chapter is devoted, however, to *will* and *shall*. Of principle interest is the discussion of *will*, which Jespersen identifies as ‘primarily’ (p. 271) denoting volition, but also used for:

- the ‘pure future’ (e.g. ‘Look out, or you will be run over.’ (p. 273))
- a ‘volition-coloured future’ (e.g. ‘I will never again taste a drop of spirit.’ (p. 272)), equivalent to the ‘promises’ typically identified in ELT accounts
- ‘requests and invitations’ (e.g. ‘Will you come for a walk this afternoon?’ (p. 273))
- ‘a mere supposition’ (e.g. ‘This, I think, will be the key.’ (p. 275)), equivalent to the ‘predictions’ typically identified in ELT accounts

Murray’s ‘second future’ for Jespersen is covered in a brief note, in which he states that ‘*will* with the perfect infinitive’ expresses the ‘before-future’ (p. 275). In this section, Jespersen also states that the use of *going to* is ‘growing’, in ‘the desire for clearness’, given that *will* can be used to express both futurity and volition (p. 281).

#### 8.4.4 *A Grammar of Spoken English* (Palmer, 1924/1955)

Palmer’s detailed account of English tenses recognises four finite tenses: the present, the preterite, the future and the future preterite (pp. 146–148). In his discussion of the future and future preterite, he identifies thirteen different structures (although he does not state this number explicitly). This account will focus on what he presents as the ‘future tense’ – structures involving *will* and *shall* – in addition to some other forms, such as present continuous and *going to*, which Palmer also discusses. Palmer’s ‘future preterite’ is not equivalent to anything that would be considered a ‘future tense’ or ‘future form’ in modern ELT accounts and is not included in the analysis<sup>67</sup>.

The future tense, for Palmer, is ‘used to express actions about to take place or associated with an adverbial of future time’ (p. 147). All examples given contain either *will* or *shall*; there is no suggestion that these two modal verbs are among a

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<sup>67</sup> Palmer identifies three uses of the ‘future preterite’, which appears to constitute simply a subset of uses of the modal *should*: i) ‘to express an action future in relation to the past, such as in reported speech’ (e.g. ‘(Yesterday) I said I **should** come tomorrow.’ (p. 147)); ‘to express a present or future condition or supposition’ (e.g. ‘If I were free, I **should** go with him.’ (p. 148)); ‘(in a few cases) to express inclination or disinclination (e.g. ‘I **should** like to see it (if I could)’; ‘I shouldn’t care to accept it (if anybody offered it to me).’ (p. 148)).

number of options for talking about the future; they are simply presented as the 'default' way of talking about the future. Palmer (p. 279) makes a number of observations on their use, particularly on the difference between *shall* and *will* in different persons, many of which seem to reflect patterns of usage that do not hold today<sup>68</sup>.

Palmer also discusses the use of the future perfect and future continuous. The former is used for 'an action already completed before a moment or period expressed by an adverbial or future time' (e.g. 'I shall have finished my letter by the time you come back.') (p. 150). The latter is used 'a) to express an action begun before and concluding after a given moment in the future'; 'b) when speaking of a future action which will happen in the ordinary course of events, or which is already decided upon or anticipated' (e.g. 'I needn't write to him tonight, because I shall be seeing him tomorrow.') (p. 154–155). The phrase 'the ordinary course of events', or variants of it, is one that has been used again and again to describe this structure and endures, as we saw in Chapter 6, in contemporary coursebook accounts. Finally, Palmer also covers the future perfect progressive, which he describes as 'an action ... or a state commencing before and continuing up to (and possibly beyond) the future moment or period with which it is associated' (p. 282).

In addition to structures based around *will* and *shall*, Palmer discusses the use of:

- *going to* for 'an action ... or a state associated with future time and implying a decision or an arrangement<sup>69</sup> made (or an intention already formed)', stating that the verbs *come* and *go* are 'generally excluded' from this structure (p. 280);
- present continuous, which Palmer notes 'is sometimes used as a future tense, more especially with such verbs as *go, come, stay*' (p. 154);
- *just + going to* and *just + present continuous* for actions 'in the immediate future' (e.g. 'He's just going to speak.'; 'I'm just coming.');
- the present simple to refer to the future in the case of a 'formal programme of movements or events' (p. 281);

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<sup>68</sup> For example, Palmer states (p. 279) that the only situation where we would use 'Will I' (rather than 'Shall I') is in the sentence, 'Will I do?' – meaning 'Am I suitable?'. However, the British National Corpus contains 544 incidences of 'Will I do', with only six of those seeming to be examples of the usage given by Palmer, and of which all six are from the fiction sub-corpus.

<sup>69</sup> The use of the word 'arrangement' shows a contrast with many modern treatments of future forms, as it is typically the present continuous that is described as being used for talking about arrangements.

What is perhaps most different in Palmer's account compared to more contemporary ELT treatments of the future is that he offers little or no advice on when to choose one structure over another; the main focus is on *will* and *shall*, and future and continuous forms combined with these, but little is given to help a learner know when to choose one or the other or, more importantly, when the present continuous or *going to* might be preferred. For example, it is unclear how useful Palmer's statement that the present continuous 'is sometimes used as a future tense' would be for a learner. This perhaps reflects Williams (1994) contrast, discussed in Chapter 2, between 'constitutive' grammar rules and 'communicative' grammar rules; Palmer provides the first here, setting out the formal structure, but does not provide the 'communicative' rules on how to choose one over the other.

#### 8.4.5 *Living English Structure* (Allen, 1947/1959)

Allen moves on somewhat from more traditional accounts and seems highly aware of the state of flux (Denis and Tagliamonte, 2018) of the future system in English. In Allen's 'preliminary note on the future tense', the problem of choosing between tenses is described as 'a very vexing one' (p. 117): he states that the traditional rules for *will* and *shall* are 'already antiquated', with 'even "will I?" and "will we" [...] frequently heard in English-speaking districts outside England' (p. 117), and describes *going to* as 'increasingly popular' (an affirmation confirmed by modern studies; see, for example, Leech *et al.* (2009, p. 99)) but states that it sometimes sounds 'out of place'. Nevertheless, at the end of the preliminary note he gives two 'golden rules' which appear to hark back to the older descriptions, in which *will* (and *shall*) are generally treated as the default future form:

1. Beware of the innocent-looking "going to" form.
2. When in doubt use "WILL." (p. 117)

Allen's explanations revolve partly around the question of which forms should be considered 'pure future'. He calls *will* and *shall* the 'normal pure (or colourless) future', stating that they are used for future actions that 'depend upon some external factors' (p. 119), and 'not on any person's will or intention' (p. 121). The exception to this is their use in the first person, when *will* 'colours the future with the speaker's intention or promise' (p. 121). These explanations are broadly in line with those in contemporary ELT materials, although the word 'intention' is now typically used to

describe the use of *going to*. In contrast, *shall* is said to ‘colour’ the future with ‘promise, compulsion or (in negative) restraint’ (p. 130), seemingly reflecting usage of the period.<sup>70</sup> Allen also covers the use of *will* to make requests, for example ‘Will you put on another play soon?’ (p. 128), which is said to mean ‘Please do so’. Compared to modern accounts, perhaps the biggest difference is the lack of reference to the use of *will* to make predictions in Allen’s explanations.

The ‘fundamental meaning’, of *going to* for Allen, is, with people, ‘intention and certainty’ (e.g. ‘He’s going to give me a new one tomorrow.’), and with things, ‘probability and inevitability *in the mind of the speaker*’ (e.g. ‘Look out! The tram’s going to overturn!’) (p. 124). These two descriptions appear to be in line with modern treatments, with the latter equivalent to ‘predictions with present evidence’. Allen also mentions the present continuous, describing it as a ‘definite’ future, but without specifying what a ‘definite’ future actually is, and stating that its time is ‘fairly immediate’ (p. 126).

The future continuous, in its ‘simplest form’, is said to be used in the same way as other continuous forms (p. 126) – in other words, to describe an action in progress at a particular moment in time in the future (e.g. ‘When I get back, they’ll be having supper.’). However, Allen also contrasts the future continuous with the present continuous, saying that, like the present continuous, it is ‘definite’, but refers to the ‘not-so-immediate future’ (p. 127). He gives the following two sentences as examples of this apparent difference:

He’s playing a violin solo next.

