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A little bit about: analyzing and teaching lexical bundles in academic lectures

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ABSTRACT

For English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) students, high academic listening skills are essential in order to succeed at the university level, and yet instructional materials in academic listening often lack authenticity (Flowerdew and Miller 1997). As corpus-based data has become more prevalent and corpus-based findings have become more and more accessible, ESL/EFL instructors are now in a position to investigate how language is actually used in the content classroom and to design lessons accordingly. The present study focuses on the use of lexical bundles, defined as recurrent word combinations, in academic lectures. A small group of lexical bundles which are frequently found in spoken academic language are examined in order to carefully analyze their function in this register, comparing the use of bundles by instructors to that of students. The findings of this comparison are used as the basis for the design of a series of academic listening lesson plans, focusing on those bundles that most often occur in academic lectures and the functions they perform in that context.

Keywords: *lexical bundles, corpora, listening comprehension, English for Academic Purposes, authentic materials*

I. INTRODUCTION

For students learning English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL), there may be a moment of startling realization if they find that those language skills that were emphasized in the language classroom are not precisely the skills needed in an actual university environment. For instance, in his personal narrative about learning English as a foreign language and then attending school at an American university, Tsai (2001: 138) writes, "…we learned grammar in depth and performed well in exams, but had no real experience…. Most foreign students, including myself, struggled because we were in a real world – all lectures were given in English". Tsai's narrative is but one example of what many ESL/EFL students experience when there is a noticeable gap between the language skills acquired in the classroom and those needed to successfully function in academic studies conducted entirely in English. Especially noticeable, as Tsai mentioned, is when there is a gap in the listening skills needed to comprehend academic lectures. According to Flowerdew (1995: 7), "academic listening

skills are… an essential component of communicative competence in a university setting", and yet Morley (2001: 69) observes that "listening is still regarded as the least important skill". For this reason, English for academic purposes (EAP) instructors might wonder about the best way to teach academic listening skills so that students are adequately prepared for the demands of comprehending lectures in English. This is a valid concern of EAP practitioners, and for many years a wide variety of research has been devoted to understanding classroom discourse and listening comprehension in academic settings.

One research approach to the analysis of academic lectures that has recently become more widespread because of advances in technology is corpus-based research. "A corpus is a collection of texts, written or spoken, stored in machine readable form, which may be annotated with varied linguistic information" (McEnery et al. 2006: 345). Once an electronic corpus has been compiled, computer programs such as concordancers can search for various linguistic features within the corpus texts. Corpora are valuable tools for researchers and instructors alike; from the instructors' perspectives, using a corpus as a resource or to inform their teaching with corpus-based findings may provide them with a sense of confidence. Instead of relying on "intuitions and anecdotal evidence of how speakers and writers use language," teachers can rely on a language corpus or the findings of corpora analyses to help them know how language is used in real life (Biber et al. 2002: 10). Further, Conrad (1999: 3) states that "Practicing teachers and teachers-in-training can learn a great deal from corpus-based studies and, in fact, owe it to their students to share the insights into language use that corpus linguistics provides".

Corpus-based research is a valuable tool for classroom instruction and materials design; in the area of academic listening, one possible motivation for using corpus-based research is to better understand the type of language that is actually used in academic lectures, thus proving or disproving intuition. Indeed, corpus-based studies on spoken academic language have revealed much about what type of language occurs in the classroom. One language feature that has come to light from such investigations is the *lexical bundle*. Biber et al. (1999) define lexical bundles as sequences of three or more words that frequently occur in a particular register. Biber et al. (2002: 443) add that these expressions "become 'prefabricated chunks' that speakers and writers can easily

retrieve from their memory and use again and again as text building blocks". In academic writing, frequent lexical bundles are expressions such as *as a result of, on the other hand,* and *in the context of,* among many others, and in academic speech, expressions such as *a little bit about, I want you to,* and *if you look at.* Lexical bundles are identified empirically and determined by their frequency across a multitude of texts (Biber et al. 2002). In this way, corpus based research, by permitting efficient examination of a large quantity of texts, has allowed for the discovery of bundles that otherwise would be nearly impossible to identify. Other features of lexical bundles are discussed in more detail later in this paper in order to show that bundles can serve a wide variety of functions within discourse. The purpose of this paper is to examine five lexical bundles as identified by Biber et al. (2004) and Nesi and Basturkmen (2006) that can be used to introduce new topics and organize the discourse in academic lectures. In order to illustrate how an EAP instructor might go about using corpus data and concordance tools to better understand the function of these bundles and to design classroom materials, we survey the use of these bundles in MICASE, the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English, which will be described in more detail in section 2. The following research questions were posed to guide our research:

