

AN ANALYSIS OF LEXICAL PHRASES IN BUSINESS LETTERS:  
AN ONLINE BUSINESS LETTER CORPUS AND TEXTBOOKS



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This study aimed to investigate the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases in the online Business Letter Corpus (*BLC*) and five selected textbooks used in Thai universities. They were analyzed in terms of form as collocations and multi-word expressions and in terms of function as politeness and as social interactional and discourse devices. The five textbooks were transcribed and compiled into a corpus. The concordancer program was used to examine the frequency of lexical phrases occurring in the textbook corpus compared with those occurring in the *BLC*. The results revealed that in terms of form, the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases consisted of 5 collocations and 25 multi-word expressions in the *BLC* and 10 collocations and 20 multi-word expressions in the textbooks. Among the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases, there were 20 lexical phrases which were recurrent in both sources. The lexical phrases appearing in the *BLC* were more diverse in terms of the use of intensifiers, adjectives, and word choices than was found in the textbooks. In terms of function, pragmatics (i.e., positive and negative politeness, indirectness, and positive connotations) play a key role in requesting, inquiring, offering, as well as asking for opinion, giving suggestions, reasoning, and apologizing. A lexical phrase can function in more than one situation, which requires speakers to understand the context of use. An implication for learning and teaching business letter writing is that chunks of language should be emphasized rather than words. Corpora are beneficial for learners since they present authentic data and provide various examples. Corpora can be used as a complementary resource in the ESP classroom.

การวิเคราะห์กลุ่มคำในจดหมายธุรกิจจากคลังข้อมูลจดหมายธุรกิจออนไลน์  
และแบบเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ



เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา

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งานวิจัยนี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อศึกษากลุ่มคำ (lexical phrases) 30 ลำดับแรกที่ปรากฏในคลังข้อมูลจดหมายธุรกิจออนไลน์และแบบเรียนภาษาอังกฤษที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการเขียนจดหมายธุรกิจในระดับมหาวิทยาลัย ในด้านโครงสร้างภาษา มีการแบ่งกลุ่มคำเป็น 2 ประเภทคือ collocation และ multi-word expression ในด้านการใช้งานตามสถานการณ์ มีการแบ่งตามบริบทของการใช้ภาษาแบบสุภาพ การปฏิสัมพันธ์ทางสังคม และโครงสร้างทางภาษาที่มีความสัมพันธ์กับความหมาย ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล มีการใช้โปรแกรมสำเร็จรูปเพื่อหาความถี่ของกลุ่มคำที่ปรากฏในคลังข้อมูลหนังสือแบบเรียนเปรียบเทียบกับกลุ่มคำที่ปรากฏในคลังข้อมูลจดหมายธุรกิจออนไลน์ ผลจากการวิเคราะห์โครงสร้างภาษาและบริบทการใช้งานพบว่า 30 กลุ่มคำที่ปรากฏในคลังข้อมูลจดหมายธุรกิจออนไลน์ประกอบด้วย collocation จำนวน 5 กลุ่มคำ และ multi-word expression จำนวน 25 ข้อความ ในหนังสือแบบเรียนมี collocation จำนวน 10 กลุ่มคำและ multi-word expression จำนวน 20 กลุ่มคำ ในจำนวน 30 กลุ่มคำที่มีความถี่สูง มีกลุ่มคำที่ปรากฏซ้ำกันจำนวน 20 กลุ่มคำ คลังข้อมูลจดหมายธุรกิจออนไลน์ มีตัวอย่างการใช้คำที่หลากหลายกว่า เช่นคำขยาย (intensifier) คำคุณศัพท์ (adjective) และสำนวนภาษา (word choice) ในด้านการใช้งานตามบริบทพบว่าวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ (pragmatics) ได้แก่การใช้ภาษาด้วยถ้อยคำสุภาพ ไม่ก้าวร้าว และมีความหมายแฝงในเชิงบวกในสถานการณ์ต่าง ๆ มีความสำคัญในการเขียนจดหมายธุรกิจ อาทิเช่น การขอร้อง การไต่ถาม การเสนอหรืออาสา การถามความคิดเห็น การให้คำแนะนำ การให้เหตุผล และการขอโทษ กลุ่มคำหนึ่งอาจมีการใช้งานได้มากกว่าสถานการณ์เดียว ทั้งนี้ผลการวิเคราะห์สามารถนำไปประยุกต์ใช้ในการเรียนการสอนเขียนจดหมายธุรกิจ โดยมุ่งเน้นการสอนกลุ่มคำมากกว่าคำเดี่ยว คลังข้อมูลจดหมายธุรกิจออนไลน์นำเสนอข้อมูลที่แท้จริงในการเขียนจดหมายธุรกิจ ดังนั้นคลังข้อมูลจดหมายธุรกิจออนไลน์ จึงเหมาะที่จะใช้เป็นแหล่งอ้างอิงเสริมให้แก่ผู้เรียน

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# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

### Rationale

In spite of widespread use of email and other means of electronic communication, business letters are still widely used in the world as a main channel of business correspondence. A business letter differs from a personal letter because business letter writing requires specialized language. Certain words, phrases, and technical terms play an important role in business correspondence. For example, *I/we look forward to hearing from you soon* or *Thank you for your enquiry/letter of [date]*. Consequently, teaching business letter writing requires English for Specific Purposes (henceforth ESP).

Many researchers (e.g., Flower & Martinez, 1990; Janis, 1966; Kavaliauskienė & Janulevičienė, 2001; Kennedy, 1998; Lewis, 2000; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Pathak, 2003; Someya, 1999) suggest using set phrases in ESP. These phrases are highly memorable since they are stored in single lexical units and memorized as whole chunks. They are often connected with the functions of language. They have been called various names, including *lexical phrases* (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1989; Schmitt & Carter, 2000), *multi-word chunks/expressions* (Moon, 1997; Zimmerman, 1997), *ready made units/chunks* (Cowie, 1992), and *collocations* (Lewis, 1993, 1997, 2000; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992). In this study, the term *lexical phrase* is used to refer to a group of words occurring together quite frequently with pragmatic functions. For example, the expressions with the modal verbs (*could, would, should*) are significantly found in business letters (e.g., *Could you please send me a catalogue and price list of ... ?* or *If that is the case, would you let me know where and when it is to be...* functioning as a polite

request and *Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate...* functioning as an offer).

Teachers teaching business letter writing may not be equipped with such ESP knowledge and may produce language and examples which sound strange because they are not in the business sector. Some of them are non native speakers of English; therefore, they have to rely on business writing textbooks which are primarily used as a resource for teachers to assist students acquiring certain language skills. However, one major criticism of textbooks is that they present invented language use, which is not found in real life situations (Harwood, 2005; Pearson, 1998; Sheldon, 1988; Tomlinson, 1998). Therefore, teachers of business letter writing need a reliable source so that they can teach authentic business English use to their students.

An ideal reference for studying authentic language in real-life situations is a *corpus*. A corpus (or corpora in the plural) is a collection of written or spoken texts that has been made for a particular purpose (*Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 1992). It is known that a corpus is a databank of authentic texts used in real situations, compiled from writing or transcribed from recorded speech. A corpus is created through the use of a concordancer and its output appears in concordance lines. A concordance line may come from the beginning, the middle, the end or may be made up of one sentence. The following is an example of a set of concordance lines shown for the phrase *due to* with its keyword situated in the middle of the concordance line.

extra discount, which cancellation was *due to* increased production costs  
 at the Regent Hotel has been canceled *due to* insufficient enrollment  
 We were shut down that week for orders *due to* inventory and then the office was close.  
 to time, errors are on the increase *due to* lack of training and rushed work of all  
 entered between us on February 7, 2001, *due to* lack of time and facilities, Exhibits X

(selected from *Business Letter Corpus* or *BLC concordancer*)

Corpora provide huge amount of data and offer great opportunities for corpus linguists, who study real life language use with the help of computers and electronic corpora. Many researchers support corpus linguistics to be used in analyzing certain aspects of a language (Oliveira, 2003, Schmitt, 2002, Tribble, 1990). Using a specialized corpus can help students become familiar with particular phrases appearing in particular situations and engaged them with examples of authentic language.

The reasons stated above lay the ground for this study, which focuses on analyzing and on comparing an online business letter corpus with textbooks in terms of lexical phrases used in business letters. The results will reveal the effectiveness of those materials.

### **Objectives**

This study has the following objectives:

- (1) to compare the top 30 business letter lexical phrases used in an online *BLC* concordancer with those selected from five textbooks.
- (2) to find out if the lexical phrases of authentic use in the *BLC* concordance are different from those patterns being used and incorporated into the framework of the textbooks.
- (3) to analyze the patterns of the high-frequency lexical phrases in both the *BLC* concordance and textbooks in terms of form and function.

### **Research Questions**

This study aims to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases used in the online business letter corpus and in the textbooks selected for this study?
2. What are those top high-frequency lexical phrases found in the online business letter corpus, which are missing in the textbooks and vice versa?

3. How different from each other are those lexical phrases in the online *BLC* concordance and in the textbooks in terms of form and function?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study would be beneficial to various groups related to the area of English language teaching and learning. Firstly, teachers can utilize lexical phrases as a tool in teaching ESP in business letters. The results obtained will be beneficial for students to acquire the necessary language skills in this field in the future. Secondly, if the online BLC concordancer provides appropriate language use in the business context, it may be an optional material for students to become more efficient in business letter writing. Thirdly, the results will help university students to better understand the use of lexical phrases in business letters in terms of form and function. Fourthly, for textbook writers and publishers, the findings will be informative as guidelines in developing more authentic textbooks. Finally, the findings would serve as a useful basis to any other related fields of study.

### **Definition of Terms**

Terminology used in this study is defined as follows.

1. **Lexical phrases** refer to lexico-grammatical units that occupy a position on the spectrum between lexicon and syntax, each of which perform certain functions. The categories formed in this study are multi-word lexical items constituting linguistic chunks or phrases based on Lewis's (2000) collocations and on Moon's (1997) multi-word expressions (see Table 2).

2. **Multi-word expressions** refer to sets of phrases and sentences that have fixed and semi-fixed word combination including prepositional phrases (Moon, 1997).

3. **Collocations** refer to words that occur so frequently together that the

appearance of one word strongly assumes the presence of the other. In this study, collocations are categorized into seven types based on Lewis (2000).

4. **Connotation** refers to the suggested or emotional meaning of a word as compared to its literal meaning (strictly technical, meaning according to the dictionary definition). It illustrates one difference in the meanings of some words or phrases. It can be an idea suggested by a word, phrase, clause, or sentence which can either be negative or positive. This study focuses on the use of positive connotations since the language in business letters is usually positive e.g., *interested in*, *best wishes*, *look forward to*, and *thank you*.

5. **Pragmatics** refers to the study of the use of language in communication, particularly the relationship between sentences and the context, a situation in which they are used (Richards et al, 1992). In this study, pragmatics is related to functions proposed in business letters such as positive politeness in requests (*would you...? , I hope..., if you have...*), offering (*we can..., we would like..., would you like...?*), inquiring (*I am writing..., we would like...* ), or asking for an opinion (*would you mind + if-clause*), negative politeness (*I/ we regret..., we are/I am sorry*) and indirectness (*I hope..., would you mind..., if you have...*).

6. **Discourse markers/connectives** refer to expressions used to connect two pieces of discourse; for example, *I mean* is used to rephrase, refine, add to or draw attention to an initial utterance (Richards & Schmidt, 2002).

7. **Concordance** refers to a display of words or simple grammatical items with their surrounding texts (Conrad, 1999). The most common format of concordance is Key Word in Context (KWIC), where the keyword is arranged in the middle of each line, with context on the left and right side of it (see samples in Appendix E). Concordance lines can be searched by entering a string of a phrase into the searching space.

8. **Web-based concordancer** refers to a computer program which is used for analyzing language, making word lists, counting word/phrase frequencies, analyzing keywords and finding words/phrases. It includes alphabetical listings of words in a text or collection of texts, together with the contexts in which they appear. The web-based concordancer used in this project is *Business Letter Corpus* or *BLC*.

9. **Textbooks** refer to five course books, namely *A Handbook of Commercial Correspondence* (Ashley, 2003), *Company to Company* (Littlejohn, 2005), *Business Communication* (Parisuthiman, 2005), *Techniques in Writing Business Letters and Email* (Sawangvaroros, 2006), and *How to Write Better Business Letters* (Geffner, 2007)

### Scope of the Study

This study covers the following:

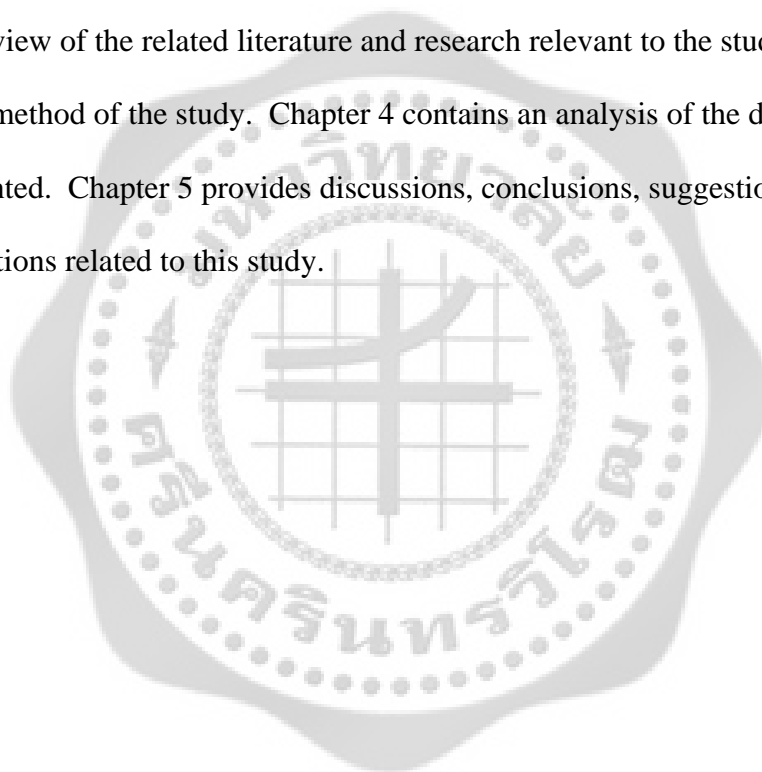
1. This study analyzes the top 30 lexical phrases that appear at least 100 times in the online *BLC* and three times in the textbooks.
2. The data in the *BLC* concordancer are selected from N-grams (a phrase or a sentence) including 3-grams, 4-grams and 5-grams (see samples in Appendix D).
3. The five textbooks are mainly used at Thai universities for teaching business letter writing.
4. This study examines the use of lexical items and patterns appearing in chunks and phrases in business letters written in English. They are organized into two main categories adapted from Moon's (1997) multi-word expressions and Lewis's (2000) collocations.
5. The data from the five selected textbooks contain 13,699 words taken from 254 model letters of five main types: enquiries, replies, orders, complaints, and adjustments.
6. The number of words in the five textbooks, which is less than those occurring

in the *BLC* concordancer, is assumed not to affect the results of the study since the references of those five selected textbooks are taken from various sources and the samples also include both US and UK versions.

7. This study emphasizes the phrases used in the opening, body and closing of an English business letter, excluding address, salutation, and enclosures.

### **Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 deals with the specific problems and their background. Chapter 2 presents a review of the related literature and research relevant to the study. Chapter 3 presents the method of the study. Chapter 4 contains an analysis of the data and the results presented. Chapter 5 provides discussions, conclusions, suggestions and recommendations related to this study.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **Review of the Related Literature**

In order to provide various perspectives of the literature review in this study, several areas are addressed in this chapter. They relate to the four main topics: lexical phrases in language teaching and learning, business lexical phrases, corpus linguistics and textbook evaluation. First, theories of lexical phrases are presented. General background on phrases/chunks of language is discussed. The definitions, terms and categories of lexical phrases in the various viewpoints of linguists are presented. The theories discussed put an emphasis on form and functional aspects of lexical phrases. Second, there is a presentation on lexical phrases appearing in business contexts since business lexical phrases are the focus in this study. The language used in business letters is discussed and lexical phrases appearing in various situations/context of business are displayed. Related research studies conducted in the field of business are presented to support the study. Third, corpus linguistics, a branch of linguistics that has become important and is dependent on computer technology, is reviewed. It is used as the instrument to help analyze the lexical phrases through computational analysis of authentic data, named concordancing. The literature regarding the use of a corpus, corpora or concordancers in the classroom is demonstrated. Finally, the last section displays positive and negative viewpoints on textbooks used as a teaching material in the classroom.

#### **Lexical Phrases in Language Teaching and Learning**

Traditionally, both in linguistics and in applied linguistics, grammar and lexis have been treated separately. Underlying this fundamental distinction is the “slot-and-filler” model. Syntactic structures are slots which are filled with selections from a dictionary

(Sinclair, 1991). Rather than being distinguished from each other, grammar and lexis complement each other. Sinclair (2000) calls these two main features “lexical grammar”. Nattinger (1980) states that language is made up of lexical phrases rather than single words. Making a sentence is arranging patterns of words and considering the situations in which they occur. The most important is the underlying claim by Zimmerman (1997), who explains, “language production is not a syntactic rule-governed process but is instead the retrieval of large phrasal units from memory” (p.17). This means that these linguists place importance on teaching and learning lexical phrases as sequences rather than isolated words.

Learning phrases as wholes, either as complete or partially pre-combined units, is supported by researchers such as Cook (1997), Huang and Hatch (1978) and Porto (1998). The reason is that when these lexical phrases are memorized they are easily retrieved since they are ready-made clusters. These formulas are bound in context and have pragmatic meanings attached to them. They are stored in the lexicon, just like words. These researchers similarly agree that since they are associated with a certain context, learners will be able to remember these phrases in similar situations. Learning in this manner means learners do not need to pay attention to grammar if they use these phrases correctly. Because of the frequency of occurrence and context association, these phrases are highly memorable for learners and thus easy for them to use in their sentences. This is noticeably true of fixed phrases which are ready for retrieval with little effort.

Kjellmer (1991) and other researchers (Fernando, 1996; Lewis, 1997; Moon, 1997; Nattinger, 1988; Nattinger & De Carrico, 1992; Pawley & Syder, 1983; Williams, 1998) explain that native speakers of English have a large collection of lexical chunks that enhance language processing and make communication easier. Language fluency and accuracy are mainly carried out by retrieving and combining ready-made chunks of

language. The ability to chunk language successfully is central to understanding how language works. Zimmerman (1997) adds that teachers can help learners recognize these chunks while reading and thus, learners can become more fluent in the target language.

Moreover, some researchers (e.g. Widdowson, 1989; Willis, 1990; Yoshida, 1978) give importance to recurrent phrases which are acquired as memorized forms. They suggest learners pay attention very carefully to recurrent phrases since the more learners can foresee the structure and patterns of phrases, the more they will be able to understand them as phrases which are an important part of not only of highly specialized texts, but of basic communicative competence. Learning phrases promote fluency by providing students with models of appropriate use.

In short, imitating and memorizing chunks in language learning is recommended because learning phrasal chunks can help learners improve their language proficiency.

**Definitions and differing terminologies of lexical phrases.** Linguists define phrases/chunks differently. Various terminologies include lexical phrases (Nattinger 1980, 1988, Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992), prefabricated language (pawley & Syder, 1983; Williams, 1998), institutionalized expressions (Lewis, 1993), formulaic language (Weinert, 1995), multi-word items/units/expressions (Moon, 1997), word combinations (Howarth, 1998), collocations (Kjellmer, 1991; Lewis, 1997, 2000), and formulaic sequences (Wray, 2000).

The different terms are used to refer to or discuss the concrete meaning of phrases. For example, Nattinger (1980, 1988) calls them lexical phrases since they are lexico-grammatical units holding a position between the traditional features of lexicon (vocabulary) and syntax (grammar). Lexical phrases are chunks of language of different length and they refer to all words that usually co-occur.

Collocations are sets of words co-occurring together. *Collins Cobuild* (1987) defines a collocation as a recurrent combination of words occurring regularly whenever another word is used. The concept of collocation is defined by most linguists in a similar view. For example, Sinclair (1991) defines collocations similarly to Lewis (2000) as the way words occur together more often than being expected. Lewis (2000) adds that collocations are common combinations of words that native speakers use instinctively. Likewise, Nation (2001) defines collocation as a group of words commonly occurring together like *take a chance*. A collocation can also be an idiomatic expression in which the meaning of the group of words is not obvious from the meaning of the parts like *take someone in*. By 1992, Nattinger and DeCarrico proposed a revised viewpoint of lexical phrases. At first, they defined lexical phrases in relation to collocations but the latter is different from the former by remarking,

Prefabricated phrases are collocations if they are chunked sets of lexical items with no particular pragmatic functions; they are lexical phrases if they have such pragmatic function (p. 37).

According to Moon (1997), multi-word units or items are named for words appearing in strings. Moon elaborates, “a multi-word item is a vocabulary item which consists of a sequence of two or more words. This sequence of words semantically and/or syntactically forms a meaningful and inseparable unit” (p.43). Pawley and Syder (1983) view lexical phrases as lexicalized sentence stems and suggest that native speakers of English have thousands of them in stock. Lewis (1993) states that lexical phrases and multi-word units are often message-oriented and they are pragmatic in character. Cowie (1992) and Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) support that the study of multi-word units is

often connected with the pragmatics of language since their purpose is to judge the social significance and the use of particular items.

To sum up, linguists use a variety of different terminology when it comes to explaining and defining lexical phrases. However, a common key aspect of lexical phrases is having pragmatic function.

**Classification of lexical phrases.** Linguists have classified lexical phrases in various ways. According to their use, lexical phrases are classified into two main aspects: linguistic form and language function. In this study, the term *lexical phrase* is used since this term has pragmatic functions, which play a key role. Then, lexical phrases are subdivided into two terms: collocations and multi-word expressions. These two terms are frequently used when discussing words that co-occur together. The characteristics given and criteria provided distinguish these two terms from each other so that the classification into sub-types is not difficult to understand and overlapping. Those characteristics of these two main types are shown as follows.

**Collocations.** Most linguists define collocation in similar ways as mentioned earlier but classify them differently. Some linguists classify collocations into two traditional aspects of grammar and lexis. In the lexis level, collocation is a “mode of meaning”. The meaning is obtained from words co-occurring in texts and the meaning is presented in four levels: orthographic, phonological, grammatical, and collocational levels. The concept on collocation emphasizes on the paradigmatic level of collocations and also on the syntagmatic level of collocations (Firth, 1957). There is an attempt to view lexis as a linguistic level in parallel with grammar. For example, Halliday (1966) and Sinclair (1966) proposed that any language consists of abundance of lexical units. This concept gives importance of lexical items equivalently to grammatical system. This means that collocations are mainly studied and analyzed through lexical analysis. The

other aspect is related to grammatical level. This concept focuses on the syntactic and semantic viewpoints of collocations. For example, Mitchell (1971) proposes that collocations are related to syntax and particular lexical items can occur only in certain syntactic relationships. Lexical patterns derive the meaning from the context and also the generalized grammatical patterns they appear. The meaning of lexical items gets from both context and the generalized grammatical patterns. Similarly, Kjellmer (1991) and Nation (2001) state that syntactic structure should be involved in the study of collocations within the lexis level.

Benson (1985) proposes collocations based on syntactic nature. He classifies them into two main types: lexical and grammatical collocations, stating that a lexical collocation co-occurs from two lexical features, which are equally important, whereas a grammatical collocation co-occurs from a dominant word i.e. verb, noun, or adjective and a preposition, which is a grammatical word. His classification is similar to that of Baker (1992), Bahns (1993) and Benson and Ilson (1986) as follows:

1. Lexical collocations do not contain grammatical elements. They are combinations of adjective + noun, noun + verb, verb + noun, and adjective + adverb, known as content words such as *price list*, *place an order*, and *run quickly*.