He’ll be playing a violin solo later. (p. 127)

The future continuous is also contrasted with both *going to* and *will*. In the comparison with *going to*, Allen states that *going to* shows ‘the present intentions of the actors’, compared to the future continuous, which ‘tells of the *results* of the intention, but by-passes the intention itself’ (p. 128). In the contrast with *will*, the following distinction is made:

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<sup>70</sup> Allen gives the following three examples of *shall* being used for restraint and promise: ‘You shan’t leave till you promise to come again’; ‘You shall have it back tomorrow’; ‘He shall never come here again’. (p. 130)

Will you come again tomorrow? (invitation)

Will you be coming again tomorrow? (in the ordinary course of events) (p. 134)

Finally, Allen states that the future perfect is ‘very seldom heard’ and is similar to the present perfect: ‘the Future Perfect bears the same relation to a *future moment* as the Present Perfect bears to the *present moment*’ (p. 139). In a separate focus, Allen describes an alternative use of the future perfect – the ‘future of assumption’ (e.g. ‘You’ll have noticed from my lecture how complicated this subject really is.’ (p. 144)). This use does not appear in the contemporary coursebooks, as McCarthy’s (2015) notes. However, it is not strictly a ‘future form’, as defined here.

#### 8.4.6 *A Practical English Grammar* (Thomson and Martinet, 1960/1969)

Thompson and Martinet state from the outset of their chapter on ‘The Future’ that ‘the future tense in English is **shall/will**’ (p. 118). However, they also immediately state that ‘this tense is not used nearly so often as students naturally expect’, and consequently choose to deal with other future forms before looking at *will* and *shall*.

Their coverage starts with the use of the present simple, ‘for a planned future action or a series of actions, particularly when these concern a journey.’ (p. 118), but the authors state that this is ‘not a very important use of the tense’. Like Allen, they describe the present continuous as being used for a ‘definite future arrangement ... in the immediate future’ (p. 118), stating that it ‘conveys little or no idea of intention’ (p. 119). The *going to* future is then said to a) show the speaker’s ‘intention to perform a certain future action ... the intention is always premeditated’, and b) to ‘express the speaker’s feeling of certainty’. Like Palmer, Thomson and Martinet state that ‘it is not very usual to put the verbs **go** and **come** into the **going to** form’.

When discussing *will* and *shall*, Thomson and Martinet state that *shall* is the ‘grammatically correct form’ in the first person, without explaining what exactly they mean by ‘grammatically correct’. They do, however, note that ‘many people avoid **shall** except in the interrogative’, and that – almost in the exact words of Allen – learners ‘should therefore use **will** when in doubt’ (p. 121). The following uses of the ‘future tense’ (i.e. *will* and *shall*) are identified (p. 201–202):

- to express ‘opinions, assumptions, speculations about the future’
- future habitual actions
- in conditional sentences

- with state verbs (verbs that are not normally used in the continuous) instead of the present continuous (e.g. 'He'll be here at six.'; 'They'll know tonight.')
- for 'formal announcements of future plans', where in spoken contexts *going to* or present continuous would be more likely
- to express intention

Martinet and Thomson then move on to the future continuous and future perfect. The former is said to be used to 'express a future without intention' in 'the near or distant future' (p. 126), or 'to express an action which continues for some time without definite limits [...] before the time mentioned and probably [...] after it' (p. 127). The future perfect is described as being used 'for an action which at a given future time will be in the past' (p. 127); Thomson and Martinet claim that 'it is always used with a time expression' (p. 128). In a separate section, they also note that *will*, including future perfect, can be used to introduce an assumption (p. 140).

Like Allen, Thomson and Martinet's chapter has a number of sections dealing with differences between future forms. This is a major difference between these two later grammars and, for example, Palmer's grammar, and seems to reflect a growing understanding of the need to provide 'communicative' grammar rules in addition to 'constitutive' rules. Thomson and Martinet's discussion is particularly detailed, covering the difference between *going to* and *will* (p. 123); the present continuous and the future continuous (the future continuous is said to be used for an action that – echoing the words of Palmer – 'will occur in the normal course of events' (p. 207)); and *will* and the future continuous (p. 207)<sup>71</sup>.

#### 8.4.7 *Essential English* (Eckersley, 1938/1967, 1940/1967, 1941/1967, 1942/1967)

Eckersley covers future forms in the first two levels of four ( 'future in the past' is covered in Book 3, and will not be discussed), as can be seen in Table 8.16. Level 1 covers *will/shall*, *going to* and present continuous. The main focus is on *will* and *shall*, which Eckersley calls the 'future tense'. The difference between *will* and *shall* is not discussed, with a note simply stating that in the first person 'we sometimes use "shall" and sometimes "will"' and a footnote explaining that this will be

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<sup>71</sup> Thomson and Martinet give a similar pair of sentences to Allen to show the difference between *will* and future continuous: Will you bring the piano in here? (polite request); Will you be bringing the piano in here? (question about a future action) (p. 127)

explained at the following level (p. 130). In addition, learners are told that ‘we sometimes express a future meaning using the present continuous, often with a word or phrase like *to-morrow, next week* etc.’ (p. 132). Learners subsequently also see *going to* – ‘another way of expressing the future’ (p. 144). The use of the three future forms covered is not contrasted in any way.

<b>Essential English: future forms</b>				
	<b>Book 1</b>	<b>Book 2</b>	<b>Book 3</b>	<b>Book 4</b>
<b>will (+ shall)</b>	Yes (the ‘future tense’)	Yes – <i>will + shall</i> with discussion of differences.	–	–
<b>going to</b>	Yes – ‘another way of expressing the future’	Yes – ‘intention’ and ‘strong probability’	–	–
<b>present continuous</b>	Yes	–	–	–
<b>future perfect</b>	–	Yes	–	–
<b>future continuous</b>	–	Yes	–	–
<b>other</b>	–	Future passive	Future in the past	–

Table 8.16: Future forms in *Essential English*

As promised, Eckersley attempts to explain the difference between *will* and *shall* at Level 2, noting differences between Scottish and English speakers, and among English speakers, on their use (pp. 82–84). It is stated that *shall* is the correct choice in the first person to talk about ‘simple futurity’, and that the choice of *will* instead of *shall* indicates making a promise, or showing willingness or determination, which appears to be analogous to Allen’s ‘coloured future’. For interrogatives in the first person, *shall* is said to be always used. For the second and third persons, the situation is reversed: the choice of *shall* over *will* is said to add the meaning of promise, determination, willingness or command (p. 85).

Level 2 also repeats *going to*, which is described as the ‘commonest and easiest way of expressing the future’ (p. 86). Eckersley states that it shows intention (p. 86) and strong probability (p. 87), but it cannot be used for simple futurity<sup>72</sup>. As an example

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<sup>72</sup> Eckersley says that the sentence, ‘I’m going to be 12 years old tomorrow.’ is not possible (p. 86). To this writer, the sentence appears possible, suggesting that Eckersley’s statement is now either outdated, or expresses unfounded prescriptivism.

of ‘strong probability’, Eckersley gives the sentence, ‘I think it’s going to rain’ (p. 87), but does not mention the idea of prediction with present evidence. Level 2 also contains explanations of the future continuous and the future perfect. The former is used, for Eckersley, for ‘an action still continuing in the future’ (p. 108); he does not cover the use of the present continuous to talk about ‘the usual course of events’ described by Allen and Palmer and in some contemporary coursebooks. The future perfect is described as being used for ‘something that will be past at or before a certain time in the future’ (p. 173).

Levels 3 and 4 do not contain further coverage of the future.

#### 8.4.8 *Oxford Progressive English* (Hornby, 1954b, 1955, 1956)

Hornby’s coverage of tenses is comparatively light, as can be seen in Table 8.17.

<b><i>Oxford Progressive English: future forms</i></b>			
	<b>Book 1</b>	<b>Book 2</b>	<b>Book 3</b>
<b>will (+ shall)</b>	Yes (‘pure future’ + promises, polite requests, offers of service, suggestions and obligation)	Yes (revision)	Yes (as part of future continuous focus)
<b>going to</b>	Yes	Yes (revision)	Yes (as part of future continuous focus)
<b>present continuous</b>	–	–	Yes (as part of future continuous focus)
<b>future perfect</b>	–	–	–
<b>future continuous</b>	–	–	Yes
<b>other</b>	–	–	–

Table 8.17: Future forms in *Oxford Progressive English*

At Level 1, he covers *will/shall*, which he calls the ‘pure future’, and *going to*. In the examples presented, *shall* is used in the first person, and *will* in the second and third person. A number of functions of *will/shall* are covered: promises, polite requests, offers of service (*Shall I ...?*), suggestions (*Shall we ...?*) and, in combination with *have to*, obligation (e.g. ‘Mr Kelly will have to change the wheel.’). These future forms are subsequently revised at the beginning of Level 2. Level 3 revises *going to*, and adds the future continuous and present continuous; from a modern perspective, it is a surprise to see the present continuous taught only at the highest level.

