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**The Lexical Approach Implementation on Selected  
EFL Textbooks of the Last Decade:  
a Quantitative and Qualitative Research**

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## *Abstract*

In many studies, the crucial role of lexis in language learning and proficiency has been repeatedly highlighted, especially concerning multi-word items. The current research focuses on the Lexical Approach, developed by Lewis in 1993, which implies a change of focus in the traditional way of teaching language. The aim of the research is to analyse the exercises of ten EFL textbooks of different levels, used in Italian upper secondary schools and universities in the last decade, and to observe whether some of Lewis' approach principles are implemented. The investigation is both quantitative and qualitative and it employs three tables that aim to discover which types of lexical items are mostly observed, whether the concept of *grammaticalized lexis* is implemented and how multi-word lexical items are treated. The results obtained by the collected data show on one hand that the exercises presented in the analysed material focus more on features of single words than on multi-word lexical items, which present a clear minority of activities. On the other hand, also *grammaticalized lexis* principle does not seem greatly considered, aside from a restricted number of exercises. Finally, the treatment of multi-word items does not follow Lewis' suggestion of using *consciousness-raising* activities. In conclusion, the results show that although the attention paid to lexis has increased in the last decades, the Lexical Approach does not appear to be fully implemented in EFL learning material.

# Introduction

In language teaching and learning tradition, the element which has always presented a particular stress was grammar and its generalisable rules. Still, in language education research and studies, lexis recently acquired a role of paramount importance in terms of acquisition and linguistic fluency. In fact, Lewis argued how lexis is the real device which vehiculate messages and how lexis and grammar represent two sides of the same coin in the realisation of a complementary process, whose aim should be that of empowering linguistic competence. Moreover, in addition to a new rediscovering of lexis relevance, language teaching and learning studies highlight the core role of prefabricated language and lexical phrases, as to say that massive store of fixed and semi-fixed multi-word items which are prepatterned and which vehiculate linguistic interaction (Lewis, 1993).

The focal point of the present study will be the Lexical Approach, a lexis-based language educational theory developed by Micheal Lewis in the early years of 1990. Lexical Approach principles, firstly observed in Great Britain and proposed for teaching English L2 purposes, are stated by recent studies to be suitable not only for English language, but also for other foreign languages acquisition. Still, little attention seemed to be paid to this approach implementation in EFL materials and, specifically in Italy, despite a number of studies and publications concerning such topic, the Lexical Approach implementation in learning textbooks appears to be extremely poor (Cardona, 2009). On the basis of these considerations, the purpose of our study is to assess whether three of the Lexical Approach key principles may be detected in ten EFL materials employed from 2009 to 2019 in some Italian upper secondary schools and universities. Notably, the aim of the research is to provide an answer to three main questions:

1. Which types of lexical items are observed in the EFL materials?

2. Is the concept of grammaticalised lexis implemented?
3. How are multi-word items treated?

The method adopted to analyse data and properly answer the three research questions was both quantitative and qualitative.

In conclusion, the research is composed of two core parts, Part 1 and Part 2. Part 1 presents the theoretical context of reference on which our study puts its basis, while Part 2 illustrates the process and results of the research itself.

Moreover, both the two parts were divided respectively into two further chapters. Throughout Part 1, Chapter 1 refers to the theoretical framework concerning language education studies (1.1.) and a theoretical description of Lewis' Lexical Approach (1.2.), while Chapter 2 illustrates previous research on formulaic discourse and lexical-based approach implementations both in the classroom and in EFL materials. On the other hand, throughout Part 2, Chapter three aims to describe in detail the three research questions formulated, the materials analysed and the method and instruments employed for data collection, while lastly, Chapter 4 is the section dedicated to the research questions data analysis and discussion of the results.

# Part 1

## Theoretical context of reference

### *Chapter 1*

#### *Theoretical framework*

The present chapter aims to introduce the fundamental role of lexis in language teaching, which for long has been underestimated, overshadowed by an excessive attention for grammar rules and treated with methods which resulted insufficient in the interest of a language acquisition enhancement. It is divided in two sections. The first section (1.1.) focuses on lexical features and their role in the learning process, and it is further divided into three parts respectively discussing the value of multi-word items (1.1.1.), the traditional grammar-vocabulary dichotomy (1.1.2.) and the role that multi-word items play in formulaic discourse and language awareness (1.1.3.).

The second section (1.2.) aims to briefly illustrate the Lexical Approach and its main principles, it is composed of three further parts which are complementary to the sub-parts of the first section, discussing the role of prefabricated chunks (1.2.1.), the vital concept of lexicogrammar (1.2.2.) and the consciousness-raising treatment of multi-word items (1.2.3.).

#### 1.1. The relevance of lexis in language learning

It is not unknown that before the last two decades of 1900, little or inexistent was the attention and interest given to lexis by language education research. On the contrary, in recent times a new interest in lexis nature, learning and teaching appears to be rediscovered (Miozzo, 2018). Balboni (2018) highlights the importance of lexis when describing two situations of initial language acquisition. As far as Italian L1 is concerned, he states that when entering school, the child

presents a mastery on a morphosyntactic level, while the lexical aspect appears to be poor, presenting little awareness of meaning connotation and an employment of only general words. Regarding second language (L2)<sup>1</sup> and foreign language acquisition (FL), he affirms that the primary need to reach considerable learning results lies in the knowledge of much more words as possible, in order to create a sort of exchange of meanings. In this respect, what vehiculate meanings is lexis, consequently leading to the conclusion that rich lexis is requested, in particular during the first steps of language acquisition, to give a direction and to accompany their morphosyntactic acquisition (Cardona, 2006; Balboni, 2014; 2018).

Balboni gives a definition of what lexis acquisition is from a psycholinguistic point of view, stating that the process first step is that of perceiving a word or a lexical item and then to store them in what is called semantic memory. After this initial phase, it will be possible to immediately retrieve every stored item when heard, found in a text or whenever needed to produce language. He also highlights the importance of the two types of memorising modality that our memory follow to enhance its potential: semantic fields and what Balboni defines “complete systems” memorisation. Semantic fields refer to words that belong to a specific class, such as colours or furniture, which are elaborated and memorised in our minds by the establishing of consistent semantic collections. Complete systems on the other hand, are so defined as they are reduced to the two opposite poles and for this reason they are “complete”. They refer to antonyms, as our mind is able to enhance the memorisation of a term (*e.g. fat*) only identifying its opposite (*e.g. thin*), consequently completing its field. This theory suggests how the common “*lexical lists*” appear to have no empowering effect on the memorisation process

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<sup>1</sup> L2 does not necessarily refers to the second language acquired by the speaker, but to a language which is used in the environment in which the speaker lives, consequently representing a type of acquisition that occurs in a relatively spontaneous way. Most people appear to have at least one L2, which can be the national language, the prestige language or the language of instruction (Balboni and Mezzadri, 2014).



of lexis, as words and lexical items need to be contextualised and systematised in order to be fully acquired (Balboni, 2012; 2018).

Words are usually considered the basic components of language although technically they are not the minimal unit of meaning. In fact, when observing language, they are associated to the conveying of different meanings, leading to the perception of them as actual units of meaning. Those units are what we study when learning a foreign language and what we search for in dictionaries, but what is the process in recognizing a word? Warren (2013) identifies five separate stages which are not necessarily divided by a temporal distinction and which work together with other processes that are aimed to the understanding of larger units of language such as sentences. These stages have been theorised by Warren in relation to the recognition of spoken words, but he mentions the possibility of extending this same process to visual words as well. The five steps of words recognition are:

- *Pre-lexical analysis*: it includes all the operations resulting from the language input that aim to arrange this input into useful units of speech.
- *Contact*: in this phase links are created between the input observed and the forms of words that are stored in our mind.
- *Activation*: here the stored words in our minds that have been contacted activate a state of “excitement” due to the fact of being recalled.
- *Access*: at this point the lexical item stored in our memory becomes available, enabling us to acquire the information we need about that word (e.g. its form, grammatical category, meaning, connotation, etc.).
- *Recognition*: the final step refers to the realisation and full comprehension of the word heard in a conversation or read in a text (Warren, 2013).

Doubtless, lexis endured for too long a lack of attention and interest from education research, which underestimated the role of word recognition in giving

access not only to meanings, but also to grammatical information, therefore resulting to be crucially important for language comprehension and acquisition as well. Furthermore, lexical information and its contextual relevance are affirmed by Warren to speed “*both the word recognition process itself and the overall interpretation of the message*” (Warren, 2013:137).

### 1.1.1. More than individual words

As it has already been argued, lexis has a central role in language acquisition and proficiency. Still, in language teaching and learning, it has always been underestimated and left in the background, while generalisable rules of grammar were considered the real protagonist in traditional language teaching (Miozzo, 2018). In addition to the question of grammar-vocabulary dichotomy, which will be better analysed in the next section (1.1.2.), another issue should be highlighted, regarding a specific aspect of how lexis has traditionally been observed. In fact, another perspective adopted by traditional language education refers to the nature of individual lexical items and the conception that “*if you have a big vocabulary you know a lot of words*” (Lewis, 1993:89). This perspective is not completely accurate according to Lewis, since having a big vocabulary is related to the direct access we might have to a massive archive of diverse lexical items, which do not include only single words. Still, what needs to be clarified now is what the term “lexical item” implies. Lewis cites in his work a significant definition provided by Pawley and Syder (1983), of what defines a lexical item and what puts it in the position of becoming part of the common expressions of a community’s dictionary. The first feature of an expression which can be defined as a lexical item is the fact that its meaning usually cannot be easily assumed by looking at its form. Secondly, as far as syntactic purposes are concerned, this same expression should be regarded as a minimal unit. Lastly, each expression classified as a lexical item should represent a “*social institution*”, a characteristic which is often

ignored, but that becomes crucial when distinguishing lexicalised strings of discourse from non-lexicalised ones. Considering these three aspects, being the first of them a fundamental feature of linguistics, we could affirm that a great deal, if not most lexical items are actually nothing more than single words. Still, Lewis questions the attempt of generalising what might be established as “the” minimal unit of language, defining it “*not meaningful*”. In fact, he states that “*for different purposes different items constitute minimal units*” and that “*Lexical items are the minimal units for certain syntactic purposes*” (Lewis, 1993:90), leading to two remarkable effects: patterns which are shorter than lexical items appear to be too short, just like longer patterns than lexical items are too large (Pawley and Syder, 1983; Lewis, 1993).

A special insight should be given to the concept of lexical items as *social institutions*, which underlines the impossibility to define them individually, but the need to link them to the society or group to which they belong, considering the fundamental view of language as a social phenomenon. No matter how many sequences may be composed according to known words or rules of grammar, there will always be sentences which present a correctness in form, but which will be perceived improbable or even bizarre by a native speaker of that language. As Lewis suggests “*there is a vast difference between what we could say and what we do say*” (1993:90), leading to the critical question of *nativelike selection*. In this respect, the fundamental aspect which must be taken into account can be found in terms of *frequency*, as it is possible to notice that an incredible high frequency of specific sentences is produced by native speakers among all the potential sentences which might be created. All these characteristics that Lewis associates to the identification of lexical items, allow him to provide us a definition of it, stating that lexical items “*are socially sanctioned independent units*” and most of all that “*many are words, but many consist of multi-word units*” (1993:90). What is interesting is that despite the possibility of analysing

multi-word units, it has been determined that considering them as wholes, as to say in their entirety and without dividing them and analysing their components, language might be understood and processed more quickly, as much from a receptive as from a productive point of view. Then, it is suggested that after having learned these items as wholes it is possible to consider their single constituents, but only in a second step. In this way, the learner may be able to acquire the typical native speaker skill, as to say not to generate items anew every time they need to, but to obtain that item from its unanalysed pattern. This process centres around the concept that what matters in language production is not to rely on generative rules of grammar, but rather “*on a vast store of fixed phrases and prepatterned locutions by which managing aspects of interaction*”(Carter and McCarthy in Lewis, 1993: 90).

Lewis categorises different types of lexical items, firstly dividing them in two main classes:

- Single words, the most basic and familiar type of lexical item. In this class, as we will observe better in section 3.3.1., also polywords are included, relatively short lexical items composed of more than an individual word, but that can be commonly found in dictionary entries.
- Multi- word items, the lexical item class which is in contrast to single words in the fact that its multi-word units are recognised as independent, despite the possibility of dividing them and analysing their fragmented constituents. It is highlighted how although they appear to be constituted by several sub-categories, these classes are not totally definite and generalisable, but they often overlap and compose of borderline situations. Among these sub-categories, the two most relevant observed by Lewis are: institutionalised expressions, which present specific pragmatic purposes (*e.g. just a moment, once in a blue moon, etc.*), and collocations,

compositions of words that present a high frequency and which are oriented to express a specific message (*e.g. to pay attention, fully aware, etc.*).<sup>2</sup>

In other words, the approach of regarding at multi-word units as wholes, without analysing them in their components, leads to the focus shift from vocabulary to lexis, but this change of focus does not seem to provide a radical shot to the traditional way of seeing language learning. Still, starting to consider lexical phrases such as institutionalised expressions and collocations is stated to present extremely important new implications, both in the theoretical framework and in language acquisition practice. Nattinger and DeCarrico describe in detail the shift in the acquisition of a language according to the learner's passage "*through a stage in which they use a large number of unanalysed chunks of language in certain predictable social context*" as to say "*a great deal of 'prefabricated' language*" (Lewis, 1993:95). In previous studies, it was believed that prefabricated chunks were not part of language, leaving them in an external position. On the contrary, they are what can be defined as the real core of language learning and what needs to precede the process of creative rule construction. This core can be also defined as "formulaic speech". The fact that rule construction remains in the background represents a total inversion of perspective, in contrast with the structuralist idea which considers systematic rules to be fundamental for the creation of proper sentences. The new vision of language acquisition enhancement through unanalysed chunks considers these items as "*raw data*", necessary for the learner to perceive all the remaining aspects of language, from morphology to patterns and every characteristic which is included in the traditional conception of grammar (Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992; Lewis, 1993).

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<sup>2</sup> The present lexical item classes and sub-classes will be further discussed and described in the presentation of the first method employed to conduct the research (section 3.3.1.).

Finally, despite the possibility and the importance of analysing language aspects and components, this does not mean that analysing them always brings benefits. Above all, this also does not imply that composing the minimal constituents and pieces of language necessarily means to master language itself. In this regard, Lewis states that traditional language teaching is “*often obsessed with teaching rather than learning*” (1993:96) and that it does not take into account the two fundamental native speaker’s resources. The first is the use of the competence they acquired in order to generate new language, while the second is precisely the ability to recall chunks they acquired as wholes. This second resource is the primary element which gives birth to the processing of language in real time, since even though language is completely mastered, recalling chunks and phrases from a large repertoire as wholes is what enables us to create totally anew sentences and what creates language proficiency (Cowie, 1988 in Lewis, 1993).

### 1.1.2. Grammar and vocabulary – a binary relation

Lewis refers to these two elements as the “*most misunderstood in language teaching*” (1993:8). They represent a real dichotomy, and in this opposition the one term which has always benefited of more attention was grammar, while the treatment of vocabulary from a wrong perspective resulted in an inhibition of the role of lexis in the lectures organization. Before going on analysing this dichotomy and the reasons why it is addressed as a misunderstanding, it is crucial to provide a definition of the two terms (Lewis, 1993).

- Grammar is usually associated to sentence patterns and structures, to the use of prepositions and verb tenses and every other aspect of language which are empowered and automatized by grammar exercises. It is consequently defined as all those sets of rules and patterns that are located around words, as to say the language vocabulary.

- Vocabulary is usually and wrongly associated with individual words, and this conception often leads students to the extremely common but not so useful habit of translating texts and sentences word by word. In fact, as it has already been argued in the previous section (1.1.1.) language does not compose of only individual words, but the binary relation between grammar and vocabulary results in the underestimation of other complex elements, which should be rather of paramount importance in language analysis.

The predominance of the role of grammar over lexis arose around the 1960s, also thanks to the concept of *generative grammar*<sup>3</sup> proposed by Chomsky, which contributed to the assumption that linguistic competence might be reached with grammar knowledge. This conception of language acquisition was supported until the beginning of 1990s and put at the core of teaching the correctness of grammar. Teachers who sustain this perspective put in the spotlight sentence structure, while texts are put in the background; the correctness of form is considered an evaluation parameter which prevails the pragmatic purposes and the social suitability of an utterance or a text (Lewis, 1993; Balboni, 2012).

Thus, in a traditional perspective of language learning which is often supported even nowadays, language learner is expected to learn systematic rules which permit to construct an infinite number of sentences, to define these sentences with specific descriptions about their pattern and to separate them from strings of language which present no grammaticalization. Chomsky's idea of generative grammar puts at its basis the "*creative power of syntactic rules*" (Pawley and Syder, 1983:193), as to say the infinite possible sequences which can be

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<sup>3</sup> The term *generative grammar* refers to the Chomskyan theory that sees language being constituted by an infinite system of rules which could potentially generate every possible sentence of a language in their correct form. Such set of rules is regulated by universal linguistic principles which are innate in the native speaker's mind (Luise, 2007).

constructed in any language. In this respect, many were the questions arisen between the 1950s and 1960s concerning the transformational-generative approach to language. Even lately, it has been questioned whether generative grammar and syntactic rules can always be considered separately from other language aspects, such as coherence, connected discourse and most of all meaning. This is precisely the issue observed by Pawley and Syder (ibid.) in their work *Two puzzles for linguistic theory*, where for two “puzzles” they mean the two linguistic faculties of *native-like selection* and *native-like fluency*.

- The first is described as the native speaker capacity to retrieve specific expressions to convey a message, which are not just grammatically correct, but also native-like, representing a “puzzle” in the question of how does he/she manage to select a clause among an infinite variety of sentences.
- The second refers to the ability of a native speaker to fluently and spontaneously generate new pieces of language. In this case what is puzzling is whether human abilities manage to create new discourse before or during speech.

The mentioned issue is related to the fact that native speakers do not really train their faculty of generative grammar to a full extent, as if they had to experience this exercise, they could not be defined to have a native-like control of their language. This leads to the conclusion that in approaching to native-like control of language, learners should not be limited to learn a set of grammar rules, but they need also to learn how to recognize among the almost infinite and grammatically acceptable sentences, the ones which can be considered native-like. The capacity to make this distinction is linked to native-like selection and the knowledge of grammar and syntactic rules is not enough to acquire this faculty. On the other hand, learners who are immersed in the language-speaking community and have the occasion to learn idiomatical language simultaneously



with grammar rules, usually encounter less obstacles in reaching native-like selection. What needs to be highlighted is that, in order to reach this type of capacity, learners should work primarily on “*speech acts*” and “*discourse context*” (Pawley and Syder, 1983:198), since well-formed sentences could be considered unnatural in certain types of contexts, but also proper expressions in others. Considering now *native-like fluency*, it is observed that creating connected speech which is also spontaneous is a capacity that requires an extremely long time for a foreign language learner to achieve. It employs a considerable mental effort and it has to do with the common problem of “finding the right words” to express in an ongoing discourse or conversation. In this respect, Pawley and Syder underline the importance of a “*one clause at a time facility*” (1983:204) which is crucial in acquiring communicative linguistic competence and refers to the learner’s need to observe and codify strings of language in their unanalysed form, considering their single lexical features as a whole. This holistic approach of storing full clauses permits to retrieve them more rapidly and mechanically and has also the advantage of resulting more familiar both to the speaker who is recalling it and to the listener (Pawley and Syder, 1983; Schmitt, 2007).

Another relevant aspect of language which appears to be disregarded because of the major attention paid to grammar, is the ability to create periphrasis. This skill is indeed a fundamental part of our linguistic competence, referring to the act of explaining the meaning of a word which we do not know or remember, with the aid of other words. It is something we always do, not only in the foreign language we study, but even in our own mother tongue when for instance we are too tired or unfocused to find the right word or expression. Balboni assumes that one of the reasons why grammar forms and morphological and syntactic closed systems have special consideration in the classroom environment is that teaching lexis is much more complex in terms of teaching organization. This complexity in the choice of methodologies and strategies results in an extreme negligence not only

in the practical teaching, but most importantly in the materials adopted to learn the language (Balboni, 2012).

In sum, vocabulary and grammar can be regarded at as two differentiated learning systems. On the one hand, words and lexical phrases are related to the acquisition of individual units and clauses, designing a process defined as *item learning*, in which the key point is the fact that the items represent wholes. On the other hand, grammar rules and syntactic structures fell into another type of learning process, defined as *system learning*, which focus on form and pattern variation of the different aspects of language according to morphosyntactic rules. Although these two systems are differentiated, they are not separated in terms of intention; on the contrary they represent a complementary process which needs to be empowered in order to acquire linguistic competence (Schmitt and Carter, 2000).

### 1.1.3. Multi-word items, formulaic language and linguistic awareness

In section 1.1.1. it has been introduced how lexis is not only about single words, being composed also of an incredible great number of lexical patterns and sequences. Among those, one of the most known type of lexical pattern was that of idioms and proverbs (*e.g. all good things come to an end*), but in fact, the kinds of lexical sequences to be considered as wholes are much more. Lewis addresses to the need for teachers to present these types of lexical items, defined also as formulaic sequences, to a larger extent than they actually are in traditional language teaching, putting them in a prominent position over features of individual words. Studies have discovered that formulaic patterns cover from a one-third to a one-half of language, and they are employed in many ways: to convey a concept (*e.g. to put someone out to pasture*) or expressions aiming to social interaction (*e.g. nice weather today*), to organize discourse (*e.g. on one hand, ... on the other hand*), to express a statement which represents a generally known truth (*e.g. a stitch in time saves nine*) or to convey a specific meaning

which can be obtained only with the association of determined words (*e.g. rancid butter*). Formulaic language is not limited to a set of word sequences, but it is the core of communicative language content and, in particular, it is interesting to observe how some individual word meanings took life precisely from the lexical phrase which they derive from. Schmitt provides an example of this phenomenon considering the word “*border*”: the meaning of this word usually refers to a physical limit or edge, but if considered in the phrase “*bordering on arrogance*”, it acquires a different meaning, providing the idea of an unpleasant mental state (Schmitt, 2007; Conklin and Schmitt, 2008).

Pinker addresses to lexicalised chunks as a “*different sense of a word*” (1994:146), highlighting the need to consider them as wholes just like mainstream single words vocabulary. He defines their meaning to be arbitrary, again in the same way individual words are, and he reaffirms the fact that speakers retrieve these items from their mental dictionary. Moreover, another term coined by Di Sciullo and Williams to define lexical sequences is “*listeme*” defined as “*the unit of a memorised list*” (1994:146). This term is a clear reference to the morphological unit of a morpheme and the sound unit of a phoneme, and aims to reconduct to the idea of word, whose treatment should be given equally to lexical units as well. The central conception at the basis of the term *listeme* is that single words and chunks should be provided the same idea of “*syntactic atom*”. Pinker also considers the impossibility for chunks to be mechanically constructed by rules of grammar and syntax, consequently assuming that the only way to express their message is to memorize them. This common aspect can be observed for example in the inability to predict the meaning of some multi-word items such as idioms, despite the knowledge that the learner might possess of the single words which compose them (*e.g. bite the bullet, go bananas, etc.*) (Pinker, 1994:146).