2. Grammatical collocations usually consist of a noun, an adjective or a verb plus a preposition such as *interested in*, *agree with* and the pattern *to + infinitive* or *that-clause* e.g. *by accident* and *to be afraid that*.

For Sinclair (1991), both the lexical and grammatical aspects of collocation are taken into consideration. However, he divides collocations differently from Benson and Ilson (1986) into two categories: the upward and downward collocations.

1. Upward collocation is a collocation whose node is more frequent than the collocate (mostly prepositions, adverbs, conjunctions, pronouns), for instance, the word

*back* collocates with the words *at*, *down*, *from*, *into*, *on* and *then*, all of which are more frequent words than *back*.

2. Downward collocation is a collocation whose node is less frequent than the collocate e.g., *arrive*, *bring* and *climb* are examples of words which occur less frequently that collocate with the word *back*.

Sinclair explains that the upward collocations tend to form grammatical frames, whereas the elements of downward collocation (mostly nouns and verbs) give a semantic analysis of a word.

To recap, linguists have defined collocations from different viewpoints and classified collocations according to how each linguist looks at them. However, they have proposed the similar concept of words co-occurring together. The classification of collocations in English falls into two main traditional directions under grammatical and lexical construction. They can be arranged under their characteristics that frequently occur together as a fixed phrase or are predicted to co-occur in a high or low degree.

In this study, collocations are categorized into seven patterns on the basis of Lewis's (2000) strategy namely adjective + noun, adjective + preposition, verb + noun, noun + noun, verb + adverb, adverb + adjective and phrasal verb so that they cover the violations of collocation. The categorization is based on grammatical and lexical features since both of them have interrelated levels of structure.

### **Multi-word expressions/units/items.**

There are various forms of multi-word items, and the classification depends on their characteristics. The study of multi-word units is often connected with the pragmatics of language showing the relationship between sentences and situations in which they are used. The purpose is to judge the social significance and the use of particular items. Many linguists argue that the linguistic form and the function play an important role in

word combination. As Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) remark, lexical phrases are form/function units i.e. the phrases contain certain pragmatic functions within the language. Therefore, the lexical phrases are categorized based on their structural features and their semantic, syntactic and functional characteristics. They divide multi-words items into four categories: polywords, institutionalized phrases, phrasal constraints, and sentence builders. First, polywords are short fixed phrases functioning as individual lexical items operating at the word level e.g., *for the most part*. Second, institutionalized phrases are long phrases functioning as separate utterances e.g., *long time no see*. Third, phrasal constraints are short to medium-length phrases with slots e.g., *a... ago*. Finally, sentence builders are phrases that provide the framework for whole sentences e.g., *I think (that)...*

These multi-word items perform certain pragmatic functions Nattinger and DeCarrico see them as having three main kinds of functions as follows:

1. Social interaction markers describe social relations and consist of categories of conversational maintenance (e.g., clarifying such as *what did you mean by...?* or *let me repeat*; shifting a topic such as *by the way* or *that reminds me of...*; closing such as *it's been nice meeting you* or *I've got to go/do...*) and categories of conversational purpose describing functional purpose (e.g. expressing politeness such as *thanks (very much)* or *if you don't mind*, complying such as *I'd be glad/happy to* or *of course*, and refusing such as *I'm sorry but..* or *I'd rather you...*

2. Necessary topics are lexical phrases that mark topics about which learners are often asked or ones that are necessary in daily conversation (e.g. autobiography such as *I'm from...* or *my name is...*; quantity such as *not a great deal* or *lots of*; time such as *what time ...?* or *on...day* or *for a long time/...years*; likes such as *I'd like to...* or *what do you like to...?*).

3. Discourse devices are lexical phrases that connect the meaning and structure of the discourse (e.g. logical connectors such as *as a result (of ...)* or *in spite of*; temporal connectors such as *and then* or *the day/week/month/year before/after...*; fluency devices such as *I think that...* or *as a matter of fact*; exemplifiers such as *for example* or *in other words*, and evaluators such as *I'm (not) absolutely sure/positive/certain (but)...* or *there's no doubt that...*). The discourse devices in spoken and written discourse are often quite distinct. Lexical phrases used in writing are generally different from those used in conversations.

Lexical phrases are divided into three categories namely *polywords*, *collocations* and *institutionalized expressions* by Lewis (1993).

1. Polywords are combinations of two or three words containing essential vocabulary for memorization. The meaning of the whole group of words may range from immediately apparent e.g., *record player* or completely different from the component words e.g., *put off*.

2. Collocations are word combinations which co-occur frequently. They show the way that certain individual words co-occur with others. The combinations range from free collocations e.g., *black/expensive/dirty car* to fixed collocations e.g., *community service*, *to catch a cold*, etc.

3. Institutionalized expressions are sets of words occurring in a pattern and conveying a single meaning. They permit the user to manage aspects of the social interaction and are considered pragmatic in character. They consist of three sub-categories: (1) short utterances, (2) sentence heads or frames, and (3) full sentences. Short utterances are rarely considered grammatically e.g., *certainly not* or *just a moment* whereas sentence heads or frames occur with the first words of utterances having

pragmatic function e.g., *The suggestion/problem was...*, and full sentences show

pragmatic meaning of requests e.g., *Could I just say a few words?*

Moreover, under pragmatic function, lexical phrases can be divided into three main types: institutionalization, fixedness, and non-compositionality (Moon, 1997).

Later, these three types are categorized into five sub-types in order to cover all details.

His taxonomy on multi-word units includes compound, phrasal verbs, idioms, fixed phrases and pre-fabricated routines.

1. Compounds occur when two or more words are combined to make a single lexeme. This lexeme can be written either fused, separated or hyphenated e.g., *pricelist*, *price list* or *price-list*. Moon points out, “Compounds are generally fixed but their institutionalization can vary widely as any other lexical items. The degree to which they are compositional varies too” (p. 45).

2. Phrasal verbs are combinations of monosyllabic verbs such as *stop*, *give*, and *take* with adverbial or prepositional particles (e.g., *up*, *off*, and *away*). Mostly, their meaning is not interpretable such as *make up*, which means to invent a story.

3. Idioms are phrases with holistic meanings such as *It rains cats and dogs*, *feeling under the weather*.

4. Fixed phrases are sets of words that are strongly fixed and institutionalized in a particular situations such as *as a result* to show a cause and effect relation, the expression *I hope so* to agree with or support a situation that has just been mentioned.

5. Prefabricated routines are defined as phrases, generalized collocations, or semi-fixed strings that are used in discursal situations as structuring devices such as *I highly recommend....*, *could you...?* Semi-fixed phrases have more flexibility than fixed phrases because certain words can be replaced.

It is obviously seen that most linguists classify multi-word expressions/units based on their structural features and their semantic patterns. The classification can be sub-divided according to the characteristics they occur. Multi-word expressions are performed of form which is related to grammatical rules and function is concerned with pragmatics.

In this study, multi-word units/items are classified based on Moon's (1997) taxonomy referring to phrases or expressions that have fixed, semi-fixed composition and prepositional phrases. Multi-word expressions are sets of words that are frozen as sequence of words or appear in strings that can be filled up whereas collocations are words frequently co-occur together. For concerns of ambiguity, phrasal verb is excluded in multi-word expressions since it would overlap with the sub-category of collocations. It is perceived that combining the preceding categories and collapsing their components would at least cover the frequently occurring phrases in the study.

### **Business Lexical Phrases**

Language used in business contexts is different from academic language. Its language is sophisticated and specialized since it consists of business terms and phrases which are related to the correct use of word combinations. Holden (1989) states, "how people use language in business contexts represents one of the most potential social influences on modern life. It is curious that this matter has been neglected so long" (p.43). This means that business communication should not be treated separately from actual business and the language used should be based on what has happened in real business situations. It is known that business language is specialized and unique since it consists of various business terms. Ellis and Johnson (1994) support that the language of business is often objective, formulaic and specific. Jarvis and Stephens (1994) analyze business language in terms of international business communication and state that misuse of idioms

and lexical collocations among other linguistic aspects is a cause of problems due to miscommunication in international business contexts. Flower and Martinez (1993) point to some phrases such as *a convenient price* or *marketing share* instead of native speaker collocations *a reasonable price* and *market share* as examples of miscommunications. They add that because information must be sent with little risk of misunderstanding, many business terms need to be utilized in clusters to avoid confusion.

Various research studies have revealed a lot on various aspects of spoken and written communications in the business world and classroom. For example, a study by Lewis (1997) examined different types of collocation in ESP which causes students' errors due to a lack of translational equivalence between the first language (L1) and the second language (L2). Kavaliauskienė and Janulevičienė (2001) studied multi-word chunks in ESP which could make a change for the better in L2 vocabulary acquisition. They concluded that it is beneficial, but also indispensable because learners become involved in the process by becoming aware of and identifying lexical phrases, processing them orally or in writing, and distinguishing between high-frequency and low-frequency lexical items. Further, there was a study conducted to investigate whether the teaching of lexical collocations in a business English workshop would enhance Taiwanese college learners' development of language fluency and collocational proficiency. The study focused on students' writing tasks, the teacher and researcher's class notes, pre and post tests, student interviews and videotapes. According to the results, lexical collocations seemed to have assisted the students in acquiring new collocations in their written tasks. There seemed to be a positive connection between the students' use of lexical collocations and their proficiency. Moreover, there were some factors that affected learning lexical collocations such as classroom instruction, previous knowledge, learner needs, the difference between their first and the other languages, idioms, morphology, and collocation' frequency.

However, this workshop revealed that raising learners' awareness of collocations and introducing the reference of collocations were alternatives for business teaching and learning in the future, and it was highly applicable for a non-native teacher to present the teaching of collocations into a classroom (Hsu, 2002).

Boonyasaquan (2005) conducted a study on collocational violations in translation of a business article. The results revealed that the students' ability in translating a business text from Thai into English, with the use of collocations, was at a low level. Both lexical and grammatical collocations were problematic for the informants. The data showed that the students were not aware of collocations when translating a Thai text into English. The major sources of the violations were learners' mother tongue interference and deficiency of collocational knowledge.

In brief, the business research has stated that it is impossible to avoid using words, phrases, and technical terms which arise in business because of the very nature of business affairs. The studies have given significance to collocational knowledge since collocations are important for vocabulary development. In business discourse, misuse of business terms are essential since it can cause communication problems. The terms in business contexts need to be expressed in clusters to avoid circumlocution and speed up communication.

**Language use in business letters.** A business letter differs from a personal letter because it is more formal and requires specialized language. Most business letters deal with the main work activities of a business, profession or vocation of the writer. By comparison, a letter is more formal and reliable in a business communication than an email. Email can deliver information fast to a great number of people (McClean, 2002). Also, people like to shorten the time spent in writing. Its content usually contains reduced phrases in the form of acronyms, such as *fyi* (for your information), *iow* (in other words)

and *pls* (please) and so on. However, letters, rather than emails, are still used and exist in business communication for several reasons. An email is not as rich a communication method as a business letter. Sometimes, the language used in the emails is flowery and indirect. Comparing with emails, letter is more formal and credible since it contains a company's letter heading and a logo, as well as the quality paper. Sometimes, businesses need to keep a hardcopy record or file and a business letter is a visible record of message (Weaver & Weaver, 1977).

The grammatical forms also take a major part in business letters. Researchers (e.g., Frailey, 1982; Parisuthiman, 2005; Pirie, R. (1997); Sang-an-wang, 2001; Sawangvaroros, 2006) point out the elements of business letter writing and offer suggestions on successful business letter writing, for example, using active construction rather than passive construction. Active verbs make the writing simpler, less formal, clearer and more precise such as *We have changed the delivery date...* instead of *The delivery date has been changed....* The use of modals may be one of the forms which distinguishes British from American business letter writing. The form such as *I would be grateful if you would...* is more widely used in British letters. Pronouns such as *I, we, you, your, my* and *our* are also related to the use of active construction in writing business letters. This helps the writers avoid using passive construction and makes the style more direct and clear. Using active verbs with personal references is a quick and dramatic way to make the writing readable and more direct (Burne, 2002).

Words/phrases used in business letters can cause a problem when writing for a specific situation or audience. Millions of people write letters as part of their work but many of them do not know how to successfully write a business letter. Not only do inexperienced writers but also people who have to deal with it regularly find it very difficult to produce writing, Therefore, a writer should pay attention to words/phrases

used in business correspondence in order to make the business letter achieve its goal (Burne, 2001). However, applying phrases in business letters can reduce the pitfalls of business writing. Using phrases/expressions in business letter writing is suggested since business letters are composed of common expressions with altered meaning. Ready-made chunks are more efficient in that they reduce uncertainty and the need for individual creativity, which takes time (Janis, 1966).

Ready-made or prefabricated language units (named differently depending on each linguist) are an important feature in teaching ESP. They make business letter writing more efficient. Once they are learnt, they are easily retrievable and accessible. They are context-bound and occur frequently so that this makes them highly memorable (Kavaliauskienė & Janulevičienė, 2001). Phrases/chunks play an important role in all kinds of genres, including business letters. Writers use a high proportion of phrases appearing as fixed and semi-fixed phrases in the sentences and this makes their writing more efficient (Willis, 2006).

In brief, the selection of words/phrases in writing business letters is very important in making this kind of written communication successful. One possible solution is applying chunks/phrases in writing business letters since these expressions are ready-made and contain words/terms related to business field.

**Pragmatics in business letters.** Besides phrases/chunks used in business letters, pragmatics also plays an essential role in business letter writing. Pragmatics is the study of how utterances have meanings in given situations. It is concerned with certain situations used in the sentences. Stalnaker (1972) defines pragmatics as the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed stating, “Pragmatics differs from grammar in that it is essentially goal-directed and evaluative in its interpretation. It is in a way that communication is problem solving” (p.383). The language used should be

appropriate to its context or situation in which it is written in order to avoid offending someone and to reach an agreement between two parties (Brown & Yule, 1983). Most business letters in English are reader-oriented, not writer-oriented. In other words, they are intended to be read and understood by others (Jenkins & Hinds, 1987). Therefore, a writer should pay attention to how the addressee/receiver will feel when he/she reads the letter in order to maintain a good relationship with the reader.

Pragmatics plays an important role in business correspondence between the addressee and addresser. An addresser or writer tries to find the best way to achieve a desired result in the addressee or reader by means of written language (Leech, 1983). Crawford (1998) gives importance to social common norms since they lead to achieve a communicative goal in formal written language, adding that the students already have the ability to write business letters grammatically, but they lack the necessary information related to social context to interpret the discourse of English business writing. Thus, the pragmatic interpretation has direct impact on the teaching of business writing.

There was an attempt to study pragmatic errors in business letters since the pragmatic use of language is essential in successful written communication. A study by Man-liang (2007) was conducted in order to examine if pragmatic errors in learners' letter writing could be prevented. The errors which appeared seemed to be correct in terms of grammar, but they had problems in pragmatic competence. The errors were analyzed based on two aspects: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic. The researcher suggested that teachers should encourage their students' pragmatic competence in their classroom instruction through textbooks and writing exercises. Activities outside the classroom were also recommended such as writing notes to friends and pen-pals with native speakers of English in real-life situations.

Other researchers (e.g., Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Schmitt & Carter, 2000) give importance to both grammar and pragmatics. They explain that grammatical competence is related to syntactic rules and functions are associated with pragmatic competence. This means that language ability requires not only the ability to produce language through syntax, but also the ability to use lexical phrases based on functions of language. If learners want to gain pragmatic fluency, they should know how to use the right lexical phrase in the right situation. Consequently, both abilities are required in efficient language learning. Similarly, Willis (2006) stressed importance of learning phrases/chunks in association with their functions and contextual demands. Functions vary depending on the situation concerned such as *requests, suggestions, inquiries, offers, promise, advice, warnings, apologies* and so on. Different phrases present a particular function. Therefore, focusing on language form only is not sufficient since the language used in business letters requires more explanations on meaning in given situations.

Thus the importance of context and functions is in association with the language used through grammatical patterns. It seems that to reach the goal in business letter writing, these factors are required to make this kind of social interaction successful. Other aspects related to business letter writing are as follows:

**Theories on politeness.** Politeness, a pragmatic paradigm, has been considered to have wide descriptive power in respect to language use and to be a major determinant of linguistic behavior (Lakoff, 1972, as cited in Leech, 1983). Politeness plays a central role in achieving effectiveness in business letter writing since it helps writers to avoid direct responsibility for something and also encodes the relationship between writers and readers. Therefore, it is considered crucial to business letter writing; however, there are very few studies (e.g. Brown and Levinson, 1987; Fraser, 1975;

Lakoff, 1975; and Leech, 1983, as cited in Pileggard, 1997) applying politeness theories to written language in ESP.

Among the theories proposed, the most influential theory to account for the politeness phenomena is that of Levinson (1983), who describes an interactional model consisting of two dimensions of face. *Face* refers to a speaker's sense of linguistic and social identity. A speech act can insult this identity and be interpreted as *face threatening*. Inappropriate speech acts may lead to serious communication problems. Levinson asserts that speakers or writers have strategies to lessen the threat of losing face. *Face* has both positive and negative sides. Positive face reflects the need to be accepted and to belong to a community. This is known as *Positive Politeness* which occurs when the writer/speaker wants to preserve the positive face of others. Negative face refers to the need to be independent. The word *negative* does not mean bad; it is just a word which is opposite to the word positive. This is also related to *Negative Politeness* since its purpose is to preserve the others' negative face. The use of requests which is more indirect e.g., *could you...?* is an example of negative politeness. It is also concerned with the use of other devices such as *please, might, or I am sorry/regret* in order to make situations less formal.

The two concepts of Positive and Negative Politeness play significant roles in communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987). They explain that when using positive politeness strategies, the interlocutor aims to connect with others by demonstrating similar goals whereas using negative face strategies reflect the desire for independence and not to be insulted by others. Three variables affecting a person's positive or negative face are suggested by Brown and Levinson. First is the social distance between the speaker or writer and the addressee, second is the power plays between two people, and third is socio-cultural nature of the communication. If the speaker or writer has less power than

the addressee, it is more likely that he or she will use negative politeness strategies to lessen the threat to the addressee's negative face.

The negative politeness strategies are indicated through indirectness and modals to show respect to the addressee. Using modals as a negative politeness strategy is feasible since modals soften strong communication. This strategy is called *socialinteractional* since the modal choice reflects the writers' grasp of the interactional situation (Murcia & Freeman, 1999). In business letters, the strategy of negative politeness is used through phrases such as *could/would you...?* or *I/we hope*. Negative politeness strategies attempt to soften the impact: hedging e.g., *Could you close the window?*; pessimism e.g., *I don't suppose you could close the window, could you?*; indicating deference e.g., *Excuse me, would you mind if I asked you to close the window?*; apologizing e.g., *I'm terribly sorry to put you out, but could you close the window?*; impersonalizing e.g., *The management requires all windows to be closed.*

Positive politeness strategies are used by a speaker or writer in order to emphasize the commonalities between interlocutors (Upton & Conner, 2001). If the speaker or writer and addressee are equivalent in status, the strategies of positive and negative politeness, for example, optimism mentioned earlier will be most effective. However, the positive politeness strategy in a situation may cause a problem in another situation i.e. directness which upsets the addressee. Upton and Conner explain that the strategy used is considered a positive politeness if it connects with the speaker or writer's need. This means that he or she is trying to lessen the distance between the speaker or writer and addressee by representing that he or she has common goals. In this situation, optimism is presented through the phrases such as *look/looking forward to* and *I/we hope*. Sentences which contain *kindly + [action verb]* and *please* suggest imperative tone but seem polite.

In summary, politeness is crucial in making business communication successful. The two aspects of politeness: positive and negative strategies play important roles in business letter writing. The positive strategy is recommended in writing since it makes readers feel impressed but the negative strategy is also applied in writing since it does not show a real negative aspect. Using proper politeness strategies is important since they make business letter writing more efficient and lessen dissatisfaction between writers and readers.

### **Corpus Linguistics**

Nowadays, a lot of investigation has been devoted to how computers can facilitate language learning. With the help of computer technology, the contextual factors that influence variability in language use can be discovered through examples taken from corpora. Corpora (or a corpus in singular) consist of a databank of natural texts compiled from writing or transcriptions of recorded speech. With the help of a word lister and concordancer, a corpus can be analyzed through these materials (Kennedy, 1998). A word lister allows learners to perform statistical analysis on their corpus since the word lister will calculate the total number of words, or tokens, in the corpus. It counts how many times a word appears. Each unique word in the corpus is known as a type. The words in the list can be sorted in alphabetical or frequency order to help learners search data with ease. *Concordancer* is a software program used to present the data through concordance lines. There are different types of corpora depending on various purposes such as written and spoken corpora, general reference corpora, special purpose corpora, monolingual and multilingual corpora, synchronic and diachronic corpora, open and closed corpora, and learner corpora (Biber, 1998).

One specific area on the computer frontier which still remains quite open to exploration is *corpus linguistics*. Corpus linguistics (hereafter CL) is the study of

language through corpus-based research, but it differs from traditional linguistics since it is related to the study of authentic examples of language (Sinclair, 1997). The main focus on CL is to discover patterns of authentic language in order to test hypotheses about language. They allow learners to discover related linguistic structures for the goals of their research. In the 1970s, few studies were conducted on corpus-based approach. However, when personal computers were widely used in the 1980s, CL gained popularity in the research field (e.g. Brown & Kucera, 1961; Quirk, 1960; as cited in Baker, 2006). CL is beneficial for both linguistic analysis and language teaching and learning.

In respect to linguistics, CL uses real data to assess hypotheses about language allowing users to explore the relevant linguistic structures for the aim they set for their research. The use of corpora to investigate phrases/chunks has been supported by some linguists (e.g., Aijmer & Altenberg, 1991; Benson, Benson & Ilson, 1986; Kennedy, 1990; Kjellmer, 1995; and Sinclair, 1991). Further, Moon (1997) supported the use of corpora to analyze words in association with their grammatical and lexical components. In other words, corpus analysis has been used to describe more complex multi-word combinations and phrases.

With the help of the concordancing-based approach, learning phrases is facilitated because co-occurrence and typical contexts of words are emphasized. De Carrico (1992) claims lexical phrases are somewhere between grammar and lexicon. Running a corpus through a concordancing program allows learners to search for multi-word expressions or phrases as well as individual words. According to Lamy and Mortensen (2006), the interrelationship of lexis and syntax becomes clear to someone who is familiar with searches on a concordancer. Users can search patterns through concordance lines, and this makes them accessible so quickly and effectively that they can create large collections of patterns for further learning. Thus, CL has been widely employed in other areas of

linguistics and lexicography, where corpora can be used to help dictionary makers to spot new words and to identify contexts for new meanings (Mayer, 2002).

CL is used to investigate word combinations i.e. phrases or chunks. For example, multi-word units or expressions can be used in repeated exercises such as matching and item identification to raise learners' awareness of how to use words properly (Hyland, 2007). Moreover, the frequency shown in a corpus can help identify collocations.

Learners can check the frequency of a given group of words in a corpus. By identifying and studying collocations, learners will form their mental lexicon not only from isolated independent units, but also from words/units combined; such consolidating a conceptual system which will allow them to become more proficient at an initial stage of learning (Hunston, 2002). Likewise, *ProQuest Information and Learning Company* (2009) stresses the importance of teaching high-frequency words/phrases taken from corpora since learning the most commonly used words/phrases through their frequency makes a learner a faster and more fluent reader.