The treatment of the future forms at Level 3 is worth comment. The future progressive is taught as ‘a polite way of asking about the future’ (e.g. ‘Shall (or Will) you be staying here long?’ (p. 64)), rather than as being used to refer to an action in progress at a particular future time. In modern coursebooks, the focus is typically on the temporal reference of the future continuous, with its potential pragmatic use given, sometimes, as an additional detail. At this level, Hornby also makes a comparison between *will/shall*, present continuous, *going to* and future continuous. The comparison is similar to that offered by Allen, but with somewhat different interpretations (p. 64). In questions, *will/shall* and present continuous are said to be ‘simple inquiries’ (e.g. ‘Shall (or Will) you stay here long?’; ‘Are you staying here long?’ (p. 64)), in contrast to Allen, who states the *will* is used in this way for an invitation. By contrast, *going to* and future continuous are said to place ‘more emphasis on intention’ (p. 64), whereas in Allen’s descriptions, the future continuous ‘bypasses intention’. Finally, Hornby goes on to make a distinction between *going to* and future continuous that touches on the familiar idea of something happening ‘in the ordinary course of events’<sup>73</sup>.

The future perfect is not covered at all in *Oxford Progressive English*.

#### 8.4.9 *English Grammatical Structure* (Alexander *et al.*, 1975)

*English Grammatical Structure* is somewhat unusual in its coverage, in that future forms are covered at only three out of six levels, as shown in Table 8.18.

At Level 2, *will* is taught (for a ‘simple future reference’ (p. 48)), presumably analogous to the idea of ‘pure future’ in older grammars. The use of *will* as a feature of formal style is also covered (e.g. ‘The 12.15 train for Liverpool will leave from Platform Four.’ (p. 49)); *shall* is mentioned ‘as an optional replacement for *will* after

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<sup>73</sup> Hornby describes one use of the future continuous as suggesting ‘that, because of the intention, something else is possible or probable’, giving the following examples:

Are you going into town this afternoon? (A question about intention.)

Shall you be going into town this afternoon? (also a question about intention, but this question, if the answer is ‘Yes’, might be followed by something else, for example, ‘Then will you please go to the library and get me some books’.) (p. 64)

The latter part of the explanation seems close to Palmer’s and Allen’s interpretation: if the ‘going into town’ action is to happen in the normal course of events, then logically additional actions can be requested.

*I or we*’). Level 2 also includes the use of *going to* as a future showing intention and for making predictions with ‘present signs’; like Palmer, Alexander et al also include ‘just going to’, which is said to indicate ‘intention to do something in the immediate future’ (p. 48).

<b>English Grammatical Structure: future forms</b>						
	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Level 5</b>	<b>Level 6</b>
<b>will (+ shall)</b>	–	Yes, including <i>shall</i> .	–	–	Yes (immediate future)	–
<b>going to</b>	–	Yes (intentions and predictions)	–	–	Yes (predictions)	–
<b>present continuous</b>	–	–	–	–	Yes (present intention or plan)	–
<b>future perfect</b>	–	–	–	Yes	–	–
<b>future continuous</b>	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	–
<b>other</b>	–	–	–	future perfect continuous	present simple; <i>be to ...; be just about to</i> (immediate future)	–

Table 8.18: Future forms in *English Grammatical Structure*

Level 3 does not cover future forms, while Level 4 introduces future perfect, future continuous and future perfect continuous. All three are described simply as having future time reference (p. 129); no reference is made to uses parallel to Allen’s ‘future of supposition’. Perhaps the biggest surprise is that the use of the present continuous with future reference – typically covered early on in contemporary coursebooks (and indeed in Eckersley’s *Essential English*, although not in Hornby’s *Oxford Progressive English*) – is introduced for the first time only at Level 5. Also at this level, the use of *will* to refer to ‘immediate future’ (e.g. ‘I’ll post your letter now.’ (p. 159)), which appears to be roughly analogous to the of *will* for promises generally identified in contemporary materials, is covered.

Level 5 also repeats the future continuous, ‘as an alternative to [the present continuous], with less emphasis on present plan and more on future action’ (p. 159); yet another interpretation of the future continuous, this is nevertheless similar to

Allen’s description of the future continuous as focussing on the results of an intention, but ‘by-pass[ing] the intention itself’. Finally, the use of the present simple for events ‘fixed by schedule’ or on a ‘fixed date’ is included, as well as *be to* (e.g. ‘The President is (due) to arrive in Rome at three o’clock this afternoon.’) and *be just about to*, to talk about the immediate future (p. 159).

#### 8.4.10 Late 20th century coursebooks

As can be seen in Tables 8.19–21, *Strategies*, *Streamline* and *The New Cambridge English Course* all include the five canonical future forms, and in approximately the same sequence, with lower levels covering some or all of *will*, *going to* and present continuous, before future perfect and future continuous are covered at higher levels. There are some inconsistencies across titles, however.

The lowest level of *Streamline* covers *going to* and present continuous; questions with *will* and *shall* in the first person are also included. At the second level, *will* – referred to as the ‘simple future’ – is covered, and is revised again at the third level, where the future perfect and future continuous are added. The highest level covers *will*, *going to*, the future perfect and continuous, and adds the future perfect continuous – the only series to do so. The focus on the future perfect and continuous is temporal reference – no mention is made of the more pragmatic uses identified in the earlier pedagogical grammars, for example Allen’s ‘future of assumption’. This approach is shared by the other titles.

<b><i>Strategies: future forms (1977–1982)</i></b>				
	<b><i>Starting Strategies</i></b>	<b><i>Building Strategies</i></b>	<b><i>Developing Strategies</i></b>	<b><i>Studying Strategies</i></b>
<b><i>will (+ shall)</i></b>	–	Yes (arrangement, prediction)	Yes (future definite predictions)	Yes
<b><i>going to</i></b>	–	Yes	–	–
<b><i>present continuous</i></b>	–	–	Yes	–
<b><i>future perfect</i></b>	–	–	–	Yes
<b><i>future continuous</i></b>	–	–	–	Yes
<b><i>other</i></b>	–	–	–	–

Table 8.19: Future forms in *Strategies*

<b>Streamline: future forms (1978–1985)</b>				
	<b>Departures</b>	<b>Connections</b>	<b>Destinations</b>	<b>Directions</b>
<b>will (+ shall)</b>	Yes, in questions only (including <i>Shall I/we ...?</i> )	Yes ('simple future')	Yes ('simple future')	Yes ('simple future')
<b>going to</b>	Yes	–	–	Yes
<b>present continuous</b>	Yes	–	–	–
<b>future perfect</b>	–	–	Yes	Yes
<b>future continuous</b>	–	–	Yes	Yes
<b>other</b>	–	–	–	Future perfect continuous

Table 8.20: Future forms in *Streamline*

<b>The New Cambridge English Course: future forms (1990–1992)</b>				
	<b>Book 1</b>	<b>Book 2</b>	<b>Book 3</b>	<b>Book 4</b>
<b>will (+ shall)</b>	Yes (predictions)	Yes (predictions; agreeing and offering)	Yes (will have to; won't for refusals; predictions)	Yes (making offers; predictions); also <i>shall</i> in 1st person, because there are some poems
<b>going to</b>	Yes (plans, predictions)	Yes (plans and intentions, predictions)	–	–
<b>present continuous</b>	Yes	Yes	–	–
<b>future perfect</b>	–	–	–	Yes
<b>future continuous</b>	–	–	–	Yes
<b>other</b>	–	<i>may</i>	–	–

Table 8.21: Future forms in *The New Cambridge English Course*

The *New Cambridge English Course* is very similar in coverage and sequencing. At the lowest level, learners see *will* used for predictions, *going to* for plans and predictions, and the present continuous. In Book 2, the functions of agreeing and offering are added to the coverage of *will*, alongside predictions; both uses of *going to* identified at the previous level are also revised. In addition, *may* is included as a

future form for predictions. The only future form included in Book 3 is *will*, again for predictions, including the phrase ‘will have to’; the use of *won’t* in refusals is also taught. In Book 4 – the highest level – the future perfect and future continuous are included, a level later than in *Streamline*. Like *Streamline*, the use of the future perfect relates only to future time, including an explicit focus on its use to make predictions (e.g. ‘By the year 3000, war will have come to an end.’ (p. 112)). Similarly, the coverage of the future continuous focuses exclusively on the idea of actions in progress at a specific time in the future, with no reference to the idea of ‘the ordinary course of events’. In addition to this, *will* is repeated, with a focus on making offers (e.g. ‘OK. I’ll come round at two.’). Unusually for books in this period, *shall* in the first person in affirmative sentences is also included, possibly because it features in a poem included as a text in the lesson.

*Strategies* does not cover future forms at the lowest level. At the second level, *will* and *going to* are taught, with *will* revised at the third level and present continuous added. This comparatively late coverage of the present continuous is a significant difference from *Streamline* and the *New Cambridge English Course*, and also from the current canon<sup>74</sup>. Finally, like *Streamline* and the *New Cambridge English Course*, the future perfect and future continuous are covered at the highest level, with the focus on the time reference associated with the forms, rather than their possible pragmatic functions.

