I'm Glad It's Correct, but Does It Make Sense? Formulation of Meaning in Compositions of South Korean EFL Learners

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While educators in South Korea have identified a need to change outdated practices of language pedagogy, continued utilization of the grammar–translation approach has perpetuated communication problems in a South Korean EFL context. To provide clinical analysis needed for effective reform, literal, figurative, and discursive aspects of formulaic language were studied in Korean EFL compositions from the Gachon Learner Corpus (GLC). Frequency values for 43 collocations related to the verb *make* were tallied by proficiency level and examined for patterns in usage. Most formulaic elements, with the exception of speech formulas for causation or force, were poorly represented, revealing little figurative or discursive expression of meaning. Results suggest that, at all levels, small lexical chunks are pieced together to form larger collocations via an overly simplistic (and literal) process of form-to-meaning mapping. Overemphasis of the grammar–translation method appears to produce compositions with long chains of information, loosely related by "fuzzy" semantic connections to adjacent lexical features.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, South Korea has become known for academic excellence. In 2009, Korean students dominated the subject areas of reading and math, earning top scores on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). In 2012, Korean achievement continued to be impressive, being well above the global average in reading, math, and science (Center on International Education Benchmarking, 2015). Despite tremendous achievement in primary academic subjects, performance outside the core has been lackluster. Extreme expenditures on foreign language education, for example, have failed to boost English ability.

Global rankings of English proficiency have continued to slip, dropping from 24th place in 2012 to 27th in 2015 (English Proficiency Index, 2015; Kwaak, 2014). It appears that a singular focus on core subject areas has left students ill-equipped to effectively communicate in English. This perspective is exemplified by South Korean college students: Despite having at least six years of English education in primary and secondary school, students are often unable to maintain rudimentary conversations with native English speakers (Niederhauser, 2012).

Although overemphasis of core subject areas has an impact on English proficiency, cultural and historical influences also affect the acquisition process. Traditional forms of English education in Asian countries like South Korea prepare learners via rote memorization, grammar–translation, and verbal drills. Classes utilize a teacher-centric paradigm in which learners are "fed" knowledge by the teacher, who serves as a content expert (Rao, 2002). While congruent with autocratic Confucian paradigms, which delineate asymmetrical social positions based on status, the use of drills and grammar–translation are ineffective means of developing communicative competence (Wong & VanPatten, 2003). The methods emphasize grammatical structures at the expense of purposeful communication, precluding the development of oral and written discourse (Kim & Kim, 2005).

While educators in Asian contexts like South Korea have identified a need to change outdated practices of language pedagogy, ineffective curricula, unsupportive management, and examination pressure hinder efforts to change (Lee, 2014). Traditional teacher-centric forms of English instruction continue to inculcate grammar and vocabulary through rote memorization. Issues associated with this approach are illustrated by a Korean author who writes, "You can see it these days at nearly every home in Asian countries, including Korea and China: young prodigal kids, sitting at a desk studying English or mathematics by themselves, accompanied by a dutiful parent or private tutor as they take mock tests" (Park, 2012, para. 3). With authoritative parents and teachers who strictly control student behavior, learners have little opportunity or motivation to work in collaborative peer groups. Thus, they lack meaningful experiences in English needed to communicate through either verbal or written media.

Efforts to Facilitate Communication

Despite governmental policy advocating communicative language development in schools (Dailey, 2010; Kim, 2004), lack of authentic communication, due primarily to overemphasis on receptive learning, has had a detrimental impact on English proficiency (Moodie & Nam, 2016). Students understand definitions of vocabulary and grammatical structures, yet lack the knowledge of discourse needed to converse or write effectively (Niederhauser, 2012). To address this issue, several resources that utilize authentic English structures have been suggested. English corpora, such as the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), have been proposed to provide more meaningful input (Carlstrom, 2014). Via handouts or guided tasks, students can become the researcher, discovering how grammatical features are used in real life. While potentially useful, the efficacy of such media has yet to be concretely established (Carlstrom, 2014; Schenck & Cho, 2012). Problems realizing efficacy may rest in communicative limitations of such approaches. While corpora or online dictionaries give students information about simple grammatical forms, they do not often provide pragmatic information needed for utilization in specific contexts. Consider the following statement:

The boss is headed your way. Better *make a run for it*.

Lacking extensive information about context of the collocation for *make*, a foreign language learner may not recognize the negative connotation of the target expression, which means "to avoid or escape." Learners may also misinterpret the pronoun *it*, believing it to be something that must be retrieved. Essentially, limited contextual input within a corpus encourages second language learners to interpret words more literally through bottom-up analysis. More extensive input that encourages top-down processing of discourse may be needed to enhance communication.