The fundamental role of formulaic language can be identified in terms of pragmatic function, as in the common case in which they are employed to fulfil communicative needs. Some of these needs present such a recurring use that the expressions employed to accomplish them have been conventionalised to some extent (*e.g. I'm sorry to hear that, I'm glad to, etc.*) (Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992: 3). In a similar way, they are also needed in everyday conversation and used for diverse occasions to achieve a specific purpose. In other words, it is clear the fundamental role portrayed by formulaic language and its widespread use, and it is for this reason that their mastery is what makes a language learner turn into a fluent and proficient speaker. Pawley and Syder address to this concept affirming that “*native speakers produce coherent strings of cohesive language. This discourse is nativelike, as opposed to possible grammatical alternatives which are not*” (1983:191). Moreover, in considering the enhanced retrieving process provided by lexical items observing them in their entirety (see section 1.1.1.), it is possible to state that formulaic language in human mind may represent a greater lexical resource than individual words in terms of communication (Conklin and Schmitt, 2008).

Having declared the value of formulaic discourse and multi-word lexical items, it is now time to observe how these elements should be treated, as to say whether there is a way to address to these items in order to empower the learner lexical acquisition. Willis and Willis (1996) discuss the inability of describing language “as a whole” in an objective and inclusive way, since the varieties and aspects which it presents are impossible to be enclosed in exhaustive outlines. Still, it is possible to provide students guidelines or better, to make them create their own, through exercises and tasks which require them to make hypotheses reflecting about language patterns and encourage them to draw conclusions about the aspect of language put into focus. Such activities have the aim to raise learner awareness on language features and for this reason are defined consciousness-raising (CR)

activities. Indeed, students are asked to formulate hypotheses on language rule construction on the basis of given linguistic data and this kind of tasks is extremely recurrent in grammar-translation approach. Nevertheless, it is also underlined how this traditional approach presents a very poor variety in terms of CR activities and techniques, and most importantly, the foreign language exposure is reduced to a minimum. Thus, as it has already been argued, this aspect can only have negative influences on acquisition and language proficiency. Moreover, the first theorists to strongly oppose to the role of consciousness were the behaviourists, since in their perspective, conscious processes are unimportant for human life and are not generalisable, as they cannot be scientifically observed and explained. Conscious experience is not objective, it is impossible to analyse it from the outside and the concept of “introspection” is not even considered by behaviourists, owing to its unreliability. Only starting from 1970s, researchers observed how students could be left practicing on features of language and grammar by themselves if properly exposed to the target language in the first place. The process which this type of teaching technique tries to empower is exactly the active engagement of the learner in the search for patterns and regularities starting from given language data, and according to Willis and Willis, this process is what defines a learner “*successful*”. Making hypotheses and drawing conclusions not only helps students to construct generalisable rules to some extent, but it may result also in the acquisition of useful learning habits which could reoccur every time learners find themselves in front of a piece of language. In conclusion, this constant procedure of observation, hypotheses construction and conclusions drawing, typical of a conscious involvement in the learning process, is also defined as a “guided problem solving” (Schmidt, 1990; Willis and Willis, 1996).

## 1.2. A shift of emphasis – The Lexical Approach

At this point, the main principles representing a major change in teaching languages have been introduced, as to say the new attention to multi-word items and formulaic language, the need to resize the role of grammar and the way in which language content should be presented, in particular concerning chunks. Lewis' Lexical Approach perfectly recollects all these linguistic considerations of a renewed understanding of language and how it is stored and then retrieved from our memory. From such new considerations the need to replace traditional activities with new and more efficient ones becomes clear and this is exactly what Lexical Approach attempts to do.

### 1.2.1. From words to prefabricated chunks

One of the main cores of the Lexical Approach can be found in the discourse about prefabricated phrases value, strings of multi-word lexical items which can be fixed or semi-fixed. In language it is not so usual to find rules and patterns which are totally fixed and regular, as each sentence or sequence we try to compose is linked to probability and contextual tendency. In addition, Lewis refers to the concept of “*idiomaticity*”, also known as “*the principle of idiom*”, term employed in relation to fixed, non-literal and often extravagant expressions (*e.g. it's raining cats and dogs*). These items have always been considered common in spoken language, but not proper for academic texts, and for this reason their presentation in advanced level courses have often been avoided. Still, what is crucial in the frequent use of idioms and multi-word chunks in general, is the fact that they help the processing of lexical items and facilitate learners' focus on the message new information (Lewis, 2006).

In summary, Lewis suggests a revision in traditional beliefs of language acquisition according to the idea that “*language does not consist of grammar and words, and that much of our mental lexicon is stored as prefabricated multi-word*

*chunks*” (1997: 20). Extremely interesting is the analogy that Lewis creates between human relationships and lexical partnerships. Each of them is characterised by differentiations, people can have a larger or smaller group of friends, but many or very few acquaintances or unstable relationships, some others may have a very strong bond with their family or sometimes they do not. This aspect may present a link with the use we make of words, as just like people and their relationships, some words are often found in the same conversational or textual contexts. Still, in the same way we refer to our relationships, frequency is not enough as:

*“raw frequency of collocation reveals the typical patterns of a word. But typicality is not necessarily the same as strength or importance. [...] Frequency is undoubtedly of interest, but strength may provide a more powerful organising principle”*  
(Lewis:1997:27).

The strength that Lewis refers to can be identified in the way some words-partnership such as collocations, may be not equally strong inverting their order (e.g. *non-alcoholic* suggests that we are referring to a *drink*, but not all *drinks* are *non-alcoholic*). Therefore, when regarding formulaic language highly frequent occurrence of the same words should be observed, but in some cases, such as for collocations, a major focus is needed in terms of strength (Lewis, 1997).

### 1.2.2. The rise of lexicogrammar

As far as the grammar-lexis dichotomy is concerned, Lewis quotes John Sinclair’s idea that *“grammatical generalisations do not rest on a rigid foundation, but are the accumulation of the patterns of hundreds of individual words and phrases”* (Sinclair, 1991:100). In the footsteps of this concept, Lewis in theorising his approach declares to firmly believe in the greater importance of lexis and specifically of *idiomaticity*, as compared with grammatical rules. This conclusion was reached according to the fundamental conception that *“language is*

*essentially about the creation and exchange of meaning*” (Lewis, 2006) and the fact that when speaking we do not perform operations such as turning a verb into its passive form or transforming sentences from direct to reported speech. This is not real language; it can be defined as just mere *“language-like behaviour”* and no classroom should base its activities on such types of tasks, since *“they make learning artificially difficult and actually constitute a barrier to efficient acquisition”* (Lewis, 2006:9).

Moreover Lewis (1993: 134-137) provides ten crucial rules for grammar which should be followed in every Lexical Approach-based teaching programme:

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”.*

Lewis states that the *“recognition of these factors suggests a much wider concept of grammar than the traditionally adopted in the teaching of English”* (1993: 137), introducing one of the fundamental points of Lexical Approach, as to say the concept of *lexicogrammar*<sup>4</sup>. To conclude, the Lexical Approach is based on a change of emphasis on lexis as the focal point of language proficiency and acquisition, since all its aspects are basically ruled in terms of meanings and lexical chunks. In this change of perspective, grammar still plays an important role, but it remains one of the aspects which are governed by lexis, losing the central position it always had occupied in traditional language teaching. Here lies

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<sup>4</sup> The term *lexicogrammar* refers to a unitary conception of language, in which all its aspects (morphosyntactic rules, grammar and lexis) combine, consequently being regarded not as individual units, but rather as reciprocally dependent components of language (Sardinha, 2012).



the idea of ceasing to see language as a set of rules which regulates language (*lexicalised grammar*), and starting to consider it as *grammaticalized lexis*, giving much more emphasis on “*word grammar*” instead of on “*sentence grammar*” in order to “*extend students’ communicative power*” (Lewis, 1993:143).

### 1.2.3. Noticing language

In section 1.1.3. the concept of language awareness has been introduced as one of the aspects which creates a proficient and successful learner. To reach awareness of something the first step to do is to notice it and its features, and it is exactly in the term “*noticing*” that Lewis identifies another fundamental point of development in the Lexical Approach, as he states that:

*“Exercises and Activities which help the learner observe or notice the L2 more accurately ensure quicker and more carefully-formulated hypotheses about L2, and so aid acquisition which is based on a constantly repeated Observe-Hypothesise-Experiment cycle”* (Lewis, 1997:52).

Consciousness-raising represents a similar view, or even an extension to the act of noticing, becoming in recent times a central issue in language acquisition research. CR is an inductive type of approach which can be applied to both grammar and lexis activities, being defined as a “*facilitator*” for language acquisition. In CR activities, a learner is required to notice grammar, morphosyntactic and lexical features of the target language and “*to analyse them in order to make new form-meaning relations*” (Borelli, 2015:1). This type of activity is a perfect instrument to raise students’ awareness and engagement in language choices without putting them under pressure with language production. Moreover, asking students to think about the use they are doing of the target language and its aspects may be also a potential development method in approaching language acquisition by themselves, not only in the classroom, but

in everyday life as well. Therefore, studies reveal that focusing on “*explicit knowledge*” in learning hours can offer many benefits to language proficiency, as well as to implicit knowledge processes in the target language (Borelli, 2015).

As far as multi-word items are concerned, Lewis highlights that CR activities and exercises which put learners’ attention on the components of the chunk help them process the input more successfully and that, consequently, these types of activities should represent the core of language teaching (Lewis, 1997). Seyidova (2018) gives a detailed description of CR methodology based on the “*Observe-Hypothesise-Experiment cycle*” formulated by Lewis and applied to multi-word lexical items observation. She explains that since the process should begin with observation, the primary element which should be observed is the text, from which the learner is asked to identify chunks and to discover new rules. After the recollection of new data, repetitive and mechanical pattern drills should be avoided to make space for learners’ considerations on word partnership guided by the teacher. At this point, assumptions and hypotheses on the lexical structure observed start to be made and, after having verified and “experimented” them, the identified multi-word lexical items are reused in exercises and activities in order to facilitate learners’ memorisation and to enhance fluency. In this type of process, the role of the teacher is of paramount importance, as it is only with his/her guidance that the learner can go through this learning path and have access to authentic inputs. In conclusion, the teacher represents a crucial resource for the organisation of the learning process and for students approaching to authentic language as naturally as possible (Lewis, 1993; Seyidova, 2018).

## *Chapter 2*

### *Previous research on formulaic language and lexical approach implementation in the EFL classroom*

In Chapter 1 the theoretical framework has been presented, by discussing the role of lexis, the value given to multi-word lexical items and their treatment. Moreover, Lewis' Lexical Approach main principles were introduced. In the next sections some significant additional research on formulaic units and their applications are recollected. This second chapter is composed of two main sections. The first (2.1.) provides an insight into formulaic language research and is further divided into two parts, one (2.1.1.) regarding specifically the processes involved in formulaic discourse production, and one (2.1.2.) investigating their role in written and oral proficiency.

The second section (2.2.) aims at illustrating some relevant Lexical Approach applications in the field of EFL teaching and learning and it is divided into two parts as well. The first (2.2.1.) refers to a research which observed whether the introduction of teaching units structured on Lexical Approach principles in a Chinese College provided at the end of the semester some advantages in terms of language proficiency. The second and last part of the chapter aims to illustrate the study conducted by Kasuya (2000), which investigated whether Lexical Approach implementations can be found in five EFL textbooks used in a Japanese high school. This latter research was extremely important for the purposes of the present dissertation and two of the methods which have been borrowed will be better discussed in Chapter 3.

#### 2.1. Further research on formulaic language

In Chapter 1 the relevant role that chunks of formulaic discourse represent in language production and learning has been introduced. The spread of prefabricated sequences such as idioms and collocations is massive, and it is also

due to their frequency in use that human mind can process them much more easily and quickly than the creative language regulated by generative grammar. In this respect, this section aims to present previous successful studies on formulaic language and its beneficial impact on processing data in oral and written proficiency (Pawley and Syder 1983; Conklin and Schmitt, 2008).

### 2.1.1. The processing of formulaic discourse

An interesting study conducted by Conklin and Schmitt (2008) investigates the benefits that formulaic discourse brings in processing data, making a comparison between the time native and non-native speakers employ to read formulaic and non-formulaic units. In this regard, they suggest that in aiming to investigate whether the advantages in formulaic sentences process are real, it is extremely important to consider their context. In fact, formulaic language is always contextualised in discourse and cannot be found as isolated items, additionally its processing speed is influenced by multiple factors. An aspect which is highly observed when speaking about formulaic language is *frequency*, which is affirmed to be one of the primary aspects to influence word and lexical items recognition. It is demonstrated that lexical items which present high frequency are recognised and processed in a more rapid way by our minds than low frequency ones.

Still, the aspect which plays a paramount role in our way of processing data, even more important than frequency, is *familiarity*. Frequent oral and written items and patterns are surely relevant, but what constitutes a more adequate predictor in terms of responsiveness is familiarity, especially when considering words presenting a lower frequency. In fact, despite the general idea of a quite linear and balanced relationship between frequency and familiarity, this equilibrium seems to fail in regarding low frequency lexical items (Gernsbacher, 1984).

Another aspect which is observed to influence word recognition in Conklin and Schmitt's study is word length, as they observe how the response times seem to

be dilated when considering longer sentences. Still, it has also been noted that length influences on word recognition were also affected by their degree of frequency, as the response time became longer with the increase of the number of word syllables or lexical elements, but appeared to be more modest when regarding high frequency lexical items. Finally, also *priming* appears to be a fundamental effect, as in presenting a related word, items recognition is empowered; a perfect example of priming concept can be found in collocational word partnerships, where words basically “*prime each other*” (Conklin and Schmitt, 2008:79).

In summary, Conklin and Schmitt’s purpose in the research was also to consider and control the mentioned aspects of formulaic language as extraneous factors in relation to potential advantages in the speed of recognising data. The linguistic skill which they investigated was the reading mode and the question they proposed referred to whether formulaic units are processed more rapidly. In addition, the study also focused on the participants’ literal and idiomatic interpretation of the formulaic sequences, asking whether their metaphorical reading resulted to be processed more rapidly or slowly if compared to the process of the literal meaning provided by their individual lexical components.

Supporting the idea that sequences of formulaic discourse bring great advantages on the processing of linguistic data, it was discovered that the participants to the study could read formulaic sequences more rapidly than non-formulaic ones. Moreover, it was learned that the resulted benefits in processing data seemed to have nothing to do with the formulaic unit being used literally or idiomatically. For instance, the idiom *to take the bull by the horns* was processed by participants in its literal meaning “*to wrestle an animal*” as well as in its idiomatic meaning “*to attack a problem*” (2008: 81). Also, extremely interesting is the fact that the results obtained can be applied to non-native speakers as well, consequently

leading to the assumption that foreign language students benefit from the same type of process as native speakers (Conklin and Schmitt, 2008).

### 2.1.2. Formulaic language in written and oral proficiency

Studies on formulaic discourse in writing production observed a great deal of frequent combinations of words, especially concerning contexts such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Such researches highlighted how formulaic sequences can affect students' writing performance, firstly in terms of pragmatic communicative purposes, when employing markers which have the function of structuring the text and help to provide coherence. Secondly, the use of formulaic language in writing is considered to provide incredible enhancements in language proficiency. Kiliç (2015) underlines the need to investigate whether coursebooks provide proper observation of formulaic language and in particular, whether formulaic language participate in the empowerment of writing coherence and linguistic competence. In this regard, the research observed that one of the main issues learners encounter in writing tasks is a lack of coherence, which needs to be given much more emphasis for instance through the employment of formulaic discourse markers (e.g. *on one hand, ... on the other hand*). These types of expressions are often provided by coursebooks, but they do not seem to be paid the right attention, even though studies suggest that it is their use which defines a well-written, coherent piece of academic writing, in which ideas are properly connected. Studies highlight also the fact that in helping to create coherence in writing, formulaic units can also be seen as a source to create a major awareness in students, which can express ideas in a much more organised way and reuse those same patterns to improve in writing production and in language proficiency in general. In addition, one of the main purposes of employing formulaic phrases in academic writing is that of decreasing the reader's effort in the data process,

marking the discourse and the ideas proposed in the text (Kiliç, 2015; Wray, 2008).

Extensive research on formulaic language was conducted as far as written proficiency is concerned. Still, the role of formulaic discourse may be equal, if not even more relevant in oral production. Sorhus (1977) suggests how speakers who participated in her study used a formulaic discourse item once every five words pronounced. Among these items also individual words used as fillers were considered (e.g. *ok, please, well, etc.*), but what is interesting is that even leaving these fillers outside the count, the frequency of formulaic lexical units remains extremely high, with the employment of expressions such as *a lot of, you know, of course, for example, etc.* It was estimated that nineteen were the items employed with an average of 41%, and these are the most frequent among the overall expressions she observed in her research. In addition, it has been argued that in oral speech which presents specific time limitations, such as advertisements and sport announcing, formulaic strings reveal to be crucial (Sorhus, 1977; Conklin and Schmitt, 2008).

De Bot (1992) explains that oral production can be extensively demanding from a cognitive point of view, provided that an average speech contains approximately 150 words pronounced in a minute, but also some peaks can arrive at 300 words in the same time frame. This implies that during oral speech we have a time interval between 200 and 400 milliseconds to process, retrieve and reemploy a specific lexical item among the about 30000 words stored in our minds, still, we usually succeed in this task (de Bot 1992: 11).

Wray gives a definition of formulaic unit, defining it 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” (2002: 9).

Naturally, this process if carried out by one person may not be processed in the same way by another. In fact, psycholinguistic studies suggest that this type of “holistic process” may apply to native speakers of a certain language, but when comes to observe language learners it is not always correct to talk about formulaic language, as learners might still process that multi-word sequence according to the generative rules. In considering formulaic language in oral proficiency, a study conducted by Boers (2006) appears to be quite revealing. In the mentioned study, an experiment is conducted in order to discover to which extent formulaic language has a positive impact on L2 proficiency and whether *noticing* techniques might enhance students’ memorization of multi-word phrases. The participants were English students who were proposed a large quantity of authentic language material. The research results showed on one hand that formulaic language appears to be of great support for learners when facing an interview conducted in the target language, revealing beneficial for their proficiency. On the other hand, *noticing* techniques and CR activities aiming to enhance the learners’ awareness of the formulaic target language features, resulted to be of great help not only for language proficiency, but also for teachers to assess it. Still, as far as their perception of linguistic accuracy, the positive effect of formulaic language did not report any significant data. To conclude, constructing a wide repertoire of formulaic phrases seems to represent a great contribution in learners’ oral proficiency empowerment, especially concerning the learners’ perception of their own fluency and their freedom in constructing language (Boers, 2006).

## 2.2. Lexical approach application studies

Lewis’ approach is mainly referred to the study of English language as a second language (L2). Nevertheless, it appears to be effectively applicable also for



foreign language acquisition as well. Among the preliminary remarks made by Lewis, it is important to underline that the Lexical Approach represents an expansion of the communicative approach<sup>5</sup>, sharing its main principles. The primary difference between the two types of approach lies in an empowered comprehension of lexis nature and its fundamental value in language education, which the Lexical Approach put at its roots. On the other hand, a communicative principle adopted by Lewis theory is the supremacy of oral over written production, as writing skills certainly are an important aspect of language, but remain a kind of codification that should occur only in a second step. In this regard, Lewis suggests that grammar should not be considered as a set of standardised rules, but as a developmental device for the learner to obtain a major awareness of language. In addition, he firmly declares the need for a great diversification in the learning materials, which should be based on multiple factors, such as students' age and level of proficiency. This, according to Porcelli, consequently leads to a necessity of a continuous reorganization of coherent learning programmes which may adapt well with a lexical approach, ceasing to follow a *presentation-exercise-production* teaching model and starting to observe an *observation-hypothesis-experiment* paradigm (Lewis, 1993; Porcelli, 2004:32).

### 2.2.1. A lexical chunk-based approach in the classroom

Xu, Mao and Liu (2012) conducted an interesting research which aimed to discover if a lexical chunk-based teaching methodology, constructed on Lewis'

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<sup>5</sup> The communicative approach represents a new perspective emerged in 1960s, which do no longer see the core of language in linguistic competence, as to say in a set of rules, patterns and meanings, but in the much more complex concept of *communicative competence*. Communicative competence refers to every aspect of language which should be employed to convey meaning, and it includes: *linguistic competence*, *sociolinguistic competence*, *paralinguistic competence* and *extra-linguistic competence*. Therefore, a communicative approach in language teaching do not put a stress on how language is formed, but on what language is used for, as to say on its social and pragmatic applications (Balboni, 2012; Laboratorio Itals). For further information see Laboratorio Itals: <https://www.itals.it/alias/approcci-e-metodi-della-glottodidattica>.

Lexical Approach theory, may bring advantages to the Collage English students who participated to the investigation. The three researchers claim that during the past decades of research, Chinese teachers have demonstrated a growing interest in the observation of lexical chunks in English teaching, considering them valuable as generative rules of grammar. In fact, *“lexical chunks indicate the positive interaction of semantics, syntax and pragmatics to promote further development of language utterances”* (Xu, Mao and Liu, 2012:2090). The need for this investigation arose as most classes based their teaching methods on two parts: the first was the presentation and analysis of new words provided through vocabulary lists, the second referred to the observation of longer sentences in texts which contained the words presented in the first place. This method resulted in discouraging outcomes, as despite the importance of vocabulary, an inadequate way of acquiring it and contextualising it leads to linguistic issues. Moreover, learners’ competence in multi-word items and formulaic language appeared too low as *“students are eager to enlarge their vocabulary but neglect the comprehensive mastery of it”* (2012:2092). In the interest of the research, teaching units were constructed in order to make learners correctly identify and reemploy lexical sequences and they were employed for about one semester. Such units were modelled on the Lexical Approach principles and their exercises were CR-based. Each unit presented three stages:

- *Lead-in stage*: this part is dedicated to the introduction of new content through activities such as warm-up questions, photo discussion and videos. It aims to increase learners’ motivation in the creation of hypotheses and in expressing them in the target language.
- *Text-analysis stage*: in this part reading materials are employed to ask students to identify lexical units and to analyse and make assumptions about them through strategies such as paraphrasing.

- *Conclusion stage*: having analysed a text, in this last part students are asked to conclude the learning unit by completing activities such as writing tasks, summaries and reviews. So, after having identified and analysed lexical chunks in the previous steps, here students need to accurately employ them in language production.