CL is also suggested by researchers to be used as a language teaching tool. Foreign language teachers usually produce simplified examples. This raises difficulties for students when they are confronted with real and more complex language which they may be incapable of processing. In this case, CL can contribute to rendering learning a foreign language more effectively since students will be faced with real language (McEnery & Wilson, 1996). Authentic materials motivate language learners in the language classroom whereas non-authentic materials may not because they do not reflect real applications of language and thus students will lose motivation in learning a target language. In these situations, CL can contribute to learning a foreign language more effectively since students will be faced with real language (Super, 2004). Learners can see many examples

of words in context and can learn more about what these words mean and how they can be used.

Although there are many benefits of CL in language teaching and learning, concordance searches are limited to corpora of specific contexts showing clusters typical of these contexts, which might get lost in larger and more general language samples (Vienna, 2005). Besides limited words in each concordance line, to read and understand the text is a hard task, especially for beginners. Interpretation of texts is important in helping learners understand the discourses surrounding them. Production cannot be simply answered by corpus-based techniques and thus, require knowledge and analysis of how a text exists within the context (Fairclough, 1989). In language learning, corpora cannot replace the teacher. The language teacher knows what is appropriate for their students. It takes time to collect the data and create corpora, and also the computer cannot carry out an entire analysis of the language (Super, 2004).

In brief, corpora are beneficial in language teaching. It presents authentic language and provides various examples through concordance lines. Seeing situations or context surrounded helps learners have a better understanding of language use in various functions, and it helps learners understand the proper use of language in a particular situation. However, in the classroom, this can cause trouble for learners since the context may not offer sufficient data for learners to understand language use since the data are presented as extracts, not complete sentences.

**Roles in ESP/business English.** CL takes an essential part in ESP (e.g., Flowerdew, 2001; Curado, 2006). Flowerdew (2001) explains ESP is designed to meet specific needs of a learner. ESP is in contrast with General English (GE). The ESP classroom can greatly benefit from the use of corpora since they are a specialized method of accessing specialized vocabulary in specialized texts (Kennedy, 1998). Therefore, a

corpus-based analysis of language tends to play a key role in specialized language pedagogy, especially in universities where ESP courses are gaining more popularity among students. Sinclair (1997) explains,

It is probably easier to search through a file of relevant examples for what is required than to think up something that sounds natural. When 'sounds natural' is examined closely, it usually transpires that it is almost impossible to invent an adequate example; attempts made by language teachers, lexicographers and others to represent usage are often embarrassing and never reliable (p.31).

This means that Sinclair supports the idea that it is difficult to produce examples that seem real in the context in ESP. In this case, corpus linguistics plays an important role in helping learners solve this problem. Since authentic data is beneficial in language teaching and learning, many English language instructors are motivated to use authentic materials with their students through corpora. CL can contribute to learning ESP more effectively. This is because students will be faced with real language. In the classroom, foreign language teachers usually produce simplified examples which will raise difficulties for students when they are faced with real and more complex language that they sometimes cannot process. Corpora provide natural texts that may be used to create language-learning materials especially in the specialized fields of ESP (McEnery & Wilson, 1996). Corpora are also recommended to help producing additional materials. Based on authentic texts through corpora, teachers can greatly improve their learners' proficiency in ESP (Barlow, 2002). Other researchers (e.g., Kennedy, 1998; Super, 2004; Sutarsyah) recommended creating a corpus to teachers so they can enhance their own class objectives. The corpus is beneficial for an ESP classroom since it contains the data for the specific purpose of an ESP course.

Corpora provide sentence examples of language use. Users not only have better quality examples but also more exposure to unfamiliar words or phrases. Teachers can

use custom-made ESP corpora as a good resource (Bogaards, 1994, as cited in Maria, 2006). Chung and Nation (2003) point out that since ESP teachers are rarely experts in the learners' fields of knowledge and may not even be native speakers of the language themselves, they face two types of problems: creating examples in a language in which they are not native speakers and doing so in a field in which they lack proficiency.

**Research related to business English in linguistics area.** The corpus-based method is widely used in language analysis in the fields of lexicography and linguistics. Horn's (1923) study on collecting 1,125 business letters were received by a bank in the State of New York. He compared the vocabulary contained in these letters with that in letters with general, non-business specific correspondence to see if there were any significant differences between these two sets of vocabulary. He concluded that ESP vocabulary in English for business purposes was very similar to everyday English, thus making it more challenging to distinguish from a lexical viewpoint.

The studies on the relationship between genres and synonyms, including register of the language have also been conducted. A corpus of business and economics texts was analyzed by Irgl (1986). It was concluded that concepts significant to a particular genre tended to be expressed in many synonyms. This study suggested looking at genre-specific concepts and their distribution (Irgl, 1986). In 1990, Tribble (1990) created a specialized corpus to study whether it is particularly useful for people to understand how language is used in a specific register. He found that a corpus that consists of business letters can provide insight into grammar and types of words that are appropriate for commercial transactions.

Ghadessy's (1992) study on the lexical characteristics of Singapore English was based on a small corpus of 66,240 word-tokens known as *the Singapore Written Business Communication Corpus*. This corpus was originally compiled by Jonathan

Webster in 1983. It consisted of a total of 566 samples of business letters, memorandums, telexes and other types of business-related documents collected from various companies, banks and institutions operating in Singapore. The corpus data from a Hallidian perspective of functional grammar which examines verb phrases, prepositional phrases and adverbs was analyzed. Then, these items were discussed in how they were typically used in the corpus. The differences and similarities between the vocabulary of Singapore English and other standard varieties of English were studied. It was concluded that there were many more similarities than differences and it was suggested the possibility of establishing a core vocabulary for international business English.

A study on written business communication in the form of letters was done by Yli-Jokipii (1994, as cited in Louhiala-Salminen, 1996). She created a corpus of British, American and Finnish business letters. Her emphasizing was on the linguistic features of requests. She did not make any distinctions between mailed letters and faxed letters in her study since both of them met the criteria. In the same line of research, Someya (1999) also conducted a corpus-based study in linguistics in terms of lexical and grammatical features of written business English. The study revealed that English for Business Purposes (EBP) is characterized by a high degree of lexical features but a low level of lexical difficulty. More evidence supported that written business English is characterized by its incorporation of spoken features into written texts. Someya claimed that business English is a “sublanguage with its unique lexico-grammatical patterns”. The results revealed that the Japanese users of EBP frequently made the errors of lexical items with high frequency. Identifying and describing lexical patterns will make learners of EBP have more proficiency than they used to have.

Furthermore, there was a study conducted by Curado (2002a) to assess a business corpus through language learning tasks. The corpus contained a total of

1,010,435 words on the integration of six subject areas (general business, management, marketing, law, M.I.S and Finance in Business Science and Technology). The corpus included eight genres (textbooks, reviews, news, reports, E-discussions, speeches, articles and abstracts) and distribution across those six subject areas. The corpus was explored and assessed according to how word behavior changes in a specific context. The results showed that lexical command plays an essential role in written and oral tasks since learners realized the need of specific words to suit specific contexts. Good linguistic skills showed lexical knowledge in the tasks while content competence contributed to acceptable performance. Also, grammatical combinations became very productive since learners tended to appeal to the need of grammatical command in the ESP tasks. The content words occurred with function words and discourse markers related to the preposition *to*. Both vocabulary and grammar were included under lexis since lexico-grammatical units play an essential role in communicative needs. The study placed importance on the critical ESP factors of language: content, learning interests, and learning situations for the design of a representative corpus of business English. It was suggested that an ESP corpus cannot be beneficial without the application of these three factors. Finally, the design of the corpus should be consistent and related to the development of language competence for specific purposes (Curado, 2002a).

In addition, contextual factors that influence variability in language use can be discovered through proper analytical tools such as corpora. Although pragmatics has mainly focused on oral interactions, it has its place in written language, especially in ESP. For example, Upton and Connor (2001) did a project using the Wordsmith corpus as a tool to analyze the linguistic features that revealed politeness strategies writers selected in their letters. The project was concerned with the application letter as an accessible genre used across different cultures to interface with the business world. It exemplified the shift in

emphasis from language to discourse. Sarmento (2005) affirms that the language contained in business letters can be analyzed pragmatically applying a corpus linguistics methodological approach which is used to investigate the data compiled in corpora.

In brief, the studies present a corpus-based method playing a major role in analyzing the language related to ESP/business English. Since ESP/business language is specialized and unique, this approach is used to discover syntactic and semantic features appearing in this field. Specialized corpora were created by researchers to collect the data and analyze the language for particular purposes. These corpora are beneficial since they contain various examples of language use in different situations or functions.

Consequently, the use of concordancing as an aid in pragmatic studies is recommended since pragmatics plays an essential role in the ESP/business context. However, there were a few studies conducted on pragmatics in business letters using the corpus-based approach.

**Research related to application in the ESP classroom.** The use of corpora is recommended by researchers since it is beneficial for students to learn real-life language. Authentic materials motivate language learners in the language classroom. Non-authentic materials may not reflect the real application of language and students may notice this and will lose motivation in learning a target language (Super, 2004). CL can contribute to learning a foreign language more effectively since students will be faced with real language. Some research studies have been conducted on the use of a corpus or corpora in business areas as teaching materials in the classroom. The studies conducted on the use of corpus-based approach are related to ESP/business field as elaborated below.

Nagano (1991, as cited in Someya, 1999) selected 67 lexico-grammatical items related to business English by Japanese learners of English for Business Purposes. These items (verbs, nouns, adverbs, and adjectives) were analyzed in terms of

markedness, collocation, comparative frequency, syntactic and semantic constraints. A corpus was created to collect the data but its size was not specified. It was not clear what the basis of the selection was of the 67 entries that had been made.

Someya (2000) compiled and wrote his own program for a business letter corpus by using different computer programs. Then, he conducted a study with 40 Japanese business people, who were divided into control and experimental groups by using his online Business Letter Corpus (BLC) concordancer (the size of the corpus is 1,000,000 word-tokens) to reduce errors of articles and prepositions. Both groups were given the same letter assignments but with different types of feedback. The control group got full error-explicit corrections while the experimental group used the BLC concordancer as a selective feedback in writing. After that, all assignments were checked and returned by email with no error explicit correction. The results confirm that the BLC concordancer was an effective tool for non-native writers in reducing the number of linguistic surface errors and improving the overall quality of the English messages. However, Someya states that this approach to writing is only effective for certain types of linguistic forms whose use is more or less determined locally, either within the phrase or the clause in question. Others such as those related to textual and discourse aspects of writing necessarily require a wider context, and cannot easily be analyzed in KWIC format. It is, therefore, important to view using a concordancer as complement to other methods of language learning and teaching, rather than as a replacement for them.

The corpora are used as tools in teaching for more than eight years in ESP courses (Oliveira, 2003). Students had chances to create their own corpus and great results were found from doing so. This approach allowed students to obtain empirical data from language analyses by themselves, and this led to autonomous learning or self-directed learning. She found that her students were able to improve their language

knowledge at the end of the courses. This approach also provides an authentic medium to motivate students learning. For teachers, it provides justification for teaching more specialized vocabulary to students of intermediate to advanced levels that they may not have received in their own ESP courses. Oliveira recommends this approach to other teachers, especially in ESP courses since she has discovered that this approach can enable further areas for language research.

According to Lombard (1997), a corpus was created to collect the collocations produced by learners. The study was conducted to analyze collocations written by native speakers of Mandarin in written assignments for a business English course. With the help of a corpus, the learner collocations and teaching materials are used to analyze the collocations. The teaching and reference materials used in the study were dictionaries related to business English. He divided collocations into four types: lexical transfer, phonological, grammatical, and semantic. Then, he examined them under qualitative and quantitative analyses. The results revealed that learners classified collocations containing semantic idiosyncrasy over half of the total. The quantitative analyses revealed that learners tended to involve idiosyncrasy in either form or meaning, but rarely both. In general, it was found out that although teaching and reference materials were used to help produce collocations, learners found difficult for them to produce collocations correctly. It is unclear whether the materials used met the needs of the language learners since a few collocations produced by learners were matched with the collocations appearing in the dictionaries. It implied that the dictionaries created by native speakers of English might not be useful for this group of students since those collocations chosen for inclusion were not those ones the students had trouble with. The researcher concluded that the actual collocational needs of the learners could only be confirmed through an analysis of learner collocations themselves.

Corpora can be an alternative material to confirm the language found in ESP course books. Corpus data can be used to inform and validate the language found in existing coursebooks. This is because CL can help verify whether, and to what degree, the textbook content corresponds to real-life language (Witton, 1993). For example, a study was conducted by Sznajder (2010) to evaluate the selection of metaphors in a published business English textbook using findings in a specialized corpus of written business English. In this study, metaphorical words and phrases from the business English textbook were contrasted with the metaphors identified in a sample of the corpus of business periodical and journal articles. The results revealed only a slight overlap between the textbook and the corpus sample metaphors. The frequency analysis of the textbook metaphors with the whole of the corpus indicated that nearly a third of them were never used. Therefore, corpus and frequency data should be considered when selecting a material for teaching metaphors in business English instruction (Sznajder, 2010).

In the field of pragmatics, the viewpoints on textbooks were contrary to the above studies. For example, Warwick and Bertini (1995) conducted a study on business faxes. The results revealed that business writing textbooks did not give the students the necessary discourse and pragmatic information to fulfill the students' needs. They recommended teachers employ discourse analysis when teaching a business context and analyze the language through a specialized corpus i.e. the corpus of business faxes since it gives the specific components in that field.

There was an attempt to conduct a study using corpus resources as a complementary task material by Curado and Edwards (2003). The study presented a particular situation where business English was taught by incorporating corpus-driven knowledge and communicative task feedback. Designing a corpus and structuring corpus-

based activities and tasks in the business English course to target language and content needs were the objectives of the study. A comparative exercise with other specific corpora is a beneficial way to promote corpus-based thinking among students. The business course integrated different subject areas and topics that were studied in various disciplines e.g., business science, tourism, computer science, library science, telecommunications, and audio-visual communication.

To sum up, some studies were conducted to investigate the use of corpora in various areas. Since corpora present real-life language, they motivate language learners in the classroom. Learners were encouraged to create their own corpus to collect their own data since they could retrieve the data for further use or study. Besides in teaching area, corpora can help analyze the language and confirm the language used in course books. They are beneficial to learners since they help them discover various linguistic features in the field of business. The knowledge of pragmatic use can also be viewed through corpora. In ESP, learners can clearly compare and search for a given examples word/phrase in the particular context of business in concordance lines without taking much time to do so.

### **Textbook Evaluation**

Published teaching materials have been widely spread and highly competitive. Millions of copies are sold every year and numerous aid projects have been set up to produce them in various countries. The publication has developed into a multimillion dollar business with UK and US publishers in many countries around the world (Littlejohn, 1998). There are different viewpoints on using textbooks as a teaching material in the classroom. There are both pros and cons among researchers on using textbooks as authentic data in language teaching and learning.

In a positive view, textbooks are viewed as an important source of knowledge and skills in language use. One of the primary advantages of using textbooks in the classroom is they help students make their progress and achievement. Students have high expectations about using a textbook in their particular language classroom and believe that they have more credibility than the materials the teacher makes (Haycroft, 1998). It is claimed that no teaching and learning situation is complete until it has its relevant textbook (Hutchinson & Torres, 1993). In the classroom, textbooks are used as the foundation of instruction and the primary source of information for students and teachers. For the students, textbooks are their major source of the language. For the teachers, they serve as one of the main instruments for providing knowledge and shaping the attitudes and principles of the students. In terms of grammatical structures, teachers who are proficient in the language can create authentic examples, but ones who have less experience in teaching ESP may not be able to achieve this (O'Neill, 1982). In terms of producing specialized language, especially in ESP classroom, students and teachers rely on materials used as the main source of new vocabulary, especially specialized terms. The structural patterns and context or situations are related to the language produced. The various terms used in ESP are unique, novice teachers or even experienced teachers find it difficult to teach in this field. Therefore, they give much attention and rely on the textbooks presenting the vocabulary terms in this specific field.

Textbooks can serve as a source for presenting materials in both written and spoken language, a reference source for learners of grammar, vocabulary, etc., and which include ideas for classroom activities and suggestions for syllabi. Material evaluation is essential as it is the systematic process of gathering the information needed to make judgments about how successful materials are in reflecting their aims and objectives (Cunningsworth, 1995).

In a negative view, textbooks are claimed as invented materials which do not meet each group of learners' specific needs. In other words, the authors of textbooks create the vocabulary for learners and do not pay too much attention to specific needs of each group of learners. There is a question on the language used in textbooks whether it is based on authentic data or created by the authors of those textbooks. Sheldon (1988) states, "teachers often regard coursebooks as a tainted end-product of an author or a publisher's desire for a quick profit" (p.239). Many teachers argue that materials used in the form of textbooks are too broad and not easily adaptable to a real learner's needs (Harwood, 2005). Textbooks are often regarded as suspect both in terms of their language models and their methodology if the language produced is created by the authors/publishers or based on real-life situations (Tomlinson, 1998). Similarly, O'keeffe and Farr (2003) agrees that sentence samples in textbooks contain only invented examples and their descriptions are based on second-hand data whereas the examples in a corpus appearing through the concordancing tool can provide more authentic and naturalistic examples.

The validity of material in textbooks also plays an important role in textbook evaluation. It can be determined by non-teaching individuals by examining the material in it in relation to the purpose of its use (Harmer, 2001). The data in one textbook may be used as models for one situation, but in different situations, the same book may be inappropriate (Richards, 2003). Coursebook design is a factor to be considered. A revolution in coursebook design is unlikely any time soon. Instead, developments will probably occur gradually over time since new ways of thinking about both language and teaching materials must first take root among coursebook writers, publishers, teachers and learners (Ranalli, 2003).

The viewpoints on the quality of textbooks are different depending on the results obtained from studies. Some researchers claimed that the data taken from the textbooks

are invented by the authors or publishers. However, some researchers (e.g., Cook, 1998 and Widdowson, 1998) do not see the difference between authentic data in the corpus and non-authentic language used for pedagogical purposes in textbooks.

In sum, the textbook is viewed as an almost universal element of English language teaching. Many teachers use textbooks to provide the foundation for the content of lessons, the balance of the skills taught, as well as the kinds of language practice during class activities. However, there is not much research on ESP textbook evaluation compared with the number of studies on textbooks evaluation in academic field. Similarly, the studies on textbooks in ESP offer both strong and weak points when applied as a teaching material in the classroom. They offer complete packages for language related to the tasks that teachers and students do together. Some researchers suggested avoid using textbooks as the only material in class or recommending them as the supplement in the class. However, textbooks still survive because there is a lot of money to be made and politics involved.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

Many studies have been conducted on lexicography, pragmatics and corpus-based approach in the areas of linguistics and pedagogy.

The literature revealed the benefits of lexical phrases. It can be said that many words in isolation do not carry much meaning; learning phrases make learning more understandable. Phrases or chunks are a key element in how language is used. They are named differently according to the definitions and characteristics they contain. In this study, the term lexical phrase is used since lexical phrases have pragmatic functions. Since pragmatics plays a major part in ESP/business English as the language in this field is used specialized in a manner. Politeness, an element of pragmatics, plays an important role in business letters. The classification on lexical phrases in this study is a combination

of Lewis's (2000) categories on collocations, Moon's (1997) types of multi-word units and functions are considered based on the theories of politeness of Levinson (1983), Brown and Levinson (1987) and Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992). Since this study focuses on lexical phrases in written business discourse, there is a tendency for phrases occurring according to these categories. Thus, to lessen confusion, the two main categories would at least provide a discrete separation among collocations and multi-word expressions/units.

One potential method proposed to help learners search for lexical phrases is corpus linguistics. An online corpus is accessible to the general public since it does not require a subscription fee or purchasing a CD-ROM. In ESP, research studies demonstrate the use of a corpus as a good resource for searching specific words/phrases since a corpus offers authentic data used in real-life situations. Therefore, teachers can improve their learners' proficiency in the particular areas where the language used is specialized. However, it is argued that the use of this tool since the data shown through the concordance lines are limited to only five or six words on either side of the key word/phrase. Thus, traditional teaching materials still survives. Textbooks/coursebooks reach deeper into the classroom in terms of the way they influence instruction. The studies related to the use of traditional material, textbooks in both positive and negative aspects. It can be said that textbooks are viewed by some researchers as the most accessible resources that teachers have whereas the others think oppositely since they do not totally believe in the quality of those textbooks and recommend a corpus as a good source for providing authentic data.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

This study is an analysis of the data in the *BLC* concordancer and selected textbooks used in business letter writing courses. It attempted to find out different types of lexical phrases presented in the *BLC* concordancer and the textbooks and. The chapter starts with the instruments involved in this study. Procedures for data collection are addressed next, followed by the procedures for data analysis.

#### Instruments

Instruments used to conduct the study were as follows:

##### **Online *BLC* KWIC concordancer**

This website is free and available with no need to log in using personal account information. Its address is <http://ysomeya.hp.infoseek.co.jp/>. It is an online *Business Letter Corpus* (*BLC*) concordancer compiled from April 1997 to March 1998 by Dr. Yasumasa Someya, a Japanese professor at Kansai University, Osaka in Japan. It was revised and updated in 2001 and last modified in May 2007. The *BLC* has instances of specified words or phrases in 1,020,060 word tokens of US and UK samples. It also has 209,461 word tokens in 1,464 letters from a non-native English corpus of business letters written by Japanese business people. In the keyword-in context (KWIC) format, a keyword is displayed in the center while the immediate context of each word is shown on both sides in a concordance line (see samples in Appendix C). All the linguistic surface errors contained in the original data remain since it is authentic data.

The concordancer can be used easily since users enter a search string (i.e. a morpheme, word or phrase) directly into the search box provided. Users may use *regular*

*expressions* (combinations of special characters and symbols used for pattern matching) by specifying a particular combination of such characters and symbols. Then, the corpus program will search for phrases related to the string through the text data. The following table shows the major regular expression symbols and their meanings which are available at Someya's website mentioned above.

Table 1

*Major Regular Expressions in Using the BLC Concordancer*

User specifies	And it will...
a*	match 0 or more times of the instance of 'a' (e.g. <i>space</i> , a, aa, aaa,...)
a+	match 1 or more times of the instance of 'a' (e.g. a, aa, aaa, ...)
...	match any combinations of three characters, including space (by adding a space before and after this sequence, it means ' <i>any single word consisting of three characters</i> ').
^word	match 'word' that appears at the beginning of a line/sentence (=> this symbol, however, is not accepted at the moment)
[abc]	match either 'a' or 'b' or 'c'.
(a-z)	match any one of the lowercase alphabets.
[A-Z]	match any one of the UPPER CASE alphabets.
[0-9]	match any one of the numbers 0 through 9.
[a-zA-Z0-9]	match any one of the alphabets and numbers.
[a-z]+	match a single word of any length consisting of lower case alphabets.
[A-Za-z]+	match a single word of any length,
[^a-zA-Z]	match anything other than alphabets (i.e., space, numbers, punctuation marks and symbols)
(aaa bbb ccc)	match either "aaa" or "bbb" or "ccc"
ab(c cd cde)	match either "abc" or "abcd" or "abcde"

*Note.* Adopted from "Regular Expressions for Beginners," by Y. Someya, 2000. Retrieved from [http://www.someya-net.com/concordancer/eng-quick\\_regex.html](http://www.someya-net.com/concordancer/eng-quick_regex.html)

This means that the search string *thank you*, for instance, matches lower case *thank you* only. If a user wants to search for all the instances of *thank you* including the upper case *Thank you*, the search string should be (Thank/thank) you or (T/t)thank you. For line width, the user may choose any line width, but the default setting is limited to 40 characters to both the right and left of the search word. The system is designed so as not to display concordance lines beyond the sentence boundaries within which the search

string is located. Moreover, this concordancer provides a sub program named *Bigram Plus*, which is a search program for any two-word combination with intervening words. The user can retrieve any two-word combination that he/she wants to find among the corpora currently available on the *BLC* Concordancer site. For instance, if a user wants to find all the instances of the *as...as* construction with three or fewer intervening words in between the two strings, enter as follows and choose a search corpus before clicking SUBMIT.

