

## **CONCORDANCE: AN INNOVATIVE TOOL FOR TEXTBOOK EVALUATION**

By

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### **1.0 Introduction**

The English of Malaysian School Students (EMAS) Corpus is a collection of samples of written and spoken data of the English Language proficiency of 872 Malaysian students. An initial report based on the findings of the EMAS Corpus (Arshad & Jayakaran, 2001, p. 244) reveals that many Malaysian learners of the language are not proficient in using the verb 'go' in their writing. This suggests that there is a serious problem in the acquisition and/or learning of verbs among Malaysian students. The verb 'go' is a basic verb in the English language. It is ranked 128 in the 150 most frequent word forms occurring in the COBUILD Bank of written corpus of 196 million words and 68 in the spoken corpus (Willis, 1998, pp. 64-65). Although the past form of this verb as in 'went' is not in the 150 most frequent words in the written corpus, it is ranked 131 in the spoken corpus.

The textbook has become a subject of debate in many English Language Teaching (ELT) discussions. Other than the many variables that form and inform the field of ELT, the textbook generates either attacks or defences for its existence. Some decry it while others praise it. Advocates of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) materials see them as fuel in their fireplace and want to place them 'roaring in the chimney' (Thornbury & Meddings, 2001) while textbook-friendly solicitors like Harmer (2001) believe that they could act as neck pillows when the teacher is strained for time and therefore merit their being. The latter claims that the textbook still has contributions to make and a role to play in the field of ELT.

In the last twenty years of the twentieth century, computer literate linguists began an empirical approach to the study of language structure. The skew has increased towards a statistical analysis of language. In recent years, linguists have adopted empirical rather than intuitive methods of analysing language. A corpus, suitable computer software and a computer are key tools in the empirical process of corpus-based scientific analysis of a language discourse. The tools mentioned form the essentials of this study. The language of the textbook is the discourse which is analysed using present day technology.

## **2.0 The Research Questions**

This study seeks to answer these pertinent questions.

- (1) How are the first-time verbs stipulated in the previous Malaysia Form 2 English Language Syllabus (MF2ELS) wordlist presented in a Malaysian lower secondary school English language textbook?
- (2) To what extent does the presentation of verbs in the textbook under investigation fulfill conditions set by the English Language syllabus of the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE)?

## **3.0 The Computable Data**

In Latin, a corpus means *body*. In the empirical process of language analysis, corpus refers to a sizeable sample of real-life usage of the language under study. Some examples of these corpora as cited by Fox (1998, p. 25) are the Survey of English Usage (Svartik & Quirk, 1980), the Brown Corpus (Kucera & Francis, 1967), and the Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen (LOB) Corpus (Hofland & Johansson, 1982). The language under study is compiled into a corpus in the form of computable data.

The computable data of this study is a Malaysian Form II English Language textbook. For this purpose, a textbook was scanned using the Optical Character Recognition programme. The scanned texts were saved into a Notepad ANSI type text file. The text files were later transferred to the computer software. These files were then analysed using a concordance software to identify the occurrences of the first-time verbs.

This data is then used as a source of evidence for testing hypotheses about the nature of that particular language. Commonly, corpora are sufficiently large. This nature of a corpus makes the manual searching for relevant evidence through it almost impossible. Therefore, much work in empirical linguistics uses computers nowadays, and language corpora which are machine-readable. They exist primarily as electronic files, which may or may not also be published as hardcopies on paper. The textbook in this study is a published hardcopy.

## **4.0 The Concordance Software**

Jayakaran (2004) used the criteria which was drafted by him and validated by three language experts based on current available technology that would score well in terms of usability and function. The ability to perform the tasks of producing a full concordance of words for a given computer text file and tracking and plotting the occurrence (recycling analysis) of a given word in a text or combined computer file of individual texts were two of the four concerns in the selection criteria. All the tasks were set after he consulted the three experts on the features that concordance software should have if the task was to analyse the content of textbooks.

Of the numerous programmes he found, Jayakaran short-listed the following candidate concordance software as being possibly useful.

1. Concordance 3.0
2. HAMLET for Windows
3. TextQuest 1.37
4. HyperResearch 2.0.3
5. EZText 3.06c
6. MicroConcord (DOS)
7. WordSmith Tools 3.0
8. MonoConc Pro 2.0

He then downloaded demonstrations or free versions of the software to analyse the features and functions of the software to determine their suitability for his study. Texts were scanned from two chapters of a reader, "Jurassic Park" and used as corpus for the software review. The short-listed candidate software programmes were evaluated by him and the evaluation was later validated by the three experts in the field of language studies, who had extensive knowledge on corpus-related research.

