Investigating Multi-Word Items in a Contemporary ELT Course Book

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Research in corpus linguistics and language acquisition has resulted in an increasing awareness that a significant amount of authentic language is made up of and processed as multi-word "chunks" (Sinclair, 1991; Biber & Conrad, 1999). It has become clear that awareness of such multi-word items (MWIs) can enhance language proficiency for learners in areas such as processing speed and pragmatic competence. However, only a small number of studies have investigated MWIs represented in language teaching materials. This exploratory study investigated MWIs in the course book *English Firsthand 1, 4th edition* (Helgesen, Brown, & Wiltshier, 2010) by using a large-scale corpus to determine the frequency at which these items exist in samples of authentic language. The study showed that while this course book incorporates many MWIs, a large proportion of them may be unrepresentative of authentic language and therefore have limited value to the learners in question.

コーパスと言語習得の研究によって、多くの一般的な言いまわしは複数の単語で構成されている定型文（multi-word items）であるという認識が高まってきている（Sinclair, 1991; Biber & Conrad, 1999）。その定型文の利用によって、学習者の流暢さや語用的な能力などを高めるということが明らかになっている。しかし、言語教育の教材に使用されている定型文を分析する研究はまだ少ない。本研究は大規模なコーパスを用いてEnglish Firsthand 1, 4th edition（Helgesen, Brown, & Wiltshier, 2010）という教科書に使用されている語彙的定型文はどこまで自然で代表的な英語であるかを検証する。その結果は、本教科書において定型文が数多く載っているが、対象の学習者にとって教育的に役に立たない定型文も数多く載っているということを表している。

In recent years there have been a large number of studies in the areas of phraseology and collocation. However, the definitions and terminology used to describe such language have varied due to their range of structural fixedness. In the literature these include *lexical phrases* (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992), *lexical bundles* (Biber & Conrad, 1999) and *formulaic language* (Wray, 2008). For this study it was decided to adopt the terminology *multi-word items* (MWIs) provided by Moon (1997), who described them as sequences of two or more words occurring together with a high degree of regularity and limited degree of structural variation. Examples of such language range from multi-word compounds to phrasal verbs and fixed or semi-fixed expressions. Although MWIs contrast with language that is syntactically constructed, their degree of fixedness allows for limited variation such as verb inflections, pluralization, or substitution of a single noun or up to two intervening words after a verb (see Table 1).

Table 1. Differentiating MWIs and Syntactically Constructed Language

MWIs	Syntactically constructed
[fixed] of course [semi-fixed] a lot of (money) [semi-fixed] take (good) care of	I'm going to the park today. Are you feeling alright?

Benefits of MWIs

A range of research has shown that recognition of MWIs can provide a number of benefits to second language learners. Recent corpus studies have suggested that MWIs are more prevalent in language than previously thought, with MWIs comprising from 20-50% of all language (Erman & Warran, 2000; Biber & Conrad, 1999). A number of studies on second language learners have also shown that knowledge of MWIs enhances the speed of encoding and decoding language and hence fluency (Ellis, 1996; Wood, 2007). Lewis (1993) and Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) also argued that knowledge of functional MWI expressions, such as those used to clarify meaning or manage discourse, enhances pragmatic competence, giving immediate communicative benefits even to lower proficiency-level learners.

Evaluation of MWIs

To investigate MWIs in the course book in question, firstly criteria for investigation needed to be established. Clearly, a number of considerations such as frequency, range, learnability, and learner interests can be taken into account when evaluating the potential usefulness of lexis for syllabus design and materials (Mackey, 1965; White, 1988). For the purpose of this study, frequency and range were selected to evaluate the usefulness of MWIs to learners. High frequency language provides lexis that the learner is most likely to reencounter and therefore most representative of authentic language. Range ensures that the lexis in question is used across a variety of language registers and genres such as casual conversation, news programs, and magazines. Recent developments in the size of large scale, computer-based corpora provide much larger samples of language, and accordingly frequency and range can now be estimated with increasing degrees of accuracy. Although it is accepted that other considerations also need to be made when evaluating the pedagogical usefulness of MWIs to learners, frequency and range are generally considered to be primary criteria (Nation & Waring, 1997; Sinclair, 1991).

Previous Studies

It is clear from the literature that MWIs have a more prominent role in language than previously thought. Despite this, there have been only a small number of studies investigating the use of MWIs in ELT course books to date, and all have generally identified deficiencies in course book treatment of MWIs (Hsu, 2008; Koprowski, 2005; Meunier & Gouverneur, 2007).

Among the studies, Koprowski's (2005) stood out as particularly relevant to the current study. In Koprowski's study, MWIs were investigated in a small number of upper intermediate proficiency-level ELT course books. Using corpus frequency and range data, Koprowski concluded that not only did there appear to be no standardized criteria for MWI selection in the course books, but a large percentage of the MWIs selected had disproportionately low frequency and range values, suggesting limited pedagogical value to the target learners.

The studies identified to date have all focused on intermediate to advanced proficiency-level course books. In this study it was decided to adopt a methodology similar to that of Kowproski's

(2005) study, but apply it to lower proficiency-level teaching materials.

Method

The course book selected for this study was *English Firsthand 1, 4th Edition* (Helgesen, Brown, & Wiltshier, 2010). This book was used by this writer and a number of colleagues who teach EGP (English for General Purposes) courses in private Japanese university contexts. The learners were non-English majors from upper beginner (false beginner) to preintermediate proficiency levels. Published in 2010, this course book is contemporary and could potentially have accommodated the more recent developments in the understanding of MWIs outlined earlier.

All MWIs included in the course book were identified from the individual units' target vocabulary summaries in the course book appendix. These vocabulary lists were summaries of what the writers considered key words and phrases that were explicitly covered in the units. To differentiate the MWIs from more syntactically generated language covered in the units, care was taken to include only items that were explicitly introduced by the course book as complete units or chunks of vocabulary. Some examples of these were *alarm clock* (unit 4) and *excuse me?* (unit 5).

Determining Frequency and Range

A large-scale corpus was used to identify the frequency and range of each MWI. The corpus chosen for this study was The Bank of English Corpus (BOE; see Appendix A). This corpus was selected because it contained only language samples taken from countries where English is spoken as a first language (for example the UK and the US) and could therefore be considered a reasonably representative sample of authentic English. Also, as of 2008, this corpus consisted of approximately 450 million words including 20 subcorpora that cover a wide range of both written and transcribed spoken language, giving a large and wide-ranging sample size.

For the purpose of this study, it was decided to adopt the methodology developed by Koprowski (2005). This allowed for single numerical values to be calculated for each MWI, incorporating both corpus frequency and range data, allowing the MWIs to be easily compared and ranked. It also provided objective criteria for dealing with the structural variations of the MWIs outlined earlier. In accordance with Koprowski's methodology, R-scores for all MWIs identified were calculated by averaging the individual MWI corpus frequency values over the five subcorpora in which the items occurred most frequently. In other words, to get the R-score for each MWI, the frequencies (words per million) of the five subcorpora where the MWI occurred the most were totaled and divided by five. For example, for the MWI *healthy lifestyle*, the top five subcorpora were UK ephemera, US ephemera, UK books, Oz (Australian) papers, and UK magazines. By averaging these respective frequencies an R-score of 1.02 was calculated (see Table 2). Accordingly, a higher R-score suggests the MWI in question is more representative of authentic language.

Table 2. Calculation of R-Score for *Healthy Lifestyle*

MWI	UK ephemera	US ephemera	UK books	Oz papers	UK magazines	R-score
healthy lifestyle	1.9	1.1	0.8	0.7	0.6	1.02

In the case of MWIs exhibiting structural variations or polysemy, only the meanings in the context of the course book were considered. Pluralization, verb inflections, intervening words, and spelling variations were also taken into account (see Appendix B).

Results and Discussion

First, the total number of MWIs in the course book was tallied and calculated as a percentage of the total course book lexis (see Table 3). Next, R-scores were calculated for all MWIs identified, and then mean, median, and statistical range values were calculated for the course book as a whole (see Table 4).

Table 3. Number of MWIs Compared to Total Lexis

Total MWIs	Total lexis
220 (31.7%)	693 (100%)

Table 4. Total MWI R-Scores

Mean	Median	Statistical range
12.3	3.2	0.0-340.0

It is clear from the results that a significant proportion (31.7%) of the course book lexis is devoted to MWIs and there is a very wide statistical range of R-scores. Additionally, the proportionally low median value indicates that a significant number of MWIs have comparatively very low R-scores.

Number of MWIs and R-scores

A significant proportion of course book lexis is devoted to MWIs. Furthermore, with R-scores as high as 340, it is clear that some items have very high frequencies and ranges (see Table 5).

