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Lexical syllabus reconsidered as a course design for English language learning in Japan

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1. Introduction

A considerable number of coursebooks have been organised chiefly in the light of grammatical and functional aspects of language. The fecundity implies that grammar and functions may be well equipped with the potentiality for organisation of a syllabus, which is in actuality the most influential factor in a course design. In the process of designing a course, whether it is based on grammatical or functional syllabus, little guidance is usually provided to vocabulary, except in the form of a word list.

Similarly in skill-based description of language vocabulary is ordinarily treated as an appendage to four skills. In the course of study for senior high schools, for example, merely the optimum numbers of words to be treated in various courses are stipulated but the words are not identified in it.

However, it would be impossible to teach grammar without referring to some vocabulary. It is not an organising force there, but it actually fleshes out the structural skeletons. It would be also quite difficult to understand a passage from a novel if there were more than two or three unknown words in every line.

Grammatical knowledge and contextual determinancy might be of considerable help to infer the right meaning, but these two factors and vocabulary are, in some cases, interdependent. They affect each other.

Willis (1990) suggests that a word can be a better unit as a syllabus design than structure. According to his argument, a word can be prior to structures in terms of meaning. This priority of vocabulary leads to the idea that the description of language which takes a word as its basis is more accessible to students than a structural description. This is where the idea of lexical syllabus starts.

To design a syllabus from the lexical viewpoint was an entirely new attempt. The present essay will first outline the notions and the criticisms of structural and notional/functional syllabuses and secondly, will introduce a variety of ideas which underlie lexical syllabus. And lastly I will show how these ideas are practically realised in course organization.

2. Syllabus design

2.1. Syllabus and methodology

In order to avoid confusion, I think it will be better to begin by making clear what I mean by the notion of a syllabus. The main point to be clarified here first is that a syllabus is not either an approach or a methodology.

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It is in principle an inert collection of linguistic document which specifies what is to be learned, and the concept of an approach and a methodology tell how it is to be learned. This implies that it is a mistaken assumption that a notional/functional syllabus is synonymous with a communicative approach to language teaching. A notional/functional syllabus is of itself no more communicative and either is a structural syllabus. Communication is what is achieved through classroom activities. This means that there is no such thing as communicative syllabus. It should be thought of as a wrong collocation at least in the field of the English teaching. So, theoretically, it is quite possible to adopt a communicative methodology for a class designed along a structural syllabus, and vice versa. Teachers are not always bound to adopt the methodology in line with the syllabus intention. Instead, they are required to think what classroom activities are promoted most consistently with the design of the syllabus they have already employed.

2.2. Structural syllabus

Most of the coursebooks written on the structural syllabus share the common assumption that the mastery of language can be achieved by isolated mastery of its constituent parts, which are mostly grammatical items such as tense, voice, etc. This assumption means that language learning is viewed as the synthetic process of separate grammatical-items which are presented to learners separately but in a meaningful sequence.

But this type of syllabus organisation is not without a problem. According to this syllabus design, learners must store an enormous body of grammatical knowledge in such a way that they can act on it automatically. To achieve this, grammatical items must be ordered in

a way which looks logical from learner's viewpoint, not from writer's viewpoint. It may well be that there is some criterion which is reasonable for course writers sake but that does not always means that their ordering are logical. If there were one fixed set of discretely ordered grammatical items which really helps learners synthesise each item, one by one, into a whole system, then would it be possible for learners to build up the same system by following another set? Or are they both logical? If a syllabus organisation based on structure is to be more satisfactory, it is reasonable to depend more on the research of second language acquisition.

2.3. Notional / functional syllabus and its criticism

Recently many course-writers have suggested that language-functions such as 'greeting', 'request', etc. should serve as the basis for a syllabus design which replaces grammatical items. It is said that the course books written along this design make it possible to teach the language in actual use, which grammatical syllabus fails to achieve. But this syllabus design is not completely free from problems, either.

The first argument to be made is concerning whether or not should it be possible to grasp the feature of language entirely in terms of the notion of functions. How many functions can an entire body of the linguistic activities be divided into? Even if it is possible, every function has a number of different ways in which it can be expressed. Then it follows that it is very difficult for a syllabus designer to order functional items per se, and also to order which phrase within the same functional category should be taught first.

