DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 320 435 FL 018 599

AUTHOR Bland, Susan Kesner
TITLE Grammatical Consciousness-Raising and the Lexicon.
PUB DATE Mar 90
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (24th, San Francisco, CA, March 6-10, 1990).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Grammar; *Language Processing; Learning Strategies; Linguistic Theory; *Pragmatics; *Second Language Instruction; *Semantics; *Vocabulary Development
IDENTIFIERS *Grammatical Consciousness Raising

ABSTRACT

A role is proposed for the lexicon in the grammatical consciousness-raising (GCR) framework for second language teaching outlined by W. Rutherford and M. Sharwood Smith (1987, 1988). First, a lexical framework that offers a series of questions to help teachers discover the relevant semantic and pragmatic information associated with grammatical structures is discussed. This framework assures a more systematic approach to what otherwise seems to be an infinite range of information. It is then argued that a consideration of the semantic and pragmatic generalizations and principles associated with grammatical structure is consistent with the major goals and assumptions of GCR. Activities for building lexical knowledge about grammatical structures that correspond with GCR activities are described, including judgment and discrimination exercises, such as drawing inferences, paraphrasing, creating context, and judging appropriateness. It is suggested that the vastness of information networks in a lexical framework necessitates teaching students various strategies that encourage schema building, associational thinking, and inferencing. These strategies sensitize learners to discovering this type of information for themselves and support language development. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
S. Bland
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED320435

***** Draft - Comments Invited *****
Paper presented at TESOL '90, San Francisco, CA

GRAMMATICAL CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING AND THE LEXICON

Susan Kesner Bland
Cornell University

INTRODUCTION

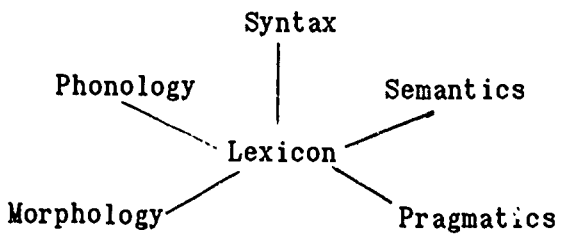
The goal of this paper is to propose a role for the lexicon in the grammatical consciousness-raising (GCR) framework of Rutherford (1987) and Rutherford/Sharwood Smith (1988). My proposal is based on certain semantic and pragmatic generalizations which make up part of our lexical knowledge associated with grammatical structures in discourse.

I will first discuss a lexical framework which offers a series of questions to help teachers discover the relevant semantic and pragmatic information associated with grammatical structures. This framework assures a more systematic approach to what otherwise seems to be an infinite range of information. I have called this framework a lexical-semantic approach to L2 grammar teaching in Bland (1987). I will then argue that a consideration of the semantic and pragmatic generalizations and principles associated with grammatical structure is consistent with the major goals and assumptions of GCR. I will describe activities for building up lexical knowledge about grammatical structures that correspond with GCR activities. These include judgement and discrimination exercises such as drawing inferences, paraphrasing, creating contexts, and judging appropriateness, etc.

THE LEXICON

Let us begin by briefly commenting on the conception of the lexicon that is assumed in this paper. Perhaps the most important point that can be made is that the lexicon is **not** merely a list of vocabulary items, but rather, it is a store of knowledge which relates the syntactic, semantic, morphological, pragmatic, and phonological aspects of the grammar of a language, as illustrated in Figure I.

Figure I: The Lexicon



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

The term "mental lexicon" probably best describes the integration of these various components by the speaker. It is generally assumed that a word listed in the lexicon of a native speaker conjures up any or all of these

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

components in some kind of information network or schema. This is what I refer to as lexical knowledge.

The interface of grammatical components in the mental lexicon appears to be very much in the spirit of the "systems" view of language expressed in the GCR perspective (see below). Let us now explore the relationship between the lexicon and GCR by turning to some of the major GCR assumptions that are consistent with a consideration of the lexical-semantic aspects of grammar.

GCR ASSUMPTIONS

For ease of discussion, I have divided the major GCR assumptions into general assumptions and developmental assumptions.