*Figure 1.* Sample of Search Result Using Bigram Plus in the *BLC*

### **Bigram Plus**

**search result:**

**Word 1: as**

**No. of intervening words: 3**

**Word 2: as**

**Search Corpus: 01. Business Letter Corpus (BLC2000)**

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The combination "as + [W=<3] + as" was found 843 time(s):

281 as soon as  
 244 as well as  
 41 as much as  
 26 as quickly as  
 18 as far as  
 16 as long as  
 15 as little as  
 12 as early as  
 11 as low as  
 8 as good as  
 4 as often as  
 4 as productive as  
 4 as fast as  
 4 as many as  
 4 as important as  
 3 as successful as  
 3 as eager as  
 3 as many copies as  
 3 as much time as  
 3 as tough as

[snip]

*Note.* Adopted from "Bigram Plus," by Y. Someya, 2000. Retrieved from <http://www.someya-net.com/concordancer/bigram.html>

Another program in the *BLC* is the N-gram, which is a sequence of variable characters from three to five that stands for a string of words in a corpus. It consists of three sub-grams: 3-grams, 4-grams, and 5-grams. The words appearing in these three grams overlap. Each gram shows the frequency of each phrase through the frequency tables of meaningful 3-, 4- and 5-grams extracted from the *BLC* (see Appendix D). The tables are sorted either by frequency or in alphabetical order.

### **Concordance program**

The concordancer used in this study is *Antconc 3.2.1w*, which consists of data collected from the five textbooks used in this study. This program is freeware which can be downloaded from <http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/software.html>. It was released in 2007 and developed by Laurence Anthony from the Center for English Language Education in Science and Engineering (CELESE), School of Science and Engineering at Waseda University in Japan. It is very user-friendly and suitable for beginners with no experience with this type of program. It can operate basic functions of a general concordance. It allows users to build frequency lists, display statistical information, and search for words, collocations, or clusters. Then, it displays source texts and the data through concordance lines (see samples in Appendix E).

### **Textbooks**

The first three textbooks were written by native English speaking authors and the last two textbooks were by Thai authors. They were purposively selected for the analysis of the study:

1. Ashley, A. (2003). *A Handbook of Commercial Correspondence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Littlejohn, A. (2005). *Company to Company*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3. Geffner, A. (2007). *How to Write Better Business Letters*. New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc.
4. Parisuthiman, S. (2005). *Business Communication*. Bangkok: Thammasart University Press.
5. Sawangvaroros, B. (2006). *Techniques in Writing Business Letters and E-mail*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.

These five textbooks are widely used in Thai universities for teaching business writing. They were selected according to the following specifications. First, they were designed for learners who are unfamiliar with business correspondence. Therefore, they were appropriate for learner at the lower-intermediate to advanced levels. Second, the contents in these textbooks included guidance on British and American English usage, levels of formality, politeness and language patterns used in writing different types of business letters. Third, these five English textbooks were issued by different publishers. Lastly, the researcher chose the two textbooks written by the Thai authors because they were widely used as primary textbooks or supplements for written business courses in Thai universities. The references of these two textbooks were taken from various sources of business letters similar to the other English textbooks.

### **Categories of lexical phrases**

Under form, lexical phrases in this study are sub-categorized into two main types: *collocations* and *multi-word expressions*. Both of them are analyzed according to grammatical and lexical features. Collocations are divided into 7 sub-categories: adjective + noun; adjective +preposition; verb + noun; noun + noun; verb + adverb; adverb +adjective; and phrasal verb on the basis of Lewis's (2000) strategy. Multi-word expressions, based on Moon (1997) are divided into 3 sub-categories: fixed expressions, semi-fixed expressions and prepositional phrases. Collocations refer to words co-

occurring in a natural text in statistically significant ways. These types of lexical phrases are commonly used in business letter writing. The definitions and examples of those sub-categories are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Two Main Categories of Lexical Phrases Based on Moon (1997) and Lewis (2000)*

<b><i>collocations</i></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. adjective + noun (eg <i>tight schedule</i>)</li> <li>2. adjective + preposition (eg <i>pleased with</i>)</li> <li>3. verb + noun (eg <i>place order</i>)</li> <li>4. noun + noun (eg <i>catalogue and price list</i>)</li> <li>5. verb + adverb (eg <i>recommend strongly</i>)</li> <li>6. adverb + adjective (eg <i>absolutely proud of</i>)</li> <li>7. phrasal verb (a combination of verbs and adverbial or prepositional particles, the meaning of which is different from the meaning of its separate parts eg <i>make up, look forward to</i>)</li> </ol>
<b><i>multi-word expressions</i></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fixed phrases: sets of words that are frozen as sequence of words which cannot be used separately (eg <i>as a matter of fact, such as</i>)</li> <li>2. Semi-fixed phrases: strings that are used in discourse as structuring devices (eg <i>I am/we are pleased..., Would you mind...?, Could you please...?</i>)</li> <li>3. prepositional phrases: groups of words beginning with a preposition and its complement (eg <i>by the due date, with our customers, at an early date</i>)</li> </ol>

In this study, the classification of the categories was a combination of Lewis's (2000) categories on collocations and Moon's (1997) types of multi-word units. This is due to the fact that combining both classifications encompasses the widespread lexical phrases in consideration of their semantic, syntactical and pragmatic characteristics.

Under functional aspects, the lexical phrases were based on Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) divided into two main groups: social interactions and discourse devices. Social interactions present markers which describe social relations. Functions are dependent upon the purposes taking place such as *expressing politeness, requesting, offering, inquiring, suggesting, reasoning, asking an opinion, warning, and apologizing*.

The other functional aspect is discourse devices. They are phrases that connect the meaning and structure of the discourse such as *logical connectors*, *temporal connectors*, *exemplifiers*, *evaluators* or *summarizers*. The theories of politeness based on Levinson (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987) were considered in this study since politeness plays a major role in business letters. The lexical phrases are classified according to function in a way that will reflect the requirements of written business letters. They represent various categories of meaning and pragmatic characteristics of discourse and structure that exist in different types of situations occurring in business letters.

The lexical phrases appearing in this study were analyzed under form and function. Grammatical competence is related to syntactic rules and functions are associated with pragmatic competence. These two aspects are related to each other and both abilities are required in efficient language learning.

## **Procedures**

### **Data Collection**

The data were gained from two sources as follows:

#### **The online *BLC KWIC* concordancer**

The top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases selected from the BLC were identified with the help of N-grams (3-grams, 4-grams, and 5-grams). Phrases in the *BLC* concordance from N-grams overlap, and each gram also presents the occurrences of the top high-frequency phrases to at least 10 frequencies. Then, they were sorted into two main categories provided and presented in the coding sheet (see Appendix A).

#### **The textbooks**

The 254 model letters in the five selected textbooks were scanned and investigated manually in order to identify the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases. Then, the data were converted into electronic files by using the freeware concordance

program *Antconc 3.2.1w*. The program was used in this step since it could present the frequency of words/phrases. The source files were divided into five sub-files. Each sub-file contained the data of each textbook. The lexical phrases obtained were categorized into the coding sheet (see Appendix B) to differentiate those lexical phrases occurring in each textbook.

The top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases which were selected appeared with over 100 frequencies in the *BLC* concordancer and over 3 frequencies in the textbooks. The lexical phrases appearing less than the frequencies mentioned above were not considered.

### **Data Analysis**

This section contains an analysis of collected data from the online *BLC* concordancer and the five selected textbooks. Then, the corpora of these two sources were investigated for the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases based on the categories of lexical phrases identified.

In classifying the phrases, four raters (two native speaking ESL professionals and one expert in business correspondence and the researcher) did the analysis. To determine the inter-rater reliability of the study, *Kendall's W Test* was used to assess the trend of agreement among the four raters. *Kendall's W* tests for more than two dependent samples showed results ranging from 0 to 1. The value 1 refers to a complete agreement among/between the raters, and the value 0 refers to a complete disagreement for more than two dependent samples. The correlation coefficient among four raters was found at 0.965, which was very strong. It seemed that the line of demarcation between collocation, fixed phrase and prepositional phrase, e.g., *due to*, *in fact* and *with regard to* was in a very gray area. The first phrase *due to* was considered by two raters to be a fixed phrase, and by the other two including the researcher to be a collocation (*adjective + preposition*). The

second phrase *in fact* was considered by one rater a fixed phrase while the others a prepositional phrase. Similarly, the last phrase *with regard to* was considered by one rater a fixed phrase and the other three raters a prepositional phrase. However, the disagreement among four raters on the categorization of the lexical phrases was solved by categorizing them according to the criteria provided in the coding sheet. The phrase *due to* is considered a fixed phrase since the two words are frozen as a sequence of words which cannot be used separately otherwise the meaning is changed. The other two phrases beginning with a preposition are considered prepositional phrases since the phrase starts with the preposition *in*. The other lexical phrases did not cause any trouble since they met the criteria provided.

After the reliability of the coding had been established, an analysis of the data from the *BLC* concordancer and textbooks was conducted. Then, the results were presented in tabular form showing percentages for clarity and ease of access. The top 30 meaningful lexical phrases in both sources were analyzed in depth under two aspects: form based on the theories of Lewis's (2000) collocations and Moon's (1997) multi-word expressions and function based on the theories of politeness of Levinson (1983), Brown and Levinson (1987), including functional aspects depending on the context of Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992).

### **Summary of the Chapter**

In brief, this chapter has described the methodology of the present study. The study focused on the analysis of the occurrence of the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases in the *BLC* concordancer and textbooks. Under form, the criteria used in this study were divided into two main types: multi-word expression and collocations. To sort the lexical phrases into those categories, four experts including the researcher identified them. The compilation of the data was divided into two parts. The first part was from the

online *BLC* concordancer. The researcher examined the use of the lexical phrases through concordance lines which could be searched by entering the string of that phrase in the online *BLC* concordance, with the help of N-grams. The other part came from the five textbooks selected. The researcher searched for the lexical phrases manually and the data were collected and then converted into electronic files using the program *Antconc*. Then, the data from both sources were compared and analyzed quantitatively in terms of form or syntax and functions related to the use in context or different situations.



## CHAPTER IV

### Results of the Study

This chapter presents the results of the research. The quantitative results of the analysis are presented to answer the research questions discussed in detail below. The lexical phrases with their frequencies occurring in *BLC* concordancer and the five different textbooks are demonstrated in tables. First, Table 3 and Table 4 show the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases occurring in the *BLC* concordancer and the textbooks. Also, the tables show the percentages of these top lexical phrases. Then, Figure 2 and Figure 3 represent the occurrences of the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases from both sources through graphs. Table 5, Table 6 and Table 7 show contrast in use of the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases occurring in the *BLC* concordancer and the five textbooks. Finally, Table 8 to Table 59 demonstrate the patterns and their functions in both sources. Additional explanation relating to the findings is further presented in Chapter 5.

#### Quantitative Results

**Research Question 1.** What are the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases used in the online business letter corpus and in the textbooks?

**Results.** Table 3 and Table 4 present the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases, ranked according to the frequencies in the two sources. These top high-frequency lexical phrases contained two words e.g., *such as*, *interested in*, etc, three words e.g., *I am writing*, *in the past*, etc, and four words e.g., *as soon as possible*. The two-word clusters were found most frequently in the *BLC* concordancer and textbooks. Semi-fixed phrases were the most common 2-word cluster in the *BLC*, whereas in the textbooks, collocations

made the most 2-word cluster appearances. The patterns of lexical phrases found in both sources were categorized according to the categories provided and presented in the coding sheet which can be seen in Appendix A and Appendix B.

Table 3

*The Top 30 High-Frequency Lexical Phrases from the BLC Concordancer*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Lexical phrases</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Freq.</b>
1*	thank you	1	2464
2*	look forward to	2	1164
3*	we can...	3	1098
4*	I hope...	4	536
5*	this is...	5	520
6*	if you have...	6	441
7*	interested in	7	387
8*	we would like...	8	291
9*	please call...	9	288
10*	so that	10	277
11*	would you...?	11	271
12	as well as	12	248
13*	due to	13	226
14	such as	14	215
15	in the future	15	207
16	best wishes	16	191
17	I have enclosed...	17	179
18*	I'm sure...	18	169
19*	as soon as possible	19	166
20*	we are pleased...	20	149
21*	within + period of time	21	143
22*	from you soon	22	133
23	in fact	23	129
24	we are very...	24	129
25	in the past	25	125
26*	we regret...	26	122
27*	I am writing...	26	122
28	at this time	26	122
29*	place order	26	122
30	set up	27	118

\* recurrent in the BLC concordancer

Table 4

*The Top 30 High-Frequency Lexical Phrases from Five Textbooks*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Lexical phrases</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Freq.</b>
1*	thank you	1	83
2*	look forward to	2	37
3*	we can...	3	21
4*	we would like...	4	17
5*	I am writing...	5	13
6*	I hope...	5	13
7*	please send... (in BLC = please call)	6	12
8*	as soon as possible	6	12
9*	this is...	7	11
10*	interested in	8	10
11	catalogue and price list	9	9
12*	from you soon	9	9
13*	so that	10	8
14	further information	10	8
15*	due to	10	8
16*	we are sure... (in BLC = I am sure)	11	7
17	trade discount(s)	11	7
18*	place order	11	7
19*	I regret... (in BLC = we regret)	12	6
20*	within + period of time	12	6
21	before the end of...	12	6
22*	would you...?	13	5
23*	if you have...	13	5
24*	we are pleased...	13	5
25	with regard to	13	5
26	terms of payment	14	4
27	delivery date	14	4
28	make up	14	4
29	take action	14	4
30	as a result	14	4

\* recurrent in the five textbooks

Figure 2. The Comparison of Lexical Phrases Occurrence in the BLC and the Textbooks

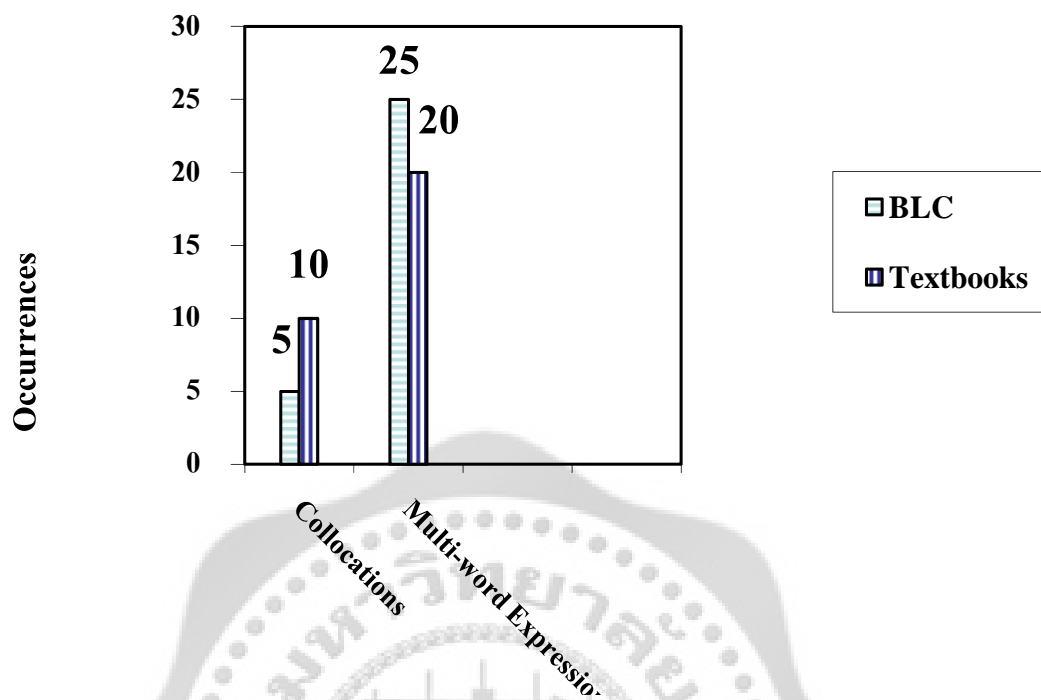


Figure 2 illustrates a number of lexical phrases in the *BLC* concordance and textbooks. Between two main categories of lexical phrases, the multi-word expressions had very significantly more occurrences with 25 lexical phrases in comparison to collocations with only 5 lexical phrases occurrences in the *BLC*, meaning there were five times more occurrences of lexical phrases than collocations. In the textbooks, there were 20 multi-word expressions and 10 collocations occurring. It seemed that writers frequently used multi-word expressions in writing business letters. However, the total collocations existing in the textbooks were higher than in the *BLC*. This means that, in the textbooks, collocations were more popular in use than in the *BLC*.

Figure 3. Types of Collocation in the BLC Concordancer and the Textbooks

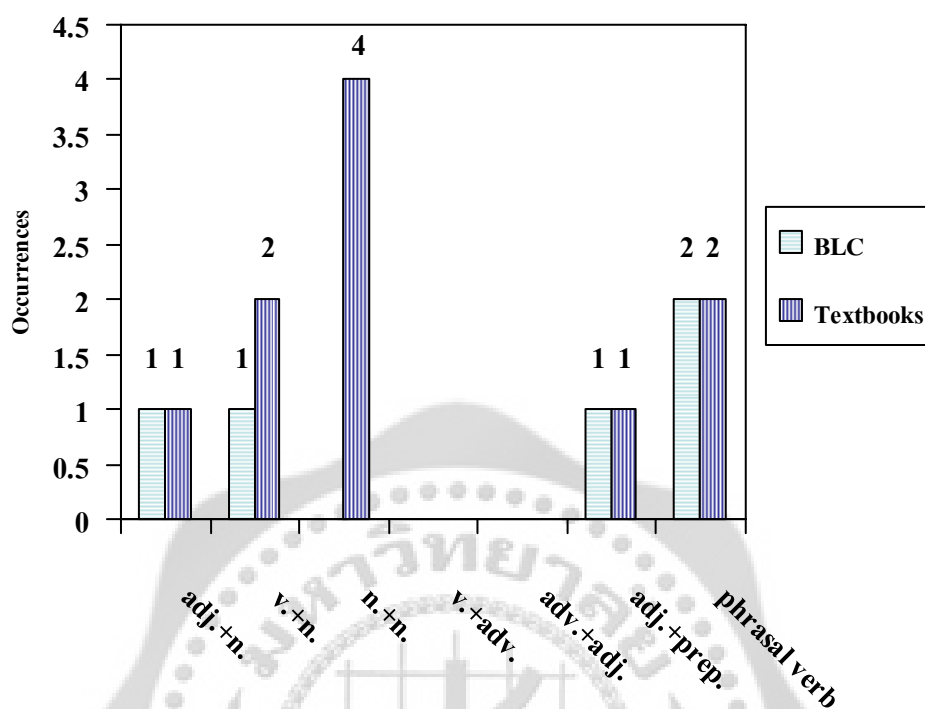
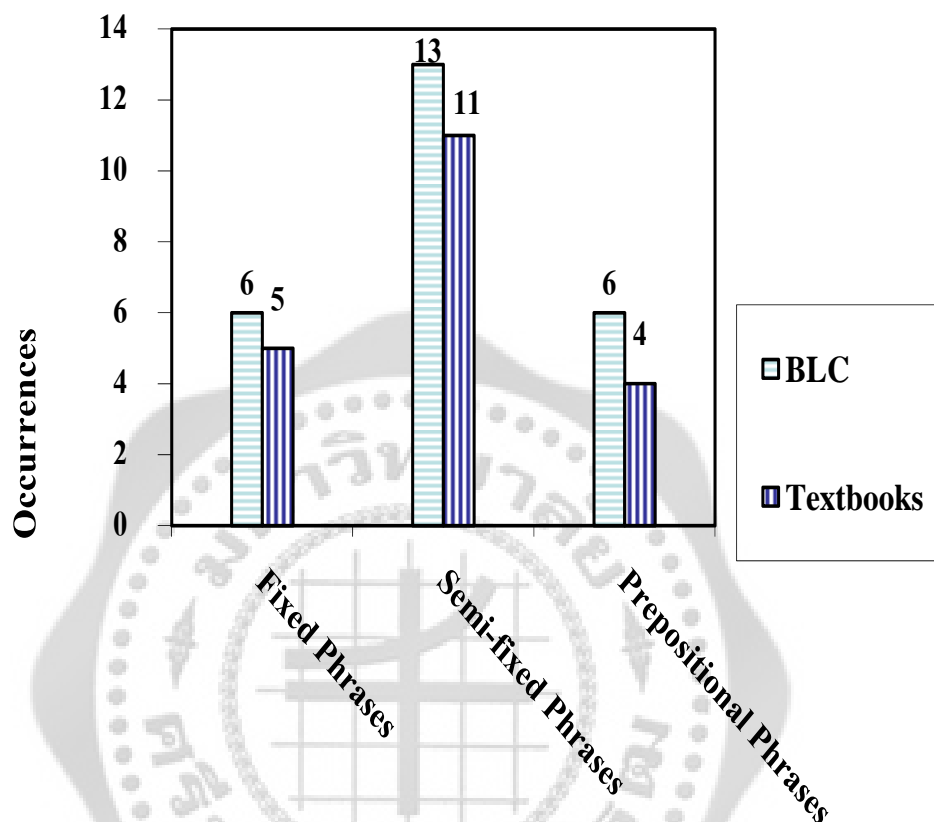


Figure 3 shows a comparison of the occurrences of collocations in the *BLC* concordancer and textbooks. It shows that four types of collocation occurred in both the *BLC* and textbooks: adjective + noun, verb + noun, adjective + preposition, and phrasal verb. In the *BLC*, phrasal verbs occurred most whereas in the textbooks the pattern noun + noun occurred most. The phrasal verbs had an equal number of occurrences in both sources, two each. Similarly, the patterns adjective + noun and adjective + preposition had an equal number of occurrences, one each. Most of them were lexical collocations. It was noted that the structures of verb + adverb and adverb + adjective had zero occurrences in both sources. It seemed that these two structures did not play an important role in business letters.

Figure 4. Types of Multi-word Expressions in the BLC Concordancer and the Textbooks



In the *BLC* and textbooks, semi-fixed phrases appeared most with 13 and 11 occurrences respectively. The three sub-types of multi-word expressions in the *BLC* had more occurrences than in the textbooks. However, the results on the occurrence of semi-fixed phrases, fixed phrases and prepositional phrases in both the *BLC* and textbooks were not much different. An interpretation was that semi-fixed phrases played an essential role in business letter writing since they had the most occurrences compared to other types of lexical phrases.

To conclude, multi-word expressions were found most between two main types of lexical phrases. Among seven sub-types of collocations, the phrasal verb appeared the highest in both the *BLC* and textbooks. The number of collocations appearing in the textbooks was higher than in the *BLC*. Among three sub-types of multi-word expressions, semi-fixed phrases constituted most of the patterns in both sources. This means that multi-word expressions play an important role in business letters and collocations gain more popularity in the textbooks than in the *BLC* according to the higher frequency of collocations.

The different sub-types of the lexical phrases appearing in the *BLC* and textbooks could be seen in Appendix A and Appendix B. Figures 5-11 in Appendix F present the occurrences of the two main types of lexical phrases in both sources through graphs.

**Research Question 2.** What are those top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases found in the online business letter corpus which are missing in the textbooks and vice versa?