Table 5. Top 10 MWI R-scores

MWI	R-score
about (170 cm)	340.04
pay for	131.7
set up	109.98
credit card	97.22
pick up	93.92
in front of	83.48
on (that) street	82.06
I hope . . .	81.82
is born	67.85
every day	66.82

However, the widely varying R-scores suggest the course book writers are not consistently referring to corpus-based MWI frequency and range lists when making selections. This in turn suggests they are not consistently presenting language that is representative of authentic English.

Further Investigation of Disproportionately Low R-scores

As outlined above, the R-scores exhibit very wide statistical ranges with comparatively low median values, suggesting a large proportion of R-scores are disproportionately low. Accordingly, it was decided to further investigate the proportion

of MWIs with comparatively very low R-scores. There appears to be no external criteria in the literature that can be used to determine what is a suitable minimum frequency or range for different learner proficiency levels. However, it was decided to investigate the proportion of R-scores under 0.5. This value is equivalent to one time per two million words, and refers to words occurring fewer than approximately 225 times in the 450 million word BOE corpus (0.00005% of the corpus), Examples of single words with similar R-scores are *rejectionist* (64 occurrences, R-score = 0.5) and *microflora* (22 occurrences, R-score = 0.3). Clearly, equivalent MWIs would have limited value to an upper beginner proficiency-level learner, even for purely receptive purposes. Accordingly, all MWIs with R-scores under 0.5 were identified (see Table 6).

Table 6. Total MWIs With R-scores Under 0.5

Total MWIs	MWIs under 0.5
220	73 (25.9%)

The results show that over a quarter (25.9%) of all MWIs identified have R-scores under 0.5. It was also discovered that, of these MWIs, the lowest 20 MWIs all have R-scores under 0.1, with five not occurring in the 450 million word corpus even one time (see Table 7).

Table 7. 20 Lowest R-Scores

MWI	R-score
has (a) round face	0.08
phone store	0.08
game center	0.06
import company	0.06
post office clerk	0.06
TV anchor	0.06
do fun stuff	0.04
computer table	0.04
rainbow-striped	0.04
portable DVD player	0.04
late 20s	0.02
poetry slam	0.02
mini-notebook computer	0
How do you say (that) in English?	0
culture festival	0
close your book	0
doing fingernail art	!
magic club	!
don't do anything special	!
I don't understand yet	!
karaoke place	!

Note. ! = no occurances in corpus

Issues Concerning Disproportionately Low R-scores

The results show approximately 25% of the MWIs studied have R-scores under 0.5, indicating that these items have very low frequency and range values. This suggests that these items are unrepresentative of authentic language and therefore of limited value to the learners in question. This is particularly worrying for upper beginner proficiency-level learners, whose materials would be expected to start with the most commonly used MWIs.

In many cases, the MWIs in question could be easily replaced with MWIs that have similar meanings but significantly higher R-scores. For example, *mini-notebook computer* has an R-score of 0; however, simply replacing the item with *laptop computer* would increase the R-score to 2.5. Another example would be replacing *computer table* (R-score = 0.04) with *computer desk* (R-score = 0.12).

As mentioned earlier, course book writers also consider factors other than representativeness when selecting MWIs. Some MWIs with low frequency and range values may have other pedagogical value such as relevance to learners or learnability. In this course book, there appear to be a small number of MWIs that fit into this category. For example, of the MWIs identified with low R-scores, *How do you say (that) in English?* (R-score = 0) would likely have particular pragmatic value to a second language learner. Also, an MWI like *close your book* (R-score = 0) may be useful in classroom management.

However, most of the MWIs with low R-scores would appear to have very limited value to the learners in question. The use of corpus-derived frequency and range data, while not the only pedagogical consideration, can at least provide an empirically based starting point for MWI selection. Failure to consider language authenticity, to at least remove questionable material, is doing a disservice to the students.

Conclusion

This study showed that a large number of MWIs are presented in the course book investigated, with MWIs making up over 30% of the total lexis covered. However, although it is generally accepted in the literature that frequency and range should be primary criteria for lexis selection (Nation & Waring, 1997; White 1988), the MWIs identified have significant variations in these values.

Most importantly, the corpus analysis revealed that over 25% of the MWIs investigated have extremely low frequency and range values, to the extent that a number of them do not even occur one time in a 450 million word corpus. This suggests a significant proportion of MWIs investigated are unrepresentative of real-life English, making them of limited value to the learners in question, at least on the basis of language authenticity. Furthermore, a number of the low-frequency items could be easily replaced with alternative or shorter MWIs, resulting in significantly higher frequencies and ranges.

It is clear that frequency and range data need to be given more consideration in MWI selection for this course book. At the very least, MWI frequency and ranges need to be checked, and those with very low values omitted or annotated in some way. Large-scale corpora and corpus-based materials are now widely available and can be easily accessed by not only course book writers but also educators and learners. Examples of these are the BNC (British National Corpus) and the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English), both of which offer free online access. Pedagogically-based, corpus-derived materials such as the *Phrasal Expressions List* (Martinez & Schmitt, 2012) and lists of frequently spoken collocations (Shin & Nation, 2008) are also useful starting points when deciding which MWIs to select for course books.

It is also important to remember a number of limitations when considering the results of this exploratory study. Firstly, course book writers are likely faced with a number of other issues when selecting MWIs. In addition to representativeness, factors such as relevance to learners and learnability also need to be taken into account. As a result, even inclusion of very low frequency and range MWIs may be pedagogically justified. Another limitation is the use of a corpus data to determine representativeness. A corpus can only provide an approximation of authentic language and will always have limits on amount

and type of language. Although the BOE corpus used in this study has approximately 450 million words and includes a wide variety of language, it has more written language and spoken British English, which could potentially distort the results of this study. However, even with such limitations in mind, use of corpora can provide empirically based data upon which to base course book language selection.

This is an exploratory study on a single course book, so clearly further research is needed before more concrete recommendations can be made. Repeating the study to check for frequency and range using other corpora or combination of copora, or even a different methodology for determining representativeness using frequency and range, may provide more support to the findings of this study. Also, further investigation of the course book writers' motivations for including such a significant number of unrepresentative MWIs may help clarify any possible alternative pedagogical justifications used. It would also be interesting to widen the study to investigate the representativeness of MWIs in other course books at the same proficiency level to see if similar results are obtained.

Bio Data

Paul McAleese began his teaching career in Japan after graduating from Waikato University in New Zealand. He began working at conversation schools and then, after completing the CELTA course, became active in ESP courses and testing. He later developed an interest in pragmatics and spoken discourse, and last year completed an MA in applied linguistics at the University of Birmingham. He is now teaching at a number of universities in the Kansai area. <paul@pomaka.com>

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Appendix A

The Bank of English Corpus (BOE)

The BOE is a computer-based collection of authentic English that, as of 2008, consists of approximately 450 million words. It was developed jointly by COBUILD (a division of Harper Collins Publishing) and the University of Birmingham, and is made up of 20 different subcorpora covering a wide range of both written and transcribed spoken language. The written subcorpora include samples from material such as magazines, newspapers, letters, nonfiction, and fiction books. The spoken subcorpora include transcribed samples from material such as casual conversation, meetings, radio, and discussions (see below for corpus profile). In order for the corpus to be as representative of authentic English as possible, all the language samples were taken from countries where English is used as a first language (for example the UK and the US). Most of the samples were entered into the BOE after 1990 and the BOE is periodically reviewed for language variety and balance to have the corpus continue to reasonably reflect contemporary English.

Table A1. Profile of BOE Corpus

Subcorpora	Number of words
US Academic books	6,341,888
US Ephemera	3,506,272
UK New Scientist	7,894,959
US Public radio	22,232,422
UK Sun/NoW	44,756,902
UK Books	43,367,592
UK Magazines	44,150,323
UK Guardian	32,274,484
UK Economist	15,716,140
UK BBC radio	18,604,882
US Spoken	2,023,482
UK Business	9,648,371
CA Canadian mixed corpus	15,920,137
OZ Papers	34,940,271
UK Ephemera	4,640,529
US Books	32,437,160
US Papers	10,002,620
UK Independent	28,075,280
UK Times	51,884,209
UK Spoken	20,078,901
TOTAL	448,496,824

Appendix B

Dealing with MWI Polysemy and Structural Variations

Polysemy

In cases where MWIs had potential multiple meanings, a random sample of 100 concordance lines containing the MWI was queried, the number having the original course book meaning was tallied, and then the original R-score was multiplied by this ratio. For example, *fill in* resulted in an initial R-score of 33.1, however only 82/100 of the random corpus concordance lines represented the same meaning as the course book, so the R-score was multiplied by 0.82 to give an adjusted R-score (see Table B1).