General Assumptions

(1) GCR takes a "systems" view of language. It is process-oriented. Learners need to seek relationships, underlying processes, concepts, and systems, rather than entities. GCR is a means rather than an end; it is a facilitator. The target language grammar needs to enter the learner's experience as a network of systems.

(2) GCR criticizes what it calls an "item/unit" approach to grammar teaching. In particular, it criticizes pedagogical itemization in which pieces of langauge are treated separately and larger units are built out of subconstituents. It recommends against specifying language content in a syllabus because language is not looked at as a system in such an approach.

(3) Instead, GCR is concerned with how language content is to be exploited. It is concerned with the cognitive correlates of the grammatical system. For example, the cognitive correlates of determiners concern the various presuppositions necessary for their use.

(4) GCR is concerned with the gross canonical structural features of language. It considers language in terms of the interdependence of form, function, and meaning. Following Givón (1979), it considers language to be a social device and grammar to be a means for processing discourse.

(5) GCR activities (or "instruments") ask for judgement, discrimination, and problem solving. Learners should render judgements on grammaticality, on semantic interpretation, on lexical choice, and on presupposition. They should also discuss appropriateness.

Developmental Assumptions

(1) The data that are crucial for hypothesis-testing are made available by GCR. These are the data from which learners hypothesize, project, generalize, and reanalyze.

(2) Learners...
  (a) ... go from familiar to unfamiliar, from known to unknown. This, of course, is a general fact about learning, not just about language learning.

(b) ... unpackage prefabricated chunks of language. That is, they gradually convert the more prefabricated routines and formulaic expressions into language.

(c) ... gradually grammaticize their sentences. This means that they initially form sentences in which the relation between meaning and form is as direct (or transparent) as possible. As they add syntactic structure to their propositional content, this relationship becomes more and more indirect.

(d) ... need to develop their powers of judgement and discrimination vis-à-vis the semantic and discourse demands on grammatical structures.

(e) ... can manage their own learning. GCP is learner-centered. It aims to teach tearners how to be better managers of their own learning by making them aware of certain prevasive facts of language.

A LEXICAL-SEMANTIC APPROACH TO GRAMMAR

With these GCR assumptions in mind, we can now ask what role the lexicon can play vis-à-vis this perspective of grammar teaching. Once again, my goal is to show that a great deal of information about grammatical structure in discourse can be organized within a lexical framework. One thing such a framework does is to make explicit the lexical-semantic aspects of grammar that learners need to be able to work with in grammatical consciousness-raising activities.

A lexical approach entails using the tools of lexical-semantic analysis to elucidate various structural problems in English (see Bland 1987). In a lexical-semantic analysis we assume, first of all, that a basic or core meaning interacts with knowledge of the world and other linguistic knowledge. We assume that knowledge of the appropriate use of a lexical item involves a whole array of semantic networks which plug the item into a variety of culturally appropriate contexts, and that it involves papaphrase rules of synonymy and hyponymy relations, and sociolinguistic conditions on use.

I contend that by using the tools of lexical-semantic analysis adopted for ESL vocabulary teaching in Bland (1981), these same tools shed light on various meaning and usage problems of English grammar. Furthermore, since linguistic thoery has in recent years done a great deal to dispel the notion that the lexicon is merely the repository of all idiosyncratic information, then *the lexicon is the place where important semantic and pragmatic generalizations can be made.*

The approach to meaning that I take is that of Fillmore (1971), who discusses the importance of shared information that we assume or take for granted when we talk about something. In other words, what implicit knowledge is the speaker in command of when using a particular word, or by extension, when using a particular grammatical structure in a sentence? What sorts of

presuppositions or preconditions are there? Fillmore asks "What do I need to know in order to use this form appropriately and to understand other pople when they use it?" He doesn't just ask, "What is the meaning of this form?" Notice that we can easily substitute "word" or "grammatical structure" for "form" in Fillmore's questions.

A lexical approach starts with the assumption, which is merely a heuristic device, that many grammatical forms are listed in the lexicon, e.g. forms representing tenses and aspects, the there construction, modals, passives, etc. These grammatical forms are typically covered in ESL grammar courses. Lexical listing means that the forms have lexical entries which detail their meaning, function, and use.