Secondly, most of the functions are performed basically through grammatical use of language. Harmer (2015) concludes that "without some understanding

of grammar students would not be able to do anything more than utter separate items of language for separate functions and the expression of functional language is only possible through the use of grammatical language.” Grammar is a primary step to be taken before functional use of language.

3. What does it mean to know a word ?

A syllabus is a document which provides the basis for a set of instruction in a coursebook concerning operations in the classroom. If we choose vocabulary as a starting point for a new way of syllabus organisation, a simple inventory of words was of little service to the purpose. In order to constitute an adequate syllabus, it is of paramount importance first to frame a definition of a word, then to make clear what it is to know a word, and, lastly, to set up appropriate criteria on which the matter of vocabulary selection depends.

3.1. A word and a word form

Generally in the sphere of foreign language teaching much argument has been made so far concerning grammatical structures, but there has been relatively little discussion about the nature of lexis from an empirical standpoint. This lack of discussion has made the concept of word unclear. According to the conventional view, the term ‘word’ tends to be inclusively defined as a unit of language comprising a base form and associated set of inflections. For example, the word ‘give’ is a base form, and its associated set of inflections are ‘gives’, ‘giving’, ‘gave’, and ‘given’. In addition to these forms, the derivative form ‘gift’ can be included in some cases.

In computational linguistics, the term ‘lemma’ is more often preferred when this inclusive notion of

words which consists of the base form, its inflected forms, and sometimes its derivative forms. In the example I have shown above, when we refer to the lemma ‘give’, it automatically refers to those forms subsumed under it.

This traditional view of the nature of a word often leads to the mistaken idea that all forms of words are equally important and that all will behave in the same way regardless of different syntactic environments. Some people only intuitively tend to believe that all forms including the base form should be counted as one word. This is why most of the course books are not always consistent concerning which form should be included, and should be excluded from the vocabulary lists in them. Such inconsistency has resulted from the lack of consideration not only of what word forms occur in natural use, but also in what forms and in what patterns they typically occur.

Textual evidence shows that word forms often behave quite differently from each other in terms of meaning and usage. These forms should be considered as essentially different word forms, and treated as such in a syllabus. The morphological pair ‘certain’ and ‘certainly’ is a typical example in this case. According to an analysis based on computer-corpus operation, the primary meanings and central patterns of usage occurring in these two words are as follows:

‘certain’

Function 1. (60% of occurrences) Determiner, as in:
/ a certain number of students/ in certain circles/

Function 2. (18% of occurrence) Adjective, as in:
/I’m not awfully certain about.../ We’ve got to make certain/

Function 3. (11% of occurrence) Adjective,

in phrase ‘A + certain + noun’, as in:
/ has a certain class ring / there is a certain
evil in all lying/

‘certainly’

Function 1. (98% of occurrence) Adverb, as in:

/ it will be certainly interesting/
/ He will almost certainly launch into a
little lecture.../

These examples of the usage patterns clearly show that ‘certainly’ is not in the same relation with ‘certain’ as ‘quick’ is ‘quickly’. It has turned out to be more than a mere adverb of ‘certain’. If it can be used as an adverb of ‘certain’, it should be replaceable by the adverbial phrase ‘for certain’. But we can not say “I know it certainly” instead of saying “I know it for certain.” In one of the word-lists used by the Japanese high school students as a preparation for the entrance examination to universities, the word ‘certain’ is given only with the meaning of the second function shown above. This treatment of these two words result from the objective analysis based on the accurate collection of the lexical data. Anyway, it is desirable to treat these forms as independent words and to list them with their syntactical environment in the lexical syllabus.

3.2. What is it to know a word ?

Knowledge of a word exists on various levels, which seems to be language universals. Sapir and Wharf hypothesised that people do not have the exactly same picture of the universe unless their linguistic backgrounds are the same. To put it briefly, it can be paradoxically said that culture is language. Though I am not sure that this linguistic view was the product which was brought about by the shift in philosophical trend from ontology to epistemology, their hypothesis,

in its extreme form, would lead to the view that perfect translation is impossible. Then, how is it made possible for speakers of different linguistic backgrounds come to understand one another? The answer to this question includes an important key role to the identification of the notion of a word.