Concluded the investigation, students were discovered to appreciate the introduction of multi-word units, noting a beneficial effect in their English acquisition process and especially in their confidence in using language. Data confirmed that using chunks students can accurately produce fluent language, in a better way than combining individual words. In summary, a lexical chunks-based approach provides a new concept of language education, using Lewis' idea of "a new emphasis" and should not be disregarded in the classroom programme organisation, in which teachers should create more opportunities to enhance chunk acquisition through the employment of specific Lexical Approach-based techniques (Lewis, 1993; 1997; Xu, Mao and Liu, 2012).

### 2.2.2. Lexical Approach implementation in EFL textbooks

This section aims to provide an insight into the role of materials in language education and notably, into their employment in a Lexical Approach-based teaching methodology. Firstly, it should be highlighted the importance of textbooks in any kind of educative course, as they are devices which reassure the learners, who consider it as a guide, even when teachers prepare their own lesson material. In fact, in preparing single lessons without the use of a textbook sometimes can be a disadvantage for students, as "*it is almost impossible to guarantee effective sequencing and balance*" (Lewis, 1993:182). Thus, a sporadic and supplementary use of a textbook is considered by Lewis to be more effective than a course organisation which take it into no consideration. In addition, if well-structured on consciousness-raising activities and relevant exercises and tasks,

textbooks could be an important device to capture learners' attention on concepts and aspects of language which they had underestimated or did not notice at a first sight. Finally, another aspect which should not be neglected when regarding textbooks, is their authority, as the information they provide will always be better accepted by students than teachers' suggestions. Among the materials used in the classroom, a few words should be said concerning grammar reference and practice books. Lewis defines them as "*a greatly over-used resource*" (1993: 181) and identifies in their structure the main issue. Grammar books should be regarded as a useful device for checking information when encountering potential doubts, but they reveal to be pointless in cases of learner's confusion. Except when including specific criteria such as "*natural co-text, supra-sentential practice and well-chosen archetypical examples*", Lewis states that grammar practice books "*can do more harm than good*" (1993:181). In fact, their common exercises such as fill-in and transformation tasks, despite their great diffusion even nowadays, reveal to have no actual relevance in language acquisition. Citing a study about the role of Lexical Approach in Italy carried out by Serra Borneto in 1998, Cardona (2009) makes some considerations about the predominance of grammar and a traditional approach in teaching, despite the enormous spread of communicative approach theories. He also highlights the fact that accurate error analysis in educational studies had led to the awareness that the major obstacles in foreign language production are caused mainly by issues linked to lexis. Then, he mentions a vital theory for the Lexical Approach, which sees our mental lexicon linked by a net that simultaneously codifies both grammatical and lexical information; an idea that is in contrast with the traditional view of considering words singularly stored in separated "drawers" of our mind. Finally, he refers to the fundamental role of collocations and the urge need to introduce them through educational materials based on authentic texts and a strategic presentation of lexis as a didactic purpose (Serra Borneto, 1998: 227-228).

Concerning Lexical Approach implementation in EFL materials, an interesting study conducted by Kasuya (2000) and repeated by Miozzo (2018) provides important contributions to the purpose of the present research. In Kasuya's study five textbooks used in a Japanese high school have been analysed in order to determine which treatment was given to lexical items. After having identified the types of exercises presented in the books, he put them in a table composed of five categories (*fixed expressions including idioms, lexical collocations, lexically dependant patterns, features of individual words and grammatical rules*). The parameter used to decide in which category each exercise should have fallen was identified in the type of knowledge the students needed to successfully complete the task. The results show that except one textbook, which presented a major attention to grammar activities (70%) than to lexical items (30%), among the overall textbook exercises an approximate 70% was focused on lexis features, while a 30% was about grammar rules. Still, despite a general greater space dedicated to lexical items, Kasuya states that the analysed materials "*do not deal with lexis in satisfactory ways*" (2000:37). In fact, it was observed that the stress was all about individual words, while multi-word lexical items were considerably underestimated, particularly regarding collocations.

On the other hand, despite a focus on multi-word items such as fixed expressions, the tasks required to learners revealed to be inadequate for learners' linguistic awareness, as they were based only on memorisation and transformation activities. Indeed, these types of activities might provide students some lexical knowledge, still, the fact that units are not stored in their minds as wholes but in their single components leads to the risk of being unavailable for authentic language production. As far as CR activities are concerned, Kasuya underlines their value in language teaching in terms of learners' active acquisition of lexical sequences which can be employed in authentic contexts, in and outside the

classroom. Still, again the investigated materials show a clear insufficiency of CR exercises, since for instance, among the 46 tasks of the first textbook focusing on lexis, only one was considered to raise learners' awareness, while in the third textbook all exercises were classified as N-CR (Kasuya, 2000; Miozzo, 2018).

Kasuya's research on the implementation of Lexical Approach in EFL textbooks used in Japan was extremely relevant in the interest of the present study. It is in the face of its results that in the next sections will be proposed the methods and discussion of the current study, according to the investigation arisen from three main questions:

1. Which types of lexical item are observed in the EFL materials?
2. Is the concept of grammaticalized lexis implemented?
3. How are multi-word lexical items treated?

## Part 2

### The Research

#### *Chapter 3 – Introduction to the research*

After having delineated an overview of the theoretical framework, this chapter will present the actual research. In particular, in the first section (3.1) the aim of the study and the three research questions will be illustrated, while in the second (3.2) and third sections (3.3) the material and methods employed during data collection will be described.

#### 3.1. Research Questions

The present paper aims at investigating the attention paid to lexis in EFL textbooks used in Italian upper secondary schools and Universities, which go from an A2 to a C1 level of the CEFR. The general purpose of the research is that of discovering whether it is possible to find Lexical Approach principles in some of the mainstream English textbooks used in Italy.

As Cardona (2006) maintains, “*the spread of this approach is still a work in progress in non-Anglo-Saxon contexts*” and there is still a lack of implementation of Lewis’ theory and a paucity or even a complete absence of educational material based on it<sup>6</sup> (Cardona, 2009). Pushed by the interest to understand this topic deeper, three research questions have been formulated and investigated. Their general purpose is to understand whether Lewis’ Lexical Approach has been implemented in some of the mainstream EFL textbooks used in Italy in the last decade. As it has already been clarified in the previous sections, the Lexical

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<sup>6</sup> Here the original passage: “*In Italia il Lexical Approach è stato oggetto di alcune pubblicazioni (Serra Borneto 1998; Cambiaghi 2003; Porcelli 2004; Cardona 2004), tuttavia non ha ancora ottenuto la meritata diffusione e scarseggiano o sono del tutto assenti materiali didattici*” (Cardona, 2009: 2).

Approach principles are multiple and diverse, and the analysis of textbook exercises cannot provide an exhaustive idea of all its aspects. Some principles could only be observed by analysing an actual teacher's lesson and its classroom practice, but the textbooks employed can tell us something about the implementation of some other principles of a determined approach. Hence, in the three research questions that have been formulated the purpose is that of investigating the Lexical Approach key principles that are meant to be implemented primarily in foreign language textbooks. The purpose of the research is not that of discovering whether the Lexical Approach is implemented in the materials under investigation basing it on the fact that every single principle of the approach needs to be observed in the textbooks; on the contrary, just the presence of its fundamental principles can contribute to the idea that an implementation has already been developed.

### 3.1.1. First research question

RQ1: Which types of lexical item are observed in the EFL materials?

The first aim is that of clarifying which types of lexical item are observed in the exercises of the books under analysis. As Lewis affirms: "*Lexical items are the minimal units for certain syntactic purposes*" (1993: 90) and they present three fundamental features. The first can be found in the fact that their form does not necessarily introduce their meaning, which can only be fully grasped considering each lexical item as a single whole. The second refers to their nature of minimal units for specific syntactic purposes and not minimal units of language. In this respect, considering the minimal unit of language is not always revealing, since being able to analyse something does not inevitably mean that this analysis results to be useful. On the contrary, it could be useful to consider that same



minimal unit in terms of its purpose within a specific context. The third and last relevant feature of lexical items is their nature as “*social institutions*”. Lexical items are socially defined, and this can be observed while listening to a native speaker, whose lexis selection is likely to contain a very high frequency of specific sentences. Furthermore, lexical items are “*socially sanctioned independent units*”, many of which appear to be not only single words, but multi-word units, whose perception as a single unanalysed whole is suggested by academics to play an incredibly important role in a faster speech production (Lewis, 1993: 89-90).

### 3.1.2. Second research question

RQ2: Is the concept of grammaticalized lexis implemented?

The second question focuses on grammar, most specifically on whether grammar is presented from a lexical point of view in the analysed textbooks. The purpose is to determine if the exercises and activities proposed in the textbooks are constructed around a *lexicalised grammar* or around a *grammaticalized lexis*. Lewis discusses the fact that although lexis has always played a secondary role in language teaching, it is the real core of language. In this respect, he also highlights how the traditional view of considering grammar as the basis of language and its proficiency to be all that counts for successful communication, is actually “*the central misunderstanding of language teaching*” (1993: 133). Subsequently, “*the Lexical Approach suggests changes to the content of grammar teaching*” (1993:146), encouraging a concept of grammar that goes beyond the one that has always been adopted in English teaching, which can be denoted as “lexicalised grammar”. In this sense, the role of grammar according to Lewis should be reorganized to the grammaticalization of lexis, as lexis alone can be employed to

convey even complex messages, but it is still important to have those messages grammaticalized.

### 3.1.3. Third research question

RQ3: How are multi-word lexical items treated?

This last question has the purpose of investigating how the multi-word lexical items identified through the first research question are treated in the textbooks under analysis. Lewis argues that learners who efficiently acquire language should not only observe the input presented to them, but it is also important to notice the units which constitute the input. This turns upon the concept of *noticing* already discussed in Section 1.2.3., which reconstitutes also to the similar view known as “*consciousness-raising*” (CR), whose application in activities and exercises has been heavily promoted by Jane and Dave Willis. Indeed, RQ3 aims to discover whether the treatment reserved for multi-word items in the analysed materials is based on CR activities, consequently leading to a process which reveals to be essential to help learners in inferring language features, creating their own learning habits and becoming more independent (Willis, D. and J. in Lewis, 2008: 52).

## 3.2. Materials

The materials that have been analysed to carry out this research are ten EFL textbooks published around the last decade (2009-2019) with the purpose to give an overview of the use and structure of EFL textbooks and identify possible differences on the implementing of Lewis’ Lexical Approach. Precisely five of

them are used in upper secondary school (*scuola secondaria di secondo grado*)<sup>7</sup> (see Table 1 and 2) covering levels from intermediate (B1) to upper-intermediate (B2) of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The other five textbooks are addressed to university/adult students<sup>8</sup> (see Table 3) and range from upper-intermediate (B2) to an advanced (C1/C2) CEFR level.

Before proceeding with the presentation of the materials, a brief overview will be provided of the English proficiency levels that students are expected to reach at the end of upper secondary school and at universities in Italy. As far as upper secondary schools (*licei*) are concerned, the national guidelines indicate that students who conclude the fifth year are expected to have attained an upper-intermediate level (B2) of CEFR in one foreign language, commonly English. An exception is made by *liceo linguistico*<sup>9</sup>, a type of high school dedicated to the study of foreign languages and cultures. This is structured around the study of three foreign languages from the first year and the introduction of CLIL<sup>10</sup> -based instruction from the third year regarding the first language (usually English), and from the fourth year regarding a second language. The CLIL curriculum applies to the other types of upper secondary schools as well, but only in the fifth year. In this respect, it can be observed a difference in the linguistic proficiency levels requested by *licei linguistici*, as here, by the end of the fifth year, students are

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<sup>7</sup> Italian *scuola secondaria di secondo grado* (upper secondary school) is part of the second state educational cycle and it is also known as “scuola superiore”. It welcomes 14 to 19-year-old students, its length of time is 5 years and it is further divided into *licei*, *istituti professionali* and *istituti tecnici* (MIUR, *The Italian Education System*, 2014: 7).

<sup>8</sup> Italian *istruzione terziaria* refers to a higher level of education which follow the upper secondary school. It includes *università*, *politecnici*, *istituti di alta formazione artistica e musicale (AFAM)* and *istituti tecnici superiori (ITS)* (MIUR, *The Italian Education System*, 2014: 7).

<sup>9</sup> Available at: <https://www.miur.gov.it/liceo-linguistico>

<sup>10</sup> Content and Language Integrated Learning: a method that aim to the acquisition of integrated linguistic, communicative and disciplinary competences through the study of a specific subject in a foreign language. For further information see <https://www.miur.gov.it/clil1>

expected to reach a B2 level for the first foreign language studied, while only a B1 level is requested for the second and third ones<sup>11</sup> (MIUR, 2014).

At Italian universities, the proficiency level in English requested to students is diversified according to the different faculties, due to the lack of general national guidelines which specify language requirements and objectives. Usually, the proficiency level in English is assessed through a language test which may generally be substituted by a certificate provided by an international examination board (e.g. Cambridge ESOL, International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Trinity College London (TCL), etc.). In most Italian universities, the English level requested before graduation is B2, but many of them can also require just a B1. In the case of the faculties of Modern Foreign Languages the language skills and expected level to be acquired at the end of the degree course is different from those of other faculties. Considering the study of English language, the level students are expected to reach at the end of their Bachelor's degree is a C1 of CEFR, which might eventually be empowered during their Master's degree, with the aim of approaching to a C2 level. Interestingly, often students need to acquire a language level certification provided by an international board in order to be able to enrol in an Erasmus project or in an internship abroad. Here the level requested is different depending on the hosting University or company.<sup>12</sup>

Table 1 and 2 present the five EFL textbooks used in upper secondary school. They have been divided into two tables to distinguish the three textbooks oriented to an intermediate level, usually used in the *biennio* of Italian high schools and the last two textbooks aiming for an upper-intermediate level, used in this case in

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<sup>11</sup> For further information about Italian educative system in upper secondary schools see <https://www.miur.gov.it/sistema-educativo-di-istruzione-e-formazione>

<sup>12</sup> For further information about language level proficiency required by Italian Universities see: <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/it/why-cambridge-english/riconoscimento-universitario/>

the last three years of high school, the so called *triennio*. The years of *triennio* are also the time in which students are prepared to face the FCE (First Cambridge English) test or other equivalent certificate at B2 level of CEFR, and therefore the textbooks used in class are oriented to reach this proficiency level in view of their entrance into University. Two of the upper secondary school textbooks have been used in the past years in two specific schools of the province of Siena, during the second year of a *liceo linguistico* (Istituto San Giovanni Bosco, Colle di Val d’Elsa, SI) in the case of “*Get Real 2*” (2010) (see Table 1), and during the third year of a *liceo classico* (Istituto Alessandro Volta, Colle di Val d’Elsa, SI) in the case of “*New Headway*” (2009) (see Table 2). The other three textbooks, *Oxford Grammar for schools 5* (2014) (see Table 1), *English Grammar in Use* (2019) (see Table 1) and *Navigate* (2016) (see Table 2) have been found on online PDF and digital books archives, after having consulted numerous catalogues and lists of intermediate and upper-intermediate English textbooks meant for upper secondary schools.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Level</b>
Get Real 2	Hobbs, M., Starr Keddle, J., Chapman, R., Tite, P.	2010	Helbling Languages	Intermediate (B1)
Oxford Grammar for Schools 5	Godfrey, R.	2014	Oxford University Press	Intermediate (B1)
English Grammar in Use	Murphy, R.	2019	Cambridge University Press	Intermediate (B1/B2)

**Table 1.** EFL textbooks used in upper secondary school (*scuola secondaria di secondo grado*): intermediate level (B1 - B1/B2).

<b>Title</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Level</b>
New Headway	Soars L. and J.	2009	Oxford University Press	Upper-intermediate (B2)
Navigate	Krantz, C. and Roberts, R.	2016	Oxford University Press	Upper-intermediate (B2)

**Table 2.** EFL textbooks used in upper secondary school (*scuola secondaria di secondo grado*): upper-intermediate level (B2).

Concerning the textbooks oriented towards reaching an advanced level, Table 3 offers an overview of the last five EFL textbooks analysed which are used in English faculties of Italian University. The majority of them have been picked from some textbooks used at the University Ca' Foscari of Venice, specifically one from a Bachelor's degree course in English language (*New English File, 2014*) and two from a Master's degree course in Language Sciences (*Language Practice for Advanced, 2014* and *Oxford Grammar for EAP, 2017*). The fourth textbook (*Keynote, 2016*) has been found to be used in an English Master's degree course of the University of Pisa, while the fifth (*Cambridge Academic English – an integrated skills course for EAP, 2012*) was rather found in a digital books archive, since it was necessary to find an additional textbook to analyse which was published before 2014. In doing so, the aim was that of having a more complete coverage of the last decade, similarly to what has been done with the upper secondary school textbooks in Table 1 and 2.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Level</b>
Cambridge Academic English	Hewings, M. and Thaine, C.	2012	Cambridge University Press	Advanced (C1)
Language Practice for Advanced	Vince, M.	2014	Macmillan Education	Advanced (C1/C2)

New English File	Oxenden, C. and Latham-Koenig C.	2014	Oxford University Press	Advanced (C1)
Keynote	Lansford, L., Dummet, P. and Stephenson, H.	2016	National Geographic Learning, a part of Cengage Learning	Advanced (C1)
Oxford Grammar for EAP	Paterson, K. and Wedge, R.	2017	Oxford University Press	Advanced (B2/C1)

**Table 3.** EFL textbooks used at University (*istruzione terziaria*): Advanced level (B2/C1 - C1+ - C1/C2).

Of the ten EFL coursebooks under analysis, some present a focus on grammar (*Oxford Grammar for Schools 5*, *English Grammar in Use* and *Oxford Grammar for EAP*), so they had a special role in the investigation of the second research question, but also regarding the first research question it has been possible to keep an eye on how lexical items were treated. Only one textbook (*Get Real 2*) presented a workbook inserted in the student's book, so the decision was that of not considering it, in order to maintain approximately the same types and number of units analysed. In this regard, in order to preserve a certain grade of reliability, it was decided to pick three units from each textbook for all the three research questions: one unit at the beginning, one unit in the middle and one unit at the end of the book. Still, two textbooks do not maintain the same pattern of unit analysis. The first book straying from the path is *English Grammar in Use (2019)*, which is composed by 145 short units, each one being two pages long. Therefore, the decision taken to address the problem was that of picking ten units here, so that the average number of pages obtained by picking three units from the other textbooks is fulfilled in this case as well. On the other hand, the second book presenting an exception followed a different system of unit analysis. In fact,

*Language Practice for Advanced (2014)* presents three sections dedicated to different aspects of language: “grammar”, “vocabulary” and “words and phrases”. Each section is divided into units that are considerably short, that is why picking three units with the same criteria used for the other books would have resulted in having just one short unit for each section, and not three standard mixed content units. Thus, the criteria applied to this textbook was that of picking six units, as to say the first and the last unit of each of the three sections, so that the number of pages and, more importantly, the variety of exercises managed to approach more to those of the rest of the analysed materials. Finally, it is important to illustrate how analysing textbooks can present both positive and negative aspects in the matter of the reliability and generalization of the research findings. On the one hand, considering the impact that textbooks have in any learning environment, analysing a textbook can give us important information about how language teaching is structured inside the classroom and on which aspects of language it focuses the most. On the other hand, textbooks only provide us a partial view of how teaching is conducted inside a classroom, as to say it does not tell us about the entire language practice pursued by students, nor to what extent teachers actually make use of them in class.

### 3.3. Method

Data was analysed qualitatively. The present section addresses to each one of the research questions separately, describing the procedures that have been followed to analyse data.

#### 3.3.1.RQ1

To discover which types of lexical items can be found in the selected textbooks it was decided to assume Kasuya’s research method (see chapter 2), rearranging and adapting it to the purpose of the present research. The instrument employed is a



table with ten columns that indicate the textbooks analysed, while in the rows are listed the categories of lexical items (single words, institutionalised expressions, collocations and phrasal verbs). To the categories of lexical items, two more rows have been added: “mixed lexical items” and “mixed multi-word items”. This was done because during the collection of data it was realised that some exercises focused on more than one type of lexical item (e.g. single words, collocations, expressions and/or phrasal verbs), thus making it difficult to categorise them in just one specific item. Moreover, the decision of inserting not just one, but two more distinct categories, was driven by the investigation need of discovering to what extent multi-word lexical items are actually observed. Consequently, if only a mixed category including single words had been considered, it would have been impossible to identify the precise number of exercises dedicated specifically to mixed multi-word items. In this way, the division of the table permits to identify to what extent the analysed textbooks deal with multi-word items, even in the case of mixed categories, compared to the attention given to single words. Furthermore, as in Kasuya’s study, the category of *grammatical rules* was added in another row so as to investigate the impact that exercises related to lexis has throughout the textbooks, compared with the focus on grammar, which has always been traditionally predominant in language learning and teaching.

The table is composed of seven categories, which were organised following Lewis’ categorization and definitions of the different lexical items:

1. *Single words*: this category includes exercises related to diverse features of single words, independent units whose alteration or replacing can change the meaning of a sentence. Here also polywords have been included, as Lewis defines them as “*small extension*” of the category of single words, identifying them as “*phrases that have a degree of idiomaticity*” (Lewis in Coady, 1997: 256) and they can be usually found in dictionaries, like single

words. Therefore in this category the features that are observed are many and they include words with high information content (e.g. *friend, book, see, consciously, etc.*), considering characteristics such as meaning, synonyms, antonyms, word-to-word translation and compounds; and words with low or zero information content, such as grammatical words and connectors (e.g. *moreover, however, this, of, with, etc.*). As it has already been anticipated, following Lewis' vision, also polywords belong to this category, so the data collected on single words include also short units of multiple words such as *by the way, as a matter of fact, the day after tomorrow, on the other hand, etc.*

2. *Institutionalised expressions*: in this category are included exercises demanding a knowledge of institutionalised multi-word units, known also as fixed or semi-fixed expressions, which represent a crucial and high potential linguistic resource for students. This lexical item category is described by Lewis to be composed of three further sub-headings (1993: 94):

a) Short and barely grammaticalized phrases: *not yet, anything else?, we'll see, certainly not, etc.*

b) Sentence heads or frames: *secondly, ... and finally, sorry to interrupt, but..., in my opinion..., etc.*

c) Idioms, full sentences with pragmatic meaning typically used by native speakers: *speak of the devil, a piece of cake, once in a blue moon, etc.*

3. *Collocations*: the third category refers to high frequency co-occurrence of words. In collocations, one word can strongly or even exclusively determine the other word, but this degree of mutuality is not always

observed. For instance, the term *rancid* is almost exclusively combined with *butter*, but *butter* does not present the same degree of fixedness, as it does not necessarily have to suggest the adjective *rancid* (Lewis, 1993: 93). In data collection both lexical and grammatical collocations have been considered to be part of this category, as they both represent two different but still linked aspects of this phenomenon. As Bahns (1993) explained, the main difference between these two types of collocations lies in the fact that in lexical collocations grammatical patterns are not involved, as they contain combinations of nouns, adverbs, adjectives and verbs, such as adjective + noun (*e.g. hard work*), verb + noun (*e.g. pay attention*), noun + noun (*e.g. comfort zone*), adverb + adjective (*e.g. fully aware*), etc. Grammatical collocations are rather composed of a noun, a verb or an adjective combined with a grammatical structure such as a “that-clause” or “to + infinitive” or with a preposition (*e.g. to be afraid that, a pleasure to, anxious about, etc.*) (Bahardoust & Moeini, 2012).