In order to create a systematic description of a form, a lexical approach considers the following types of questions for the teacher:

(1) What is the general meaning of the form? What are the necessary features of meaning (entailments) and what are the presuppppositions (i.e. conditions that aren't cancelled by negation)?
(2) What other conditions on meaning are there? For example, are there any implied meanings that arise in conversation? To what extent are these conditions cancellable?
(3) Are there any relevant formulaic or conventionalized expressions containing the target structure?
(4) What is the illocutionary force (i.e. the function) of the sentences in which the structure is being used?
(5) Are there limitations to the function and use of the target structure in different registers of English?
(6) Is there any other information relevant to the meaning, structure, and usage of the target structure?

These questions are intended to be useful for elucidating every grammatical structure, not just, for example, the modals, which are typically the only ones treated this way in ESL grammar books. I would now like to make some further comments about these questions.

Notice in (1) and (2) that by working within a lexical-semantic framework, our expectations and assumptions about the conditons on use are different from our expectations about rules and exceptions in syntax. The interesting questions about conditions on meaning are when do these conditions arise and when are these conditions cancelled, NOT what are the rules and are there any exceptions? This lexical perspective therefore gives a much more realistic and useful view of English usage.

In (3), the notion of formulaic expression is meant to refer to expressions that are used routinely in standard speech situations. In the sense of Yorio (1980), these expressions are conventionalized forms that are not idiomatic, but which remind native speakers of particular speech situations. Such an example of the will future is the expression I'll get it, which frequently serves as a response to a ringing doorbell or telephone. An example of a conventionalized there construction is there's a phone call for you. This serves as a frequently used expression for announcing a phone call. The intuition that such sentences are prefabricated makes them likely candidates for the lexicon.

Although question (4) about illocutionary force is listed separately, it should be noted that this question often collapses with (3) because of the more conventionalized form-function relationships that occur. For example, I'll get it expresses the volunteering function of will and there's a phone call for you expresses the announcing function of there constructions. On the other hand, she's always working late is an example of the complaint function of the progressive, but it is not a conventionalized or formulaic expression that would be listed in the lexicon.

Finally, (5) takes up the question of register variation. This often relates to issues of paraphrase. What is another way of saying this in a more formal situation? How would this be rephrased in writtten English?, etc.

EXAMPLES

How does this lexical approach relate to GCR? In the following, I will present a number of examples of types of information that result from a lexical-semantic analysis and show their related GCR activities compatible with Rutherford (1987) and Rutherford/Sharwood Smith (1988).

Formulaic or Conventionalized Expressions

The fact that formulaic expressions containing the target structure are likely candidates for lexical listing is important in the developmental sequence of the learner. Expressions such as I'll get it and there's someone at the door represent the kinds of expressions that learners may gradually unpackage in their development. They may very well be examples of the prefabricated chunks that learners eventually convert into language. Since these expressions are frequently used non-idiomatic expressions, they may be particularly useful to learners as exemplars of generalizations about certain functions and uses of a target structure. Therefore, I propose that they represent crucial data for hypothesis testing as discussed by Rutherford (1987). If we assume that intermediate learners and above already have some intuitions about the use of such frequently used sentences, then these learners may be ready to engage in the following GCR activity in (1) which seeks to discriminate between appropriate discourse contexts:

(1) Choose either (i) or (ii) below as a response to each dialogue below:
(i) I'll get it.
(ii) I'm going to get it.

Example: A: The phone is ringing.
B: I'll get it.

- A: Who wants to get me the hammar?
B: _____

- A: Do you know who volunteered to pick up the pizza tonight?
B: Yes, I did. _____

- A: Mark. Someone's at the door.
  B: _____

- A: Are you going out? We need a quart of milk.
  B: Sure. _____

- A: What is your decision about the car?
  B: _____

This exercise exploits the lack of predetermination or premeditation of the will future in contrast to the premeditation and intention involved with the going to future.

Now, once it is clear that the learner has succeeeded in unpackaging the meaning of I'll get it, we can further build up lexical knowledge related to the volunteering function with the following exercise:

(2) Consider the following sentence: I'll get a sponge.
- What do you think happened?
- When did the speaker say this?
- Did the speaker think about this a lot?