The original two levels – Intermediate and Upper Intermediate – of *Headway* covered the five canonical future forms, as shown in Table 8.22. Intermediate teaches *will* (for predictions, future facts, and intentions/decisions made at moment of speaking), *going to* (for future intentions, plans or decisions thought about before the moment of speaking) and present continuous (for future arrangements); at Upper Intermediate, these are all revised, and the future perfect and continuous added, with the focus of the latter two on time reference only. Upper Intermediate also adds the predictive use of *going to*. The first edition of *Elementary* covers only *going to*, with both *going to* and *will* (for predictions and promises) taught at Pre-

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<sup>74</sup> In personal communication, Ingrid Freebairn stated that ‘At the time [the future use of the present continuous] was considered by our markets as being a more sophisticated way of expressing the future, although I wouldn’t agree with that in retrospect.’

Intermediate. The original Beginner level book did not include future forms. The Advanced level contains revision of all the future forms covered.

<b>Headway: future forms (1986–1995)</b>						
	<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>Pre-int.</b>	<b>Int.</b>	<b>Upper-Int.</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>will (+ shall)</b>	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	“review of tenses”
<b>going to</b>	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
<b>present continuous</b>	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	
<b>future perfect</b>	–	–	–	–	Yes	
<b>future continuous</b>	–	–	–	–	Yes	
<b>other</b>	–			future possibility (might/could)		

Table 8.22: Future forms in *Headway*

#### 8.4.11 Discussion

The analysis above suggests that future forms represent an area of pedagogical grammar which has developed comparatively recently. The accounts in Jonson, Murray and Jespersen are remarkably brief, especially when one considers the frequency with which future forms are used, and compared to the other two areas of grammar analysed in this chapter. One reason for this comparative brevity may be related to the question of tense choice. Choosing between tenses causes few or no problems for native speakers, unlike, perhaps, relative clauses and conditionals and their potential for syntactic complexity. As a consequence, they may have been an area of grammar that simply received little attention from English grammarians over the centuries. Whatever the reasons, early twentieth century writers of pedagogical grammars had relatively little to work with when producing their accounts of future forms, particularly in terms of how to advise on tense choice. This is epitomised by Allen’s description of the English tense system as ‘vexing’, and is reflected more generally by the amount of disagreement, both diachronically and synchronically, that can be found between the descriptions in different titles, and sometimes even within titles. To give one example, there is disagreement among

many of the books examined on whether or not the present continuous is used to talk about the 'immediate future' or not:

- Jespersen and Allen both compare the present continuous to the future continuous, stating that the former is used to talk about the 'immediate future' (Allen, 1947/1959, p. 127; Jespersen, 1933, p. 267) and the latter, in the words of Jespersen, the 'near, though not exactly immediate' future (p. 267) and, in the words of Allen, the 'not so immediate future' (p. 127); Thomson and Martinet also use the phrase 'the immediate future' to describe the use of the present continuous (Thomson and Martinet, 1960/1969, p. 118)
- By contrast, Palmer and Alexander et al use the phrase 'the immediate future' not for the present continuous, but for *just + going to* and *just + present continuous* (Palmer, 1921, p. 280), and *just + going to* and *just about to* (Alexander et al., 1975, 48, 159)
- the latest edition of *Headway Intermediate* and *Upper Intermediate* both state that the present continuous refers to the 'near future'
- *face2face Pre-Intermediate* states that the present continuous 'doesn't have to be near future. The important thing is how certain we are about it.' (p. 133)<sup>75</sup>

In addition to these inconsistencies and disagreements, there is also, as has been described, disagreement both within the contemporary canon, and historically, on the order that future forms should be taught. In older titles, the initial focus tended to be on *will*, and often also *going to*, with the present continuous left, in some titles, until higher levels. In contemporary titles, similar comments can be made about a number of other forms and uses. For example, *New English File* teaches *going to* for predictions at Level 1, whereas other titles delay this until Level 3 or higher. And in contrast to the approach in older titles, the use of *will* as a future form is ignored until Level 3 by all but one of the five coursebook series examined.

The shift in emphasis away from *will* to other future forms appears to be one characteristic of another development that has taken place over the last century – a change in understanding of what exactly, if anything, constitutes the 'future tense' in English. Older titles consider *will* or *shall* as *the* future tense, with other choices such as *going to* and present continuous mentioned, if at all, only in passing. This dominant focus on *will* and *shall* as the 'future tense', often including explanations on when to use one rather than another, endured until at least the middle of the

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<sup>75</sup> Without any kind of clear definition about what exactly would constitute the immediate or near future, it appears impossible to attempt to resolve the disagreement.

twentieth century, with terms such as ‘pure future’ and ‘future simple’ perpetuating the idea of the existence of one standard future form, with other future forms to be covered briefly only after it has been taught, and in spite of the fact that there is nothing particularly ‘simple’ about the uses associated with *will*. ELT accounts from the last few decades arguably represent an improvement, therefore, in this respect, in that they typically talk of future *forms* rather than identifying a ‘future tense’, and place forms such as the present continuous and *going to* on an equal footing to *will*. On the other hand, contemporary coursebooks tend to ignore the pragmatic uses of the future continuous (to make polite enquiries) and the future perfect (to talk about assumptions about the past), which, especially in the case of the future continuous, were readily identified in older accounts. This appears to deprive learners of some useful additional functions of the grammar they are studying.

Looking at the coverage of future forms in titles across the decades, it is easy to observe how certain choices of words and phrases in descriptions appear to ‘echo’ through time and publications, largely unchanged. This is sometimes at the level of the wordings of descriptions; for example, Palmer’s use of the phrase ‘in the ordinary course of events’ (which may not have originated with Palmer himself) is still the preferred wording in contemporary accounts of the future continuous, and Jespersen and Allen’s use of the word ‘coloured’ to talk about particular future forms (*will* in Jespersen’s case, both *will* and *going to* in Allen’s case) is found in explanations of the future continuous in the latest edition of *Headway Upper Intermediate* (p. 145). A further instance are examples connected to clouds and rain to help explain the use of *going to* to make predictions (typically along the lines of ‘Look at the clouds – it’s going to rain.’), which can be found in Eckersley’s *Essential English* (Level 2), Alexander et al’s *English Grammatical Structure* (Stage 2), Swan and Walter’s *New Cambridge English Course (Book 1)*, Soars and Soars’ *Headway (Upper Intermediate (First Edition))* and Oxenden et al’s *English File (Intermediate)*. At times, the ‘echoes’ are a comparatively recent development: older coursebooks and grammars often described the present continuous as being used for ‘plans’ or ‘intentions’, but ‘arrangement’ is used in the majority of the contemporary coursebooks examined. Such cases appear to reflect some of the themes identified in the thematic analysis in Chapter 7. Pedagogical grammar descriptions are inevitably strongly influenced by other (both older and contemporary) pedagogical

grammar descriptions, a process that leads to a large degree of homogeneity, even at the level of choice of wording. Another example of this phenomenon is the rule prohibiting the use of 'going to go' and 'going to come', which has appeared again and again in ELT accounts for nearly a century. The rule is repeated, uncritically, in title after title, apparently considered true simply by the virtue of the fact that it appears so frequently in print.

Now that we have finished our discussion of the evolution of the ELT grammar canon, both in the form of the thematic analysis in Chapter 7, and in the case studies presented in this chapter, the following chapter will attempt to bring together the various threads presented in this thesis and present conclusions and implications.

## 9 Conclusion

### 9.1 Introduction

This chapter will begin by returning to the three research questions, summarising how they have been answered using the different research methods employed in this study. It will then discuss the limitations of the study, before turning to discuss implications and avenues for future research.

### 9.2 The research questions

#### 9.2.1 RQ 1: How, when and where did the consensus on the ELT grammar ‘canon’ develop?

This question has been approached in this thesis from different angles, and the data collected is possibly the richest of that related to any of the three research questions. Firstly, the broad analysis of historical pedagogical grammars and the overall historical context presented in Chapter 3 suggests that the very idea of a pedagogical grammar for EFL is a relatively recent development, dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century. There also appears to have been a strong interaction between the grammatical accounts being developed for EFL and ‘background’ events such the ‘reform movement’, methodological developments and more generally research into language teaching and acquisition, such as Palmer and Hornby’s work on patterns, the contrastive analysis hypothesis, and the notion of communicative competence to name but a few.

However, while contextualising the development of ELT grammar is relatively straightforward, tracing its exact path is more challenging, due to the lack of ‘official’ ELT documents setting out policy and mandating syllabuses. Research using primary sources – that is to say, published teaching materials for EFL – is fruitful but is limited by the fact that such publications tend to be commercial rather than academic, and therefore do not typically contain citations and lists of references. For this reason, the genesis of a key title such as Allen’s *Living English Structure* – which the eminent Michael Swan recalls having ‘learnt all his grammar from’ at the beginning of his career – is somewhat mysterious. In terms of references, Allen provided no more than a list of ‘some useful books for further reference’, although

as we saw in Chapter 8, it is possible to see some direct influences from Jespersen on Allen's explanations, and then from Allen on the content of later books.