**Results.** Tables 5-7 show the top lexical phrases with their rank in the *BLC* concordancer and in the textbooks as follows:

Table 5

*High-Frequency Lexical Phrases Appearing in the BLC and the textbooks*

Main Type of Lexical Phrase	Sub-type of Lexical Phrase	Rank	BLC Concordancer	Rank	Textbooks
collocation	phrasal verb	2	look forward to	2	look forward to
	adj. + prep.	7	interested in	8	interested in
	verb + noun	26	place order	11	place order
multi-word expression	fixed phrase	1	thank you	1	thank you
		10	so that	10	so that
		13	due to	10	due to
		19	as soon as possible	6	as soon as possible
	semi-fixed phrase	3	we can...	3	we can...
		4	I hope...	5	I hope...
		5	this is...	7	this is...
		6	if you have...	13	if you have...
		8	we would like...	4	we would like...
		9	please call...	6	please send...
prepositional phrase	11	would you...?	13	would you...?	
	18	I'm sure...	11	we are sure...	
	20	we are pleased...	13	we are pleased...	
	26	I am writing...	5	I am writing...	
	26	we regret...	12	I regret...	
	21	within...days	12	within...days	
	22	from you soon	9	from you soon	

*Note. Similar rank means equivalence in frequency*

Table 5 shows there were 20 lexical phrases which were recurrent in the *BLC* concordancer and textbooks. In terms of types, there were three collocations, four fixed phrases, 11 semi-fixed phrases and two prepositional phrases. The collocations consisted of adjective + preposition, verb + noun and phrasal verb. In both sources, the top three high-frequency lexical phrases *thank you*, *look forward to* and *we can...* were in similar ranks respectively. Moreover, in both sources, the rank of 10<sup>th</sup> (*so that*) was similar whereas the 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> ranks (*I hope...*, *this is...*, *if you have...*, *interested in*, *we would like...*, and *please call...*) were different in ranks, but in a similar set. This meant that these top 10 high-frequency lexical phrases were frequently used in business letters.

Table 6

*High-Frequency Lexical Phrases Appearing in the BLC Concordance Only*

Main Type of Lexical Phrase	Sub-type of Lexical Phrase	Rank	Phrase
collocation	phrasal verb	27	set up
	adjective + noun	16	best wishes
multi-word expression	semi-fixed phrases	17	I have/I've enclosed...
		24	we are very...
	fixed phrases	12	as well as
		14	such as
		15	in the future
	prepositional phrases	23	in fact
	25	in the past	
	26	at this time	

Table 6 shows the high-frequency lexical phrases which appeared only in the *BLC* concordancer. There were 10 lexical phrases found: two collocations (phrasal verb and adjective + noun), two semi-fixed phrases, two fixed phrases, and four prepositional phrases. The data show the pattern prepositional phrases occurring most with four prepositional phrases among other types of lexical phrases. Regarding the ranks, they varied from 12 to 30.

Table 7

*High-Frequency Lexical Phrases Appearing in the Textbooks Only*

Main Type of Lexical Phrase	Sub-type of Lexical Phrase	Rank	Phrase
collocation	noun + noun	9	catalogue and price list
	adjective + noun	10	further information
	noun + noun	11	trade discount(s)
	noun + noun	14	terms of payment
	noun + noun	14	delivery date(s)
	verb + noun	14	take action
	phrasal verb	14	make up
multi-word expression	fixed phrase	14	as a result
	prepositional phrases	12	before the end of...
		13	with regard to

*Note. Similar rank means equivalence in frequency*

Table 7 shows the high-frequency lexical phrases appearing only in the textbooks. There were 10 lexical phrases consisting of seven collocations, one fixed phrase and two prepositional phrases, but no semi-fixed phrases were found. The structures of these collocations were noun + noun, verb + noun, adjective + noun and phrasal verb. Regarding their ranks, they ranged from 9 to 14, and the collocations in the 14<sup>th</sup> rank were repeated four times. This meant that these collocations were frequently used in the textbooks.

It can be concluded that a total of 12 collocations appeared in the *BLC* and textbooks. Three collocations *look forward to*, *interested in*, and *place...order* were recurrent in both sources. Two collocations *set up* and *best wishes* occurred in the *BLC* only. And, seven collocations *catalogue and price list*, *further information*, *trade discount*, *terms of payment*, *delivery date*, *take action* and *make up* appeared in the textbooks only. There was a total of 28 multi-word expressions occurring in the *BLC* and textbooks. Seven fixed phrases: *thank you*, *so that*, *due to*, *as soon as possible*, *as well as*, *such as* and *as a result* appeared in both sources. The first four were recurrent in the *BLC* and textbooks, two occurred only in the *BLC* and the other one occurred only in the textbooks. Semi-fixed phrases appeared 13 patterns: *we can...*, *I hope...*, *this is...*, *if you have...*, *we would like...*, *please call...*, *would you...?*, *I'm sure...*, *we are pleased...*, *I am writing...*, *we regret...*, *I have enclosed...*, and *we are very...* Eleven semi-fixed phrases were recurrent in the *BLC* and textbooks and the other two occurred only in the *BLC*. Prepositional phrases occurred eight patterns: *within + period*, *from you soon*, *in the future*, *in fact*, *in the past*, *at this time*, *before the end of*, and *with regard to*. The first two were recurrent in the *BLC* and textbooks, the following four occurred only in the *BLC* and the other two occurred in the textbooks only. Therefore, 20 lexical phrases were recurrent

in the *BLC* and textbooks. In recurrent lexical phrases, semi-fixed phrases occurred most in both sources. This means that semi-fixed phrases play an important role in business letters. The lexical phrases appearing only in the *BLC* were 10 lexical phrases and the other 10 lexical phrases occurred only in the textbooks. Regarding lexical phrases which were not repeated, in the *BLC* concordancer, prepositional phrases occurred most, and in the textbooks, the pattern noun + noun of collocations occurred most. This means that the authors of the textbooks give importance to collocations, especially compound nouns as a major feature in business letters.

**Research Question 3.** How different are those high-frequency lexical phrases shared by both the online business letter corpus and by the textbooks in terms of form and function?

**Results.** In terms of form, the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases occurring in the *BLC* and textbooks were analyzed under two main types: Lewis's (2000) collocations and Moon's (1997) multi-word expressions. In terms of function, the taxonomy of discourse functions of lexical phrases described by Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) and Levinson (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987) on the theories of politeness were applied in this study.

**Collocations.** There are a total of 12 collocations in the *BLC* and textbooks. Most of the collocations occurring in both sources did not show differences in terms of form and function. However, there were 5 collocations found presenting different aspects in terms of grammatical structure and the context/situations.

**1. look forward to.** This phrase is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the *BLC* and textbooks with the frequencies of 1,164 and 37 respectively. It is considered a phrasal verb functioning as a polite request. In other words, it expresses positive politeness. The examples of the

phrasal verb *look forward to* appearing in the *BLC* were different from those occurring in the textbooks under following points.

### ***I. Addition***

**a. *adverb*.** Adverbs are added to emphasize what the writer is stating.

In the *BLC* only, the use of an adverb as an intensifier such as *eagerly*, *keenly*, and *very much* is added to the phrasal verb *look forward to*. For example, ...*in the lobby punctually at 12.30 and look forward most keenly to the occasion...*, ...*I look forward eagerly to your future with us, I look forward very much to seeing you here or in the States in...* The adverbs were used to add more degree of anticipation.

**b. *certain phrases*.** In the *BLC*, certain phrases can be used to make the sentence more polite. They can be added to the phrasal verb *look forward to* to show that a writer is anticipating something from a reader. In the textbooks, there were no instances of these kinds polite phrases. The examples of these phrases are *We look forward with pleasure to serving you once again*, or...*we look forward with (great) interest to hearing from you (BLC)*. These phrases make the sentence sound more polite.

### ***II. Variation***

**a. *verb*.** The use of a verb in the gerund with the phrasal verb *look forward to* occurs frequently in the *BLC*. In the textbooks, there are only three verbs: *hearing*, *receiving* and *seeing* appearing as gerunds, whereas in the *BLC* many verbs in gerund are found such as *Thank you very much for past business and we look forward to filling your orders again*, *We look forward to discussing our products in greater...*, *I can count on you*, and *I look forward to calling on you*, *I do look forward to visiting with you and do hope that we...*, and so on.

**b. *word choice*.** The word choice in the textbooks is more limited than

in the *BLC* for the phrasal verb *look forward to*. When a writer wanted to imply that he/she wanted to do business with a reader in the future, the gerund was used in the *BLC* such as *We look forward to **continuing** to serve you, I can count on you, and I look forward to **co-operating** with you in any way I can, we look forward to **contacting** with you in the future and send..., ...will prove popular in your country, and look forward to **trading** with you, and so on.*

*c. situation/context.* The phrasal verb *look forward to* occurring in both the *BLC* and textbooks presents the function of requesting such as *...appreciate delivery within the next six weeks, and look forward to your acknowledgement (An Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence)* or *We look forward to a prompt reply (BLC)*. However, the examples in the *BLC* also present the function of offering; for example, *We value your business and look forward to assisting you whenever possible*. No examples of this function were found in the textbooks.

**III. Rule breaking.** In the *BLC*, the pattern *look forward to* is generally grammatically used with a gerund or noun/noun phrase. The gerund should follow *to* and a noun/noun phrase should act as an object of the preposition *to*. However, there are two examples of this phrase used with the infinitive i.e., *I look forward to **contact** with you in the future and send...* and *I look forward to **see** you soon*. The writer may have been confused with the rule of the phrasal verb with the infinitive *to*.

In brief, the phrasal verb *look forward to* is used in business letter writing to show positive politeness used when the writer wants to inform the receiver that he/she is waiting for something. In the *BLC* and textbooks, this pattern is also found as a fragment. However, only two examples (out of 7 examples) in the textbooks show the phrase used as a fragment, and it seems to be used when the writer and reader know each other well. In

the *BLC*, there are various adverbs joined to this phrase, which shows more politeness. Also, there is more variation of word choice used in the *BLC* than in the textbooks. Thus, learners studying with the textbooks only see a limited number of examples in use. In the *BLC*, rule breaking was found, whereas in the textbooks, all 37 examples of this phrasal verb are used grammatically. However, in the *BLC*, there were only 2 out of 1,164 examples (0.17%) that were found ungrammatical.

**2. make up.** This phrase was found in the textbooks with four frequencies, ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in the textbooks only. It is a phrasal verb. It connotes positive because of its positive meaning. The preposition *up* shows logical relationship of an object to the rest of the sentence; therefore, the meanings were found variously. The examples in the *BLC* show the variation in meanings as follows.

**Meaning variation.** The examples of the phrasal verb *make up* in the *BLC* showed more variation in meaning than those occurring in the textbooks. The following shows this phrasal verb in different meanings in both the *BLC* and textbooks according to *the Cambridge Dictionary of Contemporary English*.

Table 8

*Different Meanings of the Phrasal verb “make up”*

Meanings	Lexical Phrases in the <i>BLC</i>	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
arrange or prepare	...how long will it take an order to be <i>made up</i> and shipped once it has been received?	Let us have a copy of the commercial invoice when you <i>made it up</i> .
compensate for something bad with something good in order to make a situation better	..., and ensure that next year's profits <i>make up for</i> this year's losses.	You will be pleased to know that how “Sunshine” electric irons were dispatched to you today to <i>make up for</i> the missing quantity of your order.

*(Continued)*

Meanings	Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
consist of	...and is <i>made up of</i> the copy invoices enclosed.	Your account now has an outstanding balance of \$3,541.46 and is <i>made up of</i> the copy invoices enclosed.
constitute	Foreign capital corporations in Japan <i>make up</i> the Liaison Association for Foreign...	-
work some extra hours because you have previously taken some time off work	Although you <i>make up</i> your time, it is important that you arrange... (+ time)	-
decide on something	There is no need for you to <i>make up your mind</i> right now. (+ the noun <i>mind</i> )	-
(especially British English) add to an amount in order to bring it up to the level that is needed	If you agree to this we are prepared to <i>make our order up to</i> \$2000 (+ amount)	-

The data in Table 8 demonstrate the meanings of the first three examples found in both sources. The meaning appearing most in both sources is to arrange or prepare. The other four meanings of this phrasal verb do not exist in the textbooks. Some writers may be confused with the phrasal verbs *make up* and *set up*. In the *BLC*, the latter appeared with 118 frequencies, ranked 27<sup>th</sup> whereas none was found in the textbooks. If the phrasal verb *set up* occurs with the preposition *for*, which means to arrange something such as ... *we recommend the letter of credit be **set up for** no less than \$125,000*, whereas the preposition *for* used with the phrasal verb *make up* meaning to compensate for something. It is used in negative situations with the nouns *loss*, *absence*, and *miss* such as ..., and *ensure that next year's profits **make up for** this year's losses*. In the *BLC*, the phrasal verb *set up* mostly occurs with the nouns *appointment* and *meeting/conference* such as *Please contact my office to **set up** a meeting* or *Please call to **set up** an appointment for a conference*. If the writer establishes a system or way of working

formally, he/she uses the phrasal verb *set up* such as *We will **set up** a more convenient filing system to...* In the *BLC*, most examples of the phrasal verb *set up* demonstrate the meaning *to create or arrange something* while the several meanings of the phrasal verb *make up* occurring in the *BLC* are used differently according to the context (as shown in Table 8).

In brief, in the *BLC*, the examples of the phrasal verb *make up* are more diverse in meanings when compared to those occurring in the textbooks. In the textbooks, no examples of the phrasal verb *set up* are found. This may be because there are not many sentence examples shown in the textbooks; therefore, some situations do not appear in model letters.

**3. interested in.** This pattern had 387 frequencies, ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in the *BLC* and ten frequencies, ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the textbooks. It is a grammatical collocation consisting of the adjective *interested* with a passive meaning plus the preposition *in*. It expresses positive politeness since its meaning presents the writer's positive feeling when the pattern is used. The pattern is used in the situation when the writer wants to show his/her eagerness on something to the readers. The examples in the *BLC* demonstrate the various adverbs added to the pattern whereas those examples occurring in the textbooks were less used.

**I. Adverb addition.** In the *BLC*, various adverbs *sincerely*, *especially*, *particularly*, *extremely* and *keenly* were added to this pattern. The examples of these adverbs are *...industries, we are **keenly** interested in your centrifuge equipment, I am **sincerely** interested in exploring how I can be a part of the..., I am **specifically** interested in the following information..., I'm still **greatly** interested in the job and hope I'm still in the ...* and *They are **particularly** interested in the procedures for receiving, storing...*

These adverbs have different meanings, but they are added to the pattern *interested in* to emphasize the writer's attention. In the textbooks, none of the 10 frequencies found show the use of adverb with this pattern.

**II. Modal verb variation.** The examples of the pattern *interested in* taken from the textbooks are used only with the modal verb *may*, whereas in the BLC there is more variety of modal verb use. For example, the modal verb *would* in the example *we would be very interested in explaining our program to you and...* expresses that a writer intends to do something. The modal verb *might* in the example *...a group of producers that might be interested in our products, a group I had never heard...* shows uncertainty. The modal verb *should* in the example *However, should you be interested in acquiring smaller properties, please...* shows a condition when something is likely or expected to happen (=if you are). The modal verb *will* in the example *I'm sure you will be interested in this new model* indicating the confidence of the writer on something. The use of modal verbs is essential since each modal verb can imply more deeply what the writer thinks or hopes.

In brief, the pattern *interested in* is used when referring to someone's curiosity about something. It consists of the adjective *interested* with a passive meaning plus the preposition *in*. In both the BLC and textbooks, its frames are followed by a noun/noun phrase and/or gerund, but in the BLC, positive adverbs are variously presented with this pattern as added emphasis of the writer. Most of the examples shown in both sources are in the present tense. This may be because the writers want to express their current feeling of interest.

**4. place...order.** This pattern occurred 122 frequencies, ranked 26<sup>th</sup> in the BLC and seven frequencies, ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the textbooks. It comprises verb + noun

considered a lexical collocation. It has positive connotation since it implies that the writer wants to do business with the other party. When both of them meet the agreement and then the goods will be delivered. In this study, it could be surmised that writers substantially used the pattern when they want to order goods or products through business letters. They use the pattern in a context which suggests that the letter is not the first contact between the company and the dealer since placing an order usually occurs after the dealer offers terms of payment or any condition and both of them agree or accept that. The examples in the *BLC* show the varieties of adjective and noun use as follows.

**Adjective/noun variation.** In the textbooks, the intervening word between the verb *place* and the noun *order* are the adjectives *new*, *substantial*, and *large*. In the *BLC*, the intervening words/phrases are in the form of adjectives such as *further*, *initial*, *major*, *regular*, *immediate*, *formal*, *firm*, and also in the form of nouns such as *bulk*, *rush*, *trial*, and *number of*. When the writers want to purchase goods in a large quantity, they can apply the adjective *substantial* or *major* or the noun *bulk* or *number of* in the sentences; for example, *If they are of standard we require, we will place a **substantial** order (An Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence)* or *If you place **bulk** orders, you can receive up to 25% off the...(BLC)*. If the writers want the goods or service to be supplied fast, they can include the adjective *immediate* or the noun *rush* in the sentence; for example, *...we placed a **rush** order for several models on April 1 asking for...(BLC)* or *...I regret for placing an **immediate** order with... (BLC)*.

In sum, the phrase *place...order* implies positive connotation between two parties because they have an agreement that the goods will be delivered. The verb *place* collocated with the noun *order* most in both the *BLC* and textbooks. Normally, the pattern *place...order* containing the intervening word/phrase varies from a determiner to an

adjective. In both sources, the pattern *place an order* appears in the singular form most and the pattern *place orders* is found most when it occurs in the plural form without any intervening word. In the *BLC*, the intervening words/phrases have more variation than those occurring in the textbooks.

**5. take...action.** This pattern appeared four frequencies, ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases in the textbooks only. It is considered a lexical collocation consisting of verb + noun. It shows negative connotation since it is used when two parties have disagreement. In the *BLC*, the word choices were various than in the textbooks as follows.

**Word choice.** In the textbooks, there are two adjectives *legal* and *immediate*, which occur with this phrase, while in the *BLC*, the intervening words vary from a determiner e.g., *this* or *any* to an adjective e.g., *hasty*, *further*, *severe*, *drastic*, and so on. The examples taken from the *BLC* are shown as follows:

...and trust that you will not take **any hasty** action against Peerless (= done in a hurry)  
 ...all due respect, we do not feel able to take **any further** action on this occasion.

...that we are not forced to take **this drastic** action. (= severe and sudden)

...the future, if necessary, we will take **severe disciplinary** action up to and including...  
 (= action that people do to punish someone seriously)

The data show the determiners and adjectives used as intervening words between the verb *take* and the noun *action*. The adjectives used with this pattern are mostly negative. It should be noted that the intervening words imply official action that is related to the law. In the textbooks, the adjective *legal* was used most as an intervening word, whereas in the *BLC* the determiner *this* was found most. The examples of these intervening words are *Unless we hear from you within seven days, we will be forced to take legal action (Company to Company)* or *We take this action with regret, but as the*

*goods were late delivered...(BLC)*. It is noted that although the phrase *take this action* appears most in the *BLC*, it cannot be explained what *this* refers to since the concordance had limited words in each line.

In both the *BLC* and textbooks, the writers use the two adjectives *legal* and *immediate* considerably. The phrase *take...action* is used as a warning in a letter of complaint when the receiver has ignored an agreement with the writer. In other words, the phrase is used when two parties have had a disagreement. The selection of word choices used with this pattern is essential since the situation is concerned with the law.

**Multi-word expressions.** There are a total of 28 multi-word expressions in the *BLC* and textbooks. They were divided into three sub-types: fixed phrase, semi-fixed phrase and prepositional phrase. In the *BLC* and textbooks, there were 6 multi-word expressions showing the different aspects in terms of grammar and context.

**1. thank you.** This phrase was in the 1<sup>st</sup> rank with 2,464 frequencies in the *BLC* and 83 frequencies in the textbooks. It is considered a fixed phrase. It is frequently found with the preposition *for* in both the *BLC* and textbooks. It implies positive connotation since the writers want to express gratitude to the reader politely. The difference of this phrase in the *BLC* and textbooks are shown as follows.

**Adverb addition.** An adverb used as an intensifier boosts the expression *thank you* to achieve positive politeness. In the textbooks, the intervening words placed between *thank you* and *for* are the adverbs e.g., *very much* and *(once) again*; for example, *Thank you very much for your inquiry* (*An Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence*) or *Once again thank you for your generous support* (*Techniques in Writing Business Letters and Email*). In the *BLC*, rather than the adverbs used in the textbooks, the intervening words *so much (indeed)*, *in advance*, *(most) sincerely*, *warmly*,

*kindly*, and *heartily* are used. The examples of these adverbs taken from the *BLC* are shown as follows:

*I want to **sincerely** thank you for your support, past and present.*  
*I thank you **in advance** for any help you may give us...*  
*May I thank you **most heartily**, also on behalf of my...*  
***Once again**, thank you **so much** for taking time out of your business...*  
*...selling trip to Germany and want to thank you **warmly** for the skilful and generous way...*  
*Thank you **most kindly** for your letter of congratulations regarding...*

The data above present the various uses of adverbs in different functions: opening of a letter (the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and last examples), closing as an ending signal (the 2<sup>nd</sup> example), and repetition before ending the letter (the 4<sup>th</sup> example). It seems that the adverb e.g., *most* or *again* is added when the writers want to express more degree of gratitude to the readers. This means that the *BLC* contains considerably more data than the textbooks, which explains the abundance of intensifiers in this source.

In brief, the pattern *thank you* is mainly used in the form of the verb, followed by the preposition *for* (1,369 out of 2,464 frequencies or 55.56% in the *BLC* and 71 out of 83 frequencies or 85.54% in the textbooks). In both sources, the data present the pattern *thank you (...)* followed by two frames of a *noun/noun phrase* and *v.ing/gerund*. This expression maintains social interaction when someone has done something for the other party. It functions as the opening of the letter, closing and repetition before ending the letter.

**2. as well as.** This phrase appeared with 248 frequencies, ranked 12<sup>th</sup>, and only in the *BLC*. It is a fixed phrase used as a conjunction to show addition. It plays a conjunctive role of the word/phrase preceding and after it. It has a similar meaning to *not only...but also* and *in addition to*. The phrase *as well as* is used when writers want to mention another item connected with the subject they are discussing. This pattern is one

of the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases in the *BLC*, but it did not appear in the textbooks. In the textbooks, the phrase *in addition to* is used instead; for example, *we would expect a quantity discount in addition to a 20% trade discount off net list prices* (Ashley, 2003). Its structure appeared in the *BLC* as follows.

**Parallel structure.** The pattern *as well as* appearing in the *BLC* demonstrates the phrase following it as parallel to that which precedes it. No example of this phrase was found in the textbooks. Its use is similar to the phrases *not only...but also*, and *in addition to*. The following examples present the structure of this phrase.

No doubt they will **appreciate**, *as well as* **be encouraged** by, the time and trouble... = will+v.  
 ...discuss how your programs are **working**, *as well as* **being** on hand to support any public... = v.ing  
 ... ate the fine quality of our **merchandise** *as well as* our wide **selection** of contemporary and... = noun  
 ...**for** future overseas projects *as well as* **for** the above plant. = preposition *for*  
 Thank you for being so helpful **to** us, *as well as* **to** the referred colleague. = preposition *to*  
 ...it took time **to write and prepare** *as well as* **to read and comprehend** the reports... = infinitive  
 Working with you is always **productive**, *as well as* **enjoyable**. = adjective  
 But, for **her sake** *as well as* **yours**, I guess I'm willing to share. = possessive

As shown in the data, when *as well as* is collocated with the adverb *as*, this phrase acts as a transitional word to introduce the other clause for comparison. For example, if the infinitive is used in the main clause, the verbal phrase is also in the infinitive form so it is parallel in structure (the 6<sup>th</sup> example).