Such activities attempt to embed the grammar into the wider lexical network to which its meaning is attached. Because of their meanings, these sentences evoke all sorts of associations that relate to lexical knowledge associated with grammatical structure. I should add that similar activities could be done with the functional and syntactic implications of there constructions as well as many other grammatical patterns that we teach. These exercises illustrate that the lexicon is the place where relations between words, concepts, structures, functions, etc. can be expressed. As such, the lexicon is the place where the notion of *linguistic system* should truly emerge. The next example will illustrate this point more fully.

Future Constructions

A lexical-semantic framework offers a semantic distinction which is not only very useful in discriminating the use of various lexical items, but it's also useful in discriminationg various grammatical instantiations of the English future. For example, notice in (3) that the semantic feature planned/unplanned plays an important role in distinguishing the behavior of the words onlooker and spectator and also in elucidating the verb cancel, among others:

(3) Lexical-Semantic Conditions on Word Meaning (Bland, 1981)

(a) Condition on ONLOOKER:	onlooker is watching an event by chance
(b) Condition on SPECTATOR:	spectator has planned to watch event
(c) Condition on CANCEL:	to cancel an event means the event was prearranged

Actually, we find that this particular lexical pattern or some related notions such as "predetermination" or "premeditation" arise repeatedly in the

semantic system of English. The lexical generalization that emerges for uses of the English future is depicted in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Future Constructions in English

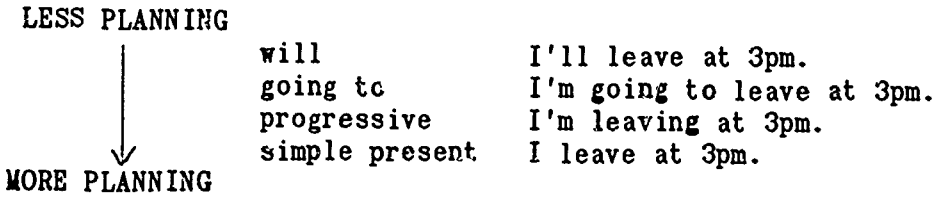


Figure 2 illustrates that one of the important differences in meaning and use between the four reflexes of the English future concerns the relative degree of planning, premeditation or predetermination that is involved in their use. This semantic distinction is amenable to various lexical-semantic GCR activities of judgement and discrimination in (4) below. These activities concern drawing inferences and setting up contexts. They depend on various aspects of our semantic creativity and our ability to use and understand sentences appropriately; for instance, they depend on background assumptions, notions of plausibility, salience, relevance, etc.

(4) a. We're having one tomorrow.
- What could <u>one</u> be? Why? a rainstorm? a party? a meeting? an exam? an accident? an earthquake?

b. It begins in two days.
- What could <u>it</u> be? Why? school? winter vacation? a snowstorm? an explosion? a sale? a new job?

c. We leave on Friday.
- Is there a definite plan?
- What kind of plan could it be?
- Do you expect the plan to be broken?

d. What sentence(s) could precede <u>I'll have a bowl of soup</u>?
- Why did you turn on the microwave?
- Are you ready to order?
- What are your plans for dinner?

It is notable that from a lexical-semantic analysis of future tenses, an explanation of the relative formality of <u>will</u> versus <u>going to</u> also emerges. That is, the relative neutrality of <u>will</u> with respect to planning and premeditation or intention means that <u>will</u> less readily conveys human involvement. <u>Will</u> can therefore be used to establish social distance, e.g. more formal, less personal situations such as news broadcasts, weather reports, newspapers, etc.

I should also add that there exist numerous other semantic notions that are related to the feature planned/unplanned such as the subject's degree of control over an action, or intention, volition, etc. These semantic notions

surface in other areas of English grammar besides the future constructions. For example, an interesting illustration is the English get passive:

(5) Get Passives
a. I don't know how that paper got written.
b. I got robbed.
c. We got delayed.
d. It got broken.

These sentences are distinguished from be passives (e.g. I don't know how the paper was written) by virtue of the fact that the action is somehow more out of the subject's control with get. Such examples should therefore bring to mind similar GCR activities to those illustrated in (4) above.

