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Identifying Principles of the Lexical Approach in Some EFL Textbooks: a Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

Supervisor
Ch. Prof. Carmel Mary Coonan

Assistant Supervisor
Ch. Prof. Graziano Serragiotto

Graduand
Margherita Miozzo
Matriculation Number 865871

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Abstract

Many researchers have demonstrated the paramount role of lexis, and in particular of lexical phrases, in language use and learning. The present research focuses on the Lexical Approach by Michael Lewis which is based on such a lexical view of language and seeks to verify whether some of its principles are implemented in ten EFL textbooks of different levels.

By using different tables, we aim at verifying the role that multi-word lexical items (i.e. phrasal verbs, collocations and expressions) play in textbooks as opposed to single words as well as the presence of consciousness-raising activities and of the *lexicogrammar* concept.

The results have shown that there is more emphasis on single words than on multi-word lexical items and that there are very few exercises which direct the students' attention towards the latter. As for the concept of *lexicogrammar*, we found that it is not present in any of the textbooks analysed. We therefore concluded that the Lexical Approach has not entirely seeped into EFL teaching yet.

Keywords*: Lexical Approach, lexical chunks, EFL textbooks*

Introduction

Vocabulary teaching and learning have traditionally been undervalued in L2 teaching in favour of grammar rules and structures. However, recent developments in the field of corpus linguistics and psycholinguistics have challenged this traditional view of language revealing that "the way our brains store and retrieve language" (Lewis, 2005: 7) is much more holistic and lexical-based than it has ever been thought to be before, thus demonstrating the importance of lexis in language use and learning.

This has led to a renewed interest in lexis, especially in lexical phrases, which Wray defines as:

> "a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar" (Wray, 2002: 9).

In this research we will be focusing on the Lexical Approach proposed by Lewis in the early 1990s which has contributed to heighten the need for a lexical-based approach in language classrooms.

Recent studies have demonstrated the value of teaching lexical phrases in language classrooms, but little attention has been paid to the implementation of such approach in EFL textbooks.

Since we believe in the powerful impact textbooks can have in language learning, the objective of our research is to determine whether three of the main principles of the Lexical Approach can be found in ten EFL textbooks currently used in some low and upper secondary school classrooms in Italy.

In particular, the present study seeks to address the following research questions – what types of lexical items do EFL textbooks focus on? What is the

treatment multi-word lexical items receive? Is grammar taught from a lexical point of view? Both quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted in the data analysis in order to provide suitable answers to these three research questions.

To conclude, the study has been structured in two main parts (Part 1 and Part 2) each of which has been further divided into two chapters (i.e. Chapter 1, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, Chapter 4, respectively). Part 1 provides the theoretical context of our research, whereas Part 2 concerns the research itself.

In particular, Chapter 1 provides the reader with the theoretical framework for both the Lexical Approach and the view of language the latter is based upon, while Chapter 2 reviews previous studies on both the teaching of lexical phrases and the treatment of lexis in L2 textbooks. In Chapter 3 the three research questions are more thoroughly described and a detailed description of the materials and methodology used to collect the data is provided as well. Chapter 4, instead, is more concerned with illustrating and discussing the results of each research question.

Part 1 – Theoretical Context of Reference

Chapter 1 – Theoretical Framework

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section (1.1) focuses on the concept of lexis, with a strong emphasis on formulaic language, and how this concept has changed over the years. It then goes on to review corpus and psycholinguistic research conducted on formulaic language in order for the reader to understand why it is of paramount importance in language use. Instead, the second section (1.2) provides a brief overview of the Lexical Approach and its key principles.

1.1 The Value of Lexis

From the nineteenth century onwards, there has been a tendency for language teaching methodologies to neglect vocabulary learning which was thought to be acquired naturally. The grammar-translation method as well as the audio-lingual method in the fifties did not know how to handle vocabulary, nor did the communicative approach in the seventies (Nation, 1990: 1; Schmitt, 2000: 10-14; Cardona, 2000: 24, 88; Cardona, 2004: 16; Balboni, 2012: 205-207).

In fact, it has been suggested that the reason why "vocabulary was given a secondary status" (Schmitt, 2000: 14) for such a long period of time might have been due to the fact that teaching vocabulary was, and may still be, considered to be more complicated than teaching a limited number of grammatical rules (Serra Borneto, 1998: 246; Balboni, 2012: 207). Nonetheless, according to Nation, "even the most formal or communication-directed approaches to language teaching must deal with needed vocabulary in one way or other" (Nation, 1990: 2).

And yet, it was only at the beginning of the nineties that vocabulary started to be recognised as part and parcel of language knowledge. This change of focus was

possible thanks to the so-called Lexical Approach proposed by Lewis which contributed to putting more emphasis on the importance of vocabulary learning in language learning.

1.1.1 From Grammar-Vocabulary Dichotomy to Multi-Word Lexical Chunks

There are several reasons why vocabulary should be taught. Among those that Nation lists, there is one in particular which deserves to be shared here – he argues that "learners feel that many of their difficulties in both receptive and productive language use result from inadequate vocabulary" (Nation, 1990: 2), which explains why, to quote Krashen's words, "when students travel, they don't carry grammar books, they carry dictionaries" (Krashen in Serra Borneto, 1998: 227).

This section focuses on one reason in particular which contributes to highlighting even more the role of vocabulary in language learning.

Traditionally, grammar has always been considered to be the generative aspect of language while vocabulary the fixed one, that is a list of words with fixed meanings. According to this standard view of language, grammar and vocabulary are meant to be taught separately because it is believed that words have to be inserted into the grammatical sentence only after the latter has been creatively built up, thus resulting in a major relevance of grammar over vocabulary. Referring to this traditional view of language, Serra Borneto uses the metaphor of the building – he identifies grammar with its structure, while single words are the building blocks which are used to 'build' the sentence (Serra Borneto, 1998: 229).

Yet, this standard view of language has gradually lost its value. As will be explained later, evidence coming from corpus statistics and psycholinguistic research has demonstrated that this distinction may not be as valid as it was thought to be before because, as Lewis argues, "we are much less original in using language than we like to believe" (Lewis, 2001: 11).

On the one hand, in fact, Pawley and Syder maintain that grammar knowledge does matter in order to be a competent user of the language. On the other hand,

however, they add that only partially do native speakers rely on it because, if they did so, they would risk not sounding like native speakers (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 193)[1].

Bareggi supports Pawley and Syder's view by saying that grammar allows you to be creative but at the same time it may lead you to "produce *possible* grammatically correct sentences which are not necessarily *probable* utterances" (Bareggi, 2006: 2). After all, the distinction between possibility and probability represents the nature of language itself, that is a completely arbitrary system where 'possible' sentences like *I desire the salmon* or *It's forty past five* are 'improbable' sentences for an English native speaker (Lewis, 1996: 10). In this regard, Lewis also says that the question students tend to ask (*Can you say…?*) and the teachers' reply to it (*You could, but you wouldn't*) can be considered a clear example of this lexical-based arbitrariness of language (Lewis, 2001: 17).

It follows that to know a language does not only mean to be able to build a grammatically correct structure whose gaps will be then filled in with single words, but also, and mostly, to know how to use words in context, which is what Pawley and Syder call the linguistic capacity of 'nativelike selection' – "the ability of the native speaker routinely to convey his meaning by an expression that is not only grammatical but also nativelike" (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 191).

And it is here that vocabulary, and particularly what have been called multi-word prefabricated patterns, come into play. In fact, as Lewis states, "grammar becomes lexis as the event becomes more probable" (Lewis, 2000: 212) because it is mastery of lexis which makes language sound more natural and native-like, without which it is highly likely to produce correct but unsuccessful utterances (Orlik, 2017: 21-22).

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1 "Let us accept that a generative grammar is part of what a person must know in order to be a competent user of any language, and turn to another, little-studied problem. The problem we are addressing is that native speakers do not exercise the creative potential of syntactic rules to anything like their full extent, and that, indeed, if they did so they would not be accepted as exhibiting nativelike control of the language" (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 193)

However, as mentioned above, this does not mean that grammar should be completely dismissed in language teaching. Conversely, Schmitt argues that we must be well aware that "grammar and vocabulary are fundamentally linked" (Schmitt, 2000: 14) so much so that the need for grammar has been stressed to be included in the study of lexis (Serra Borneto, 1998: 227-234; Schmitt, 2000: 14).

This concept of language, which has come to be known as *lexicogrammar*, is further stressed by other scholars who have maintained that language is a whole system where grammar and vocabulary cooperate (Cardona, 2004: 16) and "feed into one another" (Schmitt and Carter, 2000: 8).

Schmitt claims that they are no longer "separate entities" (Schmitt, 2000: 14), but rather "partners in synergy, with no discrete boundary" (*ibid.*) which need to be addressed together in order for language acquisition to take place.

As Lewis and Hill point out, it is true that "the ability to use the language depends on the ability to bring grammar and vocabulary together" (Lewis and Hill, 1992: 104), however, it has to be said that vocabulary always has to come first – to quote the sentence Lewis is most known for, "language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar" (Lewis, 1993: 51). This is the reason why the balance between the two can be found in the so-called *multi-word prefabricated patterns[2]*, which best reflect this strong link between lexis and grammar.

2 Throughout the study, other than 'multi-word prefabricated patterns', we will be using different other terms to refer to such lexical items such as *multi-word lexical items*, *multi-word lexical chunks*, *lexical phrases*, *lexical chunks*, *lexical bundles*, *formulaic language*, *formulaic sequences* and *formulae*. It is also interesting to report the list Wray has made on all the many other terms researchers have been using over the years: "*Amalgams – automatic – chunks – clichés – co-ordinate constructions – collocations – complex lexemes – composites – conventionalized forms – F[ixed] E[xpressions] including I[dioms] – fixed expressions – formulaic language – formulaic speech – formulas/formulae – fossilized forms – frozen metaphors – frozen phrases – gambits – gestalt – holistic – holophrases – idiomatic – idioms – irregular – lexical simplex – lexical(ised) phrases – lexicalised sentence stems – listemes – multi-word items/units – multi-word lexical phenomena – noncompositional – noncomputational – nonproductive – nonpropositional – petrifications – phrasemes – praxons – preassembled speech – precoded conventionalised routines – prefabricated routines and patterns – ready-made expressions – ready-made utterances – recurring utterances – rote – routine formulae – schemata – semipreconstructed phrases that constitute single choices – sentence builders – set phrases – stable and familiar expressions with specialised subsenses – stereotyped phrases – stereotypes – stock utterances – synthetic – unanalysed chunks of speech – unanalysed multi-word chunks –*

As will be explained later, Schmitt explains that such multi-word lexical items are first learnt as "frozen wholes with no variation possible (...) they are unanalysed and are single lexemes" (Schmitt, 2000: 128), but, since they are strings of words, they can also undergo what Schmitt defines as 'segmentation process' during which they "are analysed into words plus grammar" (*ibid.*).

This process to which lexical chunks can be subject demonstrates the generative power of lexis which Lewis further underlines by stating that "it is the word that determines the pattern around it – the grammar – not the pattern into which a word is slotted" (Lewis, 2005: 8). It is the lexical chunk that becomes "the basis, not the product, of grammatical competence" (Lewis, 1997: 259).

In this regard, it is worth mentioning Schmitt's example regarding the segmentation of a lexical chunk such as *I wanna cookie*. He says that, when segmenting it into its components, what is likely to happen is that the learner may realise that "the phrase *I wanna cookie* (previously used as a holistic unit) is actually *I wanna + noun*" (Schmitt, 2013: 3), thus learning "the way syntax works in the language, as well as the independent new word *cookie*" (*ibid.*). Therefore, he concludes that lexical chunks "provide the raw material for language development", which can be both grammatical and lexical (*ibid.*).

1.1.2 Beyond Single Words

In this section, we deem it important to shed some light on what is meant by vocabulary, "or more precisely lexis", as Lewis calls it (Lewis, 1993: 115).

According to Lewis, there is a widespread belief among teachers and students that "increasing their vocabulary will increase their fluency" (Lewis, 1992: 99). However, Lewis argues that there is no guarantee that the more words you know, the more proficient and fluent you will be; conversely, he claims that native speakers rely heavily on only about 2,000 words in everyday conversation (*ibid.*). In addition to this, Schmitt stresses the fact that "the potential knowledge that can

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units" (Wray, 2002: 9)

be known about a word is rich and complex" and therefore it cannot be reduced to its meaning and word form (Schmitt, 2000: 5).

As mentioned before, to know the meaning of single words seems not to be enough, otherwise incorrect and unnatural sentences like the famous one by Chomsky, *colourless green ideas slept furiously*, would be acceptable.

This stands out even more clearly in one of Lewis's essays where he refers to what teachers often happen to think of while reading their students' works – "I know what you mean, but that's not the way to say (=write) it" (Lewis, 1997: 259), which brings us back to the fact that the meaning of single words is insufficient when it comes to language production.

As Schmitt says, there is no denying the fact that "a word's meaning must be learnt before that word can be of any use" (Schmitt, 2000: 5) but he then adds that there are "other types of *word knowledge*" which should be learnt because "most or all of them are necessary to be able to use a word in the wide variety of language situations one come across" (*ibid.*), which explains why he states that "vocabulary acquisition is incremental in nature" (*op. cit.*: 117) given that "it is clearly impossible to gain immediate mastery of all these word knowledges simultaneously" (*op. cit.*: 5).

Similarly, Lewis and Nation point out that, contrary to popular belief, fluency and language proficiency are not linked with the number of words you know, but rather with how deep the knowledge of that word is (Lewis, 1992: 99; Nation, 1990). According to Nation, in fact, knowledge of a word goes beyond the knowledge of its meaning – form, position and function are important as well (*op. cit.*: 31). As shown in the table below, there are "various facets of knowing a word" (Schmitt, 2000: 5) which need to be mastered in order to have a more comprehensive receptive (R) and productive (P) knowledge of that word.

Form		
Spoken form	R	What does the word sound like?
	P	How is the word pronounced?
Written form	R	What does the word look like?
	P	How is the word written and spelt?

Position			
Grammatical patterns	R	In what patterns does the word occur?	
	P	In what patterns must we use the word?	
Collocations	R	What words or types of words can be expected before or after the word?	
	P	What words or types of words do we use with this word?	
Function			
Frequency	R	How common is the word?	
	P	How often should the word be used?	
Appropriateness	R	Where would we expect to meet this word?	
	P	Where can this word be used?	
Meaning			
Concept	R	What does the word mean?	
	P	What word should be used to express this meaning?	
Associations	R	What other words does this word make us think of?	
	P	What other words could we use instead of this one?	

Table 1. Knowing a word (Nation, 1990: 31)

This is further exemplified in Willis's work where he refers to the multifaceted collocational knowledge of words like *way* and *thing* which goes further than knowledge of their meaning (e.g. *The (adjective) thing is that …; The (adjective) thing is to …; It's one thing to X, quite another to Y; The done thing; The best way to … is to …; One way of __ing … is to …/by __ing …; By the way* etc.)(Willis, 1990: 27-41).

So far we have been talking about what it means to know a word. However, Lewis maintains that "we need to move the idea of 'vocabulary' away from individual 'new words'" (Lewis, 2005: 9), which is why he also says that "the important thing is to develop in the students an understanding that language do not consist of 'words' with equivalents from one language to the other" (Lewis, 1992: 98). Likewise, Schmitt and Carter claim that "vocabulary includes many units which are larger than individual orthographic words" (Schmitt and Carter, 2000: 6) in that "words act less as individual units and more as part of lexical phrases in interconnected discourse" (Schmitt, 2000: 78).

In this regard, Lewis makes reference to the concept of spectrum, according to which language is not only composed of words which are either completely fixed or

completely free, which have traditionally been referred to as vocabulary and grammar, but mostly of lexical items which are placed in the middle of the spectrum between the two extreme poles of grammar and vocabulary, so much so that he describes language as follows:

> "Language consists broadly of four different kinds of lexical items, the constituent 'chunks' of any language. Each chunk may be placed on a generative spectrum between poles ranging from absolutely fixed to very free. Although it is true that traditional vocabulary is usually close to the fixed pole, and grammar structures are frequently close to the free pole, this fact obscures the vastly more numerous and in many ways more interesting items that occur nearer the middle of the spectrum. These items may be 'words', or 'structures' in the traditional language teaching terms, but, as we will see, most typically they are lexical items of types not recognised in most teaching material" (Lewis, 1997: 255).

In order to describe the different kinds of lexical items, we have chosen to make reference to Lewis's taxonomy, in particular to the most recent one (2001).

As mentioned above, four categories have been identified, namely words and polywords, collocations, fixed and semi-fixed expressions, with the first and the last two categories expressing respectively referential and pragmatic meaning. Except for words, they are all multi-word units which "act as a single lexeme with a single meaning" (Schmitt, 2000: 97) which can be described as follows:

- *Polywords* are "arbitrary combinations" of two or three words which "sit somewhere between words and the major multi-word categories"(Lewis, 2001: 8). Here are some examples: *by the way; of course; on the other hand; put off; every now and then; record player; bread and butter; to and fro* etc.

- **Collocations** are defined as "some pairs or groups of words [which] co-occur with very high frequency" (Lewis, 1997: 256). Verb-noun collocations (e.g. *to raise capital*) and adjective-noun collocations (e.g. *a short-term strategy; an initial reaction; rancid butter*) are the most frequent ones.

- **Fixed expressions** which comprise idioms (e.g. *You're making a mountain out of a molehill; It's raining cats and dogs* etc.) and fully fixed utterances (e.g. *I'll see what I can do; I'm afraid not; No, thank you, I'm fine; I'll have to be going; Happy New Year; There's a call for you* etc.).

- **Semi-fixed expressions** which mostly consist of sentence heads "with 'slots' which may be filled in a limited number of ways" (e.g. *If I were you, I'd …; I see what you mean, but I wonder if it wouldn't be better to…; I haven't seen you for/since …; What really surprised me was …* etc.)(Lewis, 2001: 9). These types of expressions are also used to structure discourse (e.g. *Secondly, … and finally; In this paper we examine …*).

Therefore, it can be concluded that vocabulary is much more than a mere fixed entity, which explains why Lewis openly advocates a change of terminology from vocabulary to lexis[3], with the latter being a much wider term that encompasses different types of lexical items besides single words (Lewis, 1993: 89).

1.1.3 The Ubiquity and Processing of Multi-Word Lexical Chunks

In the previous section (see Section 1.1.2), we have introduced multi-word lexical chunks. What now follows is an overview of corpus and psycholinguistic research which has unveiled their centrality in language use.

Evidence from corpus research has revealed that "we do speak in pre-patterned chunks" (Bareggi, 2006: 2) since, when we speak or even write, we tend to rely to a

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3 Lewis speaks of "(…) the nature of lexis, not vocabulary" (Lewis, 1993: 89) highlighting that "the terminology is not a matter of pretention or pedantry, but represents a radical and profound change in the way we see and analyse language" (*ibid.*). Later in the same work he says that "lexis is not another word for vocabulary – it is a much richer concept which we have not exploited in the past" (*op. cit.*: 193).

great extent on multi-word prefabricated chunks. Thanks to the analysis of millions of samples of both spoken and written language of native speakers, in fact, there is now clear evidence of the pervasiveness of lexical phrases.

According to Pawley and Syder, for instance, "the stock of lexicalized sentence stems known to the ordinary mature speaker of English amounts to hundreds of thousands" (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 192). They also add that "a high proportion of the fluent stretches of speech heard in everyday conversation" consists of formulaic sequences (*op. cit.*: 208). In his work, Lewis speaks of "many hundreds of thousands" (Lewis, 2002: 92), while Erman and Warren found that 55.38% of the texts they analysed consisted of prefabricated chunks and that the average proportion of lexical phrases in the spoken texts was slightly higher than that in the written ones, respectively 58.6% and 52.3% (Erman and Warren, 2000: 37).

Overall, these studies have provided evidence that native speakers' speech and writing is fraught with lexical phrases. In doing so, Lewis says that such studies have contributed to developing a better understanding of the concept of idiom which has always been associated with "fixed, (usually) colourful, non-literal expressions" (Lewis, 2005: 8). According to him, it is thanks to corpus research that we now know that "there is no clear distinction between traditional idioms – *all hell broke loose*, *the tail is wagging the dog* – and collocations – *a big idea* would not be traditionally thought of as an 'idiom'" (*op. cit.*: 9), thus showing that "there is more lexical patterning than ever imagined" (Schmitt and Carter, 2000: 14)

As just mentioned, corpus research has provided important insights into formulaic language. It is now clear that a great amount of lexical chunks can be found in both spoken and written language of native speakers. However, as Conklin and Schmitt state, "there must be a reason why formulaic sequences are so widespread" (Conklin and Schmitt, 2008: 75). In this regard, psycholinguistic research has managed to find an answer to the said pervasiveness of lexical chunks, which is why it needs to be taken into account as well.

In this respect, numerous psycholinguistic studies have attempted to investigate the mechanisms of storage and retrieval of lexical chunks in the mental lexicon of

both native and non-native speakers and they have concluded that, even though they consist of more than one single word, they seem to be stored and processed as individual wholes in the long-term memory, as if they were single words – their being stored as single units is supposed to make their processing quicker, thus explaining their ubiquity in discourse.

A good example of this can be found in the pioneering article of Pawley and Syder where they focus on the linguistic capacity of 'nativelike fluency' – "the native speaker's ability to produce fluent stretches of spontaneous connected discourse" (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 191).

As far as fluency is concerned, it is important to highlight the fact that, as Schmitt and Carter state, "native speakers have cognitive limitations in how quickly they can process language" (Schmitt and Carter, 2000: 7). In order to better understand this, it is important to provide a brief description of how the mind works. In this regard, we report Schmitt and Carter's description:

> "One resource the mind seems to have plenty of is long-term memory capacity. However, resources in relatively short supply are working memory and processing speed. This limits the amount of information the mind can process at any one time. The result is that the mind can store vast amounts of knowledge in long-term memory, but it is able to process only small amounts of it in real time, such as when one is speaking" (Schmitt and Carter, 2000: 7).

Therefore, unlike the long-term memory, the working memory, which is the one at work in spontaneous discourse, has a limited capacity, which is why Pawley and Syder say that it cannot process more than eight to ten words at a time, resulting in the need for the speaker to pause after "a single clause of eight to ten words" (Pawley & Syder, 1983: 202). They also add that the number of pauses or other types of dysfluencies native speakers make when speaking are the most notable

examples of how the mind is structured and particularly of the working memory's limits when it comes to processing and encoding novel discourse (*ibid.*).

Therefore, according to this statement, if the clause were to be more than ten words long, the working memory would be unable to process it and the native speaker would have to slow down or even pause. However, Pawley and Syder point out that it is common for multi-clause fluent units to occur in spontaneous speech – "stretch of pause-free, promptly delivered speech extending over two or more clauses" (*op. cit.*: 204), such as *you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink* (*op cit.*: 208). Therefore, the aforementioned hypothesis seems to be challenged by the presence of multi-clause fluent utterances of more than ten words long that native speakers say without hesitation.

According to Pawley and Syder, a possible explanation for the absence of such pauses may be due to the fact that those multi-clause utterances consist of prefabricated lexical phrases which are stored as wholes and retrieved as such. As Schmitt and Carter state, they are ready-made, and therefore they can be retrieved whenever they are needed without the need to "assemble them on-line as one speaks" (Schmitt and Carter, 2000: 7).

This explains why, when referring to the minimum amount of items speakers can process without interrupting, Naldini (2013: 60) replaces the term 'word' with that of 'chunk', specifying that speakers do not necessarily process single words but rather groups of words which are used together in a cohesive and significant way.

As far as native speakers are concerned, it is widely acknowledged that formulaic sequences are stored as wholes. However, this might not be entirely true for non-natives. With regard to this, several studies have attempted to find whether it happens the same in the non-natives' mind as well.

For instance, Underwood *et al.* (2004) have carried out an eye-movement study where both native English speakers and non-natives had to read a passage which contained both non-formulaic and formulaic sequences. In order to analyse the processing of the latter, they measured the number and duration of fixations on the terminal words of both formulaic and non-formulaic sequences.

Those measures revealed that the number of fixations of native speakers were lower than that of non-native speakers and that their duration was shorter "when the terminal words were in sequence than when not" (Underwood *et al.*, 2004: 160), which demonstrates the above-mentioned hypothesis regarding the fact that formulaic sequences are stored as wholes in the native speakers' mental lexicon.

As for non-native speakers, even though they fixated more often than native speakers, they were able to process those terminal words in formulaic sequences faster than those in non-formulaic sequences.

Therefore, not only have Underwood *et al.* supported the assertion that formulaic sequences are stored and processed as wholes in the mind of native speakers, as Pawley and Syder had demonstrated, but they have also pointed out that the non-natives enjoy the processing advantage in a similar way, even though not entirely the same, as do native speakers, given that "both participant groups fixated words less often when those words were part of a formulaic sequence than when those words were embedded in non-formulaic text" (*op. cit.*: 161).

Nevertheless, it needs to be highlighted that the non-natives were not as effective as their native peers in processing those terminal words, even though they were "relatively advanced in their English, studying at the same university as the natives and having passed the university's language entrance requirements" (*ibid.*).

Likewise, Conklin and Schmitt (2008) have provided further evidence concerning the processing advantage L1 and L2 English speakers exhibit when it comes to formulaic sequences.

Their study involved two groups of native and non-native English speakers who were asked to read some passages containing both formulaic and non-formulaic phrases. The time it took for them to read both types of phrases was then measured, as a result of which they found that formulaic sequences were read more quickly than equivalent control sequences, which corroborates the view that the former are processed as wholes. Another interesting point to bear in mind is that both groups showed the same advantage in processing formulaic sequences, meaning that the latter are processed as wholes by non-native learners as well.

Another study conducted by Durrant and Schmitt (2010) contributes to providing further evidence as to how L2 English learners process formulaic language. In particular, the study challenged Wray's (2002) claims about the difference between the way child first language learners and adult second language learners approach collocations. According to Wray, adult L2 learners process collocations in a word-by-word manner. In contrast to Wray's assertion, in their study Durrant and Schmitt have found no evidence of such a difference. Rather, it was found that adult L2 learners appeared to "retain some memory of which words go together in the language they meet (...) regardless of any intentional study techniques or strategies" (Durrant and Schmitt, 2010: 179), which explains that non-native learners have a native-like holistic approach to language learning in contrast to what Wray had asserted.

Keeping this in mind, a distinction needs to be made between high and low proficiency learners. In a more recent study, Conklin and Schmitt (2012) have investigated the impact of frequency of exposure on the learning of formulaic language and they have concluded that it may be responsible for low proficiency learners not exhibiting the same processing advantage compared to high proficiency learners, thus leading the former to process formulaic language in a more creative word-by-word manner.

Apart from this, the studies we have reviewed so far suggest that "formulaic sequences have a processing advantage over creatively generated language" (Conklin & Schmitt, 2008: 72) both for native and non-native learners.

Taken together, corpus and psycholinguist results indicate that formulaic phrases are widespread in our way of speaking and writing because they are stored as wholes and retrieved more easily than non-formulaic phrases.

Hence, "given [their] ubiquitousness and demonstrated processing advantages" (Schmitt, 2013: 7), Wood argues that "it appears high time that we began to teach formulas and facilitate their acquisition more directly in the classroom" (Wood, 2002: 13). The next section addresses this issue in detail, discussing what

implementing a more lexical perspective on language teaching entails and how to adopt it.

1.2 The Lexical Approach: a Change of Focus

In this section we are going to see "the implications of taking lexical items rather than words and structures as the units of language" (Lewis, 1993: VIII) in terms of methodology, attitude and content. In this respect, the Lexical Approach by Lewis will be described.

In the previous section formulaic sequences have been shown to play a significant role in language use and learning because of their being stored and processed as wholes. On the basis of such findings, Lewis (1993; 1996; 1997; 2001) and Willis (1990) are among those who have most extensively advocated a lexical-based syllabus and methodology, with a strong focus on multi-word lexical chunks.