1. How frequently do the topic-introducing/discourse organizing bundles *if you look at, a little bit about, a little bit of, I want you to, and I would like you* occur in the spoken production of instructors and students in the academic lectures of MICASE?
2. What are the teaching applications from the pattern of use of these bundles in academic lectures?

Thus, the current study is designed to show how EAP practitioners can use the findings of current research along with available corpora and corpus-based research tools (e.g. concordancing programs) to not only analyze the use of linguistic features but also design lessons for the EAP classroom. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The next section describes how corpus-based research methods have contributed to the description of the language used to introduce new topics in academic lectures, focusing on lexical bundles that have been functionally classified as introducing or focusing on a topic. Section three describes the methodology and the corpus used in this study.

Section four presents the results of the analysis of lexical bundles and a discussion of those results. Section five outlines the importance of lexical bundles in connection to academic listening comprehension. In the final section, the findings of this study are applied to the teaching of lexical bundles and listening comprehension by means of a series of activities that incorporate corpora and corpus-based research tools.

II. RECURRING PHRASES IN ACADEMIC LECTURES

In this section we will present a brief review of the literature on lexical bundles in general and of the functions performed by lexical bundles in academic speech in particular. In addition, we will include a section on the relationship between lexical bundles and academic listening comprehension.

II.1. Lexical bundles across registers: Academic lectures

Within the field of research on academic lectures, special attention has been given to lexical phrases (e.g. De Carrico and Nattinger 1988: 91, 92). Lexical phrases were defined as "'chunks' of language of varying length, phrases like *as it were, that goes without saying, on the other hand*," and the assumption has been that knowledge of these chunks of language can "ease the problem of [listening] perception". Recently, with advances in technology and the prevalence of corpus-based research methodologies, lexical phrases within academic lectures have been revisited on a larger scale (Rilling 1996). Significantly larger numbers of transcribed lectures have been compiled into larger corpora, yielding a larger pool of information upon which to base findings. Additionally, corpus-based research has allowed researchers to examine the lexical phrases in lectures without necessarily having pre-existing ideas of which phrases will be the most common. Computer programs can be developed to search for commonly occurring three-, four-, or five-word (or longer) combinations. Thus, corpus-based methodologies have allowed for a revelation of the frequently occurring lexical phrases in academic lectures that were not possible to identify before computers. This is the case of a particular type of word combination called *lexical bundles* (Biber et al. 1999). According to Biber and Barbieri (2007) there are three characteristics of lexical bundles. The first one relates to their frequency: whether found in spoken or written

discourse, lexical bundles are extremely common, as previously mentioned. The second characteristic is that they are not idiomatic but transparent in meaning. Their final characteristic is that they are usually not complete phrases or clauses. Biber et al. (2004) determined that in spoken registers, lexical bundles act as functional frames that signal to the listeners how they should interpret the coming information. Taken together, these characteristics would imply that lexical bundles, while occurring frequently, are not always obvious to the listener or the speaker due to their being fragments of language that are often used simply to frame other information. In this way, it is evident that corpus-based research, which objectively searches for frequencies of occurrences in large corpora, has been crucial in allowing lexical bundles to come into clearer focus.