Overall the development of a consensus on grammar for EFL in the first half of the twentieth century seems to have been largely an organic, bottom-up process, driven by the work of individual teachers and teacher-authors, in disparate parts of the world. Their activities appear to meet Wenger's (1998) three criteria for a 'community of practice' – 'mutual engagement', 'joint enterprise' and 'shared repertoire'. 'Mutual engagement' was achieved through the creation of research groups such as IRET in Japan, and facilitated more generally by publications such as the *ELT Journal* (we saw, for example, pedagogical grammar knowledge being shared through the regular 'Question Box' feature). The 'joint enterprise' appears clear: these professionals were working together to develop ideas on how to best teach EFL, including the question of what to teach. Finally, the pedagogical grammar that they developed constitutes part of their 'shared repertoire'. The professionals involved in this were also supported to a great extent by the substantial body of work known as the 'Great Tradition' – the new, scientific grammars produced around the turn of the twentieth century. The fact that these grammars were mainly written by non-native speakers seems to have meant their content was particularly useful for the development of pedagogical grammar accounts.

In the second half of the century, the focus appears to have shifted to UK-based teacher-authors, often working for private language schools, but also, as we have said, responding to developments in research in linguistics and education. This period of time is also 'accessible' from the data collected during the interviews. As we saw, those informants who had been involved in coursebook production in the 1960s, 70s and 80s recalled having, or there being, a great deal of freedom in terms of content, with publishers leaving choice of grammar content and organisation to the individual author. This also meant that the developing consensus was relatively fluid, with innovation possible in terms of the ordering of grammatical elements (for example, the foregrounding of communicative elements such as *would like* under the influence of the notional/functional approach) or the addition to the canon of new grammatical elements as a result of research into discourse. At some point, however, this started to change. Ingrid Freebairn's account is particularly interesting from

this point of view, as her memories as a coursebook author over the decades reveal the gradually increasing influence of market research and the need to match user expectations, which, according to a number of the informants, has led to more homogeneity in content.

The data presented in the case studies revealed a number of tendencies in how the canon has developed over the decades. One of the most significant has been a shift in emphasis from item to pattern. This was seen in the case study on conditionals, with a change in focus from considering only the verb form in the *if*-clause to the use of numbered categorisation systems of entire sentences; in the case study of relative clauses, with a shift in focus from the choice of relative pronoun/adverb only to the use and function of the whole relative clause; and, in the case study on future forms, in the way pedagogical accounts gradually moved away from the idea of English having a 'future tense' (i.e. *will/shall*), eventually putting *going to*, the present continuous and other future forms on an equal footing. This change in emphasis, perhaps reflecting Palmer and Hornby's conception of patterns (discussed in Chapter 3) appears to have brought both advantages and disadvantages. There are clear benefits for learners in basing analysis and examples around whole structures, but it can be problematic if the whole structure or paradigm becomes the rule: complexity in learning increases, and flexibility in output decreases. In the case of conditionals, learners are expected to learn two verb forms for each conditional, increasing complexity; in addition, if it is implied that there are only four (or six, if 'mixed conditionals' are included) possible verb pairings, learners have less flexibility in the language they practise and produce.

A second tendency is the gradual abandonment of prescriptivist rules and advice. Modern pedagogical treatments contain nothing in the style of Murray's instruction to avoid the use of the relative adverb 'where' because it is 'an imitation of the French idiom', or of Samuel Jonson's opinion, reported in Jespersen, that the use of the zero relative clause is 'barbarous'. But this change has been gradual, with grammatical treatments in the early- to mid-twentieth century at times retaining elements of a prescriptivist approach; this is seen, for example, in Palmer's assertion that the use of *which* or *who* instead of *that* offers 'greater precision' in relative

clauses, or in Thomson and Martinet's claim that the use of *whom* over *who* is the 'technically correct' option.

A final observation to emerge from the case studies was the tendency for elements of grammar coverage to 'echo' through the decades from publication to publication. We saw examples of individual wordings within explanations, or even whole example sentences, repeated in later publications, and we also saw how even an inaccurate 'rule' proscribing the use of 'go' after 'going to', first found in Palmer, is still repeated in contemporary coursebooks. Authors are naturally influenced by the works of those before them, but in the case of ELT publishing, where there is no requirement for citations or references to empirical evidence, this influence may not always lead to accurate or relevant grammatical descriptions, but sometimes to the repetition of unfounded assertions. It seems that once critical mass has been reached, in the form of the publication in multiple titles, a grammar point, rule, wording, or choice of terminology becomes accepted as part of the canon and is sustained indefinitely, regardless of its merit or accuracy. Conversely, however, the process of evolution sometimes also involves loss: some of the elements in Allen's (1947) *Living English Structure*, for example, appear to show useful insights that no longer feature in the coursebook consensus. These include the use of the future continuous to make polite questions, the use of the future perfect to express an assumption about the past, and Allen's observation that mid-position non-defining relative clauses are rare in spoken English.<sup>76</sup>

9.2.2 RQ2: What is the nature of the canon today, and the system that perpetuates and sustains it?

If the initial development of pedagogical accounts of EFL can be conceived of as a shared repertoire, an element of a community of practice, the data presented in the thematic analysis in Chapter 5 suggests that the current consensus seems to have more in common with the concept of 'best practice'. In Edge and Richards' (1998b) critique of the concept, 'best practice' rests on the assumption that 'there exists, at any one time, a best way of achieving clearly identifiable ends and that this best way

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<sup>76</sup> One important addendum to the question of a move towards consensus is the larger degree of variability that is found at higher levels. All three case studies showed a large amount of variation in coverage in coursebooks at the highest level, mirroring McCarthy's (2015) observations.

can be made generally available' (p. 570); in the ELT profession, 'best practice' is often, in part, the uncritical use a well-established catalogue of grammar points to create syllabuses. One key theme to emerge from the interviews of the contemporary context was one of decisions on content being made with reference to norms perceived to exist within the ELT profession, to the needs and demands of institutions such as schools, ministries and examination boards, and to the needs and demands of markets and users. In this context, the role of successful competitor titles is crucial; those books that have found commercial success serve as models for future publications, leading to a self-perpetuating cycle of homogenous content and limited opportunities to review the established canon or innovate from it.

The picture painted is in stark contrast to the situation in the 1970s described by coursebook authors such as Ingrid Freebairn and Peter Viney; there is now little space for innovation in syllabus content as the priority appears to be to meet the expectations of markets. This situation, however, was not reported in universally negative terms. A number of informants reported understanding the need for meeting the requirements of the target audience, and the reluctance to innovate that publishers seem to have. The investment costs in producing coursebooks is high, and many informants seemed to be accepting and understanding of the fact that this means that risk needs to be eliminated as far as possible. In the words of Jack Richards, 'common practice was probably a good way to go, because if one departed too much from it, you're likely to lose your target audience.'

The homogeneity of coursebook grammar content has often been presented negatively in the literature, seen as an example of the hegemony of publishers in an increasingly capitalist and commodified world. Thornbury (2016, p. 216), for example, links the 'endless reproduction of what is essentially the same grammar syllabus' to the 'commodification' of language learning, an approach that allows 'a model of production, consumption and regulation that not only avoids threatening the status quo, but underpins a lucrative global marketing strategy'. While the data in this study cannot answer directly to Thornbury's criticisms, there certainly appears to be a circle (whether vicious or virtuous), whereby publishers provide their customers with the kind of teaching materials that they are asking for, and their customers continue to ask for the same kinds of teaching materials as they feel

that what they have seen before represents the norms they should be following. However, the interview data suggests that publishers are actually part of this cycle rather than the creators of it. Informants in the interviews seemed to echo Amrani's observation that publishers also feel themselves to be operating under significant restrictions, having 'less of a free hand than previously' because of market expectations (2011, p. 268). Publishers perhaps do have the power to break the cycle, but there would be commercial risks associated with doing so and this is likely to make them reluctant. The data collected in this study does not suggest that publishers have any kind of agenda beyond this.

Although not one of the primary research aims, this study has – in Chapters 3 and 6 – touched on question of the accuracy and representativeness of elements of the current consensus. We saw, for example, that the three-way system often used in descriptions of conditionals does not represent the full picture – either of native speaker usage or of learner usage – while pedagogical descriptions of relative clauses seem to overrepresent mid-position, non-defining clauses at the expense of end-position clauses. To this can be added the apparently incorrect proscription of the verbs 'go' and 'come' after 'going to'. Clearly such inaccuracies are undesirable in pedagogical accounts, and the fact that they continue to appear in print suggests that more could be done during the publishing process to verify the contents of grammatical descriptions, instead of – as appears to be the case – assuming that they are correct simply because they have appeared in previous publications. However, changes in pedagogical descriptions would themselves represent a form of innovation, and, as we have seen, there currently appears to be limited opportunity or appetite for this within the ELT profession.