In particular, Lewis argues that, "far from language being the product of the application of rules, most language is acquired lexically, then 'broken down'" (Lewis, 2001: 211), exactly as lexical phrases are. As a result, he rejects "the traditional 'slot and filler' approach which was in general use 20 or so years ago" (Lewis, 2005: 8) because it is in contrast with how language is naturally processed and acquired, thus making "language learning unnecessarily difficult" (*ibid.*).

This "perception of language and learning as essentially holistic, or organic" (Lewis, 1993: IV) is at the centre of Lewis's approach, which is in fact known as *Lexical Approach*. On the one hand, Lewis highlights several times that "any approach to language teaching which emphasises lexis and de-emphasises grammar represents not a revolution but a change of emphasis" (*op. cit.*: 133). On the other hand, however, Lewis himself acknowledges the fact that an approach based on such a lexical view of language cannot but have a huge impact on how language is learnt (Lewis, 1996: 11), which brings us to explore the methodological principles and implications within the Lexical Approach.

The Observe-Hypothesize-Experiment (OHE) teaching paradigm lies at the basis of the Lexical Approach. Lewis presents it as a methodology which stands in sharp contrast to the traditional Present-Practice-Produce (PPP) teaching paradigm because of several reasons which we are now going to explore (Lewis, 1993: 6, 20; 1996: 11-16).

The first main difference between the two methodologies is that in the latter "the first element is exclusively about teacher-activity, and only the latter two refer to learner-activity" while the former is entirely learner-centred (Lewis, 1996: 13).

Furthermore, the PPP paradigm is based on the idea of learning as "a sequence of small steps" (Lewis, 2001: 51) whose order cannot be altered. It structures language in such a way that it makes it "discrete and apparently manageable" (Lewis, 1996: 11). Although Lewis recognises that this may attract many teachers looking for "a neat lesson plan, with neat and distinct phases to the lesson", he claims that "this control is illusory" in that it runs counter to the real nature of language and learning which is holistic and organic (*op. cit.*: 11, 13).

According to Lewis, in fact, language does not correspond to a set of general rules and therefore it should not be broken down into bits and presented as such according to a strict order because, as he says, "breaking down is actually frequently a source of later problems. If you learn two separate words and need to put them together to make a phrase, this is obviously more difficult than learning a phrase which you then break down" (Lewis, 2005: 10) Therefore, according to him, language should be observed as it is from the very beginning, meaning that "ambiguity and uncertainty" should be preferred over the "(usually false) security of learned rules" even though this might appear to be misleading (Lewis, 1996: 14).

Another important difference Lewis makes reference to lies in the fact that the OHE paradigm gives emphasis to the concept of fluency rather than to that of accuracy as the PPP paradigm does (Lewis, 1993: 20). In his seminal work Willis further highlights this point by stating that the latter, which he calls 'presentation methodology', "is based on the belief that out of accuracy comes fluency" (Willis, 1990: 128), whereas the 'task-based methodology', which is very similar to the

OHE paradigm Lewis proposes, "is based on the belief that out of fluency comes accuracy" (*ibid.*).

The metaphor of language as a living organism lies at the basis of the Lexical Approach according to which students should be encouraged to "learn certain phrases as complete items at a relatively early stage in their learning programme" (Lewis, 1992: 98) without the need to follow a predetermined order. For instance, Lewis argues that students should be provided with a great amount of phrases, such as expressions (e.g. *Sorry, I don't know*; *Sorry I can't remember*; *Sorry, I've forgotten*; *Could you say that again?* etc.) or sentence heads (*Do you...?*; *Did you...?*; *Have you ever...?* etc.), regardless of their not sharing the same grammatical feature, i.e. verb tense. In fact, students are not required to master either the past tense or the present perfect or the modal verbs in order to be introduced to these phrases. The point is that students should be presented with them indiscriminately because this is the way language is acquired – "learners will, particularly in the early stages, meet a lot more language than they are expected to produce" (Lewis, 2001: 50). However, the important thing is to "explain the phrase by explaining its *function*" without directing students' attention towards "the *structural* features of the phrase which is being taught *as a lexical item* at that stage of the course" (Lewis, 1992: 99).

More to the point, the Lexical Approach promotes a chunk-based view of language which is based on the fact that "much language consists of multi-word 'chunks'" (Lewis, 1993: VI).

Bearing this in mind, it goes without saying that decontextualised vocabulary learning is a learning strategy which is not endorsed within the Lexical Approach. In fact, words should not be taught individually because they "are not normally used alone and it makes sense to learn them in a strong, frequent, or otherwise typical pattern of actual use" (Lewis, 2001: 32).

It has to be highlighted, though, that, according to Lewis, this does not apply to words with "high information content, particularly less common words" whose collocational range tends to be lessened by the meaning they carry. Instead, when it comes to more general and de-lexicalised words, it is important to "meet, acquire

and record [them] in a Collocation or Expression" (*op. cit.*: 48). As a consequence, students should be encouraged "to look at how words really behave in the environment in which they have been used" (*op. cit.*: 32).

According to Lewis, students should also be encouraged to break down language into its component units, also known as chunks, "which are not the traditional vocabulary and structure which teachers and students assume" (Lewis, 1993: IV). Given that language is stored and processed "in units larger than individual words" (Lewis, 2001: 56), students should develop the ability to identify chunks in language and to be able to chunk language itself. In this regard, Lewis points out that chunking is considered to be "the key for comprehensibility" (*op. cit.*: 58) in that if you cannot chunk language correctly, it is highly likely that you are not going to understand it. Furthermore, not only does it aid acquisition, but it also allows learners to see "how the foreign language divides up experience in a different way from the mother tongue", which is "one of the educational values of learning a foreign language" (Nation, 1990: 30). In fact, it helps learners realise that language is arbitrary and that, in turn, there is no word-to-word translation.

In other words, the Lexical Approach is particularly concerned with developing "in the students an understanding that languages do not consist of 'words' with equivalents from one language to the other" (Lewis, 1992: 98).

In order to promote this lexical chunk nature of language, activities have been devised aiming at raising students' awareness of the lexical items they encounter. In this regard, "conscious awareness of what constitutes a possible chunks" (Lewis, 1997: 260) is an important competence which needs to be improved in order for students to be able to "process input more effectively" (*ibid.*) given that it "ensure[s] quicker and more carefully-formulated hypothesis about L2, and so aid[s] acquisition" (Lewis, 2001: 52), so much so that noticing "informs all exercises and activities in the Lexical Approach" (*ibid.*). Furthermore, considering the great amount of lexical items, it is important for students to learn how to make "best use of the language they meet" (*op. cit.*: 58).

This is the reason why awareness-raising activities are more advisable than formal vocabulary teaching and productive practice. Some examples of such activities are chunk-to-chunk translation; the use of the dictionary to establish and expand the partial knowledge of words; the creation of a lexical notebook as a way to record lexical items; exercises and activities which may "resemble those of standard vocabulary or grammar teaching" (Lewis, 1997: 261) but which have a strong lexical focus.

We have seen so far the central role of noticing within the Lexical Approach and some activities aiming at fostering it. However, it has to be said that in order for noticing to take place there needs to be enough input to be noticed, which is why exposure to authentic language plays a key role as well.

As a consequence, Lewis suggests that students need to be exposed to as much language as possible and that teacher talking time needs to be increased (Lewis, 2001: 52) because he believes that "learners need to meet much more text, which is only partially or even superficially used for specific purpose, as we do with texts of different kinds in our daily lives" (*op. cit.*: 197). In other words, within the Lexical Approach more attention should be paid to receptive skills, i.e. listening and reading, rather than productive skills, i.e. writing and speaking (Lewis, 1997: 260).

The Lexical Approach also advocates "changes to the content of grammar teaching" (Lewis, 1993: 146). Traditional grammatical items such as the first, second and third conditionals, the comparative, the passive and the reported speech are considered unhelpful and therefore should "unquestionably be deleted" (*ibid.*) in favour of a more lexical treatment.

For instance, Serra Borneto argues that the notion of comparison can also be expressed through the negation form or adverbs (Serra Borneto, 1998: 231), as in the case of the following sentences (Lewis, 1993: 5): *He <u>hasn't</u> got the background his brother has; A <u>disappointingly</u> small crowd was waiting at the airport; The educated class has always been <u>relatively</u> mobile*.

In other words, the Lexical Approach "involves an increased role for word grammar (collocations and cognates) and text grammar (supra-sentential

features)" (*op. cit.*: 3). It follows that different types of lexical items, including de-lexicalised verbs (e.g. *have*, *take*, *get*, *put*, *make*, *do*), de-lexicalised function words (e.g. *of*, *with*, *for*, *by*), and modal auxiliaries (e.g. *would*) should be addressed from a lexical point of view as well as institutionalised utterances which should be treated lexically "as unanalysed wholes contributing to, rather than derived from grammatical competence" (*op. cit.*: 107).

It is noteworthy that some principles of the Lexical Approach have been criticised. For instance, in her essay, Granger focuses on what she views as the two major weaknesses of the Lexical Approach, namely the generative power of lexis and the preference for "depth rather than breadth of vocabulary knowledge" (Granger, 2011: 6). Granger explains that the reasons for such criticisms lie in the fact that it is doubtful whether L2 acquisition could be equalled to L1 acquisition – when learning their mother tongue, "children first acquire chunks and then progressively analyse the underlying patterns and generalise them into regular syntactic rules" (*ibid.*), but she points out that this might not be the case for adult learners who do not have the same amount of exposure to the target language "necessary for the 'unpacking' process to take place" (*ibid.*).

Moreover, Granger says that it is uncertain whether it could be possible to deepen vocabulary knowledge without running the risk of overloading students with information given that "teaching programmes are often formulated in terms of breadth rather than depth" and that "teachers usually have a very limited number of teaching hours at their disposal" (*op. cit.*: 6-7).

Nonetheless, the pros Granger lists (i.e. wide phraseological approach, fluency, accuracy and ease of learning) seem to outnumber the cons (i.e. generative power and depth vs breadth). In this regard, we need to bear in mind that the Lexical Approach is based on a view of language which is strongly supported by corpus and psycholinguist evidence. Furthermore, as we will see in the next section, experimental studies have shown its value and benefits.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review: Previous Studies on the Successful Implementation of a Lexical-Based Approach in Language Teaching

As outlined in the previous sections, much has been written about the central role of formulae in language use, so much so that there is now a growing understanding that the implementation of a lexical-based approach in second and foreign language teaching could not but "open the door to improvements in how learners acquire second languages" (Wood, 2002: 13).

This has recently prompted many researchers from all over the world to put theory into practice in an attempt to verify whether a formulaic type of teaching would improve students' language competence.

In this chapter, the reader will be provided with a review of the literature pertaining to the introduction of a lexical-based approach in classroom teaching and its positive consequences on students' language competence. The first section (2.1) presents studies which explore the connection between teaching formulaic language and speech fluency, while the second section (2.2) is more concerned with written fluency development as a result of the said teaching. The third section (2.3) will be dedicated to additional studies which have focused on other aspects, such as students' perceptions about this kind of teaching. Lastly, the fourth section (2.4) moves on to review a few studies which have analysed the treatment of lexis in L2 textbooks.

2.1 Teaching Formulaic Language and the Development of Speech Fluency

As already mentioned (see Section 1.1.3), lexical phrases do not need to be creatively processed on-line because they seem to be stored and memorised as wholes in the long-term memory, which makes them easily and readily available for use. It follows that, as Schmitt says, "there is less demand on cognitive capacity" (Schmitt, 2000: 400), which implies that the speaker can focus more on other types

of tasks involved in speaking, such as "rhythm, variety, combining memorized chunks, or producing creative connections of lexical strings and concepts" (Wood, 2002: 7). This results in a simplification of what otherwise would have been a much longer process, thus enhancing speech fluency.

That being said, the studies below provide empirical evidence in favour of the said correlation between lexical chunks and speech fluency.

The first study we review was conducted by Boers *et al.* (2006) and involved two groups of 17 and 15 upper-intermediate to advanced ESL learners who were taught by the same teacher throughout a period of 22 hours. The two groups received the same type of teaching, except for the methodology used – "in the experimental group, learners' attention was directed to formulaic sequences" (Boers *et al.*, 2006: 249), whereas in the control group "the target language was analysed in a more traditional way: the distinction between grammar and vocabulary was upheld" (*ibid.*). Ultimately, during the interview, the experimental group turned out to be more proficient than the other one – students' use of formulaic sequences resulted in an improvement of their spoken fluency. Yet, such a high use was detected only in the first part of the interview which was based on a written text, while in the second part the formulaic sequences counts did not seem to differ so much between the two groups, which led the researchers to conclude that there might be a need to "move beyond mere 'phrase noticing' into more active 'phrase learning'" (*op. cit.*: 258).

In a more recent study, McGuire and Larson-Hall (2017) investigated the benefits that explicitly teaching formulaic sequences could bring to learners' development of spoken fluency. Two groups of 8 and 11 mid-intermediate to advanced ESL learners attended five weeks English classes based on a task-based approach. Again, the methodology employed was different – in the experimental group, formulaic sequences were the main focus of attention, whereas in the control group grammar and vocabulary were approached separately in a more traditional way. Unlike the control group, it was found that the experimental group

used more formulaic sequences and thus appeared to be more fluent in spontaneous speech.

In their equally recent study (2018), Mohammadi and Enayati also attempted to find whether teaching lexical chunks would enhance the speaking fluency of 60 Iranian EFL intermediate students. During the six weeks study, two groups of 30 students were taught differently for "three sessions of 90 minutes a week" (Mohammadi and Enayati, 2018: 184) – the experimental group "worked on lexical chunks in different contexts of role play, discussion, paragraph writing and conversation" (*op. cit.*: 189), while the control group analysed language according to the grammar translation method. At the beginning and end of the study, they were required to do a test and an interview which were then analysed in order to track the progress of their performances and the differences between the two groups. The results showed that the experimental group's mean score did change after the six weeks treatment (from 10 to 12), while the control group's mean score did not (from 10.3 to 10). But, most importantly, the comparison of the two groups' mean scores of the post-tests clearly showed that the experimental group outperformed the other, with a mean score of 12 and 10 respectively.

Similarly, Attar and Allami (2013) demonstrated that teaching collocations to 40 Iranian EFL intermediate students did improve their speaking fluency and interview performance. Two groups of 20 students attended three lessons of one hour long for four weeks, before and after which a collocation test and a 10-minute interview were conducted. As always, the experimental group received a collocation instruction, while the control group did not, thus resulting in higher mean scores of the former (19 and 15) than the latter (6 and 5) in both the collocation and interview post-tests. In addition, a questionnaire was devised to investigate students' perceptions and attitudes towards collocation instruction, which proved to be well received by almost everybody.

In his study, Dickinson (2012) gauged the effects of lexical chunk instruction on the academic presentations of 10 Japanese EFL university students whose proficiency levels "varied from false beginner to quite advanced" (Dickinson, 2012:

28). During the first two weeks, the students worked on a list of formulaic sequences typically used in presentations through a series of consciousness raising activities and "writing and performing sections of presentations in class" (*op. cit.*: 29). They were also required to deliver a final presentation making use of the formulaic sequences they had learnt. During the next three weeks, formulaic sequences were not explicitly taught any more. Nonetheless, the students still had to deliver a final presentation. The analysis of the two presentations revealed that the students used formulaic discourse organisers and markers more frequently and more appropriately than before, which made "their presentations both more engaging as well as easier to understand" (*op. cit.*: 32). Given the decrease of some students' mean scores from the first to the second presentation, it was concluded that some students might have benefited more from explicit instruction than others. But, despite that, it was not possible to detect a difference between the two teaching methods, since the overall mean scores of the two final performances (2.62 and 2.66) did not differ so much.

Wood's study (2009) yields further interesting insights into the relationship between teaching lexical chunks and oral fluency. In particular, the main purpose of his study was to discover whether fluency workshops would lead a Japanese ESL university student to widen her "repertoire of formulaic sequences" (Wood, 2009: 45), thus contributing to become more fluent. During the workshops, the student's attention was particularly drawn towards phrasal patterns typical of native speakers' narrative. The student was also asked to produce two speeches, respectively before and after the six weeks treatment, whose analysis revealed that "she was more readily able to produce faster speech and longer runs between hesitations after six weeks" (*op. cit.*: 50). Furthermore, even though the post-treatment percentage of formulaic sequences did not change significantly from the first speech sample, the mean length score of the formulaic phrases in the second speech sample shifted from 3.17 to 4.46, meaning that they became more complex and longer (e.g *when I was a little girl*) than those of the first sample (e.g. *you know*).

Taken together, the findings of this first group of studies have shown that lexical phrases do have a positive impact on the development of students' speech fluency. Overall, they have substantiated that "speech fluency lies to a great extent in the control of large numbers of lexical phrases and sentence stems" (Wood, 2002: 6) and that the more lexical phrases you use, the more likely it is that you will come across as a more fluent and proficient speaker.

Furthermore, not only are lexical phrases useful from a productive point of view, but their use has shown to "ease the processing load of the listener" (Schmitt and Carter, 2000: 8). When referring to his students' improvements, Dickinson stated that, after the treatment period, their presentations were easier to understand because of the presence of lexical phrases (Dickinson, 2012: 32). This finding is perfectly in line with Schmitt and Carter's words – "language which includes recognizable phrases is easier to understand" (Schmitt and Carter, 2000: 8) and it also underpins Lewis's words when he claims that "the use of prefabricated lexical items facilitates processing by the listener/reader, allowing them to concentrate more easily on the new information contained in the message" (Lewis, 2005: 9). This is probably due to the fact that "lexical phrases can be recognized as individual wholes [which] spares the listener some of the processing effort of parsing the language stream into individual words" (Schmitt and Carter, 2000: 8).

To conclude, there is evidence to suggest that the use of lexical chunks makes it easier and faster for the speaker to encode the message and for the listener to process it.

2.2 Teaching Formulaic Language and the Development of Written Fluency

Unlike the previous studies which focused on oral fluency, the ones below investigate the benefits of formulaic sequences on writing fluency.

The present study of Ranjbar *et al.* (2012) focused in particular on the effects of lexical chunks on paragraph writing fluency. During a whole semester, two groups of 45 Iranian EFL university students received a chunk-based and a more

traditional instruction. By comparing the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the two groups, it was found that the experimental group's scores improved in the post-test (from 7.3 and 17.9), while those of the control group remained almost unchanged (from 7.0 and 7.6), which proved the positive impact of teaching formulaic language on writing fluency.

A more recent study conducted by El-Darkhs (2017) has contributed to demonstrating that there is a correspondence between explicit teaching of formulaic sequences and increased use of them in writing production. In order to demonstrate this, two control classes of 44 and other two experimental classes of 37 Saudi EFL university students were involved in a ten weeks programme which consisted of reading an overall number of eight stories, answering some comprehension questions and then re-writing them individually in 30 minutes "without looking back at the original story" (El-Darkhs, 2017: 24). At the beginning and end of the programme, the students were asked to carry out a pre and post-test. What interests us most, however, are the different treatments the two groups received – during the eight week treatment period, in fact, the control classes were presented with vocabulary activities which focused on individual words (IW), while the experimental classes on formulaic sequences (FS). Their writings were then analysed and the results showed that "the average use of the IW group of formulaic sequences throughout the 8 texts stood at 3.3 per text whereas the FS group's average was 6.7" (*op. cit.*: 28).

Another study which shows the link between chunk-based teaching and improvement in EFL students' writing is the one conducted by Li (2014) involving two classes of 40 Chinese EFL college students. Thanks to the fourteen weeks lexical chunk treatment, the writing compositions of the experimental group reached a higher mean score (75.0) compared to that (70.4) of the control group who instead had received a conventional treatment.

Likewise, Zafarghandi's study (2016) investigated whether teaching collocations would lead to a better comprehension and an increased use of collocations in students' writing compositions. The study involved 66 Iranian EFL upper-

intermediate university students who were divided into an experimental group of 36 and a control group of 30 – during 10 lessons, "the specific treatment including explicit instruction of collocation was given to the experimental group while the control group received placebo" (Zafarghandi, 2016: 107). Students were required to do a pre and post-test aiming at testing their collocation knowledge and their writing skills before and after the treatment. If any difference between the two groups' performances was to be found, it would mean that the treatment had been successful. Since the experimental group statistically proved to have improved more than the control group in the post-test, it was concluded that explicitly teaching collocations did have a positive impact on "raising collocation knowledge" and on "appropriate use of them in their writing" (*op. cit.*: 115).

In the study of Abdulqader *et al.* (2017), the Lexical Approach was put into practice to see whether it would improve EFL students' academic writing skills, especially their ability to write cause and effect essays. Before and after the experiment, 80 third-year-university EFL students were divided into two groups of 40 and they were asked to write a cause and effect essay on the same topic. Unlike the control group, the experimental group underwent a six weeks treatment based on the Lexical Approach – they were asked to "concentrate on these lexical units whenever they watch TV, listen to radio, read a book or a magazine, etc." (Abdulqader *et al.*, 2017: 136) and keep note of as many lexical chunks as they found in a new text. In the end, the mean scores of the two groups (81.7 and 72) were found to differ significantly from each other, with the experimental group statistically outperforming the control one. Such findings suggest that knowledge of lexical chunks can indeed enable students to overcome the difficulties they might have in writing in a foreign language, such as those "odd sentences, though grammatically correct" (*op. cit.*: 139), thus improving their writing competence.

In 2016, Qader came to the same conclusion as Abdulqader *et al.* regarding the powerful impact lexical chunks have on academic essay writing. Except for the number of students who participated in the study, that is 40 third-year-university EFL students compared to the overall 80 in the study of Abdulqader *et al.*, there is

no need to go into details in that the two studies were conducted in the same university following the same procedures. However, it is worth pointing out that in Qader's study the experimental group's writing performance still outperformed that of the control group, whose mean score in the post-test was 64.2 compared to the 72.7 of the former.

The only study which could not find any improvement was Chang's (2011). The writing productions of 23 Taiwanese EFL sophomores were analysed before and after 2 hours of collocation instruction with strong focus on collocation errors. Contrary to expectations, no evidence of a decrease in errors in the texts written after the instruction was detected. Such results were explained by referring to the fact that it was a small-scale experiment.

Except for this last study, all the others have demonstrated that the use of formulae also favours the written dimension as it fosters the "development of textual cohesion" (Wood, 2002: 13).

2.3 Additional Studies on the Teaching of Formulaic Language

The studies reviewed so far were all experimental and quantitative as opposed to those we are going to review in this section which are mostly observational and qualitative studies, except for the last two. It is important to highlight that they are all concerned with the implementation of teaching formulaic language but some of them are more interested in investigating its effects on students' perceptions, while others on students' language competence in general, and there is one in particular which compares the effectiveness of different teaching methodologies.

To begin with, in Ordás's study (2015), the Lexical Approach was introduced in the curriculum of the so-called VinoLingua Project, namely a self-study LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) course for beginner wine-growers coming from "five highly reputed wine-growing regions (Burgundy, Tuscany, South Tirol, Lower Austria and Toro)" (Ordás, 2015: 113), so as to enhance their communication skills. 350 wine-growers were subject to a needs analysis with the aim of identifying the

real situations which would require them to use the target language. It was revealed that the language they needed in those situations was mainly formulaic, which explains why chunk-based materials were adopted. Although the study did not provide experimental evidence as to the effectiveness of the Lexical Approach, it was argued that it facilitated beginner LSP students who had to "deal with very technical language in a limited set of situations and topics" (*op. cit.*: 118).

In the Pérez Serrano's study (2018), two different instruction methods were put to the test in order to discover which one would have the most effective impact on the development of chunk competence. The study lasted seven weeks and it involved 52 intermediate students learning Spanish as a foreign language. The students were then divided into three groups that were taught differently – in the control group, the main focus was on single words; in the 'experimental noticing group', students were exposed to lexical chunks which were only noticed in the input; in the 'experimental group of explicit treatment', exposure to lexical chunks was always followed by explicit activities, such as "connecting the parts of the chunk, inserting part of the chunk, drawing the chunk to a personal sphere, translating the chunk" etc. (Pérez Serrano, 2018: 137). Prior to the experimental treatment, students were required to do a pre-test whose data were then compared to those collected from "three post-tests, one at the end of each teaching unit" (*ibid.*). Although all three groups did improve their performance in the post-tests, the experimental group that received the explicit treatment obtained the highest mean score of the correct answers, which means that the students proved to benefit more from the explicit teaching method.

A different study from those reviewed so far is Sample's (2014) which provides interesting insights into the pros and cons that the implementation of some principles of the Lexical Approach can have on two classes of 25-30 eight-to-ten-year-old South-Korean EFL students. At the end of the study, the ultimate conclusion was that the level of autonomy the Lexical Approach advocates for should be reduced when teaching elementary students whose motivation can be undermined by the huge amount of input. Nonetheless, the author does

acknowledge its value by reporting the positive feedback he received from his students after tasking them with creating collocation boxes, writing personal sentences with multi-word patterns and keeping a personal notebook for revision.

In their study, Xu *et al.* (2012) offered other interesting insights into the introduction of the Lexical Approach in college English classes in China for 14 weeks. Although the study does not provide statistical evidence as to the effects the Lexical Approach has on students' linguistic ability, it can still shed some light on Chinese EFL students' perceptions towards its implementation. The authors based their conclusions on "students' response in classes and talk after classes" (Xu *et al.*, 2012: 2093) – besides their positive reception of the lexical-based instruction, students acknowledged "the positive effects of lexical chunks in their English learning" (*ibid.*) and, according to the teachers, they also acquired more confidence.

Another study in favour of lexical chunk teaching in English learning is Meng's (2017) which focuses, in particular, on the extent to which teaching lexical chunks promotes interpreters' competence. The study involved two groups of 5 advanced senior students attending an Interpretation Course. A test was administered to them where they had to listen to five English sentences read by the teacher and interpret them one after the other. If the sentence was not entirely clear, the student could ask the teacher to repeat it. Two hours before the experiment, the so-called Group A was also asked to memorise sixteen lexical chunks which would be later encountered in the sentences. Once the experiment was concluded, the results revealed that Group A took less time to both understand and interpret each sentence. It was also found that the degree of accuracy of Group A's sentences was higher than that of Group B.

Wasuntarasophit's study (2015) aimed at investigating use and perceptions of collocations after a year of explicit instruction. 82 fourth-year undergraduate students majoring in English took three hour-long lessons. Students were then tested on three different types of collocations – intensifying adverbs (e.g. *highly, absolutely*), everyday verbs (e.g. *have, take*), synonyms and confusable words (e.g. *big* and *large*, *start* and *begin*; *gain, win, earn, make, achieve*). The tests revealed

that "the students could use some collocations accurately" (Wasuntarasophit, 2015: 54), but they still had difficulties with some of them, especially with some intensifying adverbs. With regard to students' perceptions, the results of an open-ended questionnaire showed that 93.50% of the students believed collocational knowledge to be "highly useful for communication" (*op. cit.*: 56). Additionally, 98.70% of them said that "collocations needed to be taught explicitly" and "introduced earlier and continually so that students could improve their language skills, especially writing and speaking, and communicate effectively with foreigners" (*op. cit.*: 57).

Rahimi and Momeni's experimental study (2012) is divided into three parts – the pre-test, the treatment and the post-test. To determine the language proficiency levels of two groups of 30 Iranian pre-university EFL students, in fact, a pre-test was carried out. During the sixteen weeks treatment, the experimental group focused on collocations, while the control group received a more traditional teaching based on individual words. A post-test was then administered to verify whether there would be any differences between the two groups' language proficiency. The results showed that "teaching vocabulary in both groups caused a significant change in their language proficiency scores" (Rahimi and Momeni, 2012: 40). In spite of this, however, the collocation teaching methodology proved to be more effective than the traditional one, as shown by the difference in the post-test mean score of the experimental group (28.6) compared to that of the control group (19.3).