In a test of candidate software, every extra capability was a plus point, and in the case of WordSmith Tools version 3.0 the obvious trump card was its ability to do dispersion plots (Jayakaran, 2003, p. 66). According to Jayakaran (2004), the WordSmith Tools version 3.0 concordance software meets all the requirements of the selection criteria laid out before the exercise. WordSmith Tools' concept of separate tools working on the same collection of text enables the user to concentrate on particular tasks. The tools featured are:

- Concord – produces a full concordance
- Wordlist – produces wordlists in alphabetical or frequency order
- Keywords – locates and identifies key words in a text or corpus, with key word distribution plots
- Splitter – splits large files into smaller ones for text analysis
- Text Converter – utility to edit texts, rename files and manage files for analysis
- Viewer – to examine source files in various formats

In summary, Jayakaran and the experts agree that it was chosen for its excellent features, its capabilities and suitability to the task. The suitability of this software was confirmed at the Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) Research and Innovation Exposition 2003 where the research exposition entitled "The use of concordance software in determining Vocabulary Load Distribution and Efficiency (VLDE) in textbooks" (Jayakaran: 2003) won the

bronze medal. A detailed evaluative summary of candidate software from Jayakaran (2004) is found in Appendix A.

#### **4.1 The Wordsmith Tools Version 3.0**

This study uses the WordSmith Tools Version 3.0 software based on the above recommendation. Scott and Oxford University Press (1998) hold the copyright to this software. The WordSmith Tools version 3.0 is an integrated suite of programmes for looking at how words behave in texts. This software is used by the Oxford University Press for their own lexicographic work in preparing dictionaries, by language teachers and students, and by researchers investigating language patterns in lots of different languages in many countries world-wide. These tools can also assist the investigation of linguistic forms such as verb groups, grammatical construction, and collocations. Thus, it is used to determine the presentation of the first-time English language verbs in the selected textbook.

#### **4.2 The MF2ELS Verb List**

The other observational data are the verbs stipulated in the word list of the MF2ELS (1991, pp. 26-39). A total of 57 verbs are introduced in the syllabus. For the purpose of the exploration, only the first-time or new verbs, totally 25, listed in the word list are searched using a concordance software to locate their occurrences in the textbook. The verbs appear in thematic topics. For ease of perusal, all the verbs listed in the MF2ELS are tabulated in Appendix B.

##### ***Operating the software***

The Controller programme controls the Tools. It is the one which shows and alters current defaults, handles the choosing of text files, and calls up the different Tools. The Concord, which is the concordancer, gives the researcher a chance to see any word or phrase in context so that the researcher can see what sort of company the word or phrase keeps. The Wordlist tool allows the researcher to see a list of all the words or word-clusters in a text, set out in alphabetical or frequency order. With KeyWords the researcher can find the key words in a text.

To operate the software, the user has to choose the Tools option. Once it is opened, the researcher will see the Concord. Clicking on the Concord will activate it, on the right hand side of the computer screen. Clicking the Start button takes the user to a dialogue box which lets the user choose the texts or change the choice, and make a new concordance. The user needs to specify a Search-Word or phrase. The Concord will search through the text(s) files looking for the word specified by the user. The results of the concordancing need to be saved as .txt (text) files if the user wants to keep the concordance results for another time.

## 5.0 The Findings

A total of 57 verbs are introduced in the MF2ELS booklet. The verbs are easily identifiable because the words stipulated in the wordlist that are to be taught as verbs are marked (v). It is noted that almost half the number of verbs are marked with an asterisk (\*). Verbs that are marked with an asterisk (\*) “are words not found in the Suggested Vocabulary List for the Primary School English Language Programme nor in the Form One word list” (MOE, 1991, p. 26). In other words, these are new verbs introduced for the first time to learners in the Malaysian public schools’ English Language programme. Out of the total 57 verbs, 25 are first-time verbs.

The English language teacher is commanded by the instructions in the MF2ELS to teach the first-time verb in its *stem*, *stem+s*, *stem+ed* and *stem+ing* forms. This means that when teaching the verb *glue* for example, which appears in the thematic topic ‘Instruction – how to do something’, the teacher has to teach this verb and its function as in ‘*glues*’, ‘*glued*’, and ‘*gluing*’ forms as well.

Due to space limitation, only a selection of the findings of the 25 verbs is reported.