Table B1. Adjusting R-scores for Multiple Meanings

MWI	UK ephemera	US ephemera	UK books	Oz papers	UK magazines	R-score	Adjustment
fill in	68.3	26.7	25.8	23.1	21.6	27.14	x 0.82

My native speaker intuition was initially used to determine whether an MWI should be checked for multiple meanings. It is possible that some were not detected. However, due to the large number of MWIs investigated it was considered this would not significantly influence the overall results.

Singular and Plural Nouns

MWI *compounds* and *collocations* identified include countable nouns introduced in only their singular or plural form. In such cases, both the singular and plural forms of the items were also considered in the R-scores. For example, in the case of the MWI *love story,* the frequencies were combined with *love stories* before the R-score was calculated.

Verb Inflections

MWI phrasal verbs and collocations identified include verbs introduced in only one form. However, to gain accurate R-scores these were investigated in all their inflected forms. For example, in the case of the MWI *play tennis,* the frequencies were combined with *plays tennis*, *playing tennis* and *played tennis* before the R-score was calculated.

Intervening Words

MWIs containing verbs (not fixed expressions) were queried for 0-2 intervening words after the verb. A limit of two words was chosen because most collocations appeared to have no more than two modifiers. Additionally, allowing more than two words would potentially distort the results by possibly exceeding phrase or sentence boundaries. Intervening words were also considered in other constructions when a particular slot could obviously be filled by paradigmatic substitution. For example, in the MWI *in 5 years time*, the *5 years* would be considered a slot where the time value would be variable. In such cases, from 1-2 variable intervening words were also taken into account.

British and North American Spellings

As the course books sometimes introduced MWIs in British or North American spelling, both variants were included. For example, the MWI *movie theatre* was also queried, as well as *movie theater*.

It Starts With Phonemes

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In this paper I discuss the relationship between infant phoneme acquisition studies and teaching in an EFL context. I start with a historical account of the developments in infant language acquisition studies. Three questions are addressed. First, to what extent can second language learners' first language phonemic architecture be modified? Second, what do infant language acquisition studies tell us about the constraints that cause difficulties for such modifications? And third, what methodologies are the most effective for modifying a foreign language learner's native phonemic architecture? I argue that explicit instruction at the segmental level is vital in an EFL setting.

本論文は、乳幼児音素習得研究とEFLコンテキストにおける教育との関連性について論じたものである。まず、乳幼児言語習得研究発展の歴史について論じる。三つの質問が提起される。第一に、どの程度、第二言語学習者の第一言語音素アーキテクチャは修正され得るのか。第二に、乳幼児言語習得研究はそのような修正を困難にする制約に関し我々に何を伝えるのか。そして第三に、どの方法が外国語学習者のネイティブ音素アーキテクチャを修正するのに最も有効であるのか。本論はEFLセッティングにおいて、分節レベルにおける明瞭な指示が重要であると主張する。

To understand the nature of language learning it is crucial to study its earliest stages. The process through which children learn their native language or languages remains a mystery but distinguishing the phonemes, the smallest units of sound, is one of the earliest stages. Research has made huge strides in understanding the process behind this learning and the theoretical implications are extensive, reaching into the foreign language classroom. In this paper I will explore these implications.

I will show that an infant's perception progresses from a language-general to a language-specific state. The task of a native language learner, then, can be characterized as a "mapping" of the L1 phonetic system. In contrast, a nonnative language learner must progress from a system mapped to the sounds of the L1 to one that can be tuned to the L2.

What infant studies tell us about the difficulties faced by L2 learners will be discussed. I will also show how these studies intersect with the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) and argue that plasticity remains well into adulthood. Three questions are addressed. First, to what extent can second language learners' first language phonemic architecture be modified? Second, what do infant language acquisition studies tell us about the constraints that cause difficulties for such modifications? And third, what methodologies are the most effective for modifying a

foreign language learner's native phonemic architecture? An argument for explicit phoneme perception training will be made.

Infant Studies

The studies I follow began with Noam Chomsky. In the 1970s researchers set out to evaluate Chomsky's argument that humans' innate constraints for language included specification of a universal grammar and phonetics (Chomsky, 1968). In a landmark experiment in 1971, Eimas (1975) tested infant sensitivity to the sounds of speech and showed that 1-month old babies could differentiate the sounds /pa/ and /ba/.

Eimas's (1975) work was followed by a series of speech perception studies, which revealed that adults could only distinguish those phonetic contrasts that are used in their native language. Infants, on the other hand, discriminate phonetic contrasts whether or not they are used in the language they are used to hearing. Researchers began to accumulate facts that suggested infants were able to discriminate both native and nonnative contrasts equally well (see Saffran, Werker, & Werner, 2006, for a summary). That is, infants can hear the sounds of any language. They are prepared to learn any language to which they are habitually exposed.

The Work of Janet Werker

Clearly, adults cannot distinguish the phonemes of every language, so when the universal listening ability of infants was discovered the question that arose was at what age humans lose this discriminatory ability. The task of answering this question was taken up by Werker. She initially hypothesized that the ability to discriminate nonnative contrasts is lost at puberty. What she found, however, was that the loss of discrimination occurs between 6 and 12 months of age. After 1 year of age, infants have lost much of their ability to discriminate between sounds that are not important in their native languages (Werker & Tees, 1983). In the years since this initial work, there have been a number of replications and extensions of this finding (see Saffran et al., 2006, for a summary). Moreover brain-imaging studies have supported Werker's claim. Cheour et al. (1998) confirmed Werker's results using the MEG brain-imaging technique.

Developmental Change and Learning

Werker's claim that a perceptual shift occurred during an infant's 1st year was supported by research, but evidence began to suggest that maintenance alone is insufficient to capture the dynamics of infant speech perception. Research began to make it apparent that an infant's development is more complicated than what Eimas's model predicted (Kuhl, Tsao, Liu, Zhang, & de Boer, 2001). Eimas's (1975) model held that humans have an innate neural architecture containing all possible phonetic units. The sounds in the ambient language were perceived and so maintained while those not perceived atrophied. Maye and Weiss (2003), however, claimed, "The process of an infant's developing perception of speech must . . . involve not only paring down of initially discriminable contrasts, but also enhancement of initially difficult contrasts" (p. 508). "The framework that emerges from this research is very different from that held historically. Infants are neither the tabula rasa that Skinner described nor the innate grammarians that Chomsky envisioned" (Kuhl, 2000, p. 11856).

The Native Language Magnet Theory

To conceptualize what is occurring in the development of phonemic representations, I will use Patricia Kuhl's Native Language Magnet (NLM) theory as proposed by Kuhl et al. (2008). This theory posited three aspects to an infant's initial learning.

First, infants demonstrate excellent skills at recognizing patterns in speech. Second, infants exploit statistical properties of language input. And third, NLM claims that language experience "warps" perception. "No speaker of any language" wrote Kuhl (2000), "perceives acoustic reality; in each case, perception is altered in the service of language" (p. 11853). The third point is the most relevant because it leads to an understanding of how infants organize input and form categories, i.e., phonetic representations, which she called a sound "map" (p. 11852).

By the time an infant in an English speaking home is 6-months old it has heard hundreds of thousands of examples of the vowel sound /i/ as in *daddy*, *mommy*, and *baby*. Researchers think that from these thousands of examples, babies develop a type of sound map in their brains that helps them hear the /i/ sound clearly. It can be said that babies create perfect examples of speech sounds with a type of target area around each sound. Once their sound map for /i/ is created, babies can pick out the /i/ from the other sounds they hear. These prototypes have a profound effect on how babies hear speech and how they babble (Kuhl et al, 2001). They "tune" the child's brain for the language around them, so they can hear the different sounds of speech clearly. By the time babies are 6 months old, they have developed a set of speech sound prototypes they can use as building blocks when they begin to put together their own words (Kuhl, 1991).

A Biological Critical Period or Interference

Werker demonstrated that early development entails a shift from a language-general to a language-specific pattern of perception. Kuhl et al. (2001) claimed this shift is the creation of a mental sound map that "commits" neural structure, and this "neural commitment to a learned structure interferes with the processing of information that does not conform to the learned pattern" (p. 161). This commitment interferes with later language learning.

To what extent can L2 learners' perceptual patterns be modified after the initial mapping? The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) holds that language-learning ability is reduced after puberty as the result of the loss of neurological plasticity of the brain (Lenneberg, 1967). While a full account of CPH is beyond the scope of this paper, in the eyes of some researchers the original and strictest versions of CPH are too simplistic. The view that is emerging is that there may be different critical periods for different language skills, which change at different ages. Many have come to favor the use of "sensitive period" (Tomblin, Barker, & Hubbs, 2007). A critical period is viewed as a time in development in which experience, or the absence of experience, results in irreversible changes in the brain. Sensitive periods, in contrast, do not necessarily result in a complete irreversible change in the brain (Bruer as cited in Tomblin et al, 2007). Commonly, sensitive periods are defined as a time in development when the organism is particularly responsive to experience. Werker and Tees (2005) went further: "to ensure that we are referring to a window that is more variable in onset and offset than a classic CP [critical period], . . . we will employ the term 'optimal period' (OP)." They then said, "Language involves many different subsystems including semantics, syntax, morphology, and phonology—each likely with its own OP or interrelated set of OPs" (p. 234). The evidence for this, they claim, is "overwhelming" (p. 236).

