

## Introduction

As with most textbooks, each unit in this textbook contains readings, dialogues, writing and listening activities, and so on. All teachers should be familiar with this approach, so I would like to focus here on features in this textbook that may offer teachers new insights into the way language can be produced, presented, and taught in a textbook.

## Grammar

We have placed a ‘Grammar Awareness’ section at the end of each unit. We are not suggesting that lessons should follow the sequence we have allocated for each lesson, i.e., teach grammar last. Rather, we are suggesting that the teaching of grammar, if it takes place explicitly, should follow the instincts of the teacher in relation to how s/he sees the abilities and competencies of his/her students.

In other words, some students, particularly in the Chinese context, may have extensive knowledge of grammar, but be poor at communication activities. The teacher may therefore decide to focus on communication and completely ignore the explicit teaching of grammar. Other students may be good, but not great, at grammar. In this situation, the teacher may decide to teach ‘Grammar Awareness’ at the end of class as a review activity. Finally, for those students who are poor at grammar the teacher may decide to teach ‘Grammar Awareness’ before looking at any dialogues, texts, or activities in the unit.

## Grammar and Communication

Most textbooks nowadays label themselves as ‘communicative’. Unfortunately, few textbooks are able to demonstrate in any qualitative or quantitative way exactly how they promote communication. In order to investigate the extent to which our book promotes communication, we have followed Miura’s (1997) textbook evaluation system as a means to quantify activities in each unit:

Type of activity	Example
+creative +interactive	Activities such as role-plays or problem-solving activities where students are required to create text or dialogue while working and interacting together.
-creative +interactive	Pre-written texts and dialogues. Students may practice these scripted forms, but there is no creativity at work.
+creative –interactive	Individual essay writing, or script or task preparation, where there is creative use of language but little or no interaction.
-creative -interactive	Mechanical exercises, usually focusing on grammar. Typical of these are blank-filling, tense manipulation and other kinds of transformational drills.

Every activity or task in each unit was categorized using the above system. The results for each unit are shown in Table 1.

Unit	Topic	+creative +interactive	-creative +interactive	+creative -interactive	-creative -interactive
1	Go Where you Wanna Go!	1	4	1	6
2	Feel at Home in our Hotel!	3	0	4	4
3	Diving for Pearls	0	1	3	3
4	It's Yummy Tummy Time	0	3	0	7
5	How about a Cup of Tea?	3	0	2	6
6	Local Landmarks	3	4	6	5
7	A trip to Zhuhai	3	2	5	4
8	Follow my Rhythm	2	1	3	5
9	Environmental Issues	0	6	1	2
10	Staying Healthy	3	1	2	6
11	College Life	1	4	2	3
12	Home, Sweet Home: Foreigners in Zhuhai	3	2	0	6
Total		22	28	29	57

Table 1: Task types per unit.

As Table 1 indicates, the number of mechanical activities (-creative, - interactive) at 57 was much higher than the other categories. This is not necessarily a surprise, as textbooks aimed at young second language (L2) learners will often contain predominantly mechanical practice exercises, as these serve exam objectives, allow for easy testing, and reinforce accuracy.

This does not mean that this textbook fails to promote communication. The fact that there are 51 creative activities suggests a good balance between creativity and practice modes.

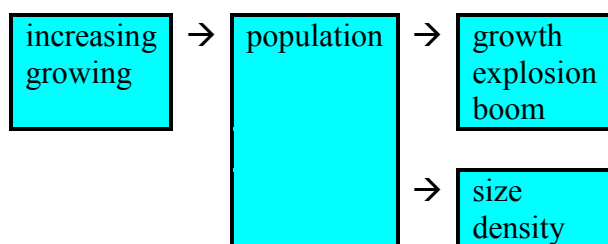
## Collocation

Collocation describes the way words habitually co-occur (See Sinclair, 1991 and McEnery et al, 2006). Often the way words combine reflects and describes the world we live in. The word *food* for example frequently occurs with words like *eat*, *digest*, and so on. Sometimes a word combines frequently with a wide range of other words; other times the combination is highly restricted, so that *neigh* really only combines with *horses* or other horse-related words like *snort* or *gallop*.

Similarly, many collocations consist of fixed or frozen syntax. Expressions such as *by the way* and *once upon a time* cannot be modified. We cannot say *by a way* or *once on a time*.

In many cases, there is no logical or transparent reason why words combine, so that we talk about *committing a crime*, but not *doing* or *making a crime*. It is this lack of transparency that creates difficulties for L2 learners, and the growing use of Corpus Linguistics techniques now allows us to measure the most frequent combinations of different words, and present these in systematic ways. In this textbook, we have used a section called 'Word Awareness' to achieve this goal.

The following example from Unit 3 shows how this works. First of all, a diagrammatic representation of the collocations is presented. In the diagram below, the node or target word is *population*, and we can see that the most frequent collocates to the left are *increasing* and *growing*, two semantically related words, while frequent collocates to the right are in two groups of related words: *growth*, *explosion*, and *boom* in one group, and *size* and *density* in the other.



Following the diagram, authentic examples from corpora are presented:

The 21th century sees human population growth.  
a population explosion.  
a population boom.

The population size is growing.  
increasing.

The population density of that country is 100 per square mile.

The presentation of lexical items in this manner allows learners to quickly develop awareness of how and how often words combine together. Knowledge of collocation is likely to aid in the acceleration of fluency development.

We hope you will find in this textbook not only the standard approaches to teaching grammar and words, but also find insights into how, by revealing and explaining language at a variety of levels, we can help our students develop awareness of how language is not simply a list of verb tenses, but is instead an intertwining set of structures and lexical patterns that allows users to be creative and progressive in the way they use language.

Terry Shortall  
 Editor

## References

- Miura, T (1997) 'An analysis of 'Aural/Oral Communication A' English textbooks in Japanese Upper secondary school'. Unpublished MA dissertation, University of Birmingham.
- Sinclair, J. McH. (1991) *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. Oxford: OUP.
- McEnery, T., R. Xiao, and Y. Tono (2006) *Corpus-Based Language Studies: An Advanced Resource Book*. Routledge,