9.2.3 RQ3: Does the canon reflect empirical evidence on the development of grammatical competence of learners of EFL?

The relatively broad consensus found in contemporary coursebooks in the case studies appears to confirm one of the premises of this research, that there is very little variety in the grammar content of contemporary ELT teaching materials. The comparison of this consensus with the data from the EGP produced mixed results. There were significant areas of agreement in terms of content and level assignments, but also significant divergences. The latter consist most frequently of

i) individual uses identified in the EGP but not typically taught, or taught at all, in the coursebooks examined or covered in their grammar explanations, and ii) structures or uses of structures which the EGP indicates that learners are able to produce at least a level earlier than they are typically taught in coursebooks. In addition to this, there are iii) a much smaller number of incidences of structures or uses of structures that the EGP indicates that learners are able to use later than the level at which they are typically taught.

In the first two types of divergence, the obvious question is how learners are able to produce the language if they have not been taught it. One possibility is that they are able to produce language that they encounter, or perhaps seek out, outside the context of the coursebook, whether that is inside or outside of the classroom. Alternatively, it may be that learners are able to use the grammar they are taught as 'building blocks', extending their use by modifying certain elements. For example, it does not seem unreasonable that a learner, after having been taught Type 1 conditionals with *will* in the main clause, will be able to substitute *will* for an imperative form, producing a form of conditional sentence which the EGP shows learners can produce at A2, but does not form part of the canonical three-way conditional system<sup>77</sup>.

Only three incidences of the third type of divergence were identified, as follows:

- the use of *might have* and *could have* in conditional sentences (typically taught at Level 5, but at C1 in EGP)
- the use of *whose* in defining and non-defining relative clauses (typically taught at Level 4, but at B2 in EGP)
- the use of *going to* to talk about plans and intentions, in affirmative sentences and in questions (typically taught first at Level 1, but at A2 in EGP)

In such cases, it is possible to speculate about some kind of lag between learning and production, or it might simply be the case that learners are not developmentally ready to use these structures at the level at which they are typically taught. Such explanations would perhaps need to be explained by underlying acquisition

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<sup>77</sup> As maligned as the categorisation system used in ELT for conditionals is, contemporary ELT treatments do not actually state that other verb combinations are not possible, although it is of course possible that a learner might infer this (see Maule (1988)).

processes. Alternatively, we might consider the question of opportunity of use; the EGP is based on data from written exams, and the exam questions might simply not provide learners with the opportunity to use certain structures.

Overall, this study has found that the ELT grammar canon evolved in a largely unplanned way, with no or limited oversight, is currently perpetuated because it has become considered as part of best practice in ELT, rather than, apparently, because of its inherent value, and appears not, in many cases, to reflect empirical evidence on how learners actually use grammar.

### 9.3 Limitations

This study has a wide focus – investigating a posited worldwide consensus on the grammar syllabus for ELT. In taking such a broad approach, it by nature does not consider all contexts. For example, by choosing to examine coursebooks – more specifically, those ‘global’ coursebooks sold by major publishers around the world – it overlooks titles published by local publishers, in addition to materials produced by language schools and other educational institutions ‘in-house’. Such materials may also follow the consensus, or may be very different to it. Furthermore, only coursebooks aimed at adults and teaching what is commonly termed ‘General English’ – courses ‘which aim to teach general language proficiency’ (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, p. 181) – were considered. These, as the most ‘middle of the road’ products, were considered to be those most likely to clearly represent the consensus, but they are nevertheless a subset of all coursebooks published. Similarly, only a comparatively small number of books were chosen for the historical analysis. These were chosen to be representative of the periods under consideration, but it must be admitted that an analysis of a wider range of, or just different, titles might produce different results.

In terms of the interview data, only a comparatively small group of people were interviewed, and it must be acknowledged that their views may not be representative of the majority of professionals working in the field. Having said that, the writers and editors of coursebooks work in a highly specialised field. The group of informants contained writers who have produced, over decades, materials that have been used around the world by thousands of teachers and learners. Even this relatively small-scale study is therefore likely to offer significant insights.

Finally, there are limitations inherent in the type of data on which the EGP is based. As discussed in Chapter 4, the EGP draws its competence statements from a corpus of learner language comprising written exams, and we should be mindful of Hunston's (2002, p. 23) argument that 'a statement about evidence in a corpus is a statement about that corpus.' It might be the case that the kind of language that learners produce in written exams is qualitatively different from that which they would produce in spoken contexts, or even in written, but non-examination contexts. Furthermore, it must also be acknowledged that the grammar that learners produce in exams is likely, in many cases, to have been influenced by the content of the grammar canon; it seems likely that many of the learners who take Cambridge English exams are likely to have gone through a 'mainstream' ELT education, involving the use of coursebooks. The areas of agreement between the canon and the EGP may in part be a reflection of this fact, although the fact that there is sometimes disagreement between the canon and the EGP would seem to suggest that this is not always the case.

#### 9.4 Implications and recommendations for further research

Perhaps the most significant implication of the research on the evolution of the grammar canon is that, while at many points this evolution has been driven by highly competent professionals, it has never taken place under any kind of oversight. That it has developed organically, from the bottom up, responding to needs identified by practitioners is certainly not a negative point. However, now that this organic process has matured and its results are considered a norm or form of best practice and are so rarely challenged, its origin perhaps becomes more problematic. As we have said, the overwhelming focus in research in recent times has been on the *how* rather than *what* of teaching but, at very least, it appears that the contents of the canon should be open for critical analysis, both in terms of the overall catalogue of grammar points that it contains (and, those that it does not contain), and the order in which the grammar is typically taught.

There are also more general implications from the historical research carried out in this thesis. As Smith (2016) notes, historical research within Applied Linguistics does not enjoy 'the relatively high status history has gained in adjacent fields, for example in education and linguistics' (p. 72), with the result being that historical

narratives on ELT tend to over-rely on secondary sources, or even on ‘hearsay or handed-down mythology’ (ibid. p. 75). Smith argues that many historical accounts ‘tend to stereotype and demonize the past in a “progressivist” manner, serving to assert the supposed superiority of current conceptions’ (ibid.). In the case of grammar, there is a tendency to refer to ‘traditional grammar’ or ‘traditional syllabuses’ in ELT, without explaining exactly which ‘tradition’ is being referred to. McLelland neatly summarises this phenomenon as follows:

‘We might summarize a layperson’s view of how foreign language teaching and learning has changed over time as follows: in the (imprecisely defined) Old Days, language teaching was all about grammar and translation, but nowadays things are “better”, and people learn to speak the language.’ (McLelland, 2017, p. 85).

An example of this kind of imprecision in historical accounts can be found in McDonough and Shaw (2003). In discussing ELT methodology in the 20th century, the authors state that in the middle of the century, the prevailing methodology meant that ‘language learners were required, above all, to manipulate grammatical forms accurately, and that this procedure was the main measure of competence in a foreign language’, before confidently stating that ‘[a] glance at many of the tables of contents of teaching materials published in the 1950s and 1960s will confirm this focus’ (p. 16). My own archive work, however, did not confirm this. In fact, one of the difficulties in the research involving older titles was precisely that they often do not explicitly state their grammatical content. Furthermore, as we have seen, in the first half of the twentieth century there was a huge focus on the teaching of vocabulary, rather than grammar. In the late 1950s, A.S. Hornby was himself pointing out that ‘traditional grammar’ was ill-suited to ELT, proposing instead his structural, pattern-based approach. (1959, x).

The historical research in this thesis has shown that we may need to rethink certain aspects of historical accounts in ELT. In reality, a comparison of the table of contents (also known as the ‘scope and sequence’) of a modern coursebook with the grammar content of coursebooks from the first half of the 20th century would show that there is far more extensive and detailed coverage of grammar now compared to the past. With the increase in the number of levels that coursebooks are published at, there is simply more space than ever before for grammar content; Michael Swan himself talked in his interview of ‘padding out’ the grammar consensus as recently as the

1960s and 1970s, meaning that what is labelled 'traditional ELT grammar' is in reality a recent invention.

The research into the nature of the system that perpetuates the current consensus largely confirms claims made elsewhere (Ellis, 2006; O'Keeffe and Mark, 2017; Thornbury, 2016) that it is simply easier and less risky for a new coursebook series to imitate, at the level of grammatical content, previously successful titles. As we have said, a publisher does have the power to attempt to break the cycle by publishing a coursebook series that treats grammar very differently. The perspectives of many of the informants, however, suggest it would be unwise for a publisher to do so, as user expectations are such that innovative materials would be considered 'deficient' (to use the word chosen by the anonymous coursebook author interviewed). The only ways for change to occur would seem to be some kind of bottom-up demand for it, and/or for a publisher to make a convincing case for it.