To summarise, the above studies have contributed to demonstrating the relevance of lexical phrases in language teaching and learning by providing empirical evidence of their effectiveness on the development of students' language competence. Particular emphasis has also been placed on students' positive response to the teaching of formulaic language and on their increased confidence as a result of using lexical phrases, which has proved even more their pedagogical value.

Moreover, special focus has been placed on their pragmatic value. It has been demonstrated that lexical phrases are indeed 'islands of reliability', as Dechert called them (Dechert in Conklin and Schmitt, 2008: 76), because "they serve as a quick and reliable way to achieve the desire communicative effect" (Schmitt, 2013: 2), especially in specific functional situations such as "hosting foreigner at their vineyards and attending a wine fair" (Ordás, 2015: 114).

Lastly, the Pérez Serrano's study (2012), as well as the Boers *et al.*'s (2006) in the previous section (see Section 2.1), have recognised the need to provide a more explicit teaching of lexical chunks in language classroom, thus recognising the importance of the Lexical Approach which values both noticing and explicit exercises in the same way (see Section 1.2).

2.4 Previous Research on the Treatment of Lexical Items in L2 Textbooks

Most of the studies reported so far have created experimental controlled situations in order to ensure that the language competence development the experimental groups were expected to undergo would be exclusively due to the treatment instruction on lexical chunks they had received. In so doing, researchers have statistically demonstrated "the obvious pedagogical advantages" of "the recognition, generation and effective recording" of lexical chunks (Lewis, 1997: 257). In other words, the above findings have proved to be totally consistent with what Lewis, and many others like him, have always acknowledged, that is the effectiveness of mastery of lexical phrases on language use and acquisition.

However, because of their controlled nature, these studies have not told us much about the actual presence and teaching of lexical chunks in mainstream classrooms. To this end, textbooks can be regarded as a useful resource to be explored. Since they represent an important teaching tool which teachers tend to use, to a greater or lesser extent, to structure their everyday classroom practice, their analysis might contribute to shedding some light on how vocabulary is actually treated and whether lexical chunks are addressed as well.

Here below we report some studies which have investigated the treatment of vocabulary in different L2 textbooks.

The first study we report is Brown's (2010) which has based his study on the assumption that, when it comes to vocabulary knowledge, nine different aspects need to be mastered (see Section 1.1). Nine English coursebooks "ranging from beginner to intermediate level" (Brown, 2010: 86) were analysed to discover whether "activities involving all nine aspects" (*op. cit.*: 85) were included. The data revealed that "across all nine textbooks only three aspects consistently receive attention" (*op. cit.*: 88). Here follows the mean percentages which show the degree of attention the activities analysed gave to all nine aspects – form and meaning (51.8%), grammatical functions (29%), spoken form (14.8%). Among the least common were collocations (8%), associations (7%), concepts and referents (6%) and written form (3%), which leads to the conclusion that "learning meanings is still dominant" (*op. cit.*: 90). As the proficiency level increases, form and meaning remain the main focus of attention in all textbooks, followed by grammatical functions, spoken form but also collocations and associations, especially in the three pre-intermediate textbooks analysed. In the light of these results, even though he acknowledges the fact that "some aspects of vocabulary knowledge will always receive more attention" (*op. cit.*: 93), Brown advocates for "a more comprehensive" and "a broader view of vocabulary knowledge" in order to provide students with "more effective materials" (*ibid.*). To this end, it is suggested that different aspects should be introduced at different stages of learning so as to ensure that students acquire "a more complete (…) and a more secure knowledge of those items" (*op. cit.*: 94).

In Koprowski's study (2005), the COBUILD corpus was used to find the usefulness score of every lexical phrase in three mainstream EFL coursebooks "designed for the intermediate learner" (Koprowski, 2005: 323). He did not question their presence, since the data collected revealed that each one of the coursebooks counted 260, 209 and 353 multi-word lexical items, amounting to a total of 822. What he did question, however, was the selection process, which was

defined as "unprincipled and careless", "unscientific", and "arbitrary" (*op. cit.*: 328, 330, 331). In fact, the data showed that 23% of the lexical phrases examined were assigned a very low usefulness score and that 14% of them were not even found once in the "computerized corpus of over 330 million words" (*op. cit.*: 324), such as *recommend fully*, *believe seriously*, *bitter apple* and *on its last feet*. Although it is acknowledged that "there is clearly a bewildering array of lexical phrases to choose from" (*op. cit.*: 322), it is argued that frequency and range should be used as the "starting points for assessing the basic utility of vocabulary" (*op. cit.*: 234), otherwise the lexical phrases may risk to lose their pedagogical value.

Similarly, in McAleese's study (2013), multi-word lexical items of one contemporary coursebook which was used in "EGP (English for General Purposes) courses in private Japanese university contexts" and designed for "upper-intermediate (false beginners) to pre-intermediate proficiency levels" (McAleese, 2013: 323) were analysed. In line with Koprowski's results (2005), it was found that multi-word items represented "a significant proportion of coursebook lexis" (*op. cit.*: 324) – in particular, 220 (31.7%) out of 693 lexical items were multi-word items. The Bank of English was then used to calculate their range scores, which were found to vary from 0.0 to 340.04. In fact, although multi-word items were included, not all of them turned out to be equally "representative of real-life English" (*op. cit.*: 326) – 73 out of 220 multi-word items (25.9%) had a range score under 0.5, meaning that "over a quarter of all MWI identified" (*op. cit.*: 325) occurred "fewer than approximately 225 times in the 450 million word BOE corpus" (*ibid.*); furthermore, 20 of the above 73 multi-word items had a range score under 0.1, "with five not occurring in the 450 million word corpus even one time" (*ibid.*). Since the less frequent multi-word items are, the less likely students are to benefit from them, McAleese suggests that "frequency and range data need to be given more consideration in MWI selection" (*op. cit.*: 326).

Vassiljev *et al.* (2015) have replicated the same experiment with particular emphasis on the amount and usefulness of collocations in three "EFL coursebooks currently utilised in Estonian upper-secondary school education" (Vassiljev *et al.*,

2015: 299). Unlike the previous studies, however, the number of lexical collocations identified in collocation exercises and vocabulary-related tasks in each coursebook (503, 293 and 325) was nothing compared to the corresponding total amount of lexical items (2975, 1704 and 2326, respectively), which means that insufficient attention was given to them. The Collins Wordbanks Online corpus was then used to calculate the usefulness scores of the lexical collocations in each coursebook to find whether the same collocations had been chosen according to their frequency and range in real-life English. In this case the findings accorded with those of the previous studies since a large proportion of collocations in each coursebook (51%, 53% and 41%, respectively) was found to have a very low usefulness score. In particular, 8%, 11% and 5% of them had a usefulness score equal to 0, meaning that they occurred "less than 5 times in the total corpora" (*op. cit.*: 301), while the other 43%, 42% and 36% had a slightly higher usefulness score ranging from 0.001 to 5.000, which was still considered to be a low score. As for the remaining 49%, 47% and 59%, their score "ranging from 5.001 to over 20" was "regarded as a good score" (*op. cit.*: 306). Taken together, these findings demonstrate that lexical collocations do not "form a substantial language learning element" (*op. cit.*: 303) and that almost half of them "can be rather unhelpful for the learner" (*op. cit.*: 306) given their low usefulness score in each coursebook.

A similar conclusion was reached by López-Jiménez (2013) after examining 24 English and Spanish L2 coursebooks "at three proficiency levels (beginning, intermediate and advanced)" (López-Jiménez, 2013: 339). With respect to what it is called the 'vocabulary selection criteria', only two of them explicitly indicated it, which may suggests "a random selection of the multi-word lexical units to be taught" (*op. cit.*: 345). Furthermore, particular emphasis was given to the treatment that lexical collocations, idioms and compounds received in the coursebooks. A few differences between the English and Spanish coursebooks were detected – firstly, the former presented a "much higher percentage of compounds" (*op. cit.*: 340) than the latter; secondly, lexical collocations were taught explicitly only in the former; lastly, the amount of lexical phrases increased in the

intermediate and advanced levels, especially in the Spanish coursebooks. Another interesting result came from the analysis of the vocabulary exercises which were divided into five categories (i.e. 'mechanical exercises', 'closed exercises', 'open activities', 'communicative activities' and 'ambiguous exercises'). Although the English coursebooks had slightly better scores than the Spanish ones, it was found that the closed exercises, followed by the open exercises, were the most used in both of them, unlike the communicative activities which were not even included.

In the study by Boers *et al.* (2014) four exercise formats on verb-noun collocations were put to the test in an attempt to identify whether there would be any differences in terms of learning gains between the format where collocations were presented as intact (i.e. 'Insert collocation') and the other three formats where collocations were broken down into parts (i.e. 'Connect', 'Insert the verb' and 'Underline the verb'). In the research different groups of ESL university learners participated in "four small-scale pre-test/exercises/post-test trials" (Boers *et al.*, 2014: 60). In the first two trials, two groups of 11 and 8 adult students were both tested on 'Insert the verb' and 'Insert the collocation' exercises, while two groups of 9 and 7 students on 'Underline the verb' and 'Insert the collocation' exercises. Because of their "very low pre-test scores" (*op. cit.*: 69), it was assumed that they might have "found the exercises too daunting" (*ibid.*), which is why, in the last two trials, three and four groups of students "with a higher level of proficiency" (12, 18, 16 and 9, 8, 17, 20) (*op. cit.*: 64) were tested on one type of format each – 'Insert the verb', 'Underline the verb', 'Insert the collocation', plus the 'Connect' format in the fourth trial, respectively. No statistical differences were observed between the four exercise formats in the post-tests, meaning that no specific format stood out as being the most "beneficial for learners' retention of the collocations they target" (*op. cit.*: 56). Furthermore, by comparing the pre-tests and post-tests' results, it was found that there was a likelihood of 'cross associations', especially in those exercises where students were required to reassemble the collocations. What happened was that "correct pre-test responses were substituted by incorrect post-test responses" (*op. cit.*: 67) which was assumed to be due to 'distracter items'.

Although the exercises with intact collocations were less likely to cause them, they were not "entirely immune to cross associations either" (*op. cit.*: 62).

Given the numerous limitations of the previous study, Boers *et al.* (2016) replicated it after two years. In this case three 'fill-in-the-blank exercises' were put to the test in order to see which one would have a more effective impact on students' meaning and form retention of the verb-noun collocations. The study involved 117 "second-year English majors in a College of Foreign Languages at a university in Vietnam" (Boers *et al.*, 2016: 6) whose results in a B1-level exam proved to have an "intermediate level of proficiency in English" (*op. cit.*: 7). However, the pre-test was administered only to the 30 students "with the highest mean exam score" (*ibid.*) in order to identify the collocations which needed to be unknown for the case study. Given their slightly higher proficiency level, in fact, it was assumed that the 12 collocations that were found to be unfamiliar to them must also be so to the remaining 87 students who would participate in the treatment study. With regard to them, they were divided into three groups. The first two groups (35 and 25) had to "fill in the blanks with suitable verbs" (*op. cit.*: 9) while the third one (27) with the intact missing expression – the first group was given a list of verbs to choose from; the second group was only given "the first letter of the missing verb" (*op. cit.*: 6), and the third group was given a list of expressions. The post-test data revealed that the latter was "the most beneficial of the three formats" (*op. cit.*: 12) because of the highest mean scores the third group obtained both in terms of form and meaning retention. The study ends with the analysis of "323 phrase-focused exercises" (*op. cit.*: 16) in 10 contemporary EFL textbooks which highlights that, contrary to the present findings, 76 of the exercises examined (namely, 23.5%) do not present collocations as wholes but rather as 'broken-up phrases' or 'incomplete phrases'.

The main focus of Nordlund's study (2016) was to detect the degree of frequency and recurrence of "adjectives, nouns and lexical verbs" in "two sets of teaching materials commonly used in Swedish primary schools" (Nordlund, 2016: 53). The data showed that a high percentage of adjectives (from 76.7% to 89.9%),

nouns (from 78.7% to 89.1%) and lexical verbs (from 67.1% to 76.3%) had low-frequency scores, meaning that they had "occurrence rates of maximum four times" (*op. cit.*: 55). It was also revealed that a large proportion of adjectives (38.33% and 31.62%), nouns (47.93% and 40.92%) and lexical verbs (25.76% and 20.05%) in the two sets of textbooks were "not found within the 2.000 most frequent words of general English" (*op. cit.*: 57). And finally, "only one-fifth of adjectives, nouns and verbs [appeared to] recur throughout a whole series" (*op. cit.*: 56). Therefore, the study further demonstrates that "textbook writers do not seem to consider word frequency in their choice of what words to include in texts" (*op. cit.*: 59), which cannot but make it difficult for students to gain a good knowledge of vocabulary, given "the important role played by frequency in vocabulary acquisition" (*op. cit.*: 51).

The importance of frequent lexical items in textbook materials is further highlighted in Northbrook and Conklin's study (2018) where they demonstrated that 35 Japanese secondary school students with a low level of proficiency in English processed faster and more accurately those lexical bundles which appeared more frequently in their textbooks than less frequent ones. To this end, 250 lexical phrases were selected comprising 20 lexical phrases which appeared in the textbooks (e.g. *do you play*), 20 control phrases (e.g. *do you hear*) which were created "by changing only one word in each lexical bundle" (Northbrook and Conklin, 2018: 7) that did appear in the textbooks (e.g. *hear*) and 20 ungrammatical phrases with zero frequency (e.g. *you with do*). As far as the lexical bundle and the control item are concerned, it is noteworthy to mention that the only difference between the two was that the former did appear in the textbooks "as a string of words" (*op. cit.*: 7), while the latter "had zero occurrences" (*ibid.*) as a phrase despite the fact that its single parts (e.g. *do*, *you* and *hear*) could be found in the textbooks. Furthermore, 95 ungrammatical fillers with zero frequency (e.g. *he yes does*) and 95 grammatical fillers (e.g. *play the piano*) were included in order to "mask any similarities between (…) lexical bundles and control phrases" (*op. cit.*: 8). Then, students were required to read these 250 lexical phrases and decide

whether they were possible English phrases or not. As expected, the mean response times showed that students took less time to respond when faced with frequent lexical bundles. The fact that they took more time to process the control phrases demonstrated that the students were sensitive only to those items that did occur in the input. Hence, Northbrook and Conklin conclude that it is advisable for textbook writers to "carefully consider the input students are given" (*op. cit.*: 15).

The last study we are going to address is Kasuya's (2000) which, as will be seen, has proved to be the most useful for the present dissertation. The study focused on lexis-related exercises in five Japanese high school textbooks in order to examine the treatment given to lexis. Once the exercises had been identified (approximately 46), they were categorised according to the type of knowledge learners needed in order to do them (i.e. fixed expressions, lexical collocations, lexically-dependant patterns, features of individual words, grammatical rules) and the ways the exercises treated lexical items. As a result, it was found that around 70% of the total exercises in the five textbooks placed emphasis on lexis-related elements, while the remaining 30% dealt with grammatical rules, with the exception of one textbook in particular in which the grammatical exercises (70%) outnumbered the lexis-related ones (30%). Yet, although the other textbooks did focus on lexis, the way they did it was deemed to be "unsatisfactory" (Kasuya, 2000: 60) – too much emphasis was put on single words and multi-word items, especially lexical collocations, tended to be treated "as fixed and as objects to be memorised one by one" (*op. cit.*: 29) and manipulated "for the sake of finding correct answers" (*op. cit.*: 58) without raising learners' awareness of their "importance and usefulness" (*op. cit.*: 34). This was further proved by analysing the two textbooks which focused more "on the significant lexical elements" (*op. cit.*: 30). Only one consciousness-raising activity out of all the 46 lexical-related exercises could be found in the first textbook; as for the second one, no consciousness-raising activities were detected.

In the light of the results of these studies, the present dissertation seeks to address the following questions which will be examined more thoroughly in the next chapter:

1. What types of lexical items do EFL textbooks focus on?

2. What is the treatment multi-word lexical items receive?

3. Is grammar taught from a lexical point of view?

Part 2 – The Research

Chapter 3 – Context of the Research

In the previous chapter we discussed the role of lexical chunks in language use and learning. Particular emphasis was given to the Lexical Approach which has been described as the most well-known approach which aims at including these lexical items in classroom practice. We also reviewed numerous studies whose results further highlighted that lexical chunks do assist language acquisition. The chapter then ended with some studies which investigated the role of lexis in L2 textbooks which is going to be the focus of our research as well.

Now that the theoretical framework has been delineated, we can move on to the actual research. To this end, this chapter has been divided into three sections. The first section (3.1) is dedicated to a more detailed description of the research questions, while the second (3.2) and third section (3.3) are more concerned with the materials and methods used to collect data.

3.1 Research Questions

As already mentioned, the present paper is concerned with investigating the focus given to lexis in EFL textbooks used in Italian lower and upper secondary schools. We are particularly interested in discovering whether the principles of the Lexical Approach can be found in mainstream EFL textbooks. If so, this may increase the likelihood that students are exposed to formulaic language which has been demonstrated to aid acquisition (see Chapter 2). This is the reason why the Lexical Approach has been used as the benchmark of our research.

In particular, the purposes of the present paper are threefold and they correspond to three of the main principles (i.e. the multi-word nature of lexis, the methodological implications of this lexical view of language and the *lexicogrammar*

concept) among the many within the Lexical Approach which we have chosen to explore in order to see whether they are adopted or not.

Here below we have reported the three research questions in the order in which they will be addressed:

1. First of all, we aim at discovering which type of lexical items EFL textbooks deal with. By posing this question we want to discover whether EFL textbooks share Lewis's view concerning the fact that "increasing learners' communicative power depends on expanding the learner's lexicon by adding lexical items of all kinds [and that] positive steps must be taken to avoid simply adding an unhelpfully large repertoire of uncollocated nouns" (Lewis, 2001: 177);

2. Once the first research question is addressed and the lexical items most dealt with are identified, we are concerned with discovering the treatment multi-word lexical items receive in EFL textbooks, namely if there are what Lewis refers to as "activities that raise conscious awareness of the lexical nature of language and its component chunks" (Lewis, 1997: 260). According to him, the majority of the activities should be "of the receptive, awareness-raising kind" and "teachers used to formal vocabulary teaching, using largely productive practice, need to make an important change of emphasis, learning truly to value receptive practice" (*ibid.*);

3. The last research question concerns the type of grammar content presented in EFL textbooks. In his seminal work, in fact, Lewis "suggests a change of content for grammar teaching" (Lewis, 1993: 146) and encourages to embrace "a much wider concept of grammar than that traditionally adopted in the teaching of English" (*op. cit.*: 137). Lewis claims that grammar is not a set of rules (e.g. the tense system, the reported speech, the passive, the comparative etc.) (*op. cit.*: 133-137). As reported in Serra Borneto's, grammar is intrinsically linked with lexis and for this reason it should be dealt with from a lexical point of view (Serra Borneto, 1998: 233-234).

Now that the research questions have been described, we can move on to the next section which is dedicated to the description of the materials we analysed in order to answer the above research questions.

3.2 Materials

The materials we analysed are ten EFL textbooks, more specifically four EFL textbooks which are used in lower secondary school (*scuola secondaria di primo grado*)[4] (see Table 2 below) and six EFL textbooks which are used in upper secondary school (*scuola secondaria di secondo grado*)[5] (see Table 3 and 4 below).

With regard to the number of textbooks we analysed, it has to be said that each one of the aforementioned textbooks comprises a student's book, which is normally used during the lesson, and a workbook, which is used to revise the language items that have been dealt with in the student's book. Depending on the publishing house, the student's book and the workbook can be published separately as two distinct volumes or they can be found together in one single volume. Therefore, it can be concluded that the total number of textbooks we analysed amounts to twenty. However, even though they sometimes happen to be published separately, we decided that the data gathered from the two of them would be combined together. In other words, the student's book and its corresponding workbook were merged as if they were a single textbook.

As far as the proficiency level of the above-mentioned textbooks is concerned, the four lower secondary EFL textbooks cover the A2 level, while the six upper

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4 The Italian *scuola secondaria di primo grado*, also known as *scuola media*, lasts three years and the age of students who attend it is between 11 and 14 years old. For a more thorough overview of the Italian education system, see the following links: http://eurydice.indire.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Structures_2017_18_diagrams_final_report.pdf, http://www.indire.it/lucabas/lkmw_img/eurydice/quaderno_eurydice_30_per_web.pdf

5 The Italian *scuola secondaria di secondo grado*, also known as *scuola superiore* (which is further divided into *liceo*, *istituto tecnico* and *istituto professionale*), lasts five years and the age of students who attend it is between 14 and 19 years old. For a more thorough overview of the Italian education system, see the following links: http://eurydice.indire.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Structures_2017_18_diagrams_final_report.pdf, http://www.indire.it/lucabas/lkmw_img/eurydice/quaderno_eurydice_30_per_web.pdf

secondary EFL textbooks range from the A2/B1 to the B2 level (see column *Level* of Table 3 and 4) of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In this regard, it is advisable to provide the reader with an overview of how the Italian education system works, especially concerning the proficiency level students are required to reach at the end of lower and upper secondary school.

With regard to lower secondary school, the latest National Guidelines (*Indicazioni Nazionali*) date back to 2012 when the government issued the Ministerial Decree (*Decreto Ministeriale*) DM 254/2012 which states that students have to reach the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) of the Council of Europe at the end of lower secondary school[6].

With regard to the current legislation concerning upper secondary school, the latest National Guidelines (*Indicazioni Nazionali*) date back to 2010 when the government issued the Presidential Decree (*Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica*) DPR 89/2010, also known as Gelmini's reform (*Riforma Gelmini*), for back then the Italian Minister of Education was Mariastella Gelmini. And it states that students have to reach the B2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) of the Council of Europe at the end of upper secondary school[7].

Furthermore, it is important to explain the reasons behind the choice of analysing EFL textbooks ranging from elementary to upper intermediate level which was not by chance.

At first we wanted to focus only on upper secondary textbooks but then we realised that the analysis of lower secondary textbooks would increase the reliability and expand the scope of our research since we would be able to compare

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6 "I traguardi sono riconducibili al Livello A2 del Quadro Comune Europeo di Riferimento per le lingue del Consiglio d'Europa"
http://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/21156/DM+254_2012.pdf/1f967360-0ca6-48fb-95e9-c15d49f18831?version=1.0
7 "Come traguardo dell'intero percorso liceale si pone il raggiungimento di un livello di padronanza riconducibile almeno al livello B2 del Quadro Comune Europeo di Riferimento per le lingue"
http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/gunewsletter/dettaglio.jsp?service=1&datagu=2010-12-14&task=dettaglio&numgu=291&redaz=010G0232&tmstp=1292405356450

EFL textbooks of different proficiency levels. Therefore, we decided to include the following ones as well.

Title	Authors	Publisher	Year	Level
Mega 3	O. Johnston, C. Barker and L. Mitchell[8]	Macmillan	2004	Elementary (A2)
High Spirits 3	P. Bowen and D. Delaney	Oxford	2009	Elementary (A2)
Today WOW 3	E. Foody, E. Stiles and S. Zervas	Pearson	2014	Elementary (A2)
Go Live! 3	C. Maxwell and E. Sharman	Oxford	2016	Elementary (A2)

Table 2. EFL textbooks used in lower secondary school (*scuola secondaria di primo grado*): elementary level (A2)

We would like to draw the reader's attention to the number 3 attached to the title of each textbook, as shown above in Table 2. In fact, with regard to the four lower secondary EFL textbooks we analysed, it has to be pointed out that each one of them (i.e. Mega 3, High Spirits 3, Today WOW 3, Go Live! 3) represents the last and third textbook of a series of three (i.e. Mega 1, Mega 2, Mega 3; High Spirits 1, High Spirits 2, High Spirits 3; Today WOW 1, Today WOW 2, Today WOW 3; Go Live! 1, Go Live! 2, Go Live! 3). In this regard, it is important to recall that lower secondary school lasts three years in Italy and it is for this reason that English textbooks are divided into three volumes, one for each year (e.g. Mega 1, Mega 2, Mega 3).

At first, we analysed all the series of three textbooks but then we decided to focus only on the textbook of the third year for two main reasons – firstly, they did not differ so much from each other and, secondly, the third one is closer to the A2

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8 As far as Mega 3 is concerned, it is important to point out that the authors of the student's book are not the same as the authors of the workbook – the authors of the student's book are C. Barker and L. Mitchell, while the authors of the workbook are C. Barker, L. Mitchell and O. Johnston (see Bibliographic References). Nevertheless, in Table 2 we reported the name of all the authors indiscriminately, given that in our research we combined the student's book and the workbook together.

level students are supposed to reach at the end of lower secondary school, meaning that it reflects better the competence we were more interested in analysing.

As far as the six upper secondary EFL textbooks are concerned, it is important to highlight the fact that they come from a *liceo scientifico* and a *liceo scienze umane.* As already mentioned, in Italy upper secondary school lasts five years and these EFL textbooks are normally used in the first years since the last three years, especially the fifth one, are dedicated to the study of literature in the *liceo scientifico* and *liceo scienze umane*[9]. They are listed below according to their proficiency level.

Title	Authors	Publisher	Year	Level
Into English	H. Puchta and J. Stranks	Cambridge	2010	Pre-Intermediate (A2/B1)
Cosmic	F. Beddall and R. Fricker[10]	Pearson	2011	Intermediate (B1+)
Interact	H. Hadkins and S. Lewis	Cambridge	2014	Pre-Intermediate (A2/B1)

Table 3. EFL textbooks used in upper secondary school (*scuola secondaria di secondo grado*): pre-intermediate/intermediate level (A2/B1-B1+)

Title	Authors	Publisher	Year	Level
Spotlight on FCE	J. Naunton, J. Hughes and A. Lane[11]	Heinle Cengage Learning	2009	Upper-intermediate (B2)
Tell me more	J. Shelly and J. Poppiti	Zanichelli	2012	Upper-intermediate

9 "In particolare, il quinto anno del percorso liceale serve a consolidare il metodo di studio della lingua straniera per l'apprendimento di contenuti non linguistici, coerentemente con l'asse culturale caratterizzante ciascun liceo e in funzione dello sviluppo di interessi personali o professionali"
http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/gunewsletter/dettaglio.jsp?service=1&datagu=2010-12-14&task=dettaglio&numgu=291&redaz=010G0232&tmstp=1292405356450
10 As far as Cosmic is concerned, the author of the student's book is F. Beddall, while the author of the workbook is R. Fricker (see Bibliographic References).
11 As far as Spotlight on FCE is concerned, the authors of the student's book are J. Naunton and J. Hughes, while the author of the workbook is A. Lane (see Bibliographic References).

				(B2)
GOLD first	J. Bell, A. Thomas, S. Burgess and J. Newbrook[12]	Pearson	2012	Upper-intermediate (B2)

Table 4. EFL textbooks used in upper secondary school (*scuola secondaria di secondo grado*): upper-intermediate level (B2)

Some of the above textbooks (i.e. High Spirits 3, Cosmic, GOLD first) were currently used in the schools where we found them. As far as the remaining ones are concerned, we were told that they had been sent in by the publishing house to the English teachers in order for them to be examined but eventually they had not been adopted. But this does not mean that they have not been used or that they are not currently used in other Italian schools.

Lastly, an additional point has to be made pertaining to the strengths and weaknesses of carrying out such a research by analysing EFL textbooks.

In fact, it has to be acknowledged that textbook analysis has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it can tell us something about the way language teaching is conducted inside the classroom given that textbooks are part of every teaching programme. On the other hand, however, as already mentioned in Section 2.4, textbooks can only give us a partial picture because they represent a part of classroom practice and, most of all, because it is not certain to what extent teachers rely on them.

Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous section, the principles within the Lexical Approach are manifold (see Section 1.2), but the ones which can be tested by analysing textbook exercises are fewer. In fact, there are some principles whose presence could be detected only by the observation of real teaching practice. Therefore, textbook analysis impacted in the choice of the three research questions.