4. *Phrasal verbs*: this category refers to the exercises under analysis that are specifically focused on phrasal verbs (*e.g. to break down, to catch up*). This classification slightly deviates from Lewis’ idea of phrasal verbs, which he considers “*one kind of polyword*” (1993:92), and consequently as already mentioned, being part of individual words. The choice of separating phrasal verbs from individual words and polywords exercises arose from a desire of discovering how much attention they received alone, which could have not been possible if they were included in single words category.
5. *Mixed lexical items*: this category includes the exercises that deal with multiple types of lexical item, as to say those which could not be put into another lexical category of the table since they did not present a specific

focus on just *single words*, *institutionalised expressions*, *collocations* or *phrasal verbs* (categories 1-2-3-4) but an interest on more than one of these categories.

6. *Mixed multi-word items*: in this category are included all those exercises that present a focus on more than just a specific multi-word lexical item category, so without considering *single words*. Therefore, the data collected in *mixed multi-word items* are those exercises that simultaneously focus on at least two categories among *institutionalised expressions*, *collocations* and *phrasal verbs* (categories 2-3-4).
7. *Grammatical rules*: this category includes those exercises that do not specifically focus on lexis, but on grammatical structural rules related for instance to the conjugation of verbs or to the composition of phrases and clauses. In this regard, the parameter used to decide whether an exercise focused more on lexis or grammar was the question about what type of knowledge the student needs in order to carry out the exercise, as to say if it requires a lexical or a grammatical knowledge. Moreover, this section will be further analysed in depth in relation to the second research question (see section 3.3.2.).

The process of data collection was organised as follows: the first step was to identify the exercises related to lexical items or grammar rules, which led to the exclusion of activities such as some types of speaking, reading and listening exercises that would have been too difficult to categorise. Then, a first glance was given to the exercise instructions to infer the possible category the exercise might belong to. Finally, the entire exercise was analysed. This process made possible to locate each exercise in a precise category of the table, or at least in the category which seemed the most suitable for that specific exercise. Yet, this process was neither automatic nor linear. On the one hand, not all the exercises were clearly

focused on specific and univocal aspects of language like lexis or grammar. On the other hand, complementary to the first problem, the categories not always presented fixed and clear bounds, as to say that some exercises, even if easily categorizable into a group, presented characteristics that seemed to deviate from the chosen category. In most cases, the problem was due to the fact that a large number of exercises seemed at a first glance to focus just on single words, but analysing the exercise sentences and phrases it became clear that in some cases the focus was on other types of lexical items. To overcome this obstacle, which could have misloaded the collection of data, a question was formulated before proceeding to identify an exercise: “What kind of knowledge does the learner needs in order to complete the task?”

What follows is an example:

**Circle the two correct words in each line** (Godfrey, 2014:7).

E.g. slice /piece / drop of cake

1. a bit / piece / litre of information
2. a spoonful /slice/ bag of sugar
3. a drop / bottle/ piece of water
4. a block of cheese/ milk/ wood
5. a feeling of sadness/ oxygen / excitement
6. a jar of honey /jam /energy
7. a packet of crisps /juice / biscuits
8. a carton / packet/ box of eggs

The fact that in the exercise description it is asked to circle the two correct words in the sentences may at first make it appear like the activity is focused only on the meaning of individual words. On the contrary, the kind of knowledge the learner needs in order to complete the task is collocational, as to say that he/she should know for example that the correct forms to express the quantity of *information* are *a bit of information* or *a piece of information*, while *litre of information* is totally

incorrect. For this reason, this exercise was not put under *single words* category, but it was inserted under *collocations*.

In conclusion, in Table 4 it is possible to observe which type of exercise was classified under each of the seven categories of the first method table.

<i>Single Words</i>	
<p><b>Match the words 1-10 to the definitions a-j. Then listen and check</b> (Hobbs and Kedde, 2010: 92).</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pickpocketing</li> <li>2. Fraud</li> <li>3. Joyriding</li> <li>4. Shoplifting</li> <li>5. Mugging</li> <li>6. Theft</li> <li>7. Murder</li> <li>8. Burglary</li> <li>9. Vandalism</li> <li>10. Blackmail</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Deliberate damaging of public property</li> <li>b. Stealing from a person, house, etc.</li> <li>c. Stealing from a house or other building</li> <li>d. The deliberate and illegal killing of a person</li> <li>e. Stealing money by a trick or by lying</li> <li>f. Stealing a car and driving it at high speeds</li> <li>g. Taking money from someone by threatening to reveal a secret</li> <li>h. Stealing from a shop</li> <li>i. Attacking a person and stealing their money or valuables</li> <li>j. Stealing things from people in public places</li> </ol>
<i>Institutionalised Expressions</i>	
<p><b>Match the two parts of the expressions</b> (Lansford, Dummett and Stephenson, 2016: 134).</p>	
<p>The optimist says:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The glass is</li> <li>2. There's light</li> <li>3. Every cloud has</li> <li>4. Look on the</li> <li>1. The grass is</li> </ol>	<p>The pessimist says:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. The glass is</li> <li>6. There's no hope</li> <li>7. If something</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a silver lining</li> <li>b. in sight</li> <li>c. bad can happen, it will.</li> <li>d. half empty</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. at the end of the tunnel</li> <li>f. half full</li> <li>g. bright side</li> </ol>

### Collocations

Complete each sentence with one of the adverbs in the box. Three adverbs are not needed (Paterson and Wedge, 2017: 168).

minimally – barely – deeply – incorrectly – mainly –  
casually – informally – severely – wrongfully

1. Most fruit pickers are \_\_\_\_\_ employed and are sometimes offered basic accommodation.
2. It was proved on appeal that all three men had been \_\_\_\_\_ imprisoned.
3. Some critics attacked the TV programme, describing it as \_\_\_\_\_ offensive.
4. Supplies to the villages were \_\_\_\_\_ delayed by the collapse of two bridges, making the overall situation much worse.
5. Simpson (2009) suggests that facilities for the athletes were \_\_\_\_\_ adequate.
6. The work carried out by Grigson on artificial intelligence was \_\_\_\_\_ theoretical.

### Phrasal Verbs

Circle the correct verbs (Godfrey, 2014: 174).

1. Has their plane *taken* / *got* off yet?
2. What time did you *get* / *give* back last night?
3. That blue dress *goes* / *gets* really well with your eyes.
4. Why have they *taken* / *got* the chairs away?
5. I *give* / *get* up! It's too difficult!
6. He's *put* / *taken* on half a kilo since he came out of hospital.
7. Hey! *Go* / *Get* off! I've just painted that chair!
8. We were having dinner when suddenly the lights *put* / *went* out.
9. They found a purse in the street, so they *gave* / *put* it in at the police station.
10. Hey! What's *going* / *getting* on here?

*Mixed Lexical Items*

Complete the sentences with a word from the box (Vince, 2014: 6).

asking – listening – shooting – talking – coming – making – taking – trying

1. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ to concentrate.
2. Are you \_\_\_\_\_ off now, or can we talk?
3. Go on, I'm \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I think we're \_\_\_\_\_ at cross purposes.
5. You're \_\_\_\_\_ for trouble.
6. It's \_\_\_\_\_ along nicely.
7. You don't seem to be \_\_\_\_\_ much interest.
8. You're \_\_\_\_\_ a fuss about nothing.

*Mixed Multi-Word Items*

Look at the list of things that can happen in a conversation. Check you understand the words in bold in the phrases. Put a thick next to the things you would aim to do and a cross next to the ones you would try to avoid (Krantz and Roberts, 2016: 7).

- Have a **row**
- Put someone **at ease**
- Listen **enthusiastically**
- **Establish** shared interests
- Ask **appropriate** questions
- Have a **misunderstanding**
- Have some **awkward** silences
- **Put your foot in it**
- Make **small talk**
- Make a good **impression**
- Tell an **entertaining** story
- **Offend** someone
- **Dominate** the conversation
- **Hit it off** with someone

*Grammatical Rules*

Write these sentences in another way, beginning as shown (Murphy, 2019:131).

1. E.g. It's hard to understand some things.  
*Some things are hard to understand.*
2. It was difficult to open the window.  
*The window \_\_\_\_\_.*
3. It's impossible to translate some words.



<p><i>Some words</i> _____.</p> <p>4. It's expensive to maintain a car. <i>A</i> _____.</p> <p>5. It's not safe to eat this meat. <i>This</i> _____.</p> <p>6. It's easy to get to my house from here. <i>My</i> _____.</p>
---

**Table 4.** Examples of exercise categories found in the materials.

### 3.3.2.RQ2

After having discovered which are the types of lexical items that appear to be mainly explored in the analysed textbooks and whether their exercises focus more on lexis or grammar, the analysis focused on the second research question, that is, whether Lewis' concept of *grammaticalized lexis* is implemented in the materials under analysis. As it has already been argued, this concept, which is considered of paramount importance for the correct implementation of the Lexical Approach, is in contrast with the traditional and “*heretic*” way of teaching language, based on *lexicalised grammar*. In fact, Lewis considers lexis as the roots of language, and he also states that giving this fundamental role to grammar is the “*misunderstanding of language teaching*” (1993:133). This does not mean that grammaticalization is not important, but that what language teaching needs is a “*change of emphasis*” (*ibid.*), employing an approach attempting to give major stress to the role of lexis and ceasing to value grammar rules on a daily basis as they were the only thing that matters in students' learning expectations. Indeed, through lexis alone complex messages can still be constructed, and this comes as a proof of the fact that lexis has a central role in studying foreign languages and that grammatical knowledge and accuracy is an aspect that should be acquired in a second step (Lewis, 1993).

To investigate this aspect of Lewis' approach some types of exercises based on Lexical Approach principles were listed in the rows of a table, while the columns contain the titles of the ten textbooks analysed. The categories of exercise that can be observed in the table were selected by Lewis himself in "*Implementing the Lexical Approach*" (2008) to provide practical examples of basic exercises designed on lexical principles and which thereby might be found in materials that put Lexical Approach into practice. Lewis' selection of activities and exercises constructed around lexical principles is extremely large and includes descriptions and samples; this led to the choice of taking into account only ten samples of exercises that were considered to be designed specifically for (or easily suitable to) grammar rules activities. It is important to highlight that for this research question important data collected in section 3.3.1. was recovered, since the choice of considering in the first method not only lexical items, but also grammar exercises was not casual. In fact, observing which are the textbooks containing a majority of exercises on grammar rules does not mean that this predominance of exercises is structured on Lexical Approach principles. For instance, a textbook which presents a great number of grammar exercises might have been constructed on the traditional idea of teaching language grammar, as to say on *lexicalised grammar*, where grammar is considered just a "*a static or canonical set of rules*" (Lewis, 1993:134). On the other hand, another textbook which presented in the first research question a light minority of grammar exercises, not only might have consequently included a majority of exercises on lexical items, but those fewer grammar exercises could have been better constructed on *lexicalised grammar* principle, demonstrating a better implementation of the Lexical Approach.

Hence, the process employed to collect data for this second research question presented a primary step in considering the total number of exercises dedicated to

grammar rules, which emerged from the method used in the first research question (section 3.3.1.). At that point the next stage was to reconsider those grammar exercises with greater attention and to compare them with the samples proposed by Lewis, in order to determine whether the exercises presented by the analysed material might be considered designed on lexical principles, nevertheless their learning purposes refer to grammar rules. Here some of the categories of exercises proposed by Lewis that were chosen to be suitable for grammaticalized lexis activities are listed in the same order as in the table employed for the research:

1. *Identifying chunks*: it is claimed to be the “*fundamental strategy*” by Lewis and it employs the distancing from the earliest stage instinct of translating foreign words and utterances in student’s L1. Identifying chunks can prevent the learners to make translation mistakes and help them in using dictionaries properly. This aspect lies at the roots of Lexical Approach as its crucial principle is that our mental lexicon is stored in chunks, therefore being able to identify them is of paramount importance. In identifying chunks exercises the learner can be asked to detect specific phrases in listening and reading activities, predicting their meaning based on their knowledge of chunks. Indeed, such an activity permit a real time language processing and a major improvement of receptive skills (*Lewis, 2008*).
2. *Matching chunks*: this kind of activity is extremely used in grammar practice, but it may be put on a more lexical perspective if it involved the matching of expressions, collocations or lines of formulaic dialogue and discourse as well. In fact, Lewis’ affirms how “*grammar tends to become lexis as the event becomes more probable*” (*2008:89*), and matching chunks that frequently belong together helps not only to memorize lexis, but also to better store grammatical rules in our minds.

3. *Completing (the double-gap: modals and common verbs)*: this is another type of traditional exercise which could be given a focus on lexis, as like in the case of matching, the gap-filling activity might be constructed on structures and expressions which take into account relatively fixed chunks of language. In this category two types of exercises proposed by Lewis were merged: on the one hand there is the traditional activity of gap-filling, which might refer also to exercises focused on the lexical items collected in section 3.3.1., on the other hand, Lewis refers precisely to the exercise of double-gap for grammar rules, in particular speaking of the relatively fixed use of modal verbs and common verbs. The utterances created by these two types of verbs reveal to be extremely frequent in many studies, and this is due to the fact that they refer to specific events which are common to recur together and, at the same time, happen to provide useful lexis.
4. *Categorising (sorting expressions)*: exercises which through contrasting examples ask the learner to hypothesise the category which specific patterns might belong to. This kind of activity might present a stress on the form, the emotional sphere or the formulation of the expressions examined and can be particularly helpful to memorise them, even just putting these patterns into perceptive categories. Lewis gives some examples of pattern categories:
- *Verbs or adjectives which partner one or other or both of two given nouns*
  - *Expressions which are elements of two different dialogues*
  - *Expressions which are more formal or more informal*
  - *Words or expressions which have positive or negative connotations (2008:90).*
5. *Sequencing*: this type of exercise usually requests students to put in order a certain number of verbs or expressions and reveals to be particularly useful as it “*takes advantage of the learners’ real-world knowledge*” (Lewis,

2008:91). The aim is to help the students recognise the expression needed to provide the pragmatic meaning of a given situation and this is reached by giving an order to these expressions. In fact, our minds are composed of stories which usually present a natural or just a likely order to be told. In this way, there is no need of contextualising an expression, as what matters is its pragmatic meaning which may be reconducted to a specific recognizable occurrence.

6. *Related verbs*: the aim of this kind of exercise is to enable learners to distinguish words that have a similar meaning but that are used in different expressions (e.g. *speak, tell, say, talk*). Memorizing these expressions and becoming familiar with them can help to differentiate those term meanings. In this sense, Lewis states that “*the real definition of a word is a combination of its referential meaning and its collocation field*” (2008: 97). Lewis also argue how this kind of exercise might create confusion in the student, but he also affirms that this is unavoidable and this is why it is crucial to handle it in the classroom, leading learners to a process of internalisation of the differences between expressions that native speakers differentiate without noticing.
7. *Extending a sound pattern*: in this kind of exercise, the focus is on stress pattern, as the aim is to observe or to match the expressions that present the same grammatical stress pattern and which create chunks sharing not only grammatical, but also phonological and lexical properties. In this regard, the attention is not paid on the rigidity of the patterns, but on their flexibility, since Lewis clarified that “*using a basic pattern, and following it flexibly, is the basis of any effective, fluent language use. Lexis is neither totally random nor rigidly structured; it is organised*” (2008: 100). Therefore, the aim is to identify basic patterns which present an initially

strict structure, but that can be taken as a basis for new creative chunk construction.

8. *Grammaticalisation*: this kind of exercise represents the basis of “grammaticalized lexis” concept. It puts its roots in the idea that sees lexis as an element which is preformed and recalled from our memorial storage, while grammar represents a process. Here the focus is to grammaticalize a series of key words presented to the learners in an ungrammaticalized way. What is interesting of this exercise is that it highlights extremely well the central point of the Lexical Approach, as to say that what provide a message in language use is lexis, regardless the fact of being structured by grammar rules. What grammar provide is the shape and correctness of the message, and despite its importance, it needs to be resized in respect of the central role of lexis.
9. *Modalisation*: what is observed in this kind of exercises are patterns related to general assertions about our knowledge of the world, as to say expressions that can modulate opinions about a certain subject, to make it sound less strong or more neutral or less definite. This activity is particularly indicated for written exercise and it is the basis for academic writing purposes. Moreover, modalisation practice is an important element for foreign language learners’ ability of expressing themselves and externalise what they think about the world around them in the foreign language they are studying, adapting it to the context in which they are speaking.
10. *Topicalisation*: this kind of exercise focus on the stress that some information carries when found in a specific position of the text, for example at the end of the sentence. In this way, this piece of information is highlighted in the chunk and the message results to be much clearer from a pragmatic point of view. Furthermore, in this case, the idea is that of

starting from the observation of a certain fixed structure of grammatical pattern, applying it in a creative way.

Finally, in Table 5 are shown some examples of the exercises proposed by Lewis which were found, at least in a similar way, in the analysed material. Still, as the categories of *related verbs* and *extending a sound pattern* remained absent from the exercises in the textbooks, the examples used in the table are the ones proposed by Lewis himself.

### *Identifying Chunks*

**Find a sentence in the article (*Why do we sleep?*) that either supports or contradicts each of these statements** (Lansford, Dummett and Stephenson, 2016: 15).

1. Randy Gardner is the world-record holder for staying awake.
2. Sleep deprivation causes people to lose touch with reality.
3. The brain basically shuts off when we fall asleep.
4. Experts say that a healthy adult should have a minimum of eight hours' sleep each night.
5. Light can have a strong effect on the natural sleep cycle.
6. Not getting enough sleep could shorten your life.
7. It's impossible for anyone to function for more than a few days without getting a solid night's sleep.
8. The only documented instances of sleep deprivation lasting more than two or three days are experiments carried out by scientists.

**Matching Chunks**

**Match the halves of the conditional sentences** (Oxenden and Latham-Koenig, 2014:61).

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. If I'd had my mobile,                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. If I wasn't a journalist,                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. If I called my mother more on the landline, | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. If I'd known exactly where my friend lived, | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. If I lost my phone,                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. If I were asked to repeat this experiment,  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
- 
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| a. I wouldn't know what to do.             |  |
| b. I'd enjoy our conversations more.       |  |
| c. I wouldn't do it.                       |  |
| d. I'd have sent her a text.               |  |
| e. I wouldn't have got lost.               |  |
| f. I would never have done the experiment. |  |

**Completing (The Double-gap: Modals and Common Verbs)**

**Complete the sentences with *wish*, *should have* and *ought to have* and the verbs for each situation** (Hobbs and Keddle, 2010:157).

1. I \_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_ it. (touch)
2. I \_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_ Tom's birthday. (remember)
3. I \_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_ my smart clothes. (wear)
4. I \_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_ so fast! (drive)
5. I \_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_ all my money. (spend)
6. I \_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_ my umbrella. (bring)

**Categorising (Sorting Expressions)**

**Optimists (☺) and pessimists (☹). Match two responses (a-l) to each dialogue 1-5. Then listen and check** (Godfrey, 2014: 86).



1. We'll take a taxi. 😊 *d* 😞 *h*
  2. I'm going to give this book to Toby. 😊 \_\_\_ 😞 \_\_\_
  3. I've lost my necklace! 😊 \_\_\_ 😞 \_\_\_
  4. I'm going to take some of this medicine. 😊 \_\_\_ 😞 \_\_\_
  5. She really wants to go to that university. 😊 \_\_\_ 😞 \_\_\_
  6. I'm going to climb that tree! 😊 \_\_\_ 😞 \_\_\_
- a. You won't find that again.
  - b. She may not pass all her exams.
  - c. You'll get a wonderful view.
  - d. It'll be expensive.
  - e. I expect they'll offer her a place.
  - f. You'll definitely get it back.
  - g. It'll help you feel better.
  - h. It'll be quick.
  - i. He won't like it.
  - j. It'll taste horrible.
  - k. He'll love it.
  - l. I think you might fall.

### *Sequencing*

**Put the words in brackets in the correct order** (Murphy, 2019:99).

1. (when / was / built / this house?) *When was this house built?*
2. (how / cheese / is / made?) \_\_\_\_\_
3. (why / Sue / working / isn't / today?) \_\_\_\_\_
4. (what time / arriving / your friends / are?) \_\_\_\_\_
5. (why / was / cancelled / the meeting?) \_\_\_\_\_
6. (when / invented / paper / was?) \_\_\_\_\_
7. (where / your parents / were / born?) \_\_\_\_\_
8. (why / you / to the party / didn't / come?) \_\_\_\_\_
9. (how / the accident / did / happen?) \_\_\_\_\_
10. (why / happy / you / aren't?) \_\_\_\_\_
11. (how many / speak / can / languages / you?) \_\_\_\_\_

***Related Verbs***

Complete the following with the appropriate form of *speak, talk, say, tell* (Lewis, 2008: 97).

1. Did you enjoy your trip? You must \_\_\_\_\_ us all about it.
2. If I may \_\_\_\_\_ say so, that doesn't sound a very good idea to me.
3. She gets very lonely since her husband died. She has nobody to \_\_\_\_\_ to, you see.
4. I can't \_\_\_\_\_ for anyone else, but I think it's a good idea.
5. If you think it would help, you know you can \_\_\_\_\_ to me about it at any time.

***Extending a Sound Pattern***

Complete each expression in List 1 with an expression in List 2 (Lewis, 2008:99).

**List 1**

1. I'll get back to you
2. We'll get there
3. This is top quality, it's
4. The meeting's still on
5. You can stay
6. There's no other explanation, it's

**List 2**

- a. as long as you like.
- b. as good as you'll find.
- c. as far as I know.
- d. as clear as can be.
- e. as fast as we can.

### Grammaticalisation

**Make sentences from the words in brackets** (Murphy, 2019:131).

1. I couldn't answer the question. (difficult question / answer)  
*It was a difficult question to answer.*
2. It's a very common mistake. (easy mistake / make)  
It's \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I like living in this town. (great place / live)  
\_\_\_\_\_.
4. I wonder why she said that. (strange thing / say)  
\_\_\_\_\_.