Two recent studies that have contributed significantly to our understanding of lexical bundles in spoken academic discourse are Biber et al. (2004) and Nesi and Basturkmen (2006). In the first study, Biber et al. (2004) start their study by explaining two important considerations when identifying lexical bundles in texts: frequency and range. Frequency refers to how often a phrase recurs. As the cut-off point used to consider a recurrent word-combination a lexical bundle is somewhat arbitrary (10 or 20 times in a million words depending on the study), for this study they chose a very conservative frequency-cut off point at 40 times in a million words. Additionally, the authors mention that a phrase must be used in a range of texts, at least five different texts in the corpus, to avoid idiosyncratic use by individual writers or speakers. This feature is particularly important when trying to determine the phrases that students will encounter across a wide variety of settings. In addition, Biber et al. (2004) provide insights into how lexical bundles are structurally and functionally classified, introducing a comprehensive functional taxonomy. The functional categories of lexical bundles identified in their study included stance expressions, discourse organizers, and referential expressions, with several sub-categories under each of these groups. In a broad sense, stance bundles provide a frame for which one can interpret coming information, discourse organizers allow for introducing new topics and elaborate on given topics, and referential bundles specify an attribute of something as being important. Some of the bundles classified as discourse organizers will be analyzed in the current study, specifically those that have been labeled topic introduction/focus bundles,

which "provide overt signals to the student that a new topic is being introduced" (Biber et al. 2004: 391).

Similarly to Biber et al. (2004), the work of Nesi and Basturkmen (2006) examined the use of lexical bundles in academic lectures. These authors used monologic university lectures from two different corpora searching for four-word lexical bundles. Their findings indicate that classroom teaching uses a large number of lexical bundles. The authors compiled a list of the 20 most frequently occurring bundles, 17 out of which were also reported in the findings of Biber et al. (2004). In sum, the findings of both of these studies implicate that lexical bundles are frequently used in academic discourse and lend support to the necessity of knowing how bundles operate in introduction/focus bundles in these studies were used as a starting point for data analysis for materials development, as will be shown in the following section.

II.2. Lexical bundles and academic listening comprehension

Two terms commonly used to describe listening processing are bottom-up and top-down listening processing skills. According to Morley (2001), bottom-up skills call for the listener to pay attention to every detail of language input while top-down skills involve the listeners' ability to access previous knowledge in order to understand what they are hearing. It has long been believed that problems in listening comprehension can arise when students depend too heavily on bottom-up rather than top-down skills; in this way, students may understand every word of an utterance without grasping the overall meaning.

In this vein, Chaudron and Richards (1986) examined the effect of using what they termed micro-markers in academic lectures on students' comprehension. Micro-markers such as "well," "now," and "so" were believed to signal lower-level information and macro-markers such as "what I'm going to talk about today" were believed to signal higher level information. It was hypothesized that students would better comprehend a lecture when both micro- and macro-markers were used rather than when one or the other was used alone. What the results of this study showed was that students actually did better on the comprehension checks after listening to the lecture that used macro-markers *alone* rather than in addition to micro-markers or with micro-markers alone. A

possible explanation for the benefit of macro-markers was that they allowed for better top-down processing, as students were able to categorize information based on those cues. The authors further concluded that the micro-markers added little in the way of semantic meaning and were possibly overlooked due to their inessentiality of the overall meaning. In light of the current study, an important note here is that some of the macro-markers chosen by Chaudron and Richards are actually similar to those lexical bundles identified in academic lectures, as shown in corpus data. For instance, the phrases *what I'm going to talk about today is something you probably know* and *and that's all we'll talk about today* as chosen by Chaudron and Richards (1986) contain the bundles (or similar bundles) *what we're going to* and *going to talk about* as seen in Biber et al. (2004). Thus, from Chaudron and Richards, one might indirectly conclude that introduction/topic lexical bundles in academic lectures may actually help students better understand the structure of the lecture and utilize top-down rather than bottom-up processing. In addition, in a more explicit examination of the presence and distribution of lexical bundles in university classroom talk, Csomay and Cortes (in press) found that lexical bundles seem to aid in allowing the listener to follow the macro-level structure of classroom talk.

III. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The comparison of Biber et al. (2004) and Nesi and Basturkmen (2006) provided us with a corpus-generated list of lexical bundles used to introduce new topics in academic lectures. From this list, the bundles *if you look at, a little bit about, a little bit of, I want you to,* and *I would like you* were chosen to conduct the analysis of the present study. The use of these five bundles was examined in the online version of the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) and the concordancer software built in on its website. The search criteria were restricted by speech event type and speaker attributes. First, in examining the speech of instructors, the search criteria was limited so that the results only came from large and small lectures which were either interactive or monologic. The speaker attributes were limited so that only speech by faculty was considered in the results. Then, in examining the speech of students, the results were limited to student presentations and dissertation defenses, and the speaker attributes

were limited to speech by students. With these restrictions established, there were 62 lectures used to gather data about the speech of instructors and 15 student presentation and dissertation defenses to analyze student speech. Each speech event had a different speaker. A search was conducted for each of the five topic-introducing bundles selected for this study: *if you look at, a little bit of, a little bit about, I want you to* and *I would like you*. As the list of instances of occurrences came up, each instance was examined to determine the bundle's function in the context, and these functions were compared to those described in Biber et al. (2004) and Nesi and Basturkmen (2006). Special attention was given to those bundles that did not function in the expected way (i.e. whose function did not resemble those in the reviewed studies) in order to better understand the nature of the bundle.

IV. LEXICAL BUNDLE FUNCTION IN *MICASE*

In this section, we present the analyses of the lexical bundles selected for this study in the speech of instructors first and then in the speech of students as identified in MICASE in order to carefully review the function they perform in these registers. The bundles' use is illustrated by examples taken from the corpus.

IV.1. *If you look at*

Instructor's speech: The phrase was found 54 times across 34 transcripts. Of the 54 occurrences, in 17 instances (31%) the bundle was used as topic introduction. By examining the co-texts, some interesting patterns were discovered. For instance, the contrastive transition word *but* preceded the bundle in some instances.

> *"…uh dissolve in a liter of water,* ***but if you look at*** *this one a very very small number of moles of mercury-two iodide…"*

In keeping with the tendency of academic speech to resemble conversation as well as academic prose, the word *so*, which has been found to be a frequent conversational linking adverbial (Biber et al. 2002) preceded the bundle as well, often when the bundle acted as the introduction of a new topic:

> *"…that's those N-O-three-minus anions that are highly soluble, uh will not precipitate. Okay so* ***if you look at*** *question number one, uh, in your handout…"*

Additionally, references to present time or a present object were made with the use of words such as *here* and *now*, both preceding and following the bundle.

> *"…and, what can you see here especially* ***if you look at*** *the eyes, the hollow of the eyes, and the um, and the way the skin looks like she stood up out of a swamp."*

A final observation was that *if you look at* was often used in order to draw student's attention to an object, a visual representation, or part of class materials.

> *"…so* ***if you look at*** *that top figure…"*

It is necessary to point out that two-thirds of the bundle occurrences showed the bundle used for topic elaboration or clarification, which is the second function of discourse organizing bundles as explained by Biber et al. (2004). Of these instances, if you look at was used 54% of the time with the meaning of "if you consider." For example:

> *"…about six lines from the bottom of that page where Gertrudis is making an argument about how, well this is true* ***if you look at*** *it one way but it could be true if you look at another way and so on."*

Thus, it would not be enough to teach the topic introduction/focus function of this bundle in an academic listening skills class; both this function and the topic elaboration function should be emphasized.

Student speech: *If you look at* occurred 10 times in 5 transcripts of student speech. Nine of these tokens can be interpreted to mean "if you consider" as in the following example:

> *"…you don't all of a sudden see a slew of multicultural films coming out every year.* ***If you look at*** *all the Oscar nominees, um, if you look at the top ten grossing film [sic] sometimes you have…"*

Student speech seems to follow instructor speech in the tendency to use *if you look at* as a topic elaboration/clarification bundle. This finding emphasizes the fact that the bundle should be presented to students in both of the functions it often performs.