3.2.1. Signification and indexical value

To begin with, it will be useful to make a distinction between the two major dimensions which are thought to be attributes of a word. They are technically called ‘signification’ and ‘indexical value’. Signification is defined as a linguistic symbol recorded in the dictionary, while indexical value is a function which is attributed to a linguistic sign by the language user when it occurs in a certain context. The following text taken from one of the Japanese English textbook will serve as an example:

Punctuality is important in American business, academic, and social settings. The importance of punctuality is taught to young children in school. Tardy *slips* and bells are used to teach the child that punctuality and time itself are to be respected.

Here is a recent newspaper article in which a schoolboy’s experience with time is reported.

(*italic mine*)

(*New Scope English CourseII*, Lesson 6 “Punctuality is important”)

Here, let us pick up the word ‘slip’ used in the text above as a example. The entry for the word in a dictionary includes a wide range of meanings: ‘to move quietly and cautiously’, ‘to elapse or pass’, ‘to fall off from a standard’, ‘to cause to move slowly’, ‘a mistake in judgment’, ‘a leash’, ‘a small piece of

paper', etc. All of these meanings stand for the total set of signification of this word as a codified abstract which is conventionally established. Only one of these meanings, however, has the value required in this text in question and the rest of them are discarded as irrelevant items. How is it chosen? If asked for the answer to this question in the classroom, most learners will surely say that the context makes clear which meaning is relevant to this text. In order to understand the meaning of 'slip' in this text, learners have to select a meaning by matching up code and context. There might be some cases in which learners don't know any of the significations of the word. Even then it is possible for some of them to derive the value from the context where it takes place if they know the signification of other words also in the same text. Actually in this text, the words 'punctuality', 'tardy', etc. help them to specify the value of the word 'slip' by offering a high degree of determinancy.

Similarly there are also some cases in which the value of a word is not achievable merely by selecting the relevant part of its signification. Let us pick up the word 'itself' out of the same text as another example. In this case, according to dictionary definitions, the following signification is given: 'that identical thing', 'its normal self', etc. It is easy to imagine that these items of signification are of little help to the understanding of the part of the text where the word is used. What learners want to know is a word or a group of words it actually refers to. Here it could refer to a combined notion of 'punctuality and time'. It is certain that this way of value recognition is possible only in a high degree of contextual determinancy.

As we have seen so far, a word is a twofold phenomenon which comprises signification and indexical

value. Consequently it follows that knowing a word must imply to know not only its signification listed in a dictionary but also its indexical value which takes place in the context where the word is being used. In this sense, we can say that signification is stable while indexical value is protean in character and continually suffers some changes to suit the environment where it is placed. Moreover, it also seems that communication can be a process in which an addressor converts signification of a word into its indexical value by putting it into a contextual stream, and then leave the value to the procedure of the negotiation with an addressee.

3.2.2 . Context

The identification of the notion of context plays a key role in specifying the question of what it means to know a word. The idea of context is closely related to the process of the achievement of indexical value of a word. In other words, it is some pre-existing knowledge or some co-existing feature of the situation which sometimes acts upon signification, or sometimes is conversely acted upon by it, to achieve its indexical value. This indicates that a word begins to assume its indexical value simultaneously or approximately when its signification is associated with something relevant to aspects of the world outside language. In the case of the word 'slip', its signification is indexicalised into 'a small piece of paper' by means of the knowledge that the reader already has, or s/he can get out of the other words used in the same text.

People who have in common a particular knowledge and experience concerning this kind of 'slip' can easily manage to understand what the writer intends to convey in this part of text. This is the case which more often happens to the native speakers of English.

Conversely, the learners of English, in most cases, can not rely on particular instances of shared knowledge and experiences which constitutes the social environment where the language is actually used. In the process of vocabulary learning they must, though subconsciously, learn such attributes as the general and conventional assumptions and beliefs which shape the basic structures of a certain society where the target words are used. In this way the notion of context or contextual realities has proved to be relevant to what is called ‘schematic knowledge’.