### Modalisation

**Reorder the words in these expressions for giving opinions. Then add them to the table above (*showing agreement/showing disagreement*) in the correct column** (Hewings and Thaine, 2012:75).

1. That's / point / a / fair
2. They / into / don't / to / appear / take / account ...
3. This / I / right / is / think
4. I'm / at / about / this / sure / not / all
5. I'd / this / question / to / like
6. This / be / me / to / to / valid / seems / entirely

### Topicalisation

**Complete the second sentence in each pair so that it has the same meaning as the first** (Krantz and Roberts, 2016:117).

1. My brother emigrated to New Zealand, so our kids don't see each other much.  
If my brother \_\_\_\_\_ closer now.
2. I had no idea how physically exhausting bringing up kids was, and I had them late.  
If I \_\_\_\_\_ had them earlier.
3. I didn't have children because I really value my independence.  
If \_\_\_\_\_ have children.
4. We need a big house because we're such a large family.  
If we \_\_\_\_\_ big house.
5. Maybe having no siblings has made me an independent person.  
If I'd \_\_\_\_\_ independent as I am.

---

**Table 5.** Examples of exercises found in the materials that respond to Lewis' suggestions of activities based on *grammaticalized lexis*.

### 3.3.3.RQ3

After having collected data to discover which were the lexical items that presented major consideration in the analysed textbooks, and whether the concept of grammaticalized lexis was considered in the exercises concerning grammar rules and structures, the attention moved to RQ3, namely, the treatment the ten EFL textbooks give to multi-word items. To reach this purpose the exercises were analysed according to their nature of *consciousness-raising* and *non-consciousness-raising* activities. In this regard, the idea encouraged by Lewis was that of presenting exercises and activities that may contribute to enhance learners' awareness on chunks, putting a major stress on multi-word lexical items, rather than individual words and grammar sentences. Still, the type of focus which should be raised in order to complete multi-word lexical items activities is *conscious*, taking us back to the concept of noticing (see section 3.1.3.). What needs to be enhanced is the process that transform input into intake and consciousness-raising activities and exercises play a vital role in the processing, allowing learners to analyse and to notice L2 features more carefully and consequently helping them to formulate more accurate hypotheses.

To investigate the treatment reserved to multi-word lexical items (i.e. institutionalised expressions, collocations and phrasal verbs), the instrument used to collect data was the same as the one used in Kasuya's study (2000). The table employed is composed of as many columns as the number of EFL textbooks, while the three rows show the total number of multi-word lexical item exercises (data that already emerged when answering to the first research question) and how many of them can be classified as *consciousness-raising* rather than *non-*

*consciousness-raising activities*. The role of these two types of process is reported to be controversial and Schmidt highlights in his study this sort of clash of views that for many years has divided linguists. On one hand he states how consciousness is an important component in language learning, as it is what enable learners to produce proper target language and correct structures. On the other hand, many linguists affirm that language acquisition is mainly unconscious, and this view is at the basis of Krashen's Natural Approach theory, which differ from the Lexical Approach precisely on the fact that for Krashen conscious learning does not produce acquisition (*Schmidt, 1990*).

The collecting data procedure was carried out analysing the exercises regarding multi-word lexical items, as to say the categories of *institutionalised expressions*, *collocations*, *phrasal verbs* and *mixed multi-word items* from the table of the first method (section 3.3.1.). The two categories of the table under which the mentioned exercise categories were further divided are:

- *Consciousness-raising activities (CR)*: defined by Willis & Willis as “*activities which encourage them to think about samples of language and to draw their own conclusions about how the language works*” (1996:1). These kinds of activities have the aim to push students to observe and “notice” specific features of the foreign language and to create assumptions about them, drawing conclusions and processing these findings in order to create a mental organization of language and to enhance its acquisition. C-R activities usually focus more on questions than on answers and are in contrast with practical language exercises. Ellis (1993) reports a set of features that are likely to find in C-R activities:
  - They *isolate* linguistic features to catch the learners' attention, allowing them to focus notably on those.

- They *provide* linguistic elements to outline the features under observation, not just illustrating them to the learners, but handling it for communicative purposes.
- They require learners to use *intellectual effort* in order to observe and comprehend the feature presented. The learner is expected to *consciously* create hypotheses starting from the data and to test them aiming to draw conclusions about language.

(Schmidt, 1990).

- *Non-consciousness-raising activities (N-CR)*: differently from CR activities, N-CR ones are defined to be more practical and mechanical, asking learners to complete an exercise that includes choosing or inserting the correct answer. Kasuya classified as N-CR activities such as *multiple choice, transformation, reordering of words, true or false, gap-filling* and *sentence connection* (2000:31). In these types of exercises, students are expected to find the one correct answer, repeating the features observed in the target language to generate correct sentences. Such activities which implies the repetition of patterns and features may be very useful in terms of practice and learning, but they do not involve learners' awareness. Indeed, they do not create hypotheses or let students process the results they obtained from those assumptions, consequently learning might take place, but it cannot become acquisition.

After having delineated the fundamental difference between CR and N-CR activities, it is important to present Schmidt's list of the types of operations which can be required by CR activities. Schmidt's examples have been taken as a parameter during the collection of data for the third research question, having been used to classify the exercises from the ten EFL textbooks in the CR or N-CR table category.

- *Identification/consolidation*: learners are asked to find specific features and patterns of language and their application, as well as the linguistic structures which accompany them.
- *Classification (semantic and structural)*: learners are asked to classify specific linguistic elements based on their structural or semantic similarities and differences.
- *Building and checking hypotheses*: learners are asked to make assumptions about patterns and features, generalizing about their characteristics and then checking whether their hypotheses were right, putting them in contrast with additional data.
- *Cross-language exploration*: learners are asked to put FL features and patterns in contrast with those of their own mother tongue, in order to identify similarities and differences between the two languages.
- *Reconstruction/deconstruction*: learners are asked to modify sentences and pieces of texts so that the pattern which is observed results highlighted.
- *Recall*: learners are asked to recall specific components of a text in order to underline important aspects in it, and then to reconstruct them together.
- *Reference training*: learners should know how to use reference devices such as dictionaries and grammar guides.<sup>13</sup>

Table 6 exemplifies some types of CR and N-CR activities which were found in the ten EFL textbooks under analysis. As it has already been anticipated, we included in the classification only exercises handling with multi-word lexical items such as *institutionalised expressions*, *collocations*, *phrasal verbs* or these three categories combined, consequently excluding *single words* and *mixed lexical items* (which includes single words as well).

---

<sup>13</sup> The classification of the operations required by consciousness-raising activities can be found in Schmidt, 1990:7.

### Consciousness-Raising Activities

a) **These lines are similar to those in the quiz but not the same. Find them in the quiz. What are the differences?** (Soars and Soars, 2009: 102).

1. I leave sufficient time for relaxation. *E.g. enough time*
2. Non-stop all of the time. *E.g. the whole time*
3. More than enough things. *E.g. plenty of things*
4. Lots of enthusiasm.
5. Very few, just a couple of minor things.
6. There aren't any uncompleted projects.
7. I see every one of my projects through.
8. I don't have any patience.
9. I have hardly any hobbies or leisure time.
10. In quite a few ways.
11. In all kinds of ways.
12. Nearly all of the time by email.

b) **The text (p. 71) includes a number of phrases about money. Using a dictionary, can you explain the difference between the words in bold?** (Hewings and Thaine, 2012: 73).

1. 40% of global tourism **revenue** (line 7)
2. Low capital **investment** (line 16)
3. The success of micro-**credit** enterprises (line 17)
4. Cultural heritage not only generates **income** (line 31)

c) **Now look at the following idioms with *mind*. What do you think they mean? Check with a dictionary** (Oxenden and Latham-Koenig, 2014:5).

1. Speak your mind
2. Cross your mind
3. Mind your own business
4. Be in two minds about something

### Non-Consciousness-Raising Activities

a) **Complete the prepositions column with one from the list** (Oxenden and Latham-Koenig, 2014: 63).

For – of – on – to – with

1. A lot of people are obsessed \_\_ celebrities and their lifestyles
2. Some young people are becoming addicted \_\_ social networking websites.
3. People are normally very kind and helpful \_\_ foreign tourists.
4. Most young people are dependant \_\_ their parents until their mid-twenties.



5. People are totally fed \_\_ the number of commercial on TV.
6. Older people aren't as open \_\_ new ideas and fashions as younger people are.

**a) Match verbs 1-8 to phrases a-h** (Krantz and Roberts, 2016:125).

- |           |                                 |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Miss   | a. into a pension.              |
| 2. Make   | b. out on all the fun.          |
| 3. Ask    | c. up after a row with someone. |
| 4. Stand  | d. down with a life partner.    |
| 5. Choose | e. a career path.               |
| 6. Turn   | f. someone out on a date.       |
| 7. Pay    | g. up to a bully.               |
| 8. Settle | h. down an invitation or offer. |

**b) Complete the sentences. Use a verb + *away* or *back*** (Murphy, 2019:291).

1. I was away all day yesterday. I *got back* very late.
2. I haven't seen our neighbours for a while. I think they must \_\_\_\_\_.
3. "I'm going out now." "OK. What time will you \_\_\_\_\_?"
4. I saw a man trying to break into a car. When he saw me, he \_\_\_\_\_.
5. If you cheat in the exam, you might \_\_\_\_\_ with it or you might get caught.
6. Be careful! That's an electric fence. Make sure you \_\_\_\_\_ from it.
7. He wasn't very friendly. I smiled at him, but he didn't \_\_\_\_\_.

**Table 6.** Examples of CR and N-CR activities found in the materials.

## *Chapter 4*

### *Analysis results and discussion*

After describing in Chapter 3 the three research questions investigated in the present paper and the research method adopted. The data collected will now be illustrated and discussed. This chapter is divided into three main sections (4.1., 4.2. and 4.3.), each of them being dedicated respectively to one research question. Moreover, each section is ulteriorly composed of two parts: in the first (4.1.1., 4.2.1. and 4.3.1.) are shown the data and results flowed from the analysis of the EFL materials, and this first part of each section is dedicated to the correspondent method discussed in Chapter 3. In the second part of each section (4.1.2., 4.2.2. and 4.3.2.) an in-depth analysis of the results showed in the first part is provided, together with a focus on the implications those results appear to have.

#### 4.1. First research question: Types of lexical items

This first section focuses on the analysis and discussion of the results connected to the first research question about the language aspects observed in the analysed material.

##### 4.1.1. Results

In Section 3.3.1., the table employed to collect data for RQ1 purposes has been largely described in reference to its division into seven different categories, which respectively correspond to exercises focused on specific linguistic aspects (i.e. single words, institutionalised expressions, collocations, phrasal verbs, mixed lexical items, mixed multi-word items and grammatical rules). Hence, the first six categories represent the exercises focusing on lexical items, while the last one is a specific category which collects activities structured on rules of grammar. In Table 7 and Table 8, in addition to the seven categories investigated, three

additional categories were added: *lexical items* (1+2+3+4+5+6), which represent the total amount of lexical-related exercises, *multi-word items* (2+3+4+6), which observe only lexical-related exercises focussing on multi-word lexical items, consequently excluding single words, and finally the last row referring to the *total exercises* (1+2+3+4+5+6+7) analysed in the EFL materials. The two tables respectively represent the results obtained in upper secondary schools (CEFR level B1/B2) (see Table 7) and university materials (CEFR level C1/C2) (see Table 8). The last column (*average*) which can be observed in both tables was added in order to provide an idea of the average presence of each exercise category considering the average total exercises analysed. For instance, it can be observed that in B1/B2 level materials considering an average 40.8 of the total exercises analysed, 15.4 were focused on grammar rules, while in C1/C2 materials an average 44.6 of total exercises, 13.4 were focused on grammar rules. This first result shows us how C1/C2 materials seem to leave more space to lexical related exercises and a little less stress on grammatical structures. Moreover, it needs to be highlighted the importance of reporting in the table not only the data collected, but also the percentage of each category in proportion to the total number of exercises analysed in every single textbook. Indeed, in order to acquire reliable data, it was important to consider that the total number of exercises analysed is different for each coursebook, and this might be due to diverse reasons. On the one hand, the units in the materials seldom contain the exact same number of exercises; on the other hand, as anticipated in Section 3.3.1., some activities such as speaking, reading and listening tasks were excluded from data collection, since they would have been too difficult to categorise. Therefore, it goes without saying that some student's books which presented a high amount of these kinds of activity showed a minor number of analysed exercises in the research. For example, observing Table 7, *Get Real 2* presents a total number of 42 exercises analysed, while *Oxford Grammar for Schools 5* presents only 27 total exercises.

Consequently, in consideration of the different amount of analysed exercises for each book, it became evident the need to compare each textbook on the base of their exercise categories percentage to the actual total number of activities analysed.

Thereby, Table 7 and 8 show the amount of exercises analysed for each category, as well as their correspondent percentage in proportion to the total number of the exercises investigated. Taking the first textbook *Get Real 2* as an example, it can be observed that in the three units taken into account, 12 exercises do focus on single words which correspond to 28.5% of the textbook exercises analysed. It should also be highlighted how the two tables not only represent two different levels of proficiency, but how they also were structured according to a further internal ascending order of levels, from a B1 to a B2 (Table 7) and from a B2/C1 to a C1/C2 (Table 8). Furthermore, in cases where some textbooks referred to the same proficiency level, the parameter employed to put them in order refers to their publication year, as for instance in the case of *Get Real 2* and *Oxford Grammar for schools 5*, both aiming to a B1 level, so that the choice was that of putting the more outdated one (2010) first and the more recent one (2014) right afterwards in the table. This second parameter of reordering data, as we will observe later in this section and the next ones as well, revealed to be extremely helpful in the creation of other types of tables and graphs which were employed to observe the variation of results according to the materials temporal component, in addition to their CEFR level.

Finally, during the collection of data it was decided to consider not only lexical related exercises, but also those focused on grammar rules, in order to acquire a more complete overall view of how materials were structured. Still, it should not be forgotten that the aim of RQ1 was specifically that of discovering which types of lexical items are observed in the EFL materials under analysis, and most importantly, which types of multi-word items present major interest, since the

research purpose is to determine whether the Lexical Approach is implemented in the first place. For this reason, the four categories referring to multi-word items (i.e. institutionalised expressions, collocations, phrasal verbs and mixed multi-word items) were marked in orange, as well as the row showing the total number of exercises focused on multi-word items (2+3+4+6).

Category	Get Real 2 (B1) 2010	Oxford Grammar for Schools 5 (B1) 2014	English Grammar in Use (B1/B2) 2019	New Headway (B2) 2009	Navigate (B2) 2016	Average
1. Single words	12 (28.5%)	11 (40.7%)	6 (16.6%)	15 (39.4%)	15 (24.5%)	11.8 (28.9%)
2. Institutionalised expressions	/	/	/	2 (5.2%)	/	2 (4.9%)
3. Collocations	1 (2.3 %)	1 (3.7%)	1 (2.7%)	3 (7.8%)	6 (9.8%)	7.2 (17.6%)
4. Phrasal verbs	/	7 (25.9%)	4 (11.1%)	/	1 (1.6%)	2.4 (5.8%)
5. Mixed lexical items	5 (11.9%)	2 (7.4%)	3 (8.3%)	3 (7.8%)	7 (11.4%)	4 (9.8%)
6. Mixed multi-word items	2 (4.76%)	/	2 (5.5%)	5 (13.1%)	13 (21.3%)	11.6 (28.4%)
7. Grammatical rules	22 (52.3%)	6 (22.2%)	20 (55.5%)	10 (26.3%)	19 (31.1%)	15.4 (37.7%)
Lexical items (1+2+3+4+5+6)	20 (47.6%)	21 (77.7%)	16 (44.4%)	28 (73.6%)	42 (68.8%)	25.4 (62.2%)
Multi-word items (2+3+4+6)	3 (7.1%)	8 (29.6%)	7 (19.4%)	10 (26.3%)	20 (32.7%)	9.6 (23.5%)
Total exercises (1+2+3+4+5+6+7)	42	27	36	38	61	40.8 (Tot. 204)

**Table 7.** Number and percentage of exercise categories out of the total number of activities analysed in the upper secondary school EFL textbooks (level B1/B2).

<i>Category</i>	<b>Oxford Grammar for EAP (B2/C1) 2017</b>	<b>Cambridge Academic English (C1) 2012</b>	<b>New English File (C1) 2014</b>	<b>Keynote (C1) 2016</b>	<b>Language Practice for Advanced (C1/C2) 2014</b>	<b>Average</b>
1. Single words	11 (28.2%)	11 (28.9%)	28 (42.4%)	7 (16.2%)	16 (43.2%)	14.6 (32.7%)
2. Institutionalised expressions	1 (2.5%)	2 (5.2%)	10 (15.1%)	11 (25.5%)	3 (8.1%)	5.4 (12.1%)
3. Collocations	6 (15.3%)	6 (15.7%)	9 (13.6%)	1 (2.3%)	1 (2.5%)	4.6 (10.3%)
4. Phrasal verbs	/	/	2 (3.0%)	/	2 (5.4%)	0.8 (1.7%)
5. Mixed lexical items	3 (7.6%)	4 (10.5%)	2 (3.0%)	6 (13.9%)	7 (18.9%)	4.4 (9.8%)
6. Mixed multi-word items	/	/	2 (3.0%)	2 (4.6%)	3 (8.1%)	1.4 (3.1%)
7. Grammatical rules	18 (46.1%)	15 (39.4%)	13 (19.6%)	16 (37.2%)	5 (13.5%)	13.4 (30.0%)
Lexical items (1+2+3+4+5+6)	21 (53.8%)	23 (60.5%)	53 (80.0%)	27 (62.7%)	32 (86.4%)	31.2 (69.9%)
Multi-word items (2+3+4+6)	7 (17.9%)	8 (21.0%)	23 (34.8%)	14 (32.5%)	9 (24.3%)	12.2 (27.3%)
Total exercises (1+2+3+4+5+6+7)	39	38	66	43	37	44.6 (Tot. 223)

**Table 8.** Number and percentage of exercise categories out of the total number of activities analysed in University EFL textbooks (level C1/C2).

For the analysis of the collected data, two graphs were created. Graph 1 refers to the EFL textbooks used in upper secondary schools (level B1/B2), and shows the results obtained in Table 7, while Graph 2 illustrates the data collected in Table 8, with reference to the EFL textbooks used in universities (level C1/C2). These two graphs provide an image of the results and percentages obtained by analysing the books exercises, making it easier to observe the differences and to compare them to find similarities in the focus that textbooks of the same level give to specific linguistic features.

Looking at Graph 1, what can be noted at a first glance is the significant predominance of two main categories common to all books: single words and grammatical rules. *Get Real 2* and *English Grammar in Use* appear to be the textbooks which focus more on grammatical rules (52.3% and 55.5%) than on lexical items (47.6% and 44.4%). It is important to take into account the fact that *English Grammar in Use* is a grammar coursebook and not a general English one, which makes the remarkable high percentage of grammatical rules exercises quite justified. Still, among the five books, *English Grammar in Use* is not the only grammar textbook, as *Oxford Grammar for Schools 5* seems to have the same focus on grammar looking at the title. Nonetheless, this latter presents only a 22.2% of grammar exercises, a score that, if compared to the other materials under analysis, represents also the minor percentage related to activities focused on rules of grammar. This may be due to two major reasons. The first is that looking at *Oxford Grammar for Schools 5* it can be observed a focus on grammar lessons and theoretical explications, but the exercises which were considered to be fully grammatical were not so many; on the contrary it was encountered a majority of lexical-based exercises, in particular regarding single words and phrasal verbs. The second reason can be the way exercises were categorised: the parameter for recognition was not just that of considering the elements observed by the exercise directions, but as mentioned above, in order to decide in which category an exercise should have been collocated, a specific question was asked, namely: what type of knowledge do learners need in order to complete the assigned activity? This led to the conclusion that exercises which at a first glance would have been categorised as grammar exercises, actually presented the need of a lexical knowledge to be fulfilled.

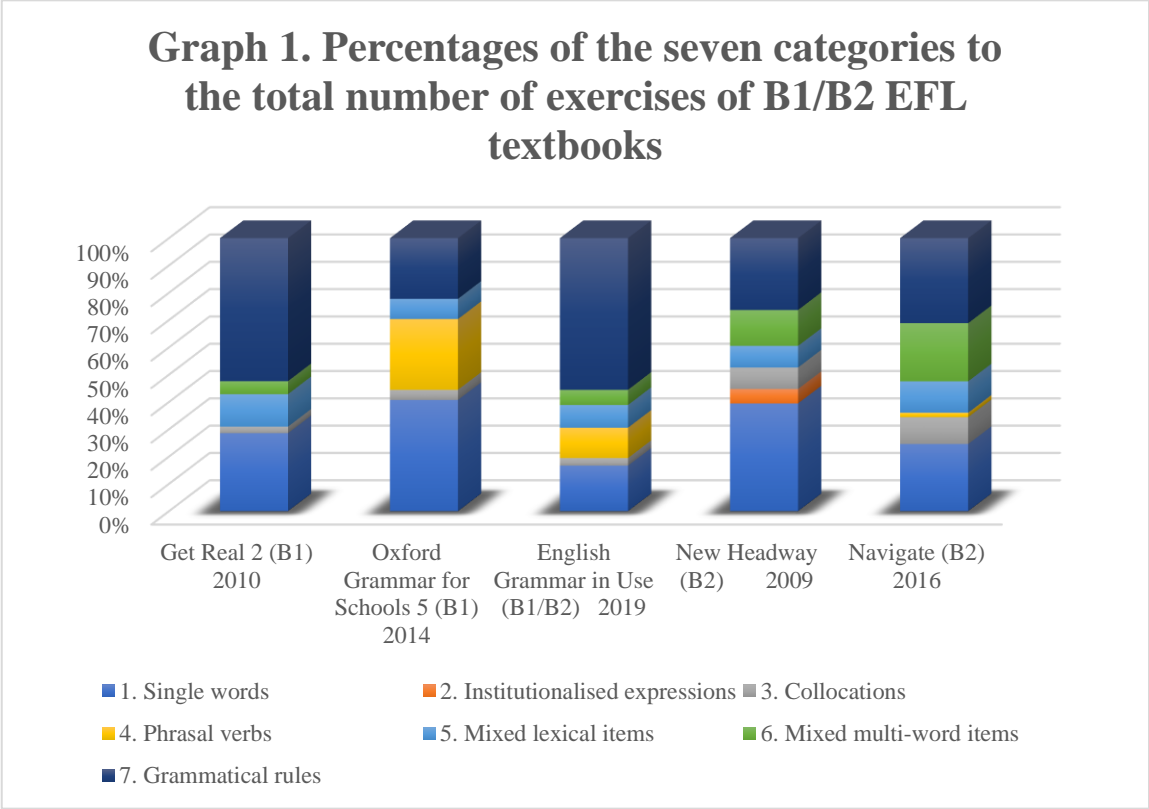
As far as lexical items are concerned, the first thing which can be noticed in Graph 1 is that the category of single words appears to be the most observed in all

textbooks. Even in the two books which contain the minor number of grammar exercises (*Oxford Grammar for Schools 5* and *New Headway*), and consequently, despite a majority of lexical-related activities, single words still play a predominant role over multi-word items (40.7% and 39.4%). Moreover, if together with single words we also consider the category of *mixed lexical items*, as to say the group of exercises which focuses both on single words and multi-word items, we can observe that the space in the graph left to exercises focalised on multi-word items alone is further reduced. On the other hand, there are some categories of multi-word lexical items which seem to be more observed. A relevant space is dedicated for example to phrasal verbs in *Oxford Grammar for Schools 5* (25.9%) and *English Grammar in Use* (11.1%). The significance of the two data is not the same, as it should be highlighted that in the case of *Oxford Grammar for Schools 5*, among the units analysed that were chosen by following the same parameter for each book (see Section 3.2.), one of them was a section dedicated in particular to phrasal verbs, which explains the high percentage compared to the other textbooks. Then, except for these results, phrasal verbs seem to be basically absent in the remaining textbooks, with only a 1.6% observed in *Navigate*. A little more interest appears to be observed for exercises which do not focus on specific multi-word items, but on two or more category types. Specifically, in *New Headway* and *Navigate*, the mixed multi-word items activities present a relevant focus (21.3% and 28.4%), and remarkable is the fact that in *Navigate* this data is extremely close to the percentage of single words exercises (24.5%). Among upper secondary school materials, the category which seems to be the most disregarded is that of institutionalised expressions, which is totally absent in all books, except for *New Headway*, whose units investigated contain only 2 exercises on this category (5.2%). Finally, in consideration of the



diversity of activities provided by the textbooks concerning a B1/B2 level, the one which seems to present a major assortment of diverse activities is *New Headway*, while the one which appear to be the poorer in terms of variety is *Get Real 2*. In fact, in the latter a 52% of the total exercises analysed is dedicated to grammatical rules, while a 40,4% is focused on single words and mixed lexical items, leaving to activities specifically dedicated to multi-word items only a 7.1%, which is the lowest result calculated.