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12 Again, as far as GOLD first is concerned, the authors of the student's book are J. Bell and A. Thomas, while the authors of the workbook are S. Burgess and J. Newbrook (see Bibliographic References)

Nonetheless, the analysis of textbook exercises can be sufficient when it comes to discovering whether an approach is implemented or not. In fact, since the three principles of the Lexical Approach we have selected (see Section 3.1) can be considered to be the main ones, it goes without saying that if they were not to be found, all the remaining principles could not be found as well. Therefore, it is not necessary to verify that every single principle is included in the EFL textbooks analysed in order to see whether the approach is implemented or not, given that the presence of some of them can already tell us a lot about its implementation.

3.3 Methods

In this section, we shall explain the methods adopted to collect the data which would enable us to provide an answer to the three research questions (see Section 3.1). This section is further divided into three parts as many as the research questions are. The first (3.3.1), second (3.3.2) and third part (3.3.3) describe how we proceeded in order to answer the first, second and third research question, respectively.

3.3.1 Method 1

With regard to the first research question (i.e. *What types of lexical items do EFL textbooks focus on?*), we were concerned with discovering what kinds of lexical items appeared in the EFL textbooks we analysed. In particular, we were interested in understanding whether different types of multi-word lexical items such as phrasal verbs, collocations and expressions, which Lewis considers to be the "novelty and pedagogical challenge" (Lewis, 2001: 8) of the Lexical Approach, were implemented in the EFL textbooks besides single words.

In order to do so, we used the same method which was used in the study of Kasuya (2000) which we reviewed in Section 2.4; but we adapted it so that it would be suitable for the purpose intended. Therefore, we created a table with four columns corresponding to the four different categories of lexical items we wanted

to investigate (i.e. *Single Words*, *Phrasal Verbs*, *Collocations* and *Expressions*) and as many rows as the number of EFL textbooks we analysed, that is ten.

During data collection, however, we realised that some exercises did not fit in any of the above-mentioned categories. For instance, there were exercises which included different lexical items at the same time such as single words, phrasal verbs, collocations and/or expressions. Since we could not put them under any of the above categories, we decided to add two more categories (i.e. *Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items* and *Mixed Lexical Items*) where we could put those exercises which focused on more than one type of lexical item at the same time.

The choice of adding two categories instead of one was due to the fact that we found two different types of these mixed exercises – some exercises draw the students' attention to multi-word lexical items, while others to multi-word lexical items plus single words. That being said, we could have added only one mixed category where we could have put these two types of exercises indiscriminately together, but, given that we wanted to discover how much focus was placed on multi-word items as opposed to single words, we thought that it would be better to separate them – in this way we would be able to discover the exact amount of exercises which dealt only with multi-word lexical items.

The table was devised in such a way because it would show us whether the textbooks focused more on single-word or multi-word lexical items. We would also be able to understand the amount of exercises which dealt with each type of lexical item. The six categories were organised as follows:

1. *Single Words*: in this first category we included those exercises which focused on different features of single words such as antonyms, meanings, compound words, word transformations, word-to-word translations, grammatical words (e.g. *this*, *those*, *however*, *moreover*, *as*, *like*) etc.;

2. *Phrasal Verbs:* in this second category we included those exercises which explicitly focused on phrasal verbs. Although Lewis claims that phrasal verbs are "only one kind of polyword" (Lewis, 1993: 92), which is a category

he includes within the one of individual words (see Section 1.2), we decided to separate phrasal verbs from the latter. In doing so, we would be able to see how much focus phrasal verbs received, which we would not have been able to see in case we had left them within the first major category of *Single Words*;

3. *Collocations*: in this third category we included those exercises which featured both lexical and grammatical collocations. The difference between the two is well described in Bahns's study (1993) where it is stated that lexical collocations "do not contain prepositions, infinitives, or clauses, but consist of various combinations of nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs" (Bahns, 1993: 57) such as verb + noun (e.g. *make the bed*, *save time*), adjective + noun (e.g. *a quick meal*), adverb + adjective (e.g. *completely satisfied*), noun + noun (e.g. *a pride of lions*), noun + verb (e.g. *lions roar*) etc. On the other hand, grammatical collocations "consist of a noun, an adjective, or a verb, plus a preposition or a grammatical structure such as an infinitive or clause" (*ibid.*). Examples of grammatical collocations are adjective + preposition (e.g. *anxious about, keen on*), verb + preposition (e.g. *accuse of, apologise for*) etc.;

4. *Expressions*: in this fourth category we included those exercises featuring fixed expressions (e.g. *Anything else?*), semi-fixed expressions (e.g. *I'm just saying that…*; *There's no point in…*; *There is nothing wrong with…*) and idioms (e.g. *It's raining cats and dogs*);

5. *Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items*: in this fifth category we included those exercises dealing with more than one type of multi-word lexical items at the same time. In other words, those exercises that featured some lexical items of the second, third and fourth category (i.e. *Phrasal Verbs*, *Collocations*, *Expressions*) except for the first one (i.e. *Single Words*);

6. *Mixed Lexical Items*: in this sixth category we included those exercises dealing with different lexical items of the first four categories at the same time (i.e. *Single Words*, *Phrasal Verbs*, *Collocations*, *Expressions*).

During data collection, we proceeded in the following way – the first thing we did was to identify the lexical-related exercises, we then read the instruction of each exercise, and, ultimately, we analysed the entire exercise. At the end of this process we would be able to position the exercise under what we thought would be the right category according to the lexical item the exercise focused on.

In this regard, it is important to highlight the fact that this process of identification and categorisation was not always straightforward for two main reasons:

- first of all, there were some exercises where it was not always clear what kind of lexical knowledge students were tested on;

- and second of all, the boundaries between the categories were not always crystal clear, meaning that there were some exercises containing lexical items which seemed to defy fixed categorisation.

For instance, as far as the first point is concerned, there were times when students were asked to "choose between the words in *italics* to complete [the] sentences" of the exercise (Naunton and Hughes, 2009: 17), which might have led us to categorise the exercise under the *Single Words* category. And yet, a more thorough analysis would reveal that the exercise did not only deal with single words but that there were also sentences such as "The Minister of Health was forced to hand in his *notice/resign* over the hospital scandal" (*ibid.*) which clearly tested the student's knowledge on the expression *to hand in your notice*. In other words, the student would not have been able to give the right answer unless he/she had known the aforementioned expression. Therefore, in order to understand under which category exercises such this one would fall, we asked

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ourselves the following question – what kind of lexical knowledge does the student need in order to do the exercise?

We have reported below other two examples like the one we have just commented upon. For instance, sentence number 3 of exercise *a* requires students to know the expression *to go for a walk* (see the underlined part in Table 5 below), otherwise it would not be possible for them to choose the right option. Similarly, exercise *b* tests the student's knowledge on lexical items such as *the same … as*, *the (best/worst) thing about …*, *introduce somebody to somebody else*, *by email*, *compared to …* which are collocations and expressions (see the underlined parts in Table 5) – had they not known the said collocations and expressions, students would not have been able to choose the right preposition and therefore they would not have been able to carry out the exercise successfully.

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a) Read what happened to Jack when he was in New York and circle the most appropriate word (A, B or C)[13] (Johnston, Barker and Mitchell, 2004: 46)

1. My friend Jack ………… New Work last month.
   A travelled **B** visited **C** went
2. He ………… in a hotel in the centre.
   A stayed **B** stood **C** reserved
3. On the first day he ………… <u>for a walk</u> around the city.
   A took **B** <u>went</u> **C** turned
4. He got lost and couldn't ………… his hotel.
   A find **B** discover **C** arrive
5. In the end, he asked someone the …………
   A road **B** path **C** way
6. The man told him, 'You're right in ………… of your hotel!'
   A middle **B** side **C** front

b) Choose the correct word to complete the sentences (Beddall, 2011: 8)

1. He's <u>the same</u> size ………… me.
   A of **B** to **C** with **D** <u>as</u>
2. What's <u>the worst thing</u> ………… living in your town?
   A <u>about</u> **B** with **C** of **D** in
3. I haven't <u>introduced</u> him ………… my parents yet.
   A for **B** <u>to</u> **C** with **D** at

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13 My translation of the original Italian instructions: "Leggi le frasi su cosa è successo a Jack a New York. Cerchia la parola migliore (A, B o C) per ogni spazio" (Johnston, Barker and Mitchell, 2004: 46)

Table 5. Example of the first type of exercises which were difficult to classify

There is another example which is worth mentioning in order to better understand why the categorisation was not always instant. As many other textbooks, the textbooks we analysed were organised in units, at the end of which there was a *Review* section where students had the opportunity of revising the language items of the previous unit/s by doing some exercises. In these *Review* sections we happened to find exercises we had difficulty in categorising such as the gap filling exercise below.

Complete the sentences with the correct preposition (*after, away, off, up, on, down, out, over*). You may need to use them more than once (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 55)

1. I wasn't expecting him to arrive. He just <u>turned</u> ………… with no warning.
2. I had to <u>turn</u> ………… the invitation to dinner because I was working late.
3. The restaurant is so popular that people are often <u>turned</u> ………… at the door.
4. Getting food poisoning from shellfish really <u>turned</u> me ………… eating it again.
5. The play <u>turned</u> ………… to be a disappointment after a great start.
6. The chef <u>turned</u> ………… me and blamed me for burning the meal.
7. When I have more time, I'm going to <u>take</u> ………… tennis.
8. I had to leave work at five but a friend <u>took</u> ………… for the last hour.
9. The band have completely <u>taken</u> ………… in America: everyone loves them.
10. I think he must <u>take</u> ………… his mother. She's really clever, too.

Table 6. Another example of the first type of exercises which were difficult to classify

The difficulty in classifying exercises like this one lied in the fact that it seemed to deal with single words because students are asked to fill in the gap with the

correct preposition. However, we decided to put this exercise under the *Phrasal Verbs* category instead of the *Single Words* category for two main reasons – in order to be able to carry out the exercise, it is necessary for students to know the meaning of the phrasal verbs with *turn* and *take*, given that the prepositions to choose from form part of such phrasal verbs (see the underlined verbs in Table 6); secondly, in the previous units we found two exercises which explicitly focused the students' attention on these phrasal verbs (see Table 7). We encountered many other exercises like this one and the rationale we adopted to classify them was the same as the one explained so far. Again, we managed to categorise the exercise by asking ourselves what kind of lexical knowledge students were required to have in order to carry out the exercise successfully.

Match the phrasal verbs in 1-5 with meanings A-E (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 11)

1. His career *took off* as soon as he won the prize: he's so talented.
2. He *takes after* his father, who's also really musical.
3. I *took up* playing the saxophone last year.
4. Tom *took over* as the band's manager when Sam left.
5. I made him *take back* what he said about my taste in music.

A) Have similar characteristics
B) become responsible for something
C) start an activity
D) admit you are wrong
E) become successful

Match definitions 1-6 with the phrasal verbs with *turn* (*turn off*, *turn down*, *turn away*, *turn up*, *turn out*, *turn on*). Some of the verbs are underlined in the text (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 51)

1. refuse an invitation
2. arrive somewhere, especially unexpectedly
3. suddenly attack someone, physically or with words
4. have a particular or unexpected result
5. make somebody decide they don't like something
6. refuse someone permission to enter a place

Table 7. Example of exercises on phrasal verbs that preceded and helped us classify the exercise in Table 6

As far as the second point is concerned, it was not always clear whether lexical items such as *traffic jam*, *full moon*, *solar panel* etc. had to be classified as

noun/adjective + noun collocations or single words, and more specifically compound words.

On the one hand, they may be considered as collocations because they consist of two single lexical items such as *traffic + jam*, *full + moon*, *solar + panel* which go together and with no other lexical item in order to signify "a large number of vehicles close together and unable to move or moving very slowly" (Cambridge Dictionary) etc. On the other hand, however, they also may be considered as open noun/adjective + noun compounds such as *bus stop*, *car park* etc.[14]

Therefore, we decided to verify how these types of lexical items were classified in Lewis's groundbreaking works (1993; 2001) and we found that he classifies lexical items similar to the aforementioned ones, such as *taxi rank*, *record player*, *continuous assessment*, under the category of polywords.

As we know from Section 1.1.2, Lewis includes polywords under the major category of single words – he describes such lexical items of "two or three words" as being similar to single words in that they can be frequently found in dictionaries (Lewis, 1993: 92). He then goes on to say that "the meaning of the whole group may range from immediately apparent or totally different from the component words" (*ibid.*). It is also interesting to point out that Lewis makes reference to the same problems we had in attempting to categorise them:

> "Here are some examples [of such lexical items]: *taxi rank*, *record player*, *continuous assessment*, *put off*, *look up*, *look up to*, *of course*, *on the other hand*, *all at once*, *by the way*, *the day after tomorrow*, *in his element*. Immediately, we see that the categorisation is fuzzy edged, and a matter of interpretation rather than objective fact. Perhaps *continuous assessment* is more usefully categorised as a

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14 There are three types of compound nouns: the closed ones are written as a single word (e.g. *blackboard*, *boyfriend, keyboard*), the hyphenated ones are written as a word with a hyphen (e.g. *mother-in-law*, *check-in*) and the open ones are written as two words (e.g. *car park*, *bottle opener*, *apple tree*, *peanut butter*). Furthermore, the most common ones are noun + noun (e.g. *bus stop*), adjective + noun (e.g. *small talk*) and verb + noun (e.g. *swimming pool*). (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/it/grammatica/grammatica-britannico/about-nouns/nouns-compound-nouns)

fixed collocation: if *the day after tomorrow* is a lexical item, what about *at the weekend* – perhaps that is best treated as a fixed item rather than *at + the weekend*. Finally, even if *in his element* is a polyword it permits some variation: *in her/their element*. We, fortunately, are not looking for rigidly defined categories, only useful ways of grouping" (*op. cit.*: 93).

Since we had to find a solution in order to make our categorisation as objective as possible, we decided that we would put the aformentioned lexical items under the *Single Words* category for the following reasons:

- they were often presented with single words (see *directory enquiries* and *emergency services* in the exercise in Table 8 below);

- they do have an entry in the dictionary where they are labelled as nouns unlike collocations (e.g. *make the bed*) which can be labelled as 'expressions', 'idioms' or 'phrases' depending on the type of terminology the dictionary adopts;

- they suit the definition of open compound nouns (see Note 14);

- Lewis puts these lexical items under the category of polywords which, in turn, is under the category of single words, regardless of their being multi-word lexical items.

Match the words (*ambulance, <u>directory enquiries</u>, envelope, the internet, stamps, <u>emergency services</u>*) to the sentences (Barker and Mitchell, 2004: 54)

1. You surf it when you are looking for information …………
2. You write the address on it …………
3. It takes people to hospital …………
4. You phone them when you don't know a telephone number …………
5. You need them to send letters and postcards but you don't need them for e-mails …………
6. 113 is their number in Italy but in Britain it's 999 …………

Table 8. Example of the second type of exercises which were difficult to classify because of their featuring noun + noun lexical items

To make clear what kind of lexical items we are referring to, we have listed below some examples of these 'problematic' lexical items which we decided to put under the *Single Words* category for their being considered as compound nouns. They were taken from the overall ten EFL textbooks we analysed.

Bowling alley	*Basement flat*	*Make-up artist*	*Window seat*	*Fire escape*
Climate change	*Tennis skirt*	*Mountain biking*	*Eye drops*	*Air pollution*
Wind turbine	*Race track*	*Glossy magazine*	*Police officer*	*Tin opener*
Sea level	*Talent show*	*Special effects*	*Organic food*	*Tourist guide*
Budget hotel	*Single room*	*Shopping mall*	*Sand dune*	*Hand luggage*

With regard to data collection, there is an additional point that should be noted. Since the Lexical Approach is based on a new view of language which has its centre on lexis, we decided to focus not only on the traditional vocabulary-related exercises which can be found under the section labelled as *Vocabulary* but to analyse also other sections such as *Reading*, *Listening*, *Writing*, *Speaking*, *Functions*, provided that they included exercises with a specific focus on lexical items.

This choice lies in the very nature of the Lexical Approach whose aim, in fact, is not that of merely expanding the *Vocabulary* section but of viewing language from a lexical point of view which embraces every single activity. Nevertheless, we decided not to take into account the *Grammar* section of each textbook given that we would analyse it more accurately in Section 3.3.3.

As far as the *Expressions* category is concerned, it has to be said that not only did we include exercises which explicitly asked students to use them, but we also included exercises where the instructions did not make any reference to the expressions the students need to use. For instance, the instruction of such an exercise was the following one:

> "Work in pairs. Choose one of the sports above which has never been an Olympic event. Think of three arguments that you could

use to convince the Olympic committee to include it in the next

Olympic Games. Tell the class." (Naunton and Hughes, 2009: 25).

As can be seen, there is no reference to expressions. However, since right beside the exercise there was a box called *Useful expressions* featuring expressions such as *I think/I'd like to suggest that chess should become an Olympic sport*, *It deserves to be an Olympic sport because…*, *To begin with/First of all it is very skilful/beautiful to watch/exciting*, *Next…*, *Finally…,* we decided to include the exercise as well as many others like this one under the *Expressions* category.

It is also important to point out that we did not take into account exercises like the one below because they tested "a range of grammatical structures and vocabulary" (Burgess and Newbrook, 2012: 10) and therefore they would not have fitted in any of the six categories.

Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between two or five words, including the word given (Burgess & Newbrook, 2012: 10)

1. I lived in London when I was a child but now I live in Paris.
   USED
   I live in Paris now but ………………… London when I was a child.

2. When I lived in London, I went to the music shop on the corner every Saturday.
   WOULD
   Every Saturday ………………… the music shop on the corner when I lived in London.

3. It's become easy for me to sing live as I do it so much.
   GOT
   I've ………………… as I do it so much.

4. I find watching TV quite relaxing in the evenings.
   FEEL
   Watching TV ………………… in the evenings.

5. I don't go to live concerts very often.
   HARDLY
   I ………………… live concerts.

6. I only found your message by change when I was looking for something else.

ACROSS	

I ………………… accident when I was looking for something else.

7. I decided not to learn to play the piano as it seemed very difficult.
   UP
   I decided not ………………… to play the piano as it seemed very difficult.

8. I'm not sure about going to the concert, though if I have enough money, I will.
   DEPENDS
   I'm not sure about going to the concert because ………………… whether I have enough money.

Table 9. Example of exercise we did not include in our research

To conclude, in the table below we have reported one exercise for each category as an example of the ones we considered to fall under the six categories.

Single Words
Choose adjectives to describe the following (Foody, Stiles and Zervas, 2014: 35) 1. a person who does a lot of sport ………… 2. a person who has big muscles ………… 3. a person who doesn't like exciting activities ………… 4. a person who often feels scared ………… 5. a person who has a lot of accidents …………
Phrasal Verbs
Complete the sentences with a phrasal verb based on *look*. **All of these verbs appear somewhere in this unit** (Naunton and Hughes, 2009: 41) 1. I can't find my keys. Can you help me look ………… for them? 2. Looking ………… someone else's pet is always a big responsibility. 3. The police are looking ………… the problem posed by dangerous dogs. 4. I'm really looking ………… reading her new book about horses. 5. We shouldn't look ………… on people who live in smaller homes than *we* do.
Collocations
We can use different prepositions with the same verb. ~~Cross out~~ **the option which is not possible** (Hadkins and Lewis, 2014: 64) 1. climb   **up** a mountain/**over** the wall/**down** the ground 2. fall   **down** the stairs/**up** the water/**off** the bike 3. dive   **off** the diving board/**out of** the water/**into** the water 4. jump   **over** the chair/**off** the table/**onto** the water

Expressions
Complete the dialogue with the expressions below (Maxwell and Sherman, 2016: 15) **Emma** Hi Annie. We're going to have a barbecue next Saturday. ………… like to come? **Annie** Yeah, I'd …………! What time? **Emma** At half past six. **Annie** Cool! Hey, do ………… going shopping this afternoon? **Emma** Sorry Annie, I haven't got any money. ………… to stay at home. **Annie** Never mind. Do you ………… come to my house and watch a film? **Emma** That …………! See you later! *Fare un invito*: Would you like to…? Do you watch to …? Do you fancy…? *Accettare un invito*: I'd love to! That'd be great! *Rifiutare un invito*: Sorry, I don't feel like it. Sorry, I'm not really into… Sorry, I'm busy. *Esprimere una preferenza*: I'd rather… I'd prefer to…
Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items
Underline all the prepositions in the text. Then find one example of (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 48) 1. a phrasal verb 2. an adjective + prepositions 3. a verb + preposition 4. a fixed expression
Mixed Lexical Items
Can you guess what the underlined words mean? (Barker and Mitchell, 2004: 29) 1. It's <u>set</u> in Verona. 2. He probably never <u>left</u> England. 3. You didn't have a <u>seat</u>. 4. You <u>stood</u> very close to the stage. 5. Theatres were <u>lively</u> places. 6. The audience didn't <u>keep quiet</u> during the performance. 7. The old Globe Theatre <u>burned down</u> a long time ago.

Table 10. Examples of exercises which were classified according to the type of lexical item they focused on

3.3.2 Method 2

In the previous section we explained the method adopted to answer the first research question which allowed us to count the number of exercises dealing with different types of lexical items, and in particular to see how much focus was given to multi-word lexical items compared to single words. In this section we shall describe the method used to answer the second research question regarding the treatment multi-word lexical items receive in EFL textbooks (i.e. *What is the treatment multi-word lexical items receive?*).

According to Lewis, textbook exercises should be devised in such a way as to raise students' awareness of multi-word lexical items, "the recognition of which is an important aid to speeding the process of language acquisition" (Lewis, 1993: 186). He believes that "accurate noticing of lexical chunks provides the central strategy of the Lexical Approach" (Lewis, 2001: 53).

Having said this, we were particularly concerned with discovering the way multi-word lexical items (i.e. phrasal verbs, collocations and expressions) were treated. In order to do so, we used the same table as the one used in Kasuya's study (2000) where consciousness-raising activities are separated from the non-consciousness-raising ones.

As in Kasuya's study, we decided to focus only on the textbooks with the highest percentage of exercises dealing with multi-word lexical items; in particular, we chose one textbook for each level of proficiency (i.e. A2, B1 and B2).

During data collection, the procedure we adopted consisted in analysing the exercises which fell under the categories of *Phrasal Verbs*, *Collocations*, *Expressions* and *Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items*. These exercises were further collocated under the two categories of *Consciousness-Raising Activities* and *Non-Consciousness-Raising Activities* according to the following characteristics:

1. *Consciousness-Raising Activities (CR)*: this category includes all the activities which are "based more on questions than answers" (Lewis, 1996: 14), which encourage "an acceptance of the ambiguity and uncertainty which

underlies language" (*ibid.*) and which foster "the individual student's personal cognitive activity" (*op. cit.*: 13). Dave and Jane Willis also describe them as activities which encourage learners to "notice particular features of the language, to draw conclusions from what they notice and to organise their view of language in the light of the conclusions they have drawn"(Willis and Willis, 1996: 64). According to them, in a typical consciousness-raising activity students may be asked to "identify a particular pattern or usage and the language forms associated with it" (*op. cit.*: 69), to classify data "according to similarities or differences" (*ibid.*), to make cross-language comparisons, to hypothesise, to "recall and reconstruct elements of a text" (*ibid.*) or to learn how to use reference materials such as dictionaries;

2. *Non-Consciousness-Raising Activities (N-CR)*: unlike the previous one, this category includes more mechanical exercises where students are asked to choose or produce the correct item. Kasuya listed typical types of non-consciousness-raising activities such as multiple choice (see exercise *a* in Table 11), gap-filling (see exercise *b* in Table 11), transformation (see exercise *c* in Table 11) and reordering of words (Kasuya, 2000: 31).

Here below we have reported some exemplifying exercises of the ones we included under the aforementioned categories. As can be seen, the exercises do focus on multi-word lexical items but they differ in the way they do so.

Consciousness-Raising Activities
Match the two halves of the expressions. Then discuss what they mean with a partner. Do you have similar expressions in your language? (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 30)
1. He's got more money   **A** to burn. 2. Put your money where   **B** not made of money. 3. I'm a bit short-term   **C** a fortune. 4. Money's a bit   **D** your mouth is. 5. She's got money   **E** tight at the moment. 6. He's worth   **F** to make ends meet.

| 7. My mum always says she's | **G** of money this month. |
| 8. It's sometimes hard | **H** than sense. |

Non-Consciousness-Raising Activities

a) Choose the best answer A, B, C or D (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 55)

1. He snacks a lot ………… meals.
   A besides **B** on **C** between **D** from
2. It's important to eat a diet ………… in vitamins.
   A rich **B** high **C** full **D** plenty
3. People would be healthier if they ate less ………… food.
   A fast **B** quick **C** hurried **D** speedy
4. Never add salt to any dish without ………… it first to see if it's needed.
   A tasting **B** cooking **C** flavouring **D** pouring
5. Some cultures are known ………… their spicy food.
   A by **B** for **C** about **D** with
6. What ………… are needed to make that dish?
   A parts **B** items **C** ingredients **D** pieces

b) Complete the sentences 1-4 with an expression with *time* in the box: *time is money, time flies, not before time, ahead of their time* (Burgess and Newbrook, 2012: 95)

1. Is it really ten o'clock already? it's amazing how ………… !
2. I can't stop now; I'm supposed to be working, and ………… .
3. The first science fiction films introduced such modern ideas that they were ………… .
4. At last you've arrived, and ………… – I've been waiting for hours!

c) The requests, preferences and questions below are too informal. Make them more polite by using the introductory phrases given. Make any punctuation changes that are necessary (Burgess and Newbrook, 2012: 17)

1. I want to stay with a family in the city centre.
   I would like ………………………………………… .
2. I play football most of the time.
   I enjoy ………………………………………… .
3. I want to go to Wembley Stadium.
   Would it be possible ………………………………………… ?
4. I also want to go to Oxford Street.
   I'd be really interested ………………………………………… .
5. Thanks for saying you'd pick me up.
   I appreciate you offer ………………………………………… .
6. Don't bother to meet me as my friend will be there.
   It isn't necessary to ………………………………………… .

Table 11. Examples of exercises classified according to the way they treat multi-word lexical items

As happened during the data collection of the first research question (see Section 3.3.1), we encountered some types of exercises (see Table 12 below) which we were not entirely sure how to classify.

In order to decide whether to put such exercises under the *Consciousness-Raising Activities* or under the *Non Consciousness-Raising Activities*, we asked ourselves which of the two categories each exercise was closer to in terms of methodology adopted. In particular, we asked ourselves whether the exercise stimulated the active role of students by making them reflect on lexical phrases or whether it simply tested the students' knowledge of such lexical phrases.

In Table 12 below we have reported some of these exercises we ultimately classified as non consciousness-raising activities. By looking at them below, we can see that they do explicitly address multi-word lexical items[15]; however, this does not automatically make them consciousness-raising activities. In fact, although students know they are working on phrasal verbs (*a*), expressions (*b*, *d*, e, *f*, *g*) and collocations (*c*), these exercises seem not to stimulate their thinking, which is why we decided to classify them as non consciousness-raising activities.

For instance, the first three exercises below (*a*, *b*, *c*) require students to simply give the right answer which is opposite to what a consciousness-raising activity would ask them to do – students have to match the right lexical phrases with the corresponding meanings (*a*) and functions (*b*) or cross out the lexical item which does not collocate with a given lexical item (*c*).

As already mentioned in Section 3.3.1, we also included in our research exercises featuring lexical phrases which were not necessarily found under the *Vocabulary* section – this is the case of exercises *d*, *e* and *f* below which we found under the *Speaking* section. Unlike the first three exercises, they simply require students to repeat lexical phrases – in particular, they require students to use the expressions in order for them to be able to better communicate with their partners (*d*, *e*) and they present expressions students have worked on previously and test

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15 This is also the case of exercise *f*, even though it may seem that it does not make students notice that *put your foot in (something)*, *can't face (doing something)*, etc. are expressions. It has to be said, though, that it is the last of some exercises which have explicitly focused on the same expressions.

their knowledge of such expressions by making them answer questions containing these expressions (*f*).