IV.2. *A little bit of*

Instructor speech: In the corpus, *a little bit about* had 40 tokens across 22 texts and in 11 of these occurrences it was used to introduce a topic. In four of these occurrences, the bundle was preceded by the word *spend* and immediately followed by the word *time*, creating a six-word recurrent expression, *spend a little bit of time.* Furthermore, three out of these four occurrences were part of the longer expression *spend a little bit of time talking about*, as shown in the following example:

> *"…so, lemme* ***spend a little bit of time*** *and I mean* ***a little bit of time talking about*** *um a little bit about the continuous methods…"*

Another frequent collocate of the bundle was the word *reading* that occurred in three occasions.

On the other hand, 27 occurrences of *a little bit about* (68%) did not show it as introducing a topic. In these cases, the bundle was used as a quantifier.

> *"…the application of serotonin itself, and you get* ***a little bit of*** *inhibition for a short period of time."*

Thus, in the instructor speech examples from MICASE, *a little bit of* functioned more often as a quantifier than a discourse organizer. This use as a quantifier could be attributed to instructors hedging when not sure of exact statistics or to deemphasize an action. These pragmatic implications for *a little bit of* should also be introduced to students. Likewise, the phrase *spend a little bit of time talking/discussing* should be presented as a topic introduction marker, as it occurs relatively often in the corpus as well.

Student speech: *A little bit about* occurred 13 times in 7 texts of student speech. In 62% of the cases, it acted as a quantifier, similar to the tendency in instructor speech. In

the remaining occurrences, it was used as topic introduction/focus. The following examples illustrate these functions, respectively:

> *"…so I think that really until you could get **a little bit of** information, from an oral r- some real data, it's gonna be hard to do…"*
> *"…um, and let me, tell you **a little bit of** this article, Encountering Language and Language…"*

IV.3. *A little bit about*

Instructor speech: Interestingly, *a little bit about,* while just one word different from *a little bit of,* showed a much stronger preference for acting as a topic introduction bundle. This bundle was used 81% of the time performing this function and it was preceded or followed by some reference to time, such as the word *today* or *next.*

> *"…we talked about medical ecology on Monday and today we're gonna talk **a little bit about** epidemiology"*

Student speech: the bundle *a little bit about* was used 6 times in 5 texts. Four out of these six occurrences showed the bundle functioning as a topic introduction/focus marker.

> *"…alright, let's talk **a little bit about** Mindspeak."*

Both in instructor and student speech, this bundle was often preceded by a communication verb such as *tell, talk,* and *show.*

IV.4. *I want you to*

Instructor speech: The bundle *I want you to* occurred 43 times in 18 texts. This bundle was used only five times as a topic introduction marker. True to its nature as a directive, it was used as a kind of downplayed command, as if giving instructions or guiding the student to notice something:

> *"…um , alright. Let me tell you a couple other things **I want you to** know. You can control…"*

The other 38 occurrences of this bundle showed it functioning as a directive but not introducing a topic. In these cases, the expression was used to ask students to literally do something as in the following example:

> *"…assume a level of knowledge and comfort with uh archeological terminology that I don't expect you to have so **I want you to** email me and let me know when you come across terms or concepts that you don't know."*

Student speech: There were only five tokens for *I want you to* in 4 transcripts of student speech. In all 5 occurrences, the bundle was functioning as a directive, much as in the instructor samples.

> *"…so, if you think that this is still a problem today, **I want you to**, um (do we stand up?) maybe we should stand up everybody…"*

IV.5. *I would like you*

Instructor speech: *I would like you* was mostly used as a directive in instructor speech. The bundle appeared only 5 times in four texts and was never used as a topic introduction marker.

> *"…they are not in order. **I would like you** to rank them, from one to twenty-two, with one being…"*

Student speech: There was only one token of this bundle produced by students, in which it functioned as a directive.