The situation concerning materials employed in university contexts appears to be slightly different. As it can be observed in Graph 2, the focus distribution in the five textbooks ranging from a B2/C1 to a C2 level still presents a general major interest in the two categories observed in Graph 1 as well: single words and grammatical rules. The textbooks which show a significant predominance of grammatical exercises are *Oxford Grammar for EAP* (46.1%) and *Cambridge Academic English* (39.4%). Still, also in this case one of them (*Oxford Grammar*



*for EAP*) is conceived as a grammar book rather than a general English textbook, and it is important to keep in mind such a point in the results analysis discussion, since it is the nature of the book that explains itself the detected high percentage in grammatical rules category. However, differently from the books in Graph 1, none of the books in Graph 2 and not even the previously observed grammar book, presents a majority of grammatical rules exercises over lexical ones, which means that the materials under analysis used in university contexts show a greater interest in lexical items (see categories 1+2+3+4+5+6) than in grammatical rules. In particular, two books out of five (*New English File* and *Language Practice for Advanced*) show a very little focus on grammar (19.6% and 13.5%) if compared to their interest on lexical-based exercises (80.0% and 86.4%).

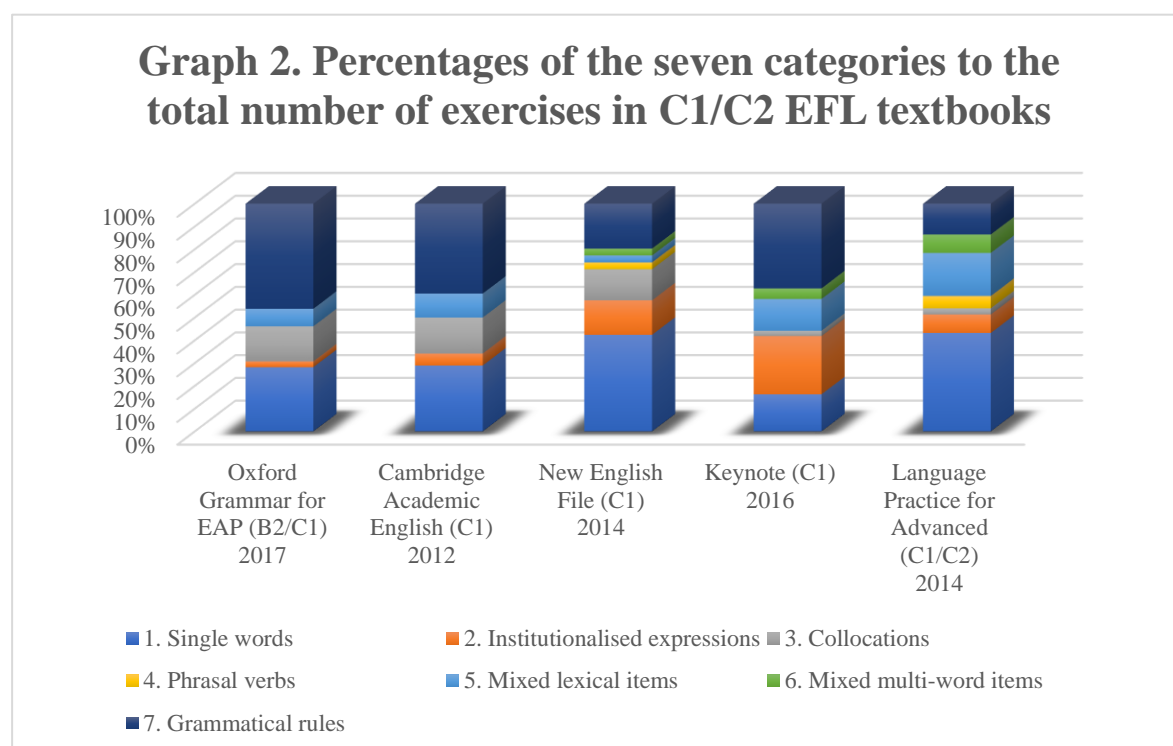
As to lexical items, it can be observed how single words still play an important role in the materials, but their role is subtly resized if compared to Graph 1 textbooks. Graph 2 shows how single words represent the lexical category majorly observed, but in comparing it with a unique and inclusive multi-word items category, the proportions appear to be less distant. For instance, in *New English File* and *Language Practice for Advanced*, where single words definitely represent the bigger percentage of exercises analysed (42.4% and 43.2%), the total number of multi-word items reaches a percentage of 34.8% and 24.3%. Even in this case, the category of mixed lexical items which collects both single words and multi-word items should be taken into consideration, since adding this category to the count of single words it appears that 45.4% of exercises in *New English File* and 62.1% of exercises in *Language Practice for Advanced* are dedicated to single words, or at least not specifically to multi-word items. The only book in which a light predominance of multi-word items exercises can be observed is *Keynote*. Here the percentage of exercises focused on single words is quite low (16.2%) and together with mixed lexical items category it reaches a

percentage of 30.1%, which happens to be extremely close, but still lower than the results for mixed multi-word items that reach a percentage of 32.5%.

Moreover, nevertheless the categories of *single words*, *grammatical rules* and *multi-word items* (2+3+4+6) show similar proportions as Graph 1, in Graph 2 it can be noted a subtly increased variety of multi-word lexical items and also a shift of interest in exercises focused on specific categories of multi-word items such as collocations or institutionalised expressions, rather than on general mixed multi-word items. If in Graph 1 the most frequent multi-word items were phrasal verbs, in Graph 2 this category was found in only two books out of five, namely, in *New English File* and *Language Practice for Advanced*, and with minor percentages (3.0% and 5.4%). On the contrary, while upper secondary school textbooks (Graph 1) demonstrated almost no interest in *institutionalised expressions*, in university materials this category presents a relevant focus together with collocations, if compared to the other multi-word item categories. Exercises dedicated specifically to institutionalised expressions were found in all the five books analysed in Graph 2, revealing a particular major focus in *Keynote* (25.5%) and in *New English File* (15.1%). The results reported in *Keynote* present a specific relevance, since the percentage of institutionalised expressions exercises alone is extremely close to that of single words and mixed lexical items together (30.1%). As far as collocations are concerned, they represent the second most observed lexical category in the five university textbooks, reporting good percentages particularly in *Oxford Grammar for EAP* (15.3%), *Cambridge Academic English* (15.7%) and *New English File* (13.6%).

Finally, considering the variety of activities which were observed in the C1/C2 textbooks, as it has already been clarified they all present little more focus on exercises dedicated to specific multi-word items, leading to a major diversity of elements observed in detail. Still, this diversity cannot be reported in every book,

as the ones which seem to provide a major assortment of diverse activities are *New English File* and *Language Practice for Advanced*, while the ones which appear to be poorer from this point of view are *Oxford Grammar for EAP*, always bearing in mind its nature of grammar textbook, and *Cambridge Academic English*, where the only categories observed regarding multi-word items are collocations and a not so relevant percentage of institutionalised expressions (15.7% and 5.2%), therefore leaving to activities dedicated to specific multi-word items only a 21.0%, the lowest result after *Oxford Grammar for EAP* with a 17.9%.

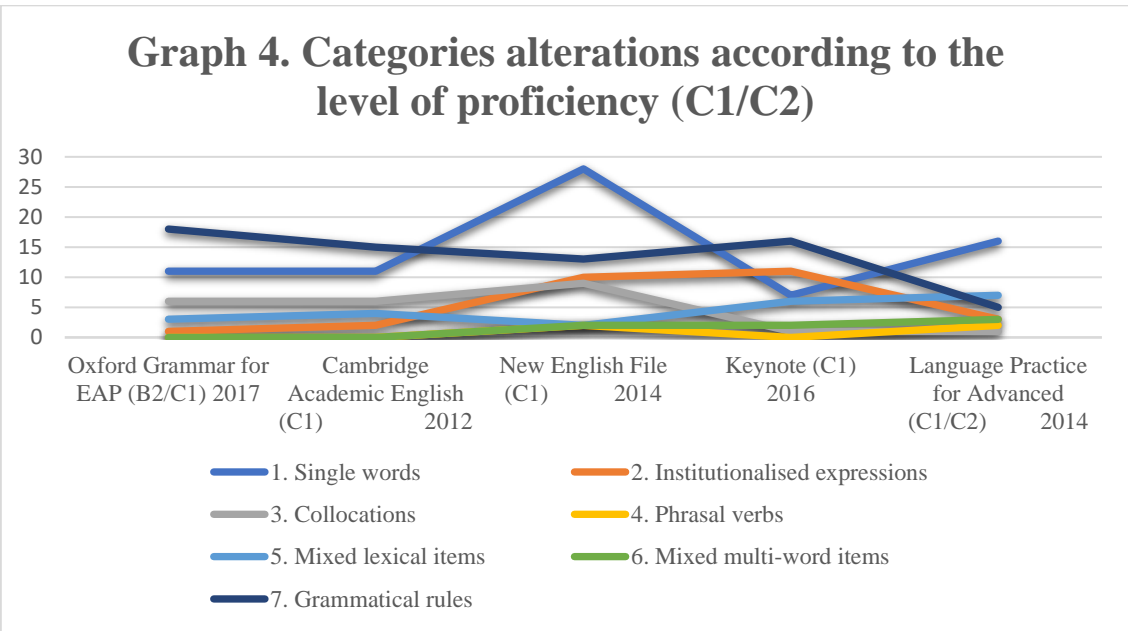
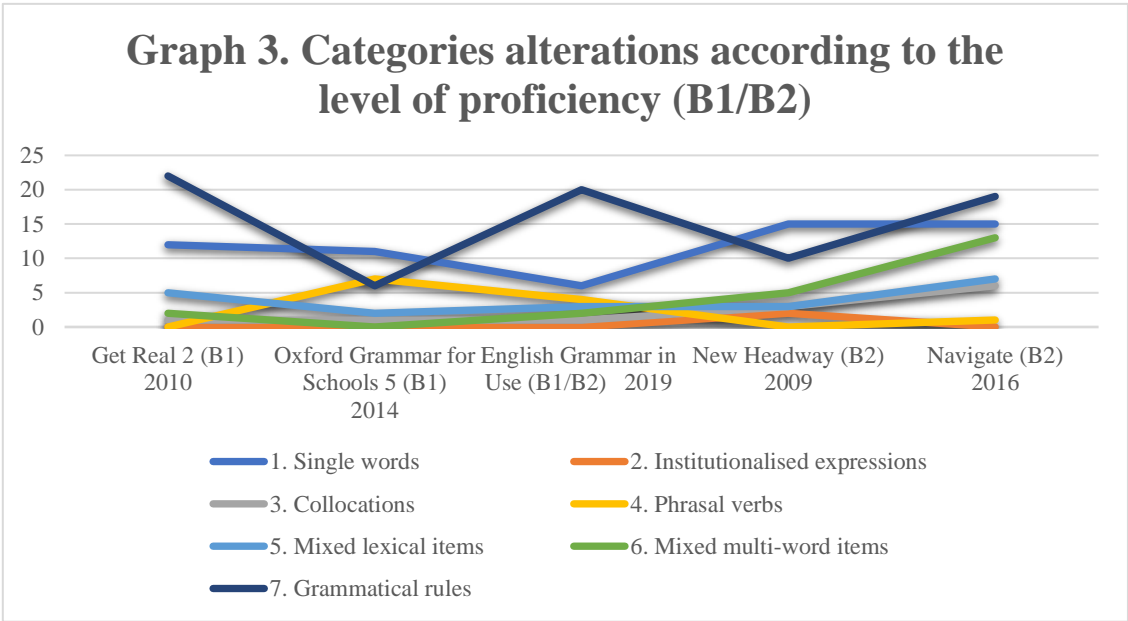


Graph 3 and 4 illustrate the variations of the different categories of linguistic features identified in the materials exercises under analysis whose alterations refer to the proficiency level of the ten textbooks. Graph 3 shows the five upper secondary school textbooks that range from a B1 to a B2 level, while Graph 4 represents the university textbooks that go from a B2/C1 to a C2 level. Again, looking at these two graphs, it can be noticed how single words and grammatical

rules represent the two categories most observed in all books, while the focus on multi-word items appears to remain superficial. In general, it can also be seen how the level of proficiency does not seem to affect to a great extent the specific linguistic features around which exercises are structured. For instance, taking into account grammatical rules exercises, there is not a real increase or decrease of this kind of activity, on the contrary we can observe both high and low scores in the same level (see for B1 level *Get Real 2* and *Oxford Grammar for Schools 5*, and for B2 level *New Headway* and *Navigate*). Quite the same seems to happen in Graph 4 for university textbooks for many of the categories observed. Still, a link might be noticed between an increasing of the level of proficiency and a decreasing of grammatical rules exercises category, showing a first percentage of 46.1% in *Oxford Grammar for EAP (B2/C1)*, lowering through a 39.4% and a 19.6% in *Cambridge Academic English (C1)* and *New English File (C1)*, and concluding with the lowest result of 13.5% in *Language Practice for Advanced (C1/C2)*.

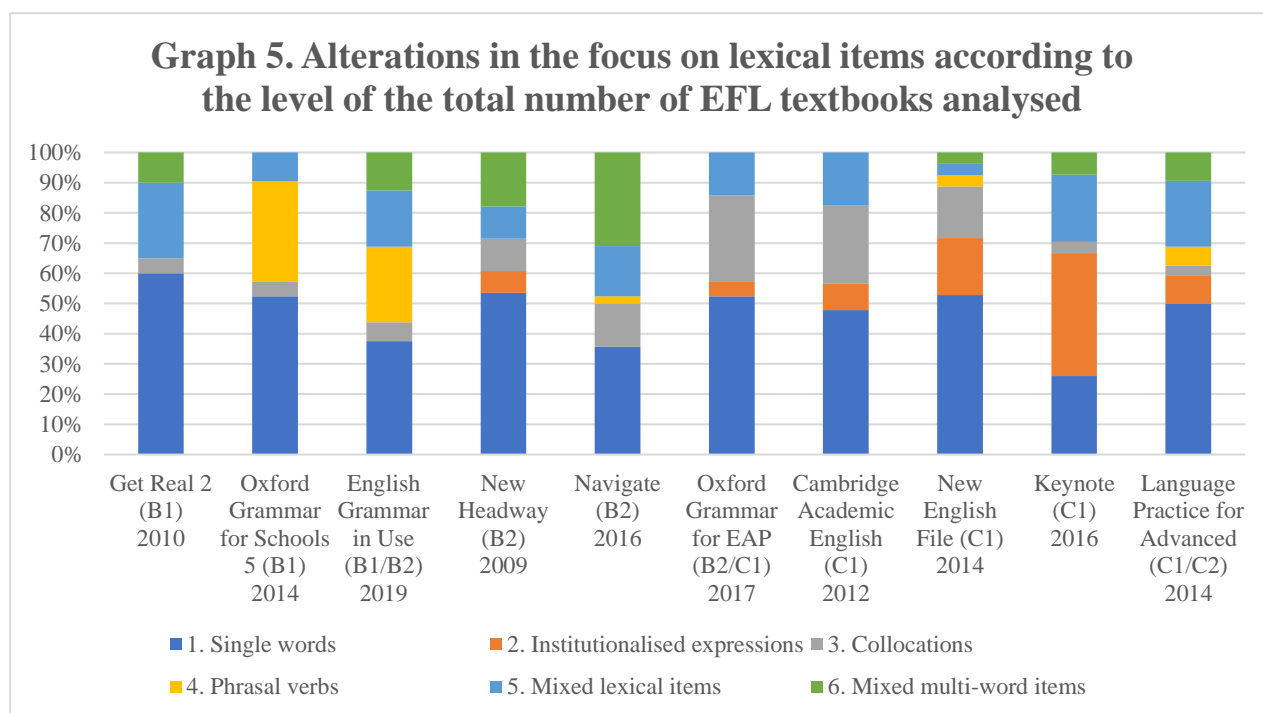
As far as multi-word items are concerned, in Graph 3 it can be noted a small increase in mixed lexical items (including single words) and multi-word items, while the role of exercises dedicated to specific multi-word items remains quite marginal, except for phrasal verbs which seem to be majorly observed in *Oxford Grammar for Schools 5 (B1)* and *English Grammar in Use (B2)*, while concerning higher proficiency levels they appear to be more neglected. In Graph 4, the situation concerning multi-word items appears to be different, since already mentioned, materials used in university contexts seem to be more focused on specific multi-word items exercises than general mixed multi-word items, so that the grade of specificity of what the activities focus on is observed to a greater extent than in upper secondary schools materials. Still, also here the variations observed for the different categories in the materials under analysis appear to have

little to do with their proficiency level. In fact, the same proficiency level registers both high and low scores in the same category of lexical items, which means that a link among materials, CEFR level, and most frequently observed linguistic elements cannot be hypothesised. For instance, in the books which present the same C1 level of proficiency, collocations were found as follows: 15.7% in *Cambridge Academic English*, 13.6% in *New English File* and 2.3% (just one exercise) in *Keynote*.



In addition, two further graphs were added in relation to the attention paid specifically to lexical items. In both graphs are considered all the ten textbooks under analysis in order to obtain an overall view, but while in the first one (Graph 5) they were ordered according to the level of proficiency observed (from B1 to C1/C2), in the second one (Graph 6), the order was that of the years of publication of the analysed materials, which cover exactly a decade (from 2009 to 2019).

Looking at Graph 5 it can be highlighted again the predominance of single words category, which does not seem to present any significant link with the textbooks level of proficiency, as it presents evident peaks both in B1 and in C1/C2 textbooks. As it has already been mentioned, in the same Graph can also be better observed the major interest for mixed multi-word items in upper secondary school materials, while the only specific multi-word item category significantly observed only in two books appears to be that of phrasal verbs. On the other hand, with an increasing of the level of proficiency more attention to specific lexical items other than single words can be noted, in particular when concerning institutionalised expressions and collocations.