Here, we can say that indexical value is something that connects signification with its relevant aspects of schematic knowledge. Or it is better to say that it is a mental phenomenon which takes place only when signification is appropriately connected with its relevant aspect of schematic knowledge. This idea leads to the assumption that knowing a word is to know its signification on one hand, and to acquire its relevant schematic knowledge on the other. Practically in language learning, the former is actually itemised as follows:

to know its syntactic behaviour

to know its inflected forms

and the latter as follows:

to know its collocability

to know its limitations of use according to function and situation

to know its place in a network of associations with other words in the language

3.2.3. Citation form and modification

In the preceding section we have seen that the notion of a context performs an important function in the process of communication. This leads to the idea that knowledge of a word or a string of words refers not

merely to its signification but also to its indexical value which changes continually to suit the circumstances in which it is being used. A word is semantically twofold. I think, however, that this view of a word is applicable not only to its semantic attribute but also to its phonetic aspect.

According to the rules in phonetics, the pronunciation of a word in isolation, which is technically called ‘a citation form’, shows a strong tendency to undergo some change both when it is used in a context and when it is combined with particular words in an utterance. This tendency is termed as ‘modification’. Consider the following example:

I love you.

First, under ordinary circumstances, the word ‘love’ and ‘you’ are not explicitly pronounced as a separate word in this combination. In this case each of these two words is articulated in such an implicit way that they sound like one word such as ‘lovview’.

Secondly, we can give this utterance the context where a very shy person mumbles these words in the presence of his girl friend. These three words are probably stringed together as if they were one word, which would produce the pronunciation ‘Aluvview’. If she asks him for a clarification or a reconfirmation, he would have to say explicitly, ‘I love you’.

It can be said that a citation form is to modification what signification is to indexical value. Citation forms are stable, explicit, and not difficult to decode, but they are rarely heard in a real-life language. It is modified forms which are common and convey messages to listeners. A word is also phonetically twofold.

3.3. From structure to vocabulary

As I have mentioned above, there are some occa-

sions where a word acquires a grammatical dimension in that it conveys a meaning when it is placed in the high degree of contextual determinancy. Let us have a brief look at the following example. The sentences here seem to be totally stripped of their grammatical appendages and reduced to three words:

farmer duckling kill

hunter lion kill

In the first example, one can guess the meaning out of a mere set of these words with ease. Similarly, it is not difficult to reproduce the original sentence. This is certainly because of the context of our world knowledge as well as the signified meaning conveyed by these three words. It is easy to envisage the situation where the farmer is an agent and the duckling is a patient in their relationship engendered by the value of the word 'kill'. Most people agree on the reproduced sentence: The farmer killed a [the] duckling.

Contrary to this, in the second example, it is impossible to set up the similar relationship between a hunter and a lion by employing the same process. For, here, a lion is indexically associated with a fierce propensity to attack a hunter and render him a victim of a killing process. This is schematised as a general knowledge. So, in this case, where there is no adequate support from the generally accepted ecological assumption of the animal, the mere assumption of the word will only ambiguously point to meaning. This is exactly where grammar comes in.

As is shown in the argument above, grammar turns out to be a secondary appendage specifically seen in terms of communication. At least it can be said that vocabulary is better equipped with a force which achieves a desire or need to induce learners to begin some linguistic activities.

4. Which words should be learned ?

As I have shown above in the preceding chapters, words may serve as a better basis for syllabus design than the structure of language. This means that when we think about the criteria for word selection, it is inevitable to give some consideration to the factors such as syntactical patterns and collocability. And it is also necessary to adopt some effective measure which provides us with statistical evidence for the identification of this criterion.

4.1. Criteria for inclusion of words into syllabus

According to the argument made by Sinclair and Renouf (1989) concerning this matter, it seems reasonable to put a main focus of language study on the following three points.

the commonest word forms

their central patterns of usage

the combination which they typically form

The second and third items are relevant not so much to the vocabulary specification as to that of syllabus content itself. The characterisation of the commonest word forms and the confirmation of their utility are the main target to be attacked in this section. Moreover, the research on the vocabulary frequency must be based on the statistical analysis of the data provided by as large a corpus as possible. The computational manipulation of the COBUILD main corpus will be an effective method to provide us with a reliable list of the word forms in the order of frequency.

The first point itemised above as a learning focus refers to the matter of frequency of word forms occurring in the texts. In the COBUILD main corpus the list of the 200 most frequent word forms are specified. According to the further information brought about

from the same database, the most frequent 700 word forms account for 70 percent of any text. The next 800 word forms cover a further 6 percent, and the next 1000 do no more than 4 percent. These figures show the great advantage of common words of English. They also mean that even if we have a vocabulary of more than ten thousand, seven out of every ten word forms we speak, listen, read and write are from those 700 most frequent word forms. What I have just mentioned above is, of course, is true of the texts and the discourse on a variety of general matters. In a highly specialised text such as genetic engineering, the data obtained through the same method will certainly show different figures.