In brief, in the *BLC*, the phrase *as well as* has 248 examples and *in addition to* has 38 examples. In the textbooks, only two examples of *in addition to* are found. It seems that in the *BLC*, writers prefer using *as well as* to *in addition to* in business letter writing.

**3. I hope...** This phrase appeared with 526 frequencies, ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the *BLC*. In the textbooks, the expression was in the 5<sup>th</sup> rank with 13 frequencies. It is considered a semi-fixed phrase signaling intention. It functions as a polite request with positive

connotation. The phrase in the *BLC* is different from those examples in the textbooks in structural pattern and modal verb use.

### *Variation*

*a. structure.* In the *BLC* and textbooks, the verb *hope* is found with the pronoun *I* more often than *we*. The expression can be used in the negative form; for example, ..., so ***I hope*** that you will ***not*** have to wait much longer (*Company to Company*) or ***I hope*** *I have not* caused you too much aggravation (*BLC*). It is used at the beginning of the sentence as a clause and can be followed by another clause or phrase. The clause following is used in the future tense since the writers want something to happen in the future. However, in only the *BLC*, there are a few examples showing the use of this expression in the past tense; for example, *I hope that you had a safe journey back to Italy*. It shows the writer's expectation that hopes everything has gone well although the situation has already passed. The following table shows the use of this expression in different structural patterns in the *BLC* and textbooks.

Table 9

#### *Different Patterns of "I hope" in the Affirmative*

Structural Pattern	Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks	Frequency and Percentage	
			BLC	Textbooks
I hope + <b>clause</b> ( <i>that</i> is left out)	Please accept my sincere apologies, and <i>I hope</i> I may hear from you soon.	<i>I hope</i> this information is helpful for you.	376 (71.48%)	8 (61.54%)
I hope + <b>that-clause</b>	<i>I hope that</i> we can find a way to support each of...	<i>I hope that</i> this information is of use to you.	81 (15.40%)	5 (38.46%)
I hope + <b>infinitive to</b>	<i>I hope to</i> become part of your team.	-	64 (12.17%)	-

*(Continued)*

Structural Pattern	Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks	Frequency and Percentage	
			BLC	Textbooks
...which I hope... (as a phrase)	...enclosed a specifications sheet, which <i>I hope</i> will answer some of your questions.	-	3 (0.57%)	-
I hope so (as a formulae)	Indeed <i>I hope so</i> because we would be pleased to be in a...	-	2 (0.38%)	-

*Note. Percentage in the BLC is calculated from the total of 526 frequencies and percentage in the textbooks is calculated from the total of 13 frequencies*

According to the data, in both the *BLC* and textbooks, the pattern *I hope* is followed most by a that-clause, which can be left out. The other structural patterns occur only in the *BLC*. For example, the 3<sup>rd</sup> example of the infinitive *to* implies a request in the future. The last example shows the use of the pattern *I hope* with *so* in the situation when the writer does not want to repeat something mentioned earlier.

**b. modal verb.** The expression *I hope* is followed by a clause containing the use of a modal verb. In the textbooks, there is only one modal verb *will* used while in the *BLC* more modal verbs are used depending on the context in which the writer is writing. The following examples show the use of modal verb in the *BLC* and textbooks:

Table 10

Pattern “*I hope + modal verb*”

Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases In the Textbooks	Frequency and Percentage	
		BLC	Textbooks
I hope I <i>will</i> receive an order from you.	..., and I hope you <i>will</i> look into the situation to see that....	226 (42.97%)	5 (38.46%)
I hope I <i>can</i> help them maintain that tradition...	-	39 (7.41%)	-
Please accept my sincere apologies, and I hope I <i>may</i> hear from you soon.	-	5 (0.95%)	-
..., but I hope these suggestions <i>might</i> bear fruit in the future.	-	1 (0.19%)	-

Table 10 presents the expression *I hope* followed by the modal verbs *will*, *can* and *may* respectively. The first example shows the modal verb *will* used most with this expression in both the *BLC* and textbooks. This may be because when this expression is used, the writers want something to be true or happen in the future. However, the data in the *BLC* also present the use of the other modal verbs. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> example, the modal verb *can* indicates the possibility that the writer intends to do something for the reader. It is related to the writer’s helpful feeling. The modal verbs *may* and *might*, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> examples, indicate that something will possibly happen, but the writer cannot be certain.

In brief, the structural patterns of this phrase are mostly used with a that-clause, which can be left out. The tense used in the following clause after the expression varies in the *BLC*. The verb *hope* cannot stand alone in a sentence, other than in the expression *I hope so*. In the *BLC*, there are different kinds of modal verbs used in the clause following the expression, and they also state the writer’s intention. It can be said

that the expression *I hope* is added into a sentence to make it sound more polite. It is considered positive politeness since the writers expect things will go well in the future.

**4. if you have...** This expression had 441 frequencies, ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the *BLC* and five frequencies, ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the textbooks. It is considered a semi-fixed phrase showing a polite request and indirectness. It is used to state an open condition functioning as a probable action or result in the future. The pattern appears in the *BLC* shows the varieties in the following points.

**Variation.**

**a. modal verb.** Syntactically, it is considered an if-clause fragment in a conditional sentence-Type I (if-clause with simple present tense, main clauses with will-future tense or infinitive or modal + infinitive). In the *BLC*, the main clauses vary in the use of modal verbs. The examples taken from the *BLC* and textbooks are shown as follows:

Table 11

Pattern “if you have...” with Different Modal Verbs

Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
<i>If you have</i> a reason for not paying them, let us know...	Please contact me <i>if you have</i> any questions.
I <i>will</i> telephone Tuesday to see <i>if you have</i> any questions about the PRODUCT.	-
<i>If you have</i> a need, I <i>could</i> make a valuable management...	-
<i>If you have</i> access to the Internet, you <i>can</i> also support...	-
During my leave, <i>if you have</i> urgent questions, you <i>may</i> feel free to...	-

The examples in the table show the use of the if-clause according to the syntactic rule mentioned earlier. The pattern *if you have...* can be at the beginning or in the middle of the sentence. The 1<sup>st</sup> example of this pattern is frequently found in both the *BLC* and textbooks. The word *please* is added in the main clause to make the sentence sound more polite. The other examples in the *BLC* represent the main clauses using the different modal verbs *will*, *could*, *can* and *may*. These modal verbs indicate a probable action or result in the future. They are used in situations when writers want to suggest a possibility of something happening or when they want to make suggestions or give advice.

**b. situation.** Most sentences appearing in both the *BLC* and textbooks function as requests. In the *BLC*, some sentences found also imply negotiations e.g., *If you have not yet paid, please pay the minimum rate...* and promises e.g., *I will telephone on Tuesday to see if you have any questions about the product.*

**c. word choice.** In the *BLC* only, the patterns *should you have* and *if you should have* can be substituted for *if you have* e.g., *Please do not hesitate to telephone should you have any questions or wish additional information* or *If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to...* The pattern *should you have* is used in a subordinate clause starting with *should*. Swan (2005) explains that the use of *should* in the phrase *should you have* comes from the complete form *if you should have*. He comments that the use of *should* after *if* makes the condition seem less probable. He also notes that the optional omission of *if* is a possibility in British English. According to the data shown in the *BLC*, the phrases *should you have* and *if you should have* are very similar in use. The phrase *if you should have* is found 3 times and *should you have* appears 11 times. It appears that writers prefer using *if you have* to *should you have/if you should have*. Writers use these patterns interchangeably when they want to state a condition.

The expression *if you have...* appeared as an if-clause indicating a condition. It is considered a subordinate clause connected to the main clause. Its structure is similar to *should you have*. In this study, the noun *question* in the plural occurred most with the phrase. It is used in a sentence as a closing remark before ending a letter. Also, it has various functions i.e. requesting, making suggestions, giving advice, promises, and negotiations depending on the context.

**5. we are very...** This phrase was ranked 24<sup>th</sup> with 129 frequencies in the *BLC* while in the textbooks the phrase *I am very...* had two frequencies appearing with the pronoun *I* only. The expression is considered a semi-fixed expression showing politeness with the adverb *very* added to the sentence. The phrases following this expression are mostly positive in meaning. In the *BLC*, the adjectives used have more varieties than those in the textbooks.

**Adjective variation.** In the textbooks, there are two examples of the expression *I am very* appearing with the two adjectives *interested* and *worried* i.e. *I am very **interested** in your product and would like to...* and *I am very **worried** about the effect of the explosion at Perfecto on our sales (Company to Company)*. In the *BLC*, the adjective mostly used with the adverb *very* is *sorry*, followed by the adjectives *pleased* and *happy* respectively. In the textbooks, the expression *I/we regret* was rather found than *I am/ we are very sorry*. This means that the authors of the textbooks prefer using the verb *regret* in place of the adjective *sorry* (six frequencies of the pattern *I/we regret* were found in the textbooks) since the verb *regret* seems more formal. In the textbooks, only the adverb *very* was found, whereas in the *BLC* various adverbs related to the adjectives were used. The following table presents the use of adverbs with the top three adjectives *sorry*, *pleased* and *happy* appearing in the *BLC*.

Table 12

*Adverbs Used with the Three Adjectives in the BLC*

Adjectives	BLC	Frequency
sorry	We are <i>very sorry</i> to hear about the problems you have been having...	138
	We are <i>terribly sorry</i> , but we find it impossible to attend the...	11
	We are <i>extremely sorry</i> to learn that the < PRODUCTS	5
	I'm <i>awfully sorry</i> for this last-minute request, but I hope...	3
	We are <i>indeed sorry</i> to learn of the difficulty you have had...	1
pleased	If the above is acceptable to you, we are <i>very pleased</i> to submit our revised price as...	124
	We were <i>so pleased</i> to receive in today's mail your inquiry...	17
	We are <i>most pleased</i> at the rather large order you made yesterday...	12
	We are <i>quite pleased</i> with the result and hope you will like...	8
	We are <i>extremely pleased</i> you are happy with the success of our...	6
	I am <i>indeed pleased</i> to accept your invitation to...	5
	I am <i>awfully pleased</i> you did.	1
happy	We are <i>very happy</i> to inform you that we have published our...	74
	We are <i>most happy</i> to accept all of your suggestions.	7
	We are <i>always happy</i> to provide any information for your...	4
	...and I'm <i>quite happy</i> that you should quote whatever you like...	2
	We are <i>extremely happy</i> as it means that all the hard work we...	1

According to the data, the adverb *very* is added for intensity or degree of feeling. It appears before an adjective to make it stronger. The adjective *sorry* is considered negative politeness since it implies an unhappy or unpleasant situation. In some situations, writers may do something which dissatisfies receivers, and they want to

make them feel better; therefore, the adverb *very* is used to add emphasis to the feeling of sympathy. The other two adjectives are used as positive politeness since their meaning expresses a positive feeling. The adverbs shown in Table 12 can be used with both positive and negative adjectives. However, it should be noted that the adverb *awfully*, which has a negative connotation, can be used with the positive adjective *pleased*, which has a positive effect. More examples taken from the *BLC* are *Since we are **terribly good** at collections, we have...* or *She is **terribly excited** about the trip as you can...* These two adverbs can be used with positive adjectives when writers want to emphasize the intensity of particular situations. However, it is considered rather informal to use the negative adverb with positive adjective.

In short, the pronoun *we* is used rather than *I* in the *BLC*, but it is the opposite in the textbooks. The adjectives following the expression *we are very...* in the *BLC* are much more varied. The top three adjectives appearing with this expression are *sorry*, *pleased* and *happy* respectively, whereas in the textbooks only two adjectives *interested* and *worried* are found. The selection of the adjectives used relates to the situations in which the letters are written.

**6. would you...?** This pattern occurred with 271 frequencies in the *BLC*, ranked 11<sup>th</sup> and five frequencies, ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the textbooks. It is a semi-fixed phrase expressing politeness in the sentence. Its structure is interrogative, but it is not a real question. In the *BLC*, the contexts of this phrase's usage are more diverse than those in the textbooks as follows:

*Situations related to structural variation.* In the textbooks, all five examples of the expression *would you...?* are used with the word *please* to express requests more politely; for example, ***Please would you** return the whole consignment to us*

*within the next...?* or **Would you please** send the shipping documents and your sight draft...? The pattern is similar to the pattern *could you...?* In the *BLC*, the pattern *could you...?* is found 102 frequencies fewer than *would you...?*, which has 271 frequencies. In the *BLC*, other structural patterns are shown as follows:

Table 13

*Pattern “would you...?” in the Other Two Main Patterns*

Structural Pattern	Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Frequency and Percentage
<b>would you like...?</b>	<i>Would you like</i> us to ship your order C.O.D. without further... (+ indirect object + infinitive <i>to</i> )	21 (7.75%)
	<i>Would you like</i> to reply to him? (+ infinitive <i>to</i> )	9 (3.32%)
<b>would you mind...?</b>	<i>Would you mind</i> giving me a call with the name of a... (+ v.ing)	6 (2.21%)
	<i>Would you mind</i> if I quoted the job with... (+ if-clause)	2 (0.74%)

*Note. Percentage in the BLC is calculated from the total of 271 frequencies*

According to the data, the 1<sup>st</sup> example of the pattern *would you like...?* is used by the writer in a situation of offering. He/she would like to hear the reader's opinion on what he/she is stating. Its structural pattern is found with an indirect object most when it is used with the infinitive *to*. Regarding the pattern *would you mind...?*, this pattern is similar in use as the pattern *do you mind...?* In the *BLC*, only the pattern *would you mind...?* is used. In the *BLC*, the pattern *would you mind + v.ing* is used as a request. And, the only two examples of the pattern *would you mind + if-clause* are grammatically used with the past tense in a situation of asking permission.

Table 14

*Patterns “would you...?” Preceding with Question Words*

<b>Structural Pattern</b>	<b>Lexical Phrases in the BLC</b>	<b>Frequency and Percentage</b>
<b>how + would you like...?</b>	<i>How would you like to cut your distribution costs by...</i>	14 (5.17%)
<b>what + would you...?</b>	<i>What would you concentrate on improving?</i>	6 (2.21%)
<b>how + would you...?</b>	<i>How would you feel about doing a brief weekly segment...</i>	4 (1.48%)
<b>which + would you...?</b>	<i>Which would you prefer to solve a problem once,...</i>	1 (0.37%)
<b>how much + would you...?</b>	<i>How much would you be willing to pay for such a program?</i>	1 (0.37%)

Table 14 shows the expression *would you...?* used with the three question words *how*, *what*, and *which*. The data show the pattern *how would you like...?* occurs most among patterns. These patterns are applied to situations in which the writers would like to ask the readers if they would like to do something. If the situation is concerned with feelings, the question word *how* is preferred to *what*. When an amount of money is concerned, the question word *how much* is used.

In brief, the pattern *would you...?* is a more polite form of *Do you want...?* The pattern mostly occurs in the *BLC* and textbooks to express requests. In the *BLC*, when the expression *would you* occurs with *like*, it is used in offers. In business letters, when it occurs with *mind*, it expresses a situation of asking for an opinion.

The comparison of the other lexical phrases occurring in the *BLC* and textbooks could be seen in Appendix G.

All in all, most of the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases found in both the *BLC* and textbooks were not different in terms of form and function. The structural pattern found in both sources is used grammatically and functions related to the context were used

politely in business letters. There were a total of 11 lexical phrases showing the differences between the two sources. The examples of most patterns found in both sources were grammatical. However, in the *BLC*, there were two ungrammatical examples of the phrasal verb *look forward to* which used the infinitive *to*. However, that is considered a surface structure error and most examples shown are used syntactically correct. In the *BLC*, the use of intensifiers like adjectives is common, with the pattern verb + noun as intervening words. The adverbs were added to the adjective to emphasize a stronger degree. The choice of the adverbs used is related to the adjectives since some adverbs can be used with positive and negative words. However, since a business letter is formal and diplomatic, the words/phrases appearing must be courteous and tactful.

In the *BLC*, the adjectives and adverbs appearing were much more varied than those occurring in the textbooks. The use of various modal verbs appears in the *BLC* to indicate possibility in situations. There were many more examples of lexical phrases with diverse word choice in the *BLC* than in the textbooks. The selection of word choices is essential since specific words/phrases are suitable/acceptable for particular situations e.g., the pattern *take...action* requires intervening word/phrase like *legal*, *immediate* or *drastic* which is a specialized term used for this pattern. In terms of context, the lexical phrases shown in the *BLC* can function in more than one situation e.g., *would you like...?* expressing a request and *would you mind if...?* is used in asking for an opinion. The same pattern may function in more than one situation e.g., *if you have...* expressing a request or an offer and the pattern *we can...* can function as an offer or giving a suggestion.

## Summary of the Chapter

In summary, this chapter has presented the quantitative results of the research. The top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases appearing in the *BLC* concordancer and textbooks were compared and analyzed in terms of form and function under the categories provided. It was found that two-word clusters occurred most frequently in the *BLC* concordancer and textbooks. In the *BLC* and textbooks, there were 20 recurrent lexical phrases, and 10 lexical phrases occurring only in the *BLC* and 10 lexical phrases occurring only in the textbooks. Between the two main categories of lexical phrases, multi-word expressions had more occurrences in comparison to collocations in both sources. However, in the textbooks, collocations occurred more frequently than in the *BLC*. There were seven sub-types of collocations in both sources, which fell into four types: *adjective + noun*, *verb + noun*, *adjective + preposition*, and *phrasal verb*, whereas the structures of *verb + adverb* and *adverb + adjective* did not appear. Phrasal verbs occurred most in the *BLC* while noun + noun occurred most in the textbooks. Among the three sub-types of multi-word expressions, semi-fixed phrases appeared most in both sources.

The results show most of the lexical phrases appearing in the *BLC* and textbooks express politeness and indirectness. The word *please* and modal verbs are added for politeness. Functions were related to different context/situations. For example, requesting (*look forward to*, *I hope...*, *we would like...*, *please call...*, *would you +v. in base form...?*, *would you mind + v.ing...?*), inquiring (*we would like...*, *would you...?*, *I am writing*), promising (*we can...*, *we would like...*), offering (*we can...*, *I hope...*, *if you have...*, *we would like...*, *would you like...?*), asking for an opinion (*would you mind if...?*), *How/What/Which would you (like)...?*, *What I am/we are pleased..., I am writing...*,

*interested in*), advising (*we would like..., if you have...*), opening (*I am writing...*), clarifying (*this is...*), reasoning (*so that, due to, as a result*), notifying time (*in the future, as soon as possible, within + period..., from you soon, in the past, at this time, before the end of + point of time*), apologizing or refusing (*I am/we are very..., I/we regret...*). Some expressions served more than one function in sentences. The expressions starting with the question words *how, what* and *which* were frequently found in the *BLC*. These structures are in the form of questions; however, they function as requests or asking for an opinion, depending on the context/situations. In the *BLC*, the method of boosting through intensifiers was substantially found to make the readers feel more impressed or sympathetic in the case of requests. Many positive politeness expressions were found in both sources. However, in the *BLC*, more negative politeness expressions were found to preserve the negative face of receivers/readers such as *regret, sorry* and *apologize*. In both the *BLC* and textbooks, the pronouns *I* and *we* did not differ in number. Logical connectors expressing cause and effect were found most in this study. They are formal discourse markers used mainly at the beginning of a phrase or clause to express different relationships between ideas. Prepositional phrases were found in high number in both sources. Most of them were markers of temporal sequence.

Chapter 5 summarizes the results and provides the discussion and implications, including recommendations for the further studies.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

The research results are discussed, then implications, limitations of the study and suggestions for further studies are included.

#### Summary of the Study

This research investigated the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases occurring in the *BLC* and textbooks. Those lexical phrases that occurred in the online *BLC* concordancer and five English university textbooks were compared and analyzed under form and function, which were seen as equally essential features of linguistic items. To analyze the form, the lexical phrases were classified into two main types based on Moon's (1997) taxonomy on multi-word expressions and Lewis's (1997) categories on collocations. The collocations were divided into seven sub-types, and multi-word expressions were divided into three sub-types. The major purpose of the study was to examine whether the top 30 lexical phrases found in both sources are worth teaching to learners in business correspondence courses.

In terms of form, among the 30 lexical phrases, ten lexical phrases were either found only in the *BLC* or textbooks and the other 20 lexical phrases were recurrent in both sources. Four lexical phrases, *thank you*, *look forward to*, *we can* and *so that*, ranked similarly in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> respectively and the other 16 lexical phrases ranked in different order. This means that there were 20 lexical phrases frequently used in business letter writing. In the *BLC*, the top 30 lexical phrases comprised five collocations and 25 multi-word expressions. In the textbooks, there were ten collocations and 20 multi-word expressions. Multi-word expressions occurred most in both sources. These multi-word

expressions are used consistently in business letters. Among the seven types of collocations, noun + noun appeared most in the textbooks, followed by verb + noun and phrasal verb in the equal number. In the *BLC*, phrasal verbs appeared most and the other sub-types occurred equally. The pattern noun + noun did not appear in the *BLC* and the two patterns of verb + adverb and adverb + adjective were not found in the list of the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases in both sources.

In both sources, the lexical phrases *place...order(s)* and *take...action* were found to be the only two collocations with the pattern verb + noun. The adjective + preposition *interested in* occurred in only one pattern but was the most frequently occurring collocation. In this study the phrasal verbs were *look forward to*, *make up* and *set up*, and they were the most common collocates found. Among the three sub-types of multi-word expressions, semi-fixed phrases occurred most in both sources. The patterns *thank you* as a fixed phrase and *we can...* as a semi-fixed phrase appeared with the most frequencies in both sources. The prepositional phrase *in the future* was used most in the *BLC*, and in the textbooks, *from you soon* appeared most. Most of the prepositional phrases (6 out of 8 lexical phrases) were related to time. The prepositional phrases stated in both sources did not specify a certain time.

The theories of politeness based on Levinson (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987) and also from Nattinger and DeCarrico's (1992) functional aspects were adopted when considering the functional role of lexical phrases. The analysis shows that the lexical phrases were used in various situations of requesting, inquiring, offering, asking for an opinion, giving suggestions, warnings, reasoning, apologizing, refusing and indicating time. In the *BLC* and textbooks, politeness strategies, which fall under the branch of pragmatics, were expressed through indirectness, formal words and requests. In

this study, politeness was presented in both positive and negative aspects. Positive politeness was demonstrated through positive phrases such as *look forward to*, *interested in*, and *we are pleased*. The use of positive connotations was frequently found in both sources to impress readers. Negative politeness was expressed through modal verbs and the phrases *we regret...*, and *I am sorry*. Negative politeness was used to preserve the negative face of readers. Negative connotations should be avoided since they may offend readers' feelings. Also, adjectives and adverbs as intensifiers were used appropriately in both kinds of politeness and in both sources, but they appeared considerably more in the *BLC* than in the textbooks.

In the textbooks, classifying lexical phrases into different categories included a range of perspectives from material developers. Lexical phrases serve various functions in business discourse, and their functions are based on the different situational demands and requirements of the written communicative task.

### Discussion

Discussions of the results are presented under 3 major topics: (1) the analysis of the seven sub-types of collocations and three sub-types of multi-word expressions in the *BLC* and textbooks, (2) the analysis of the pragmatic functions in the *BLC* and textbooks, and (3) the evaluation of the *BLC* concordance and textbooks as tools.

#### **The analysis of the seven patterns of collocations and the three patterns of multi-word expressions in the *BLC* and textbooks**

Among seven sub-types of collocations: adjective + noun, adjective + preposition, verb + noun, noun + noun, verb + adverb, adverb + adjective and phrasal verb (based on Lewis, 2000), phrasal verbs were found most in the *BLC*, whereas the pattern noun + noun appeared the most in the textbooks. The pattern of noun + noun receives much attention

from the authors/publishers since it forms a particular pattern used in business context such as *catalogue and price list, delivery date, terms of payment and trade discount(s)*.