The commonly observed and widely accepted notion that learning gets harder with age is not in question. What is of interest here is what infant studies say about the fundamental changes in the learning process that occur at a fairly fixed age; that is, whether there is a closing of a biological "window of opportunity." My questions are about the possibility of, and the constraints upon, changing the phonemic mapping that occurs during an infant's 1st year. The question concerning us, then, is not if the ability to learn an L2 declines with age; that is uncontroversial. The question is the degree to which L2 learners can improve.

Kuhl, Conboy, Padden, Nelson, and Pruitt (2005), in a study linking infant speech perception to later language development, claimed that "critical period phenomena arise not from a genetically determined change in learning capacity at a particular age, but from entrenchment, which is the direct outcome of learning" (p. 258). This neural commitment to a learned structure, Kuhl (2000) argued, interferes with the processing of information and "initial learning can alter future learning independent of a strictly timed period" (p. 11855).

McClelland (2002) agreed. Discussing the results of a study he conducted of the English /r/-/l/ contrast as perceived by native Japanese speakers he commented,

> The findings . . . suggest that there is considerable residual plasticity in the phonological systems of Japanese adults. Their failure to learn under normal conditions may reflect not so much a loss of plasticity as a tendency for the mechanisms of learning to maintain strongly established perceptual tendencies. (p. 12)

Kuhl (2000) believed that, "L2 speech learning is probably not a strictly timed developmental experience" (p. 1539) and to show this she conducted a training study with Japanese university students (Zhang et al., 2009). This study is noteworthy because the researchers improved the ability of native Japanese speakers to discriminate the English phonemes /r/-/l/ by using characteristics of infant-directed speech (IDS), the kind of speaking parents and caregivers use when speaking to an infant. The theory informing the study is that circumventing the L1 "neural commitment" requires "enriched" exposure analogous to IDS. This idea of signal enhancement has also been found effective in treating children with language disabilities to improve their language skills (Tallal et al., cited in Zhang et al., 2009).

The study by Zhang et al. (2009) was conducted in collaboration with researchers at Nippon Telephone and Telegraph in Tokyo and looked at whether Japanese listeners could be trained to respond to the /r/-/l/ stimuli as linguistic signals, that is with the left hemisphere of the brain (see Kuhl et al., 2001, for an explanation of brain laterality and speech processing). The Japanese subjects heard /r/ and /l/ in syllables, with high fundamental frequency and extended duration. Listeners also heard many different speakers, and the sounds were presented in different vowel contexts. After 12 hours of training the subjects showed over 20% improvement in discrimination. Also, prestudy and poststudy MEG data revealed that the subjects treated more of the stimuli with the left hemisphere of their brains. This indicates that linguistic processing, as opposed to purely auditory processing, was involved. It can be said, then, that neural plasticity remains well beyond puberty.

Why Teach Phoneme Acquisition?

I used NLM to characterize the initial phonemic mapping that occurs with L1. According to this model, the starting point of the neural system for L2 acquisition is, as Ellis (2006) pointed out, a "tabula replete" (p. 184). It has also been shown that NLM conceives this mapping as a neural commitment that becomes entrenched with age and can interfere with L2 learning. While making L2 acquisition difficult, it has been established that plasticity remains well into adulthood and the sound map can be modified. The obvious questions are: So what? Why should an EFL teacher spend class time on the explicit instruction of the phonemes, or as they are often called, segmentals?

I will make three points in arguing for explicit phoneme instruction: (a) improving L2 learners' ability to perceive phonetic distinctions is important for reasons beyond improving listening; (b) explicit training is the only way to improve EFL student's perceptive abilities because they do not get enough input; and (c) evidence suggests that when both speakers are nonnative English speakers, errors involving phonemes (segmentals)

are as important as those on the suprasegmental level, that is on any level higher than the phoneme level.

Regarding the first point, the results of a recent study, suitably titled *Phonetic Training Makes Word Learning Easier* (Perfors & Dunbar, 2010) indicate that training on novel phonetic contrasts improves word learning. To understand how this might work, one can refer to another paper, *The Phonological Loop as a Language Learning Device* (Baddeley, Gathercole, & Papagno, 1998), in which the phonological loop is understood as being responsible for the temporal maintenance of acoustic and speech-based material in working memory.

How might phoneme perception effect performance on other aspects of language? L2 learners have difficulty processing fluent speech in their L2, which may be due to difficulty in perceiving the phonemes that make up that speech. Difficulties in rapid processing could also lead to difficulties in segmenting words. Also, empirical evidence reveals that knowledge of lower level aspects of language (such as phonological perception) can help in the acquisition of more complex linguistic phenomena (Werker & Yeung, 2005). Recent computational work, moreover, suggests that word learning and phonetic category learning are more effective when occurring simultaneously (Feldman & Griffiths, cited in Perfors & Dunbar, 2010). And lastly, the connection between perception and production must be considered. A review of the studies supporting the argument that the development of L2 perception precedes L2 production can be found in Escudero, (2005). And even though Bradlow, Akahane-Yamada, Pisoni, and Tohkura (1999) only trained Japanese native speakers in perception, their production of /r/ and /l/ improved dramatically.

The second point about the importance of explicit phoneme instruction is that such instruction is the only way EFL learners will ever learn to perceive difficult L2 phonemes. According to NLM, we do not hear the spoken sounds directly but filter them through the phonemic structures of our L1. McCandliss, Fiez, Protopapas, Conway, and McClelland (2002) claimed that initial learning creates a strong tendency to treat nonnative contrastive phonemes as a single phoneme from the listener's L1 and that "this tendency may be self-reinforcing, leading to its maintenance even when it is counterproductive" (p. 185). The "sad irony for an L2 speaker," as Ellis (2006) pointed out, "is that more input simply compounds their error; they dig themselves ever deeper into the hole created and subsequently entrenched by their L1" (p. 185). The sounds have to be enriched, like in IDS, so the learner can hear them.

The third point to be made in support of explicit phoneme training is that the mainstream focus on suprasegmentals may not be entirely valid, especially in EFL situations. Suprasegmentals are the features of pronunciation at any level higher than that of the phoneme: things like stress, rhythm, and intonation. Both Levis (2005) and Neri, Cucchiarinin, and Strik (2006) doubted the reliability of the studies ascribing greater importance to suprasegmentals than to the segmentals, and Jenkins (2000) offered some evidence to support their doubts.

Jenkins (2000) viewed English as a *lingua franca* that plays a role in the lives of hundreds of millions of speakers, whom she terms "non-bilingual English speakers" (NBESs). Jenkins looked into the components of English pronunciation that are essential for successful interaction between NBESs and discovered that phonemes, segmentals, are more important than suprasegmentals. Specifically, errors on the level of phonemes caused more communication problems than errors on levels higher than phonemes. Her claim was that the focus on suprasegmentals is unnecessary when teaching NBESs because these elements of spoken English only come into play when one of the conversation partners is a native speaker. Given the status of English as a global language and the possibility that our students are as likely to use English with other nonnative speakers as with

native ones, some work on improving phoneme perception is more than reasonable.

Implications for the EFL Classroom

I have shown that training EFL students to perceive phonemes is possible and that it is important. I will now discuss how a teacher can apply the research to an EFL classroom. First, students have to hear the sounds to learn them. The importance of contrasting and emphasizing L2 phonemes is self-evident. This can be accomplished with minimal-pair exercises, reading individual words, or reading words in sentences. In my classes, I put two columns of minimal pairs on the board, pronounce one word, and ask the students to write the word I say. After giving the correct answer and some doing some practice, I have students do the same in pairs. Tongue twisters and rhymes can also be used. Students can even be asked to create their own tongue twisters and rhymes. Importantly, these drills should be complemented with details about how the sounds are articulated.

Another important point about phoneme acquisition is that exposure to multiple speakers ("high variability," as it is called) seems to be an effective way to increase perceptual learning. Logan, Lively, and Pisoni (1991) showed that the subjects exposed to numerous speakers improved significantly in minimal-pair identification when compared to subjects who heard only one speaker. To expose students to multiple speakers, teachers can use CDs, DVDs, or Youtube clips or make their own videos.

