The Benefits of the CEG Typology Framework for Learners, Teachers, Researchers, and Textbook Writers

KOBUYASHI Toshihiko (Otaru University of Commerce)

Abstract The purpose of this paper is five-fold: 1) to shed light on how traditional grammar has failed to describe spoken language and highlight many important colloquial expressions; 2) to describe the differences between spoken and written language and summarize a wide range of previously identified linguistic traits of colloquial language; 3) to illustrate how physical and psychological conditions affect the way people speak or write in casual settings by identifying some of the physical and psychological constraints and factors peculiar to casual (quasi-) face-to-face oral and written interactions and how they affect the way people produce messages; 4) to propose a typology framework to clarify and give shape to lexicogrammatical and discourse features pertaining to colloquial English; 5) to exemplify the benefits of the framework for learners, teachers, researchers, and textbook writers (materials developers).

Key words: CEG / colloquial / grammar / framework / lexicogrammatical

1. The Backgrounds for Colloquial English Grammar

EFL learners often fail to recognize the differences between written and spoken language. English native speakers often point out that nonnative speeches or writings in English are bookish, which means grammatically correct, but sounding unnatural or too formal to their ears. Some may claim it is no problem to use bookish or too formal forms in casual settings because such a way of using English never offends anyone, adding that learning informal expressions is rather potentially harmful since learners could use them even when a formal lexical and grammatical choice is more desirable or even required.

In both speaking and writing, choosing proper words, phrases and structures for a particular purpose or in a particular social setting is one of the most difficult aspects of learning foreign languages even for advanced learners. Moreover, even adult L1 speakers may sometimes produce improper statements in a certain register. In particular, making an appropriate lexicogrammatical and discourse choices in a face-to-face oral interaction requires a precise grasp of a situation where far more complicated physical and psychological factors are involved than in writing. However, traditional grammar instruction has focused on the decoding of written texts with little reference to lexicogrammatical and discourse features that are commonly observed in spoken language.

The need for identifying the characteristics of spoken language has been underestimated by many linguists, researchers, educators, textbook writers, publishers and
those involved in curriculum design. Halliday (1994: 23) points out that “Traditionally grammar has always been the grammar of written language.” Biber et al. (1999: 1038) state that “Western tradition is founded almost exclusively on the study of written languages; a bias which still exists today.” Naturally, traditional English grammar often misrepresents and/or fails to explain some of the important informal or colloquial expressions that learners frequently observe outside their classrooms, including such movie lines as “Wonder who gave it to you.” (Harry Potter, 2001), “Don’t you say your good-byes.” (Titanic, 1997), and “Doors ain’t as bad as you think.” (Ghost, 1990)

Despite the high frequency of use in daily conversation or other forms of real-time personal communication such as a twitter and in chat rooms, colloquial expressions like those mentioned above have been long mistreated or labeled as deviations from pedagogically desired forms to teach in class and have been inexplicably excluded from school textbooks and other teaching/learning materials. Among numerous textbook analyzes, Porter & Roberts (1981: 177) point out that “ELT listening materials normally avoid the fragmentation of linguistic structures at various levels.” Cullen & Kuo (2007: 361) maintain that “Common syntactic structures peculiar to conversation are either ignored or confined to advanced levels as an interesting extra.”

Consequently, the knowledge on these colloquial forms has gained little pedagogical attention. To make things worse, knowledge is not properly shared by English teachers, researchers and even textbook writers (materials developers), some of whom may have rather limited experiences in face-to-face communication with L1 English speakers or rarely watch or pay attention to English expressions in TV dramas and/or movies. Thus, teachers can hardly teach colloquial expressions systematically as there is a shortage of appropriate guiding principles that make a clear distinction between formal and colloquial forms of English.

The impetus for identifying the characteristics of colloquial English and for creating a systematic device to organize them for the sake of learners and anyone concerned with English teaching is derived primarily from the author’s professional needs as a university English professor, and as a textbook writer to judge if a particular lexicogrammatical or discourse feature is more commonly used in spoken or written mode of English language.

