

An Analysis of the Multiword Lexical Units in Contemporary ELT Textbooks

Jeng-yih (Tim) Hsu

Department of English
National Kaohsiung First University of Science and Technology

Abstract

Over the past decade, the importance of multiword lexical units has been receiving an extraordinary amount of attention, and is now almost a must-have component in the practice of English language teaching. The field of English for Business Purposes was among the first to recognize the uniqueness of multiword units, establishing the initial attempt to accommodate longer lexical items in coursebooks. A bigger scale attempt began in the year 2003 when major commercial textbook writers started to face such “lexical chunk” phenomenon by wholeheartedly incorporating “exercises” or “activities” targeting multiword lexical phrases. It is now routine to see ELT textbooks designing tasks for a variety of multiword lexical units (MLUs): lexical collocations, fixed/semi-fixed expressions, and idioms¹.

The current study intends to examine multiword lexical units enthusiastically promoted by textbook publishers from a more cautious perspective. A profile of multiword units is established, based on three series of contemporary ELT textbooks published between 2003 and 2005, including Communication Strategies (Paul, 2003), Touchstone (McCarthy, McCarten, & Sandiford, 2005), and Totally True (Huizenga & Huizenga, 2005). Within this profile, major multiword lexical units are recorded, categorized, and compared. This study aims to report whether:

- (1) there are types of multiword lexical units considered most important and should be taught immediately
- (2) there is a suggested acquisition order for multiword lexical units
- (3) there is an agreed-on collection of common multiword lexical units among these textbooks

By presenting the analysis of multiword lexical units from the latest published textbooks, this study offers possible direction for choosing ideal coursebooks.

Keywords: multiword lexical units, material/syllabus design, L2/EFL vocabulary acquisition

¹ Lexical collocations consist of words whose meaning associations are arbitrary. The study focuses on lexical collocations only as they have caused most learning problems and have been the center of previous studies. For the definitions of the four multiword lexical units, please see Appendix II

1. Introduction

At the entering point of the new millennium, Rogers (2000), the leading writer and researcher in TESOL methodology, predicted that the study of the lexical phraseology would be one of the major language teaching enterprises of the coming century. Prior to his prediction, many scholars of language acquisition related fields had made similar claims, indicating the pedagogical value of lexical phrases or multiword lexical units (i.e., vocabulary consisting of two or more highly co-occurring words) (Moon, 1997; Zimmerman, 1997).

The real classroom practices on multiword lexical units did not take place until the formal introduction of the Lexical Syllabus (Willis, 1991) as well as the Lexical Approach (Lewis, 1993; 1997). Other than the first ‘word combination’ dictionary (Benson, Benson, & Ilson, 1986), the major response to multiword units came from a London-based textbook publisher, Language Teaching Publication (LTP, London, United Kingdom). Targeting uniquely on ESP (i.e., English for Business Purposes in this case), Lewis and his colleagues produced the first collection of multiword-focused coursebooks. Good examples of this series include The Language of Meeting (Goodale, 1987), American Business Vocabulary (Flower & Martinez; 1990), Meeting (Goodale, 1993), Business Matters (Powell, 1996), Presenting in English (Powell, 1996b), Build Your Business Grammar (Bowen, 1997), and The Working Week (Watson-Delestree & Hill, 1998).

However, the skepticism on these pioneer ESP materials was hanging for a long period of time. Many wondered if only learners within special contexts would benefit from the acquisition of domain-specific lexical chunks as they were expected to interact in a professionally prescribed manner. Three major documents appeared between 2001 and 2002 ended the suspension, leading ELT to a new direction in the post-method era. First, the renowned second language vocabulary researcher, Nation (2001), took the strongest position on the importance of multiword lexical units by stating that “Language knowledge is collocational knowledge” (p. 318). Adapting Ellis’ idea on lexical units, Nation argued that chunking is a very common process in L2 acquisition as L2/EFL learners pass through

different periods of sequence learning, including “lexical form,” “vocabulary meaning,” and “phrases, collocations, and idioms” (cited in Ellis, 1996, p. 91). In the same year, Richards and Rodgers, while revising their second edition of the book Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching (2001), allotted a full chapter to discuss the Lexical Approach. The inclusion of this particular approach marked the official recognition for initiating systematic studies of multiword lexical units. Finally, lexicographers ran for the last leg of the relay, igniting the trend for promoting the role of multiword lexical units. Among the newly published dictionaries, Lea’s (2002) British National Corpus based Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English, containing 150,000 collocations for nearly 9,000 headwords, is perhaps the most comprehensive copy up to date.

It was the joint effort among second language researchers, applied linguists, corpus linguists, and lexicographers that set the stage for the arrival of multiword lexical units. In response, a bigger scale attempt began in the year 2003 when major commercial textbook writers started to face such “lexical chunk” phenomenon by wholeheartedly incorporating “exercises” or “activities” targeting lexical phrases. It is now almost routine to see ELT textbooks designing tasks for a variety of multiword lexical units: collocations, fixed/semi-fixed expressions, and idioms.

2. The Purpose of the Study

With so many new materials published every year, teachers may wonder what is at best to serve the need of students when choosing a textbook of lexical units. If considering the enormous number of lexical units², choosing an ideal textbook can be extremely difficult. Oftentimes writers, whether relying on experience or intuition, include lists of long word units ‘arbitrarily.’ In real practices, when teachers are forced to use a textbook, they are actually equating the textbook to

² NTC’s Dictionary of Everyday American English Expressions (Spears et al., 1994) lists over 7,000 fixed expressions; the newly revised The BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations (Benson et al., 1997) contains over 90,000 basic word combinations of English; Oxford Idioms Dictionary for Learners of English (Toby, 2001) collects around 10,000 British and American idioms that are frequently used by native speakers.

syllabus (Sinclair & Reouf, 1988). In the end, we teachers may waste time presenting the lexical units of little or no value.