Lastly, these exercises do not take a lot of class time. A recent study by Kase and Jensen (2013) showed that improvement in student perception can be achieved in only a few minutes of class time per week. Of course, when designing a strategy for teaching pronunciation, it is important to consider the nature of the task in terms of the degree of its difficulty for students and the chances for its successful accomplishment. Teachers should also consider the time available and set their goals accordingly.

Conclusion

I have looked at the studies of infant phoneme acquisition and discussed their implications for teaching EFL. Using the NLM theory as a conceptual model, I discussed how infants create a sound map from ambient language and how this sound map represents a neural commitment that interferes with later language learning. Importantly, I showed that explicit phoneme instruction not only "cascades" to higher language skills, but that such perception is critical when two nonnatives are speaking. Contrast, emphasis, and high variability were discussed as effective methods for modifying a L2 learner's initial L1 phoneme structure.

The point I make in conclusion is that training students to hear difficult L2 sounds is best done in the early stages of L2 teaching. I have shown how the ability to hear the difficult sounds of an L2 decreases with age as a result of tendencies that increase with age. Starting early is of particular importance when it comes to improving perception skills. Finally, improving listening skills is inherently important, but the acquisition of these skills also increases confidence and gives students a sense of accomplishment, traits learners will carry with them through their years of instruction.

Bio Data

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Pragmatic Analysis of Conversational Closings in Friends

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In this paper I discuss the results of conversation closings of an American drama *Friends* compared with those in ELT textbooks. Understanding how to begin and end a conversation is important for successful communication in English. Lack of knowledge about how to end a conversation may lead to communication breakdown. Knowledge about rituals of closing a conversation is important. In my previous textbook analysis, I found that most of the ELT textbooks I examined did not deal with conversation closings at all or dealt with conversation closings in a limited manner (Saito, 2013). It has often been suggested that situational comedies and movies can offer more authentic samples of English conversation. Therefore, in this paper, I ask if *Friends* offers better samples of conversation closings than those found in ELT textbooks.

本論文ではELTの教科書に比べアメリカのドラマ”フレンズ”がどのように会話の終わりを扱っているかを検証する。英語のコミニューケーションにおいては会話の始め方同様、会話の終わり方を理解することが重要である。会話の終わり方についての知識の欠如は、コミュニケーションの断絶につながる可能性がある。英語でコミニューケーションする上で、会話の終わり方についての知識は重要である。私の以前の教科書の分析では、ELTの教科書のほとんどは限定的に会話の終わり方を扱っているか、もしくは全く扱っていないことがわかった。映画やドラマの方がより実際の英語の会話に近いサンプルを提供するとしばしば言われている。したがって、本論文では、会話の終わり方がアメリカのドラマ “フレンズ”ではどのように扱われているかを検証し、またその会話の終わり方のサンプルがELTテキストと比較してよりよいサンプルを提供しているかどうかを検証する。

Being able to close a conversation appropriately depending on the context is as important as being able to open a conversation. The importance of being able to close a conversation is included in lower levels of the Common European Framework of References of Languages (CEFR), which is the reference of languages designed to provide a transparent, coherent, and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabi and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency (Council of Europe, 2001). In the CEFR, A1, the lowest level, and A2, the second lowest level, are categorized as Basic User. A1-level learners can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases; and A2-level learners can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, and employment. Regarding conversation closings,

A1-level learners can use basic greetings and leave-taking expressions and A2-level learners can establish social contact—greetings and farewells, introductions, and giving thanks. As these levels of the CEFR show, learners are expected to be able to close a conversation at an early stage of learning.

Learners of English, however, are often unable to end a conversation appropriately (Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan, & Reynolds, 1991). Learners tend to say "bye" too soon, too late, or not at all, which will possibly bear negative interactional consequences (Wong, 2011). Learners often cannot understand the message to end a conversation as flagged by another speaker saying, *It was nice talking to you* or *Let's get together some time* and often try to continue the conversation in spite of the message sent. Closing a conversation is not merely the first pair part *goodbye* and the second pair part *goodbye* of one adjacency pair, but it is more complicated and elaborated. Adjacency pairs are sequences of two utterances that are adjacent, produced by different speakers, and ordered as the first pair part and the second pair part (Levinson, 1983; Psathas, 1994).

In conversations, closings are often ritualized and more complex, with different steps than merely one realization of adjacency pairs. Major steps in closing a conversation are (a) shutdowns, (b) preclosings, and (c) terminal exchanges (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991; Wong & Waring, 2010). In shutdowns, conversation partners indirectly let each other know they have no more business to talk about without saying *goodbye* directly, and the conversation content here largely reflects the main purpose of the exchange (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). In preclosings, the conversation partners confirm their understanding of each other's intentions to end the conversation and preclosings are often signaled lexically with items such as *OK*, *alright*, *well*, *so*, *anyway*, *yes*, and *yeah*. In terminal exchanges, the conversational partners exchange their leave-taking by saying *so long*, *bye* (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). Shutdowns were further divided by Wong and Waring (2010) into the following categories: (a) arrangement, or participants' making or restating plans to contact one another or get together (*I'll see you in the morning*); (b) appreciation, or participants' expressing or repeating thanks to one another (*I appreciate it*); (c) solicitude, or participants' expressing concerns, well wishes, regards to third parties, holiday greetings (*Have a happy Thanksgiving*); (d) reason-for the call, or the caller's restating why he or she called (*I just called to ask . . .*); (e) back-reference, or participants' talking about something discussed earlier in the conversation (*So what did the baby say?*); (f) in-conversation object, or participants' using utterances such as *mm hmm*, *um*, or *yeah* to display their availability for further talk; (g) topic-initial elicitor, or participants' soliciting a new but none-specific topic for discussion (*Anything else?*); (h) announced closing, or participants' overtly stating that the conversation should close or giving a reason for ending the conversation (*I'll let you go*); and (i) moral or lesson, or participants' using a moral or lesson to summarize the topic so far (*Things always work out for the best*).

One of the reasons why the chances to learn conversation closings are limited is that English textbooks often deal with conversation openings in the first units, but they do not place the same emphasis on conversation closings. ELT materials should be expected to offer enough pragmatic information including conversation closings. However, instructional materials often lack pragmatic information for learners to acquire pragmatic competence (Vellenga, 2004). In previous research based on the hypothesis that ELT textbooks do not offer enough information about conversation closings, I analyzed conversation closings in ELT textbooks (Saito, 2013), using the category of preclosing, shutdowns, and terminal exchange. Among the 19 textbooks examined in the previous study, only nine dealt with conversation closings. In most of the textbooks that dealt with conversation closings, steps of conversation closings and types of shutdowns were limited. In some of the examples, only expressions of terminal exchange such as *goodbye* and *see you*

were introduced and dialogues in which conversation closings are actually carried out were not introduced.

Inadequate pragmatic information in ELT textbooks has been pointed out by other researchers, too (see Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Jiang, 2006; Usó-Juan, 2008). Some researchers have assumed that films have language more similar to that of real life compared with textbooks (Kite & Tatsuki, 2005). Situational comedies as well as films may offer better language examples than textbooks. Eslami (2010) mentioned that situational comedies can be used as a rich source of speech act data. Washburn (2001) also stated that sitcoms offer rich, varied, and contextualized models and pragmatic language use among various characters in different settings, unlike most textbooks. Bacelar Da Silvia (2003), using example of refusals to invitations in *Friends*, investigated whether explicit instruction can be facilitative for L2 pragmatic development and observed the positive effect of explicit instruction on acquiring pragmatic ability.

Friends aired on NBC from 1994 to 2004, received a number of awards and nominations, and was considered one of the most popular television shows in the United States and around the world during the period when it was aired (Quaglio, 2009). There are six main characters, young adults living in New York who are very different and unique. Quaglio compared conversations in *Friends* to natural conversation from perspectives of linguistic study. Reflecting on the results, he held that though the scripted language of *Friends* is not the same as natural conversation, there are some shared linguistic features between *Friends* and natural conversation. For this reason, the adoption of *Friends* for this study, from among other situational comedies, can be considered appropriate.

Study Purposes

Based on the hypothesis that conversation closings in *Friends* will offer more authentic conversation closings than those in EFL textbooks, the purposes of this study are as follows:

1. to investigate whether conversation closings are included in EFL textbooks;
2. to investigate what steps of shutdown, preclosing, and terminal exchange are introduced in conversational closings; and
3. to identify the differences between conversation closings in *Friends* and conversational closings in the ELT textbooks.