Moreover, another important point can be drawn out of these figures. It is the rate of the acute decrease in respective percentage which denotes each coverage. It is amazing that there is a striking difference in coverage between first 700 word forms and the next 800 word forms. It is easy to estimate that the further 1000 word forms above these 2500 word forms will cover less than 4 percent. This analysis shows that utility also falls off generally in inverse proportion with frequency.

As is mentioned in the first chapter, the main focus of the lexical syllabus, which will be dealt with more in details later, is not on vocabulary learning in a conventional sense. It aims, however, to help learners to acquire central usage patterns of word forms along with the typical combinations they of ten make with other word forms. In other words, it is envisaged that it facilitates the process in which learners can implicitly internalise grammatical structures of language. This implies that the most frequently used word forms selected through objective analysis of COBUILD corpus are reliable enough to be included into the

syllabus.

4.2. What is to be learned ?

As I have mentioned above from the theoretical point of view in the preceding chapter, knowledge of a word includes mainly the following two points: signification and indexical value. These items carry a considerable relevance to the two foci on language learning which are put forward by Sinclair and Renouf (1989). These are central patterns of vocabulary usage and its typically formed combinations. In order to specify common patterns and combinations, we need a thorough description of language based on objective analysis. This means that it is necessary first to see how words are actually used in sentences and in discourses, and then to arrange the type of patterns and combinations in the order of frequency. It is certain that the manipulation of the COBUILD database can provide statistical evidence of typical language use which occurs very frequently.

By running the programme to produce concordance for each word, we can get a list of the sentences with a target word exactly in the middle of each line. Let us look at the word “way.” This word is the third most frequent noun and occurs with a frequency of about 7000 in the Main Corpus made up of 703 million words. A mere observation of this list will give the researcher the very useful information for specifying the commonest pattern of the usage of the word and its typical combination with other words.

If we look at this list, we will certainly notice that this word is mainly used in the following syntactical environment.

the way(s) of + -ing (846)

the way(s) + to infinitive or prepositional to (696)

the way(s) + in + which + clause (352)

the way(s) + that clause (279)

in + article + way(s) (136)

the superlative + way + be-verb (78)

(the number in each bracket denotes the frequency of occurrences)

The matter of typical combination are to be treated here partly in terms of common patterns. Though such combinations have sometimes grammatical restrictions, there are some which function almost like lexical items in themselves. In the case of the word “way,” they are summarised as the following items:

by the way

no way

by way of

Additionally, the list of concordance can also enable us to build up an overall picture of the word from the angle of meaning, as well as from its syntactical patterns which are recurrent in naturally occurring texts and discourses. This matter, however, will be treated more in details in the next part of this chapter.

In this way, it can be said that the common patterns of usage of common words effectively serve as appropriate items to be included in the lexical syllabus.

5. The lexical syllabus and communicative methodology

As I mentioned in the first chapter, a syllabus is basically a collection of inert documents. We need an appropriate methodology in order to activate a syllabus as an organising force to design a coursebook which employs the idea of lexical syllabus as an organising force. This is where communicative methodology is recommended as the most complimentary mediator to the intention of the syllabus design. But in this chapter

before going into how the idea of the combination is realised the coursebook, I would like to show what I mean by the word “communicative” to have a common understanding.

5.1. Communicative methodology

First, I am going to begin by looking at the following discourse exchanged between a teacher and students.

Teacher: Right, open your textbooks to page 51 and 52. (1) We already finished the grammar practice last Tuesday, didn't we? Yes? Kanako?

Kanako: Yes.

Teacher: Then, (2) what pattern did we learn? Ikuyo
Ikuyo : will be ---ing.

Teacher: Good! OK, erm, let's have a look at the pictures with some words on it.

(3)How many pictures are there? Hiroshi.

Hiroshi: There are three pictures.

Teacher: Good! Have a look at the first picture.

(4) What will John be doing at noon tomorrow? Kenji.

Kenji : He will be driving.

Teacher: Excellent! (5)By the way, Kenji, are you interested in cars?

Kenji : No, no, no, I'm interested in motorbikes.