### 5.1 First-time verb: *glue* (*glues*, *glued*, *gluing*)

There were 17 concordance entries for the word *glue*. Out of the 17 entries, 12 were nouns and only five functioned as verbs. The identification of the verb form of this word was done by reading each concordance line, identifying the function of the word in context, zapping the concordance lines that uses the word as a noun and deleting it. Eventually, only the concordance lines indicating the use of the word as a verb were retained. Table 1a is the printout of the concordance findings of the textbook.

Table 1a: Concordance printout for the word ‘glue’

GLUEx: 17 entries (sort: 5L,5L)						
N	Concordance	Set	Tag	Word No.	File	%
1	about 1.5 cm long, with glue on one side. 6 To r			1,199	it04~1.txt	53
2	sh and a brush 7 Strong glue 8 Scissors 9 Colo			366	it11~1.txt	14
3	ured paper 2 scissors 3 glue 4 paints and brus			3,163	it14~1.txt	97
4	oloured pencils 1 dent 2 glue 3 basic mask a T			375	it11~1.txt	15
5	2 How do you make the glue? 3 What do you d			208	it11~1.txt	9
6	ater in the bowl to make glue. Next, blow up the			58	it11~1.txt	2
7	ewspaper in the bowl of glue? 7 How many lay			246	it11~1.txt	10
8	oon., spoon; food, rude, glued; boot, root, shoot,			750	it08~1.txt	36
9	4 paper Fig. 5 fold and glue Fig. 6 string bridle			2,165	it11~1.txt	89
10	tures or drawings. 5 Put glue on the tabs and pl			3,216	it14~1.txt	99
11	ll dent. c Spread strong glue round the edges of			411	it11~1.txt	16
12	r than the frame. i Then, glue and tie the two stic			2,147	it11~1.txt	88
13	e paper over the frame. Glue the edges. are read			2,053	it11~1.txt	85
14	the dotted line and put glue on the flaps. e Pre			432	it11~1.txt	17
15	Put them in the bowl of glue. Cover one half of			93	it11~1.txt	4
16	nd put them in a bowl of glue. Blow up a balloon			2,717	it13~1.txt	95
17	r. Write them out. Fig. 2 glue and tie When you			1,959	it11~1.txt	81

Table 1b shows the concordance entries for the word *glue* functioning as a verb in the textbook. The table shows that the verb *glue* occurs five times in two units of the textbook. It appears for the first time in Unit 8 ~ Finding the Way. The theme of this unit is “directions to places in the town or village”. It appears in its *stem+ed* form as in *glued*. A cross-check with the textbook revealed that this verb is presented out of context. It is included in a group of words to practise the pronunciation of the long vowel sound /u:/. This type of presentation of a new verb is haphazard and will not facilitate its learning.

Table 1b: Concordance entries for the various forms of the verb *glue*

glux.cnc: 5 entries (sort: 5L,5L)						
N	Concordance	Set	Tag	Word No.	File	%
1	on., spoon; food, rude, <b>glued</b> ; boot, root, shoot,			750	unit08.txt	36
2	<b>paper</b> Fig. 5 fold and <b>glue</b> Fig. 6 string bridl			2,165	unit11.txt	89
3	<b>than</b> the frame. i Then, <b>glue</b> and tie the two stic			2,147	unit11.txt	88
4	<b>e</b> paper cver the frame. <b>Glue</b> the edges are r			2,053	unit11.txt	85
5	out. Fig. 2 <b>glue</b> and tie Wren you			1,959	unit11.txt	81

The verb *glue* appears again four times in Unit 11 ~ Following Instructions, on how to make a handicraft or a drink, in the *stem* form as in lines N2, N3 and N4. Its presentation this time around is pedagogically sound as the verb occurs in context. Although it is a writing task, the learner will have to read the sentences and arrange them in the correct order before writing them out. It can be argued that the verb is receptively presented to the learner. The Principles and Parameters Model (Greenburg, 1963; Chomsky, 1981) observes that there are underlying similarities among all human languages. The notion that the basic structure of language is part of our biological gift is of special interest to the statement that the verb is presented appropriately in this unit of the textbook. Assuming that this notion is correct, the acquisition of syntactic competence can then be seen as a matter of “setting” grammatical parameters through exposure to appropriate receptive language input in the textbook. Receptive language is language heard or read. However, no concordance entries were found for this verb in its *stem+s* and *stem+ing* forms as in *glues* and *gluing* which are stipulated in the MF2ELS.