2. Differences between Spoken and Written Language

Linguists commonly stress the supremacy of spoken language over the written language. Jespersen (1964: 17) points out that “language is primarily speech, i.e. chiefly conversation (dialog), while the written (and printed) word is only a kind of substitute— in many ways a most valuable, but in other respects a poor one -- for the spoken and heard word.” Halliday
(1994: 6) explains that “Language evolved first as speaking and listening, and languages were spoken for many thousands of generations before any of them came to be written down.” Fromkin & Rodman (1983: 154) claims that “To understand language one cannot depend solely on its written form except as an approximation to the spoken language.”

Linguistic traits of spoken and written language and the context of situations where these two types of languages are used have been described by a number of linguists, here taken chronologically. Jespersen (1964: 17) states that oral intercourse is “not always such complete and well-arranged sentences as form the delight of logicians and rhetoricians.” Kantor & Rubin (1981: 61) maintain that “oral language is less often planned, and because speech is a fast-fading medium, its potential as an adjunct to the cerebrum is limited. Writing, on the other hand, leaves a permanent trace and permits revision and ongoing meta-analysis.” Brown & Yule (1983) describe the primary function of written language as transaction of information, while spoken language as interaction to establish and maintain the social relationship. Coulthard (1985: 62) depicts spoken language as “units which are recognizable as either incomplete or possibly complete.” Carter & McCarthy (1991:52, 54) view spoken language as “phrases, or of incomplete clauses, or of clauses with subordinate clause characteristics but which are apparently not attached to any main clause, etc.” and add that “word, phrase and clause be raised to that of (potentially) independent units, to recognize the potential for joining production of units, and to downplay the status of the sentence as the main target unit for communication.” Nunan (1993: 9) stresses that “the differences between spoken and written modes are not absolute, and then characteristics that we tend to associate with written language can sometimes occur in spoken language and vice versa.” Halliday (1994: 23, 24) illustrates that spoken language “responds continually to the small but subtle changes in its environment” and is “not static and dense but mobile and intricate.” Leech (1998) summarizes the characteristics of conversation as 1. Conversation takes place in a shared context; 2. Conversation avoids elaboration or specification of meaning; 3. Conversation is interactive; 4. Conversation is expressive of personal politeness, emotion and attitude; 5. Conversation takes place in real time; 6. Conversation has a restricted and repetitive repertoire; 7. Conversation employs a vernacular range of expression. Likewise, Carter & McCarthy (2006: 164) characterize spoken language as follows: “1. Spoken language happens in real time and typically unplanned; 2. Spoken language is most typically face to face; 3. Spoken language foregrounds choices which reflect the immediate social and interpersonal situation; 4. Spoken language and written language are not sharply divided but exist on a continuum.”
3. How Characteristics of Colloquial Language Affect the Way People Speak & Write

The shapes of spoken grammar or general and specific features that are consistently observed in the way people talk or write in casual settings are subject to a variety of real-time physical and psychological constraints and factors. They can be manifested in five terms; 1) Contextual; 2) Spontaneous; 3) Reciprocal; 4) Social, and 5) Casual. All, some or one of these five characters of colloquial language, especially in a casual face-to-face interaction, affect the way people speak to convey their meanings, as illustrated in Figure 1.

First, when someone talks face-to-face or even quasi face-to-face as a series of exchanges of text messages, a twitter, chat room and Skype, the context of communication is shared and less needs to be expressed in words. Besides, speakers may have little time to elaborate on the way they speak or cannot afford to monitor their language, failing to make a careful lexical choice and revise their statement. Thus, their production tend to be less organized or inaccurate in both forms and meanings, lacking a certain sophistication that they would be able to seek given enough time for elaboration and revision. The contextual and spontaneous nature of colloquial situations is assumed to motivate speakers to save time and energy by using fewer words or morphemes to convey their meaning.