In order to promote language learning from a top-down perspective, researchers and educators have called for a critical approach to literacy. They identify the importance of promoting authentic and meaningful language use by considering multiple perspectives (Lee, Ardeshiri, & Cummins, 2016; Shin, 2007). Through critical examination of various texts, which depict both global and local issues, a better understanding

of language may be cultivated. As in corpus-based approaches to pedagogy, critical literacy may be problematic in a Korean context. Research suggests that learning in teacher-centric, authoritarian classrooms leaves students unable to critically analyze issues external to their own lives (Niederhauser, 2012). Due to a singular focus on Korean concepts within high school curricula and college entrance exams, learners cannot view situations from unconventional perspectives, precluding identification of figurative meanings in discourse.

Although Korean educators now understand the need to cultivate better understanding of communicative processes, namely, the means to convey meaning in spoken or written form, curricular reform continues to be a daunting task. Thus far, efforts to implement authentic curricula in Korean public schools, via assessments like the National English Ability Test (NEAT), have failed (Moodie & Nam, 2016). Within higher educational contexts, efforts to implement English-medium instruction have had some positive outcomes, yet they lack a support system for learners or teachers who are not prepared for such an approach (Byun et al., 2011). Failures at implementing innovative reforms in a Korean context may be caused by improper identification of learner needs (Byun et al., 2011; Moodie & Nam, 2016). Concerning this issue, Moodie and Nam (2016) state that researchers must "(re)consider learning objectives to reflect how Koreans encounter English (outside the classroom) in order to bring a more practical approach to language education" (p. 91). Without such inquiry, students will continue to use receptive skills learned for the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT), which prevents use of English for any meaningful purpose.

While efforts have been made to increase quality of English instruction, reforms have not significantly changed the highly receptive nature of Korean EFL learners. As suggested in prior research, improper preparation for innovative new solutions is a primary factor perpetuating the problem (Dailey, 2010; Kim, 2004). One major hindrance to the preparation process is an unclear understanding of how traditional Asian approaches to language pedagogy impact the learning process. Due to perpetuation of the notion that grammatical accuracy, rather than production of meaning, is the key to effective writing, both educators and researchers in a South Korean context continue to emphasize syntax, rather than figurative, pragmatic, and discursive aspects of writing. Such a one-sided approach to instruction has, in turn, produced a gap in understanding that impedes educational reform. Essentially, more holistic

research of semantic development in a Korean context is needed to accurately identify how communicative ability may be enhanced. Using a clinical evaluation of Korean EFL learner issues associated with the formulation of meaning, information about current challenges to communicative competence may become more salient, leading to more practical solutions. Reforms may then be considered alongside cultural and educational traditions prevalent in South Korea, ensuring that new learning techniques can be effectively adapted to a Confucian context.

Formulaic Language as a Gauge of Communicative Competence

As suggested by Hymes (1972), communicative competence is much more than an ability to use grammar; it is the power to convey meaning in a variety of social situations. Research suggests that communicative competence systematically develops as formulaic aspects of language are encoded with literal, figurative, or discursive connotations. Initially, literal meanings are mapped to small lexical features like nouns, verbs, and adjectives (VanPatten, 2004). Because these features contain foundational information concerning agents, actions, and qualities of a sentence, they are essential for basic communication. Following acquisition of lexical features, meaning is developed through use of grammar (VanPatten, 2004). First, morphology emerges to enhance the meaning of adjacent lexical features. The progressive *-ing* and past *-ed*, for example, add semantic sophistication to verb phrases, while articles and the plural *-s* add meaning to noun phrases. As semantic complexity increases, links to multiple lexical phrases become expressed through features like the possessive *-'s*, which connects an object with its owner, and the third person singular *-s*, which connects an action to its agent (Cook, 1993; Dulay & Burt, 1973; Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Like inter-phrasal morphology, syntactic features constraining word order also reveal growing complexity of relationships between lexical elements. Questions, phrasal verbs, *can*-inversion (e.g., *Can* you tell me where the subway is?), and tag questions all require semantic understanding, linking multiple phrasal and sentential elements. Thus, it is no surprise that these features emerge late in the process of grammar acquisition (Gass & Selinker, 2009; Pienemann, 1999, 2005).