The current study aims to evaluate multiword lexical units popularized by textbook publishers from a more cautious perspective. Three series of contemporary ELT textbooks, Communication Strategies (Paul, 2003) and Further Communication Strategies (Paul, 2003)³, Touchstone: Book I & II (McCarthy, McCarten, & Sandiford, 2005), and Totally True: Book I, II, & III (Huizenga & Huizenga, 2005), constitute the basis for a profile of multiword lexical units. These books are chosen because they (1) place a strong emphasis on multiword lexical units; (2) are written for L2/EFL learners with between beginning and intermediate proficiency, (3) are designed for integrated language skills; and (4) together represent a great sample of the latest published mainstream ELT textbooks.

Within this profile, major multiword lexical units are recorded, categorized, and compared.

This study aims to report whether:

- (1) there are types of multiword lexical units considered most important and should be taught immediately
- (2) there is a suggested acquisition order for multiword lexical units
- (3) there is an agreed-on collection of common multiword lexical units among these textbooks

It is hoped, by presenting the analysis of multiword lexical units from the newly published textbooks, this study might offer possible guidelines for choosing ideal coursebooks.

3. Research Method

3.1 The Controversy on Defining Multiword Lexical Units

The process of data collection was long and tiring as each lexical unit was physically counted; there was no sampling taken from each of the seven books. It is also understandable that one can

³ Further Communication Strategies is henceforth coded 'Communication Strategies: Book 2' for an easier comparison among the three series of textbooks which specify target users' proficiency levels.

argue with the data reported here as (1) there is no precise definition for a multiword lexical unit and (2) there could be some overlapping among the 4 investigated multiword lexical units (i.e., lexical collocations, fixed/semi-fixed expressions, and idioms). Inevitably, subjective decisions need to be made and acceptable but marginal errors are unavoidable, both of which are obvious limitations of the current study.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The four types of multiword lexical units were counted manually, grouped, and further recorded by Microsoft Excel software. Pearson correlation (i.e., SPSS 12.0) was also adapted in order to investigate if there were connections among the four multiword lexical units within each of the seven textbooks. In sum, descriptive statistics was used to report the findings of the study.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Question One: Are There Types of Multiword Lexical Units Considered Most Important and Should Be Taught Immediately?

The counting and categorizing process enables this study to create a comprehensive profile of the multiword lexical units accumulated from all the textbooks. Figure 1 lists the total number of MLUs⁴ in each series of the textbooks: Communication Strategies series contains 963; Touchstone includes 1,609; Totally True specifies 656, all of which account for 3,228 MLUs. Obviously, the 2-volume Touchstone provides the largest number of MLUs among the three series.

The MLUs are further divided into three major types, namely lexical collocations, fixed-/semi-fixed expressions, and idioms. The separation of 3 MLU types indicates that the ratio among the three targeted MLUs differs from one series to the others. Nonetheless, an obvious harmony, as indicated by Figure 2, can be found among the three series. Any student who uses

⁴ Please refer to Appendix I for Figure 1~9.

these three sets will be exposed heavily to lexical collocations as they consistently play a dominating role in each and every single volume of the textbooks.

Still, major differences can be found among these books as shown by Figure 3, 4, 5, and 6. Touchstone in particular gives a clear emphasis on lexical collocations (1,313 of 1,609; 81.6%) while considering fixed/semi-fixed expressions secondary (295 of 1,609; 18.34%), and idioms almost unnecessary (1 of 1,609; 0.06%). Totally True in its three volumes, also giving priority to lexical collocations, allots 609 units (92%), but only 47 fixed-/semi-fixed expressions and idioms altogether (8%). In contrast, Communication Strategies uniquely maintains a nice balance between lexical collocation and its two other counterparts (fixed-/semi-fixed expressions and idioms) as the first group accounts for 553 items (57%) and the other two combined total 410 items (43%).

The above data show that the material writers of three publishing companies consistently give the most important status to lexical collocations as they are found to occupy the largest portion in each of these three series textbooks. However, the same writers rank their secondary MLUs differently. In Totally True, the ratio between lexical collocations and fixed/semi-fixed expressions and idioms is seriously imbalanced in that fixed-/semi-fixed expressions and idioms are considered close to no use. On the contrary, the authors of Communication Strategies present lexical collocations hand-in-hand with the other two MLU types, keeping a near 50-50 balance. To answer Research Question One, the role of lexical collocations, among the MLUs of the three series of contemporary ELT textbooks, is predominating. In this sense, to L2/EFL learners with between beginning and intermediate proficiency level, lexical collocations are considered most essential and should be taught immediately. The findings regarding the secondary MLUs are somewhat conflicting; drawing conclusion on the other two MLU types becomes impossible.

4.2 Question Two: Is There a Suggested Acquisition Order for Multiword Lexical Units?

The counting of MLUs only enables the study to produce an accumulated profile of total MLUs of all types. MLUs are examined as merely one big unit. Still, within each series of the

textbooks, the portion of every type of MLUs (i.e., lexical collocation, fixed-/semi-fixed expressions, and idiom) can be arranged and presented differently from one chapter to another as well as from one lower fluency book to another higher one. It is crucial to further investigate, in the three series of textbooks, whether there are any differences in determining at what stage, how many, and what types of MLUs are introduced.

Figure 7, 8, and 9 indicate the trends of three major MLUs collected from each of the three series of textbooks. The total number of each MLU type is listed chapter by chapter from its beginning to intermediate volume accordingly.⁵ The data from these three figures do not say much. The only obvious finding is that idiom is systematically given the least important consideration. Except in Communication Strategies, the existence of idioms in the other two book series is hardly of any significance. Even in Communication Strategies, the chapter by chapter analysis shows that idioms are routinely ranked last after lexical collocations and fixed-/semi-fixed expressions throughout this 2-volume series.