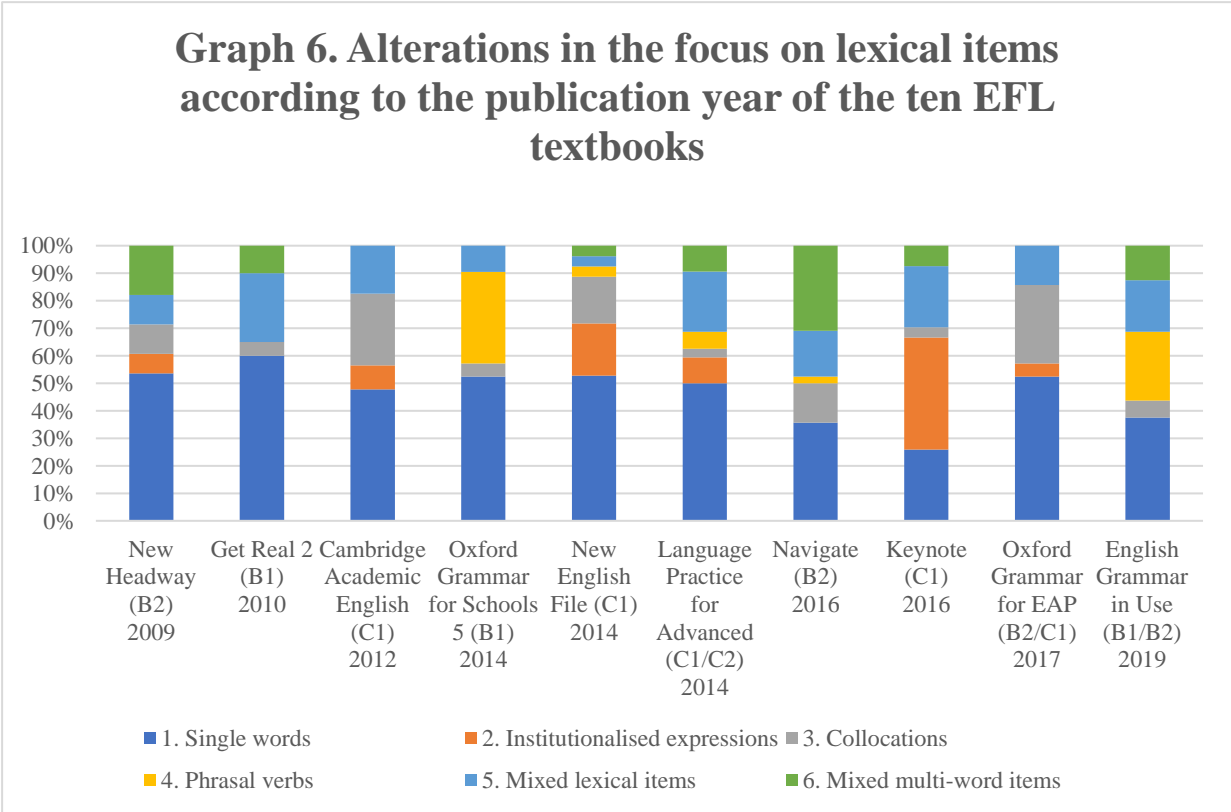


In Graph 6, the focus is on the textbooks' year of publication, so that the purpose becomes that of determining if the alterations of the attention paid to different lexical items might present a link with the time in which the book was published. Starting to consider the most observed category in all materials, as to say single words, it can be noted how the most outdated textbooks (*New Headway*, 2009 and *Get Real 2*, 2010) present the highest scores in this category. On the other hand, starting from 2014 textbooks (*Oxford Grammar for Schools 5*, *New English File* and *Language Practice for Advanced*) and arriving to consider 2016 textbooks (*Navigate* and *Keynote*) a gradual decreasing in the percentage of activities focused on single words is evident, consequently leaving more space to multi-word items exercises, or at least to mixed lexical items activities. Still, a clear link between a decreasing interest in single words and recent years textbooks cannot be wholly affirmed, since as it can be seen in the Graph's last two textbooks (*Oxford Grammar for EAP*, 2017 and *English Grammar in Use*, 2019) show a new increase in single words activities. However, an important aspect should be highlighted, as to say that the last two textbooks observed, as it has already been mentioned, are not general English coursebooks, but they are primary conceived as grammar books, an aspect which does not only justify the great amount of grammatical rules exercises, but also the fact that exercises based on lexis put major stress on single words. In fact, in these types of textbooks, even though in each unit rules of grammar were presented, the proposed activities often required a lexical knowledge to be carried out. The type of lexical knowledge requested involved to some degree also multi-word items as it can be observed in Graph 6, but the fact that basically every exercise was connected to the rule of grammar presented in the first place, might have influences on the need to work primary on single words in order to put a stress on the rule of grammar in an easier way. If this theory in considering grammar textbooks more likely to focus on single words than multi-word items presented a kernel of truth, then removing *Oxford*



*Grammar for EAP* and *English Grammar in Use* from the single words focus analysis, it could be determined that in the past there was a major interest on single words exercises than today and that in recent years textbooks, although the focus remains primarily on single words, is more likely to find activities focused on multi-word items such as collocations, institutionalised expressions and phrasal verbs, or mixed lexical items including single words. Finally, concerning the alterations over time regarding the interest put in specific categories of multi-word items, it does not seem to exist any link which could show a clear increasing or decreasing in the focus on specific categories according to the year of publication of each textbook. For instance, the peaks of collocations can be found in *Cambridge Academic English*, 2012 (15.7%) and *Oxford Grammar for EAP*, 2017 (15.3%), while phrasal verbs are mostly observed in *Oxford Grammar for Schools 5*, 2014 (25.9%) and *English Grammar in Use*, 2019 (11.1%). The same seems to happen for the other categories of multi-word items as well, since none of them appears to follow a significative parameter of distribution.

**Graph 6. Alterations in the focus on lexical items according to the publication year of the ten EFL textbooks**



#### 4.1.2. Discussion

This section aims to further comment the data observed in the previous section and to draw useful implications which may provide an answer to the first research question: which types of lexical items are observed in the EFL materials?

This first question aims to determine if one of the Lexical Approach main principles is implemented in the materials investigated by the present study. In section 1.2. it was identified one of the main cores of Lewis' approach in the greater emphasis prefabricated phrases and fixed or semi-fixed strings of multi-word items should be given compared to individual words, since they "*form an important constituent of a programme based on the Lexical Approach*" (Lewis, 1993:19). Moreover, since the first method tables also include exercises of grammatical rules, it is vital to highlight again the major importance that Lewis attach to lexis, specifically to *idiomaticity*, as compared to grammatical rules.

Firstly, as we can evince from the data collected, more than a half of almost all the analysed textbooks are lexis-related. These results suggest that the majority of the EFL textbooks investigated put a greater emphasis on lexis rather than in grammar activities, an aspect which support to a certain extent the Lexical Approach idea of 'lexis before grammar'. Still, this data tells us nothing about Lexical Approach actual implementation, since what should be primarily considered are the types of lexical items which are given more focus and, to affirm that Lewis' approach is observed in the ten EFL textbooks, the lexis-related exercises just mentioned should have presented a major focus on lexical phrases than on single words, which was not the case. Indeed, the results show that both in upper secondary school textbooks and in university textbooks, among the lexis-related exercises, the majority is constituted of single words and mixed lexical items, which still include single words. In fact, in almost all the ten textbooks

analysed, multi-word items appear to be less than a third compared to the total amount of exercises analysed, and far less than 50% of the total lexical-related exercises. These scores lead us back to the already discussed issue related to the traditional underestimation of lexis and specifically of prefabricated chunks, since the materials still seem to be designed on the conventional idea that the only way to acquire a rich vocabulary is linked to the memorisation of a wide range of individual words. On the contrary, this consistent need for single words fragmentation does not contribute to linguistic fluency the way multi-word phrases do if “*perceived as single, unanalysed wholes*”, providing then the learner a subsequent possibility to analyse them “*into their constituent parts as [...] native speakers retain the ability to produce the item in its unanalysed form rather than generating items ‘from scratch’ on every occasion [...] relying on the generative power of grammar*” (Lewis, 1993:90).

As it has already been discussed in the previous section, the amount of single words exercises does not seem to present a link with the proficiency level of the materials analysed. On the contrary, a subtle decreasing of individual words activities has been noted in relation to more recent years of publication, if only general English textbooks are considered. This may signify that in the last years the concept of Lexical Approach, even though not properly implemented, has penetrated in the lexis teaching strategies used to construct learning material. Furthermore, while a greater interest in grammar is found in correspondence of lower levels (B1/B2), advanced materials appear to be more focused on lexical items than on exercises of grammatical rules. This is probably due to the fact that, while intermediate and upper-intermediate language learners do not have acquired yet ideal foundations of grammar, in advanced language learners grammar is considered as something already consolidated, and consequently the choice becomes that of strengthen their vocabulary, especially in terms of specific

terminology and sector-based lexis. This may help explain why in higher level textbooks specific multi-word items seem to be paid more attention than in lower level materials, where multi-word phrases can be found mainly in mixed lexical items and mixed multi-word items exercises, without putting a stress on the specific phrase typology. In this respect, what plays an important role may be the advanced language learners' metalinguistic capacity (Mertz and Yovel, 2003). This might lead to the assumption that textbooks with a lower level of proficiency present exercises that focus on different types of lexical items without distinguishing them and their characteristics from one another, because learners are not asked to reflect specifically on collocations or expressions. On the contrary, advanced students are presented activities which do not only mix different lexical items, but also exercises which analyse specific multi-word items typologies, such as collocations and institutionalised expressions. Upon these considerations, it could be suggested that the textbooks interest on specific lexical chunks and phrases seems to be notably linked to advanced level materials, since this typology of lexical items may be considered to require an advanced metalinguistic knowledge and a more complex processing than single words do.

In conclusion, in response to the RQ1 it can be affirmed that the types of lexical items which are observed in the EFL materials under analysis are both single words and multi-word items. Still, as already discussed, the exercises focused on multi-word items, whose presence would have signified a certain grade of Lexical Approach implementation, do not reach a significant proportion of the total lexical-related activities in almost any of the textbooks analysed. On the other hand, reordering the textbooks according to their publication year, it was observed an interesting subtle decreasing tendency for general English books concerning exercises focused specifically on single words and a major percentage of activities focused on specific categories of lexical phrases (i.e. institutionalised expressions,

collocations and phrasal verbs). Although this tendency might seem too much optimistic in terms of future Lexical Approach implementation, the results suggest that the EFL textbooks under analysis do not observe one of the key principles of Lewis' approach, which considers the processing of multi-word items as single unanalysed wholes to be a fundamental element for a more proficient speech production.

## 4.2. Second research question: Grammaticalised lexis

The second section focuses on the analysis and discussion of the data obtained through the second research question investigation method, whose purpose was that of determining whether the concept of grammaticalised lexis theorised by Lewis was implemented or not in the ten EFL textbooks analysed.

### 4.2.1. Results

Section 3.3.2. reported the method adopted for data collection to provide an answer for RQ2. The instrument employed was a table divided into ten rows corresponding to the types of grammaticalised lexis exercises proposed by Lewis himself (i.e. identifying chunks, matching chunks, completing - the double gap, categorising - sorting expressions, sequencing, related verbs, extending a sound pattern, grammaticalisation, modalisation, topicalisation). In Tables 9 and 10, in addition to the ten categories of exercises on grammatical rules, two further rows can be observed, one including the total amount of grammar activities analysed (which correspond to the data collected in grammatical rules category of Tables 7 and 8 in Section 4.1.1.), and one (the last row) showing the results observed. In the columns were listed the ten textbooks, dividing them into the five books employed in upper secondary schools (Table 9) and the other five used in university contexts (Table 10). Additionally, as it was done for Tables 7 and 8, in the last column was reported the calculation of the average presence for every

type of grammar exercise, in order to observe not only which are the most treated ones, but also to see what is the average percentage of each in proportion to the average total of the exercises regarding rules of grammar. For instance, concerning B1/B2 level materials (Table 9) it can be observed that considering the total number of exercises under analysis (77), only 35 (45%) are structured around the concept of grammaticalised lexis, and therefore can be considered to be based on Lexical Approach principles. In addition, looking at each exercise category, we can determine for example that in an average of 15.4 exercises, two exercises were structured on grammaticalisation, being consequently the category mostly observed, while some categories were not observed at all (i.e. related verbs, extending a sound pattern and modalisation). The situation for university textbooks (Table 10) did not seem to be notably different, in fact we can affirm that in consideration of a total amount of 67 grammar exercises analysed, only 32 (47.7%) observed Lewis examples of grammaticalised lexis activities. In this case, in a total average of 13.4 grammar exercises, 2 were constructed on matching chunks activities (14.9%), which revealed to be the category most observed, while the ones less observed were again those categories which did not present any related exercise (i.e. completing, related verbs, extending a sound pattern and grammaticalisation). Analogously to the RQ1 method, also in this section it is important to highlight the fact that the table did not report only the data collected, but also their correspondent percentage. In fact, the percentage of each category was extremely helpful in the analysis of data considering it in the right proportion to the total number of exercises analysed for every different book, since also in this case some books reported more grammar activities than others. Therefore, the use of percentages played a crucial role in the examination of reliable data and in generalisable implications which might be elaborated. For instance, considering the first book in Table 9, *Get Real 2*, it can be observed that in the three units analysed were found 22 exercises related to rules of grammar, but only 6 exercises

(27.2%) were considered to respond to Lewis' grammaticalised lexis principle, since there were individuated 3 matching chunks activities (13.6%), one completing activity with double gap (4.5%), and two exercises of grammaticalisation (9.0%), while the other categories remained undetected. In addition, these tables, like Tables 7 and 8 in the previous section, not only are divided according to the level of education (upper secondary school and university), but they also follow an internal ascending order of the level of proficiency, from a B1 to a B2 (Table 9) and from a B2/C1 to a C1/C2 (Table 10). In the case of books reporting the same level, it was employed again the reordering parameter which regards the textbooks publication year.

Finally, the last row of data which shows the results, as to say the total numbers and percentages of the grammaticalised lexis-based categories of activities, was highlighted in order to put a stress on the results section which will be the focal point of the RQ2 results analysis discussion.

<i>Exercise types</i>	<b>Get Real 2 (B1)</b>	<b>Oxford Grammar for Schools 5 (B1)</b>	<b>English Grammar in Use (B1/B2)</b>	<b>New Headway (B2)</b>	<b>Navigate (B2)</b>	<b>Average</b>
1. Identifying chunks	/	/	/	/	1 (5.2%)	0.2 (1.2%)
2. Matching chunks	3 (13.6%)	/	1 (5.0%)	/	/	0.8 (5.1%)
3. Completing (the double-gap: modals and common verbs)	1 (4.5%)	/	/	/	1 (5.2%)	0.4 (2.5%)
4. Categorising (sorting expressions)	/	2 (33.3%)	1 (5.0%)	3 (30.0%)	3 (15.7%)	1.8 (11.6%)
5. Sequencing	/	/	1 (5.0%)	/	/	0.2 (1.2%)
6. Related verbs	/	/	/	/	/	/
7. Extending a sound pattern	/	/	/	/	/	/
8. Grammaticalisation	2 (9.0%)	1 (16.6%)	5 (25.0%)	2 (20.0%)	/	2 (12.9%)
9. Modalisation	/	/	/	/	/	/

10. Topicalisation	/	/	1 (5.0%)	5 (50.0%)	2 (10.5%)	1.6 (10.3%)
Total grammar exercises	22	6	20	10	19	77 ( $\bar{a}$ =15.4)
Results %	6 (27.2%)	3 (50%)	9 (45%)	10 (100%)	7 (36.8%)	35 (45.0%)

**Table 9.** Number and percentage of grammar exercises based on grammaticalized lexis principle out of the total number of grammatical activities analysed in upper secondary schools EFL textbooks (level B1/B2).

<i>Exercise types</i>	<b>Oxford Grammar for EAP (B2/C1)</b>	<b>Cambridge Academic English (C1)</b>	<b>New English File (C1)</b>	<b>Keynote (C1)</b>	<b>Language Practice for Advanced (C1/C2)</b>	<b>Average</b>
1. Identifying chunks	/	2 (13.3%)	1 (7.6%)	1 (6.2%)	/	0.8 (5.9%)
2. Matching chunks	4 (22.2%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (15.3%)	2 (12.5%)	/	2 (14.9%)
3. Completing (the double-gap: modals and common verbs)	/	/	/	/	/	/
4. Categorising (sorting expressions)	/	1 (6.6%)	1 (7.6%)	1 (6.2%)	/	0.6 (4.4%)
5. Sequencing	3 (16.6%)	/	1 (7.6%)	1 (6.2%)	/	1 (7.4%)
6. Related verbs	/	/	/	/	/	/
7. Extending a sound pattern	/	/	/	/	/	/
8. Grammaticalisation	/	/	/	/	/	/
9. Modalisation	/	4 (26.6%)	/	1 (6.2%)	/	1 (7.4%)
10. Topicalisation	1 (5.5%)	2 (13.3%)	/	1 (6.2%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (7.4%)
Total grammar exercises	18	15	13	16	5	67 ( $\bar{a}$ =13.4)
Results %	8 (44.4%)	11 (73.3%)	5 (38.4%)	7 (43.7%)	1 (20.0%)	32 (47.7%)

**Table 10.** Number and percentage of grammar exercises based on grammaticalized lexis principle out of the total number of grammatical activities analysed in university EFL textbooks (level C1/C2).

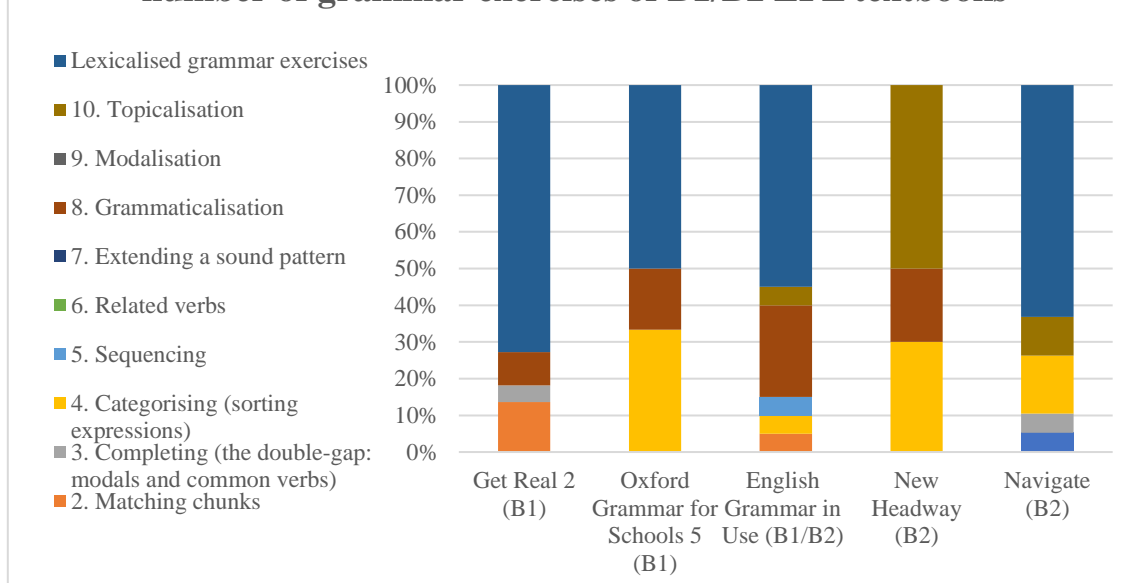


For the analysis of the collected data, two graphs were created. The first refers to the EFL textbooks employed in upper secondary schools (level B1/B2), so including the data of Table 9 (see Graph 7), while the second shows the data collected in Table 10 which refers to the EFL materials used in university contexts and aiming to a C1/C2 level (see Graph 8). The two graphs provide a clear image of the percentages calculated from the collection of data and materials analysis, and this resulted extremely useful to observe and compare the different textbooks in order to determine whether they present striking alterations or similarities according to the level of proficiency they are structured on. Moreover, in both the two graphs a new category has been added in addition to the ten categories of grammaticalised lexis exercises, as to say the difference between the total amount of exercises in each book and the ones considered to be structured on Lexical Approach. The category of *lexicalised grammar exercises* was added in order to provide major transparency to the analysis of data and to distinguish more clearly the grammaticalised lexis exercises from the lexicalised grammar ones.

Graph 7 provides us a picture of the distribution of the diverse typologies of grammatical exercises in EFL materials that range from a B1 to a B2 level (i.e. *Get Real 2*, *Oxford Grammar for Schools 5*, *English Grammar in Use*, *New Headway* and *Navigate*) and aims to determine whether they are based on Lexical Approach principle of grammaticalised lexis or not. What could be noticed at a first glance is the fact that some typologies of grammaticalised lexis exercises were common to almost all the textbooks analysed. The category that seems to be prevalently observed is grammaticalisation, which could be found in four books out of five (9.0%, 16.6%, 25.0% and 20.0%), *Navigate* being the only exception. So, in a total number of 35 activities structured on Lexical Approach, 10 (the 28.5%) were observed to be structured on grammaticalisation, which is the higher result obtained in the five B1/B2 textbooks. The second category of exercises

which appears to be paid more attention is that of categorising activities, which just like grammaticalisation was observed in four books out of five, but only in two of them it showed relevant results, *Oxford Grammar for Schools 5* (33.3%) and *New Headway* (30.0%). In *Navigate* this category as well was observed to a lesser but still notable extent (15.7%), while in *English Grammar in Use* it presented only one exercise in the units analysed (5.0%). Moreover, interesting is the impact of topicalisation activities, which in terms of frequency showed low data, being totally absent in *Get Real 2* and *Oxford Grammar for Schools 5*, and scarcely present in *English Grammar in Use* (5.0%) and *Navigate* (10.5%). Still, it remains the third more observed category after grammaticalisation and categorising, since in 35 total grammaticalised lexis exercises, 8 (the 22.8%) were discovered to observe topicalisation. This high percentage is due to the fact that only one textbook (*New Headway*) presented a 50% of grammatical exercises focused on this type of activity, increasing the total average results of the materials analysed. Finally, we can affirm that while some categories were not observed at all (i.e. related verbs, extending a sound pattern and modalisation), some others were found. Matching chunks activities were observed in two textbooks, *Get Real 2* (13.6%) and *English Grammar in Use* (5.0%) and left out in three books out of five, while the categories of sequencing and identifying chunks could be identified only in one book, respectively the first one in *English Grammar in Use* (5.0%) and the second one in *Navigate* (5.2%). Yet, It is important to consider that, despite the majority of exercises in all textbooks being covered by lexicalised grammar exercises, one of the books analysed (*New Headway*) showed a 100% of exercises structured on grammaticalised lexis.

**Graph 7. Percentages of the 10 categories to the total number of grammar exercises of B1/B2 EFL textbooks**



Although it can be regarded as an optimistic example for Lexical Approach implementation, the variety of the grammatical activities seems to be too poor, presenting only three types of exercises (i.e. categorising, grammaticalisation and topicalisation). On the other hand, the textbook which despite its majority of lexicalised grammar activities, still presented the higher diversification of activities was *English Grammar in Use*, presumably for its role of grammar coursebook, containing matching chunks, categorising, sequencing, grammaticalisation and topicalisation exercises.