In addition to the literal development of meaning, figurative and discursive competence develop as learners become more proficient. Initially, discourse becomes organized into distinct segments using

formulaic connectors, such as conjunctions or transitions (Hoey, 1996, p. 5). The transition, "to make matters worse," for example, links past discussion of negative experiences with illustration of a more serious calamity. Research suggests that features connecting discourse, like their morphological and grammatical counterparts, develop systematically as proficiency increases (Evers-Vermeul, 2009; Spooren & Sanders, 2008). In addition to discursive linguistic features, figurative language appears to be acquired systematically. Research of avoidance, for example, reveals that figurative phrasal verbs develop after their literal counterparts (Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Laufer & Eliasson, 1993; Liao & Fukuya, 2004).

Despite evidence that literal, discursive, and figurative aspects of language develop systematically as proficiency increases, few studies examine each of these features concurrently. Kecskes (2007), however, has examined these features collectively, placing them on one formulaic continuum (Table 1):

TABLE 1. Formulaic Continuum

Grammatical Units	Fixed Semantic Units	Phrasal Verbs	Speech Formulas	Situation-Bound Utterances	Idioms
Be going to	As a matter of fact	Put up with	Going shopping	Welcome aboard	Kick the bucket
Have to	Suffice it to say	Get along with	Not bad	Help yourself	Spill the beans

(Kecskes, 2007, p. 3)

On the left side of this continuum (Table 1), grammatical units have a simple form–meaning mapping. The syntactic feature "have to," for example, generally signifies a compulsory action. Like grammatical units, fixed semantic units like "As a matter of fact" have literal form–meaning mappings, which may be discerned through consecutive and cumulative interpretation of component parts. These features, however, may also be imbued with discursive meaning, serving to link ideas within conversation or text. Categories to the right of fixed semantic units in Table 1 tend to be more figurative. In the case of phrasal verbs and idioms, for example, meaning cannot often be construed by simply

adding the definitions of individual words. Meaning must be gleaned by looking at the words or expressions collectively. In the case of Situation-Bound Utterances (SBUs), context is required to facilitate understanding. Collectively, the formulaic continuum outlines importance of not only bottom-up form–meaning mappings and the accumulation of meaning, but top-down figurative interpretation of larger expressions and compositions.

Due to literal, figurative, and discursive meanings associated with formulaic language, it serves as an ideal gauge for communicative competence. Whereas individual words and grammatical features reflect literal form–meaning mappings from a bottom-up perspective, fixed semantic units, phrasal verbs, and idioms expose figurative or discursive understanding, as well as top-down linguistic processes. Because formulaic language is so versatile and semantically sophisticated, it may be used to evaluate Korean learners, who exhibit problems communicating in both oral and written discourse. Clinical analysis of language could reveal key gaps in literal, figurative, and discursive understanding not inculcated through either the grammar–translation or audiolingual approach. Consequently, quantitative and qualitative analysis of formulaic language was utilized within this study to evaluate communication of Korean EFL learners, as well as the impact of Asian language pedagogy.

Research Questions

Traditions of language pedagogy, which promote grammar–translation and drill through teacher-centric inculcation, have hampered the degree to which Korean EFL learners can communicate. Despite a clear understanding of vocabulary and grammatical structures, learners have difficulty utilizing these constituents to compose meaningful texts. While a need to enhance communicative competence in South Korea is now clearly evident, inadequate understanding of problems caused by traditional Asian language pedagogy has masked identification of essential reforms. More clinical analysis of learner communication, interpreted in the context of historical and cultural educational traditions, is needed to find more effective pedagogical techniques.

Due to a need for further research on communication in a Korean EFL context, the following questions have been posed:

1. How is meaning produced in Korean EFL learner compositions?
2 How does formulation of meaning develop as English proficiency increases?
3 What problems with the formulation of meaning are reflected by errors in the use of formulaic language?

METHOD

Data Resource

To analyze the communicative competence of Korean learners, the Gachon Learner Corpus (GLC) was utilized (Carlstrom, 2013). The corpus contains 16,111 texts (1,824,373 words) from Korean EFL learners at university. In addition to information about English proficiency level (TOEIC, TOEFL, or IELTS score), each text contains metadata concerning the writer's languages learned in high school, years of English study before college, and university major. Information was accessed via the CQPweb, which is a new web-based corpus analysis system that allows for keyword searches and analysis of collocations (Hardie, 2012).