Resources such as the EGP may potentially play a role in this. Having readily and freely available information on how learners actually use grammar at different competency levels may be enough to persuade publishers and end users that innovation is both possible and desirable. However, it is not always easy to ascertain how a materials designer should respond to findings in the EGP. For example, how should an author – given a free hand – respond to findings from the EGP that learners are able to use grammar earlier than it is typically taught in coursebooks, or grammar that is not typically taught at all? One possible response would be to suggest changes to existing syllabuses, by either adding extra grammar coverage, or reordering the grammar that is already taught. Neither response is unproblematic. Current coursebook syllabuses are 'full'; adding new grammar to a level – whether by adding completely new elements, or by teaching earlier elements that are currently covered in later levels – would either necessitate increasing the total amount of grammar taught at a level, eliminating other grammar points, or making space for the new grammar by postponing other grammatical points, which might as a consequence themselves be taught 'too late'.

In some cases, however, it may be possible to make the desired changes by changing the way grammar is described and taught. This is particularly relevant in the case of conditionals; my view is that if the focus shifted away from entire sentence

paradigms, and towards the verb form in the *if* clause, a greater total number of patterns could be described. For example, the pedagogical information given to learners for conditionals about the present and future could simply be that future forms are not typically included in the *if* clause. This would give learners license to allow a range of structures – including the imperative and a variety of future forms – in the main clause. With the current focus on the entire sentence paradigm, an attempt to cover a wide range of verb combinations would likely be considered too complex and too confusing in a single lesson. But if the ‘new’ grammar was to be considered simply the *if* clause, this apparent complexity could be avoided.

Another approach might be to cover more grammar, but in some way reduce the amount of focus on each grammar point so that more can be covered in total. How exactly this could be operationalised at the level of individual lessons within a coursebook is not immediately obvious: lessons are typically built around single, self-contained grammar points, and increasing the number of grammar points means increasing the number of lessons, and pages, unless a very different approach to the teaching of grammar is taken. Furthermore, the evidence from the EGP that learners are able to use grammar that is not taught arguably also suggests that large interventions at the level of the syllabus are not actually necessary.<sup>78</sup>

The differences identified between learner usage, as reported in the EGP, and typical pedagogical accounts may also have implications for theories of second language acquisition. As we saw, one striking difference was between the sheer number of tenses and verb forms learners produce in conditional sentences, compared to the far more limited three-way system employed in pedagogical descriptions; however, all three case studies showed that learners appear to be able to produce far more varied language than they are typically explicitly taught in coursebooks, and often at an earlier learning stage. As discussed above, this suggests that as part of the acquisition process learners are able to extrapolate from the limited input they receive and exemplars they are exposed to in pedagogical accounts, which, one could speculate, resonates with usage-based models of learning (Tomasello, 2003;

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<sup>78</sup> However, one might again speculate that learners might be more likely to achieve passing scores in Cambridge English exams, and therefore be represented in entries in the EGP, if the grammar content of their instructional materials was more complete.

Ellis et al., 2016). It also, or perhaps alternatively, suggests that learners are able to successfully acquire and use language they encounter outside of the context of the coursebook, whether in- or outside the classroom, even though this language is not 'mediated' in any way, that is to say, it is not explained to them in a pedagogical account.

## 9.5 Final conclusion

As a final conclusion to this thesis I will quote the introduction to *English Grammatical Structure* (1975), the 245-page catalogue of pedagogical grammar that was highly influential for so many authors in the period:

'To compile such a list on the basis of a statistical investigation into the frequency of occurrence of grammatical structures and into the range of styles in which such structures are found would be an enormous task. [...] The authors have not attempted that task, nor have they pretended to estimate what the results would be. It is rather on the basis of their combined experience of teaching English and of compiling English-teaching materials that [the authors] have agreed where the limits of this book should be drawn and in what order individual items should appear.' (Alexander *et al.*, 1975, v)

The combined experience of the authors of the book should be respected. However, today, the existence of computerised corpora and the compilation of learner corpora mean that a different approach to cataloguing a sequencing grammatical structures for a pedagogical grammar of English can be taken. A combination of this with the 'experience of teaching English and of compiling English-teaching materials' of contemporary ELT professionals might be able to provide new important insights into the design of grammar syllabuses.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Example of the 'canon' (content from *New English File* (3rd edition))

<i>Beginner</i>	<i>Elementary</i>	<i>Pre-Intermediate</i>
<p>verb <i>be</i> (singular): <i>I</i> and <i>you</i>            verb <i>be</i> (singular): <i>he, she</i> and <i>it</i>            verb <i>be</i> (plural)  <i>wh-</i> and <i>How</i> questions with <i>be</i>            singular and plural nouns: <i>a / an</i>  <i>this / that / these / those</i>            possessive adjectives;            possessive 's adjectives            present simple (+) and (-); <i>I, you, we, they</i>            present simple (+) and (-); <i>he, she, it</i>            adverbs of frequency            word order in questions: <i>be</i> and present simple            imperatives; object pronouns: <i>me, him</i> etc.  <i>can / can't</i>  <i>like / love / hate</i> + verb + <i>-ing</i>            present continuous            present continuous or present simple  <i>there's a ... / there are some ...</i>            past simple: <i>be</i>            past simple: regular verbs            past simple irregular: <i>do, get, go, have</i>            past simple: regular and irregular verbs (revision)            present continuous for future</p>	<p>verb <i>be</i> (+), subject pronouns, <i>I, you</i>, etc.            verb <i>be</i> (?) and (-)            possessive adjectives: <i>my, your</i> etc.  <i>a/an</i> plurals;  <i>this/that/these/those</i> adjectives            imperatives; let's            present simple (+) and (-);            present simple (?)            word order in questions;  <i>Whose...?</i>, possessive 's            prepositions of time (<i>at, in, on</i>) and place (<i>at, in, to</i>)            position of adverbs and expressions of frequency  <i>can/can't</i>; present continuous            present simple or present continuous            object pronouns: <i>me, you, him</i>, etc...  <i>like+(verb+ -ing)</i>            revision: <i>be</i> or <i>do</i>?            past simple of <i>be</i>: <i>was/were</i>            past simple: irregular verbs  <i>be going to</i> (plans)            past simple: regular and irregular  <i>there is/there are, some/any</i> +plural nouns  <i>there was/were</i>            countable/uncountable nouns; <i>a/an, some/any</i>            quantifiers : <i>how much/how many, a lot of</i> etc.            comparative adjectives;            superlative adjectives  <i>be going to</i> (plans), future            time expressions  <i>be going to</i> (predictions)            adverbs (manner and modifiers)            verbs + <i>to</i> +infinitives; articles            present perfect; present perfect or past simple?            revision: question formation</p>	<p>word order in questions            present simple; present continuous            past simple regular and irregular verbs            past continuous            time sequencers and connectors  <i>be going to</i> (plans and predictions)            present continuous (future arrangements)            defining relative clauses            present perfect + <i>yet, just, already</i>            present perfect or past simple?            something, anything, nothing, etc.            comparative adjectives and adverbs, <i>as...as</i>            superlatives (+ <i>ever</i> + present perfect)            quantifiers, <i>too, not enough</i>  <i>will + won't</i> (predictions)  <i>will + won't</i> (decisions, offers, promises)            review of verb forms:            present, past, and future            uses of the infinitive with <i>to</i>            uses of the gerund (verb+<i>-ing</i>)  <i>have to, don't have to, must, mustn't; should</i>  <i>if</i> + present, <i>will</i> + infinitive (first conditional)            possessive pronouns  <i>if</i> + past, <i>would</i> + infinitive            present perfect + <i>for</i> and <i>since</i>            present perfect or past simple?            passive; <i>used to; might</i>;            expressing movement            word order of phrasal verbs  <i>so, neither</i> + auxiliaries            past perfect; reported speech            questions without auxiliaries</p>