## 5.2 First-time verb: *mix* (*mixes*, *mixed*, *mixing*)

Table 2: Concordance entries for the various forms of the verb *mix*

mixx.cnc: 2 entries (sort: 5L,5L)						
N	Concordance	Set	Tag	Word No.	File	%
1	<b>ur and</b> hot inlabPy 2 A <b>mixing</b> bowl and spoon			26	unit11.txt	1
2	A BASIC MASK First, <b>mix</b> the tapioca flour an			46	unit11.txt	2

The finding shows the concordance entries for the verb 'mix' which appears in Unit 11 ~ Following Instructions, on how to make a handicraft or a drink. However, this verb is used only once in its *stem* form as in *mix*. It is noted that its variant as in the verb 'mixing' is not used as a verb. Instead, it is presented as an adjective as in "a *mixing* bowl". Its *stem+ing* form used as an adjective could confuse the learner. This example supports the argument that language learning materials can be chaotic (Larsen-Freeman, 1997) if no control is exercised over its presentation in the input material. No concordance entries were found for this verb in its *stem+s* and *stem+ed* forms as in *mixes* and *mixed* respectively. This finding suggests that this first-time or new verb is presented only once in the entire textbook.

### 5.3 First-time verb: pour (pours, poured, pouring)

There were six concordance entries for the verb *pour* in this textbook. Out of these, five uses appear in Unit 11 ~ Following Instructions on how to make a handicraft or a drink, while one use occurs in Unit 12 ~ Asking for Information on electrical appliances used in the home and school. This verb is used in its *stem* form as in *pour* in Unit 11 and in its *stem+ing* form as in *pouring* in Unit 12. No concordance entries of this verb in its *stem+s* and *stem+ed* forms as in *pours* and *poured* were evident in the entire textbook. It is observed that in line N1 "pour/stir" is listed together. A survey of the textbook show that these two verbs are presented in one visual that represents only one action, that of *pour* while the action *stir* is not presented at all.

Table 3: Concordance printout for the various forms of the verb *pour*

pourx.cnc: 6 entries (sort: 5L,5L)						
N	Concordance	Set	Ta	Word No.	File	%
1	straws 1 boil 2 put 3 <b>pour</b> /stir 4 fill 5 pour 6			972	unit11.txt	37
2	put 3 <b>pour</b> /stir 4 fill 5 <b>pour</b> 6 serve 7 Work			976	unit11.txt	37
3	es going into the jug. 9 <b>Pour</b> the tea into the gl			867	unit11.txt	33
4	a jug with ice cubes. 8 <b>Pour</b> the hot tea over th			846	unit11.txt	32
5	itch off the power before <b>pouring</b> out the water. A			2,457	unit12.txt	91
6	en the water has boiled, <b>pour</b> it into the teapot.			810	unit11.txt	31

Verbs are difficult to learn because they are more polysemous than nouns (Golinkoff et al., 2002). What this means is that a verb can signal several as well as different meaning to different people. As an example, the verb *run* is not the same action when performed by a short distance sprinter and a long distance runner. Similarly, the action *cut*, *slice*, *chop* and *sever* do not carry same meanings. In the conclusion of the study, Golinkoff et al. conclude that early verb learning and extension can however occur if the action of the verb is presented to learner in focus, as in point light displays, and when the

action is simple, not multi-faceted. Therefore, presenting two verbs in one visual might debilitate the learning of them.

#### 5.4 **First-time verb: stir (stirs, stirred, stirring)**

There were five concordance entries for the verb *stir* that appear in two units of the textbook; Unit 11~ Following Instructions on how to make a handicraft or a drink, and Unit 17 ~ More Stories on moral values. All five uses of this verb occur in their *stem* form only, as in *stir*. One use of this verb however, occurs in isolation in Listening: Pronunciation practice 2. In this exercise, the learner is exposed to the sound /ə:/ as in /stə:/. The learner is asked to “notice the different spelling” and not the verb.

Table 4: Concordance entries for the various forms of the verb *stir*

stirx.cnc: 5 entries (sort: 5L,5L)						
N	Concordance			Set	TačWord No.	File %
1	s	1 boil	2 put 3 pour/ <b>stir</b>	4 fill	5 pour 6 serv	972 unit11.txt 37
2		ingredients and to <b>stir</b>	the dodol.	The hotel		732 unit17.txt 21
3	of <b>sugar</b>	to the tea and <b>stir</b> .	6 Leave the tea fo			827 unit11.txt 31
4	ifferent spelling: fur, sir, <b>stir</b> ,	were; burn, turn,				1,072 unit11.txt 42
5	<b>sing</b>	three big kawah to <b>stir</b> the	dodol in.			803 unit17.txt 23