Scope of Examination

To assess the communicative competence of Korean learners, a systematic means of evaluating formulaic language was designed. First, the verb *make* was selected from a list of the top one hundred most common words in the English language (Fry & Kress, 2012). Unlike other features included in the list (e.g., *the*, *and*, *from*, *if*, etc.), the word *make* is lexical in meaning. It may be used to express the idea of production, as in the expression "make dinner." While there is a simple form–meaning mapping at the micro level, the word may also be imbued with discursive or figurative qualities at the macro level. *Make sense*, for example, is an idiomatic expression that can signify a useful thing to do, as in the sentence, "Marrying him right now just makes sense." In addition to idiomatic expressions, *make* may be used as a figurative phrasal verb; the term *make up*, for example, may be used to signify the creation of false information (e.g., make up a lie). Yet another use of

the verb *make* is as a speech formula that signifies either cause or force (e.g., makes me angry / make my brother clean his room). Finally, the verb *make* has discursive functions, serving to summarize (e.g., to make a long story short) or intensify (e.g., to make matters worse). Due to semantic complexity and frequent usage within the English language, the verb *make* was selected for analysis of Korean EFL learner competence.

To systematically evaluate different forms of *make*, a list of collocations was obtained from the English Vocabulary Profile (n.d.). This profile contains information about English language development (e.g., expressions, CEFR levels in which the expressions emerge, and meanings conveyed by expressions), which has been obtained from the collaborative study of researchers, academics, corpus linguists, teachers, testers, ministries of education, and other specialists (English Profile, n.d.). Using the profile for American English, 43 different forms of the word *make* were discovered (see Appendix A). Organized based upon the CEFR level in which they usually appear, expressions served as indicators of Korean EFL learner proficiency.

Gachon Learner Corpus (GLC) Frequency

GLC frequency denotes the number of times a target collocation appears in the Korean EFL corpus. To discover issues with communication of meaning, expressions with *make* were located through using the search and collocation functions of the GLC (see Appendix for search strings). Expressions resulting from the search were then examined for congruence to one of the 43 categories of *make* in the English Vocabulary Profile (n.d.). Before expressions could be included within a frequency count, usage of a target collocation within the text had to satisfy the following two criteria:

1. The writer attempts to use the target expression (collocations associated with the feature are present even if there are grammatical errors that do not interfere with meaning).
2 The writer attempts to convey meaning associated with the target collocation.

Sometimes, a writer would attempt to use expressions, yet they would have grammatical errors. One learner, for example, wrote about getting a massage and stated “it is hard to *go make a time*” [sic]. Because

grammatical errors do not impede understanding of the expression, which signifies a personal desire to set aside time, it was included in the tally.

In other circumstances, grammatical errors or differences in meaning were not clear, obscuring understanding. One learner, for example, described beauty treatments by saying, "I know I have to facial and I want. But it must *make a time* and spend money" [sic]. In this context, the pronoun *it* appears to refer to the word *facial*, which suggests that the learner meant to communicate *take time*. Due to a grammatical ambiguity, the expression was eliminated from the tally. In another case, a learner used the expression, "I will make up for my appearance" [sic]. While grammatically accurate, proximity near a discussion of beauty care products revealed an intended meaning (put on make-up) different from the phrasal verb *make up for*. Thus, the expression was eliminated from the tally. In order to be included within frequency counts, all collocations had to be congruent in both grammatical form and meaning.

Procedures

To address the research questions, which examined development of communicative competency, each form of *make* was systematically searched and tallied (see Appendix for search strings). Searches for causation (e.g., "make me happy") and force (e.g., "make him go") focused on personal pronouns that denoted people (*it* was excluded). Since these pronouns are not generally used with the word *make* to "produce" a person, they were deemed an adequate reflection of the target meanings. Other formulaic expressions were located using the keywords in the Appendix. Expressions resulting from all searches had to satisfy criteria for form and meaning before they could be included within the tally.

Tallies for expressions were separated into nine TOEIC proficiency levels (from 100–199 to 900–999). To provide additional information for the evaluation of semantic development, tallies were also collated with the student's CEFR level, which was obtained by converting the TOEIC score (Table 2).

TABLE 2. Mapping of TOEIC Scores to CEFR Level

CEFR Level	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1-C2
TOEIC Score	120–224	225–549	550–784	785–944	945–

(Tannenbaum & Wylie, 2007)

Despite some issues of equivalence between standardized assessments (Harsch, 2014), conversion of scores provided a means to track learner development along universally delineated proficiency levels.