## Appendix 1 (continued)

<i>Intermediate</i>	<i>Upper-Intermediate</i>	<i>Advanced</i>
<p>present simple and continuous, action and non-action verbs</p> <p>future forms: present continuous, going to, <i>will/won't</i>, <i>each other</i></p> <p>present perfect and past simple</p> <p>present perfect + <i>for</i>, <i>since</i>;</p> <p>present perfect continuous</p> <p>comparatives and superlatives</p> <p>articles: <i>a/an</i>, <i>the</i>, no article</p> <p><i>can</i>, <i>could</i>, <i>be able to</i></p> <p>reflexive pronouns</p> <p>modal obligations: <i>must</i>, <i>have to</i>, <i>should</i></p> <p><i>should have</i></p> <p>past tenses: simple, continuous, perfect</p> <p><i>usually</i> and <i>used to</i></p> <p>passives (all tenses)</p> <p>modals of deduction: <i>might</i>, <i>can't</i>, <i>can</i></p> <p>first conditional and future time clauses + <i>when</i>, <i>until</i>, etc.</p> <p><i>make</i> and <i>let</i></p> <p>second conditional</p> <p>reported speech: sentences and questions</p> <p>gerunds and infinitives</p> <p>third conditional</p> <p>quantifiers</p> <p>separable phrasal verbs</p> <p>relative clauses: defining and non-defining</p> <p>question tags</p>	<p>question formation</p> <p>auxiliary verbs; <i>the ... the ...</i> + comparatives</p> <p>present perfect simple</p> <p>using adjectives as nouns, adjective order</p> <p>narrative tenses, past perfect continuous; <i>so/such ... that</i></p> <p>the position of adverbs and adverbial phrases</p> <p>future perfect and future continuous</p> <p>zero and first conditionals, future time clauses</p> <p>unreal conditionals</p> <p>structures after <i>wish</i></p> <p>gerunds and infinitives</p> <p><i>used to</i>, <i>be used to</i>, <i>get used to</i></p> <p>past modals: <i>must</i>, <i>might/may</i>, <i>should</i>, <i>can't</i>, <i>couldn't</i> + <i>have</i>, etc. <i>would rather</i></p> <p>verbs of the senses</p> <p>the passive (all forms): <i>it is said that...</i>, <i>he is thought to ...</i> etc.; <i>have something done</i></p> <p>reporting verbs</p> <p>clauses of contrast and purpose; <i>whatever</i>, <i>whenever</i>, etc.</p> <p>uncountable and plural nouns</p> <p>quantifiers: <i>all</i>, <i>every</i>, <i>both</i>, etc.</p> <p>articles</p>	<p><i>have</i>: auxiliary or main verb?</p> <p>discourse markers (1): linkers</p> <p>the past: narrative tenses, pronouns</p> <p>the past: habitual events and specific incidents</p> <p><i>get</i></p> <p>discourse makers (2): adverbs and adverbial expressions</p> <p>speculation and deduction</p> <p>adding emphasis (1): inversion</p> <p>distancing</p> <p>unreal uses of past tenses</p> <p>verb + object + infinitive or gerund</p> <p>conditional sentences</p> <p>permission, obligation, and necessity</p> <p>verbs of the senses</p> <p>gerunds and infinitives</p> <p>expressing future plans and arrangements</p> <p>ellipsis</p> <p>nouns: compound and possessive forms</p> <p>adding emphasis (2): cleft sentences</p> <p>relative clauses</p>

## Appendix 2: Recruitment email



## Appendix A - Recruitment email

Dear [name],

I'm writing to you because I am hoping to involve you in some research I am doing for a PhD at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, supervised by Prof. Mike McCarthy and Dr. Anne O'Keeffe. My overall project involves comparing empirical data on learners' grammatical competency at different CEFR levels to the grammar that we typically teach learners at different levels. The empirical data comes from the recently published English Grammar Profile, which you may have heard about. The first step of my project is to look through a range of coursebooks and other sources to try to establish what kind of consensus there currently exists in ELT about what grammar should be taught, and at what level.

One aspect of this first step is a historical angle. I'm looking at how (or if) the grammar points we currently teach, and the levels we teach them at, have changed over the decades and centuries. So far I've carried out analysis of older titles (starting with Ben Johnson's pedagogical grammar from 1640, and Lindley Murray's school grammar from 1795), and have also collected a good deal of data on 20th century pedagogic materials up until 1980, from the ELT archive at the University of Warwick, and this will help me paint a picture of how grammatical coverage in ELT has evolved. However, I've become increasingly aware that just looking at what's included in published titles will not tell the whole story, as you don't see the thinking behind the decisions. So I have decided to interview a number of key figures in ELT who have had significant involvement in producing coursebooks or pedagogical grammars, to gain their perspectives on various issues related to the teaching of grammar.

I'm therefore writing to you now to ask if you would be willing to be interviewed for my research. I would be happy to do an interview over the phone or on Skype, or possibly in person if you preferred – I live in the north of Italy but I will be back in the UK over the new year.

Best wishes,

Graham Burton

## Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet



### **Title of project**

An analysis of the English Language Teaching grammar canon and comparison with the English Grammar Profile

### **What is the project about?**

This thesis is about what grammar is typically taught to learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and at which levels, how this 'canon' of grammatical structures' evolved and is sustained in current practice, and how it compares to empirical evidence on learner output in the English Grammar Profile.

### **Who is undertaking it?**

My name is Graham Burton and I am a Postgraduate student at Mary Immaculate College. I am presently carrying out a PhD in Applied Linguistics in the Department of English Language and Literature under the supervision of Dr. Anne O'Keeffe and Professor Michael McCarthy. The current study will form one part of my PhD thesis.

### **Why is it being undertaken?**

The project is being undertaken to examine the nature of the 'canon' of grammatical structures typically employed in published English Language Teaching (ELT) materials, and consequently in classrooms around the world. It aims to examine how the canon came about, how it is sustained, and how it compares to empirical evidence on learner grammatical production.

### **Exactly what is involved for the participant? (time, location, etc.)**

Participants will be interviewed on their experience in writing or developing teaching materials for ELT, with a particular focus on the selection and ordering of teaching points related to grammar. The interviews will take place over the phone, using Skype or similar software, or in a location convenient for the participant. The duration of the interviews will depend greatly on the length of answers provided by the participant, and whether he or she wishes to add anything additional.

### **What are the benefits of the research?**

The results of the research will shed light on how current practice in grammar teaching has evolved, may reveal potential areas for improvement in the typical ELT grammar syllabus, and should be of interest to materials writers and teachers.

**Right to withdraw/not answer questions.**

Unless you tell me otherwise, your contributions to the research will remain anonymous. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without consequence.

**How will the information will be used / disseminated?**

The data will be combined with that of the other participants in this study and analysed as part of my PhD thesis, along with a separate analysis of contemporary and older teaching materials, and a comparison between the English Grammar Profile and typical grammar syllabuses in contemporary teaching materials.

**How will confidentiality be kept?**

All information gathered will remain confidential and will not be released to any third party. A random ID number will be generated for each teacher participant and it is this number rather than the participant's name which will be held with their data to maintain their anonymity. Each student will also be given a randomly generated ID number to maintain their anonymity during transcription.

**What will happen to recordings, transcriptions, after research has been completed?**

The data will be stored for potential use in future for diachronic discourse analysis but in all cases the data will be securely held and the identities of the participants protected.

**Contact details for the Project Investigator(s)**

If at any time you have any queries/issues with regard to this study my contact details are as follows:

Name: Graham Burton  
Email: [graham@grahamburton.org](mailto:graham@grahamburton.org)  
Phone: +39 346 527 5659

**If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:**

MIREC Administrator  
Mary Immaculate College  
South Circular Road  
Limerick  
061-204980  
[mirec@mic.ul.ie](mailto:mirec@mic.ul.ie)

## Appendix 4: Informed Consent Declaration



### Informed Consent Declaration

Dear Participant,

The participant information sheet should be read fully and carefully before consenting to take part in the research. You will remain anonymous unless you inform me otherwise and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. All information gathered will remain confidential and will not be released to any third party. The data will be stored for potential use for future research but in all cases the data will be securely held and the identities of the participants protected.

Please read the following statements before signing the consent form.

- I have read and understood the participant information sheet.
- I understand what the project is about, and what the recording will be used for.
- I understand that I am being audio-recorded, and the recording may be transcribed.
- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.
- I am aware that the data will be kept confidential unless I specify otherwise.

Name (PRINTED) :

Name (SIGNATURE) :

Date :

Signature of Project Investigator:

## Appendix 5: Example transcript showing coded sections in NVivo

Start Time	End Time	Transcript	Speaker
00:00:14.2	00:00:14.8	<p>It depends whether it's for primary, secondary or adult, because if it's into the primary or secondary scheme, then you've got to have the number of levels they have, whether it's six year primary, or three year lower secondary, or whatever, then that determines it. I think with general adult courses it's become the norm to publish six levels, generally, and whether or not you need a starter level particularly for markets like the middle east, but I think because you've got other courses out there which cover those levels, you're not going to succeed with something that does what ... fifty, twenty years ago, people would start by publishing an intermediate level and then they would work up and down from there, publishing with the same team of authors writing one level a year and eventually five years later you'd have a complete course. You can't do that any more, you've got to come out with at least four levels at once, so, generally with a course like Speak Out from Pearson, or Empower from CUP, they publish the four core levels first, because they're the ones that sell most, then you add a starter and advanced a year later. That's a fairly common model, now, and then the question of 'does that actually fit with the number of hours it takes to get through the different levels?' There have been various places that I've talked to where Upper Intermediate doesn't really take you to C1 even if you analyse what's in the contents of an Advanced level course, it's mostly B2 content with bits of C1, never really gets to C2. I remember John De Jong, who I worked with at Pearson, saying 'nobody is C2'. If you look at the definitions of what it is, it's perfectly able to speak about anything and any topic. So a lot of institutions ... I remember doing research in Spain and Italy about what do they do</p>	

SUS\_following competition  
 EVO\_greater role of author in the past  
 SUS\_publishing pressures or needs  
 SUS\_CEFR  
 EVO\_level system imperfect  
 GEN\_innovation from corpora  
 SUS\_influence of external exams  
 SUS\_existence of norm or consensus to follow  
 SUS\_market research or perceived market or user needs  
 Coding Density