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 those features in this textbook that may offer teachers new insights into the way language can be produced, handled, and analyzed 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 of these textbooks are able to demonstrate in any qualitative or quantitative way exactly how they promote communication.   We have followed Miura's (1997) textbook evaluation system as a means to quantify activities in each unit according to the following approach:

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 found in every textbook. 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 grammatical items. 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	Festivals	5	4	1	10
2	Sports	2	6	2	6
3	Travel	3	3	2	9
4	Volunteering	3	4	3	7
5	Table manners	5	2	3	9
6	Culture	5	3	2	9
7	Going out	7	2	1	10
8	Technology	3	4	4	6
9	Food	5	1	4	9
10	Health	3	1	3	10
11	Film	5	3	5	5
12	Crime	6	1	1	9
Total		52	34	31	99

Table 1: Task types per unit.

As Table 1 indicates, the number of mechanical activities (-creative, -interactive) at 99 was almost double that for the +creative, +interactive type, which stood at 52.   This is not necessarily a surprise, as textbooks aimed at young second language (L2) learners will often contain predominantly mechanical practice exercises.

This does not mean that this textbook fails to promote communication. The fact that for every two mechanical exercises there is one creative and communicative activity suggests a good balance between creativity and practice modes.

In addition, tasks were quantified according to which of the four skills they represented. Again, it was felt that data of this kind would be indicative of how representative and balanced the textbook is as an example of real language. The four skills activities for each unit are shown in Table 2.

Unit	Topic	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
1	Festivals	4	6	3	7
2	Sports	9	8	5	4
3	Travel	2	4	6	5
4	Volunteering	9	7	5	5
5	Table manners	2	7	7	4
6	Culture	3	6	6	3
7	Going out	2	8	5	5
8	Inventions	2	3	5	7
9	Food	2	4	6	4
10	Health	1	3	9	4
11	Film	1	8	3	3
12	Crime	2	6	6	3
		39	70	66	54

Table 2: distribution of four skills across all textbook units

Table 2 shows that Listening activities are substantially fewer in number than the other three skills. This is probably because the student writers had no

means to record the Listening activities they were writing. This may have discouraged our authors from presenting such activities.


Collocation

Collocation describes the way words habitually co-occur. 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, while frequent collocates to the right are growth, explosion, boom, size, and density..

increasing growing	→	population	→	growth explosion boom
			→	size density
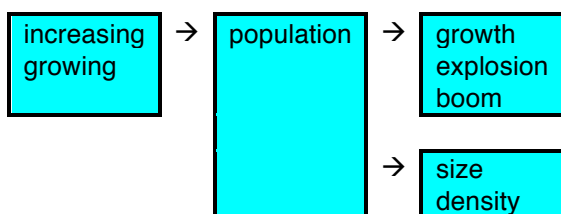
Following the diagram, authentic examples from corpora are presented:

The 21th century sees <u>human population growth</u>.
<u>a population explosion</u>.
<u>a population boom</u>.

The <u>population size</u> is <u>growing</u>.
<u>increasing</u>.

The <u>population density</u> 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.

Colligation

The co-occurrence of words with specific grammatical classes or categories; the way words are attracted to specific grammar patterns.

I strongly believe that it makes sense to pay attention to collocation and **colligation** in language instruction and to teach lexical items in their typical syntactic and semantic contexts. This belief clearly echoes one of [John McH.] Sinclair's (1997:34)

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.

Tony McEnery, Richard Xiao, and Yukio Tono, *Corpus-Based Language Studies: An Advanced Resource Book*. Routledge, 2006