In the textbooks, noun + noun and phrasal verbs were the main types of collocation used in business letters. According to Moon (1997) and Lewis (1993), phrasal verbs and noun + noun play an important role in written language. Moon (1997) provides supporting evidence that phrasal verbs are one of the main categories of lexical phrases commonly used by native speakers of English. Writers know the appropriate situations of when and how to use these phrases in their business letters. In the *BLC*, the phrasal verb *take action* frequently appears in claim letters/adjustments. It is a technical term used as a warning and a writer should know the impact of using this phrase. It connotes a negative aspect since it can offend the addressee. A response to a complaint should be concerned and courteous.

Not every type of collocation appeared in the *BLC* and textbooks. The results showed the absence of two patterns, verb + adverb and adverb + adjective, in both sources. An explanation is that the use of adverbs and adjectives in the *BLC* and textbooks appears as intervening words between the verb and noun like *place substantial orders* and *take immediate action*. In the textbooks, a possible explanation is that adverbs may be considered exaggerated modifiers when they are used to add information to the action or event in business letters. However, the use of adverbs depends on the context/situations and whether it will create more positive feeling to the readers. For example, the pattern *we are extremely sorry to learn that...* can create rewarding business relations since the reader feels that the writer is being empathetic. In this study, it was also found that most patterns occurring in the *BLC* and textbooks were lexical collocations i.e. verb + noun like *take...action*, noun + noun like *delivery date*, and adjective + noun like *best wishes* except for the pattern adjective + preposition like *interested in*. This

finding is in agreement with Benson (1986), who indicated that lexical collocations take an important part in word combination in language.

The reason why authors/publishers of the textbooks give the importance to collocations can be supported by Pedersen (1995). He states that collocations play an essential role in the description of the specific language usage. The use of higher collocations in the textbooks was relevant in written discourse for they were chosen to complete a particular context. Channell (1981) states that awareness of collocations is very beneficial in increasing communicative power and enabling learners to be aware of language used in writing.

In the *BLC* and textbooks, multi-word expressions consisted of fixed phrases, semi-fixed phrases and prepositional phrases. Multi-word expressions occurred more than collocations in both sources. Among the three sub-types of multi-word expressions based on Moon (1997), semi-fixed phrases were found most in both sources, followed by fixed phrases. The total number of semi-fixed phrases is double in both the *BLC* and textbooks when compared with fixed phrases and prepositional phrases. Since semi-fixed phrases can be combined with a selection of word choices appropriate to the situation. Willis (2006) maintains that writers use a high proportion of fixed and semi-fixed phrases in sentences which make their writing more efficient.

The semi-fixed expressions, which appeared in both the *BLC* and textbooks, were used similarly grammatically. Most of them occurred in present tenses to express actions in the present (*I am sure/certain... or we are pleased...*), a current state (*I am writing...*), an occurrence in the future (*I hope...*) or an action that started in the past and continues into the present (*I have enclosed...*). Cook (1989) points out that the present and future tenses used in the sample letters in English both refer to the future. For example, the pattern *I look forward to seeing you soon* is used in the present tense but it implies a

future request or *The products will be dispatched to you before the end of March* shows the use of passive form in the future tense. Semi-fixed phrases also appeared in various forms of affirmative phrases (e.g., *I hope, we would like, I am sure*), imperatives (*please call...*), questions (*would you...?*), negative connotative phrases (*I/we regret...*) and if-clauses (*if you have...*). Widdowson (1989) and Cowie (1992) stress the importance of such partially fixed phrases by stating that they serve communicative needs and enable individuals to reuse and create units. The other two types of multi-word expression, fixed phrases and prepositional phrases, were not different in number in the *BLC* and textbooks. In both sources, most of the fixed phrases e.g., *so that, due to, and as well as* and prepositional phrases e.g., *with regard to* and *in fact* were used as connectors.

In this study, the pattern verb + noun *place... order* is suggested to avoid by the two textbooks (Geffner, 2007; Sawangvaroros, 2006) and substitute for the verb *order* to reduce redundancies. However, this type of collocation was frequently found in the *BLC* and the other textbooks as one of the top 30 high-frequencies lexical phrases. The connector *due to*, which appeared as one of the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases in both sources, is considered a redundant expression in the two textbooks (Geffner, 2007; Sawangvaroros, 2006) and the word *because* is suggested as a substitute. This is similar to the connector *as a result*, which is also viewed as a redundant expression in the two textbooks (Sawangvavoros, 2006; Ashley, 2003) and should use *because* as a substitute. Similarly, the prepositional phrase *with regard to* was substituted for *about* in two textbooks (Sawangvavoros, 2006; Geffner, 2007). The prepositional phrase *at this time* was found only in the *BLC* and it was suggested to learners by the two textbooks (Sawangvavoros, 2006; Geffner, 2007) to avoid it and use *now* instead. Janis (1966) suggests avoiding expressions with too many words such as *with reference to, in connection with, etc.* in business letters. This means that writers should pay attention to

the selection of phrases used in business letters since redundant and wordy expressions should be avoided in business letters.

Most of the 10 lexical phrases which were found only in the *BLC* were prepositional phrases. In the textbooks, the prepositional phrases *in the future* and *in the past* do not appear in use. This may be because they are substituted for the particular time by stating the certain day or month and the phrase *at this time* is substituted for the word *now*. The phrase *best wishes* is not found in the textbooks since the situations and words or phrases used should be more formal and this phrase could be regularly used when the reader is well known to the writer. For the phrase *I have/I've enclosed* found in the textbooks, the verb *send* is substituted for the verb *enclose* and the abbreviation *Enc.* or *Encl.* is used at the end of the letter to indicate that the writer put something in the same envelope as the letter. The lexical phrases occurring most in the textbooks only is the pattern of noun + noun. The authors of the textbooks pay attention to the pattern *noun + noun* since they are the technical terms frequently used in business letters.

In summary, the collocations and multi-word expressions in this study were divided into different sub-types depending on their structural forms and characteristics. In the textbooks, the differences in the numbers of lexical phrases display how each material developer applied the language differently since each developer had their own choice of lexical phrases and diverse presentation styles related to business letters.

### **The analysis of the pragmatic functions**

Pragmatics plays an essential role in business correspondence. Crawford (1998) maintains that discourse analysis should be the means to determine the type of information that should be used to develop materials in business writing. The data taken from the *BLC* illustrate the specific functions of certain words and expressions in particular types of texts, whereas the useful expressions for business letter writing in the textbooks were

suggested by the author(s) of each textbook. However, the five textbooks were concerned with the presentation of standard formats for business correspondence and did not directly discuss the quality of information or how to correctly interpret real business social situations. The expressions published in the textbooks originated from the authors/publishers' opinion and expertise on types of expressions to be used in business letters.

The language used in business letters is unique, making it different from other types of written texts. It should be formal and polite. Law (2009) affirms that in order to achieve set objectives in business English writing, it is very important to follow the principles of politeness. In the *BLC* and textbooks, most semi-fixed phrases and sub-types of collocation expressed both positive and negative politeness. As Brown and Levinson (1978) propose, politeness strategies can be divided into two aspects: positive and negative.

For positive politeness strategies, the expressions frequently found in the examples for this study were *look forward to, I am /we are sure..., we would like..., please + action verb, I/we hope..., and I/we are pleased...* The semi-fixed expressions *we can..., we would like..., please..., I/we hope..., and would you...?* also form positive suggestions. Burd (2007) adds that positive suggestions make ideas more believable or acceptable, which then lead to logical conclusions. Connotations also appeared as examples in the *BLC* and textbooks. The phrases with positive connotations were *we are pleased..., I am/we are sure..., and interested in*. Negative words/phrases may generate resistance and other unfavorable reactions and should be used carefully. The words used to deny such as *not, refuse, unable* are not found in the list of 30 top high-frequency lexical phrases in

both the *BLC* and textbooks. However, the phrases *I/we regret* and *we are/I am very sorry*, which have a softer tone, are found instead.

Negative politeness expressions appeared in the *BLC* and textbooks such as *I/we regret...*, *if you have...*, and *I/we hope...* The expression *would you...?* is used as an indirect strategy. Its structure is in the form of a question; however it functions as a polite request because it starts with the modal verb *would*. Celce-Murcia and Larson-freeman (1999) point out that modal verbs such as *would*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *should* and *can* are frequently used to make the tone of the sentence more relaxed and pleasant. It seems clear that the *BLC* and textbooks use this pattern to show indirectness. For example, *If you have further questions, please feel free to contact us* or *I hope to hear from you soon*. This can be explained by Upton and Conner (2001) that negative politeness normally appears in business letters since it is not considered as impolite language. For example, *We are indeed sorry to learn of the difficulty you have had...* or *I regret that we had no reply to our letter*.

There are other lexical phrases appearing in the *BLC* and textbooks which express politeness. For example, the use of phrasal verb *look forward to* can present a polite request. It mostly appears before ending the letter such as *I look forward to hearing from you soon*. The other patterns expressing requests such as *Please call in and see us; we are confident that you...*, *I hope to meet you in Japan next time* and *If you have a reason for not paying them, please let us know either....* The function of inquiring is proposed through the patterns like *we would like consulting help to decide whether we should...*, *If you have any problems opening the file, let us know* and *Not having heard from you, I am writing as a matter of urgency, to ask you to...* The pattern *we can* functions as an offer with/without the verb *offer* such as *However, we can offer you another model of equally high quality...; We can send you some display pieces by messenger; Would you like to*

close more sales on the initial sale...hope; **If you have** any further question, please contact me as soon as possible; or I thought you might be **interested in** a few facts about Techtaun's products... In asking for an opinion, the pattern **Would you mind if I quoted the job with...** is presented, whereas offering is demonstrated through the patterns. Giving suggestions can be presented through the logical connectors such as *Please write to me so that we will discuss the idea further* or *...may be able to give you suggestion with regard to the type of products that we would need...* In warning situations, the example **I hope you will look into the situation before starting the meeting to see that...** or *We had no choice but to take this action because of your...* could be applied... In reasoning, the patterns *due to, as a result* and *this is* can be used, for example, *...the deletion of a few lines that we made due to space limitations* or *As a result of the meeting, I think we both communicate...* or **This is** because our suppliers recently increased the price by 15%. Notifying time can be represented through the prepositional phrases *in the future, as soon as possible, within..., from you soon, in the past, at this time, and before the end of*. For example, *..., you will certainly receive the goods within a week; We will, in the future, address all invoices to your accounting...; In the past six month;*, *our office supplies budget...; The only other option I can suggest at this time is to find another business currently...* Also, apologizing can be presented through the example **We are very sorry to hear about the problems you have been having...** or *..., I regret that we must turn down...*

In this study, the lexical phrases used explicitly showed various functions, and some could be repeated in the other situations. As McKay (2002) states the similar form of any utterance can be different in its illocutionary force related to the context in which it occurs. This demonstrates the flexibility of lexical phrases.

Connectors and intensifiers also appeared in the *BLC* and textbooks. In this study, phrase conjunctions expressed different relationships between ideas: for example, making

a link with previous discourse by referring back to what was said before e.g., *If you have any further questions **with regard to** the contract, or anything else, please...*, making what you say stronger e.g., ***In fact**, there already have been requests that you...*, saying what the result of something is e.g., *It occurred **as a result of** staff shortage during this unusually busy season and...*, introducing the result of the situation e.g., ***So that** our meeting can be most productive, I have...*, saying why something is the case e.g., ***Due to** your efforts, our second quarter shows...*, and adding information or arguments to what has already been said e.g., *...are the fine quality of our merchandise **as well as** our wide selection of contemporary and....* The discourse connector with the highest occurrence in the BLC and textbooks was *so that*. The results showed most fixed phrases in this study were related to cause and effect (*due to, so that, as a result*). This can be explained that in delicate situations, it is essential for the addresser to provide a reason and a solution to the other party so that this will not affect the atmosphere of doing business.

Almost all of the prepositional phrases which appeared in this study were related to time (*in the past, in the future, at this time, within + period, before the end of*). This is because stating a specific time for any situation is important in business transactions. Most of the prepositional phrases show a specified time e.g., *in the past few weeks, at this time, or in the near future*. Crystal (1987) supports that conjunctive relations are important components in business letters because they demonstrate such notions as contrast, result and time.

Boosting is a method commonly used in business letter writing and found through the patterns *very much* and *so much*, which were the most common boosts used in the BLC and textbooks. These two patterns demonstrate a neutral intensifier. Woo-hyun (1994) indicated the use of adverbs such as *very, so, and a lot* add more emphasis and effect in order to make the readers feel more impressed or sympathetic in the case of being

requested to do something. In the *BLC*, there was more variety of adverb usage such as *kindly, hopefully, extremely, absolutely, indeed, quite, always, awfully* and *terribly* used as intensifiers than those occurring in the textbooks. The last two adverbs can show positive and negative meaning. Most of adverbs used in business letters show positive meaning and they are added to make the sentence more polite.

In sum, it is clear that the lexical phrases appearing in this study performed various functions and some could be repeated in more than one context. The strategies of positive and negative politeness were frequently used in the *BLC* and textbooks, including the use of phrase connectors, which mostly expressed cause and effect. Intensifiers were also used to add emphasis on what has been mentioned earlier.

### **The evaluation of the BLC and textbooks**

In this study, the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases occurring in the *BLC* concordancer and the five selected textbooks were analyzed. Various perspectives on lexical phrase usage found in business letters surveyed from the two sources are presented below.

**Accessible information.** Using the *BLC* corpus is not complex since the program is user-friendly and provides guidelines for beginners. A user enters a word/phrase into the concordancer and then its examples appear in concordance lines. This helps learners access data more easily than spending time searching for words/phrases from textbooks. The *BLC* concordance computes and displays significant collocates of the search term in the corpus. Learners can see how frequently each phrase appears in use. In the *BLC*, a search program called *Bigram Plus* for any two-word combination with intervening words is also available for learners. The N-grams consist of 3 to 5 characters with frequency tables, which are useful for learners since they can study words in groups and see the frequencies represented. Sinclair (1991) supports the use of a corpus in linguistics. He

states, “the concordance is at the center of corpus linguistic because it gives access to many important language patterns in texts” (p. 170). If there are too many examples available, the *BLC* concordance can help narrow the patterns of co-occurrence in the concordance lines with the keyword situated in the middle of the extracts.

**Authentic data.** Some textbooks present the authors or publishers’ opinions on language usage. For example, the phrases *place...order*, *due to*, *as a result of* or *at this time* were considered obsolete in some textbooks. Therefore, no examples of those patterns were found in the textbooks. However, in some of the textbooks, and also in the *BLC*, those phrases were still used. According to some textbooks, the phrasal verb *place...order* and the pattern *due to* are redundant and they are suggested that they be avoided. However, they were found in the list of the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases occurring in both the *BLC* and textbooks. The pattern *as a result of* is also suggested to be avoided by some textbooks; however, it is found in two textbooks (e.g., Littlejohn, 2005; Parisuthiman, 2005). The prepositional phrase *at this time* should also be avoided; however, it is in the list of the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases in the *BLC*, but no examples of this prepositional phrase was found in the textbooks. Since the *BLC* corpus presents authentic data, this means that in real-life situations these patterns were still used and is still popular among writers because of the frequencies shown. Only one textbook (Parisuthiman, 2005) indicated the source of the examples used, and none of them mentioned using data from a corpus.

In the *BLC*, some examples contained surface structure errors. For example, the pattern *...just been updated on your situation and would like say that I am very sorry for your recent...* or *...I have enclosed **an invoice** as well as **completing** your tax...* The pattern *would like* is followed by infinitive *to*, while the structure used in the second example should be paralleled. However, ungrammatical patterns were found. Among the

top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases appearing in the *BLC*, only three lexical phrases appeared ungrammatically. In the *BLC*, the data were authentic and used in real-life situations; therefore, grammatical mistakes would be more common since the textbooks were proofread and edited by the authors before publishing. However, Gavioli and Zanettin (1997) point out that a corpus acts as a continual source of additional raw material, and they consider that the greatest benefit. A corpus can display multi-word “chunks” that learners can use to produce texts that sound more natural in the target language, where fluency is more difficult to achieve.

**Clusters/ready-made units.** The *BLC* concordancer has proved very useful for finding information about collocates or multi-word units, especially when adverbs used as intensifiers collocate with adjectives or verbs for particular situations. The *KWIC* display provides a rich source of adjectives to choose from. The prepositions appearing in the *BLC* are diverse and these provide users with the knowledge of prepositions which occur with other words in different situations. When searching for collocates, the corpus often leads to somewhat unexpected discoveries, which is beneficial to language learning. Stubbs (1996) points out that the sudden shift in methodology, the combination of computers, software and large corpora allows linguists, language teachers and learners to see phenomenon and discover patterns which were not previously suspected. Learning words that co-occur together helps achieve accuracy and fluency in written communication (Zimmerman, 1997). Also, Kennedy (1998) supports using a corpus for ESP, noting the importance of teaching collocations in ESP and illustrating how easily and abundantly corpora provide natural texts that may be used to create language-learning materials for specialized classrooms. It is beneficial to learn words/phrases of ESP in chunks or phrases since it is easier to remember them as ready-made expressions.

**Sentence examples.** The *BLC* concordancer is a specialized corpus of business letters. The data are related to the language used in business letters containing more than one million words. It provides various examples which are appropriate for the situations writers face in creating business letters. Writers can select lexical phrases appropriate to the situation they face. When studying those lexical phrases from the textbooks, learners adopt them without knowing how to use them in sentences. They do not recognize the different usage patterns since there are only a few samples in the textbooks. In the study, although the examples demonstrated in the textbooks were not as varied when compared with those which occurred in the *BLC*, they were in complete sentences, not excerpts like those in the *BLC*. For example, some contexts appearing in the *BLC* did not have clear meanings, and thus might not be sufficient for beginner learners to infer. It seemed that showing a short piece of writing could make trouble for learners since the context surrounding it was not sufficient to interpret the rest of the data. In the *BLC*, the examples showed their use in extracts and not always full sentences. Therefore, some examples taken from the *BLC* concordance may not provide sufficient data for learners to understand the meaning of a phrase in certain contexts.

**Implicit and explicit learning.** Grammatical rules and useful words/expressions were recommended and provided for learners explicitly in the textbooks. However, when studying through a corpus, learners have to be self-directed in searching since the concordance lines do not provide explanation on grammar and lexis. In this study, many different verb tenses were used in the *BLC*. A learner would have to study and examine which tense is suitable for different situations. The use of punctuation marks before or after the phrases or connectors can also be studied from the various examples appearing in the *BLC*. Further, learners can take note of the use of personal pronouns in the *BLC* through concordance lines such as *I*, *we*, and *you*. These pronouns help the writer to avoid

using passive verbs and make the style more direct and clear, whereas in the textbooks, the authors/publishers directly inform readers of the grammatical rules and pronoun references.

For understanding the function of expressions, learners have to examine and analyze the context/situations presented through concordance lines by themselves. Using a corpus encourages implicit language learning. Analyzing corpus data can raise learners' awareness of the language, making language acquisition more successful. But learners must have discipline to undertake this approach. Benson (2001) claims that although there are different perspectives on the field of self-learning, many researchers agree that this method plays the most important role in acquiring authentic language. The traditional teaching styles based on textbooks disconnects learners from real language since the language they learn in the classroom is not from authentic data.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for EFL language classrooms. They are described as follows:

1. It would be useful if a teacher selected high-frequency lexical phrases to teach or emphasize in the classroom. Frequency of occurrence in online corpus should be used to influence instruction since they contain authentic data. Learning high-frequency lexical phrases is an effective approach which can help learners further their language acquisition.

2. There is a need to raise lexical phrase awareness, especially in ESP courses. Since lexical phrases are one of the major means to success in ESP pedagogy, the classroom should be focused on teaching them. This is supported by Lewis (1997), who states that lexical phrases plays essential role in ESP since business language is *specialized* and unique. The combination of words into patterns is essential in order to be

able to comprehend those patterns. Learning ready-made expressions/units helps learners reduce the difficulty in understanding the grammatical rules of those patterns. In other words, this method makes learners memorize the patterns in sequence rather than separate words easier.

3. A corpus-based approach allows one to obtain empirical data from language analyses in an efficient and effective manner. Using corpora in the classroom will provide an authentic medium to motivate student learning. Corpora can provide authentic data with which to develop textbooks. It also provides justification for teaching more specialized language from specialized corpora to university graduate students, which they may not receive in their ESP course textbooks.

4. Since the data in corpora are authentic, there may be mistakes. The data appearing in textbooks were edited and proved by the author/publishers. In the *BLC*, there were two examples of the phrasal verb *look forward to* used ungrammatically with the infinitive *to*. However, most of the patterns (928 examples) evaluated were grammatical. If a corpus is used in the classroom, teachers can provide explanations for any mistakes found.

5. In business letter writing courses, the teaching of grammar or other language features is essential since understanding syntax helps learners recognize the context/situations in written language. Situations are related to syntactical rules; therefore, when situations change, language use also changes. If sentences are written ungrammatically, the interpretation of the message is also affected. Many examples of language usage in business letter writing are provided in concordance lines: the use of *if*-clause in conditional sentences, sentence connectors, modal verbs to indicate the possibility of the situation, the use of intensifiers like adjectives and adverbs.

6. Since pragmatics plays an important role in business letters, there is a need to raise pragmatic awareness, in addition to grammatical awareness, among learners.

Pragmatic awareness, such as positive and negative politeness strategies and indirectness strategies, encourages learners to value it as one of the major means to success in business letter writing. Paying attention to different politeness devices leads learners understand the use of language in different types of letters. Learning the language through contexts facilitates learning a language since language usage is related to the context/situations. Careful consideration should be paid in the textbooks, not only to grammatical use but also function in the pragmatic sense. More examples of those related patterns should be presented in model letters in order to make learners understand their use in various situations. A corpus-based approach may be the solution to finding unlimited real-world scenarios and lexical phrases in context, as well as pragmatically-loaded contexts that may be used in the ESP classroom.

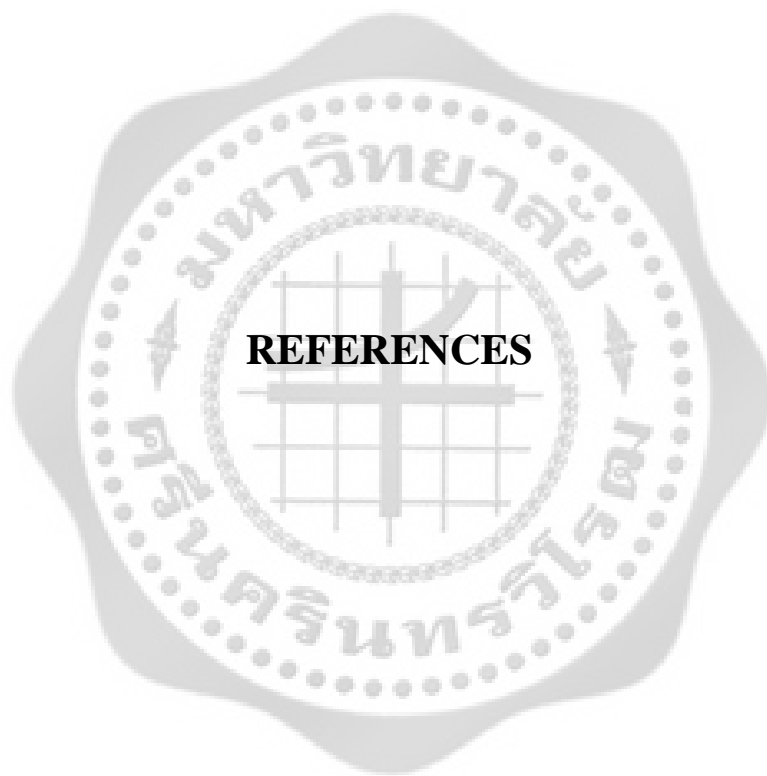
7. Since corpora contain both strong and weak points, using corpora in teaching ESP should not necessarily be seen as a replacement for all other types of resources. Instead, they can be viewed as a complementary resource that can be used in conjunction with other types of resources and other task activities in order to encourage self-directed learning. The structural patterns used in both the *BLC* and textbooks did not show the differences since they are grammatically used and the data in both sources taken from US and UK resources. Sometimes, textbooks present only one example of the lexical phrase through a model letter and learners cannot recognize its usage clearly. In the *BLC*, there are abundance of examples showing meaningful lexical phrases which lead to various situations. However, in the *BLC*, the data appearing as concordance lines are extracts, not complete sentences; therefore, learners might find them difficult to understand the meaning from the context. Textbooks should be used in business writing courses as they

might lead learners to come up with a hypothesis that can be further investigated with the use of a corpus as a reference guide.