Furthermore, the variants of this verb in the *stem+s*, *stem+ed* or *stem+ing* as in *stirs*, *stirred*, and *stirring* do not occur in this textbook. This finding indicates a blatant disregard by the textbook writers for the wordlist suggested by the MOE. What is worrisome is that if the textbook fails to present the suggested verbs to the learners through its input materials, there is a possibility that having failed to identify this shortcoming teachers might also fail to present them to their learners. Many teachers do tend to rely on textbooks when pressed for time. Jayakaran (2003) cites a study by Zulkifli Saharil and Shahrir (2000) that reveals that 73.4 percent (%) of Malaysian teachers “always” and “sometimes” use the textbook as the main source of reference. Another short survey on in-service teachers undergoing studies conducted by the Educational Technology Unit of UPM revealed that “about 75 percent of these teachers relied greatly on textbooks ... when teaching” (Muhamad Hasan, 2001). Consequently, it would be unfair on the part of the Examination Syndicate then to set public examinations based on the syllabus wordlists as learners will likely be tested on a verb form that was not presented nor taught to them through no fault of theirs.

#### 5.5 **First-time verb: forget (forgets, forgot, forgetting)**

There were five concordance entries for the base verb *forget*. They appear in Unit 1 ~ Occupations in the education and the uniformed services, Unit 13 ~ Filling in Forms, and in Unit 17 ~ More Stories on moral values. This verb



occurs in its *stem* form as in *forget* in all these units. No concordance entries were detected for the verb *forget* in its *stem+s* form as in '*forgets*' and also in its *stem+ing* form as in '*forgetting*'.

A majority, if not in totality, of English language teachers who use the prescribed textbook have the tendency to follow the flow of the units in it out of convenience or for the purpose of having a standardised scheme of work for all the language classes in a grade level within a school. The latter is justified as many districts and even states tend to have standardised mid-year or end-of-the-year examinations. If this is the case, then the introduction of this first-time, *forget*, as in concordance line N4 is questionable. Firstly, it is presented outside a language learning receptive input. McEldowney (1982, p. 4) argues that "learning materials should be based on spoken and written examples" as learners need to be exposed to the new item before they are told to use it. Secondly, it is presented in an instruction to a sentences joining exercise. Finally, this is done in Unit 1. If at all there was a need to use this verb, it should be done after it has been presented to the learners and not before that.

Table 5a: Concordance printout for the verb *forget*

forgetx.cnc: 5 entries (sort: 5L,5L)						
N	Concordance		Set	TacWord No.	File	%
1	one number - and don't	<b>forget</b> your signa		779	unit13.txt	27
2	entences.	Don't <b>forget</b> Stage 3 and Stag		3,177	unit17.txt	89
3	later ... and don't	<b>forget</b> your signature. . .		172	unit13.txt	5
4	<b>ing</b> the word who. Don't	<b>forget</b> the commas. 1		2,014	unit01.txt	89
5	<b>t you.</b> 2	What did you <b>forget</b> ? Learn it again.		2,138	unit13.txt	76

Concordance lines N1, N3 and N5 appear in Unit 13 of the textbook. The verb *forget* is presented appropriately through N3 "... don't *forget* your signature ..." which occurs in a listening exercise and also through N1 "... don't *forget* your signature ..." which occurs in a reading text. Although the structure in N1 is similar to that of N3, the fact remains that language is acquired through listening to it. Echoing McEldowney (1982), Pinker (1994) states this succinctly when he writes:

It is not surprising that grammar development does not depend on overt practice, because actually saying something aloud, as opposed to listening to what other people say, does not provide the child with information about language he or she is trying to learn. (p. 280)

In other words, listening input provides the language learner information about the target language. Thus, the presentation of the verb *forget* in the listening exercise is consolidated by the reading exercise. This verb as in line N5 reappears in this unit in the Study skills section. Here, it is used in a question to the learner. A similar use of this verb appears again as in line N2 after three units in Unit 17. It can be said that there is a certain amount of recycling of this verb in the textbook. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether its appearance is intentional or unintentional.

This verb has an irregular form and the WordSmith 3.0 concordance tool does not concord irregular morphology. As a result, concordance was run for its *stem+ed* form which is the irregular form as in '*forgot*'. Table 5b lists the occurrence of its *stem+ed* form.

