The interest in Pedagogical Grammars or Grammar (PG) reflects a growing sensitivity to the role which grammars play at the point of interaction between the learner, the material to be learned, and the teacher. Among the issues which engage the attention of applied linguists and teachers are whether PG should be descriptive or prescriptive, the proper relation between PG and other kinds of grammar, the psycholinguistic foundations for learning via explicit grammar teaching, the nature and choice of the object to be taught (linguistic selection), and the macro- and micro-organization of a grammar. Attention has to be divided between what people argue ought to be done (theory), what people do in practice, and attempts to answer the above questions empirically (research) (see reviews by Shirai and by Schachter in Volume 4).

EARLY HISTORY

It is probably safe to assume that all or most early grammars (Greek and Latin) started from some pedagogical purpose. Although later grammars were written for teaching Latin or Greek as second – and not only as first – languages, it was some centuries before grammars were produced explicitly with the non-native user in mind.

The Renaissance, and the advent of printing, gave a strong impetus to this development. Most early descriptions of vernacular languages were written with the aim of facilitating communication between travellers, merchants, etc. The rapid increase in the production of grammars during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was perceived in Europe as a source of terminological, theoretical, and methodological confusion. In England, Henry VIII decreed that only one grammar – Lily’s – should be licensed for teaching Latin in schools. In Germany, the same perception led not to a single imposed solution for the Holy Roman Empire, but to conscious attempts to didacticise grammar – i.e. to strip it to its essentials, and to ‘harmonize’ or unify the grammatical terminology (and with it the grammatical categories) used to teach different languages. One may see in this period, then, early attempts to produce PGs designed to accommodate the requirements of the learner, in contradistinction to conventional grammars, which simply recorded ‘the facts’.
The vernaculars were not universally installed as curriculum subjects in European schools and universities until the nineteenth century. This development accentuated the gap between descriptive grammars and the requirements of schools. Curtius wrote his Greek grammar explicitly, ‘to make fruitful for practical teaching purposes at least some of the results from comparative linguistics’ (Curtius, 1852, p. iv). Viëtor was one of the first to concentrate on the tensions between ‘scientific grammar’ and PG in his paper ‘Scientific grammar and English teaching’ (Viëtor, 1880).

FROM 1900 TO THE PRESENT

The main developments in theory were concerned with the relation between grammar and lexicon, the nature of first and second language acquisition, the elimination of error, and the nature of PG and its relations with other disciplines.

The most influential tendency in grammar during the first half of this century was the divorce of syntax from meaning. In PG this led to an emphasis on structure and associationist or behaviourist methods, which was reinforced by developments in psychology. In Halliday et al. (1964) a clear distinction was drawn between lexis and grammar, and related to the distinction between open and closed lexical classes or sets. This accentuated the distinction between grammar and lexicon. An exception to this trend was Palmer (1938), who recognized that lexemes, too, have grammar, and that major lexical items cannot be learned successfully in isolation from the structures they control.

Language acquisition research was to sharpen the distinction between behaviourist and mentalist views of how language is acquired. Indirectly, it led to two different approaches, still identifiable, one of which has crystallized into PG. The first locates the linguistic material on the level of objectives, and embeds these in systematic progression in different content. PG by contrast makes the linguistic material the object of study, on the assumption that some kind of transfer will take place from conscious knowledge to linguistic competence (the Teachability Hypothesis). At this stage, however, the task of PG was seen as providing exercises to develop habits, rather than descriptions or explanations of language.

Structuralism made its influence felt in the Contrastive Structure Series (Chicago University Press). Based on the old hypothesis that any two languages share much in common, so that teaching can be concentrated on areas of difference, this series provided contrastive accounts of the grammar and phonologies of pairs of languages. Theoretical and practical difficulties with this approach led to Contrastive Analysis being superseded by Error Analysis (EA) – research into the actual errors made by second language acquirers – and a comparison of these with errors made by native acquirers. Similarities between these patterns across speakers of different