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a) Match the phrasal verbs underlined in the article to meanings: *organise something, escape, succeed, make (someone) leave, be determined, suddenly become successful, admire, arrive unexpectedly* (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 20)

b) Match strategies (*correcting yourself/explaining something in other words/giving yourself time to think/checking you understand*) **to examples 1-3. Then listen again and tick the language the students use** (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 90)

1. Do you mean…? I'm sorry did you say…? So, what you're saying is…?
2. OK, let me see… Well, it's difficult to say, of course, but… As far as I know,… Right,…
3. I mean… What I meant was… What I'm trying to say is… …or rather,…

c) Choose the word which does NOT fit in phrases 1-3 (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 58)

1. The *main/most obvious/highest/key* (dis)advantage of (being a street performer) is…
2. *Another/One further/One different/An additional* (dis)advantage of (working in) is…
3. …is a *huge/considerable/major/large* (dis)advantage.

d) What advice would you give to someone going to a very hot or cold climate? *Examples: You should (drink)… Make sure you (wear)… Avoid (sitting in the sun). Don't (ignore) warning signs.* (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 43)

e) Work in pairs and compare the photographs. Use some of these expressions of certainty, probability and doubt: *They seem/appear (to be)…, It looks like/as if (they are)…, It must/could/may/can't (be/have done)…, I'd imagine (that they are)…, I'm fairly/absolutely certain (they are)…, As far as I can see, (they are)…, I suppose (they are)…, They are definitely…* (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 71)

f) When was the last time you (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 37)

1. put your foot in it?
2. couldn't face doing something?
3. put your foot down?
4. couldn't keep a straight face?

Table 12. Example of non consciousness-raising activities which were difficult to classify

3.3.3 Method 3

In the previous sections we described the methods adopted to discover the types of lexical items EFL textbooks focused on the most (see Section 3.3.1) and the treatment given to multi-word lexical items (see Section 3.3.2). We are now going to describe the method we used to collect the data which would allow us to answer the last research question regarding the type of grammar teaching in EFL textbooks (i.e. *Is grammar taught from a lexical point of view?*). We were particularly interested in discovering whether the concept of *lexicogrammar* could be found in the three of the EFL textbooks we analysed.

As already mentioned, the concept of *lexicogrammar* represents one of the main principles within the Lexical Approach. At this point we all know that the Lexical Approach is based on a lexical view of language according to which lexis informs language in all its aspects. In his works, Lewis makes clear that grammar is one of them and as such it has to be reconsidered in the light of lexis.

Having said this, he suggests that grammar should not be taught as if it were a set of rules and transformations but that more emphasis should be placed on "word grammar rather than [on] sentence grammar", on *will* rather than on *the future*, on *if* and *would* rather than on *the conditional* etc. (Lewis, 1993: 136, 143)

In this regard, it is worth mentioning Willis's example which we think best illustrates this concept of *lexicogrammar*. Willis claims that the traditional grammar rules and structures of the English language should be replaced by analysing word patterns. For instance, he points out that there is no point in explaining the following three grammar rules, namely that the English infinitive form is preceded by *to*, that the *-ing* form is used after prepositions and that the pronoun *that* can be omitted in some contexts, because in this case the same rules could be drawn from the analysis of the commonest patterns of the word *way* which "occurs with *of* and the *-ing* form of the verb", "with *to* infinitive" and "with a defining relative clause" such as in the following examples (Willis, 1990: VI):

- ...different *ways of cooking* fish;

- A pushchair is a handy *way to take* a young child shopping;
- I don't like *the way he talks.*

According to Lewis, in fact, "individual words, whether lexically powerful (*submarine*) or lexically weak (*take*), have their own grammar" (Lewis, 1993: 137) which, if exploited, can extend students' communicative power in a way that traditional grammar rules would not be able to do (*op. cit.*: 143).

In order to see whether this concept of *lexicogrammar* was implemented in EFL textbooks or not, we decided to focus on ten sentences we found in Lewis's work where he states what grammar is not (*op. cit.*: 133-137). According to him,

1. *grammar is not static or canonical;*
2. *grammar is not prescriptive;*
3. *grammar is not well-defined;*
4. *grammar is not the basis of language or language learning;*
5. *grammar is not the 'correct sentences' of the language;*
6. *grammar is not linearly sequenced or linearly sequenceable;*
7. *grammar is not a set of 'rules';*
8. *grammar is not a set of transformations;*
9. *grammar is not primarily the tense system;*
10. *grammar is not logically distinct from 'vocabulary'.*

As Lewis states, "recognition of these factors suggests a much wider concept of grammar than the traditionally adopted in the teaching of English" (*op. cit.*: 137). Therefore, our purpose was to see whether the three EFL textbooks we analysed recognised these factors or not – if they did so, it would mean that they embraced Lewis's novel view of grammar.

It has to be said, though, that we did not take into account all the ten factors because some of them (i.e. sentences 1, 2, 3 and 6) are quite abstract principles whose presence could not be detected by analysing textbooks. Nevertheless, since these factors are all very much related to each other, recognition of some of them

entails recognition of the others as well. In other words, if the textbook recognised that grammar is not a set of 'rules' and transformations, it would also recognise that grammar is not static or canonical. Therefore, by focusing on six factors, we managed to address the remaining factors as well.

We then further reduced them to three – in fact, we decided to combine sentence 4 with sentence 10 as well as sentence 7 with sentence 9 and sentence 5 with sentence 8 because of their expressing similar concepts. To summarise, we focused on the following factors:

1. *grammar is not the basis of language or language learning and it is not logically distinct from 'vocabulary'* – according to Lewis, "there is little doubt that some grammatical information is useful to students" (Lewis, 1993: 133); however, he also believes that "the pre-eminent role given to grammar is regrettable" (*ibid.*) and should be given to lexis in that the latter "allows us to identify useful grammar" (*op. cit.*: 137) without the need for what Lewis regards as "frequently incomprehensible rules" and "abstract meta-language" (*op. cit.*: 133);

2. *grammar is not a set of 'rules' and it is not primarily the tense system* – by the term 'rules' Lewis means items such as reported speech, conditionals, passives etc. "which have been traditionally (that means over the last 30 years) been considered to be essential to the learning of English" (Lewis, 1993: 135). Lewis regards this view of grammar as "totally distorted, indeed primitive" (*ibid.*). According to him, "over-emphasising the tense system will necessarily lead to an under-emphasis" of other important language items such as sub-sentential and supra-sentential patterns (*op. cit.*: 137). Likewise, Lewis believes that the aforementioned 'rules' "lend themselves to convoluted transformation exercises" (*op. cit.*: 136), which explains why "the Lexical Approach suggests a change of content for grammar teaching" (*op. cit.*: 146);

3. *grammar is not the 'correct sentences' of the language and it is not a set of transformations* – according to Lewis, "traditionally grammar practice is almost exclusively based on productive practices in which the student is required to complete or produce examples of correct English, usually sentences, less frequently whole dialogues, texts or essays" (Lewis, 1993: 157) and it is also based on "meaningless, decontextualised transformation of individual sentences" (*op. cit.*: 156). However, the Lexical Approach grammar practice should be different from the traditional one – it should be process- rather than product-orientated as well as "based predominantly on awareness-raising receptive tasks and activities" (*op. cit.*: 163) because "it is the students' ability to *observe accurately*, and *perceive similarity and difference* within target language data which is most likely to aid the acquisition of the grammatical system" (*op. cit.*: 154).

We therefore thought of three methods we are now going to describe below which enabled us to verify whether the three textbooks recognised each of the three aforementioned factors.

Before describing each method, though, it is important to point out that we analysed only the *Grammar* sections, that is those sections which had not been taken into account previously.

Furthermore, with regard to the number of textbooks we analysed, we decided to focus on the ones we analysed in Section 3.3.2, that is the textbooks with the highest percentage of multi-word lexical items for each level of proficiency (i.e. A2, A2/B1 and B2). We decided to gather data from these three textbooks because we thought that this concept of *lexicogrammar* would be more likely to be found in such textbooks where lexis was given more emphasis than in the others.

In order to verify whether the three EFL textbooks recognised this first factor (i.e. *grammar is not the basis of language or language learning and it is not logically distinct from 'vocabulary'*), we created a table with three categories (i.e. *Grammar Exercises*, *Lexical-Related Exercises*, *Other Exercises*) under which we reported the overall number of grammar exercises, lexical-related exercises and other types of

exercises of each textbook. In so doing, we would be able to verify the role of grammar in the textbooks compared to that of lexical-related exercises.

It has also to be said that some *Grammar* sections of GOLD first were divided into two parts – the section where the grammar content was directly addressed through a series of grammar exercises and a *Speaking* section with only an exercise in it (see exercises *a* and *b* in Table 13 below). With regard to this latter speaking exercise, although it was separated from the other grammar exercises, it was clear that it was linked to the *Grammar* section because, in order to carry out this exercise, the students would have to use the grammar structure such as the future form (see exercise *a* below) or the conditional form (see exercise *b* below) they had been working on in the previous *Grammar* section. Therefore, we decided to include them under the *Grammar Exercises* category as well.

a) Tell your partner one hope, arrangement, intention or prediction for: later today, next weekend, your next holiday, next year (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 61)
b) If you could live twenty-four hours in the life of anyone in history, who would you choose and why? *Example: If I could, I'd be Neil Armstrong in 1969. I'd love to be able to walk on the moon* (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 91)

Table 13. Example of speaking exercises we included under the *Grammar Exercises* category

In order to verify whether the three EFL textbooks recognised the second factor (*grammar is not a set of 'rules' and it is not primarily the tense system*), we created another table where we put "three items within the traditional grammar syllabus" Lewis makes reference to, that is *Reported Speech*, *Conditionals* and the *Passive* (Lewis, 1993: 134)*, together with the *Tense System* (i.e. Present Simple, Present Continuous, Past Simple etc.). Other than these, we also added other types of grammar content we found in the three textbooks such as *Comparatives and Superlatives*, *Modal Verbs*, *Habits in the Past*, *Question Tags*, *Pronouns* (including indefinite, reflexive and relative pronouns), *Adverbs*, *Articles*, *Countable and Uncountable Nouns*, *Modifiers*, *Verb Patterns: -ing/infinitive* and *Others* (i.e. subject/verb agreement, emphasis with *what*, *as* and *like*, hypothetical meaning) for a total of fifteen different types of grammar contents.

The choice of structuring the table in such a way was driven by what we wanted to discover since this categorisation would enable us to identify the types of grammar content per textbook and, in particular, to see whether the items typical of the traditional grammar system Lewis directly addresses and defines as "unhelpful" (*op. cit.*: 135) were present in the textbooks.

With regard to the third factor (i.e. *grammar is not the 'correct sentences' of the language and it is not a set of transformations*), we created another table with the two following categories:

1. *Product-Orientated Activities* where we included all those grammar exercises of the "*Can you do/produce…?*" (Lewis, 1993: 154) *o*r "*Re-write the following sentences using…*" (*op. cit.*: 156) types which emphasise controlled, accurate and productive practice, that is exercises which "see grammar practice as the students *producing* language, usually sentences, for evaluation by the teacher" (*op. cit.*: 153). In other words, exercises which "concentrate on the production of 'correct' sentences" (*op. cit.*: 135) and which often "require students to produce a particular, usually uniquely defined, grammatical structure" (*op. cit.*: 151);

2. *Process-Orientated Activities* where we included all those grammar exercises of the "*Can you see…?*" (Lewis, 1993: 154) type which emphasise receptive and free practice by "making students aware of features of the target language" (*ibid.*) and by making them "observe language before, or as well as, being required to produce it" (*ibid.*).

As in the previous sections, the exercises reported in Table 14 below further exemplifies the type of the ones we included in each category.

Product-Orientated Activities
a) Complete the sentences using the *Past passive* of the verbs in brackets (Bowen and Delaney, 2009: 77) 1. The World Wide Web ………… (not/invent) by Bill Gates. 2. *The Last Supper* ………… (paint) by Leonardo Da Vinci.

3. The Pyramids .... (not/build) by the Romans.
4. *The Four Seasons* concerto .... (compose) by Vivaldi.
5. America .... (not/discover) by Sir Francis Drake.
6. *The Simpsons* cartoon .... (not/create) by Walt Disney.
7. 'Nessun Dorma' .... (sing) by Luciano Pavarotti.
8. Harry Potter .... (not/play) by Rupert Grint in the films.

b) Rewrite the following sentences using the first conditional[16] (Bowen and Delaney, 2009: 111)

1. Don't skateboard on the road. You'll have an accident.
2. Work hard and pass the exam.
3. Don't watch that horror film. You won't sleep very well.
4. Don't eat lots of sweets because you won't have nice teeth.
5. I hope the weather will be good tomorrow because I want to go to the beach.

c) Look at the passive forms underlined in Activity 1 and make them active (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 52)

d) Complete the questions with the verbs in the present simple or present continuous (Hadkins and Lewis, 2014: 26)

1. What .... (you/do) at the moment?
2. What language .... (you/speak) at home?
3. Listen! .... (the phone/ring)?
4. Someone's in the bathroom. .... (Joe/have) a shower?
5. .... (they/watch) TV every day?
6. That smells good. What .... (Lucia/cook) for dinner?

Process-Orientated Activities

d) What's the difference in meaning between these examples? (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 47)

1. **A** The shop sells a few cakes.
   B The shop sells very few cakes.
2. **A** There's a little cheese left.
   B There's very little cheese left.

e) Look at the sentences again (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 64)

1. Write down the time linkers connected to the future.
2. Underline two actions which began before a specific time in the future and will continue after it.
3. Circle two actions which are already over before a specific time in the future.

f) Underline the adverbs in sentences A-D. Then answer the questions (Bell

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16 My translation of the original Italian instructions: "Riscrivi le frasi usando il periodo ipotetico di primo tipo"(Bowen & Delaney, 2009: 111)

and Thomas, 2012: 19)

A) *They will have to work very hard to make their marriage work.*
B) *It could be difficult for them to get on well.*
C) *They are allowed to grow up more slowly.*
D) *It can have hardly any impact on large families.*

Which adverbs are irregular?
Which words can be both an adverb and an adjective?

g) What words can you use instead of *could* for example 2 in Activity 1? (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 61)

Table 14. Examples of exercises classified according to their way of conceiving grammar practice

As in the previous sections, though, there were some exercises (see Table 15 below) whose classification was not always straightforward. We are now going to comment upon some of them.

For instance, in Interact we found a type of grammar exercise (see exercise *a* and *b* in Table 15 below) which was repeated twice in each unit because it was used to introduce the grammar content. Although it required students to choose the correct answer, we decided to put it under the *Process-Orientated Activities* because the students were also asked to look at the examples before – although grammar rules are still present, it is the student who derives them by looking at the examples.

Similarly, other types of exercises where students were only asked to complete the rule (see exercise *c*) were placed under the *Process-Orientated Activities* because of the very fact that students were not simply given a set of rules, but they were asked to complete them, which implies a certain degree of reflection on the part of the students.

Exercise *d* is another type of exercise we classified under the *Process-Orientated Activities*. At first, we were not sure whether to classify it under the said category because it seems to be the typical exercise where it is required to choose the correct option to complete the sentence; however, students are also asked to discuss why, which makes the exercise a process-orientated activity because students have to give their own opinion regarding why they decided to choose the

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present instead of the continuous form, which implies that they have to reflect upon the language itself.

There is another thing to point out regarding the categorisation of some exercises, especially of the speaking exercises we mentioned before (see exercises *a* and *b* in Table 13 above). We decided to place them under the category of the *Product-Orientated Activities* because students simply had to use and produce the grammar features in order to communicate.

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a) Look at the examples and circle the correct words to complete the rules (Hadkins and Lewis, 2014: 84)

*If you **find** a white snake, you'**ll be** lucky.*
*You'**ll have** bad luck **if** you **don't touch** your hair.*

- We use the first conditional to talk about possibilities in the **future/past**.
- We make the first conditional with if + **present simple/infinitive** and will or won't + infinitive **with/without** to.

b) Look at the examples and write the verbs *want* and *finish* in the table (Hadkins and Lewis, 2014: 97)

*After he reached England he **didn't want to stop***.
*She **finished running** in August 2008.*

Verb + *-ing*	Verb + infinitive with *to*
Hate, like, not mind, …	Agree, learn, hope, …

c) Complete the notes (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 64)

- future continuous: *will/may/might* + ……… + *-ing*
- future perfect: *will/may/might* + ……… + ……… participle

d) Look a the sentences and decide whether they should be in the simple or continuous form. Then discuss why (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 10)

1. My son*'s always downloading/always downloads* music instead of getting on with his work.
2. I *work/'m working* overtime this month while the music editor is on sick leave.
3. Someone *plays/'s playing* the piano. Can you hear it?
4. Did you know the band *comes/'s coming* from my home town?
5. I *get/'m getting* better at recognising classical music-
6. I *take/'m taking* my iPod everywhere.

Table 15. Examples of grammar exercises whose classification was not always immediate

Chapter 4 – Results and Discussion

In the previous chapter we illustrated the research questions and we then described the materials and methods we used in order to answer them.

The following chapter is divided into three sections (4.1, 4.2, 4.3) as many as the research questions we are interested in answering and each of these sections is further divided into two parts. The first part of each section (4.1.1, 4.2.1, 4.3.1) contains the results we gathered during the analysis of the textbooks according to the three methods we illustrated in the previous chapter, while the second part (4.1.2, 4.2.2, 4.3.2) focuses on the same results and discusses their implications.

4.1 First Research Question: Types of Lexical Items in Ten EFL Textbooks

In this first section we are going to describe and discuss the results we gathered during our investigation pertaining to the first research question.

4.1.1 Results

As already mentioned in Section 3.3.1, we created a table with six categories which corresponded to different lexical items (*Single Words*, *Phrasal Verbs*, *Collocations*, *Expressions*, *Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items*, *Mixed Lexical Items*) according to which we categorised the lexical-related exercises of each textbook.

As shown in Table 16 below, we added another column (i.e. *Total (a+b+c+d+e+f)*) where we reported the total number of the lexical-related exercises we analysed. For instance, if we look at Mega, the total number of lexical-related exercises we analysed equals to 144, 90 of which deal with single words, 8 with collocations, 34 with expressions and the remaining 12 with more than one type of the just mentioned lexical items. As can be seen by looking at this column (see column *Total (a+b+c+d+e+f)* of Table 16), the total number of lexical-related

exercises differs from textbook to textbook, which is why calculating the percentages was essential in order for us to be able to compare different textbooks.

We also added three *Subtotal* lines where the figures and the average percentages of each category of all the textbooks of the same level were reported so that we would know how a specific category (e.g. *Single Words*) was represented in all the textbooks of that level. As we will see later on, these data proved to be very helpful when we had to compare categories of different levels.

Other than the total number of lexical-related exercises and the subtotal of each category per level, the table below illustrates both the number of exercises which focus on different types of lexical items such as single words, phrasal verbs, collocations etc. and the percentage of the exercises of each category to the total number of the lexical-related exercises analysed. For instance, we could say that in Mega the number of exercises which focus on single words is 90 but we could also say that 62.5% of all the lexical-related exercises we analysed of that textbook are exercises which focus on single words.

It is also important to say that the table was structured in such a way as to ensure that the textbooks were grouped according to their level of proficiency – A2, A2/B1 and B2 (see the black horizontal line which divides the ten textbooks in three groups). Furthermore, as shown in the table below, we highlighted in grey the four categories related to multi-word lexical items (i.e. *Phrasal Verbs*, *Collocations*, *Expressions*, *Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items*) since we were particularly interested in the number of exercises which focused on such lexical items.

		Single Words (a)	Phrasal Verbs (b)	Collocations (c)	Expressions (d)	Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items (e)	Mixed Lexical Items (f)	Total (a+b+c+d+e+f)
Mega	A2	90 62.5%	/	8 5.6%	34 23.6%	/	12 8.3%	144
High Spirits	A2	41 38.3%	/	14 13.1%	42 39.3%	/	10 9.3%	107
Today	A2	91	/	12	49	2	33	187

WOW		**48.7%**		**6.4%**	**26.2%**	**1.1%**	**17.6%**	
Go Live!	*A2*	79 **46.7%**	/	18 **10.7%**	60 **35.5%**	/	12 **7.1%**	169
SUBTOTAL		*301* *49.6%*	*/*	*52* *8.6%*	*185* *30.5%*	*2* *0.3%*	*67* *11%*	*607*
Into English	*A2/B1*	93 **41.2%**	2 **0.9%**	17 **7.5%**	40 **17.7%**	6 **2.7%**	68 **30.1%**	226
Interact	*A2/B1*	142 **64.3%**	1 **0.5%**	13 **5.9%**	50 **22.6%**	2 **0.9%**	13 **5.9%**	221
Cosmic	*B1+*	171 **53.1%**	14 **4.3%**	17 **5.3%**	45 **14%**	8 **2.5%**	67 **20.8%**	322
SUBTOTAL		*406* *52.8%*	*17* *2.2%*	*47* *6.1%*	*135* *17.6%*	*16* *2.1%*	*148* *19.2%*	*769*
Spotlight	*B2*	148 **40.3%**	41 **11.2%**	7 **1.9%**	82 **22.3%**	7 **1.9%**	82 **22.3%**	367
Tell me more	*B2*	26 **33.3%**	12 **15.4%**	8 **10.3%**	7 **9%**	1 **1.3%**	24 **30.8%**	78
GOLD first	*B2*	114 **32%**	25 **7%**	46 **12.9%**	81 **22.8%**	14 **3.9%**	76 **21.3%**	356
SUBTOTAL		*288* *36%*	*78* *9.7%*	*61* *7.6%*	*170* *21.2%*	*22* *2.7%*	*182* *22.7%*	*801*

Table 16. Number and percentage of exercises per category to the total number of the lexical-related exercises analysed per textbook

In order to analyse these data, we have created three graphs as many as the levels of proficiency of the textbooks we analysed where the results of each textbook of the same level have been reported graphically (Graph 1 for A2 textbooks, Graph 2 for A2/B1 textbooks, Graph 3 for B2 textbooks) as a way to help us compare them and see whether all the textbooks of the same level give emphasis to the same categories or not.

We are now going to focus on Graph 1 which reports the results of all the four A2 textbooks (i.e. Mega, High Spirits, Today WOW, Go Live!) and we are going to see how much emphasis is given to each category in each of the four textbooks.

From Graph 1 below, we can see that the lexical-related exercises in all A2 textbooks focus only on the following categories – *Single Words*, *Expressions*, *Mixed Lexical Items* and *Collocations*. Moreover, it can be seen that in all the textbooks

there are far more exercises on single words than on any other type of lexical item except for High Spirits where there are more exercises on expressions (39.3%) than on single words (38.3%).

From the graph below we can also see that the *Expressions* category is the second most frequent one in all the A2 textbooks after the *Single Words* category. Unlike the *Single Words* and *Expressions* categories, we can see that there is some variation between each textbook when it comes to *Collocations* and *Mixed Lexical Items* – in High Spirits and Go Live! there are more exercises on the former (13.1% and 10.7%, respectively) than on the latter (9.3% and 7.1%, respectively), whereas in Mega and Today WOW there are fewer exercises on the former (5.6% and 6.4%, respectively) than on the latter (8.3% and 17.6%, respectively).

As we can see, there are no exercises on phrasal verbs and just two exercises in Today WOW which fall under the *Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items* category (see also Table 16 above).

Graph 1 - Percentages of the six categories to the total number of the lexical-related exercises analysed in the four A2 textbooks
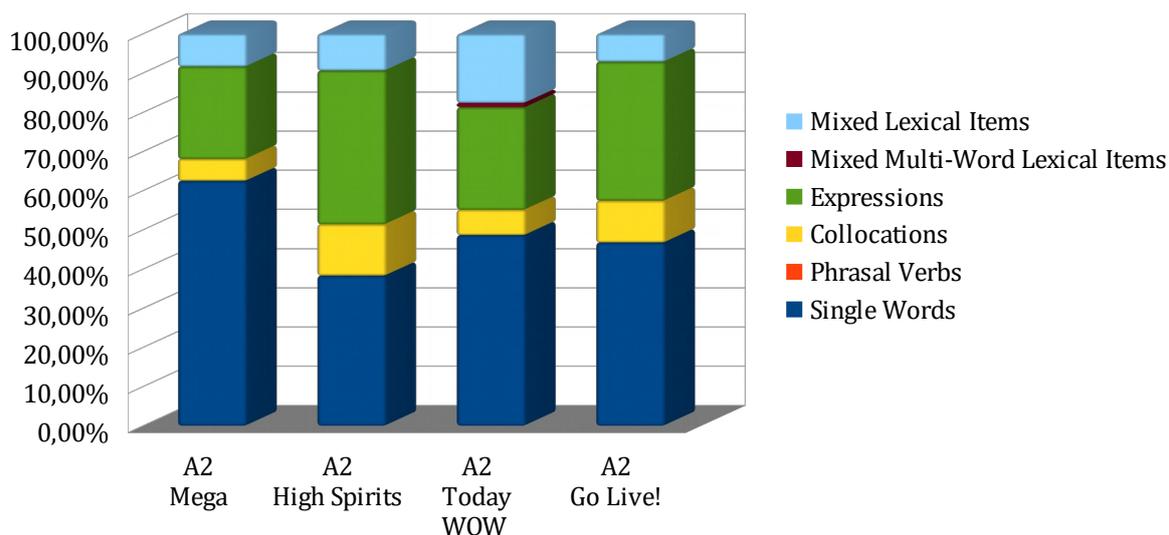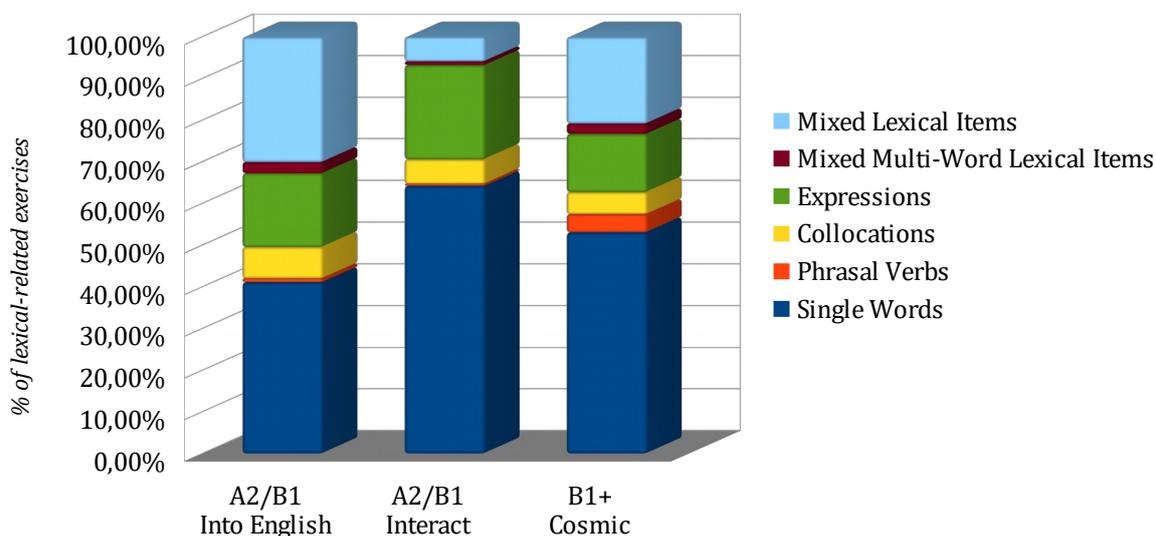

We are now going to analyse the results of A2/B1 textbooks (i.e. Into English, Interact, Cosmic). From the blue parts of the Graph 2 below, we can see that there

is still a majority of exercises in all A2/B1 textbooks which focus on single words. Unlike A2 textbooks, though, in two of the three textbooks analysed (i.e. Into English, Cosmic) the category with the second highest percentage is the *Mixed Lexical Items* category, while in Interact it is the *Expressions* category.

