

Boris Hlebec, *Engleski za perfekcionista*. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2011, pp. 159.

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As the title itself suggests, this book is intended for those who wish to improve their language skills, to reach a proficient level of English or simply to catch up on those issues that they missed out on and never got round to acquire fully. It does not address some of the fundamental issues in English grammar, or if it does, the explanations provided here are on a much more complex level. The author also points out that most of the issues presented here have been acquired on a lower level and taught in such a way which led students to infer only a limited number of uses for a certain grammatical construction. Therefore, this book aims at those issues representing the obstacle which all the speakers of English must overcome in order to feel more confident in the overall knowledge of the language.

It is artfully written in the form of questions and answers, thus creating the impression of one being in a classroom and asking questions about all those issues which from time to time trouble even the most accomplished speakers or have bothered dedicated learners of English for a very long time and immediately getting the desired answer. This book represents the collection of 393 questions and corresponding answers. Those forms whose meaning and use could be worked out by speakers themselves have not been discussed in this book, due to the identical use of those issues in the Serbian language. Furthermore, there is an index at the back of the book whose function is to help learners find the topic they are dealing with. It is divided into two parts: *Gramatičke kategorije* (eng. Grammatical categories) and *Engleski oblici* (eng. English word classes). The author makes the use of the index more manageable by listing all the possible contexts in which one item may appear in this book and providing each with the appropriate page number.

Although, at first sight one might think that this book comprises a series of random questions and respective answers, a pattern emerges according to which all the questions and answers can be organized into several thematic groups. I have identified several such groups: Questions 1–8 deal with specific uses of English tenses. This is at the same time the order which most grammar books tend to follow, that is, start with presenting the most common uses of tenses, their forms, and general guidelines regarding the difference between the uses of two given tenses. However, only rare points have been discussed here, such as: which tense to use when describing a picture, or whether state verbs can follow verbs *keep* and *continue*, etc. Questions 9–12 deal with the subjunctive mood and conditionals. Questions 13–18 mainly deal with modal verbs. One interesting aspect of this form of writing is that there are certain questions, that is,

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pairs of questions which discuss the same issue. While the first question tends to provide us with the basic information on the topic, the second question is reserved for more comprehensive learners. Questions 36–39 deal with phrasal verbs and idioms. Questions 40–44 and their respective answers illustrate the use of participles in context, as well as some similarity in the use of present participle and corresponding construction in the Serbian language. Questions 45–71 refer to a range of issues concerning determiners (articles, quantifiers) and word classes such as countable/uncountable nouns, numbers, and various types of pronouns. Questions 72–94 are concerned with various uses of modal verbs such as *may*, *can*, *might*, etc. The advantage of this form of writing is that it can illustrate certain grammatical constructions in the context of speakers' native language, so that their meaning and the use of adequate construction is clear to them. Most speakers tend to make mistakes when it comes to modal verb *could* referring to present/future or past. That issue is disambiguated here by translating two sentences into English and providing an explanation for each grammatical construction.

Questions 95–133 deal with various forms of infinitive and gerund constructions. One such question and the appropriate answer aim to broaden particular uses of these constructions by providing us with more details regarding one aspect. For example, question 96 discusses whether we can use sentence *I'd like to have visited Spain* or *I'd have liked to visit Spain* (p. 42) to express an unfulfilled wish. Questions 134–145 mainly deal with some ambiguous issues regarding sequence of tenses, conditionals and reported speech. For example, the initial supposition in question 143 is that the speakers know that *Present Simple Tense* and *Present Progressive* can be used to express actions which will happen at some point in the future. However, the difference in meaning of these two tenses is further analyzed here. Questions 146–169 discuss diverse uses of adverbs and adverbial phrases. Questions 170–197 deal with the forms of different word classes, such as the genitive case of nouns and pronouns, some functions of nouns, comparative forms, gender, etc.

Questions 198–206 discuss the passive voice. Questions 207–217 deal with specific forms of the verb *have* such as *causative have*, question tag, *have to*, the difference in the use of verbs *have* and *do* with some nouns and so on. Questions 218–223 discuss transitive and intransitive verbs. Questions 224–282, that is, their respective answers offer explanation to all those queries we all have when it comes to certain forms of compounds, pronouns, adjectives, quantifiers, predeterminers, superlatives and the definite article.

Questions 288–305 discuss prepositions in various positions in a sentence and prepositional phrases as well. One point that I would emphasize in this part is question 304. It provides us with the extensive explanation regarding the situations in which prepositions are placed in the final position in a sentence. Questions 306–313 deal with some random grammatical issues. Thus, question 310 suggests possible grammatical constructions in English that are used to translate the sentence "*Kako to da ona još nije stigla*?" (p. 121). Questions 313–333 deal with rare uses of some modal and semi-modal verbs, as well as several specific uses of the passive voice. In questions 334–340, the focus is again on parts of speech (prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs, determiners). Questions 341–378 deal with some less frequent uses of English tenses, gerund, infinitive, helping verbs, etc. Another advantage of this book is that some issues

discussed here refer to single pieces of information. For example, question 353 relates to the negation of infinitives. On the other hand, question 363 and the corresponding answer offer a comprehensive explanation regarding the verbs which express feelings and senses, when used in continuous form.

I have selected several questions and corresponding answers from this book, which in my opinion best illustrate the author's intention to present some grammatical constructions in an innovative way. For example, there are some questions and answers that refer to the fundamental uses of certain grammatical issues, but which are here explained so as to cater for the needs of those who wish to know more on the topic. For example, point 63 and its answer offer a thorough explanation of the functions of predeterminer or pronoun *some*, point 145 discusses the difference between sentences *I'm selling my car* and *I'm going to sell my car* (p. 57), point 150 refers to the meaning and use of adverbs and it also provides examples of various types of single-word adverbs, point 190 extensively explains how the nouns expressing nationalities are formed, while point 361 explains the difference between sentences *I repaired a chair this morning* and *I was repairing a chair this morning* (p. 136). Most speakers are well aware of the situations in which these two tenses are used, but this point tackles subtler differences in their use.

Furthermore, there are certain points which are explained through the language skill of translation. It is of considerable difficulty for non-native speakers of English to discern all the possible contexts in which one grammatical construction can be used. Several interesting examples are illustrated in this book: point 92 discusses the translation of the sentence *Nameravao sam da popravim bicikl* (p. 41), and thus emphasizes one of the uses of past tenses, point 388 provides an example *Šta misliš, ko me poslao?* (p. 145), which is of great interest from the point of grammar when translated into English.

There are also several constructions which speakers unconsciously use in everyday speech, but which sometimes confuse even the most proficient speakers. For example, point 47 explains whether indefinite article has to be repeated as in the phrase *a man and a woman* (p. 23), or the second one can be omitted, point 54 also discusses one ambiguous form. Namely, most speakers instinctively add suffix *-s* to the nouns *hundred*, *thousand*, *dozen* when a number precedes them. This point differentiates between situations where such nouns are used in the singular and the plural form. Point 359 discusses difference in meaning between sentences *Where are you living now?* and *Where do you live now?* (p. 135). These sentences illustrate situations in which we would take the choice of tense for granted, while they carry a significant change in meaning if chosen correctly.

To sum up, *Engleski za perfekcioniste* presents a grammar textbook with comprehensive explanations inasmuch as the examples provided here are analyzed from a number of aspects: stylistic, grammatical and semantic. It is ideal for those learners who wish to expand their overall knowledge of the English language and tackle various grammatical constructions on a higher level.