Second, in reciprocal and interactive communication, if given enough time, speakers can afford to pay attention to the way they convey a message and may care how their speech sounds to their listeners and wish to know if they are speaking properly. They may feel it necessary to make extra efforts to insure the comprehension on the part of listeners since their listeners usually have no chance to listen to a particular part again as is possible in case of reading a passage. Moreover, feedback from their listeners leads the speakers to constantly change and alter the way they speak; they may add more words and phrases or repeat them, or even paraphrase the whole message to be better comprehended by the listeners or to emphasize a particular part for a particular purpose. Consequently, their speech could be longer than in casual speech and writing to convey the same message.

Third, because casual communication often takes place to achieve some personal purposes, such as establishing a personal relationship and requesting. Thus, the topics of talk tend to be casual and familiar as well as to simply convey information like newspapers, magazines and weather reports. Naturally, informal lexical items are often preferred for speakers to avoid formality and sound friendlier to listeners to get closer to each other. Besides, people may change the word order to emphasize certain information and/or for other purposes. In this third situation, speakers neither use more or fewer words than in formal speech and writing; rather, they make a colloquial choice of lexical items and word order, using the almost identical number of words or phrases as in formal speech and writing.
Figure 1. How Characteristics of Colloquial Language Affects the Way People Speak & Write

4. The Colloquial English Grammar (CEG) Typology Framework

Kobayashi (2008, 2009, 2010, 2013a) extensively studied and reorganized a wide range of previously identified lexicogrammatical and discourse traits of colloquial English into a simple three-fold typology framework or the Colloquial English Grammar Typology Framework, identifying a total of 50 linguistic features, as in Table 1 and defined the Colloquial English Grammar (hereinafter referred to as CEG) as “lexicogrammatical and discourse features peculiar to casual conversation and writing, i.e. messages transmitted through either spoken or written medium in spoken mode.” (Kobayashi, 2008: 107) To be more precise, casual conversation can be defined as “interactions which are not monitored by clear pragmatic purposes, and which display informality and humor.” (Eggins & Slade, 1997: 20)

The CEG Typology Framework is a clear and uncomplicated but fairly comprehensive way to categorize colloquial linguistic features on the basis of the quantitative differences in the number of morphemes, words and phrases to express a particular meaning in written and spoken, or formal and casual settings: the first type of colloquial speech is termed Reduction, which consists of Ellipsis and Contraction; the second one is Expansion, of Attachment and Paraphrasing; and the third is Variation, of Substitution and Reordering.

The Framework can be applied to any type of colloquial communication in English; not only to face-to-face oral communication but also to casual written communication such as
personal mail, memos, twitter and chat room. In one way or another, the Framework will potentially benefit learners, teachers, researchers, and textbook writers (materials developers).

Table 1
The Colloquial English Grammar Typology Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REDUCTION</th>
<th>EXPANSION</th>
<th>VARIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellipsis</td>
<td>Contraction</td>
<td>Attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W C</td>
<td>W C</td>
<td>W C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellipsis</td>
<td>Contraction</td>
<td>Attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W C</td>
<td>W C</td>
<td>W C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Greeting
2. Fixed Expressions
3. Ellipsis in Replies
4. Ellipsis of Subject
5. Ellipsis of Copula be in a Command
6. Ellipsis of If
7. Ellipsis of Copula be in the Middle
8. Ellipsis of that
9. Ellipsis of Infinitive
10. Ellipsis of -ly
11. Ellipsis of Prepositions
12. Ellipsis of have / had
13. Ellipsis at the End
14. Abbreviations
15. Nicknames
16. Texting Abbreviations
17. Verbal Phrase Contraction
18. Coalescent Assimilation
19. Attaching the Personal Pronoun you
20. Attention-Getting Signals
21. Reaction Signals
22. Discourse Markers
23. Tags
24. -'ve got to
25. Preference for Phrasal Verbs
26. Repetition
27. Redundancy
28. Using More Clauses
29. Communication Strategies
30. Colloquialism
31. Frequent Use of get
32. Frequent Use of give / get Phrases
33. Vernacular Range of Expression
34. Vulgarism
35. Progressive Form of a State Verb
36. Past Tense for Present / Past Perfect
37. Preference for was in Subjunctive Mood
38. who for whom
39. Neutralizing a Personal Pronoun
40. less before a Countable Noun
41. like for as
42. more before a Short Adjective
43. Double Negation
44. Topicalization
45. Post Positioning
46. Left Dislocation
47. Right Dislocation
48. Post-W/ H- Word Interrogative
49. Declarative Question
50. Parataxis
5. The Benefits of CEG Typology Framework