Table 5b: Concordance entries for the verb *forget* in its *stem+ed* form

forgot.cnc: 2 entries (sort: 5L,5L)					
N	Concordance	Set	TačWord No.	File	%
1	badminton at recess. I <b>forgot</b> to bring my racket		428	unit14.txt	14
2	e paper on Sunday. I <b>forgot</b> that my cousin w		3,661	unit15.txt	97

Only two concordance entries surfaced for the verb *forget* in its *stem+ed* form as in *forgot*. They occur once each in two units, that is, Unit 14 ~ Giving Messages expressing apology, condolence, and congratulations, and Unit 15 ~ Writing Letters expressing apology, condolence, and congratulations. Its occurrence in only two units of the textbook which comprises 17 learning units once again shows the limited number of times some verbs are recycled which could facilitate the language learning process.

### 5.6 First-time verb: *forgive* (*forgives*, *forgave*, *forgiving*)

The concordance tool was set to exclude the noun *forgiveness* when concordancing for the verb *forgive*. There were eight concordance entries for this verb across three units, that is, Unit 14 ~ Giving Messages expressing apology, condolence, and congratulations, and Unit 15 ~ writing Letters expressing apology, condolence, and congratulations, and Unit 16 ~ Festivals and Weddings.

It occurs seven times in its *stem* form and only once in its *stem+s* form as in *forgive* for the former and *forgives* for the latter. The presentation of this verb appears to be pedagogically sound as it occurs in context and in its different forms except for concordance line N5 which appears in Unit 16 of the textbook. In this exercise, this verb occurs in isolation in the *stem+s* form as in *forgives* in the effort to practise the pronunciation of the sound /vz/.

Table 6: Concordance printout for the various forms of the verb *forgive*

forgivx.cnc: 8 entries (sort: 5L,5L)							
N	Concordance	Set	Ta	Word No.	File	%	
1	ou another one. Please <b>forgive</b> me.	Aini	159	2,384	unit14.txt	74	
2	<b>He</b> asked Mr Rajoo to <b>forgive</b> him.	Messages		2,465	unit14.txt	77	
3	Don't worry. Please <b>forgive</b> me	T		486	unit14.txt	16	
4	ped her mother would <b>forgive</b> her.	Dear Moth		2,357	unit14.txt	74	
5	, believes, dives, drives, <b>forgives</b> , gives, improve			1,871	unit16.txt	54	
6	prepare for it? Please <b>forgive</b> me for not letting			3,599	unit15.txt	95	
7	<b>you</b> a new one. Please <b>forgive</b> me.	Juanita		451	unit14.txt	15	
8	ey stick. 7 Please <b>forgive</b> me for being rude			581	unit14.txt	20	

There were no concordance entries for this verb in its *stem+ing* form as in *forgiving*. Similar to the verb *forget*, this verb too has an irregular form and the WordSmith 3.0 concordance tool does not concord irregular morphology. As a result, concordance was run for its *stem+ed* form which is the irregular form as in *forgave*. However, the result returned as “no concordance entries were found for *forgave* by the tool. It can be concluded from the above concordance printout and a close study of the textbook that only the *stem* form of this verb was presented and its *stem+s* was presented in isolation while its *stem+ing* as well as *stem+ed* forms were neglected. This neglect on the part of the textbook does not make verb acquisition among Malaysian learners any easier. Research literature (Gentner, 1978; Sandhofer & Smith, 2000; Golinkoff et al., 2002) in language learning suggests that the process of verb acquisition is challenging to even the most competent English language learner. Therefore, the textbook as a resource and reference material should be reliable and user-friendly.

## 6.0 Conclusion

These findings reveal that the 25 first-time verbs suggested in the MF2ELS were not presented completely by this Malaysian lower secondary school English language textbook. Table 7 in Appendix C displays these verbs in their *stem*, *stem+s*, *stem+ed*, and *stem+ing* forms as presented in the textbook. It answers Question 1 of this study. The textbook fails to present the first-time in their various forms.

Table 7 and Graph 1 (See Appendix C and D respectively) reveal that not all the verb forms are given equal if not adequate attention by the textbook writers. Both these visuals tells us that the *stem* form of all the 25 first-time verbs forms are presented in the textbook. However, less than half or 12 out of these 25 first-time verbs, that amounts to 48%, in the *stem+ed* and *stem+ing* forms were presented in the textbook. While only 11 or 44% of these 25 first-time verbs in the *stem+s* form were presented in the textbook.