Teacher: Mhm... OK, let's go on to the second picture. (6)What will be Tom doing next Friday? Mai.

Mai : He'll be dancing.

This discourse is a typical example taken from what is thought to be a “communicative” activity in the class for communication in Japan. The teacher asks students six questions in the course of this procedure. In terms

of classroom discourse these questions can be divided into two groups. One is made up of the questions (1) and (5), and the other is of the questions (2), (3), (4), and (6). In what way are they substantially different from each other? The first group is a type of questions answers to which the questioner already know, while the second group is the one answers to which the questioner does not know the answer. The former type of question is technically called ‘a display question’, and the latter is termed as ‘a referential question’.

The research results reported by Long and Sato (1983) show that in informal conversations display questions rarely occurred and there was an overwhelming preponderance (1320 out of 1322) of referential questions. This data indirectly characterises an aspect of the teacher-student relationship where a teacher is not expected to receive any new or academic information from students.

As I showed in the preceding chapter, a word is a twofold phenomenon, in that it is a composite of signification and indexical value. This promotes the idea that a sentence is a string of signification, and in the process of communication, it is converted into a string of indexical values which actualises a meaning as a whole sentence. This indicates that when we ask display questions, we merely try to convey signification. In this case the questioner has no genuine intention to know the answer, to share affective territory, to maintain rapport, not to achieve mutually acceptable state of mind. No schematic knowledge can be expanded either in the questioner or in the questionee. Only systematic knowledge is accumulated as part of schematic knowledge, which is a grammatical knowledge that the form of “will + be + --ing”, in our example, is used to describe the duration and certainty of an event at a

specific time in the future. This grammatical knowledge is totally different from what is internalised as a system or competence for communicative resource in a native speaker’s linguistic repertoire.

The general tendency to prefer display questions in classroom discourse shows that teaching is seen as a process achieved through the uni-directional flow of knowledge from a teacher to students. It is also a process of transmission, which provides both teacher and students with few opportunities for negotiation of meaning.

If properly handled, a display question might occupy an important place in the stream of classroom procedure. But it seems more likely that we must be aware that we can not achieve any exchange or negotiation of meaning solely by asking display questions.

5.2. Communicative Language teaching and its methodological cycle

In this section, I am going to observe in details how a coursebook as a whole should be organised.

First, Willis and Willis (2007), based on the view that people learn a language more effectively by using the language to do things, expands communicative methodology into a methodological cycle which comprises six stages of different components. All these stages can repeatedly appear more than once in each unit of the coursebook..

Introduction: This gives students initial exposure to target forms within a communicative context.

Task : This provides an opportunity to focus and realise target meanings. Students may begin to approximate to the target form or they may use quite different,

even ungrammatical forms.

Planning : This is the stage where the teacher helps students to move towards accurate production, often by modeling the target forms for them.

Report : Students have another opportunity to use target forms. Again, however, there is a focus on fluency as well as accuracy.

Listening/Reading:

Students have a chance to hear or read the target forms used in a context which has become familiar to them together their own attempt to form and report the task.

Analysis : This is the stage for an awareness-raising exercise which gives the learners a chance to formulate generalisations about the language they have heard.

This methodological cycle should not always be conducted, exactly stage by stage, in the order shown above. There are some cases in which it is more effective to place Listening/Reading stage before the stage of Task. Additionally Willis(1990) continues that a great deal of responsibility concerning classroom procedure lies with students. This does not necessarily lead to the idea that the teacher's role in classroom activity lessens. It has the implication that classroom activities or classroom discourse should be conducted more in terms of interaction than of transmission. From this viewpoint the stage for Planning is not important because a teacher tends to be transmissive there and, as a result, restricts students' linguistic activities.

5.3. Statistical Analysis

In order to organise a unit, a huge amount of discourse concerning the use of target words must be collected as effective data. Then, through computational analysis based the mega corpus such as COBUILD Corpus and British National Corpus(BNC), specific word forms which frequently take place with the use of recurrent patterns of usage have been identified. In this way, the grammatical structure which is most complimentary to the commonest word forms and patterns is chosen for the unit.

