

Extension exercises

Chapter 15: The past

Exploring English

Listen attentively to people talking about the past. Ideally this should be unscripted (for example, friends talking or a radio or television interview), but if you don't have access to this, you could also use part of a feature film. If you have access to the necessary technology, record this so that you can listen to it several times and even write it down.

- 1 Identify examples of past simple, past perfect and past continuous tenses.
- 2 Explain to yourself why the tenses are used in this context.
- 3 Account for any unexpected or unconventional uses of tenses.

Course materials

Choose one of the tenses considered in this chapter (for example, past perfect simple), and find the parts of two coursebooks in which this is taught. You may find that the approach in the two books is similar, but you may also find that there are significant differences.

- 1 What 'rules' are provided? How accurate, comprehensive, clear and useful are they?
- 2 What kinds of texts are provided? Are these real or are they especially constructed to provide examples of a particular rule? If they are especially constructed, how natural are they?
- 3 Are learners guided to work out the meaning of the language for themselves?
- 4 Does the material suggest that we can choose between different forms, or does it suggest that there is always one, 'correct' form in any context?
- 5 To what extent are the uses of different forms compared and contrasted (for example, is the past continuous compared with the past simple)?
- 6 What opportunities are provided for practice of the language? Do these involve simple choices between tenses? Do they involve more extended creative speaking or writing? Do they provide opportunities for students to work together? Does the material include exercises which demand one answer when more than one would be possible?
- 7 How much attention do the books pay to this aspect of grammar compared to other grammatical topics?
- 8 Think of a particular group of learners. How far do you think this degree of attention is appropriate?