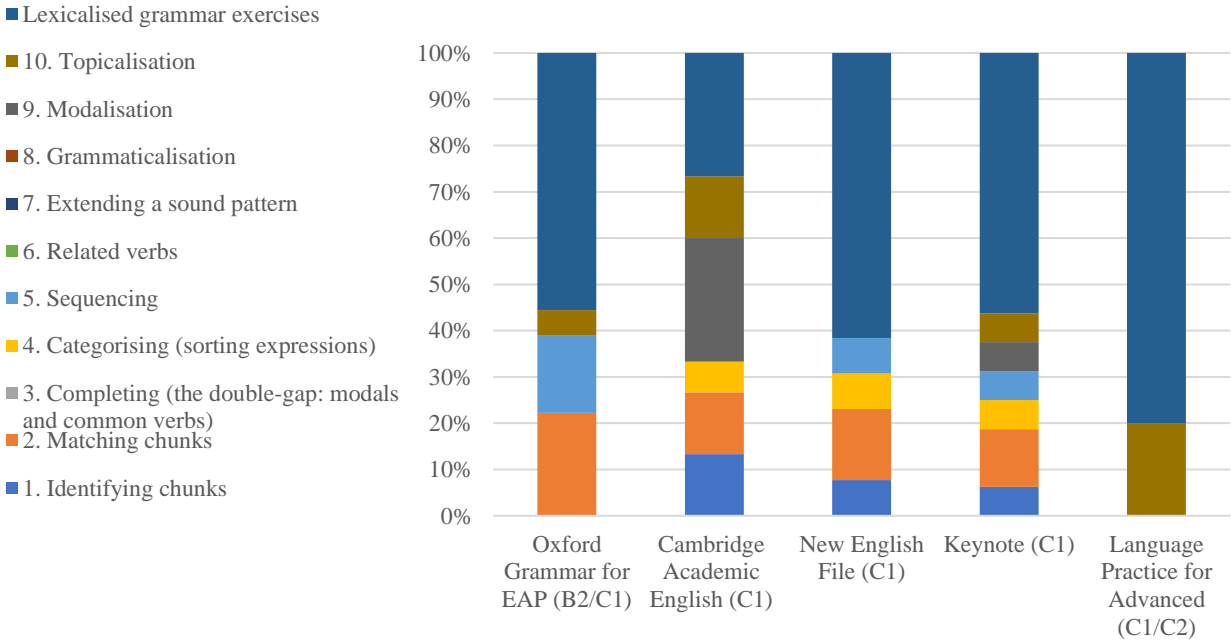
Looking at Graph 8, the categories which in upper secondary school materials resulted to be the most observed (grammaticalisation and categorising) appear in this case extremely downsized. In particular, grammaticalisation activities do not even appear once in the units analysed, while categorising activities can be found in three books out of five with lower results if compared to Graph 7, as to say in *Cambridge Academic English* (6.6%), *New English File* (7.6%) and *Keynote* (6.2%). On the contrary, matching chunks category which was poorly observed in EFL textbooks of Graph 7, in Graph 8 appears to be paid much more attention,

being included in four books out of five, as to say *Oxford Grammar for EAP* (22.2%), *Cambridge Academic English* (13.3%), *New English File* (15.3%) and *Keynote* (12.5%), turning out to be the most observed typology of grammar exercise in university EFL textbooks (the 14.9% to the total number of grammatical exercises). Also sequencing and identifying chunks activities revealed to be more recurrent in advanced materials than in intermediate and upper-intermediate ones, both being present in three books out of five and reporting respectively a percentage of 7.4% and 5.9% to the total grammar-based activities. Topicalisation revealed a minor general focus if compared to the results in B1/B2 materials (10.3%), in fact in C1/C2 ones it showed a 7.4% to the total exercises analysed. Still, despite a lower percentage, it is interesting to observe how topicalisation appeared to be more frequent in advanced books in terms of its presence in four books out of five, while the high percentage in intermediate materials, as it has already been argued, is due primarily to a peak found in only one textbook. In consideration of this point, it could be affirmed that the category of topicalisation exercises was more significantly observed in advanced materials. In addition, Graph 8 shows that four were the categories absent from the collection of data: completing, related verbs, extending a sound pattern and grammaticalisation. Exercises on related verbs and extending a sound pattern were the less observed both in intermediate and advanced textbooks, having been completely ignored, while completing and especially grammaticalisation were included in upper secondary school materials. Modalisation, which was totally absent in Graph 7, can be observed to gain attention in Graph 8 instead, being included in two textbooks, *Keynote* (6.2%) and *Cambridge Academic English*, where it appeared to be the type of grammaticalised lexis exercise most observed (26.6%). Finally, in terms of frequency, the lower diversity of activities was identified in *Language Practice for Advanced*, which showed the higher percentage of lexicalised grammar exercises (80%) and only one topicalisation

exercise. The textbook which on the contrary showed a higher grade of variety in activities was *Keynote*, which despite a majority of lexicalised grammar exercises, presented a great diversity in terms of grammaticalised lexis activities, including six categories (i.e. identifying chunks, matching chunks, categorising, sequencing, modalisation and topicalisation). Still, nonetheless a slightly lower variety, *Cambridge Academic English* seemed to be the only proper example of Lexical Approach implementation, since it was the only advanced textbook to show a predominance of grammaticalised lexis activities (73.3%), including also a considerable diversity of exercises (i.e. identifying chunks, matching chunks, categorising, modalisation and topicalisation).

Finally, similarly to the previous section concerning RQ1, also for RQ2 it was decided to create a last graph in order to observe whether some links could be found between grammaticalised lexis focus and the textbooks’ publication year. Looking at Graph 9, it can be assumed that the year of publication did not seem to play any significant role in the observation of grammaticalised lexis. In fact,

**Graph 8. Percentages of the 10 categories to the total number of grammar exercises of C1/C2 EFL textbooks**



we can see how the blue columns corresponding to lexicalised grammar exercises, which refer to the traditional treatment of grammatical activities, remain approximately the same in almost all textbooks. Moreover, in only one textbook lexicalised grammar exercises remained left out, namely, in *New Headway* (2009), which is the most outdated book of our sample, and this specifically tells us that no major attention to grammaticalised lexis principle was paid in relation to more recent textbooks.

#### 4.2.2. Discussion

The aim of this section is to comment on the results described in the previous section and to formulate possible implications in order to give an answer to our second research question: is the concept of grammaticalised lexis implemented in the analysed EFL materials?

As it has been argued in the previous sections, Lewis put the language exercises structured around this concept in contrast with the traditional and canonical grammar exercises that sees language as a set of rules and which “*constitute a barrier to efficient acquisition*”(Lewis, 2006:9). So, in order to affirm that grammaticalised lexis concept was applied to the exercises in the textbooks, the activities based on traditional lexicalised grammar should have been outnumbered, while the exercises categories attributable to the grammaticalised lexis sample activities proposed by Lewis should have been significantly observed. However, also in this case the Lexical Approach, and along with it the concept of grammaticalised lexis, results to be not properly implemented in the EFL materials under analysis. Firstly, data showed that in a large majority of EFL textbooks, the exercises categories inspired by Lewis’ samples did not reach significant scores, managing to reach relevant results only in two textbooks, *New Headway* and *Cambridge Academic English*. In addition, No relevant alterations

were observed between upper secondary school (B1/B2) and advanced materials (C1/C2), since all textbooks presented similar results, even though referring to different exercise categories. Moreover, also in considering a different type of alteration parameter, as to say the temporal component, and taking into account the publication year of the materials, no significant bond with the results obtained was identified. Consequently, according to the two possible alteration parameters applied in the study, it appears clear that the creation and structure of EFL materials and their activities are still anchored to the traditional conception of lexicalised grammar, in which the correctness of form is considered to have primacy over the pragmatic purposes of an expression or a text and their social suitability (Lewis, 1993). Thus, the only two textbooks which provided an appropriate example of grammaticalised lexis implementation are not enough to affirm that the Lexical Approach is implemented in the EFL materials investigated.

#### 4.3. Third research question: Multi-word items treatment

This last section focuses on the analysis and discussion of the data collected throughout the third research question method, whose purpose was to determine which is the treatment applied to multi-word items in the analysed materials and whether it can be affirmed to follow Lexical Approach concept of consciousness-raising.

##### 4.3.1. Results

In section 3.3.3. the method employed to collect data for RQ3 was introduced and described. The instrument used was a table divided into three main rows, in which the first reported the number of total exercises focused on multi-word items, data which was already collected in the RQ1 investigation method. Then, the further two rows of data represented the number of exercises which were structured on

consciousness-raising activities (CR) and the number of those structured on non-consciousness-raising activities (N-CR). In the columns were included the five upper secondary school (see Table 11) and the five university (see Table 12) textbooks under analysis and their respective exercises distribution in terms of multi-word items treatment. Lastly, similarly to Tables 7, 8, 9 and 10 in the previous sections, a last column was added in order to show the average presence for both CR and N-CR activities and to observe which is the average percentage of each category in relation to the total average of the multi-word lexical items exercises. For instance, in Table 11 it can be observed how in a total average of 9.6 exercises in upper secondary school materials, only 2 (the 20.8%) were CR-based, while the large majority of an average of 7.6 exercises (the 79.1%) were N-CR-based. An extremely similar result can be detected in Table 12, as far as university textbooks are concerned. Here in fact, considering a total average of 12.2 exercises focused on multi-word items, a wide average of 9.6 exercises (the 78.6%) were N-CR-based, while only 2.6 of them (21.3%) were CR-based. These first results may anticipate the fact that CR activities were not properly observed in the materials analysed by the present study. Finally, analogously to the tables of collected data in the previous sections, also in this case the row reporting the results of the number of CR activities was highlighted as its data were the focus point that enabled us to answer to the 3RQ.

Category	Get Real 2 (B1)	Oxford Grammar for Schools 5 (B1)	English Grammar in Use (B1/B2)	New Headway (B2)	Navigate (B2)	Average
<b>Total multi-word item exercises</b>	3	8	7	10	20	48 ( $\bar{a}$ =9.6)
<b>CR activities</b>	/ (0%)	1 (12.5%)	/ (0%)	5 (50%)	4 (20%)	2 (20.8%)



<b>N-CR activities</b>	3 (100%)	7 (87.5%)	7 (100%)	5 (50%)	16 (80%)	7.6 (79.1%)
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**Table 11.** Number and percentage of consciousness-raising and non-consciousness-raising activities out of the total number of multi-word items exercises analysed in upper secondary schools EFL textbooks (level B1/B2).

Category	Cambridge Academic English (C1)	Language Practice for Advanced (C1/C2)	New English File (C1)	Keynote (C1)	Oxford Grammar for EAP (B2/C1)	Average
<b>Total multi-word item exercises</b>	8	9	23	14	7	61 ( $\bar{a}=12,2$ )
<b>CR activities</b>	2 (25%)	1 (11.1%)	7 (30.4%)	3 (21.4%)	/ (0%)	2.6 (21.3%)
<b>N-CR activities</b>	6 (75%)	8 (88.8%)	16 (69.5%)	11 (78.5%)	7 (100%)	9.6 (78.6%)

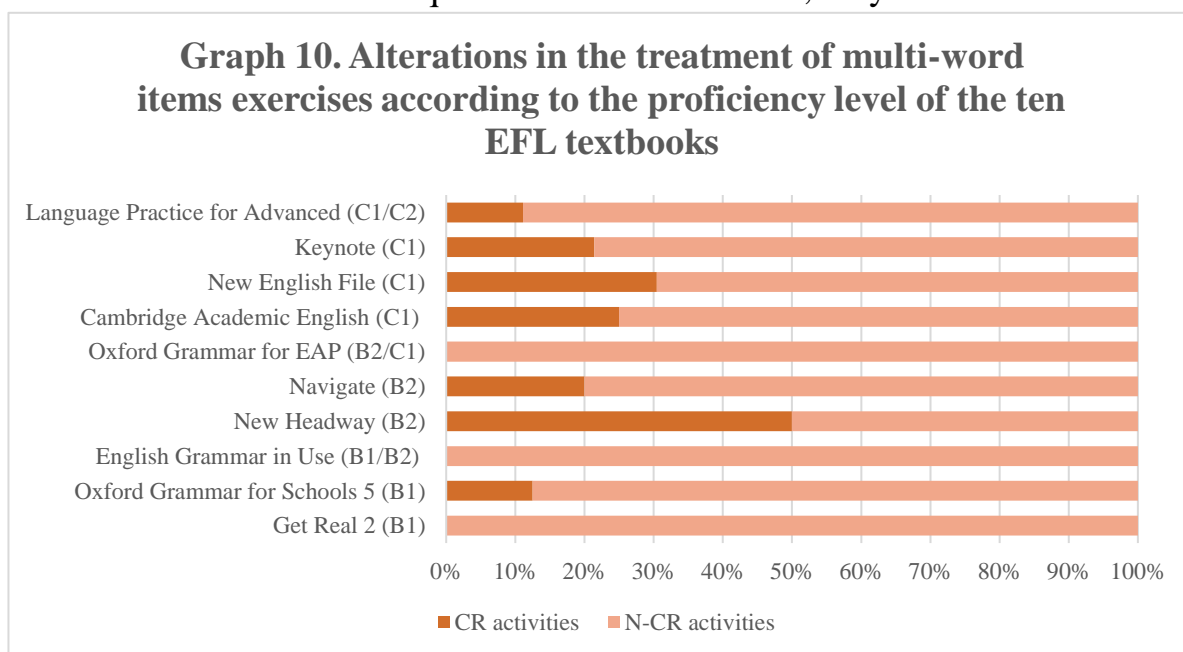
**Table 12.** Number and percentage of consciousness-raising and non-consciousness-raising activities out of the total number of multi-word items exercises analysed in University EFL textbooks (level C1/C2).

In order to examine and formulate implications on the results obtained in the two tables just described, two graphs were created, showing the results of all the ten textbooks together. In fact, since the categories observed were just two, differently from the graphs concerning 1RQ and 2RQ, this time there was no need of dividing them into upper secondary school and university materials. On the contrary, dividing them would have just made the analysis more fragmented without adding any clarity. Finally, the two graphs followed two different parameters of reordering data, both already used for 1RQ and 2RQ, as to say the materials level of proficiency (Graph 10) and their publication year (Graph 11).

In both graphs it can be highlighted how in three textbooks out of ten (*Get Real 2*, *English Grammar in Use* and *Oxford Grammar for EAP*) no multi-word

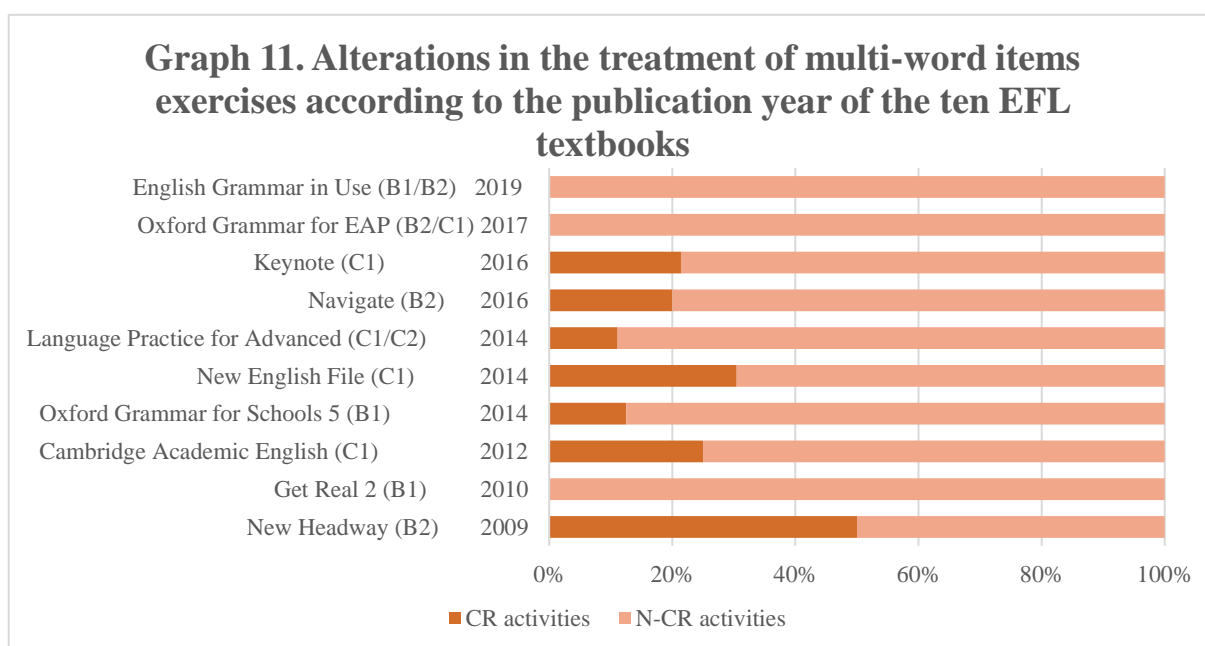
exercise based on CR activities was detected, consequently resulting in a 100% of N-CR activities. Moreover, only one upper secondary school textbook (*New Headway*) resulted to have at least 50% of multi-word items exercises structured on CR activities, which implies that the CR exercises of nine textbooks out of ten did not reach not only the half, but according to Graph 10, not even one third of the total amount of multi-word items exercises (12.5%, 20.0%, 20.8%, 25%, 30.4%, 21.4%, 11.1% and 0%).

In Graph 10, the alterations of the multi-word items treatment are showed according to their level of proficiency, which range from a B1 to a C2 level. Concerning this first observation parameter no significant findings were identified, since there does not seem to be a clear link between the textbooks level and a major use of CR activities. The higher percentage of CR activities belonged to one textbook used in upper secondary school (*New Headway*, B2), still in the same group of books, two of them present no CR activities at all (*Get Real 2* and *English Grammar in Use*). On the other hand, although among the university textbooks may be noticed a minority of books which do not observe any CR activities (only one book – *Oxford Grammar for EAP*, B2/C1), the results of the other four textbooks remain quite low and in addition, they seem to decrease in



correspondence of the level increasing of the last three textbooks (*New English File*, *Keynote* and *Language Practice for Advanced*).

Graph 11 shows that the two most recent textbooks do not include any CR activities, in addition to *Get Real 2* (2010). Still, it should be kept in mind the primary role of these two textbooks (*Oxford Grammar for EAP* and *English Grammar in Use*) as grammar coursebook, and not general English textbooks. This aspect was already detected in Section 4.1, where it was observed that these two grammar textbooks presented a minor attention to multi-word items, so that it should not be too surprising to discover that also the treatment they apply to these types of exercises was not based on Lexical Approach. Nevertheless, *Oxford Grammar for Schools 5*, which is a grammar coursebook as well, was previously observed to be more focused on lexical items, even if primarily on single words, and the results in this case show a low, but still existing, attention to CR activities (12.5%). Finally, considering the alterations derived from the textbooks publication year, *New Headway* (2009), which is the most outdated book analysed, is also the one presenting a higher percentage of CR activities. Still, despite this first evident result, moving towards higher levels it does not seem to



exist a clear connection between textbooks time of publication and their interest on CR exercises, since there is no curve, but a constant alternation of higher and lower results, similarly to the one in Graph 10. Therefore, excluding the last two recent textbooks which happen to be grammar coursebooks, among the remaining materials, their publication year, just like their level of proficiency, did not seem to be determinant for their interest in Lexical Approach consciousness-raising principle.

#### 4.3.2. Discussion

The aim of this last section is that of further discussing the data and results obtained in the previous section as well as that of drawing possible implications which could enable us to give an answer to the third research question: how are multi-word lexical items treated?

The purpose was precisely to determine if the concept of language awareness introduced in Section 1.1.3. and the crucial role of consciousness-raising activities to notice language and reaching that awareness, already discussed in Section 1.2.3., were properly observed in the EFL materials analysed. In fact, Lewis not only puts at the basis of his Lexical Approach a special attention to multi-word items, but he also states how this attention should be CR-based, as to say it should be applied an observe-hypothesise-experiment cycle, an approach which is not implemented in the traditional exercises based on N-CR activities. So, to be able to determine whether the Lexical Approach was implemented in the treatment that multi-word items are given in the textbooks analysed, those materials should have presented a majority of CR activities. Again, the CR and language awareness principles, as well as the Lexical Approach itself, did not appear to be properly implemented in the analysed materials, since looking at the results it can be observed how no textbook succeeded in reaching an overwhelming majority in CR exercises. Moreover, according to the alteration parameters considered as well

for RQ1 and RQ2, also in the present case no relevant links were found both in terms of materials proficiency level and times of publication, except for the two more recent grammar coursebooks which presented insignificant interest for multi-word items already in the RQ1 analysis and which, even in this case, showed no CR activity at all. Finally, what can be evinced from the data obtained concerns the fact that not only Lexical Approach appears to be unimplemented in terms of its consideration of multi-word items (QR1), but also that the treatment given to the few activities focused on prefabricated chunks which were found in the analysed materials is not optimal for the empowering of learners' lexical acquisition. In fact, affirming that an extremely low number of activities were CR-based means that students were seldom asked to reflect upon the lexical items presented and to create their own hypotheses on the patterns and structures observed. Pattern drills<sup>14</sup> such as cloze tests and transformation exercises may be useful to practice linguistic structures and to enhance automatic processing in our mind, but if overly repetitious, monotonous and with poor connection to communicative and pragmatic purposes, they may result extremely demotivating for students. On the contrary, CR-activities contribute to increase the learners' motivation and encourage them to draw their conclusions on the basis of their hypotheses, making them aware and active protagonists of their own language acquisition (Willis and Willis, 1996).

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<sup>14</sup> Pattern drills (esercizi strutturali) in itals - Laboratorio per la formazione e la ricerca in Italiano Lingua Straniera. Nozionario di Glottodidattica available at: <https://www.itals.it/nozion/noziof.htm>

## Conclusions

The present study aimed at determining to what extent implementation of Lewis' Lexical Approach is considered in EFL textbooks design, which ranged from a B1 to a C2 level. A sample of 10 EFL textbooks were analysed, with the purpose to investigate respectively three of the Lexical Approach key principles (a significant focus on multi-word units, a major emphasis on grammaticalised lexis activities compared to lexicalised grammar ones, a CR-based treatment reserved to multi-word items). Findings showed that:

1. Regarding the types of lexical items majorly observed, the Lexical Approach cannot be declared properly implemented in any of the textbooks under analysis. Still, even though there does not seem to exist a clear link between the number of single words activities and the textbooks proficiency level, this link may be observed in consideration of more recent materials, since according to a temporal parameter, it was noted a subtle decreasing of single words interest. Finally, according to the proficiency level of the materials, it was observed a major focus on grammar in lower level textbooks and a greater emphasis on exercises focused on specific categories of multi-word items in advanced level materials.
2. As far as the concept of grammaticalised lexis is concerned, also in this case Lexical Approach does not appear to be properly implemented, since the grammar sample activities proposed by Lewis were poorly observed by almost all the analysed EFL materials. Furthermore, concerning the alterations of grammaticalised lexis exercises in each textbook, no significant link was detected with the materials proficiency level as well as with their publication year.

3. Lastly, concerning the treatment of multi-word items, the results obtained showed that no textbook presented even a subtle majority of CR activities. Moreover, even in this case no link was observed between CR activities alterations and the materials proficiency level or their publication year. Finally, once again the Lexical Approach and with it the key concept of language awareness does not seem to be observed by any of the coursebooks under analysis.

Consequently, gathering the findings of the present research together, it may be determined that three of the most important principles on which Lexical Approach put its basis were not adequately observed and implemented in any of the ten textbooks under analysis, not even in consideration of those textbooks published in more recent years.

Finally, as far as the limitations of the study are concerned, it should be highlighted the fact that the research conducted was limited to the analysis of a restricted number of materials. Consequently, it goes without saying that a more reliable generalisation of the results may be acquired in consideration of a larger-scale research, in which more textbooks, aiming to different levels of proficiency and from various publication time ranges, might be taken into account. Moreover, the ten textbooks investigated by the present study were published between 2009 and 2019, thus, considering the Lexical Approach a theory firstly described in the early 1990s, it could be interesting to observe a wider time range of textbooks, considering also those published in the early 2000s as well as up-to-date textbooks published from 2019 onwards.

Besides, as it has already been mentioned in Section 3.2., another important aspect that needs to be stressed is that despite the impact that textbooks have in learning environments and despite the present study results suggesting us that Lewis' approach is not implemented enough in EFL materials, it should be kept in mind that these materials only provide us a partial picture of the way teaching is

conducted inside a classroom. In fact, coursebooks alone, even though not structured on Lexical Approach, tell us nothing about to what extent teachers use them in class, nor about the actual practice pursued by students in and outside the classroom environment.

Although the present study is a small-scale research, it may hopefully inspire further investigations on Lexical Approach implementation, and contribute to increase attention and awareness on the importance of taking into consideration lexical-based approach when designing EFL materials.



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