The chapter by chapter comparison allows the study to observe the overall pattern of changes among three MLU types in each series of textbooks. But the exact connections among the three MLU types are not yet answered. Pearson correlation is therefore adapted to examine the possible relations. Table 1 lists the results among three types of MLUs in each of the seven textbooks independently. As shown by Table 1, two strong but negative correlations are reported. The first one comes from the correlation between idiom and lexical collocation in Communication Strategies: Book I. The second (even stronger) correlation is found between fixed-/semi-fixed expression and lexical collocation in Touchstone: Book I. Since the two pairs of correlations are both negatively significant, they are likely to suggest that:

1. In Communication Strategies: Book I, the number of idioms decreases when the number of lexical collocations increases as the book chapters advance.

⁵ Communication Strategies consists of 2 volumes, each of which contains 15 chapters; Touchstone consists of 2 volumes, each of which contains 12 chapters; Totally True is a 3-volume series; each contains 18 chapters.

2. In Touchstone: Book I, the number of fixed-/semi-fixed expressions is negatively corresponding to the number of lexical collocations; i.e., when the book chapters move forward, the frequency of fixed-/semi-fixed expressions is declining whereas that of lexical collocations is rising.

Table 1

Pearson Correlation among Three Multiword Lexical Units in All Seven Textbooks

		Idiom	Fixed/Semi-fixed	Lexical Collocation
Communication Strategies Book 1	Idiom	1	.070	-.567(*)
	Fixed-/Semi-fixed	.070	1	-.053
	Lexical Collocation	-.567(*)	-.053	1
Communication Strategies Book 2	Idiom	1	.040	.460
	Fixed-/Semi-fixed	.040	1	-.463
	Lexical Collocation	.460	-.463	1
Touchstone Book 1	Idiom	.(a)	.(a)	.(a)
	Fixed-/Semi-fixed	.(a)	1	-.819(**)
	Lexical Collocation	.(a)	-.819(**)	1
Touchstone Book 2	Idiom	1	.000	-.489
	Fixed-/Semi-fixed	.000	1	-.068
	Lexical Collocation	-.489	-.068	1
Totally True Book 1	Idiom	1	-.139	-.143
	Fixed-/Semi-fixed	-.139	1	.491
	Lexical Collocation	-.143	.491	1
Totally True Book 2	Idiom	.(a)	.(a)	.(a)
	Fixed-/Semi-fixed	.(a)	1	-.013
	Lexical Collocation	.(a)	-.013	1
Totally True Book 3	Idiom	1	-.303	.007
	Fixed-/Semi-fixed	-.303	1	-.055
	Lexical Collocation	.007	-.055	1

Note. * = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level; ** = correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; (a) indicates that correlations cannot be computed because at least 1 set of variables appear to be zero.

The findings so far provide many possible and perhaps contradictory answers in responding to Research Question Two. There does not seem to be a possible acquisition order for multiword lexical units agreed by the three series of coursebooks. Nevertheless, observable presentation orders suggested by the three series can be concluded:

(1) In terms of Communication Strategies: Book I & II, idioms are systematically included and emphasized; their quantity decreases as the quantity of lexical collocations increases particularly in the beginning level volume. Communication Strategies: Book I might suggest that L2/EFL students ought to learn idioms first and gradually replace such group of MLUs by lexical collocations.

(2) As for Touchstone: Book I & II, idioms constitute no learning value; the two MLU types, fixed-/semi-fixed expressions and collocations, dominate the initial stage in the acquisition of MLUs. The learning order, as suggested by Touchstone: Book I, is likely to start from the learning of fixed-/semi-fixed expressions, and subsequently increase the learning of lexical collocations.

(3) In the case of Totally True: Book I, II, & III, there is no evident order to follow. The only observed pattern in MLU presentation is that a large number of lexical collocations are found in every chapter (although the number of lexical collocations varies from one chapter to another).

Surprisingly enough, while choosing one textbook over the others, students might be led through many completely different MLU acquisition routes. Therefore, as far as the acquisition order of multiword lexical units, the comparison among the three most up-to-date MLUs focused textbooks reveal results which seem conflicting. One series may suggest an acquisition order dramatically different from the others.

4.3 Question Three: Is There an Agreed-on Collection of Common Multiword Lexical Units among These Textbooks?

The most striking finding centers on the doubt whether there is a collection of MLUs the three series of textbooks have all in common. The data shows that, of the 3,228 recorded MLUs, only 27 MLUs (i.e., 24 lexical collocations and 3 semi-fixed expressions) are shared by all the three series.

In other words, less than one percent (0.836%) of the MLUs constitutes the agreed-on group of common MLUs among these textbooks (see Table 2).

Table 2

MLUs Commonly Shared by the Three Series of Textbooks

	Lexical Collocation	Semi-fixed expression
MLUs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. best friend 2. business trip 3. computer graphics 4. do exercise 5. do homework 6. earn money 7. free time 8. get a job 9. get a stomachache 10. have dinner 11. have fun 12. improve life 13. make friend 14. make mistakes 15. make money 16. need help 17. new skills 18. pay attention 19. play games 20. play piano 21. save money 22. save time 23. spend money 24. spend time 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What's...? 2. Do you mind...? 3. How much...?

The finding here has stirred up many issues worth discussing. First of all, the end users of the three series definitely question where and from what source the book writers draw their MLUs. Other than Touchstone in which McCarthy (2004; 2005) specifies his sample MLUs are selected from the Cambridge International Corpus, the other two series do not identify their data bank at all. In addition, if the three series examined are all designed for L2/EFL learners of between beginning and intermediate English proficiency, what would be their strategies, principles, and criteria in planning their syllabus or determining their materials. Lastly, one may argue that Totally True is a

series specially written to teach reading and vocabulary skills whereas Communication Strategies and Touchstone are more geared toward the integration of four skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing), thus resulting in the limited percentage of the commonly shared MLUs. If this argument stands, is it suggesting that the most essential MLUs that deserve immediate attention and need to be incorporated into the earliest English learning will differ from one language skill to another? Evidently, the answers to the above mentioned questions are beyond the scope of the current study. Many following studies need to be carried out.