The CEG Typology Framework is expected to serve as a useful device or a new guiding principle for anyone involved in English learning, teaching, research, and materials development as summarized in Figure 2 to make a clear distinction between formal and casual forms of English words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and discourse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials Developers</th>
<th>Learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>can learn</strong></td>
<td><strong>can learn</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How to Write</em></td>
<td><em>What to Learn</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researchers</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>can learn</strong></td>
<td><strong>can learn</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How to Evaluate</em></td>
<td><em>What to Teach</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. The Benefits of CEG*

5-1. Benefits for English Learners

Learners can learn what to learn. Without the proper knowledge of CEG, learners can misunderstand messages expressed with colloquial features and fail to tell if “Don’t you say your good-byes.” (Titanic, 1997) is a negative interrogative or a negative command by looking at their structures only. They may even despise the users of such colloquial expressions as wanna / gonna / gotta, wrongly assuming that the speakers or the writers are not well educated. If they know that a certain colloquial expression is proper to use in any situation or limited to certain situations, they will be able to pay due respect to the users and avoid having prejudice out of ignorance. Learners need to learn the differences among Colloquialism (*Hi. / What’s up?*), Vernacular Range of Expressions (*ain’t / the hell*) and Vulgarism (*fucking / shit*) and should not be confused on their differences.

In particular, EFL learners who wish to make their speeches sound more natural or native-like can benefit a great deal from the CEG Typology Framework. With the Framework in mind, they can adjust their speech according to the settings in order to sound friendlier and show their willingness to get closer to their interlocutors. Conversely, they can sound more formal and even standoffish by removing colloquial features from their utterances.

The knowledge of CEG is also beneficial to learners who write formal academic papers. Some learners may pick up and learn colloquial expressions such as *What’s up? / the hell / ain’t* through their interaction with someone outside classroom. They may later use these expressions in formal writings and offend readers and give them false impressions that the writer is uncultured and vulgar. With the proper knowledge of CEG, they would use *How are you? / on earth [in the world] / isn’t* instead.
5-2. Benefits for English Teachers

Teachers can learn what to teach. The knowledge of CEG and the Framework is far more important for teachers who teach colloquial English in class. Teachers cannot make any excuse for their lack of knowledge of CEG merely because they have never lived or studied abroad, or because they have little contact with English native speakers, or because they are too busy to learn anything new. They are fully responsible for their own knowledge and they are expected to be good learners themselves; they are professionally expected to successfully explain what such music lyrics as “Ain’t got no gal to make you smile.” *(Don’t Worry, Be Happy*, by Bobby McFerrin, 1988) means even though their students do not have to or should not speak that way.

The knowledge of CEG is an integrative part of professionally required expertise of teachers. Without the proper knowledge of CEG, they will fail to give proper feedback to their students’ output such as “I don’t wanna study English.” Would the teacher tell the student not to say wanna but say want to instead to sound more formal and educated? If they do so, they may have never heard of U.S. presidents in the past use wanna in their public speeches. Wanna may sound informal, but it is not a dialect of a particular social or ethnic groups; it is simply an example of coalescent assimilation, a common phonological phenomena that occurs every minute in L1 English speakers’ speeches. In this particular case, teachers should not force their student to correct their speech, but rather focus on the meanings they are trying to express.