Additionally, a task and a topic are deciding factor in the ordering of units. Along with these tasks, the most frequent words, graded according to the frequency in authentic discourses, have formed the design of a coursebook organisation for elementary learners. In such a grading system, students are, even from a false beginner level, exposed to 'real' language rather than an edited and simplified language. For example, in most conventional coursebooks, the past form of the word 'be' may not appear until its two present forms, which are actually 'is' and 'are', have been presented to students. Contrary to this, in the lexically organised coursebooks the introduction of the past tense does not seem to be so systematic as in the existing courses. This is because of the important fact that the word 'was' appears more frequently than the word 'is'.

Lastly, according to the data brought about by the COBUILD Corpus, "would" has slightly less than 15,000 occurrences. In around half of its occurrences the word is described as being used to indicate its hypothetical nature at the time being mentioned such as in:

The people of South Vietnam *would* receive their conquerors with relief.

Only 1200 examples included in the COBUILD Corpus show that “would” is used with “if + clause.” “Would” is far more frequently used without “if.”

In fact, most of the coursebooks in Japan first treat this hypothetical “would” in a complex sentence with ‘if + clause’ and then go on to a simple sentence, but, from a statistical viewpoint, this strategy has proved to be ineffective. And also according to the corpus analysis, ‘will’ is rated below ‘would’ in the frequency list.

6. Conclusion

Some while ago I got a letter written in English from a boy in the sixth grade. Inaccurate words were strung together haphazardly. But after examining the letter for a while, I began to understand, as if I were deciphering a code, what the child was trying to say. He was trying to apply to letter-writing the great discovery that he had made in America – that when one can not compose a complete sentence, one can make oneself understood just by stringing words together. On year later, I was again astonished when I read a letter in English from that same child. There were grammatical mistakes, and the choice of words in several places left something to \be desire. But the letter was written in more natural English than an adult Japanese would be able to write. The child said that he had written abbot 80 letters during that one-year period. He sometimes borrowed the sentences form the letters that have come form America, changing the wording a little.

The letter written y this boy seems to suggest that even a string of words turn out to be a proper vehicle for conveying indexical value if it is fully contextualised. In his attitude for learning how to write a letter in English, there is no conscious attempt to learn the usage

of grammar. He tried only to choose the right words, referring to the real letters form America. In the process he unconsciously acquired the patterns of usage of word forms he chose. Though I am not sure whether he has achieved the same degree of other abilities, what he did was nothing other than partial application of the lexical syllabus to his acquisition of letter writing skills in English.

Such examples as this boy’s letter writing can be often found. But formally to realise an attempt to design a syllabus based on vocabulary need an enormous amount of linguistic data. It is corpus computing which has produced the idea of lexical syllabus.

Among various kinds of linguistic data given by the corpus, what is specifically worth attention is the one by the concordance programme. It is easy to emphasise the importance of showing the commonest patterns of the commonest word forms, but it is more difficult than is expected to obtain the idea of concordance and develop the programme for manipulation of the huge corpus. This programme has made it vastly easier to gain an overall view of both semantic and syntactic environment where a particular word form is used. This means that it can provide collocations, patterns of usage, and contexts of particular word forms at the same time. Such a high degree of utility of this programme actually makes it possible to realise the provision of the commonest patterns of the commonest word forms in authentic materials. The enormous scale of COBUILD Corpus and BNC had brought me the re-cognition of the English language as *lingua franca*.

Another impetus for the creation of this syllabus lies in author’s desire to seek for an appropriate seed-bed where a seed of communicative methodology

germinates and grows. The conventional syllabuses based on structure and function has been effective in producing students who knows about language. To teach grammar explicitly brings a mere accumulation of grammatical knowledge in their language repertoire. It only helps students to expand their schematic knowledge on grammar which they are not allowed to withdraw whenever they need it. It is the pet theory by Willis(2003) that grammar should be taught indirectly or implicitly to be habitualised as systematic knowledge. The lexical syllabus, which is the first attempt to realise this idea of grammar teaching, will turn out to be a sign post to guide teachers who are seeking for an effective way of grammar teaching.

In terms of its implementation in Japanese high school language teaching context, the idea of authentic materials and task-based methodology should be realised specifically in the schools which has English and international courses. And, what is more important, it should be applied not to complete beginners but to false beginners who have already learned English to some extent. For, the lexical syllabus, even if it ins not realised in full scale as a course design, will make a great contribution to the teachers who attempt teach

English as a means communication by theoretically supporting their ideals as teachers of English.

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