What is more, there is a significant difference in the amount of exercises on phrasal verbs – there is not even 1% of such exercises in Into English and Interact, whereas in Cosmic the percentage value increases to 4.3%. This trend may be due to the fact that, although Cosmic has been grouped with A2/B1 textbooks, it is a B1+ textbook. As for the *Collocations* category, the three textbooks have a similar percentage of exercises on collocations (7.5%, 5.9%, 5.3%).

To conclude, in all the three textbooks there are not so many exercises (2.7%, 0.9%, 2.5%) which focus on more than one type of multi-word lexical item.

Graph 2 - Percentages of the six categories to the total number of the lexical-related exercises analysed in the three A2/B1 textbooks

We are now going to analyse the results of the B2 textbooks (i.e. Spotlight, Tell me more, GOLD first) in Graph 3.

The first thing which stands out by looking at the graph below is that there are still more exercises on single words than on any other type of lexical item as in the previous textbooks. However, the data show a marked improvement in the amount

of exercises dealing with phrasal verbs (11.2%, 15.4%, 7%) which was not detected in the textbooks of the previous levels.

From the graph below we can also see that there are differences in the extent to which each textbook focuses on some lexical items. For instance, in Spotlight only 1.9% of all the lexical-related exercises focuses on collocations, while Tell me more and GOLD first give more emphasis to this type of lexical item (10.3% and 12.9% respectively). The same applies to the exercises on expressions which reach 22.3% and 22.8% in Spotlight and GOLD first but only 9% in Tell me more, meaning that in some textbooks material designers have chosen to focus more on some lexical items which may be different from those in other textbooks of the same level.

Another interesting thing to point out is that if we compare the two mixed categories, the *Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items* category always has lower percentage values (1.9%, 1.3%, 3.9%) than the *Mixed Lexical Items* category (22.3%, 30.8%, 21.3%), meaning that there are very few exercises which focus on more than one type of multi-word lexical item and far more exercises where single words are mixed with one or more than one type of multi-word lexical item.

Graph 3 - Percentages of the six categories to the total number of the lexical-related exercises analysed in the three B2 textbooks
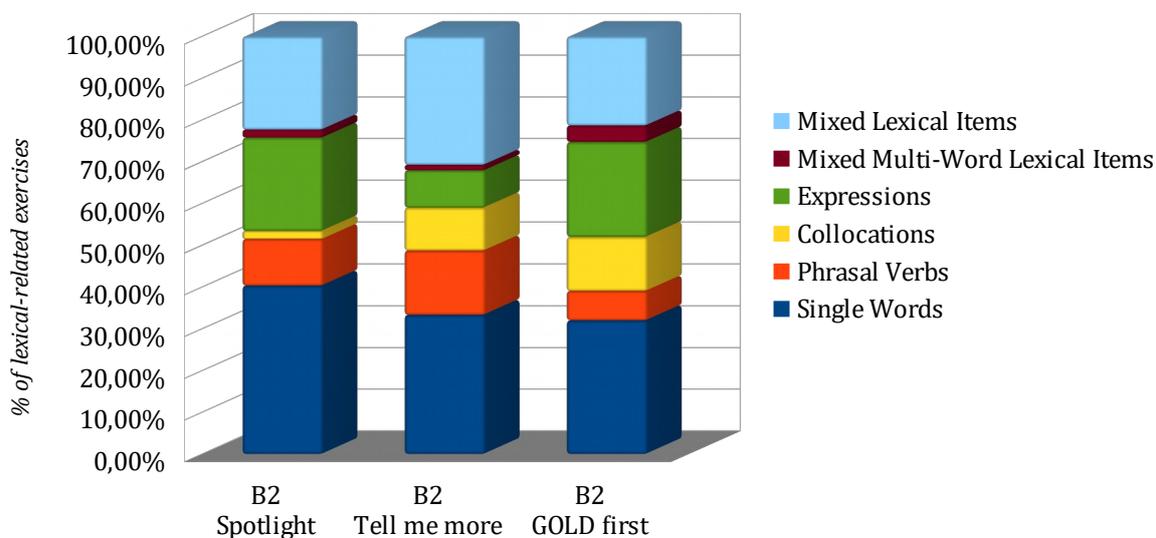
Overall, there are a few general conclusions which can be drawn from the findings we have just commented upon and which will be further explained when analysing the next graph (see Graph 4 below):

- First of all, the *Single Words* category has proved to be the category with the highest percentage in each textbook except for High Spirits where there are more exercises focusing on expressions than on single words;

- Secondly, we have seen that in five textbooks (i.e. Mega, Today WOW, Go Live!, Interact, GOLD first) the category with the second highest percentage is the *Expressions* category, while in other three textbooks (i.e. Into English, Cosmic, Tell me more) the *Mixed Lexical Items* category is the second highest one. As for the textbook Spotlight, the *Expressions* and the *Mixed Lexical-Items* categories share the same percentage (22.3%) which is why they can both be considered as second categories with the highest percentage after the *Single Words* one.

So far we have analysed the figures of the six categories by commenting upon each textbook of the same level. We are now going to focus on how the percentage of each category changes from level to level. To this end, the Graph 4 below will be analysed. The percentages we will refer to correspond to the average percentages of each category per level (see *Subtotal* lines in Table 16).

Graph 4 - Percentages of the six categories per level
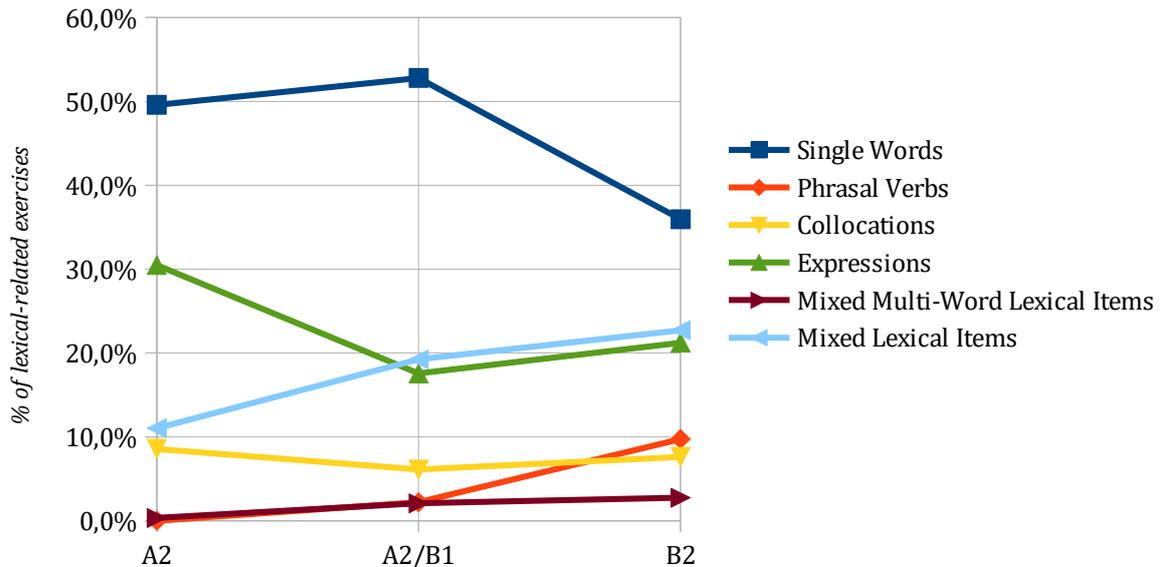
It can be seen from the graph above that 49.6% of all the lexical-related exercises analysed in the A2 textbooks (607) focus on single words. If we continue to follow the blue line, we can see that the *Single Words* category reaches its highest value in the A2/B1 textbooks (52.8%) and then decreases until it reaches its lowest value in the B2 textbooks (36%).

Even though it is the only category with such a downward trend, it is apparent from the graph that it is still the category with the highest percentage in all the levels compared to the other categories. Although its percentage value decreases in the B2 textbooks, there are still more exercises focusing on single words and fewer exercises focusing on the other lexical items. This can well be seen by looking at the blue line which still occupies the highest position despite its being decreased in the B2 textbooks. By comparing the blue line with all the others, in fact, this gap between the *Single Words* category and the other categories stands out clearly.

Unlike the *Single Words* category, we can see that the percentages of the *Phrasal Verbs* (red line), *Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items* (dark red) and *Mixed Lexical Items* (light blue) categories increase as the level increases. For instance, there are no exercises on phrasal verbs in all the A2 textbooks as well as there are almost no

exercises which focus on more than one type of multi-word lexical item (0.3%). Their results slightly increase in the A2/B1 textbooks (2.2% and 2.1%, respectively) until they reach their highest percentage – but still a low one compared to other categories – in the B2 textbooks (9.7% and 2.7%, respectively). As far as the *Mixed Lexical Items* category is concerned, the light blue line shows the same upward trend as the two aforementioned categories – it starts as the category with the third highest percentage in all the A2 textbooks (11%) and it reaches the second position in both the A2/B1 and the B2 textbooks (19.2% and 22.7%, respectively).

As for the *Collocations* and *Expressions* categories, even though there is a significant difference between their percentages which can well be seen from the gap between the green and yellow line, they show a similar trend which is different from that of the other categories – they have a high percentage in the A2 textbooks (8.6% and 30.5%, respectively), which decreases in the A2/B1 textbooks (6.1% and 17.6%, respectively) and then slightly increases in the B2 ones (7.6% and 21.2%, respectively). However, although it increases in the B2 textbooks, the graph and the percentages reveal that there are more exercises on collocations and expression in the A2 textbooks than in the B2 textbooks.

From the graph above it is also apparent that *Phrasal Verbs* (2.2%, 9.7%), *Collocations* (8.6%, 6.1%, 7.6%) and *Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items* (0.3%, 2.1%, 2.7%) are the categories with lower percentages compared to *Single Words* (49.6%, 52.8%, 36%), *Expressions* (30.5%, 17.6%, 21.2%) and *Mixed Lexical Items* (11%, 19.2%, 22.7%).

Although the percentages of each category does vary from level to level (e.g. the average percentage of exercises on single words varies from 52.8% in the A2/B1 textbooks to 36% in the B2 textbooks), the percentages of the former three categories never go beyond 9.7% while those of the latter three categories only go from 11% onwards, which leads us to conclude that there are more exercises which fall under the categories of *Single Words*, *Expressions* and *Mixed Lexical Items* and

fewer exercises which fall under the categories of *Phrasal Verbs*, *Collocations* and *Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items* throughout all the levels.

Moreover, it is interesting to notice that the *Expressions* category is the only category among the ones which focus exclusively on multi-word lexical items (i.e. *Phrasal Verbs*, *Collocations*, *Expressions*, *Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items*) to be present to a greater extent in all the levels (30.5%, 17.6%, 21.2%). Apart from exercises on expressions, there is also a good percentage of exercises which fall under the *Mixed Lexical Items* category which, as we know from Section 3.3.1, test the students' knowledge on both single and multi-word lexical items. This means that it is more likely to find multi-word lexical items mixed with single words than it is to find exercises which focus directly on one type of multi-word lexical item.

Another interesting thing to point out concerns the types of multi-word lexical items because not all the three levels give the same emphasis to the same categories. For instance, in the A2 textbooks the exercises focus only on two types of multi-word lexical items, that is expressions and collocations, whereas in the B2 textbooks there are fewer exercises on these two types of multi-word lexical items but, on the other hand, more focus is given to other types of lexical phrases such as phrasal verbs and mixed exercises which combine different multi-word lexical items, meaning that in the higher levels the exercises on multi-word lexical items become more varied than in the lower levels.

Now that we have analysed how each category develops throughout the levels, we are interested in discovering how much emphasis is given to multi-word lexical items as opposed to single words throughout the levels. In order to do so, we simply grouped together all the categories on multi-word lexical items (i.e. *Phrasal Verbs*, *Collocations*, *Expressions* and *Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items*) with the exception of the *Mixed Lexical Items* category which focuses on both single and multi-word lexical items and then we created Graph 5 below.

Graph 5 - Percentages of all the categories on multi-word lexical items compared to the Single Words and the Mixed Lexical Items cateogories per level
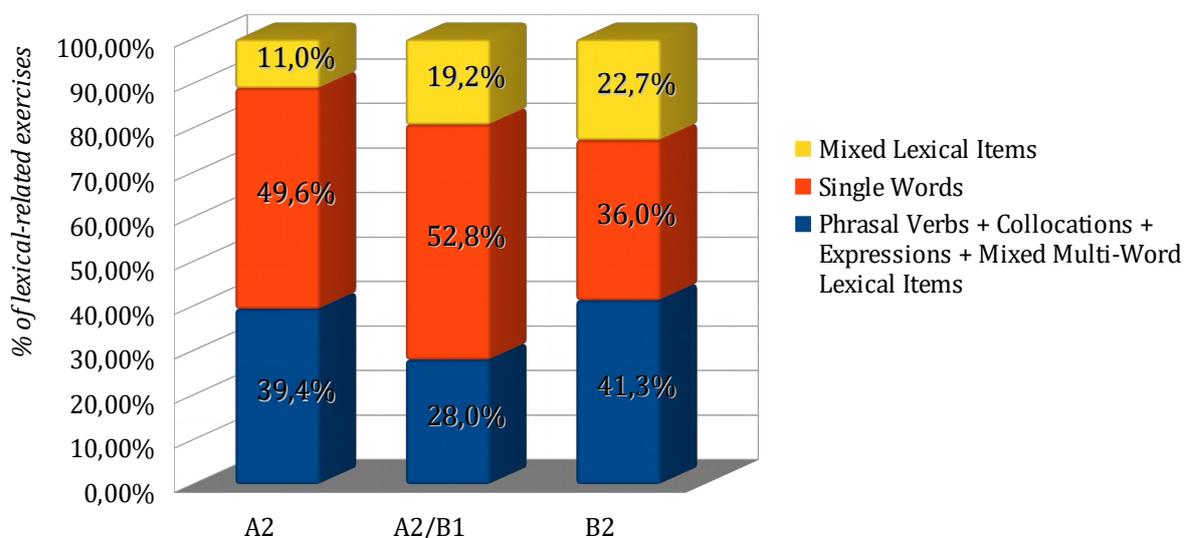

As far as the first two levels are concerned, the graph reveals what has been revealed before, namely that the *Single Words* category is by far the most frequent category in the first two levels – 49.6% and 52.8% of all the lexical-related exercises we analysed in the A2 and A2/B1 textbooks deal with single words. With regard to B2 textbooks, the graph shows that exercises on single words occupy only 36% of all their lexical-related exercises. The percentage decreases because the number of exercises on multi-word lexical items increases as well as the number of exercises on both single and multi-word lexical items. In fact, if we look at the *Mixed Lexical Items* category, we can see that the higher the level becomes, the more exercises which fall under this category there are.

If we take a closer look at Graph 6 below, we can see how much emphasis each textbook gives to multi-word lexical items. The graph shows that the majority of the textbooks (i.e. Mega, Today WOW, Go Live!, Into English, Interact, Cosmic, Spotlight) have more exercises on single words whereas only three textbooks (i.e. High Spirits, Tell me more, GOLD first) focus more on multi-word lexical items.

Moreover, Graph 6 shows us two exceptions we could not detect by looking at Graph 5. It shows us that there might be textbooks of lower levels (e.g. High Spirits)

which focus more on multi-word lexical items (52,3%) than on single words (38,3%) but also textbooks of higher levels (e.g. Spotlight) where there are slightly more exercises on single words (40.3%) than on multi-word lexical items (37.3%).

Graph 6 - Percentages of all the categories on multi-word lexical items compared to the Single Words and Mixed Lexical Items categories per textbook
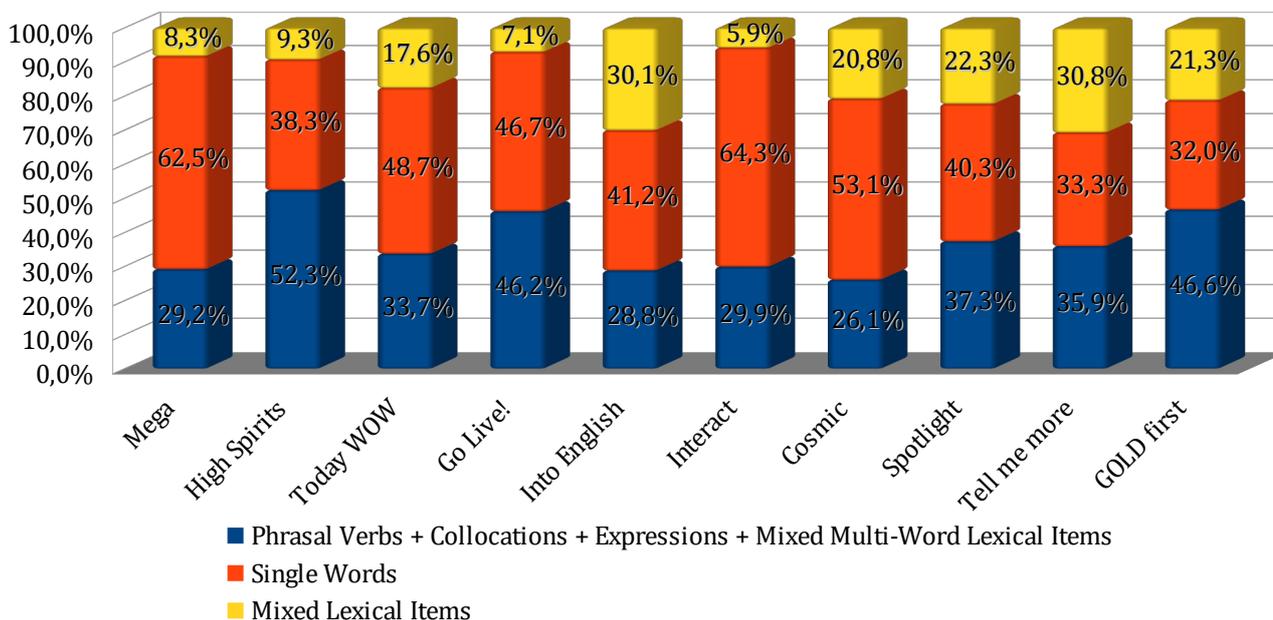
To conclude, as far as the exercises on multi-word lexical items are concerned, the two graphs above show an irregular trend – we expected the exercises on lexical phrases to increase as the *Mixed Lexical Items* category but they do not. Contrary to what we expected, in fact, there seem to be fewer exercises on multi-word lexical items in the A2/B1 level than in the lower A2 level.

After analysing Table 16 where the percentages were calculated to the total number of the lexical-related exercises, we thought that it would be also interesting to calculate the percentages of each category to the total number of all the exercises per textbook in order to see how much emphasis was given to both each category and all the lexical-related exercises (see column *Total 1 (a+b+c+d+e+f)* in

Table 17 below) compared to other types of exercises a textbook normally includes such as grammatical or comprehension exercises.

We thus counted all the exercises of each textbook (i.e. 635, 478, 701, 752 etc.) which were then used to calculate the percentages of each category. That being said, Table 17 is very similar to Table 16 we have just commented upon except for two main differences – the figures listed in the last column (i.e. *Total 2 (a+b+c+d+e+f+…)*) and consequently the percentages of each category.

From Table 16 above we have seen that the total number of lexical-related exercises we analysed differed from textbook to textbook (i.e. 144, 107, 187 etc.). As the last column of Table 17 illustrates (i.e. 635, 478, 701 etc.), the same applies to the total number of exercises.

Unlike the figures in the column *Total 1* of the table below, though, the column *Total 2* provides the figures of the total number of exercises of each textbook, namely the total number of lexical-related exercises (see column *Total 1* below) plus all the remaining non lexical-related exercises.

As already said, these figures enabled us to calculate the percentage of each category to the total number of exercises per textbook – if we take Mega as an example, we can say that 14.2% of all the exercises of this textbook focuses on single words, while only 1.3% on collocations.

		Single Words (a)	Phrasal Verbs (b)	Colloca tions (c)	Express ions (d)	Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items (e)	Mixed Lexical Items (f)	Total 1 (a+b+c+d+e+f)	Total 2 (a+b+c+d+e+f+…)
Mega	A2	90 **14.2%**	/	8 **1.3%**	34 **5.4%**	/	12 **1.9%**	144 **22.7%**	635
High Spirits	A2	41 **8.6%**	/	14 **2.9%**	42 **8.8%**	/	10 **2.1%**	107 **22.4%**	478
Today WOW	A2	91 **13%**	/	12 **1.7%**	49 **7%**	2 **0.3%**	33 **4.7%**	187 **26.7%**	701
Go Live!	A2	79 **10.5%**	/	18 **2.4%**	60 **8%**	/	12 **1.6%**	169 **22.5%**	752
SUBTOTAL		*301*	*/*	*52*	*185*	*2*	*67*	*607*	*2566*

		11.7%		2%	7.2%	0.1%	2.6%	23.7%	
Into English	A2/B1	93 10%	2 0.2%	17 1.8%	40 4.3%	6 0.6%	68 7.3%	226 24.3%	930
Interact	A2/B1	142 14.6%	1 0.1%	13 1.3%	50 5.1%	2 0.2%	13 1.3%	221 22.8%	971
Cosmic	B1+	171 25.7%	14 2.1%	17 2.6%	45 6.8%	8 1.2%	67 10.1%	322 48.4%	665
SUBTOTAL		406 15.8%	17 0.7%	47 1.8%	135 5.3%	16 0.6%	148 5.8%	769 30%	2566
Spotlight	B2	148 14.1%	41 3.9%	7 0.7%	82 7.8%	7 0.7%	82 7.8%	367 34.9%	1053
Tell me more	B2	26 5%	12 2.3%	8 1.5%	7 1.3%	1 0.2%	24 4.6%	78 14.9%	525
GOLD first	B2	114 11.2%	25 2.5%	46 4.5%	81 8%	14 1.4%	76 7.5%	356 35.2%	1015
SUBTOTAL		288 11.1%	78 3%	61 2.4%	170 6.6%	22 0.8%	182 7%	801 30.9%	2593

Table 17. Number and percentage of the exercises per category to the total number of exercises per textbook

As can be seen from the table above, the percentage values of each category are lower compared to those we analysed in Table 16. This is due to the fact that they were calculated to the total number of all the exercises of each textbook.

In order to analyse the data of the table, we are going to analyse Graph 7 below which shows the percentage of all the lexical-related exercises (i.e. *Single Words*, *Phrasal Verbs*, *Collocations*, *Expressions*, *Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items* and *Mixed Lexical Items*) to the total number of exercises per textbook. The textbooks are ordered according to their level of proficiency, that is from A2 to B2 level.

**Graph 7 - Percentages of all the lexical-related exercises
to the total number of exercises per textbook**
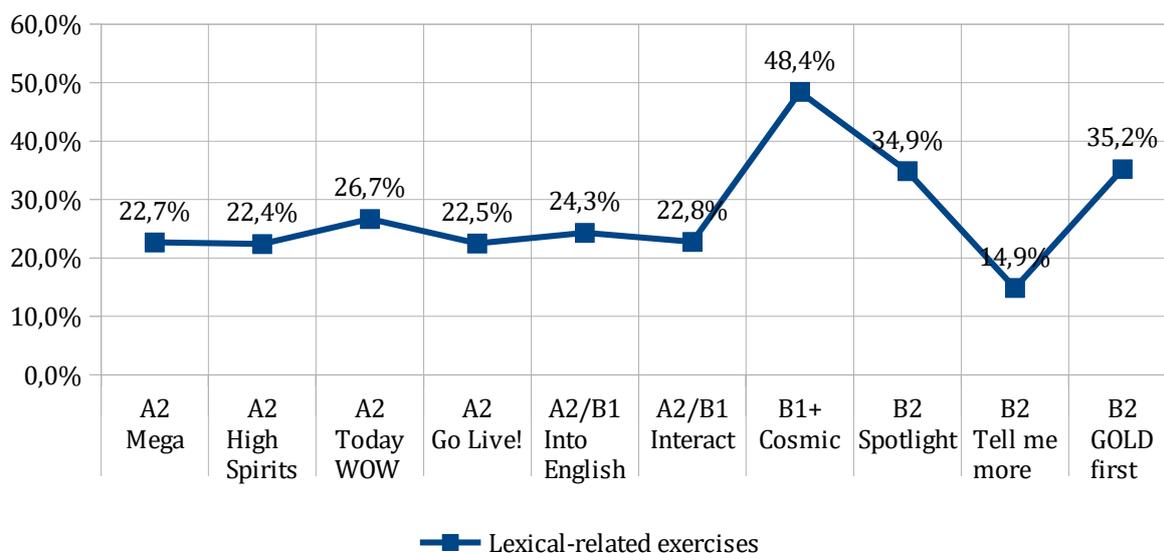
As can be seen from the graph above, the first six textbooks have similar percentages (22.7%, 22.4%, 26.7%, 22.5%, 24.3%, 22.8%), meaning that there is not a huge difference between all the A2 textbooks (i.e. Mega, High Spirits, Today WOW, Go Live!) and two of the three A2/B1 textbooks (i.e. Into English, Interact) in terms of space given to lexical-related exercises.

The blue line then increases until it reaches its highest value in Cosmic where almost half (48.4%) of all its exercises are lexical-related exercises. In this regard, it has to be said that we included Cosmic in the group of A2/B1 textbooks even though its level of proficiency corresponds to a B1+ level, which may explain why its percentage value changes so much compared to those of the two textbooks of the same group.

Interestingly, two of the B2 textbooks (i.e. Spotlight and GOLD first) have lower percentages of lexical-related exercises than Cosmic but higher percentages than the first six textbooks. With regard to Tell me more, the graph shows that it has the lowest percentage value – only 14.9% of all its exercises deal with lexis.

By looking at Graph 8 below where the same data of Graph 7 are ranked in ascending order, we can see that the amount of lexical-related exercises does

increase as the level increases because three of the A2 textbooks (High Spirits, Go Live! and Mega) are followed by the two A2/B1 textbooks (Interact, Into English) which are in turn followed by two of the B2 textbooks (Spotlight, GOLD first).

However, there are three exceptions to this upward trend which are represented by Tell me more, Today WOW and Cosmic (see red squares in Graph 8 below) – even though Tell me more is a B2 textbook, it is the textbook with the lowest percentage; Today WOW, which is an A2 textbook, has more exercises on lexis than the two A2/B1 textbooks; lastly, Cosmic has the highest percentage even though it is a B1+ textbook.

Graph 8 - Percentages of all the lexical-related exercises to the total number of exercises per textbook ranked in ascendant order
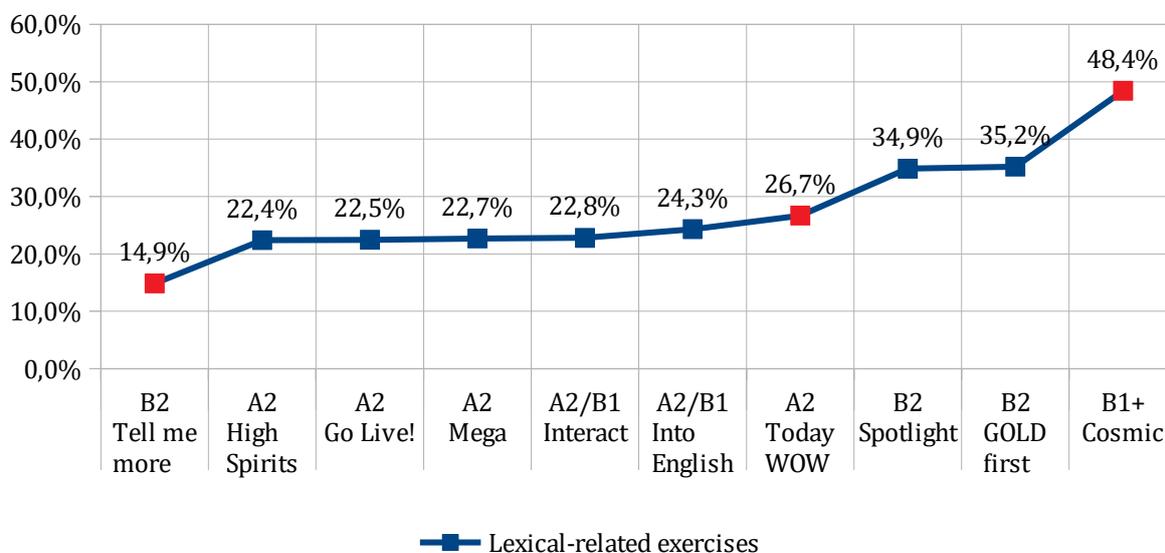

Despite these three exceptions, if we look at Graph 9 below where the average percentages of the lexical-related exercises per level are presented, it can be seen that the higher the level becomes the more lexical-related exercises there are, regardless of the type of lexical items they focus on.