The Present Progressive

The next set of examples comes from the English present progressive/simple present contrast. I contend that by focusing on lexical-semantic issues, a lexical approach to these grammatical patterns offers a systematic explanation of what are often treated as disparate uses and exceptions in ESL grammar courses. Furthermore, in the spirit of GCR, we can appeal to broader linguistic principles such as semantic concepts and conversational rules.

First of all, in treating the progresssive, it is important to seek the basic meaning as a starting point as we typically do for a vocabulary item. In grammar, we typically ask what the *different* meanings or uses are. Bland (1988) proposes a basic meaning of the progressive: the progressive focuses on a change or changes of state. This basic meaning helps tie together a number of different uses of the present progressive in English.

For example, in the sentences in (6) below, notice that since there is no inherent activity or process with the verb live, the progressive sets up the expectation for change (see Smith 1983). This is realized as temporariness.

(6) a. John is living in NY.
b. John lives in NY.

Now, it has also been observed that the progressive makes a weaker statement than the simple present. By the Gricean conversational maxim of quantity which says "be informative" (Grice 1975), the sentence appears to imply something less than what the speaker asserts with the simple present. In other words, since it is a weaker assertion, and not a more full-fledged assertion, it implies temporariness. This weaker/stronger relationship between the present progressive and the simple present could be noted in the lexicon.

Notice that the same weak/strong semantic distinction exists in the following examples of the NP + BEing + ADJ construction. Once again, the progressive is weaker; it makes less of an assertion about the NP. We therefore get the implication of temporary behavior when the progressive is used:

(7) a. She's being rude.
b. She's rude.

c. You're being silly.
d. You're silly.

A third example of this same phenomenon occurs in the sentences below. This time, the weaker progressive is realized as more indirect or polite. The progressive is weaker with regard to the assertive force of the simple present.

(8) a. I'm guessing that you're French. (King, 1983)
b. I'm wondering if you could help me.
c. Are you liking it here?

In these sentences, the speaker says something less than could be said in order to be more polite or indirect, that is, in order not to "come on too strong"!

Finally, the fourth example of this same weak/strong distinction actually comes from the previous discussion of future constructions. Notice in Figure 2 above, that the progressive once again emerges as weaker relative to the simple present future. We can think of weakness with regard to the certainty of whether or not the event will actually take place (see Dowty 1978). In I'm leaving, the speaker can still change his or her mind. But in I leave, it is more likely that other forces have predetermined the occurrence of this event (e.g. these are your orders, etc.).

To summarize, notice that we have just seen four different examples of the same semantic distinction between the progressive and the simple present. A lexical framework is particulary amenable to discovering and expressing these types of generalizations for L2 grammar teaching.

The weak/strong generalization suggests the following types of GCR activities:

(9) a. They're being silent.
- What could they be? flowers? children? birds? raindrops?

b. What is the difference between each pair of sentences below?

- I live on Dobb Road.	I'm living on Dobb Road.
- He wears a tie to school.	He's wearing a tie to school.
- James is polite.	James is being polite.

Match each of the following sentences with one of the above sentences to form an appropriate context.
- He usually wears jeans and a T-shirt, however.
- I've lived there all my life.
- He has very good manners.
- I just moved there a few weeks ago.
- He's typically very rude.
- He's a very formal dresser.

Once again, the goal of these activities is to integrate these grammatical structures into the lexical knowledge of the learner. Like the lexical

knowledge of vocabulary words, lexical knowledge of grammatical structures means having available a whole network of associations, appropriate situations, connotations, inferences, etc. GCR activities should try to draw out this knowledge. By setting up contexts, for example, learners become accustomed to questions like the following:

What comes to mind when you hear X?
Why say it this way?
How does the speaker feel?
What are the clues?
What are possible outcomes of these sentences?

The purpose of these exercises is to tap the kind of information that comes to mind when the sentences are used appropriately. They encourage learners to build up a wide variety of circumstances and semantic networks related to the target sentences. All of this is lexical knowledge.