## 7.0 Implication

This study of one previously used Malaysian Form 2 English language textbook in a government-aided public school shows that the textbook is partly to be blamed as the cause of the low level of English language achievement among many school leavers. It also shows that the textbook succeeds only partially in presenting this very crucial grammatical item of the target language to its intended learners. This failure on the part of the textbook is a probable variable in the myriad variables in second language teaching and learning that misrepresented the English verb forms to the learners of this language which in reality is far from being their second language.

The textbook failed to provide sufficient models of meaning of the verb structure through their learning materials. The targeted verbs were presented in non-salient position. This could have resulted in the learners not taking notice of them. Schmidt (1990) emphasises the importance of apperception for language acquisition in his 'noticing' hypothesis. Ellis (2002, p. 173) quotes Schmidt as saying that "the initial registration of a language representation may well require attention and conscious identification". Schmidt proposes that "the subjective experience of noticing is the necessary and sufficient condition for the conversion of input to intake in second language acquisition." This experience of noticing is clearly not created for the learners to take notice of the first-time verbs in language learning input materials and to convert them into intake and eventually through the process of recycling internalise them and have them in their repertoire.

The textbook has a hand in the learners' failure to master this crucial grammatical item of the English language in their initial attempt to learn it which is collaborated by the findings of the EMAS Corpus (Arshad & Jayakaran, 2001).

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## Appendix A

### Evaluative Summary of Candidate Software from Jayakaran (2004)

No	Software Title	Relevant Features	Interface & Usability	Suitability	Remarks
1	Concordance 3.0	Concordance Context Analysis Frequency Analysis Lemmatiser Text Converter	Excellent	Suitable	A very good tool with excellent interface, lacking only in the inability to track vocabulary recycling.
2	HAMLET for Windows	Joint-Frequency Analysis Context Analysis Frequency Matrix	Average	Unsuitable	Specifically analyses joint frequencies of words in order to produce a word usage matrix rather than producing a concordance or doing individual word frequency analysis.
3	Text-Quest 1.37	Concordance Vocabulary Growth Frequency Analysis Context Analysis Readability Analysis	Good	Suitable	Very good features in set of tools, let down by the fact that all text (raw file) has to be laboriously coded into system files before all the featured analysis can be done. Interface is intuitive but requires thorough understanding of the system.
4	HyperRe-search 2.0.3	Citation Reference Tool Source Document Tracking	Average	Unsuitable	Tracks words, phrases and sentences used in citing references. Unsuitable for frequency and vocabulary usage analysis.
5	EZText 3.06c	Qualitative Response Analysis	Good	Unsuitable	Uses a database to import text and track responses. More suitable for analysing questionnaires.
6	Micro-Concord (DOS)	Concordance Frequency Analysis	Average	Suitable	A simple concordancing program that uses the DOS operating system. Requires user to be familiar with older DOS computer options in order to input and analyse text. Lacks vocabulary recycling analysis.
7	Word-Smith Tools 3.0	Concordance Frequency Analysis Vocabulary Recycling Analysis	Very Good	Highly suitable	This is the best tool for corpus text analysis of language textbooks. Easy to use, it has concordancing functions as well as vocabulary frequency, collocation and recycling analysis in graphical form.
8	Mono-Conc Pro 2.0	Concordance Frequency Analysis	Very Good	Suitable	A good tool for concordancing and frequency analysis. Has the ability to tag items and a good interface but lacks a proper word dispersion plot.

## Appendix B

### Verbs stipulated in the MF2ELS Wordlist

Thematic topic	Recurring Verbs	First time (*) Verbs	Total Verbs
6.1 Instructions – how to do something	1. boil 2. cut 3. decorate 4. fold 5. make 6. paint	1. glue 2. mix 3. pour 4. stir 5. tie	11
6.2 Directions – places in the town or village	1. pass 2. show 3. turn 4. walk	<b>No new verbs</b>	4
6.3 Messages – apology, condolence, congratulations, help or advice	1. help 2. like 3. need 4. pass away 5. wish	1. apologise 2. congratulate 3. forget 4. forgive 5. offer	10
6.4 Stories – moral values	1. give 2. help 3. receive 4. thank 5. welcome	1. cooperate 2. share 3. work together	8
6.5 Information – interests	1. like 2. dislike 3. enjoy 4. prefer	<b>No new verbs</b>	4
6.6 Information – places in the town or village	<b>No recurring verbs</b>	<b>No new verbs</b>	0
6.7 Information – electrical appliances	1. made in	1. switch off 2. switch on	3
6.8 Timetables – bus, train	1. arrive 2. leave	1. book	3
6.9 Diagrams – part of the body, animals, plants	<b>No recurring verbs</b>	<b>No new verbs</b>	0
6.10 Occupations – teacher, fireman	1. work	1. burn 2. mark 3. put out 4. teach	5
6.11 Vehicles – bus, train	<b>No recurring verbs</b>	1. carry	1
6.12 Descriptions – crops, animals	<b>No recurring verbs</b>	<b>No new verbs</b>	0
6.13 Events – weddings and festivals	1. gather 2. receive	1. celebrate 2. invite 3. dance	5
6.14 Letters – informal	1. hope	<b>No new verbs</b>	1
6.15 Forms – banking, order	<b>No recurring verbs</b>	1. order	1
Total	32	25	57