Speech formulas (causation and force) and other formulaic expressions were summarized in a table, which depicted the total number of target features at each level. Since the number of texts at each TOEIC proficiency level varied, a percentage was needed for comparison across levels. Thus, percentages were calculated by dividing the number of target features by total usage of *make* for each level in the GLC. Within the second stage of analysis, frequency of other formulaic expressions, which were much less common than speech formulas for causation or force, were depicted in a table. Qualitative analysis was conducted in the final stage. Utilization of meaning and form, along with notable errors, were examined within writing contexts for presentation within research findings.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of formulaic language development in Korean EFL texts revealed several key insights (Table 3). Speech formulas for causation or force (e.g., "make me happy" / "make him go") emerged early in Korean EFL learner compositions, appearing in the A1 and early A2 stages. This finding did not match the CEFR vocabulary level predicted by the English Vocabulary Profile (n.d.), which was B1. These speech formulas were also used much more frequently than any other type of formulaic language, often surpassing 20% of overall use of the word *make* for each level. While meaning of such expressions is not literal (they do not retain the meaning *produce* or *create*), they are small and highly systematic. Furthermore, they are easily mapped to semantic concepts. The expression "make me happy," for example, can simply be mapped to *cause* + *me* + *happy*. Collectively, small, systematic, and semantically simple attributes of speech formulas can explain high frequency values in the Korean EFL corpus. Such attributes are highly consistent with the grammar–translation approach, which promotes memorization of small lexical units that are formulaically pieced together. In effect, speech formulas provide a systematic "replacement" for semantic concepts conceived in the mother tongue.

As with frequency of speech formulas for causation and force, utilization of pronoun types with speech formulas appeared to represent traditional Korean language pedagogy. The pronoun *me*, which represented 50% or more of the pronouns at each proficiency level, revealed overemphasis of personal experience in Korean EFL compositions. Like systematic use of speech formulas, absence of critical inquiry concerning diverse subject areas may reflect inculcation through the grammar–translation approach. Dictation of learning exercises via an autocratic teaching style limits student exploration of alternative opinions, reflection on global issues, and collaboration with peers, which subsequently hinders diversification of written content. Like overutilization of the pronoun *me* in speech formulas, a lack of other formulaic language types, which are imbued with a variety of figurative, discursive, and rhetorical meanings, suggests issues with diversification of meaning in Korean EFL learner texts.

TABLE 3. Frequency of Speech Formulas for Causation and Force According to Proficiency Level

TOEIC SCORE	100-199	200-299	300-399	400-499	500-599	600-699	700-799	800-899	900-999
CEFR LEVEL	A1		A2			B1		B2	C1
+Pronoun									
make me	1	12	25	82	166	89	60	16	1
make you	1	2	2	11	49	9	5	0	0
make them	0	4	5	9	32	14	10	2	0
make us	0	1	2	11	21	11	3	1	0
make her	0	0	0	0	2	3	1	1	0
make him	0	0	1	1	5	6	0	1	0
N	2	19	35	114	275	132	79	21	1
%	66.67%	27.14%	15.77%	16.52%	21.86%	17.23%	21.88%	26.25%	22.22%
Other Formulaic Language									
N	0	0	8	14	24	13	9	1	0
%	0%	0%	3.60%	2.03%	1.91%	1.70%	2.49%	1.25%	0%

Note. Percentage values represent use of target expressions divided by total usage of the verb *make* in each proficiency level.

Further analysis of Table 3 suggested that formulaic language use is more prevalent in the early stages of proficiency. Percentages of use within the GLC were highest at early stages. Speech formulas, for example, were used 66.67% and 27.14% of the time in the earliest two proficiency levels, respectively; these values were higher than those at any other level. Likewise, other forms of formulaic language were used most prevalently in early stages. At the A2 proficiency level (the third TOEIC proficiency level), the highest percentage of use was revealed (3.60%). Rather than an increase in use of formulaic language as learners developed semantic sophistication, usage appeared to decrease and level off as proficiency increased.

Evaluation of idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs revealed very little clear developmental patterning (Table 4). More literal and fixed semantic units emerged earliest. *Make sure*, *make friends*, *to make matters worse*, *make fun of*, and *make way for* each appeared in the third TOEIC stage, which ranged from 300-399. Other than this finding, appearance of formulaic elements seemed sporadic. *Make fun of*, for example, which emerged early, did not appear again until a later stage of proficiency. *Make way for*, which normally emerges in stage C2 (English Vocabulary Profile, n.d.), was frequently used in early proficiency levels, yet was not used at higher proficiency levels. Relatively inconsistent and infrequent utilization of formulaic language across levels may further reflect language learning via the grammar-translation approach, which "feeds" students simple form–meaning mappings. Without awareness of contexts, connotations, or purposes associated with formulaic expressions, learners may be unable to utilize them consistently, explaining their random appearance in the corpus.

