As recent years have brought with them a post-method pedagogy in language teaching where educators are recognizing the need to create a more holistic and context-driven approach to teaching a language in a given environment, so too has the need for a more communicative language teaching approach arisen where learners acquire productivity in the target language to communicate effectively, rather than simply gaining theoretical and abstract knowledge of the language (Duff, 2014; Kumaravadivelu, 2001). While Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), with information exchange, group work, and negotiation of meaning is not a mutually exclusive concept with explicit grammar teaching, teaching grammar in a communicative way, where students move beyond forms and begin to explore and experiment with meaning and use, often proves challenging and does not appear in all of textbooks or classrooms (Larsen-Freeman, 2014). Grammar and Beyond, 3 takes on this challenge and claims to present grammar in a communicative, corpus-based way without eliminating explicit grammar instruction. In doing so, it presents grammatical forms in a contextualized way that facilitates communicative tasks, rather than simply isolated focus on form occurrences (Ellis, 2006). To make it even more applicable to students, the book uses a corpus-based approach to expose students to real world uses of the forms and then engages them in “grammaring” to create productions with the grammar that incorporates structure, semantics, and pragmatics (Larsen-Freeman, 2014).

Overview

The Grammar and Beyond series through Cambridge University Press (2012-2014) offers grammar learning materials to English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) language learners through four levels of difficulty, ranging from beginning to advanced learners, and all have accompanying student and teacher resources (Blass, Iannuzzi, Savage, & Reppen, 2012). In this particular review, I will be focusing my attention on the Grammar and Beyond 3, Student’s Book for intermediate high students with the Test of English as a Foreign Language Internet-based Test (TOEFL iBT) scores between 55 and 74 and the Common European Framework of Reference Levels (CEFR) from B1 to B2. While it does contain many additional resources that make it suitable for a classroom environment, the authors explain that the book can also be used as a “self-study learning tool” (p. ix).

Format. Each unit of Grammar and Beyond, 3 begins with a ‘Grammar in the Real World’ activity where students are asked to notice specific grammatical forms and their uses from a text prior to an explicit explanation of such forms. For example, students may read an
article on shopping addiction that uses several adverb clauses and will be asked whether given clauses “introduce contrasting ideas” or “give a reason” (Blass et al., 2012, p. 366-367). Following this contextualization, the grammar is presented in a chart defining its varying uses and forms, after which students are asked to apply it in a variety of activities such as combining sentences and filling in blanks. This enables students to have learned rules inductively before moving on to a more deductive approach (Ellis, 2006). Each unit also includes group work activities and discussions. Units are front-loaded with the most common forms of that grammatical structure, with less common forms introduced after students have already been asked to apply the initial concepts. There were instances in later sections of some chapters that may be possible to skip or generalize, as they began to enter too complex of detail for what seemed helpful to a class at the intermediate level.

The multitude of language learning activities throughout each unit that reflect the themes while applying the grammar in different ways engage students by varying task-types and addressing all four language skills. For example, ‘Unit 21, Subject Relative Clauses’ asks students to read a passage to answer questions, and then listen to an article to fill in the blanks of sentences, and later to work with a partner, and finally ends with a writing task using subject relative clauses. All together, these activities create varied and cohesive units that allow students to practice the grammar forms while also effectively honing all four skills in a contextualized and meaningful manner (Duff, 2014).

Evaluation of Claims

Usability

The authors of Grammar and Beyond, 3 claim to present “clear and simple charts” of grammar concepts throughout each chapter that identify grammar forms, their syntactic requirements, and examples (Blass et al., 2012, p. x). While this claim is substantiated because these charts do provide clear information about given grammar points, they seem to assume that students are already acquainted with such forms prior to using this book. It is true that Level 3 is intended for high intermediate language learners, who presumably should already have been introduced to these forms (Ellis, 2006), but the language used to explain the nuances of some of these grammatical structures and their definitions may be difficult for some students to decipher independently. The metalinguistic terminology and sometimes only subtle nuances in the different explanation between different forms often require close scrutiny to decipher, which is something that can prove difficult for intermediate language learners.

That being said, the authors present these charts detailing the given grammar topics in a rational order throughout the chapter and provide all of the essential information in an organized manner, thereby indicating that many grammatical nuances are simply difficult to present to learners. Simply put, the authors do a primarily successful job of outlining complex grammar points in a logical way, and the shortcomings of this book that are described are relatively small in comparison to its highlights. This does, however, make this book’s claim to be an optional “self-study learning tool” somewhat more difficult and encourages its use within a classroom context with a teacher, instead (p. ix).
Corpus-based research

Randi Reppen, a leading researcher in corpora use in language teaching, is the corpus consultant for *Grammar and Beyond, 3* (Reppen, 2010). Her expertise, coupled with the reliance on the *Cambridge English Corpus*, lends credibility to the series and indicates the reliability of the textbook and its associated components. Drawing on a multi-billion word corpus as a basis for organization and the creation of the entire textbook, its grammatical explanations, and its communicative activities sets students up for success by using authentic materials to present the three dimension of grammar (Cambridge University Press, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2014). The ‘Data from the Real World’ sections illustrate this clearly. Particularly in an EFL context, where access to authentic material is more limited, this is a valuable tool in helping students speak and write in a more target-like manner.

Curricular considerations

While *Grammar and Beyond, 3* incorporates all four skills in each unit, it is first and foremost, a grammar book, which will affect its potential fit within a curriculum (Bryd & Schuemann, 2014). The book itself provides plenty of grammatical instruction and a variety of applications, but it provides very little explicit instruction in regards to the four major language skills. Even though the book does explain that it emphasizes grammar present in academic writing, it does not, nor does it claim to, actually teach many specific writing skills beyond the grammatical forms that they highlight for that context. For this reason, the book may best function as a supplement to an ESL or EFL course and could easily complement grammatical units presented in reading or writing books. If, however, it were to be used in a grammar-only course, this book would work very will with little additional supplementation necessary. It does still have some related resources that could add to its versatility.

Reflection

*Grammar and Beyond, 3* and its related resources offer a wide-ranging approach to grammar that accentuates real-world applications and touches on all four language skills. This textbook can easily serve as a main textbook for a grammar course, be incorporated into a high intermediate ESL or EFL classroom, particularly in a writing classroom, or serve as a self-study tool or reference for students. Its corpus-based, three-dimensional framework approach demonstrates a clear pedagogical process of presentation and learning that can help keep students engaged with its wide variety of tasks and themes. The themes that enable students to contextualize their communication and the use of real-world data from a multibillion word corpus to authenticate the productions really underscore the communicative nature of this textbook and how the authors meet their expressed goals. Considering the plethora of challenges to a textbook that can contextualize grammar, make it meaningful and approachable to students, and still provide implicit and explicit exercises to engage students in communicative tasks, *Grammar and Beyond, 3* is a textbook that meets all of these aims and still has the versatility to pull its weight as a grammar course’s main textbook, supplement another course, or simply act a quick reference book to keep nearby.
References