> "…when she comes she'll come in around two o'clock, she'll stay until around, two fifteen and **I would like you** asking her questions…"

V. DISCUSSION

This small-scale corpus study exemplifies how to go about using corpora to examine how language features are used by both instructors and students in academic settings and how implications for the instruction of academic listening skills can be drawn in order to inform the EAP classroom. For instance, the data show that the lexical bundles

analyzed in this study have numerous functions in academic lectures; labeling a lexical bundle as a "discourse organizer" or a "topic introducer" may serve as type of broad categorization, but often lexical bundles serve more than one purpose, a finding which aligns with that of Biber et al. (2004). Students should be aware of this flexibility that bundles have and should therefore be exposed to multiple occurrences of lexical bundles used to express different functions. For example, *if you look at*, while not always used to introduce a topic in a lecture or student presentation, was often used to ask students to turn their attention to a new object in the classroom or to imagine or contemplate a topic already under discussion. Therefore, teachers should discuss this bundle's tendency to be used to direct one's attention, whether it be to a new topic or to contemplate a current topic further. The data also showed that certain bundles do have lexical preferences. For example, *a little bit about* seems to have a clear preference for being a discourse organizer, specifically a topic introducing bundle, and it commonly occurs with reference to time. Teaching students this tendency would be very valuable, considering the frequency with which *a little bit about* is used in this way. Likewise, *a little bit of* has a tendency to occur in the expression *spend a little bit of time talking about*, which has several functions. One might be that the instructor is making an aside to introduce knowledge that he/she thinks is important but has not been mentioned beforehand; another implication might be that the instructor is recognizing the importance of the students' time and is showing a sign of politeness or rapport-building. Without discussion about these subtle meanings, EAP students may miss nuances of a lecture.

As can be seen from the above results and discussion, lexical bundles are frequently used in academic lectures, and lexical bundles are used in a variety of types of academic lectures, varying by style (interactive or monologic) and subject. In addition, while a lexical bundle can have a primary function, the same bundle can be used for different functions across the span of a lecture.

Obviously, it would be beneficial to teach lexical bundles in regard to listening comprehension, but in what way? Taking into account what research about lexical bundles in general and their use in the teaching of listening comprehension in particular, the next section will present our view of possible pedagogical applications of the findings of our study to English for Academic Purposes teaching settings.

VI. PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATIONS: CORPUS-BASED ACTIVITIES IN THE CLASSROOM

Several criticisms of corpus-based classroom activities are addressed by Flowerdew (2005). One criticism is that concordance, most often used to pull key words from the texts in a corpus with a line or so of surrounding co-text, only allow for bottom-up processing instead of top-down. Similarly, another criticism is that corpus-based activities do not account for contextual features, since concordance programs only allow one to see a small "clip" of the entire picture. In other words, it has been argued that the "decontextualized nature of certain corpus-based activities have actually created an inauthentic language learning experience. Yet Flowerdew contends that corpus-based activities can be better contextualized by the use of whole texts; she states that "…carefully-chosen and appropriately constructed texts do lend themselves to more top-down processing" (p. 329).

Other criticisms have been aimed at the fact that much of the attention given to corpus-based activities has been from the perspective of instructors and materials developers but not students themselves. Yet Yoon and Hirvela (2004), in their evaluation of students' attitudes toward corpus-based language learning activities, established that the students actually found corpus activities to be useful ways of learning some types of features, such as words in context. Additionally, these authors concluded that those students who had a strong desire to improve their language skills (writing skills in this case) were the ones who found the corpus-based activities the most useful. Likewise, other researchers (Cortes 2007, Lee and Swales 2006, Thurstun and Candlin 1998) also found that students appreciate corpus-based classroom activities when they are well-aligned with the goals of the course. Thus, the research suggests that corpus-based activities can be effective teaching and learning tools when proper planning and instruction takes place. Students should be aware that corpora and concordance programs are simply tools for language learning and should be treated as such. Therefore, the following lesson plans, which focus on lexical bundles and listening comprehension, strive to include corpus-based activities in such a way that that students are encountering features (lexical bundles) within their context (academic lectures).

The following series of lessons could be used consecutively or periodically over the length of a course. While they were not designed for an actual class, the intended

audience would be a course of English for academic skills, particularly academic listening, in an ESL or EFL setting with students at the high intermediate or advanced level. As we wanted to concentrate on expressions that are used to mark the introduction of a topic in speech, for the purpose of this paper, only the lexical bundles *if you look at, a little bit about, and a little bit of* were used in the design of these activities in order to allow students to investigate how they are used to introduce topics in academic lectures. In the case of *if you look at,* the function of elaborating upon topics was also included in the units, as this function was also found to be very frequent in academic lectures.