Like examination of frequency, qualitative analysis of formulaic expressions revealed seemingly random patterns of usage, supporting the idea that contexts, connotations, and purposes associated with formulaic language were not known to the students. Learners tended to chain small lexical combinations together, as in the following example:

> *know, it is not cheep and some time hard to go *make* a time. so i take the massage once in a 3 month (TOEIC 500)

In the excerpt, all constituents appear to be "pieced" together. Incorrect insertion of the article between the collocation *make time* also appears to suggest a bottom-up process, whereby individual words of the target

expression are chained together by an overly simplistic syntactic encoder. Very little top-down semantic processing of lexical features appears to be occurring. Instead, basic form–meaning mappings for individual words are utilized. Without a top-down semantic understanding of relationships between lexical elements, the learner may be unable to identify how figurative or idiomatic expressions can be grammatically modified.

TABLE 4. Formulaic Language Use According to Proficiency Level

Learner Proficiency (TOEIC Score)	100-199	200-299	300-399	400-499	500-599	600-699	700-799	800-899	900-999
CEFR LEVEL	A1		A2			B1		B2	C1
Make From			1						
Make Sure			1	3	6	1	2		
Make Up My Mind						1			
Make Friends			1	3	6	1	1		
Make Up For				1	1	2			
Make Into					1				
Make A Living				1			2		
Make One's Bed						1			
Make The Most Of					1				
Make A Big Difference				1	2	2	1	1	
To Make Matters Worse			1		1	1			
Make Fun Of			1				1		
Make Sense				1		2	1		
Make Time				2	2				
Make It (Be Successful)						1	1		
Make Ends Meet						1			
Make A Point Of					1				
Make Do					1				
Make Way For			3	2	2				

While some formulaic expressions were combined word by word, other expressions appear to have been constructed through lexical retrieval of small two-word units. Consider the following sentences from the GLC:

1. *I am good at *make from* paper. (TOEIC 325)
2. *In many cases of famous CEOs and celebrities, we can know that they couldn't *make it* their success without their practice and effort. (TOEIC 700)

In each example, errors suggest that two-word units are being lexically retrieved. In the first example, *make from* is utilized "as is," without inserting a direct object (e.g., "make things from paper"). In the second example, *make it* is lexically retrieved and utilized with a direct object ("their success"), which suggests cognitive mapping of the two-word unit to a verb meaning *produce*. Neither example reveals semantic sophistication. In both cases, the verbs appear to be imbued only with a simplified semantic conception of *produce* or *yield*. Collocations do not reveal a heightened understanding of semantic relationships between words, nor do they reveal top-down cognitive processing of meaning.

Utilization of formulaic language tended to be isolated to piecing together one or two words, yet larger formulaic expressions were used on a limited basis by more advanced learners. As in the use of other formulaic expressions, collocations did not show a clear conception of meaning or connotation. In the expression "make light of me as a pig," the phrasal verb is used to mean ridicule, rather than treating something as unimportant. In another example, which used "make a living," meaning was not even clearly discernable (TOEIC score 460):

*if you have to fix unpack fixes Humanbeing *make a living* with thought

In the excerpt, elements seem, once again, to be chained together without careful regard to meaning. Due to an apparent lack of semantic understanding, the learner is providing an overly simplistic, vague mapping of concepts through "daisy chaining" small lexical and grammatical elements.

Although grammatical accuracy tends to increase as TOEIC scores increase, overly simplistic form–meaning mapping remains evident. Even at higher levels, the encoding of meaning appears to be a bottom up process, whereby small lexical utterances are chained together. Refer to the following paragraph from one of the most proficient learners in the GLC (TOEIC score 925):

> so i decided to use beauty products as mask packs and ample..something else i think that using personal care and beauty products can **make** people who use those more fascinating **making** one's image better is good for themselves so i will use those things to make my image more fascinating it's a trend so i am just a man who is simply affected by human society i'll follow the trend. [sic]

While the learner tends to use grammatical features more accurately than lower-level learners, meaning of sentences appear to change and drift with no regard to organization of ideas or purpose. Writing appears focused on the local lexico-grammatical units being written, rather than the overall pragmatic purpose of the writing. The text reflects little understanding of higher-order processes needed to organize discourse or communicate for a specific purpose. Collectively, quantitative and qualitative analysis appears to reveal issues with the grammar–translation approach, which emphasizes learning through translation of individual words and grammatical features. Without contextual understanding, learners appear unable to effectively use expressions for any practical purpose. As a result, formulaic language is used sporadically and erroneously according to a simplistic orientation, which is framed in individual experience.