## Appendix C

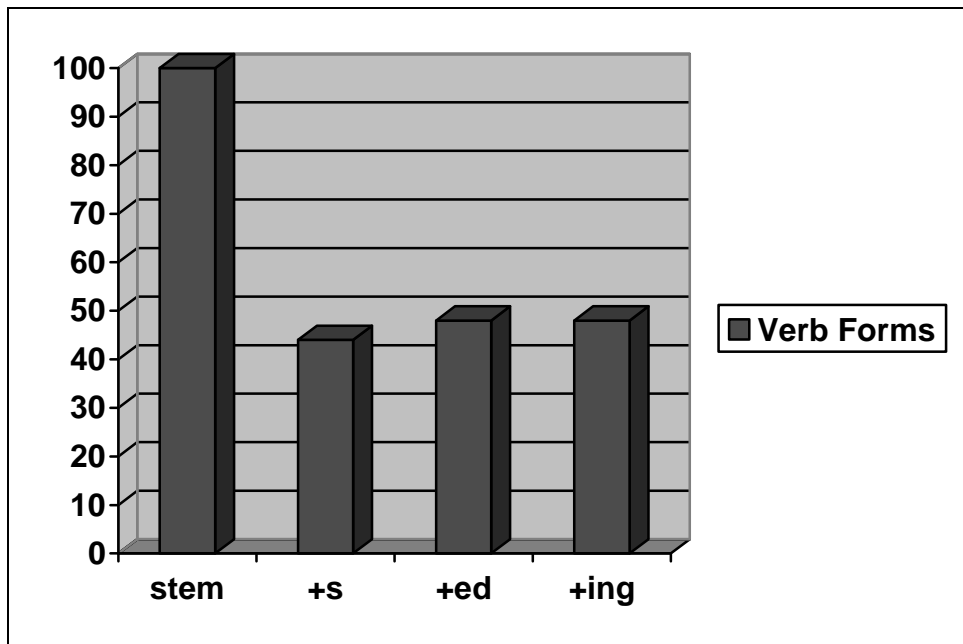
Table 7: The forms of the first-time or new verbs as found in the textbook

The 1 <sup>st</sup> -time or new verb	stem	stem+s	stem+ed	stem+ing	As non-verb
glue	5	NCE	2	NCE	12
mix	1	NCE	NCE	NCE	1
pour	5	NCE	NCE	1	-
stir	5	NCE	NCE	NCE	-
tie	9	1	1	NCE	-
apologize	9	2	NCE	1	12
congratulate	4	1	2	1	16
forget	5	NCE	2	NCE	-
forgive	7	1	NCE	NCE	-
offer	10	2	1	5	-
co-operate	2	1	NCE	NCE	3
share	6	NCE	NCE	NCE	-
work together	4	1	7	1	-
switch off	4	NCE	NCE	NCE	-
switch on	8	NCE	NCE	NCE	-
book	3	NCE	NCE	NCE	62
burn	6	2	4	2	-
mark	4	2	NCE	3	-
put out	6	NCE	NCE	NCE	-
teach	9	4	5	5	-
carry	11	NCE	4	2	-
celebrate	8	NCE	2	2	-
invite	6	NCE	4	2	-
dance	2	1	NCE	2	-
order	7	NCE	4	NCE	51

*Note:*

The numerals in this table indicate the frequency of occurrences while NCE is the abbreviation for No Concordance Entry found for the said form of the verb in the textbook under inspection. The tabulation indicates that the presentation of verbs in the textbook under scrutiny falls short of fulfilling the conditions set by the MF2ELS. The condition set is that the +s, +ed, and +ing forms of these first-time or new verbs are to be taught to the learners. What this means is that the newly introduced *stem* verb, for example the verb *order*, and its +s, +ed, and +ing forms as in *orders*, *ordered*, and *ordering*, must also be presented to the learners.

## Appendix D



Graph 1: Percentage of the various verb forms appearing in the textbook