Method

Materials

Using scripts and DVDs of *Friends* (from episode 1 of season 1 to episode 24 of season 2), conversations including the terminal exchange of *bye*, which was introduced in Bardovi-Haling et al.'s (1991) article as a terminal exchange, were extracted. Scripts were obtained from http://www.livesinabox.com/friends/scripts.shtml

Procedures

First, the episodes were analyzed to find whether they included terminal exchanges with *bye*. Next, conversation closings including *bye* were analyzed in terms of what steps of conversation closings and what types of shutdowns were introduced. The steps of conversation closings used in this study were preclosings, shutdowns, and terminal exchanges (see Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991). Shutdowns were categorized into the following types, based on Wong and Waring (2010): arrangement, appreciation, solicitude, reason-for-the call, back-reference, in-conversation

object, topic-initial elicitor, announced closing, and moral or lesson. Wong and Warning (2010) did not have a category for utterances such as *It was nice talking to you* and *It was nice meeting you* because their study dealt with telephone conversations; however, comments such as *It was nice talking to you* can be heard in face to face conversation; thus, the category comments on conversation was added.

Results

Table 1 shows the result of conversation closings. In total, there were 14 conversation closings including *bye*. In these 14 examples, a total of 99 conversation closing types including 27 preclosing signals, 36 shutdowns, and 36 terminal exchanges, were observed. As for terminal exchanges, there were from 1 to 7 terminal exchanges in 13 examples. In the example from episode 20 of season 2, the number of preclosings was 7 and the number of terminal exchanges was 10. Five participants took part in this conversation. The conversation closing was stopped in the middle after the terminal exchanges because one participant started talking about something irrelevant, and then the conversation closing was resumed. This is why the conversation closings included many preclosings and terminal exchanges. Another example from episode 12 of season 2 included 5 preclosings and 5 terminal exchanges in a three-way conversation.

Example 1 from *Friends* episode 10, season 2

Ross:	OK,	well, um,	have a nice evening.
	[preclosing	preclosing	solicitude]
Rachel:	Um, Russ, you ready?		
Russ:	Yeah.		

Table 1. Conversation Closings in *Friends*

Conversation closing type		Episode / season													
		9/1	1/2	4/2	10/2	10/2	12/2	12/2	18/2	20/2	23/2	23/2	23/2	24/2	24/2
Preclosing signal		1	1	1	1	2	3	5	2	7	1	1	1	1	
Shutdowns	Arrangement			2	1					3	2			1	
	Appreciation	1											1		
	Solicitude					1	2			1	1			2	1
	Reason-for-the-call											1			
	Back reference							1					1		
	In-conversation object														
	Topic-initial elicitor				1										
	Announce closing	1	1		1				1	3	1		3		
	Moral or lesson						1								
	Comment on conversation												1		
Terminal exchange		1	1	1	3	3	1	5	3	10	2	2	1	1	2

Rachel: Bye.
[terminal exchange]
Monica Bye.
[terminal exchange]
Phoebe: Bye.
[terminal exchange]

In this conversation closing, Ross starts with preclosings *OK* and *well* and continues a solicitude *have a nice evening*. Here Ross tries to imply the intention of closing the conversation indirectly without saying terminal exchanges directly; the use of *um* also conveys his hesitation of saying *bye* directly. This implication conveys to Rachel, who vaguely understands his intention and confirms him by saying *Um, Russ, you ready?* After the reply *Yeah*, Rachel says *Bye* as a terminal exchange and two other participants, Monica and Phobe, also say *Bye* respectively to Ross. This conversation closing consists of 6 turns by 4 speakers. In this example, the use of the preclosing conveys the first speaker's hesitation to close the conversation.

Example 2 from *New English Upgrade*

A:	Well,	better go.	See you later.
	[preclosing	announced closing	terminal exchange]
B:	OK.	Take care.	Bye.
	[preclosings	solicitude	terminal exchange]

Example 2 is a conversation closing in one of the ELT textbooks, *New English Upgrade* (Gershon & Mares, 2008), from my previous research (Saito, 2013). In this example, the first speaker uses announced closing *better go*, and the second speaker uses solicitude *Take care*. Composed of only two turns by two speakers, no remark is made by the second speaker until after the first speaker's terminal exchange. After the first speaker's preclosing, shutdown, and terminal exchange, the second speaker's preclosing, shutdown, and terminal exchange follow. In Example 1 from *Friends*, the solicitude *have a nice evening* replaced an announced closing.

Example 3 from *Friends* episode 23, season 2

Joey:	You and Milton have to join us on the boat. Karen'll pack up a lunch, you'll bring the kids, we'll make a day of it.	
	[arrangement]	
Jeannie:	Oh, that sounds lovely.	We' re gonna have to set that up.
		[arrangement]
	Oh,	I better get back.
	[preclosing	announced closing]
	Hope the baby feels better.	
	[solicitude]	
Joey:	Oh, thanks, thanks.	Bye bye Jeannie.
		[terminal exchange]
Jeannie:	Bye bye Joey.	
	[terminal exchange]	

This conversation closing in Example 3 starts from arrangement, in which Joey makes a plan to get together. Then, Jeannie replies by saying *Oh, that's lovely* and agrees to the arrangement by saying *We're gonna have to set that up*. Although *oh* was the first reply, it is probably part of the reply rather than a preclosing signal. Jeannie continued by saying *Oh*, again, this time as a preclosing signal, and *I better get back*, which is an announced closing. In this turn, a preclosing signal, an announced clos-

ing, and solicitude were used. In the next turn by Joey, where appreciation and terminal exchange were used, *Oh* is most likely part of appreciation rather than a preclosing. In the last turn, Jeannie uses a reciprocal terminal exchange. This example, which includes seven conversation closing types (one preclosing, two arrangements, one announced closing, one solicitude, and two terminal exchanges with four turns by two speakers) is more complex than most of the conversation closings in the ELT textbooks in my previous research (Saito, 2013).

Example 4 is a conversation closing in one of the ELT textbooks, *Get Real* (Buckingham, 2007), which consists of only two turns. It includes one shutdown (arrangement), one preclosing, and one terminal exchange. The first speaker makes no reply to the terminal exchange.

Example 4 from *Get Real*

A:	Let's meet at seven on Saturday morning	
	[arrangement]	
B:	OK.	See you then.
	[preclosing	terminal exchange]

Discussion

There were 14 conversations that included *bye* in the first two seasons of *Friends*. Overall, the conversation closings had more turns and types of shutdown than those in the ELT textbooks and were, therefore, more complex. Unlike many examples in ELT textbooks with no preclosings (Saito, 2013), all examples from *Friends*, except one, included preclosings; some included many preclosings. The closings without any preclosings in ELT textbooks might perhaps seem too abrupt and straightforward.

Although the number was limited, a variety of conversation closings with different types of shutdowns were found in the *Friends* examples; among them were many announced closings, arrangements, and solicitudes. Among the shutdowns in my previous study of ELT textbooks (Saito, 2013), arrangements were the most often used, although the number of announced closings and solicitudes here was also limited. The conversation closings including solicitudes from the *Friends* examples seem to have the effect of showing concern to other participants, as in Example 3.

About one third of the examples from *Friends* included one terminal exchange in the conversation closings. Many of the ELT textbooks in the previous study included only one terminal exchange and I observed that the examples with only one terminal exchange seemed to end halfway (Saito, 2013). However, it was of note that some of the examples from *Friends* also included only one terminal exchange. This may be because most of the conversations in *Friends* are between or among friends, which may result in reflecting informality. Another reason may be that since this is a situational comedy, extended closing sequences may have been avoided. In that respect, conversation closings in *Friends* may not always reflect conversation closings in natural settings.

The number of the participants was varied in the examples of conversation closings from *Friends* and sometimes the number of the participants was five, which may have resulted in bigger numbers of preclosings and terminal exchanges. However, in most of the ELT textbooks, there are only two participants in the conversation closings, and in some of the examples, only expressions of terminal exchange, such as *goodbye* and *see you* were introduced; dialogues in which conversation closings are carried out are not present.

The number of preclosings, shutdowns, and terminal exchanges in most of the ELT textbooks examined in my previous study (Saito, 2013) was smaller than that in the examples from

Friends. The conversation closings in most of the ELT textbooks for this study are more basic than those in *Friends*.

Although different types of conversation closings were observed in the episodes of *Friends* in this study, contexts such as the participants, the relationships between and among the participants, and the settings were not analyzed. More detailed analysis as to contexts in which conversation closings are carried out will need to be conducted. Another limitation of this study is that the use of conversation closings from *Friends* might have restricted the types of conversation closings available because the conversations in this situation comedy tend to take place at home between and among friends. Also, as Quaglio (2007) suggested, the scripted language of *Friends* is not always the same as natural conversation, and *Friends* may miss some features that can be observed in natural conversation, such as overlaps and interruptions. For more detailed analysis of conversation closings in natural occurring data, conversation closings in other media such as spoken corpora may need to be investigated.