In sum, none of these three series clearly indicate its selection process and rationale in selecting MLUs. The analysis of multiword lexical units in three series of contemporary ELT textbooks appear to suggest that the arrangement and organization of MLUs is still largely dependent on either writers' experiences, intuitions, and personal judgments or function/notional topics, themes, and tasks pre-selected in a textbook.

5. Conclusion

That multiword lexical units are of great importance has been well documented in the work of many L2/EFL researchers (e.g., Smadja, 1989; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997) and has been one of the core issues among classroom practitioners (Coulmas, 1979; Pawley & Syder, 1983; Peters, 1983; Low, 1988; Schmitt, 2000) in the past two decades. Some emphasize on overlearning this type of formulaic language (McCarthy, 1984; Robinson, 1988; Aghbar, 1991), encouraging teachers to exposure learners to lexical chunks in order to develop a better memory of them. Others (Berman, 1986; Pienemann, 1998) consider the acquisition of longer lexical units or sentence-like strings basis for future fluency, believing these MLUs will gradually open up, add in new lexical items, and become creative language use. It is therefore comforting to see so many coursebooks published to assist teachers and students to tackle the learning of MLUs.

However, approaching the three series of MLU-focused coursebooks from a naïve consumer point of view, the researcher finds the results of current study somehow disappointing. The only consensus among the three series comes from their heavy emphasis of lexical collocations. Their MLU selecting process does not seem to be consistent, producing three different kinds of material presentation orders and a very small portion of agree-on common MLUs. The L2/EFL vocabulary scholar, Mood (1997), perhaps describes the current status of English MLUs best as he states:

The appropriate use and interpretation of multi-word items by L2 speakers is a sign of their proficiency...particularly with regard to the creative exploitation and manipulation of multi-word items....It is a difficult situation: these items are hard, but they need to be acquired at some stage. And the difficulty of the situation is compounded by the inadequacy or misleadingness of many teaching and reference materials (p. 58).

As Sinclair (1991) suggests, coursebooks writers should always begin their work by testing language data. With the increasing availability of many large size corpuses, the major ELT companies can always have the access to them. In this study, only Touchstone series is reported to base its MLUs on the Cambridge International Corpus (CIC), holding over 900 million words. It is the hope of the current study to see many more future MLU-targeted products make the best use of their resources and to produce theoretically, pedagogically, and commercially convincing ELT materials.

REFERENCES

- Aghbar, A. A. (1990, October). Fixed expressions in written texts: Implications for assessing writing sophistication. Paper presented at a meeting of the English Association of Pennsylvania State System Universities. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 352 808)
- Al-Zahrani, M. S. (1998). Knowledge of English lexical collocations among male Saudi college students majoring in English at a Saudi university. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania.
- Benson, M., Benson, E., & Ilson, R. (1986). The BBI combinatory dictionary of English. Amersterdam: John Benjamin Publishing Company.
- Benson, M., Benson, E., & Ilson, R. (1997). The BBI dictionary of English word combinations. Amersterdam: John Benjamin Publishing Company.
- Berman, R. A. (1986). A step-by-step model of language acquisition. In I. Levin (Ed.), Stage and structure: Reopening the debate (pp. 191-219). Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Bowen, T. (1997). Build your business grammar. Hove, England: Language Teaching Publications.
- Coulmas, F. (1979). On the sociolinguistic relevance of routine formulae. Journal of Pragmatics, 3, 230-266.
- Ellis, N. C. (1996). Sequencing in SLA: Phonological memory, chunking and points of order. Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 18, 91-126.
- Ellis, N. C. (2001). Memory for language. In P. Robinson (Ed.), Cognition and second language instruction (pp. 33-68). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Flower, J. & Martinez, R. (1990). American business vocabulary. Hove, England: Language Teaching Publications.
- Gillard, (2003). Cambridge advanced learners' dictionary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gitsaki, C. (1999). Second language lexical acquisition: A study of the development of collocational knowledge. Maryland: International Scholars Publications.
- Goodale, M. (1987). The language of meeting. Hove, England: Language Teaching Publications.
- Goodale, M. (1993). Meeting. Hove, England: Language Teaching Publications.
- Hsu, J. T. (2002). Development of collocational proficiency in a workshop on English for General Business Purposes for Taiwanese college students. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania.
- Howarth, P. (1998). Phraseology and second language proficiency. Applied Linguistics, 19 (1), 24-44.

- Huizenga, J. & Huizenga, L. (2005). Totally True: Book I, II, & III. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, M. (1993). The lexical approach: The state of ELT and a way forward. London: Language Teaching Publications.
- Lewis, M. (1997). Implementing the lexical approach: Putting theories into practice. London: Language Teaching Publications.
- Low, G. D. (1988). On teaching metaphor. Applied Linguistics, 9 (2), 125-147.
- McCarthy, M. J. (1984). A new look at vocabulary in EFL. Applied Linguistics, 5(1), 12-22.
- McCarthy, M. (2004). Touchstone: From corpus to course book. Cambridge, UK: CUP.
- McCarthy, M., McCarten, J., & Sandiford, H. (2005). Touchstone: Book I & II. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nation, I.S.P. (2001). Learning vocabulary in another language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nattinger, J. & DeCarrico, J. (1992). Lexical phrases and language teaching. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Paul, D. (2003). Communication strategies. New York, NY: Thomson International.
- Paul, D. (2003). Further communication strategies. New York, NY: Thomson International.
- Pawley, A. & Syder, H. (1983). Two puzzles for linguistic theory: Nativelike selection and nativelike fluency. In J. C. Richards & R. W. Schmidt (Eds.), Language and communication (pp. 191-225). New York: Longman.
- Peters, A. (1983). The units of language acquisition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pienemann, M. (1998). Language processing and second language development: Processability theory. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Powell, M. (1996). Business matters. Hove, England: Language Teaching Publications.
- Powell, M. (1996b). Presenting in English. Hove, England: Language Teaching Publications.
- Robinson, P. J. (1988). A Hallidayan framework for vocabulary teaching—An approach to organizing the lexical content of an EFL syllabus. IRAL, 16 (3), 229-238.
- Sinclair, J. & Renouf, A. (1988). A lexical syllabus for language learning. In M. McCarthy & R. A. Carter (Eds.), Vocabulary and language teaching (pp.140-160). New York: Longman.
- Richards, J. C. & Rogers, T. S. (2001). Approaches and methods in language teaching (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J., Schmidt, R., Platt, H., & Schmidt, M. (2003). Dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics (3rd ed.). New York: Pearson/Longman.
- Rogers, T. (2000). Methodology in the new millennium. Forum, 38 (2), 2-16.