The Present Perfect

The final examples of lexical-semantic CGR activities relate to the present perfect/simple past distinction. They exhibit a well-known indefinite/definite contrast similar to that found between the English indefinite and definite articles a and the. This distinction is amenable to various GCR activities on cohesion. For example, consider the GCR activities where learners assemble small discourses (e.g. paragraphs) from unordered lists of sentences. The present perfect/simple past contrast should explicity be one of the features included in the list of sentences. In (10) below, for example, we see the definite and indefinite articles, the present perfect, the simple past, and pronominalization features all working together to form a cohesive discourse. Tense and aspect, e.g. the simple present and present perfect, are important features of this cohesive relationship:

(10) The Present Perfect
Order the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph. Discuss the reasons for the particular order that you choose.
- He jumped from the window into a creek.
- No one knows exactly where he found the ladder.
- Another prisoner has escaped from the local prison.
- He swam across the creek, climbed over a wall, stole a car, and drove away.
- Sometime during the night, the prisoner used a ladder in order to reach a high window.

Finally, the notion of presupposition in lexical semantics also carries over to grammatical patterns in ESL. Recall that one of the major assumptions of GCR concerns seeking the cognitive correlates of the grammatical system, rather than just studying the forms themselves. As examples of cognitive correlates, Rutherford (1987) specifically refers to the presuppositions of the determiner system, which are necessary for their appropriate use. Since the definite/indefinite distinction of the determiner system also plays a role in the simple past/present perfect contrast, I propose that we seek the cognitive correlates of the simple past/present perfect contrast, namely, certain presuppositions that constrain their use in discourse. This is

illustrated in the final example, (11) below:

(11) Suppose you are in the following situation. You are in the lounge at work reading a magazine article. You read about something that reminds you of a character in a Chekov play that you once read. A co-worker walks in.

Which of the following questions would be more appropriate for you to ask your co-worker. Why?
- Did you read any of Chekov's plays?
- Have you read any of Chekov's plays?

Compare the two responses. Why are they different?
- Did you read any of Chekov's plays?
  No, was I supposed to? Why do you ask?

- Have you read any of Chekov's plays?
  No, never. Why do you ask?

The use of the simple past suggests a definite past time and therefore the inappropriate presupposition that something was supposed to be done. This type of example illustrates an important difference in the use of the simple past and the present perfect in discourse.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper I have presented a number of examples of the kinds of lexical knowledge which systematically relate to grammar. I have demonstrated how this information, in turn, is related to GCR.

Finally, let me conclude be saying that the vastness of the information networks in a lexical framework underscores the importance of teaching students various strategies which encourage schema building, associational thinking, inferencing, etc. These strategies sensitize learners to the interface of form, function and meaning in context. Most importantly, they sensitize learners to discovering this type of information *for themselves* in their language development. Ultimately, it is in this sense that lexical-semantic GCR activities can make a significant contribution to the language learning process.

REFERENCES

Bland, S. K. 1981. Applied lexical semantics: presuppositions and vocabulary teaching. Paper presented at TESOL '81, Detroit.

-----. 1987. A lexical-semantic approach to L2 grammar teaching. Paper presented at the Grammar Teaching / Grammar Learning Conference. Georgia State University, December 4-5, 1987.

-----. 1988. The present progressive in discourse: grammar versus usage revisited. TESOL Quarterly 22 1, 53-68.

Dowty, D. 1979. Word meaning and Montague grammar. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Fillmore, C. 1971. Verbs of judging: an exercise in semantic description. Studies in Linguistic Semantics, ed. by C. Fillmore and T. Langendoen. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Givón, T. 1979. On Understanding Grammar. New York: Academic Press.

Grice, P. 1975. Logic and conversation. Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts, ed. by P. Cole and J. Morgan, 41-58. New York: Academic Press.

King, L. 1983. Tense, orientation, and aspect. Lingua 59.

Rutherford, W. 1987. Second Language Grammar: Learning and Teaching. London: Longman.

Rutherford, W and M. Sharwood Smith (eds.) 1988. Grammar and Second Language Teaching. New York: Newbury House.

Smith, C. 1983. A theory of aspectual choice. Language 59.479-501.

Yorio, C. 1980. Conventionalized language forms and the development of communicative competence. TESOL Quarterly 14 4, 433-442.