Conclusion

Understanding how to close a conversation is important for successful communication in English. However, for learners of English, closing a conversation can be difficult. In this study, reflecting the results of my previous study of ELT textbooks (Saito, 2013), conversation closings in *Friends* were analyzed in terms of what steps in conversation closings and what types of shutdowns were used. The conversation closings in *Friends* were compared with the conversation closings in the ELT textbooks. Although the ways of dealing with conversation closings varied depending on the textbook, conversation closings in the ELT textbooks were relatively simple compared to those in *Friends*. Television dialogues can have a potential for pedagogical purpose (Quaglio, 2007). In addition, DVDs of *Friends* can be obtained easily, which will be helpful for pedagogical purposes. When using ELT textbooks, which do not offer enough information about conversation closings, introducing conversation closings from *Friends* as additional resources will help students become aware of and acquire different conversation closings in various contexts. The use of situation comedies with visuals and audio may also help learners understand gestures and facial expressions in closing conversations, which is yet another advantage of situation comedies.

Bio Data

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Teaching Collocations

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In this paper I give a brief explanation of *collocation* and describe the potential benefits of an increased focus on collocations. This is followed by many sample activities and exercises. While the majority of the activities may be more suitable for students of an intermediate or higher level of English proficiency, materials and exercises that can be used for beginner level students are also included. Collocation exercises for reading, writing, and speaking classes are provided. I also describe how the use of computer concordances, collocation dictionaries, and vocabulary notebooks can help develop collocational competence.

本論文では、最初に「コロケーション」について簡単な説明を行い、コロケーションに焦点をあてることによってもたらされる効果について記述する。次に、多くの実例を用いた、アクティビティと演習を示す。大部分のアクティビティは、英語力が中級もしくは上級の学習者に適しているかもしれないが、いくつかのアクティビティは、初級レベルの学習者にも活用できる教材と演習問題になっている。またリーディングやライティング、スピーキングクラスのための、コロケーション演習問題についても説明する。コロケーション能力を発達させることに役立つ、コンピューターコンコーダンスやコロケーション辞書、単語帳の使い方についても述べる。

Second language vocabulary acquisition has been widely researched (Nation, 2001, 2008; Schmitt, 2000), and language teachers commonly use vocabulary activities as part of their lessons. As a university language teacher in Japan, I have also used vocabulary exercises as a key component in my classes, both as an activity and as a means for student assessment. However, due to a lack of improvement in spoken fluency using the targeted words, I have since shifted my focus to teaching collocations.

The term *collocation* has many definitions. These definitions tend to fall into two groups: statistical and phraseological. Durrant (2009) offered the following statistical definition: "Collocations are sets of two or more words which appear together more frequently than their individual frequencies would lead us to expect" (p. 158). This definition is consistent with how corpus linguists view collocations and collocation research. However, another group of definitions emphasizes how collocations are stored and used by native speakers. Wray (2000), for example, used the following definition for collocation: "A sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other meaning elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar" (p. 465).

Why Teach Collocations?

There is some debate about the practicality of teaching collocations. The size of the mental lexicon (the number of *chunks* of language a native speaker has stored and is able to use) and the belief that mistakes in collocation usage have a limited effect on comprehension are two reasons against a collocation focus in the classroom. Hill (2000) stated that learning collocations is challenging due to the enormous size of the mental lexicon. Bahns (1993) also stated that, due to the great number, teaching lexical collocations is a challenging task. Woolard (2000) suggested that comprehension is not hindered to a great degree by speakers using inappropriate word combinations. While there is some truth to both of these arguments, others (Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Conzett, 2000; Handl, 2009; Hill, 2000; Jiang, 2009; Lewis, 1994; Reppen, 2010) stated that the potential benefits of teaching collocations outweigh the difficulties.

Perhaps the most recognizable benefit is that learners will sound more native like. Collocation knowledge "allows us to say and write things like a native speaker" (Nation, 2008, p. 117). To illustrate, a great deal of language that would be considered to be grammatically accurate is in reality not used. Woolard (2000) gave an example: "Biochemists are making research into the causes of AIDS" (p. 30). This sentence is grammatically accurate in tense, aspect, and subject and verb agreement, but native speakers would not use the verb *make,* but would use *do* instead. Because of the incorrect verb usage, the reader or listener would know a native speaker did not produce the sentence. Word choice mistakes also interfere with comprehension. We are able to understand quickly spoken language because we do not focus on the individual words but on chunks of language that we can often predict. Written texts with collocation errors are difficult to read, and take additional processing time to understand the intended meaning (Hyland, 2003). Spoken language with collocation errors can hamper comprehension even further as speakers do not have the luxury of time to review what they have heard.

Another benefit concerns low-level speakers. Nation (2008) stated that learning multiword units (a term he prefers although he also states it would be possible to use *collocation*), "allows beginner learners to make productive use of the language without having to know a lot of vocabulary or grammar" (p. 118). He used survival vocabulary (travel English) to illustrate this point. This idea of productive use is one of the strongest reasons to focus on collocations as opposed to individual words. While Nation is referring to complete phrases (e.g., *Where is the bathroom?*), it is reasonable to assume that by learning word combinations, especially verb-plus-noun collocations, low-level students will have an easier time expressing themselves. Students who study lists of individual words are often unable to use them productively in conversations or in written texts (Morgan Lewis, 2000; Woolard, 2000).

It has been suggested that studying collocations can help students learn grammar. By learning chunks of language containing certain grammatical structures, the learner will be better able to acquire that grammatical pattern (Hill, 2000; Michael Lewis, 2000). It has been argued that a strict focus on grammar instruction has led to many of the word combination errors mentioned earlier (Hill, 2000; Morgan Lewis, 2000; Woolard, 2000). This problem occurs because learning grammar is often seen as a simple substitution exercise in which different word types can be placed into the correct slot. A better approach may be to teach appropriate word combinations from a lexical perspective and have students come to their own conclusions about the syntax of a language.

In addition to grammar, receptive and productive fluency should improve (Conzett, 2000; Hill, 2000; Morgan Lewis, 2000). If students are taught that collocations are multiword units stored as single items in the mental lexicon, they should be able

to string longer sequences of words together when producing language and also have an easier time identifying these chunks of language when listening or reading.

Furthermore, collocation study allows students to use language they already know. Woolard (2000) emphasized that "learning more vocabulary is not just learning new words, it is often learning familiar words in new combinations" (p. 31). The first 1000 words of the General Service List (GSL) account for a surprisingly high percentage (according to Nation, 2001: 84.3 % for conversation, 82.3% for fiction, 75.6% for newspapers, and 73.5% for academic texts) of the written and spoken language in English. If students are not aware of how the words fit together, they will continue to struggle in listening and reading and more so in speaking and writing.

While these reasons all sound convincing, there is a need to support them with more research. Collocation research has been limited to short studies mostly dealing with advanced level students (Durrant, 2009; Jiang, 2009; Wray, 2000). Longitudinal studies focusing on different proficiency levels should provide a clearer picture of the potential benefits. The claims of improvements in grammar and fluency, in particular, need to be researched.

Activities

In the remainder of this paper I will introduce and explain activities for teaching collocations. The activities are divided into five groups: reading activities, collocation dictionary activities, writing activities, speaking activities, and general activities. The majority of the activities can be used with students of different proficiency levels.

Collocation Reading Activities

Speed-Reading and Collocation

This activity comes from Jiang's (2009) study that investigated consciousness-raising tasks for collocations. The students read a passage of 400 to 800 words and record their reading time. They then answer several comprehension questions about the passage. For homework, they answer questions based on collocations used in the text. In section one of the homework, the students write down expressions, phrases, and collocations from the text that they notice and want to learn. Section two has exercises in which students use collocations from the text in different contexts. Section three features questions geared towards enhancing and expanding the students' collocation awareness. An example of a task in this section is taking a collocation from a reading, such as *bad dream* and having the students compile a list of other common collocates for the noun *dream*. The final section is done in the following class. The students retell the story with a partner using the expressions, phrases, and collocations from section one as a guide. This series of tasks does not require much class time, but the preparation (finding a suitable text and writing questions for sections two and three) is time consuming. It can also be used with students of different levels by choosing an easier or more difficult text.

Reconstructing the Content

In this activity from Hill, Lewis, and Lewis (2000), students read a short text and then write 15 words from the text on a sheet of paper. They should choose words that will give another group the best possible chance to reconstruct the text. Students can be encouraged to write down some two- or three-word collocations as well as individual words. The students then exchange papers with another group. Using the words and collocations as a framework, the students try to retell what they have read.

Phrase Match

For this activity, the teacher chooses several collocations from a reading. The collocations are divided into two parts. The students match the parts of the collocation (without looking back at the original text). See Figure 1 for an example.

1. long past	a. open
2. drove down a side	b. midnight
3. metal bar to force	c. street

Figure 1. Phrase Match

How Was It Used?