Schmitt, N., & McCarthy, M. (eds.). (1997). Vocabulary: Description, acquisition and pedagogy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schmitt, N. (2000). Vocabulary in language teaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sinclair, J. (1991). Corpus, concordance, collocation. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smadja, F. (1989). Lexical co-occurrence: The missing link. Literary and Linguistic Computing, 4 (3), 163-168.

Spears, R., Birner, B., & Kleinedler, S. (1994). NTC's dictionary of everyday American English expressions. Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Publishing Group.

Toby, J. (2001). Oxford Idioms Dictionary for Learners of English. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Watson-Delestree, A. & Hill, J. (1998). The working week. Hove, England: Language Teaching Publications.

Willis, D. (1990). The lexical syllabus: A new approach to language teaching. London: Harper Collins Publishers.

Zimmerman, C. B. (1997). Historical trends in second language vocabulary instruction. In J. Coady, & T. Huckin (Eds.), Second language vocabulary acquisition (pp. 5-19). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

APPENDIX I

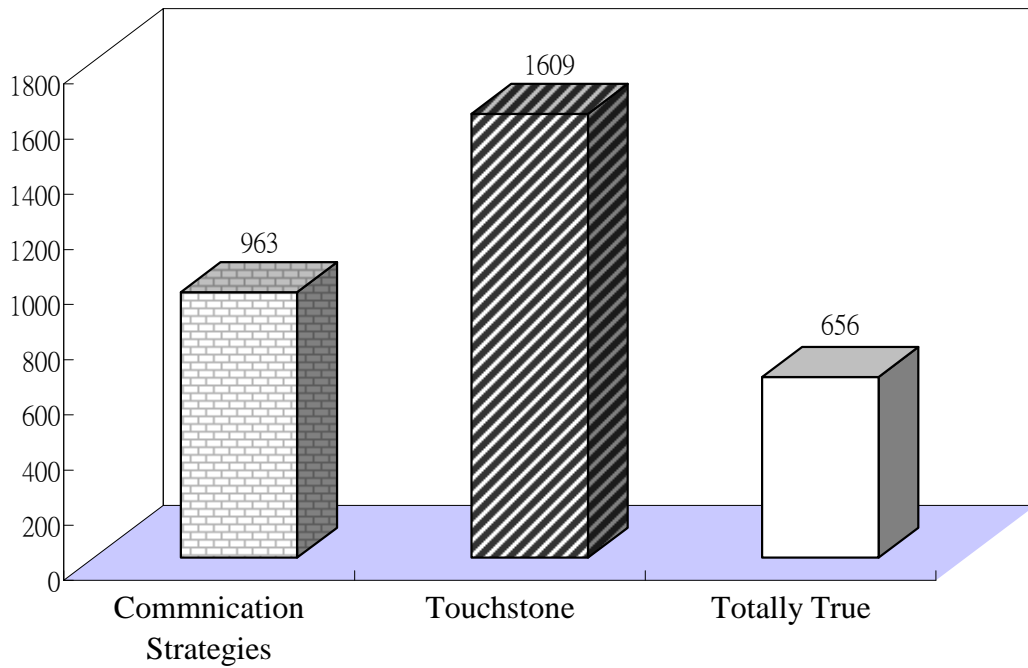


Figure 1. Number of MLUs in Each Textbook Series

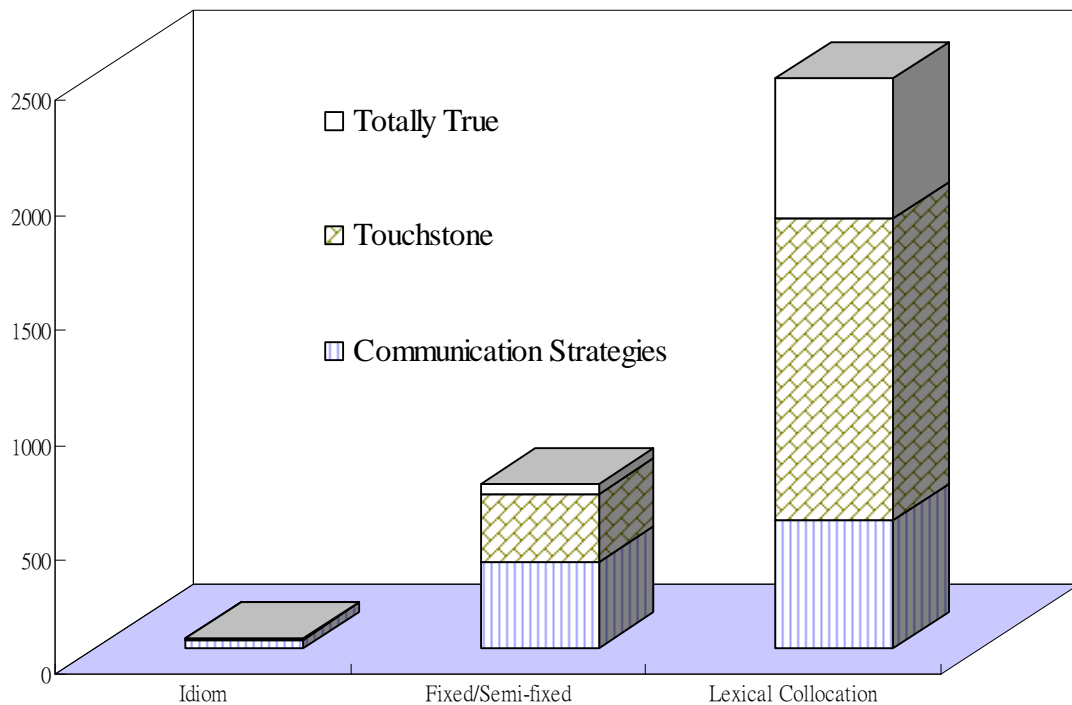


Figure 2: Accumulated MLUs from 3 Textbooks

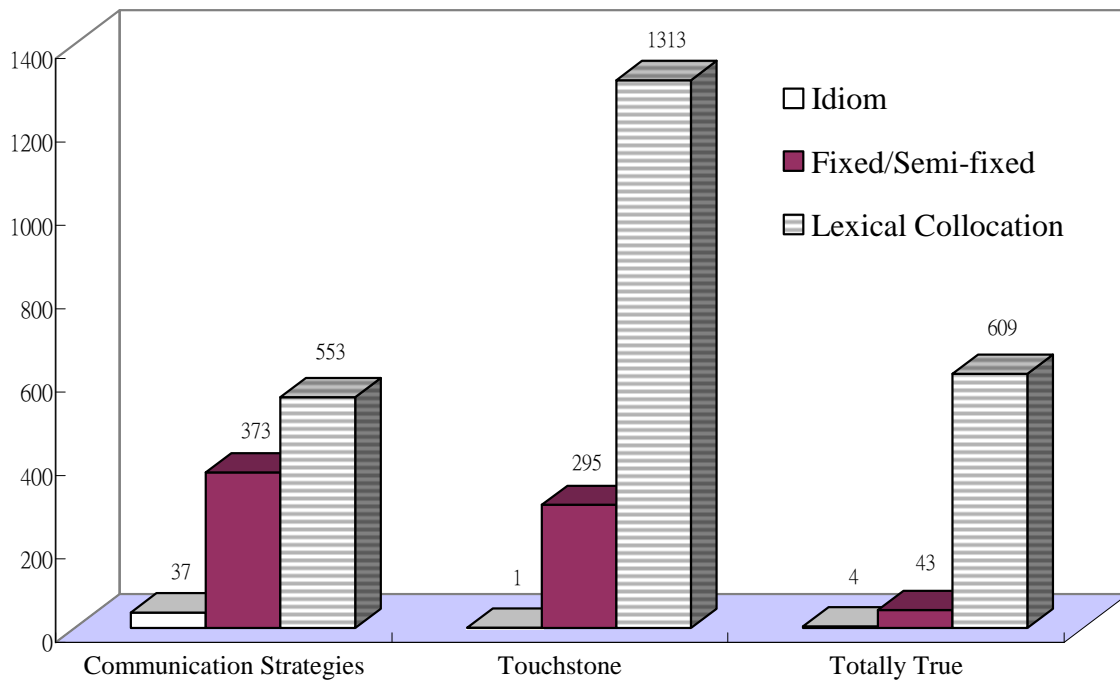


Figure 3. Number of MLU Types by Textbooks

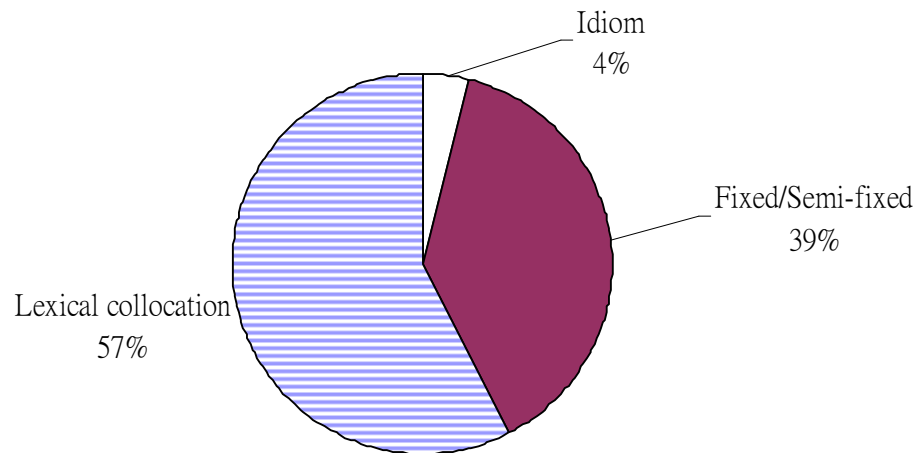


Figure 4. Number of MLU Types in Communication Strategies

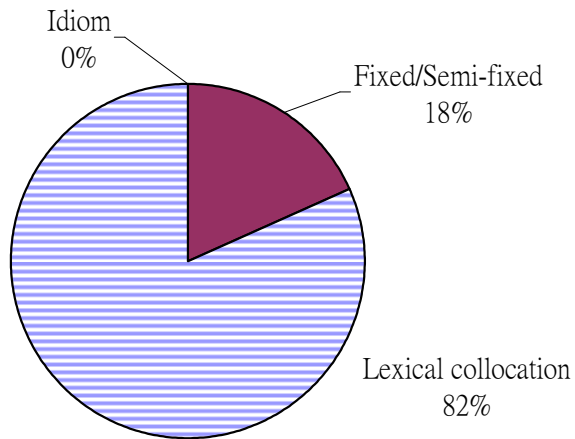


Figure 5. Number of MLU Types in Touchstone

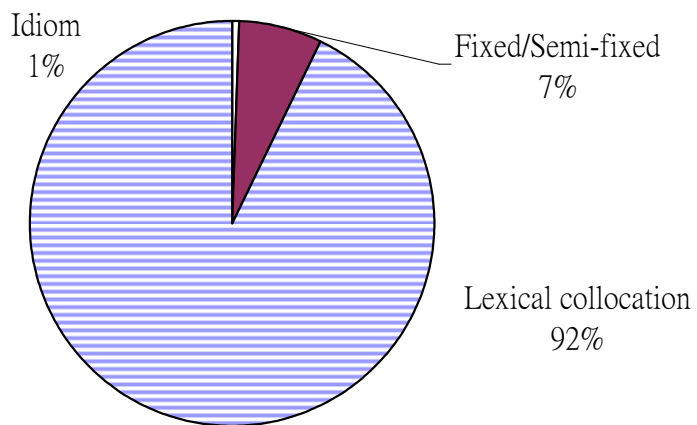


Figure 6. Number of MLU Types in Totally True

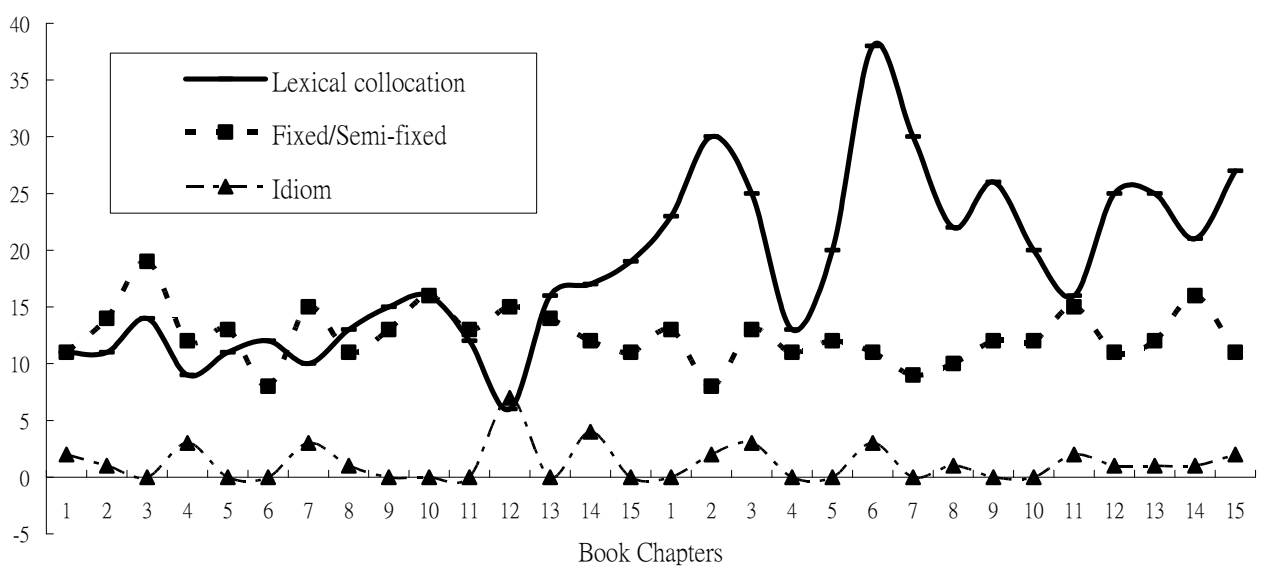


Figure 7. Trend of MLU Types in Communication Strategies

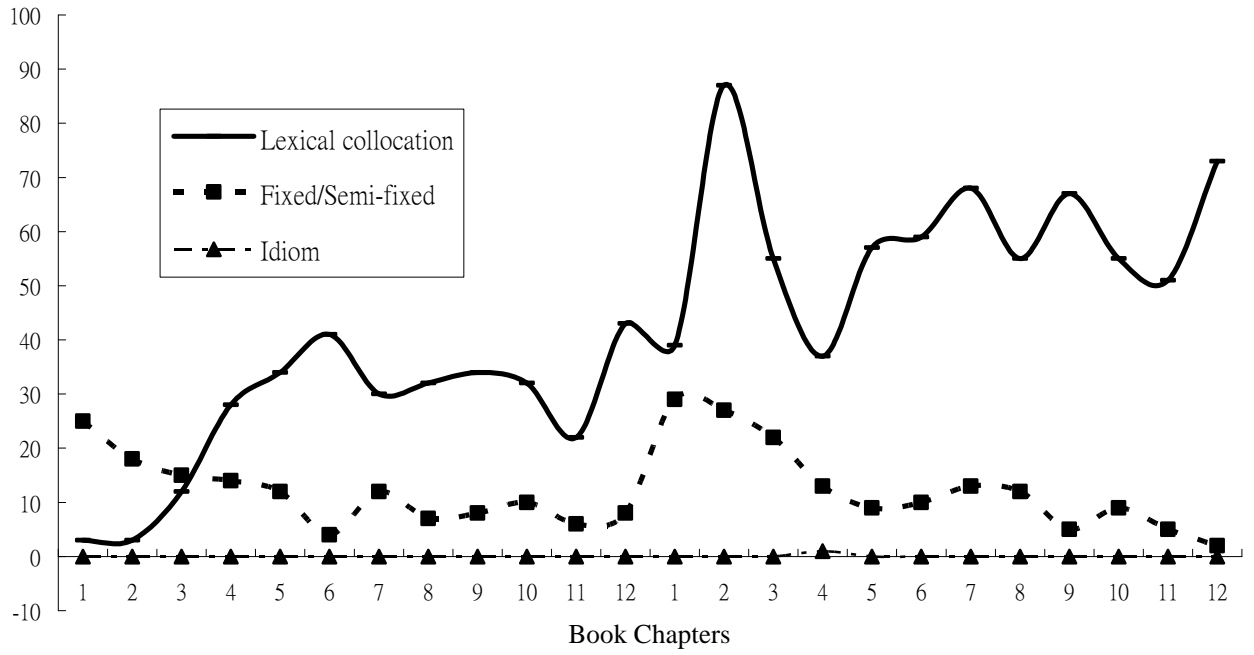


Figure 8. Trend of MLU Types in Touchstone

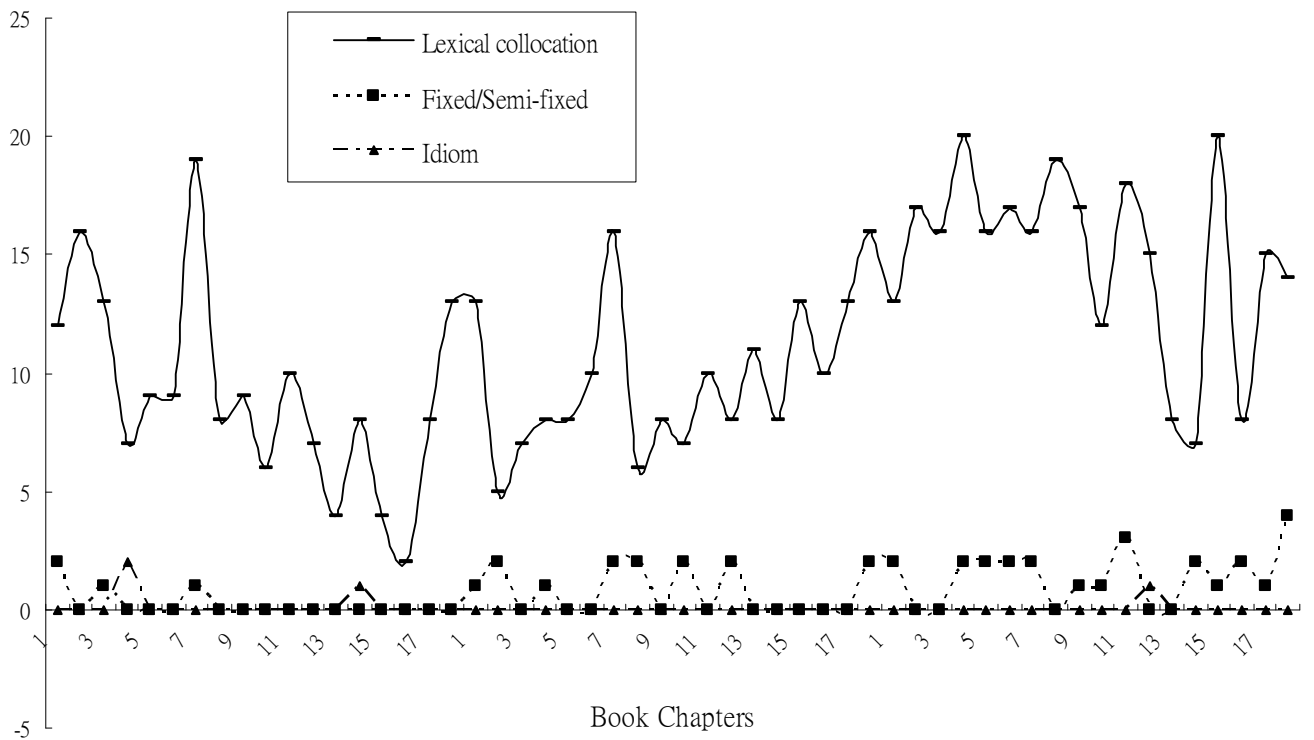


Figure 9. Tend of MLU Types in Totally True

APPENDIX II

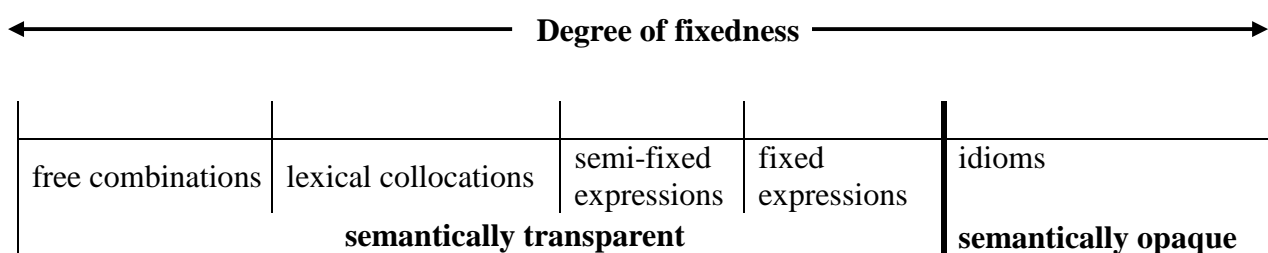


Figure 10. Spectrum of Multiword Lexical Units