VI.1. Lesson 1: Comparing the language of textbooks to MICASE

The first lesson aims at simply raising students' awareness to the fact that the way that textbooks present materials (through "textbook" or contrived lectures) uses very different transition / topic introduction expressions from an actual academic lecture. As Rilling (1996) suggests, one way to raise this awareness is to have students compare a textbook lecture to a lecture taken from a corpus (such as MICASE). Students can examine an entire lecture or just an excerpt from both registers and make note of where transitions occur, as shown in Figure 1. This could lead to a whole class discussion about the language used to make such transitions; while this activity will not necessarily highlight all of the bundles under examination, it will certainly raise students' awareness of the vast difference between contrived and actual lectures.

Directions: Read the following excerpt taken from a MICASE lecture on river flooding and mark the language the speakers used when they are going to introduce a topic. Which words/expressions are generally used?

Alright great. **The topic for today's lecture** is river floodplains, and what **we're gonna be doing is** first I wanna talk about, the larger picture what it means, a watershed is and what drainage basins are, and then **we'll look at** some specific drainage patterns which are actually, on page ninety-five I think, yeah in your coursepack. And then **we'll talk about** the different processes, that are, that go on surrounding a river, followed by the

specific landforms of the floodplain, the climate of the floodplain, soils, and vegetation of the floodplain, and then if we have time **we'll look at** slides of, um last week's lab, when we went to Sharon Hollow, okay, **so the first thing**, is talking about this idea of a…

Figure 1. Awareness-raising activity based on lecture excerpt.

VI.2. Lesson 2: Lexical bundles in academic lectures

The purpose of this lesson is to explicitly introduce lexical bundles and their functions, which can be done through a variety of activities. Similar to lesson one, students should be led to noticing the ways in which the instructors introduce new topics within academic lectures, but attention should be drawn specifically to lexical bundles as language features that can have the function of introducing new topics. In order to lead this activity in the most authentic manner, an audio excerpt from MICASE could be used and students could be asked to listen for ways in which the speaker introduces new topics within the lecture. In order to focus on a particular lexical bundle at a time, several excerpts in which the bundle is used performing the function of introducing a new topic should be used to help students draw conclusions on the function of the bundle in different contexts. The following excerpt has been selected from MICASE to illustrate the way in which *a little bit about* has been used to introduce a new topic in these lectures. It would be advisable to present students with several excerpts from different lectures that include the bundle for them to draw their own conclusions.

…so the average is somewhere, from point-two to two centimeters per thousand years. that's not very fast. and so you can see, if it were say one centimeter per thousand years, somewhere in the middle there, if the oldest part of the ocean is like two hundred million years old, uh a thousand years is ten-to-the-third, a million is ten-to-the-sixth, so it'd be one times ten-to-the-third, centimeters thick, on the oldest part of the ocean. that's not very thick... so u- usually on the average you expect to f- find, a few hundred meters, of sediment. and that is indeed what you do find. now let's talk **a little bit about** each of these types of sediment. and we'll start with the terrigenous, stuff. <*PAUSE:09*> it's very difficult... to carry sediment, out into the ocean very far. if you think about it, what happens? the the rivers flow down to the ocean

right? in general in most places not every place but in most places, as you come down, from the mountains down through the hills down through the coastal plain, the level or the or the um, the steepness of the slope of the river gets lower and lower, and then when it hits the ocean, in a way it's like, hitting a s- a rock wall i mean that it can't go any deeper than that, and so the flow, stops, in terms of river flow. and other processes take over. currents, tidal flushing in and out, longshore currents, wave generated currents, things like that, will then take that sediment that's delivered by the rivers, and move it around a little bit. but it's hard to get it out, out, far into the ocean. so the terrigenous sediment just tends to pile up around the edges. unless it's carried by the winds. and, of course dust, in the in the atmosphere, can go a long long way. in fact, uh, people have traced dust storms uh via satellite, well clear across the Atlantic. (Oceanography Lecture)

Figure 2. Example of lexical bundle use from MICASE.