Implications for Pedagogy

Analysis of formulaic language has yielded several insights concerning the development of communicative competence in a South Korean EFL context. Although formulaic expressions are indeed utilized, they have many semantic and grammatical errors, remnants of small language segments inculcated via the grammar–translation method. Because learners have acquired linguistic structures through rote memorization rather than authentic input and communication, they appear to lack figurative, discursive, and rhetorical knowledge required to speak or write for a distinct purpose.

Deficiency in understanding of meaning has given learners a unique form of language construction. Small lexical units, usually one or two words, are retrieved and pieced together using an overly simplistic understanding of form–meaning mappings. Utilization of this learning style influences language in two ways. First, several grammatical and semantic errors emerge when lexical units are pieced together

incorrectly. Because meaning is not considered from a top-down perspective, relationships between lexical features are not identified, precluding correction of errors. Second, long chains of information, only loosely related to adjacent words or phrases, are developed when lexical and grammatical features are combined. At the level of discourse, this technique creates a generic composition, devoid of coherent rhetorical devices for specific communicative purposes. There is little diversification of writing to express diverse ideas or serve different purposes.

To overcome the "daisy-chaining" effect, students must learn to make larger semantic connections between words, phrases, and sections of text. More extensive use of summary skills is one means of correcting this issue. Summary compels learners to examine discourse and negotiate meaning of key points. It also promotes top-down understanding, which is essential for purposeful writing. In addition to summarization, skills for synthesizing information from multiple sources are needed to facilitate top-down interpretation of meaning as well as mapping of larger lexical phrases to semantic concepts. Due to years of education via the grammar–translation approach, which supports bottom-up linkage of individual words and grammatical features, Korean students may have difficulty utilizing top-down linguistic skills to summarize, evaluate, or cite multiple sources.

Despite a tendency in Korean EFL contexts to promote similarities of essay type, differences in discourse are often given much less coverage, resulting in an all-purpose, generic essay structure (Kim & Kim, 2005). Via a "universal" form of discourse, thesis statements and key points are utilized regardless of genre. In reality, differences in discourse must be stressed if learners are to write for a particular purpose. While teaching commonalities between genres is indeed important, when overemphasized, learners obtain a false notion of discursive simplicity. Essentially, teaching one universal framework leaves students ill-equipped to write texts for a specific purpose. This issue may be addressed by developing a purpose-driven syllabus for formulaic language. Table 5 outlines how a pragmatic syllabus might be designed for the target form, *make*, to promote effective use of formulaic language.

In contrast to the grammar–translation method, which promotes utilization of grammar and vocabulary in contextual isolation, pragmatic presentation of features reveals a distinct communicative purpose for the

target language. If learners lack clear knowledge of purpose, they will have little motivation to use new idioms, expressions, or grammatical features. Thus, pragmatic syllabi like that in Table 5 are needed. These syllabi may promote top-down processing of target expressions, thereby helping learners identify semantic relationships between words, phrases, and sections of texts.

TABLE 5. Pragmatic Syllabus for Formulaic Language Use

Purpose	Example
1. Intensify	To make matters worse…
2. Justify	It just makes sense.
3. Put into larger perspective / Summarize	To make a long story short…
4. Refute	Many people make light of smoking in public places, yet it is a significant problem.
5. Add negative connotation	I have to make do with the life I have.
6. Convince the reader	This story will make your blood run cold.
7. Describe controversy	The new technology is making waves in the music industry.
8. Defend a position	We must make allowances for student issues which affect their learning.

While summary, synthesis, and analysis of textual differences are all essential components promoting comprehension and, thereby, the ability to write, learners in a Korean context will need more cognitive development. Teacher-centric, authoritarian classes have hampered facilitation of critical-thinking skills necessary to look at similarities or differences between sources. As revealed by emphasis of the pronoun *me* with *make*, simplistic descriptions related to the author's experience predominate. Traditional teacher-centric, authoritarian classrooms may have left students with an inability to examine issues external to South Korea. Without a way to critically analyze novel subject matter, learners may have difficulty cultivating the skills necessary to write effectively.

Because years of teacher-centric learning have limited the extent to which learners may critically process the meaning of English texts, systematic pedagogical interventions are needed. Reading annotation may be one successful means to promote deeper understanding of meaning as well as more structured analysis of readings (Chen & Chen, 2014; Nor,

Azman, & Hamat, 2013). Annotation can be used to promote higher-level cognitive skills like analyzing, summarizing, and evaluating. It can also promote the identification and utilization of different literary genres. While annotation represents an ideal means to facilitate cognitive processing of meaning needed to become an effective writer, the tool will need to be carefully scaffolded. Since Korean learners lack the foundation from which to utilize the technique, they will first need to annotate materials more closely related to their lives. Through providing step-by-step analysis of issues that move from local to global, critical-thinking skills may be developed. Learners may also systematically move away from egocentric views of experience toward more critical evaluation of global issues.