The definitions of 4 multiword lexical units are best illustrated by the spectrum in Figure 10. On the one end, free combinations consist of co-occurring multiple words whose meanings can be understood from their components, permitting substitution in at least one of their components. On the other end, idioms are composed by fixed multiple words whose meanings can not be identified from the constituents themselves, allowing no replacement for any of their constituents (Howarth, 1998; Gitsaki, 1999). Each of the 4 MLUs examined in the study is further defined below.

Lexical collocations—Lexical collocations are word-associations where one word recurrently co-occurs with one or more other words as the only or one of few possible lexical choices. Examples of commonly seen lexical collocations include “*launch a missile*,” “*revoke a silence*,” “*blonde hair*,” “*closely acquainted*,” and “*market saturation*” (Benson, Benson, and Ilson, 1986, 1997; Al-Zahrani 1998; Gitsaki, 1999; Hsu, 2002; Richards et al., 2003).

Fixed expressions—Fixed expressions are word groups used in a particular context; often they allow no replacement in any of their components and are used as longer institutionalized phrases attached with social functions or pragmatic meanings. Examples are like “*I suppose!*” “*No way!*” “*What’s up?*” and “*I’ll see what I can do*” (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Gillard, 2003).

Semi-fixed expressions—Semi-fixed expressions are similar to fixed expressions except they allow replacement in at least one or more of their components chosen from a relatively small group of words whereas fixed expressions prohibit replacement. Examples include “*It’s...than I thought*,” “*How much...?*” and “*If I were you, I would...*” (Lewis, 1993, 1997; Gillard, 2003).

Idioms—Idioms are word groups fixed in word orders and substitutability. Their meanings can not be comprehended based on the meaning of each word understood on its own. Good examples are like “*a skeleton in the closet*,” “*once bitten twice shy*,” and “*go through the roof*” (Hsu, 2002; Gillard, 2003; Richards et al., 2003)