It is, however, absolutely essential for teachers to correct their students’ speech if they use such offensive expressions or vulgarisms as four-letter words. Teachers need to have the proper knowledge to judge the seriousness of using the offensive word in a particular situation and should be able to properly explain why they should not use the particular expression and offer a proper alternative which sounds decent and suitable to the situation. All of this requires the knowledge of CEG on the part of teachers.

Just like researchers and textbook writers, teachers need to be able to analyze the textbooks they use in class every day and develop their own extra or supplementary materials for the sake of their students. They should not wait for other teachers or researchers to evaluate the textbooks, but should take action to analyze the materials. Teachers should be always critical of the textbooks and should not blindly believe the English textbooks are perfect and totally reliable on the grounds that they are government-approved materials. They need to keep in mind that some useful and functional expressions used frequently in daily conversation may be missing or avoided.
5-3. Benefits for Researchers

Researchers can learn how to evaluate materials and L2 data. Researchers interested in discourse analysis, particularly conversation or textbook analysis, will find the CEG Typology Framework useful and practical to evaluate the authenticity of any materials and identify which expression truthfully reflects or contradicts the reality of language use. One such study that utilized the framework for textbook analysis was conducted by Kobayashi (2013) to identify which CEG features are used and which are not in junior and senior high school textbooks newly approved by Japan’s Ministry of Education for the current academic year of 2013. In that study, all of the phrases and sentences involving any of the CEG features were extracted from each textbook, as shown in the Table 2 and 3. The results show that the junior high school textbooks vary greatly in the number of CEG features used in dialogs and passages. In particular, Sunshine English Course 2 and 3 have far more CEG features than the other three textbooks. As for the high school Communication English textbooks, the Joyful Communication English Basics exceeds the other seven in the number of CEG features. As a whole, only 24 types of CEG features were identified in the 25 textbooks. Besides, 20 were selected out of the 50 CEG features that have been undermined or totally ignored in English textbooks but should be used in dialogs and passages in future textbooks—1) Ellipsis of Copula Be in a Command, 2) Ellipsis of Infinitive, 3) Ellipsis of have/had, 4) Abbreviations, 5) Coalescent Assimilation, 6) Attaching the Personal Pronoun, 7) Attention-getting Signals, 8) Reaction Signals, 9) Discourse Markers, 10) Tags, 11) –‘ve got, 12) Communication Strategies, 13) Phrasal Verbs, 14) Colloquialism, 15) Frequent Use of get, 16) Past Tense for Perfect, 17) Post Positioning, 18) Left Dislocation, 19) Post W/H Word Interrogative, and 20) Parataxis. These features are used frequently by English speaker, native or nonnative, in their daily conversations. More importantly, they are appropriate to teach in classrooms.

Another possible way of employing the CEG Typology Framework for research purposes is to regularly analyze the development of an L2 learner’s acquisition of colloquial expressions and structures by observing the traits of their output in casual settings to determine in which developmental stage the learner is at present. Japanese learners of English who fluently use such colloquial phrases as *I don’t get it.* (= I don’t understand.) or *I can’t make it to the meeting.* (= I can’t attend the meeting.) are likely to be at a higher stage in oral proficiency on the assumption that they learned formal English words and phrases in class first then somewhere in the middle of their development they started to use them.
### Table 2
Colloquial Expressions Found in the 12 Junior High School English Textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbooks</th>
<th>Publishers</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>CEG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ONE WORLD English Course 1 | Kyoilca Shippun | Hi! Nice to meet you. ... Right? Oh, you are? Oh, is it? **everyone**? No, no! Ha Ha! We? Great! Oh, no! Let me see. Yes, thank you! Right? Really? | Colloquialism / Ellipsis / Tag / Repetition /...
| ONE WORLD English Course 3 | Kyoilca Shippun | I see. | AG Signal / Ellipsis / R Signal |
| NEW HORIZON English Course 3 | Tokyo Shoekii | Really! Hello, everyone! Hit! Like a good boy. Wow! Uh! Oh! What's going on here? Oh, no, no. Well. | R Signal / Tag / Colloquialism / DM |