Despite this upward trend, though, it is interesting to notice that none of the percentages of the three levels are high enough. Even though the percentage of B2 textbooks is the highest one (30.9%) compared to those of A2 (23.7%) and A2/B1

textbooks (30%), it is still quite low because it entails that the remaining 69.1% of all the exercises of the B2 textbooks focuses on non lexical-related items.

Therefore, the graph below illustrates that the space dedicated to lexis increases as the level increases. At the same time, though, given the low percentage values, it shows that lexical-related exercises correspond to less than one third of all the exercises in each level, meaning that lexis appears to be still underrated in many of the textbooks analysed.

Graph 9 - Percentages of all the lexical-related exercises to the total number of exercises per level
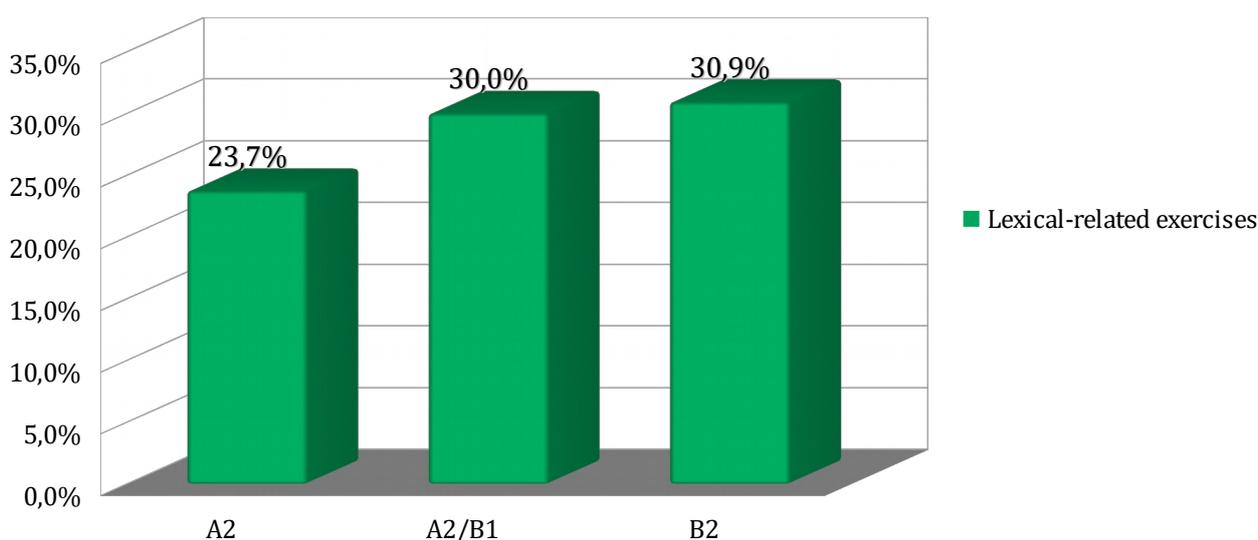
In the next section we are going to focus on the implications of such results with the aim of answering the first research question.

4.1.2 Discussion

In this section we are going to comment upon the data we have presented in the previous section and we are going to draw some implications from them in order to answer our first research question – what types of lexical items do EFL textbooks focus on?

By answering this question, we want to discover whether one of the main principles of the Lexical Approach is applied or not. As we know from Section 1.1.2,

in fact, the Lexical Approach distinguishes between single words and lexical phrases such as phrasal verbs, collocations and expressions and it gives to the latter much more relevance than to single words – according to Lewis, lexical phrases "form an important constituent of a programme based on the Lexical Approach" (Lewis, 1993: 19). Therefore, by identifying how many exercises there were on the aforementioned types of lexical items (i.e. single words and lexical phrases), we can now conclude if the EFL textbooks we analysed do include lexical phrases and therefore if they adopt at least one of the principles of the Lexical Approach.

First of all, the data suggest that less (14.9%, 22.4%, 22.5%, 22.7%, 22.8%, 24.3%, 26.7%) or little more than one third (34.9%, 35.2%) of all the exercises of the majority of the textbooks we analysed are lexical-related exercises, which means that there are other language items which are thought to deserve more attention than lexis. The only exception is represented by Cosmic where almost half (48.4%) of all its exercises concerns lexis.

This finding suggests that at least nine of the ten textbooks we analysed do not support the central role of lexis the Lexical Approach is based upon – had they upheld Lewis's perception of language as intrinsically lexical, we would have found a greater number of lexical-related exercises than those we actually found. Moreover, the little attention given to lexis in almost all the textbooks provides further support that vocabulary learning is still thought to take care for itself.

It has to be said, though, that the amount of lexical-related exercises can only give us a hint at whether the Lexical Approach is implemented or not because it tells us nothing about the types of lexical items addressed. In order to answer our research question, in fact, it is important to know the types of lexical items these few lexical-related exercises focus on – if all the few aforementioned exercises on lexis had only focused on lexical phrases, it would have been good news because it would have meant that lexical phrases were chosen over single words; however, this was not the case.

The data show that the majority of the lexical-related exercises in all A2 and A2/B1 textbooks – except for High Spirits – are predominantly on single words and only a small fraction of them on multi-word lexical items (i.e. phrasal verbs, collocations and expressions).

On the contrary, in all B2 textbooks – except for Spotlight – the exercises on multi-word lexical items outnumber those on single words, even though there are still many exercises on single words (see Graph 6 in Section 4.1.1).

Furthermore, other than the two aforementioned types of exercises on single words and on multi-word lexical items, the data illustrate that there is also another type of exercise which falls under the *Mixed Lexical Items* category whose percentage increases as the level increases. Since the exercises which fall under this mixed category are exercises which combine single words with multi-word lexical items, their results cannot condition the trend of either single words or multi-word lexical items.

A possible explanation for the difference between lower (i.e. A2 and A2/B1 levels) and higher levels (B2 level) in terms of relevance given to multi-word lexical items might be due to the fact that beginner language learners are thought to need to learn a certain amount of single words before being introduced to multi-word lexical items, as if they did not have enough lexical knowledge to be able to deal with the latter. This might explain why there are more exercises on different types of lexical phrases in B2 textbooks. In fact, the observed increase in the percentage of exercises on lexical phrases in B2 textbooks could be attributed to their being thought for more advanced learners who already have a good vocabulary knowledge.

Such a difference between textbooks of lower and higher levels can also be observed in the diverse use of the terminology. For instance, in A2 textbooks there are only few terms which are used to describe lexical items (i.e. 'word', 'phrase') as opposed to the several ones (i.e. 'collocation', 'idiom', 'expression', 'phrasal verb' etc.) in both B1+ and B2 textbooks. This seems to provide further support for our

hypothesis that lexical phrases tend to be associated to higher levels probably because of their being considered more complicated than single words.

It is also interesting to notice that, if we take into account separately the percentages of exercises which focus on every single type of multi-word lexical item (i.e. exercises on phrasal verbs, collocations and expressions), the data show that none of them have the same amount of exercises as the ones on single words in all textbooks of all levels except for High Spirits. Therefore, although B2 textbooks present more exercises on multi-word lexical items in general, if we compare the percentage of exercises on phrasal verbs, collocations or expressions with the ones on single words, there are still more exercises on single words (see Graph 3 in Section 4.1.1).

As far as the A2/B1 textbooks are concerned, it is difficult to explain why such textbooks have a higher percentage of exercises on single words (52.8%) and a lower percentage of exercises on multi-word lexical items (28%) compared to A2 textbooks (49.6% and 39.4%, respectively). So far we have explained that the more the level increases the more exercises on lexical phrases and the fewer exercises on single words we would expect to find. Therefore, since the A2/B1 level is slightly higher than the A2 level, we would have expected A2/B1 textbooks to have more exercises on multi-word lexical items and fewer exercises on single words; however, as already said, it happens the opposite. This unexpected result is difficult to be related to anything if not to the choices of the material designers.

Furthermore, it is interesting to analyse more in particular the types of multi-word lexical items (i.e. phrasal verbs, collocations and expressions). As far as phrasal verbs are concerned, the data show that there is a significant difference between textbooks of different levels, especially between A2 and B2 textbooks – in fact, exercises on phrasal verbs are practically non-existent in A2 and A2/B1 textbooks but they can be found in textbooks of the highest level, that is in four textbooks out of ten (i.e. Cosmic, Spotlight, Tell me more, GOLD first). However, although phrasal verbs can be found in B2 textbooks, they are one of the least treated multi-word lexical items together with collocations (see Graph 4 in Section

4.1.1). In fact, expressions can be considered the only one among all the types of multi-word lexical items to be present to a considerable extent in all the textbooks (see Graph 4 in Section 4.1.1). A possible explanation of this might be due to what Lewis refers to as "the influence of pragmatics"(Lewis, 1993: 107). He says that "when the influence of pragmatics was felt in language teaching, functions became a familiar term to teachers. As a result *Would you like...?* was re-identified as *Offering*; its re-identification allowed it to be re-valued, and re-placed, much earlier in courses" (*ibid.*), which could explain why in the A2 textbooks 30.5% of all the lexical-related exercises concerns expressions.

To summarise, what types of lexical items do EFL textbooks focus on? EFL textbooks focus on both single words and lexical phrases. However, there is a difference between textbooks of different levels – the A2 and A2/B1 textbooks focus more on single words, while B2 textbooks focus more on lexical phrases, even though there is still a good percentage of exercises on single words in the B2 textbooks as well.

Hence, to conclude, it can be said that the EFL textbooks we analysed do not adopt one of the main principles at the basis of the Lexical Approach which says that "lexical items rather than words and structures [should be taken] as the units of language" (*op. cit.*: VIII).

4.2 Second Research Question: Treatment of Multi-Word Lexical Items in Three of the Ten EFL Textbooks Analysed

In the previous section we have analysed all the exercises related to lexis in order to see the focus given to different types of lexical items. In this section we are going to focus on multi-word lexical items and we are going to see how they are treated in three of the ten EFL textbooks we analysed in the previous section.

4.2.1 Results

As already mentioned in Section 3.3.2, we selected one textbook for each level for a total of three textbooks to be analysed – High Spirits for A2 level, Interact for A2/B1 level and GOLD first for B2 level.

The rationale behind the selection of the three textbooks was the percentage of exercises on multi-word lexical items. As shown in Graph 10 below (see red squares), High Spirits is the A2 textbook with the highest percentage of exercises on multi-word lexical items (52.3%) compared to the percentages of all the other A2 textbooks (29.2%, 33.7% and 46.2%). The same applies to Interact and GOLD first where there are more exercises on multi-word lexical items (29.9% and 46.6%, respectively) compared to the percentages of all the other A2/B1 (28.8% and 26.1%) and B2 textbooks (37.3% and 35.9%), respectively.

Graph 10 - Percentages of exercises on multi-word lexical items to the total number of lexical-related exercises analysed
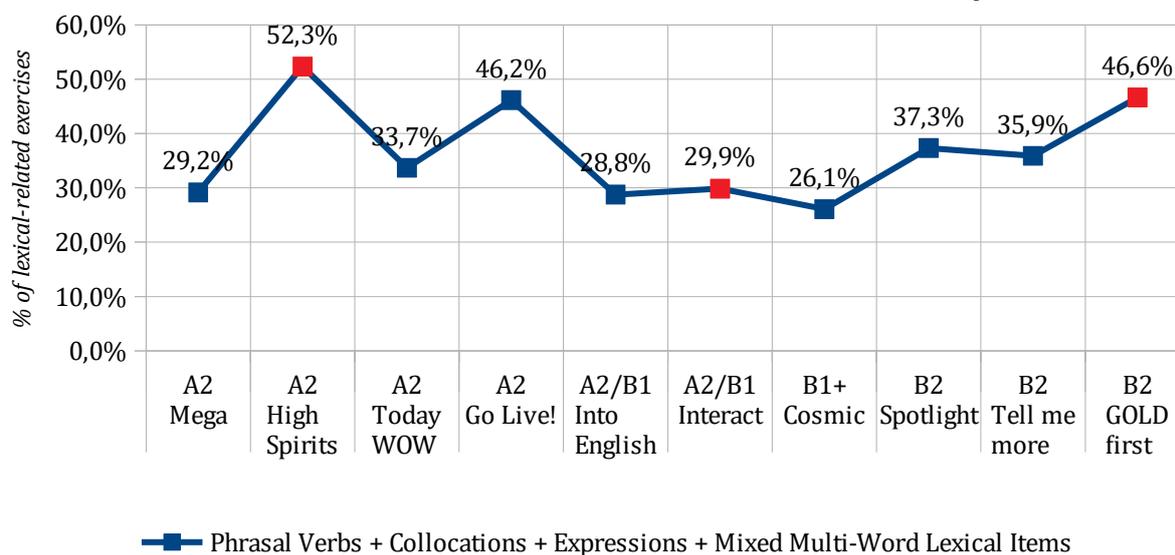
Furthermore, it is important to point out that, since we were interested in seeing how the multi-word lexical items were treated in these textbooks, we did not take into account the exercises which fall under the *Single Words* and *Mixed Lexical Items* categories but only the ones which focused exclusively on multi-word lexical

items, that is those exercises which fell under the *Phrasal Verbs*, *Collocations*, *Expressions* and *Mixed Multi-Word Lexical Items* categories (see grey columns in Table 16 and 17 in Section 4.1.1).

As described in Section 3.3.2, we created a table with two categories (i.e. *Consciousness-Raising Activities* and *Non Consciousness-Raising Activities*) according to which we classified all the exercises on multi-word lexical items of the three textbooks. We also added another column (i.e. see column *Total* in Table 18) where we reported the total number of exercises on multi-word lexical items, which we used to calculate the percentage of each category per textbook. In fact, since the total number of exercises on multi-word lexical items varies from textbook to textbook, the percentages are the only figures we can rely upon in order to compare the two categories of the three textbooks.
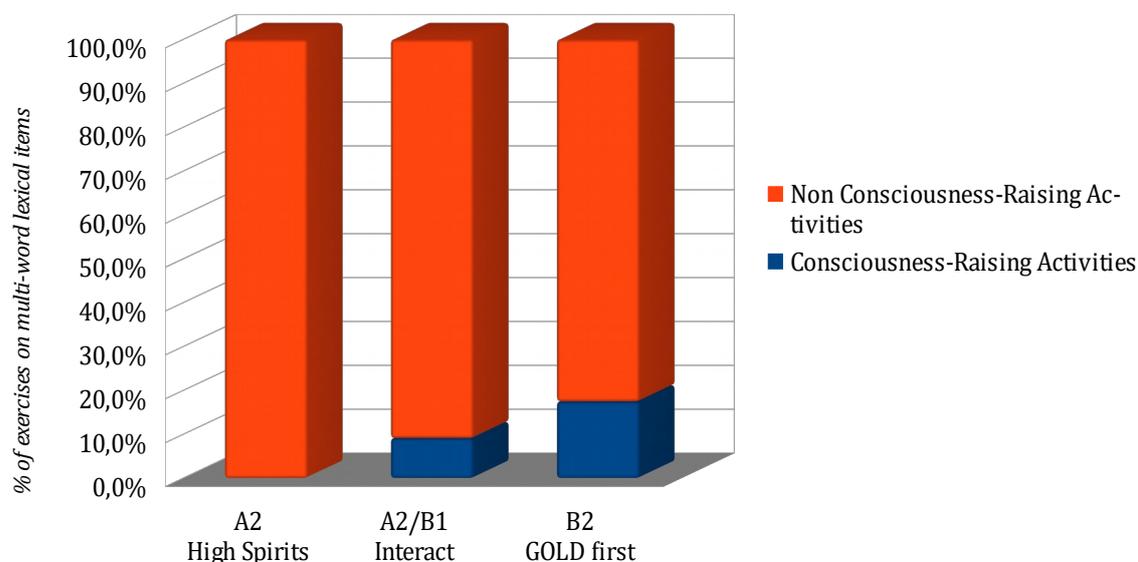
		Consciousness-Raising Activities	Non Consciousness-Raising Activities	Total
High Spirits	A2	/ 0%	56 100%	56
Interact	A2/B1	6 9.1%	60 90.9%	66
GOLD first	B2	29 17.5%	137 82.5%	166
SUBTOTAL		35 12.2%	253 87.8%	288

Table 18. Number and percentage of the exercises on multi-word lexical items per category to the total number of exercises of each textbook

In order to analyse these data, we are going to focus on Graph 11 below where the same percentages of Table 18 have been reported in order for us to visualise them better.

By looking at the graph below, we can see how the percentage of each category changes in the three textbooks. Furthermore, since the three textbooks correspond to three different levels (A2, A2/B1 and B2), the graph also tells us how each category changes throughout the three levels.

Graph 11 - Percentages of consciousness and non consciousness-raising activities to the total number of exercises on multi-word lexical items per textbook

As far as High Spirits is concerned, the graph shows that all its exercises which focus on multi-word lexical items are non consciousness-raising activities. Therefore, it can be said that, even though it is the A2 textbook with the highest percentage of exercises on lexical phrases, the way such lexical phrases are treated does not seem to raise the students' awareness of them.

With regard to Interact, it can be seen that 90.9% of all its exercises are non consciousness-raising activities and that the percentage of consciousness-raising activities stands at 9.1%.

As for GOLD first, the graph shows that there are more consciousness-raising activities (17.5%) compared to the ones in the two previous textbooks (0% and 9.1%). Nevertheless, this percentage value is still very low in that it represents less than one fifth (17.5%) of all the exercises on multi-word lexical items we analysed in this textbook. In fact, it can be seen that the remaining 82.5% of the exercises are non consciousness-raising activities.

We can therefore conclude that the number of consciousness-raising activities does increase throughout the levels (0%, 9.1% and 17.5%). Despite this upward trend, however, the gap between the two types of activities is always wide, meaning

that there are far more non consciousness-raising activities than consciousness-raising ones in all the three textbooks, regardless of their level of proficiency.

Now that we have analysed the data of all the exercises on multi-word lexical items on the basis of their being consciousness or non consciousness-raising activities, we thought that it would be interesting to take a closer look at those exercises we were most interested in, that is the ones we included under the category of the *Consciousness-Raising Activities*.

As already mentioned in Section 3.3.2, consciousness-raising activities differ from non consciousness-raising ones in that they allow students to be more actively engaged in the carrying out of the exercise. However, there are several ways in which an exercise can raise students' awareness of lexical phrases. In particular, by examining all the 35 consciousness-raising activities of Interact and GOLD first, we detected six different types of such activities which can be summarised as follows:

1. exercises where students have to underline lexical phrases in a given text (see exercise *a* in Table 19 below);

2. exercises where students have to categorise lexical phrases according to some lexical features (e.g. formal or informal language) they have in common (see exercise *b* in Table 19 below);

3. exercises which raise students' awareness by making them use the dictionary (see exercise *c* in Table 19 below);

4. exercises where it is required to make cross-language comparisons (see exercises *d* in Table 19 below);

5. exercises where students are asked to draw from their own knowledge of the language and add as many lexical phrases as they know to the exercise (see exercise *e* in Table 19 below);

6. and lastly, exercises where students are asked to answer questions whose purpose is to draw their attention towards a specific lexical phrase in order for them to notice it and reflect upon it (see exercise *f* in Table 19 below).

a) Read what students said in answer to a discussion question. Underline where the student (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 84):

1. gives examples (find four examples)
2. tries to include the other candidate in the discussion (find three examples)
3. uses phrases for agreeing and disagreeing (find three examples)

b) Which of the words (*the difference, a joke, lies, rubbish, (someone) a secret, sense, a story, the truth, to yourself*) go with *tell* or *talk*? Copy and complete the table below (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 141)

c) Would you use *make* or *take*? Complete the following sentences and check in the dictionary if you have chosen the correct verb. Then make a list of all the *collocations* you know with *make* and *take*. Write some example to remember how they are used. (Hadkins and Lewis, 2014: 154)[17]

1. We need to .... *plans* for our holiday in August.
2. We've worked for three hours. It's time to .... *a break*.
3. Shh! Don't .... *a noise* when you come in.
4. You can .... *money* in this job if you work hard.
5. .... this *medicine* three times a day.
6. Let's .... *a walk* along the beach.
7. It's OK, you don't need to hurry. .... *your time*!
8. .... *a list* of the things you need.

d) Which of the expressions in Activity 8 are similar to expressions in your language? (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 73)

e) Work in pairs and think of as many other useful expressions as you can for each category (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 133)

f) Which answers in Activity 4 depend on you knowing (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 134)

1. whether the verb can be used with a particular preposition?
2. a fixed phrase

Table 19. Examples of exercises we included under the *Underline* (a), *Categorise* (b), *Dictionary* (c), *Cross-Language Comparison* (d), *Students' Knowledge* (e) and *Notice/Hypothesise* (f) categories.

Once we identified these six types of consciousness-raising activities which draw the students' attention towards lexical phrases in different ways, we decided to create a table with six categories as many as the types of consciousness-raising

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17 My translation of the original Italian instructions: "Nelle seguenti frasi si usa *make* o *take*? Completale, poi controlla sul dizionario. Fai una lista sul quaderno di tutte le *collocations* con *make* e *take* che conosci. Scrivi degli esempi per ricordare come si usano queste espressioni" (Hadkins & Lewis, 2014: 154)

activities we have just illustrated (i.e. *Dictionary, Cross-Language Comparison, Students' Knowledge, Underline, Categorise, Notice/Hypothesise*).

As shown in Table 20 below, we used the six categories to classify all the 35 consciousness-raising activities (6 from Interact and 29 from GOLD first).

	Dictionary	Cross-Language Comparison	Students' Knowledge	Underline	Categorise	Notice Hypothesise
Consciousness-Raising Activities	3 **8.6%**	3 **8.6%**	3 **8.6%**	9 **25.7%**	12 **34.3%**	5 **14.3%**
TOTAL	35					

Table 20. Number and percentage of different types of consciousness-raising activities

We are now going to comment upon the data reported in Graph 12 below which show the same percentages of Table 20 above ranked in ascendant order.

**Graph 12 - Percentages of different types of C-R activities
to the total number of C-R activities ranked in ascendant order**
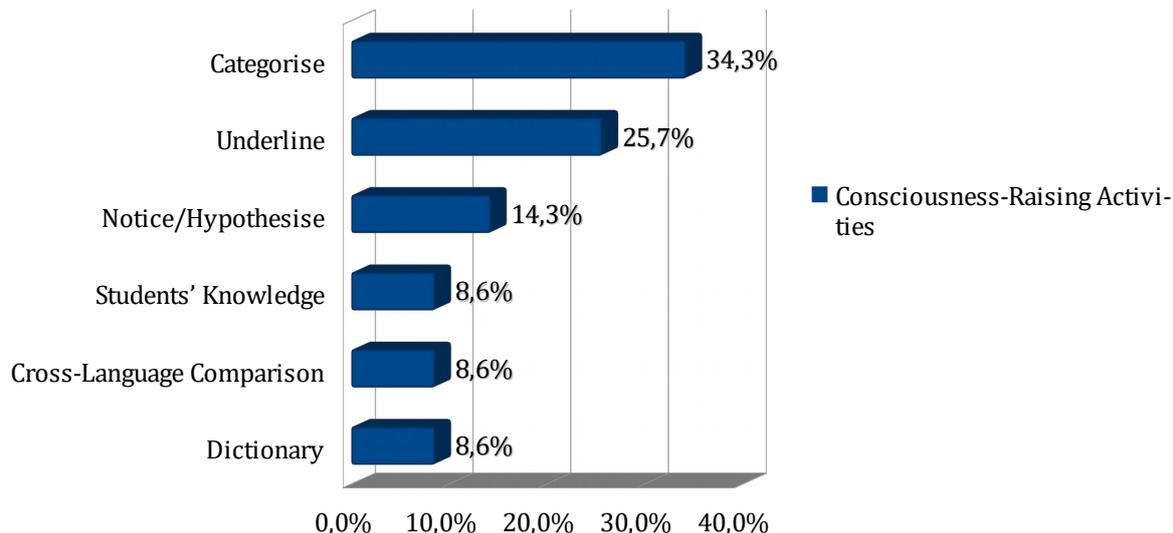
The graph shows that the most frequent types of exercises are the ones where it is required to categorise (34.3%) and underline (25.7%) lexical phrases, whereas the third most frequent one (14.3%) is the type of exercise where students are

asked to notice, hypothesise and draw their own conclusions in order to be able to answer the question of the exercise. With regard to the remaining three types of exercises, they all share the same percentage value (8.6%) – as shown in Table 20 above, in fact, there are only three exercises of each type in all the 35 consciousness-raising activities we analysed.

4.2.2 Discussion

In this section we are going to comment upon the data we have described in the previous section with the aim of answering the second research question – what is the treatment multi-word lexical items receive?

According to Lewis, "learning is process-orientated" (Lewis, 1993: 18) and entails "cognitive involvement, struggling, trying, hypothesising" (*ibid.*), which is why he believes that "a change of the teacher's mind-set from product to process is not only helpful, it is essential" (*ibid.*).

In answering our research question, we are interested in discovering whether such a view of learning is adopted in the exercises on multi-word lexical items of the three EFL textbooks we analysed. In order to do so, we focused on consciousness-raising activities in that they are the types of activities which best embody this process-orientated view of learning. As already mentioned in Section 3.1, in fact, consciousness-raising activities "do not have fully predictable outcomes, or unique 'correct answers'" (*op. cit.*: 184) but rather they require students to hypothesise and be more actively involved in the process of learning.

Therefore, what we did was to verify how many of these activities were present among the overall 288 exercises on multi-word lexical items in the EFL textbooks we analysed so as to discover whether another important concept at the basis of the Lexical Approach was implemented or not.

The results in the previous section show that the more the level increases, the more consciousness-raising activities there are. Similarly to the explanation we provided in Section 4.1.2 as to why there were more exercises on different types of multi-word lexical items in the B2 textbooks compared to the textbooks of lower

levels, the observed increase of consciousness-raising activities throughout the levels can be attributed to the fact that they might be thought to be more suitable for advanced learners, which may explain why we did not find any consciousness-raising activities in the A2 textbook.

Although the percentage of consciousness-raising activities increases from A2 to B2 level, we have to bear in mind that there are far more non consciousness-raising activities (i.e. 100% in High Spirits, 90.9% in Interact and 82.5% in GOLD first) than consciousness-raising ones (i.e. 0%, 9.1%, 17.5%, respectively) in all the three textbooks we analysed. It follows that the degree of involvement of the students in the majority of the exercises on multi-word lexical items is quite low.

It has to be said that in the non consciousness-raising activities students do know what the exercise is about (e.g. exercise on collocations, expressions or phrasal verbs) but, as Kasuya points out in his study, "the purpose of these activities seems to be to check learners' memorisation rather than to help them examine the language" (Kasuya, 2000: 36), as can be seen by reading the instructions of some non consciousness-raising activities below (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 35, 37, 40, 45, 58, 73, 75, 94, 121):

Choose the best alternative to complete the following sentences.
Match the underlined idioms 1-10 with meanings A-J.
Match the words in column A with their collocations in column B.
Match the first part of sentences 1-5 to their endings A-F.
Choose the word which does NOT fit in the phrases 1-3.
Complete the expressions with the correct preposition.
Complete the sentences so they are true about you.
Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verb.
Write the correct form of one of the verbs in the box below in each gap 1-6.