VI.3. Lesson 3: Familiarization with form and function

The purpose of this lesson is to familiarize students with the form and function of lexical bundles. To do this, corpus-based activities similar to those of Thurstun and Candlin (1998) can be created, as shown in the figures below. First, students are given a page of one-line concordances for each of the bundles under examination (see Figure 2) taken from MICASE, and they are guided in how to interpret the handout. Students are asked to look at the words directly before and after the bundle and pay special attention to lexical patterns as well as the function the bundle is performing (as well as can be perceived). For further practice with form and function, a set of "fill-in-the-blank" exercises can be designed for students to determine the most appropriate bundle to use in a give context from MICASE, as shown in Figure 4. A final example of this sort should include listening to a sample lecture so that students can identify the appropriate bundle within the context of that lecture.

Directions: Examine the concordance lines containing *a little bit about*. Notice the words immediately preceding and following *a little bit about*. Is there a pattern? What do you think the speaker's purpose was in using *a little bit about?*

also. On page ninety-seven…okay…so the next thing, is to talk ***a little bit about*** how the climate is different in these

into a larger cohort of mice. and then, to conclude, i wanna talk ***a little bit about*** how this works. so, there's really two

it's just a brief outline of what i'm talking about first i'll go into ***a little bit about*** stress, uh and the different types of it

're gonna talk about in case, people really care we're gonna talk ***a little bit about*** the phytase content, we're gonna talks

…how 'bout the role of groups in politics? wanna tell us ***a little bit about*** that? politics isn't, politics doesn't just

that means of course, that you know, remember when we talked ***a little bit about*** range of resources available? states tha

t one that you start out with…so my, final topics i'm gonna talk ***a little bit about*** the honeycomb problem, which is the t

nna be. and then before that nothing happened right? we talked ***a little bit about*** that the other night when we talked abo

e gonna talk a little bit about delayed ripening, we're gonna talk ***a little bit about*** the phytase content, we're gonna talk

Figure 3. Activity based on concordancing lines from MICASE.

Directions: In each of the following sentences, a lexical bundle is missing. Using the context of the sentence, decide which bundle should go in each blank. Choose between *if you look at* and *a little bit of*

…it's a good time to get into some of this. um this is just in the US. but this is actually, world wide so I wanna spend _____ time talking about the extent, or extant i guess the the, distribution, of biotech, around the world.

…now consistent with that, argument, are just a few things, first is that,_____the facial neuro-muscular mechanisms, fun to say that three times they show continuity from higher primates to man.

we could've seen it after the glaciers left okay so that's _____ the soil profiles, how they get formed and then there's six major soil orders. And um there's other ones too but these…

but now you start to look at other ki- other hallucinogens. so _____ something like mescaline. You see mescaline, which is a hallucinogen shows cross-tolerance and L-S-D doesn't bind to the one five or seven family.

Figure 4. Fill-in-the-blanks examples taken from MICASE.

A follow-up for this activity could consist of providing students with opportunities to continue noticing lexical bundles in a variety of academic context and reporting their analysis afterwards. Students could then be asked to attend a public academic forum on their university campus (e.g. a special presentation, a guest lecturer, or some type of published speaking setting). Students should be asked to pay special attention to how speakers organize their speech, to see if there are any key words or lexical bundles used. Ideally, the purpose of this last activity is to increase students' awareness of the presence of discourse organizers in the academic discourse they hear inside and outside the classroom.

VII. CONCLUSION

The present study showed how it is possible to use existing corpus-based research findings in conjunction with publicly available corpora and concordance programs in order to design lessons and materials for the ESL/EFL classroom. In examining the presence of the bundles analyzed in this study in academic lectures, it was found that bundles should be taught presenting the complete spectrum of their functions in context for students to analyze these functions in discourse similar to the one they encounter daily in their academic lives. The series of lessons presented attempt to align current research in listening comprehension with the findings of corpus-based research, enabling students to become familiar with corpus-based research tools such as concordancing software. As corpus-based research findings become more popular and as publicly available corpora continue to increase, it is hoped that EAP instructors will feel empowered to use these resources to inform their teaching and in the process of designing their classroom materials.

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