In this activity, teachers choose several collocations they would like their students to learn from a reading passage. For each of these collocations, one word is written on the board and the students try to remember how it was used.

Example:

- From a reading: *For centuries hotels have been thinking of different and novel ways to attract guests.*
- On the board, write *novel*.
- Students try to remember that *novel* was used with the noun *ways*.

Collocation Dictionary Activities

5-1 Boxes

These exercises work well with verb + noun, adjective + noun, adverb + verb, and adverb + adjective collocations. Choose a word the students are familiar with but may not be able to use productively. The students use a collocation dictionary to find five collocates for the given word.

For example, consider the noun *moment* (see Figure 2).

Adjectives	Noun
Big *Last possible* *Embarrassing* *Right* *Happiest*	moment

Figure 2. 5-1 Box

Note. Student answers are in italics.

Find a Better Word

In this activity from Hill, Lewis, and Lewis (2000), students use a collocation dictionary to find an alternative word combination. This exercise is geared more towards expanding a student's productive vocabulary than correcting mistakes. For instance, a student might use the noun phrase *new idea* when writing a paragraph. While this collocation is easily comprehensible and accurate, a teacher might want the student to use a more descriptive adjective, such as *innovative idea*.

Really Useful Words

Hill, Lewis, and Lewis (2000) compiled a list of 47 nouns (see Figure 3) that they felt are problematic for English language learners. They postulated that the reason these nouns were troublesome for learners is that their meanings are largely dependent on the adjective used with the noun. As a result, incidental exposure is unlikely to lead to uptake of these words. A more beneficial approach is to explicitly teach adjective + noun collo-

cations for these words. Using a collocation dictionary, a teacher can choose one of the nouns and write five or six common collocations on the board. The students can then discuss an example of each from their lives.

Example:

- With a partner discuss an experience you have had that can be described by one of the following collocations: *an embarrassing situation, a bewildering situation, a tricky situation, a unique situation, an extraordinary situation, a tense situation.*

account	change	discussion	issue
action	circumstance	effect	manner
answer	condition	feature	method
approach	consequences	idea	move
argument	decision	information	performance
behaviour	difference	interest	plan
policy	reason	state	use
position	relationship	story	view
problem	result	style	vision
programme	scheme	system	way
project	situation	theme	work
question	solution	theory	

Figure 3. Problematic but Really Useful Words: 47 nouns whose meanings depend on the adjectives used with them

Note. List from Hill, Lewis, and Lewis (2000).

The Collocation Game

This activity from Hill, Lewis and Lewis (2000) can be used as a review or as a way of introducing new collocations to students. For the description, I have used one adjective + noun collocation and one verb + noun collocation, but this game also works with other kinds of collocations. First, choose a noun that has many adjective collocates. Tell the students that all the adjectives collocate with the same noun. Read out five or six adjectives (one at a time) for the noun. The students write down the adjectives as they listen. When they think they know the answer, they stand up or raise their hands. Ask the students to not shout out their guesses to allow the others a chance to come up with the correct answer as more adjectives are read. The teacher should start by reading general collocates (adjectives which can be used with many nouns) and finish with stronger collocates (adjectives which strongly suggest the presence of a particular noun). For example, for the noun *future* the adjective list might start with *bright* and finish with *foreseeable*. Two examples are given in Figure 4. It helps to have the students copy the empty, numbered chart into a notebook beforehand.

Game 1 – Adjectives	Game 2 - Verbs
1. *plain*	1. *collect*
2. *dark*	2. *provide*
3. *white*	3. *volunteer*
4. *bitter*	4. *conceal*
5. *milk*	5. *gather*
6. *bar of*	6. *withhold*
Answer (noun): *chocolate*	Answer (noun): *information*

Figure 4. The Collocation Game

Note. Teacher reads collocates one by one.
Students write them on the chart and try to guess the answer.

Collocate Writing Activities

Essay Preparation

This activity from Hill, Lewis, and Lewis (2000) is a useful prewriting exercise for essays and paragraphs. Ask the students to write four or five nouns associated with a topic (the teacher could also give the students the nouns). Using a collocation dictionary, students choose some common word combinations for the nouns. The teacher can help the students choose the most useful collocations. For instance, if the topic of an opinion essay is prisons or crime, four suitable nouns might be: *prison, criminal, crime, sentence*. The students can then write several collocates for each noun.

Example:

- go to / send somebody to / sentence somebody to / (7) years in ***prison***
- born / dangerous / hardened ***criminal***
- death / heavy / life / severe / (3)-year ***sentence***
- prevent / crack down on / petty / violent ***crime***

Editing Symbols

Using writing produced in class is an excellent way of targeting collocations that are especially useful for your students. If you use editing symbols to help the students understand their mistakes in writing classes, it is useful to have a symbol that highlights a collocation error. When correcting a piece of writing, instead of a *wrong word* symbol, underline the whole mis-collocation and have the students find a more suitable word combination.

Collocation Speaking Activities

4 / 3 / 2

This speaking activity was created by Nation (1989) to enhance fluency. In the first step, a student answers a question (or series of questions) about a particular topic, trying to speak for 4 minutes continuously. During this step only, a partner can help by asking questions if the student cannot think of something to say. The students then change partners and repeat their previous answer; however, this time the student tries to say everything from their previous answer in only 3 minutes. The students change partners again for the final step. They again repeat their original answers, but they have only 2 minutes to do so. In the final step, the students should sound more fluent than their current speaking ability. This exercise is challenging, but teachers can provide scaffolding by doing a collocation-building exercise prior to the speaking stage. This can be done as homework or in class. For instance, if the speaking topic is *pets*, have the students compile a list of adjective, verb and noun collocates for the noun *pet* (see Figure 5). This should help the students to express their thoughts as well as provide ideas as to how they can extend their answers.

Example:

1. With a partner, find collocations for the word *pet*. You can also think of a specific pet such as a dog or cat.
2. Speaking topic:
   - » Have you ever had a pet?
   - » If yes, tell you partner as much as you can about your pet. Try to talk for 4 minutes.
   - » If no, would you ever want a pet? Why or why not? Try to talk for 4 minutes.

Type	Collocate part 1	Collocate part 2
Adjective	*Domestic, family, house, household, beloved, abandoned, unwanted, lost, virtual*	pet
Verb	*Have, keep, own, feed, bring in, let out, let in, take care of, train, walk (dog), give (pet) water, keep (pet) under control, mistreat*	pet
Noun	pet	shop, store, dog, owner, sitter, food, hair, allergy

Figure 5. 4 / 3 / 2 Activity (Homework or in Class)

Note. Word given to students was *pet*. Possible student answers are in italics.

Role-Plays

Another activity for reviewing previously taught collocations is to have the students create role-plays using one or more of the targeted collocations. The collocations could come from a reading used in a previous class.

Describe Pictures or Picture Sequences

Students can also use collocations to describe pictures or strip stories. This activity works well if several theme-based collocations (travel, daily routine, etc.) are taught beforehand.

Shadowing and Tracking

This is a fairly well known activity, which can be adapted to emphasize collocation use. For this activity, the teacher records spontaneous speech from a native speaker before the class. The recording can be based on a particular theme, context, or function. The teacher plays the recording for the class, drawing students' attention to aspects of the recording, such as pauses, repair phenomena, and collocations. The students then make a transcription. Then they follow their transcriptions and shadow the recording. In the next step, tracking, the students repeat what was said a few syllables after the recording, without using their transcriptions. Finally they record a version of their own and submit it to the teacher for feedback.

General Collocation Activities

Collocation Notebooks

Having the students keep a collocation notebook can be a worthwhile practice. The students can treat the targeted collocations as they would individual words by writing definitions, translations, and sentences. The notebook can be organized alphabetically, around a theme, or by the type of collocation (adjective + noun). An alternative would be to use a traditional vocabulary book but include a section where students write common collocations for the words.

Corpora and Concordancers

A corpus can be used to find out if there are any instances of a particular word combination. We can also use a corpus to find out the most common collocates for a particular word. A concordancer can find examples of how a word or collocation has been used. It is difficult to understand collocation usage simply by relying on intuition.

Collocation Lists

There are several collocation lists available. Durrant (2009) compiled a list of 1000 two-word highly frequent collocations for EAP. Shin and Nation (2008) made a list of the most frequent collocations in spoken English. I have created a list of 120 collocations using delexicalized verbs (Antle, 2012). This list is available at: https://sites.google.com/a/joshuaantle.com/collocationdictionary/home

Conclusion

Collocation activities can be incorporated into most classes. As with individual lexical items, it is important to consider our students' needs, level, and motivation when choosing what to focus on. It is important to be selective. Raising student awareness of collocations can also help our students understand how and when a word can be used. The activities described in this paper will help teachers plan lessons with a greater collocation focus.

Bio Data

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