There is no doubt that it is important for students to revise lexical phrases they already know, however, the fact that the gap between these two types of activities is so wide (87.8% are non consciousness-raising activities but only 12.2% are consciousness-raising activities) seems to tell us that, even when lexical phrases

are presented for the first time, they are more likely to be presented in an exercise which do not raise the students' awareness of them.

Therefore, even though the three textbooks we analysed are the ones with the highest percentage of exercises on multi-word lexical items, the way these exercises are structured is quite mechanical and leaves no room for students' thinking. This finding is in agreement with what Kasuya says in his study concerning the fact that, "although the two textbooks devote a considerable amount of their exercises to treating lexical phrases and lexical patterns, they restrict the advantages of their selection of the lexical features by adopting non consciousness-raising methods" (Kasuya, 2000: 34).

If we then examine the different types of consciousness-raising activities, there is another important finding which is worth mentioning – 60% of all the consciousness-raising activities require students to categorise and underline, whereas the remaining 40% fall under the other four types of activities (i.e. using the dictionary, hypothesising, making cross-language comparisons and drawing from your own knowledge of the language).

Interestingly, the former two types of consciousness-raising activities seem different from the latter four ones because the degree to which students are involved in the carrying out of these two types of activities seems slightly lower than the remaining four types of activities – even though it is the student who has to underline or classify, there seems to be the idea that you have to underline the right phrase or put the right phrase under the right category; on the contrary, in the other four types of activities, the student explores and reflects without necessarily having to look for the right answer.

The fact that these two types of activities (i.e. those where it is required to categorise and underline) are the two most frequent types of all the six types of consciousness-raising activities we found in two of the three textbooks we analysed seems to further support what the previous finding regarding the lack – in the case of High Spirits – or the very few number of consciousness-raising activities – in the case of Interact and GOLD first – appeared to suggest, that is the

tendency of treating multi-word lexical items by using non consciousness-raising methods.

To summarise, what is the treatment multi-word lexical items receive? The majority of the exercises on multi-word lexical items are presented using non consciousness-raising methods. With regard to the few consciousness-raising activities we found, more emphasis is given to the types of activities which seem to be more mechanical. We can therefore conclude that the second principle of the Lexical Approach is not adopted in any of the three textbooks analysed.

4.3 Third Research Question: Grammar Content in Three of the Ten EFL Textbooks Analysed

In the previous section we have analysed the methodology adopted in all the exercises on multi-word lexical items of three EFL textbooks. In this section we are going to focus on grammar, in particular on the concept of *lexicogrammar*. The main purpose is to verify whether such concept can be found in the same three EFL textbooks we analysed in the previous section.

4.3.1 Results

As already mentioned in Section 3.3.3 and in the introduction above, the three EFL textbooks we analysed are the same we analysed in Section 4.2.1 – High Spirits for A2 level, Interact for A2/B1 level and GOLD first for B2 level. The reason why we selected these three textbooks is the same we described in Section 4.2.1 – we thought that it would be more likely to find the concept of *lexicogrammar* in textbooks where the percentage of lexical phrases was higher.

As mentioned in Section 3.3.3, we started from three statements where grammar is described for what it is not (i.e. *grammar is not the basis of language or language learning and it is not logically distinct from 'vocabulary'; grammar is not a set of 'rules' and it is not primarily the tense system; grammar is not the 'correct sentences' of the language and it is not a set of transformations*). By verifying

whether the three textbooks recognised these three statements, we would be able to draw conclusions regarding the implementation of the *lexicogrammar* concept.

Table 21 below shows the data we collected in order to see whether the three textbooks acknowledged Lewis's first statement which says that *grammar is not the basis of language or language learning and it is not logically distinct from 'vocabulary'*.

We counted all the grammar exercises we found in the *Grammar* sections and we reported them under the *Grammar Exercises* category, while we placed the total number of lexical-related exercises we analysed in the previous sections (see column *Total 1 (a+b+c+d+e+f)* in Table 17 in Section 4.1.1) under the *Lexical-Related Exercises* category. We then added another column (i.e. see column *Total* in Table 21 below) where we reported the total number of exercises per textbook (see column *Total 2 (a+b+c+d+e+f+...)* in Table 17 in Section 4.1.1) on the basis of which we were able to derive the figures regarding the number of exercises we placed under the *Other Exercises* category, that is exercises which are neither grammar nor lexical-related exercises.
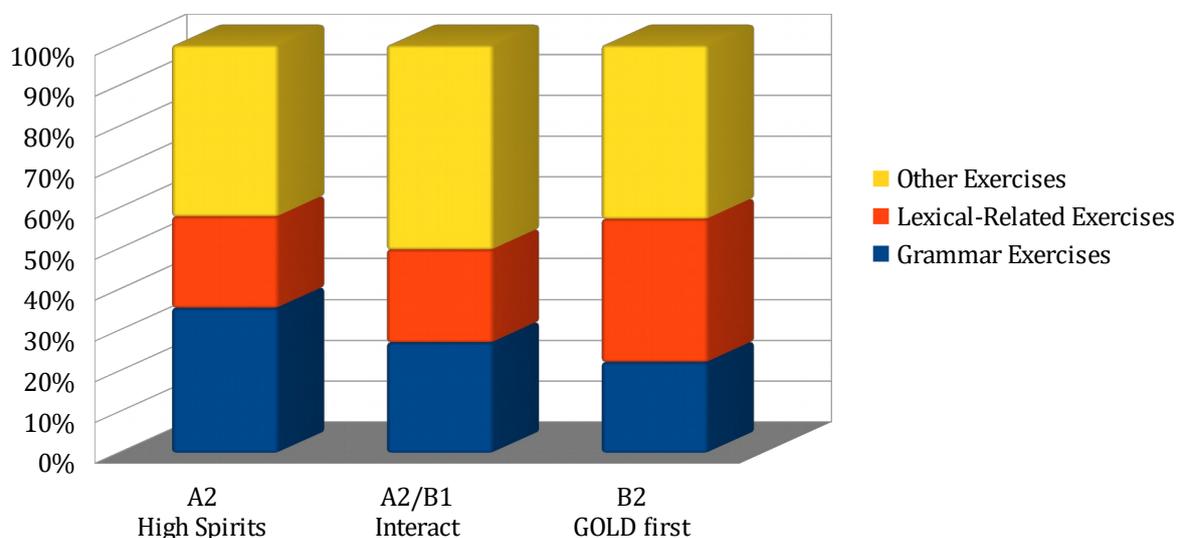
		Grammar Exercises	Lexical-Related Exercises	Other Exercises	Total
High Spirits	A2	170 **36%**	107 **22%**	201 **42%**	478
Interact	A2/B1	263 **27%**	221 **23%**	487 **50%**	971
GOLD first	B2	226 **22%**	356 **35%**	433 **43%**	1015
SUBTOTAL		659 **27%**	684 **28%**	1121 **45%**	2464

Table 21. Number and percentage of grammar exercises, lexical-related exercises and other types of exercises to the total number of exercises per textbook

We are now going to analyse the data of Table 21 by looking at Graph 13 below where the percentages of each textbook have been reported. These findings show us the role of each category per textbook. Furthermore, since the three textbooks

correspond to three different levels, the data also show us how each category changes throughout the levels.

Graph 13 - Percentages of grammar exercises to the total number of exercises per textbook

From the graph above we can see that the category with the highest percentage in all the three textbooks is the *Other Exercises* category. However, we are going to focus primarily on the *Grammar Exercises* and *Lexical-Related Exercises* categories (i.e. the blue and red parts, respectively) – they are the categories we are most interested in because it is on the basis of their relationship that we will be able to see whether the three textbooks support Lewis's statement which says that "it is lexis, not grammar, which is the basis of language" (Lewis, 1993: 134).

The graph shows that 36% of all the exercises in High Spirits are grammar exercises, whereas the remaining 22% are exercises related to lexis. The same relevance of grammar over lexis can be seen in Interact where the percentages of grammar and lexical-related exercises stand at 27% and 23%, respectively. GOLD first is the only textbook where the emphasis given to grammar and lexis is reversed – 35% of all the exercises focus on lexis, whereas the remaining 22% on

grammar. Interestingly, in fact, the percentage of grammar exercises decreases the higher the level becomes (36%, 27%, 22%).

Therefore, we can conclude that two out of three textbooks give more relevance to grammar than to lexis. This conclusion is further supported by another interesting point which is worth mentioning. As has already been said before, in fact, the figures we reported under the *Lexical-Related Exercises* category correspond to the overall number of lexical-related exercises we analysed in Section 4.1, that is exercises we did not only find in the *Vocabulary* sections, but also in other sections such as *Reading*, *Listening*, *Writing*, *Speaking*, *Functions* etc. In other words, the *Lexical-Related Exercises* category does not only correspond to all the *Vocabulary* sections of each textbook but also to all the exercises we thought were related to lexis, even though they were not included under the *Vocabulary* section. Instead, in the *Grammar Exercises* category there are only exercises we found in all the *Grammar* sections of each textbook.

That being said, since the percentage of the *Grammar Exercises* category is higher in the first two textbooks, had we only put those exercises we found in the *Vocabulary* sections under the *Lexical-Related Exercises* category, the gap between the grammar and the lexical exercises would have been even bigger than the findings above show (14% in High Spirits and 4% in Interact).

As far as GOLD first is concerned, had we placed only the exercises we found in the *Vocabulary* sections under the *Lexical-Related Exercises* category, the latter would have had a lower percentage value than the one we actually found (35%). And, even though we cannot say whether the percentage of the *Lexical-Related Exercises* category would have been lower than the percentage of the *Grammar Exercises* category (22%), we can say for sure that the gap between the two categories would have become lower than the gap we actually found (13%).

We are now going to analyse Table 22 below regarding the types of grammar content addressed in each textbook. As can be seen from the table, the first five types of grammar content have been highlighted in grey because they are the ones Lewis explicitly refers to in his work (1993) – were they to be found in the three

textbooks, it would mean that the textbooks analysed do not recognise Lewis's view of grammar according to which *grammar is not a set of 'rules' and it is not primarily the tense system.*

	High Spirits A2	Interact A2/B1	GOLD first B2
Tense System	●	●	●
Conditionals	●	●	●
Passive	●	●	●
Reported Speech	●		
Comparatives and Superlatives		●	●
Modal Verbs	●	●	●
Habits in the Past		●	●
Question Tags		●	
Pronouns		●	●
Adverbs			●
Articles			●
Countable and Uncountable Nouns			●
Modifiers		●	●
Verb Patterns	●	●	●
Others			●

Table 22. Types of grammar content per textbook

As can be seen from the table above, in all the three textbooks we can find the following grammar contents – *Tense System*, *Conditionals*, *Passive*, *Modal Verbs* and *Verb Patterns* of which the former three are the ones Lewis regards as "unhelpful" (Lewis, 1993: 135). The second most frequent types of grammar content are *Comparative and Superlatives*, *Habits in the Past*, *Pronouns* and *Modifiers*, none of which can be found in the A2 textbook. The grammar contents we found in only one textbook are the following ones – *Reported Speech*, *Question Tags*, *Adverbs*, *Articles, Countable and Uncountable Nouns* and other types of grammar contents.

It is also interesting to notice that the higher the level becomes, the more grammar contents there are (six in High Spirits, ten in Interact and thirteen in GOLD first). Interestingly, there are more grammar contents in the B2 textbook where there are fewer exercises on grammar as shown before in Graph 13.

However, it has to be said that the overall number of units varies from textbook to textbook – High Spirits has eight units, Interact twelve and GOLD first fourteen. Generally, one or two grammar contents are addressed in one unit, which may explain why there are fewer and more grammar contents in the textbooks of lower and higher levels, respectively.

Furthermore, the fact that there are fewer of them in High Spirits and Interact compared to GOLD first can also be explained by the fact that more units deal with the same grammar content (e.g. *Tense System*) – for instance, there are five out of eight units on different types of tenses in High Spirits, but only three out of fourteen in GOLD first because it is a type of grammar content which is thought to be already acquired by students at a B2 level.

However, it has to be said that this is not particularly relevant for our purposes in that we are more interested in whether such grammar contents can actually be found in the three textbooks, regardless of how many of them there are in each textbook.

We are now going to analyse Table 23 below where we classified all the grammar exercises (see the *Grammar Exercises* category in Table 21 above) according to the way they presented the grammar content. In so doing, as already mentioned in Section 3.3.3, we were able to see whether there were more exercises which required students to produce 'correct sentences' or transformations (i.e. *Product-Orientated Activities*) or more awareness-raising receptive exercises (i.e. *Process-Orientated Activities*).

		Product-Orientated Activities	*Process-Orientated Activities*	*Total*
High Spirits	A2	170 **100%**	/ **0%**	170
Interact	A2/B1	232	31	263

		88%	**12%**	
GOLD first	B2	147 **70%**	63 **30%**	210
SUBTOTAL		549 **85%**	94 **15%**	643

Table 23. Numbers and percentages of product- and process-orientated grammar activities

As can be seen from the table above, the total number of grammar exercises in GOLD first (210) is lower than that reported in Table 21 (226), even though it should be the same as it is in the other two textbooks (170 and 263).

The reason why these two categories (i.e. *Total* in Table 23 and *Grammar Exercises* in Table 21) differ is that the majority of the *Grammar* sections of GOLD first were organised in the following way – the first of many exercises was often an introductory type of exercise (see exercises *a* and *b* in Table 24 below) where the target grammar features were underlined but students were not asked to focus upon them; only later, in the next exercises, would the students' attention be driven towards them. In other words, these types of exercises were more similar to a comprehensive type of exercise where students could be asked to predict the end of a story (see exercise *a* below) or to reflect upon the relationship between two characters of a story (see exercise *b* below), which is why we decided not to include them in our categorisation.

> **a) You are going to read a story about a man who was shipwrecked on a desert island. Read Paragraph 1 and predict what happens next** (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 38)
>
> (1) Last October, 79 years-old Mark Richards <u>set off</u> from Florida in his cabin cruiser. He <u>had planned</u> to sail to Nassau in the Bahamas in twelve hours. However, while he <u>was sailing</u> there, a storm blew up and he was shipwrecked on a small island.
>
> **b) Read the text quickly. Why are Ewan and Charlie such good friends?** (Bell and Thomas, 2012: 104)

Table 24. Example of exercises we did not include in our classification for their being more similar to comprehensive rather than to grammar exercises

We can now comment upon the data by analysing Graph 14 below where we reported the percentages of Table 23 of each textbook.

Graph 14 - Percentages of process- and product-orientated activities per textbook
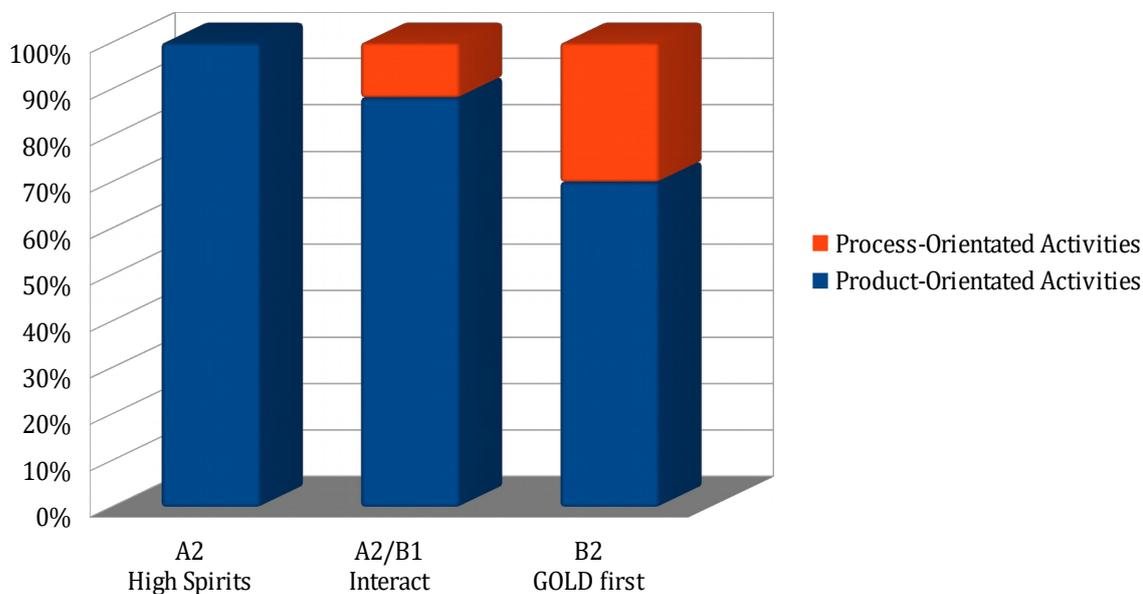
The graph shows that there are no *Process-Orientated Activities* in High Spirits and that, as the level increases, the number of such activities increases as well – it stands at 12% in Interact and at 30% in GOLD first. We can therefore conclude that the majority of the grammar exercises (100% in High Spirits, 88% in Interact and 70% in GOLD first) are *Product-Orientated Activities*.

4.3.2 Discussion

In the previous section we have illustrated the data we gathered from analysing the *Grammar* sections of the three textbooks. On the basis of such data we are now going to try and answer the last research question – is grammar taught from a lexical point of view?

In particular, what we seek to determine is whether the three textbooks are in line with three principles at the basis of the Lexical Approach which express Lewis's new view of grammar, also known as *lexicogrammar*.

The conclusions we drew from answering the first two research questions (see Section 4.1.2 and Section 4.2.2) seem to suggest that we would not be able to find such *lexicogrammar* in any of the three textbooks. Taken together, in fact, the data we described in Section 4.3.1 appear to meet our expectations because they show that the traditional view of grammar is still alive and well in all the three textbooks.

There are several reasons which bring us to say so. First of all, according to Lewis, "grammar has a role to play, but not the pre-eminent role which it is frequently still accorded" (Lewis, 1993: 133). Had the textbooks recognised Lewis's words, we would have had a lower percentage of grammar exercises in all of them; however, the data show that there are more grammar exercises than lexical-related exercises in two of the three textbooks we analysed.

Furthermore, it has to be borne in mind that the lexical-related exercises were not necessarily found under the *Vocabulary* sections as the grammar exercises were, which brings us to say that the *Grammar* sections are even bigger than the *Vocabulary* sections at least in two of the three textbooks we analysed. We can therefore conclude that grammar does have an important role to play in High Spirits and Interact as opposed to the minor role it should have according to Lewis.

This is further exemplified by the way in which the three textbooks are structured. In fact, the very fact that there are *Grammar* and *Vocabulary* sections reflects a particular view of language where grammar and vocabulary are presented as if they were two different language contents which have to be dealt with separately, which is the opposite of what Lewis says – *grammar is not logically distinct from 'vocabulary'*.

It is also interesting to point out that the only textbook where there are more lexical-related exercises than grammar ones is GOLD first, which may bring us to think that this textbook embraces the idea of grammar as it is within the Lexical Approach, however we came to the conclusion that it was the level of proficiency to be responsible for such a low presence of grammar exercises – GOLD first is a B2 textbook and it is addressed to more advanced students who already have a good

knowledge of grammar and therefore do not need *Grammar* sections filled with grammar exercises anymore.

We have just said that, even though GOLD first has fewer grammar exercises than High Spirits and Interact, it is not so different from the latter. This is even clearer if we focus upon the types of grammar contents each textbook addresses. In fact, the findings show that there is no difference at all between the three textbooks – all the traditional grammar rules and structures of the English language Lewis makes reference to in his works (i.e. *Tense System*, *Conditionals*, *Passive*, *Reported Speech*, *Comparatives and Superlatives*) can be found in all of them, regardless of their level of proficiency.

In this regard, Lewis says that "traditional grammar teaching emphasises the structure of the verb, together with comparatively few other grammatical items – countability, quantifiers, prepositions and the like" (*op. cit.*: 134), which is precisely the type of grammar teaching we found in the three textbooks.

This contributes even more to prove what we have already mentioned before, namely that the grammar of the three textbooks do not reflect the grammar of the Lexical Approach. The latter, in fact, suggests a change of grammar content where rules and tense system "are no longer the defining element[s] of a syllabus" (*op. cit.*: 136) in that they "lend themselves to convoluted transformation exercises (…) [which] have no place in the language classroom for they set out to practise language which has simply been mis-analysed in the first case" (*op. cit.*: 136).

The Lexical Approach also suggests "a radically different view of methodology" (*op. cit.*: 146) – grammar practice, in fact, is another of the reasons which brought us to say that the grammar teaching of the three textbooks was rather traditional and did not reflect the grammar teaching of the Lexical Approach.

The results we gathered by analysing each grammar exercise of the three textbooks show that the majority of the grammar exercises (i.e. 100% in High Spirits, 88% in Interact and 70% in GOLD first) are product-orientated activities among which we can also find the aforementioned "convoluted transformation exercises" (*ibid.*), which runs counter to what Lewis says in another of his seminal

works – "far from language being the product of the application of rules, most language is acquired lexically, then 'broken down'" (Lewis, 2001: 75). With regard to process-orientated activities, they only "form a small percentage of grammar practice material, which still emphasises productive rather than receptive use" (Lewis, 1993: 154) – 0% in High Spirits, 12% in Interact and 30% in GOLD first.

Again, the fact that the process-orientated activities increase as the level increases can be explained by referring to the higher level of proficiency of the students who may be thought to be more suitable to these types of activities given that they should already have acquired and systematised the grammar rules and structures.

What interests us most, however, is that grammar rules, structures and product-orientated exercises have proved to be still part and parcel of the grammar teaching of the three textbooks.

Therefore, as to the question of whether grammar is taught from a lexical point of view, we can conclude and say that it does not. Had the *lexicogrammar* concept been adopted, in fact, the following sentences would have been recognised by each textbook – *grammar is not the basis of language or language learning and it is not logically distinct from 'vocabulary', grammar is not a set of 'rules' and it is not primarily the tense system; grammar is not the 'correct sentences' of the language and it is not a set of transformations*. However, the data show exactly the opposite, which is why we can conclude that grammar is not taught from a lexical point of view in any of the three textbooks we analysed.

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to discover whether three of the main principles of the Lexical Approach were implemented in ten EFL textbooks of three different levels of proficiency (i.e. A2, A2/B1 and B2).

The methodology we adopted was to create tables with different types of categories which were used to classify the exercises of each textbook. The findings we gathered were then used to answer three research questions as many as the aforementioned principles we aimed to investigate. The results show that:

1. as far as the lexical-related exercises are concerned, there are more exercises on single words than on any other type of multi-word lexical item in all the ten EFL textbook we analysed, except for High Spirits where there are more exercises on expressions than on single words; however, if all the exercises on all the types of multi-word lexical items (i.e. phrasal verbs, collocations, expressions) are taken together and compared to the number of exercises on single words, the B2 textbooks prove to have a higher percentage of exercises on the former types of lexical items than on the latter, with the exception of Spotlight, even though the gap difference between the two is very small. Furthermore, among the exercises on multi-word lexical items, those on expressions are more frequent than those on phrasal verbs and collocations;

2. with regard to the way multi-word lexical items are treated, there are more non consciousness-raising activities than consciousness-raising ones in all the three textbooks we analysed. We also found that the more the level increases, the more consciousness-raising activities there are, even though they are still fewer than the non consciousness-raising ones. As for the types of consciousness-raising activities, the most frequent types are the ones where it is required to underline and categorise;

3. finally, the *lexicogrammar* concept is not present in any of the three textbooks we analysed. The reasons why we came to this conclusion are threefold – firstly, there are more grammar exercises than lexical-related exercises in two of the three textbooks, except for GOLD first; secondly, grammar rules and structures are the only types of grammar content we could find in all the three textbooks; lastly, there are more grammar exercises which emphasise the product and the application of grammar rules than process-orientated exercises; even though the latter increase as the level increases, they are still fewer than the product-orientated ones.

Therefore, taken together, the results of this study indicate that three of the main principles of the Lexical Approach have not been adopted by any of the ten textbooks we analysed. It follows that the material designers of these textbooks have not applied such a lexical-centred approach in any of their textbooks.

It is worth pointing out, though, that they have all been published in the early 2000s and that it was back in the early 1990s when Lewis proposed the Lexical Approach – therefore, although a few years have passed between these two events, the Lexical Approach does not seem to have seeped into EFL teaching yet.

Finally, a number of limitations need to be acknowledged. First, the study was limited by the small number of textbooks we analysed. It would be interesting to replicate the same research focusing on a greater number of textbooks for each level of proficiency because four A2 textbooks, three A2/B1 textbooks and three B2 textbooks may be insufficient, especially when it comes to giving an account of some unexpected outcomes – had we had more textbooks to refer to, in fact, we might have been able to provide a more detailed explanation of such unexpected outcomes instead of just calling them 'exceptions' (see Section 4.1.2).

Secondly, when increasing the number of textbooks, the year of publication should be taken into account as well. In fact, it would be advisable to increase the number of more recently published textbooks. The ten textbooks we analysed have been published between 2004 and 2016 (see Table 2, 3 and 4 in Section 3.2) – since it has been a few years since their publication, it would be interesting to

analyse up-to-date textbooks because there might have been some changes in terms of the presence of the Lexical Approach in the last few years.

There is another thing to point out regarding the ten textbooks we analysed. We do know that three of them are currently used in at least three language classrooms; however, we do not actually know whether the same textbooks have been adopted in other Italian language classrooms as well, which in a way limited our research in that it did not allow us to make any kind of generalisation.

To solve this issue, we suggest that further research could be carried out on the most adopted EFL textbooks for each level of proficiency in the Italian school system. In so doing, we would be able to have a clearer – even though not complete – picture of which type of textbook Italian EFL teachers prefer most, namely of those textbooks language teachers are more prone to adopting on the basis of how they think a foreign language should be taught – as reported in the Ministerial Note (*Nota Ministeriale*) n. 2581 of the 9th of April, 2014, in fact, it is the teacher who chooses the textbook to adopt in the classroom[18].

There is another point worth mentioning. We have seen that the Lexical Approach is not present in any of the textbooks we analysed, which might bring us to say that it is not introduced in the language classroom as well. However, we need to bear in mind that the two things are not necessarily interrelated. As already mentioned in Section 3.2, although textbooks are usually used in the teaching of any school subject, they can only tell us something of the type of language teaching adopted in the classroom because it is up to the teacher to decide to what extent to make use of them.

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18 "L'adozione dei libri di testo è stata di recente oggetto di particolare attenzione da parte del legislatore, nella prospettiva di limitare, per quanto possibile e fatte salve l'autonomia didattica e la libertà dei docenti, il costo che annualmente le famiglie devono sostenere per l'acquisto dell'intera dotazione libraria. (…) Le adozioni dei testi scolastici vengono deliberate dai collegi dei docenti nella seconda decade di maggio. (…) I dirigenti scolastici avranno cura di esercitare la necessaria vigilanza affinché le adozioni dei libri di testo siano deliberate nel rispetto dei vincoli di leggem assicurando in ogni caso che le scelte siano espressione della libertà di insegnamento e dell'autonomia professionale dei docenti". For further information on the Ministerial Note, see the following link: https://www.dirittoscolastico.it/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Nota-prot2581_14.pdf

This is the reason why further research on a larger scale would be of great help in order to have a more thorough understanding of whether the Lexical Approach is actually adopted in the language classroom or not. In this regard, we suggest that, in addition to the textbook analysis, researchers could take part in real language lessons and observe how language and lexis are taught as well as investigate "teachers' attitudes and expectations" (Lewis, 1993: 184).

Hence, in spite of the limitations we have just pointed out, this study has proven to be very helpful because it lays the foundation for further research work.

Furthermore, we think that it can have an important impact on both language teachers and material designers. Despite of being a small-scale study, in fact, it can help to raise their awareness of the importance of lexical phrases in language use and learning which we hope may lead them to introduce such lexical items and therefore a lexical-based approach in their language classrooms and textbooks, respectively.

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