CONCLUSIONS

Results of formulaic language analysis suggest that small grammatical formulas are utilized, yet they are created using overly simplistic form–meaning mappings. Overall, there seems to be little figurative, discursive, or rhetorical language at any proficiency level. Deficiencies in communicative competence appear to rest with overemphasis of the grammar–translation approach, which does not provide authentic input or opportunities to exchange ideas. Lacking a clear purpose for the writings created, Korean EFL learners appear to compose texts as a mere academic exercise, chaining lexical chunks together. This language style has resulted in the following problems within Korean EFL compositions, regardless of proficiency level:

1. Chains of small lexical chunks that are only loosely related to adjacent features
2. A universal, generic form of discourse with no clear purpose
3. Writings without figurative, discursive, and rhetorical devices
4. Sporadic use of formulaic language, which reflects little understanding of nuisances associated with the language
5. Little change of content-based upon context or situation

To reduce issues with communication and increase writing proficiency, learners must be provided with pedagogical techniques like

summary or synthesis, which promote top-down semantic processing. Through such techniques, learners can identify relationships between words, phrases, and sections of text. In addition, teachers need to emphasize differences in discourse to promote more meaningful communication. This may be accomplished through stressing the pragmatic functions of formulaic language. While bottom-up semantic processing (basic form–meaning mapping) is indeed necessary, top-down semantic processing must also be encouraged, ensuring complete acquisition of tools necessary for communication. Ultimately, learners must be given writing exercises with a clear communicative objective, not an academic one. Without having a salient purpose for writing, Korean EFL learners may have little motivation to develop content, perpetuating problems with communication.

The Author

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APPENDIX

Search Strings for Formulaic Features

Formulaic Feature (CEFR LEVEL)	Search String (GLC)	Formulaic Feature (CEFR LEVEL)	Search String (GLC)
Make From (A2)	mak* + Colloc. (from)	Make Yourself At Home (C1)	mak* + Colloc. (home)
Make Sure (A2)	mak* + Colloc. (sure)	Make A Note (C1)	mak* + Colloc. (note)
Make Up My Mind (B1)	mak* + Colloc. (mind)	Make Way For (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (way)
Make A Face (B1)	mak* + Colloc. (face)	Make Do (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (do)
Make Friends (B1)	mak* + Colloc. (friends) mak* + Colloc. (friend)	Make A Splash (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (splash)
Make A (Big) Difference (B2)	mak* + Colloc. (difference)	Make Light Of (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (light)
Make Sense (B2)	mak* + Colloc. (sense)	Make Allowances For (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (allowances)
Make A Living (B2)	mak* + Colloc. (living)	Make Your Blood Run Cold (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (blood)
Make The Most Of (B2)	mak* + Colloc. (most)	Make Your Blood Boil (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (blood)
To Make Matters Worse (B2)	mak* + Colloc. (matters)	Make My Day (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (day)
Make Fun Of (B2)	mak* + Colloc. (fun)	Make A Name For Yourself (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (name)
Make Up For (B2)	mak* up + Colloc. (for)	Make Your Presence Felt (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (presence)
Make Into (B2)	mak* + Colloc. (into)	Make A Run For It (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (run)
Make One's Bed (B2)	mak* + Colloc. (bed)	Make Waves (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (waves)
Make The Best Of (B2)	mak* + Colloc. (best)	Make Your Way (Succeed) (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (way)
Make A Fool Of Yourself (B2)	mak* + Colloc. (fool)	Make Understood (C1)	mak* + Colloc. (understood)
Make For (B2)	mak* + Colloc. (for)	Make Of (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (of)

Make A Fool Out Of (B2)	mak* + Colloc. (fool)	Make Sense Of (C2)	mak* + Colloc. (sense)
Make Out (B2)	mak* + Colloc. (out)	make me (B1)	mak* me
Make Up (e.g., Lies) (B2)	mak* + Colloc. (NN)	make you (B1)	mak* you
Make It (Be Successful) (C1)	mak* it	make them (B1)	mak* them
Make Time (C1)	mak* + Colloc. (time)	make us (B1)	mak* us
Make Ends Meet (C1)	mak* + Colloc. (ends)	make her (B1)	mak* her
Make A Point Of (C1)	mak* + Colloc. (point)	make him (B1)	mak* him