### Table 3
Colloquial Expressions Found in the 13 Senior High School English Textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbooks</th>
<th>Publishers</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POWER ON Communication English I</td>
<td>Tokyo Shoekii</td>
<td>Do you? Most morning, I have a rare egg on rice. Yes.</td>
<td>Ellipsis / Topicalization / DM / R Signal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROMINENCE Communication English I</td>
<td>Tokyo Shoekii</td>
<td>Around the age of six, I enjoyed drawing things.</td>
<td>Topicalization /...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW ONE WORLD Communication English I</td>
<td>Kyoilca Shippun</td>
<td>Are you? Well, let me see me. I see. Yes. Good.</td>
<td>Colloquialism / DM / AG Signal / Ellipsis / R Signal / Tag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CROWN English Expression I</td>
<td>Sansrseido</td>
<td>Ah...! Sounds delicious!</td>
<td>R Signal / Ellipsis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MY WAY English I</td>
<td>Sansrseido</td>
<td>Oh, that's news to me. Well</td>
<td>R Signal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW FAVORITE English Communication</td>
<td>Tokyo Shoekii</td>
<td>IB. Oh! Well. To me, playing the guitar is important, just like eating or sleeping. My pleasure. Not really. Me, too.</td>
<td>Colloquialism / R Signal / Ellipsis / DM / Topicalization / Ellipsis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5-4. Benefits for Textbook Writers (Materials Developers)

Textbook writers can learn how to develop materials and what to include in them. The CEG Typology Framework can be referred to as a tool for EFL textbook writers (materials developers) to make their materials more authentic, attractive, reliable and responsible by including more of the CEG features with high frequency and practicality in casual settings such as Coalescent Assimilation (*wanna* / *gonna* / *gotta*), Colloquialism, Post Positioning, Left Dislocation, and Post-W/H-Word Interrogative.

Textbook writers (materials developers) are most responsible for the selection of colloquial expressions to include in their textbooks. Besides, they are expected to have a full grasp of the Framework or even a more sophisticated and appropriate instrument that can incorporate all necessary linguistic features peculiar to colloquial discourse; they are absolutely required to share the knowledge on what should be included in or excluded from the teaching materials. However, they seem to be well aware as to what to exclude from their textbooks, but not necessarily what to include in the textbooks.

As is evident from the previously mentioned study by Kobayashi (2013), junior and senior high school students fail to learn what they need to learn because the current English textbooks miss so many important common and practical lexicogrammatical and discourse features. However, learners still have ample opportunities to get access to authentic linguistic data of their target language through the Internet, direct contacts with L1&L2 English speakers, movies, songs and other media resources that are so abundantly available in their daily life. Thus, textbook writers (materials developers) must realize the whole picture of their students’ ethnographic surroundings and the reality of today’s learners’ high-tech environment that enables them to evaluate the authenticity of the textbooks by themselves in a matter of seconds for free.

Today’s learners have far more choices in the way they learn English compared to previous generations and can choose their favorite learning materials among a huge number of books, CDs, DVDs, and other materials that are commercially available at bookstores and net shops. School textbooks are just one of their choices. It is quite natural for parents of students to expect that their children learn English daily with better textbooks than those commercially available and those tailored for general learners of English because they have been approved by the government. Nevertheless, textbook writers (materials developers) should realize the competitiveness and the extremely high expectation in the quality of materials including the proper selection of colloquial expressions in the textbooks.
References