### **Recommendations for further studies**

This study provides some suggestions on how to supplement this study as follows:

1. The study would be conducted by using qualitative methods to observe learners' in the process of learning lexical phrases and their reactions to learning those lexical phrases. In other words, it is desirable to investigate how learners acquire lexical phrases knowledge and turn their input into output, which enable them to write business letters effectively.
2. A study of the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases occurring in the BLC and textbooks could be done in order to test whether students could become more efficient in writing business letters after studying all top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases.
3. Variations of lexical phrases in other areas of ESP such as news, hospitality, finance and banking, engineering and law could be done to see whether lexical phrases used in those studies are different from those which appear in business letters.
4. Other studies such as semantic and syntactic viewpoints, genres of business letter types and register variation, and sociocultural aspects in business letter writing could be done to see differences and similarities of lexical phrases across different contexts.
5. A participatory study could be done with students and their teachers to see how they view the textbooks that they use in class.
6. An experimental study between students who use the BLC concordance as a tool in writing business letters and students who study the textbooks as a traditional method could be done in order to investigate which tool could effectively improve business letter writing.



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**APPENDICES**



**APPENDIX A**

**CODING SHEET WITH CATEGORIES OF LEXICAL PHRASES**

*The Total Number of Lexical Phrases in the BLC Concordancer = 30*

**BLC Concordancer**

<i>Collocations</i>						<i>Multi-word Expressions</i>			
<b>adj.+n.</b>	<b>v.+n.</b>	<b>n.+n.</b>	<b>v.+adv.</b>	<b>adv.+adj.</b>	<b>adj.+prep.</b>	<b>phrasal verb</b>	<b>fixed phrase</b>	<b>semi-fixed p.</b>	<b>prep. Phrase</b>
best wishes	place...order				interested in	look forward to set up	thank you so that	we can I hope	in the future within...days
							as well as	this is	from you..soon
							such as	if you have	in fact
							as soon as possible	we would like	in the past
							due to	please call	at this time
								would you	
								I've/have enclosed	
								I'm/am sure	
								we're/are pleased	
								we're/are very	
								we're/are regret	
								I'm/am writing	
<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>



**APPENDIX B**

**CODING SHEET WITH CATEGORIES OF LEXICAL PHRASES**

*The Total Number of Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks = 30*

Name of the Textbook: Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence									
<i>Collocations</i>						<i>Multi-word Expressions</i>			
adj.+n.	v.+n.	n.+n.	v.+adv.	adv.+adj.	adj.+prep.	phrasal verb	fixed phrase	semi-fixed p.	prep. Phrase
further information (3)	place...order (4)	catalogue and price list (5)			interested in (1)	look forward to (8)	thank you(16)	we can (7)	from you soon (5)
	take...action (1)	trade discount (7)					as soon as possible(3)	we would like (4)	within...weeks (2)
		terms of payment (2)					so that (2)	we are writing (1)	before the end of(3)
		delivery date (3)					due to (2)	please send (5)	with regard to (2)
								we are sure (3)	
								I regret (3)	
								would you...? (3)	
								if you have... (1)	
								we are pleased (1)	
								this is...(1)	
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>

Number of Lexical Phrases = 27

Name of the Textbook: Business Communication									
<i>Collocations</i>						<i>Multi-word Expressions</i>			
adj.+n.	v.+n.	n.+n.	v.+adv.	adv.+adj.	adj.+prep.	phrasal verb	fixed phrase	semi-fixed p.	prep. Phrase
Further information (1)		catalogue and and price-list (3)			interested in(6)		thank you(14)	we can (4)	from you soon (1)
							as soon as possible(2)	we would like (1)	within...week (2)
							so that (1)	we are writing (1)	with regard to (1)
							as a result of (1)	I hope (1)	
							due to (1)	please send (3)	
								we are sure (1)	
								would you...? (2)	
								we are pleased (2)	
<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>

Number of Lexical Phrases = 19

**CODING SHEET WITH CATEGORIES OF LEXICAL PHRASES (Continued)**

Name of the Textbook: Techniques in Writing Business Letters and E-mail									
<i>Collocations</i>						<i>Multi-word Expressions</i>			
adj.+n.	v.+n.	n.+n.	v.+adv.	adv.+adj.	adj.+prep.	phrasal verb	fixed phrase	semi-fixed p.	prep. Phrase
	place a new order (1)	price list (1)				make up (2)	thank you (9)	we can (1)	from you soon (2)
		terms of payment(2)				look forward to (1)	as soon as possible (1)	we would like (7)	
		delivery date(1)						I hope (2)	
								please send (3)	
<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

Number of Lexical Phrases = 13

Name of the Textbook: Company to Company									
<i>Collocations</i>						<i>Multi-word Expressions</i>			
adj.+n.	v.+n.	n.+n.	v.+adv.	adv.+adj.	adj.+prep.	phrasal verb	fixed phrase	semi-fixed p.	prep. Phrase
	placed the/this order (2)					look forward to (20)	thank you (35)	we can (7)	within...days/weeks (2)
	take...action (2)				interested in (3)		as soon as possible (8)	we would like (3)	with regard to (2)
							so that (2)	we are writing (2)	
							as a result of (2)	I hope (8)	
							due to (5)	we are sure (1)	
								I regret (3)	
								if you have...(3)	
								this is... (10)	
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>

Number of Lexical Phrases = 20

**CODING SHEET WITH CATEGORIES OF LEXICAL PHRASES (Continued)**

Name of the Textbook: How to Write Better Business Letters

<i>Collocations</i>						<i>Multi-word Expressions</i>			
<b>adj.+n.</b>	<b>v.+n.</b>	<b>n.+n.</b>	<b>v.+adv.</b>	<b>adv.+adj.</b>	<b>adj.+prep.</b>	<b>phrasal verb</b>	<b>fixed phrase</b>	<b>semi-fixed p.</b>	<b>prep. Phrase</b>
						look forward to (1)	thank you (7)	we can (1)	from you soon (1)
							as soon as possible (1)	we would like (2)	within...week (1)
							so that (3)	I hope (1)	before the end of (3)
							as a result (1)	please send (1)	
								we are sure (2)	
								if you have... (1)	
								we are pleased (2)	
<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>

Number of Lexical Phrases = 15



**APPENDIX C**

## Concordance Lines in BLC Concordancer

### Sample of the collocation, adjective + preposition 'interested in'

1 [BLC2:18:01082] If you are still interested in < address > or would like me to show yo  
 2 we will have to that you are no longer interested in < Club >, and you will no longer receiv  
 3 20] I think he < she > may be extremely interested in < SUBJECT > and I would like to call on  
 4 9] You did not indicate if you would be interested in a banking position outside of Illinois.  
 5 [BLC2:05:00562] 7. Are you interested in a bicycle for yourself or for someone e  
 6 C2:02:03712] Neither is aware that I am interested in a career change at this time.  
 7 [BLC2:05:05127] I am very interested in a career in the administration of retir  
 8 [BLC2:13:02484] I thought you might be interested in a few facts about our software:  
 9 t your decision, I thought you might be interested in a few facts about Techtaun's products a  
 10 [BLC2:04:03884] I am interested in a firm that has growth and/or diversifi  
 11 [BLC2:04:00829] I am interested in a firm that has plans for growth and/or  
 12 [BLC2:05:01970] However, if you are interested in a hairdryer that runs on 220 volts, 50  
 13 tion of Retired Persons would indeed be interested in a lecture on " The Social Security Act:  
 14 ne numbers of people you think might be interested in a new or used truck or automobile.  
 15 [BLC2:04:01798] I am most interested in a position with your firm and I believe  
 16 urance companies like Partners would be interested in a program such as this?  
 17 in the last two years, I might also be interested in a retainer agreement.  
 18 ditional training and find you're still interested in a supervisory position. bring that to o  
 19 [BLC2:04:01417] I am very interested in a technical sales position, and your pr  
 20 area, we would like to know if you are interested in accepting a sole agency.  
 21 [BLC2:10:02610] However, should you be interested in acquiring smaller properties, please le  
 22 in London, informed us that you may be interested in acting as our agent in your country.  
 23 already represented here, we should be interested in acting as your sole agents.  
 24 [BLC2:40:00186] My company is interested in all types of motor accessories, and if  
 25 [BLC2:05:03219] We are interested in an open end, 36-month lease with a 20%  
 26 C2:32:00269] List 2 shows those who are interested in an overnight homestay with your members  
 27 ou have a pretty good idea of what I am interested in and can do for the industry.  
 28 or your further information, I would be interested in any assignment your organization might  
 29 age proposes to visit Japan and is very interested in any cultural activities that can be coo  
 30 [BLC2:32:00347] They would be interested in any of the following possibilities: esc

### Sample of the phrasal verb 'look forward to'

33 shall be there at 8 as you suggest and look forward to a very interesting evening.  
 34 [BLC2:09:08171] I look forward to addressing your group.  
 35 [BLC2:29:00475] I certainly look forward to an early opportunity to reciprocate you  
 36 [BLC2:41:02363] I look forward to an early reply.  
 37 been a pleasure working with you and we look forward to an even better year in 1986.  
 38 [BLC2:32:01332] I look forward to an exciting program.  
 39 capable and dynamic Chairman and we all look forward to an interesting year's work under your l  
 40 [BLC2:05:05003] I look forward to an interview and hope to hear from you  
 41 n a highly rewarding experience, and we look forward to an occasion that again requires your se  
 42 :02078] We appreciate your business and look forward to an ongoing relationship.  
 43 With you assigned to their account, we look forward to another great year there.  
 44 s decision meets with your approval and look forward to another opportunity of meeting you in t  
 45 ion extended to us on this project, and look forward to another opportunity of working with you  
 46 extended us in this project, and shall look forward to another opportunity of working with you  
 47 We're delighted to have you with us and look forward to another productive year.  
 48 [BLC2:10:04206] I look forward to another such opportunity.  
 49 [BLC2:21:01147] I look forward to another year of working together.  
 50 leted sometime next month, we very much look forward to asking you over to dinner.  
 51 C2:05:01751] We value your business and look forward to assisting you whenever possible.  
 52 appy to accept your kind invitation and look forward to attending a great many more meetings in  
 53 [BLC2:36:00719] I look forward to attending the ceremony and seeing you.  
 54 [BLC2:27:01967] We look forward to attending your next < BUSINESS EVENT >

## Sample of the fixed phrase ‘thank you’

33 [BLC2:26:00362] I would like to thank you again for your very warm reception.  
 34 ure you will understand my position and thank you again most sincerely for your kind invi  
 35 [BLC2:35:00749] In closing, we wish to thank you again. and look forward to a continual  
 36 5:02333] Please accept my apologies and thank you again for asking me.  
 37 [BLC2:32:01251] I want to thank you also for making this opportunity availa  
 38 your valuable assistance, I know, and I thank you also on their behalf.  
 39 [BLC2:31:01718] A hearty thank you and a welcome.  
 40 our director, has asked me to write to thank you and accept your kind invitation to atte  
 41 the above matter I hereby would like to thank you and all the staff of the Kanagawa Train  
 42 [BLC2:05:05293] I want to thank you and Charlotte for making my first busin  
 43 delighted with your efforts and want to thank you and congratulate you on a splendid perf  
 44 [BLC2:37:00884] We thank you and remain,  
 45 London my first thought is to write and thank you and the other people at Winkler's for a  
 46 [BLC2:04:02684] I wish to thank you and the other staff members at Texas Oi  
 47 -operation and take this opportunity to thank you and to wish you and your family a very  
 48 [BLC2:35:00204] We thank you and your associates for kindly assistin  
 49 [BLC2:35:00216] We thank you and your associates for the many kindne  
 50 [BLC2:04:03692] Just a brief note to thank you and your group for the time you spent w  
 51 [BLC2:25:06045] My wife and I wish to thank you and your husband for the delightful eve  
 52 would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for making my stay in Ja  
 53 would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your very capable staff for the goo  
 54 [BLC2:10:04002] Once Again, thank you for a job well done!  
 55 [BLC2:05:04536] Again, thank you for agreeing to speak.  
 56 So I'm taking this opportunity just to thank you for all of your business, for your loya  
 57 ocial Welfare Department, would like to thank you for all that was done to make my stay a  
 58 [BLC2:35:00245] Once again, we thank you for all that you did for him, and since  
 59 [BLC2:01:01681] I want to thank you for all the hard work you have been put  
 60 istmas comes round once again I want to thank you for all the hard work you have put into  
 61 [BLC2:01:00005] I want to thank you for all the help you gave me on the mer  
 62 [BLC2:04:01145] I want to thank you for all your efforts on my behalf with  
 63 [BLC2:18:05776] I want to thank you for all your hard work on it.  
 64 minds me that I have not yet written to thank you for all your help with " Two Heritages  
 65 ply to your letter of 22nd November, we thank you for allowing us a special discount.  
 66 [BLC2:10:02550] And Again, let us thank you for allowing us to serve Electrolite in  
 67 0:05821] Despite our disappointment, we thank you for allowing us to talk with you and pr  
 68 rd with interest to your good news, and thank you for any assistance you care to give me.  
 69 [BLC2:01:00073] I want to thank you for approving my request for a raise.  
 70 sure of visiting Governor Nagato and we thank you for arranging it.

## Sample of the semi-fixed phrase ‘we would like...’

1 [BLC2:32:02031] If possible, we would like a copy of the tape to be broadcast in t  
 2 [BLC2:34:01722] Also, we would like a copy of your safety regulations.  
 3 [BLC2:13:00220] Additionally, we would like a no-charge insertion of our ad in the  
 4 As we haven't received your cheque yet, we would like a photocopy of the register entry so th  
 5 2:00942] However, there are some points we would like answered before we make a decision.  
 6 0275] Attached you will find a list and we would like either replacements to be included in o  
 7 he order has not already bee n shipped, we would like it sent air express because our stock o  
 8 he order has not already bee n shipped, we would like it sent air express because our stock o  
 9 greement on the granting of the agency, we would like it to be on a one-year trial basis to b  
 10 fications of the electric products that we would like manufactured under an OEM agreement.  
 11 ned verbal approval from Mr. R Strauss, we would like official confirmation in writing.  
 12 nd vessels for the kerosene Merox area, we would like temporary use of the area south of the  
 13 [BLC2:16:00365] Now we would like the convenience of a charge account.  
 14 2856] However, in the renewed contract, we would like the delivery to be shortened to one mon  
 15 [BLC2:01:03251] While we would like to accommodate you with the lower price  
 16 ctive spirit we have with our customers,we would like to actively include you in our idea-sha

## Sample of the prepositional phrase *'from you soon'*

205 C2:36:02762] We look forward to hearing from you soon.  
 206 [BLC2:15:01723] However, I need to hear from you soon -- hopefully within a week.  
 207 [BLC2:15:01787] I hope to hear from you soon about what action you intend to ta  
 208 [BLC2:02:01420] I'd like to hear from you soon after the next services have been  
 209 C2:12:02580] We look forward to hearing from you soon and having you as a customer.  
 210 [BLC2:15:03503] I hope to hear from you soon regarding this second phase, so th  
 211 ent order immediately, but hope to hear from you soon that delivery at the beginning of  
 212 [BLC2:23:04988] We hope to hear from you soon that the goods have arrived safely  
 213 p and encouragement, and I hope to hear from you soon!  
 214 [BLC2:31:00062] Hope to hear from you soon!  
 215 :04:02020] I would be delighted to hear from you soon!  
 216 [BLC2:41:00333] We hope to hear from you soon,  
 217 [BLC2:23:02810] I hope to hear from you soon, and to be given the opportunity t  
 218 [BLC2:01:02232] Let's hear from you soon, Mr. < NAME >.  
 219 LC2:10:00332] I look forward to hearing from you soon.  
 220 will tell David that he will be hearing from you soon.  
 221 LC2:12:01014] I look forward to hearing from you soon.  
 222 [BLC2:12:02750] We hope to hear from you soon.  
 223 LC2:12:02854] I look forward to hearing from you soon.  
 224 0026] I'll tell Simon to expect to hear from you soon.  
 225 LC2:13:00909] I look forward to hearing from you soon.  
 226 LC2:13:01190] I look forward to hearing from you soon.  
 227 C2:13:01754] We look forward to hearing from you soon.  
 228 C2:13:02040] We look forward to hearing from you soon.  
 229 [BLC2:15:00659] I hope to hear from you soon.  
 230 [BLC2:01:00210] We hope to hear from you soon.  
 231 [BLC2:15:02410] Xxx, I hope to hear from you soon.  
 232 [BLC2:16:00501] We hope to be hearing from you soon.  
 233 ss associate and hope that we will hear from you soon.  
 234 ering us and we look forward to hearing from you soon.  
 235 ear ends June 30, 19XX, we hope to hear from you soon.  
 236 ] Meanwhile, we look forward to hearing from you soon.  
 237 C2:22:00059] We look forward to hearing from you soon.  
 238 [BLC2:22:00072] We hope to hear from you soon.  
 239 C2:22:00161] We look forward to hearing from you soon.  
 240 C2:22:00299] We look forward to hearing from you soon.



**APPENDIX D**

## Top Five of N-grams in the *BLC* Concordancer

### Sample of 3-grams

N	3-gram	Freq.
1	thank you for	1648
2	look forward to	991
3	would like to	675
4	your letter of	485
5	if you have	442

### Sample of 4-grams

N	4-gram	Freq.
1	thank you for your	967
2	we look forward to	389
3	I look forward to	355
4	if you have any	302
5	you have any questions	256

### Sample of 5-grams

N	5-gram	Freq.
1	thank you very much for	205
2	forward to hearing from you	203
3	look forward to hearing from	191
4	look forward to seeing you	148
5	please do not hesitate to	118



**APPENDIX E**

## A Concordancer Display of *Antconc*

### Sample of the collocation (adjective + preposition) *'interested in'* from *Business Communication*

1 in The Bangkok Post dated March 7, 2008 and I am interested in your air-conditioner, model AH/SL split system. W  
 2 also quote me your most competitive price? We are interested in increasing our range of auto-airconditioners and  
 3 mporting women's and children's underwear, we are interested in contacting a number of prominent manufacturers in  
 4 The Bangkok Post dated June 1, 2008, and are very interested in the oppoutunity you are offering. We have found t  
 5 ated catalogue giving you all the details you are interested in. The outstanding feature of this model is economy  
 6 ionary at a bargain price of US \$ 6.95. I am very interested in this book. Please send me one copy. I have enclos

### Sample of the collocation (phrasal verb) *'look forward to'* from *Company to Company*

1 ur brochure with details of our tour to Taiwan. I look forward to hearing from you. This year, the Daily Observer  
 2 e to put an ad in it. I attach our price list and look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your email about  
 3 e information. Please find attached our report. I look forward to hearing your ocmments. Please can you select the  
 4 he prices in your catalogue are still correct? We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your email of Mar  
 5 of 16 February concerning Arabian Electronics. I look forward to receiving your order. Thank you for your telephon  
 6 tell me exactly where your offices are located. I look forward to hearing from you. I would be grateful if, in your  
 7 ould cover the following points in your reply. We look forward to hearing from you. Many thanks. I am writing in connt  
 8 r printer. I am attaching our new price list. We look forward to receiving your order. If you need any further inf  
 9 a new range of exciting products on the market. I look forward to seeing you. I am pleased to tell you that we can  
 10 I hope this information is helpful for you, and I look forward to receiving your bookings. Thank you for your email  
 11 ames of all group members in the next few days. I look forward to receiving your confirmation. I am writing in connt  
 12 these as soon as possible or refund our money. We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your letter of 30  
 13 if you could send me this as soon as possible. I look forward to hearing from you. Unfortunately, we have not yet  
 14 et us know exactly when the goods will arrive. We look forward to receiving the drills. Thank you for your fax dat  
 15 Sweden and the expected arrival date in Spain. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your fax of 19 Ma  
 16 with details of the Italian hotel I mentioned. I look forward to seeing you again when I visit Bahrain in Septemb  
 17 ttend your dinner at the Crown Hotel. I very much look forward to seeing you again and meeting some of your colleg  
 18 keeping well. Please say hello to David for me. I look forward to hearing from you. We would be very grateful for a  
 19 524 767545. We thank you for your coperation and look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your email of 15  
 20 red to arrange it. These are some of our ideas. I look forward to hearing your comments. Please give my regards to

### Sample of the fixed phrase *'thank you'* from *How to Write Better Business Letters*

1 ur current price list before the end of the week. Thank you for arranging for us to receive our Christmas car  
 2 peared in the September issue of Consumer Digest. Thank you for your recent order, number 622. We are always  
 3 on their way to you before the end of the month. Thank you for ordering Indra Madhur's outstanding book, An  
 4 i of the planned symposium as soon as he returns. Thank you for your interest in A & M equipment. We are happy  
 5 these dealers sell Maxine Sportswear at discount. Thank you for your recent request for my endorsement of you  
 6 in inflicted by an employee of your institution. Thank you for bringing to my attention the inexcusable wait  
 7 and the sum has been stricken from your account. Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention. We hop

## A Concordancer Display of *Antconc* (Continued)

### Sample of semi-fixed phrase ‘*we would like...*’ from *Techniques in Writing Business Letters and E-mail*

1 t of Siam Pewterware quoting CIF price Singapore. We would like to place a new order for next year, 2006. Your pr  
 2 2006. Your prompt attention would be appreciated. We would like to buy eight facsimile machines for our offices i  
 3 t kind of discount is available on the eight sets we would like to order. We would greatly appreciate your prompt  
 4 oducts. We look forward to hearing from you soon. We would like to apply for being TASTE's franchisee in Thailandt  
 5 o apply for being TASTE's franchisee in Thailand. We would like to sell groceries to fulfill our customers' needs  
 6 ers' needs and to be a complete department store. We would like to be your franchise as you are one of the bigges  
 7 ur customers regularly order vases of this color, we would like to confirm our order for white vases. Please send

### Sample of the prepositional phrase ‘*from you...soon*’ from *An Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence*

1 current catalogue and price list. We hope to hear from you soon. Thank you for your enquiry of 31 January. W  
 2 you for your interest. We look forward to hearing from you soon. We feel sure you will agree that this is a t  
 3 above number, ext.21. We look forward to hearing from you soon. For this order, we accept the 15% trade di  
 4 y much for your order. We look forward to hearing from you again soon. The following consignment has been se  
 5 fittings for one year. I look forward to hearing from you soon. The damage you described in your letter of



**APPENDIX F**

### Different Types and Numbers of Lexical Phrases in the *BLC* and Textbooks

Figure 5. Number of Lexical Phrases by Textbooks

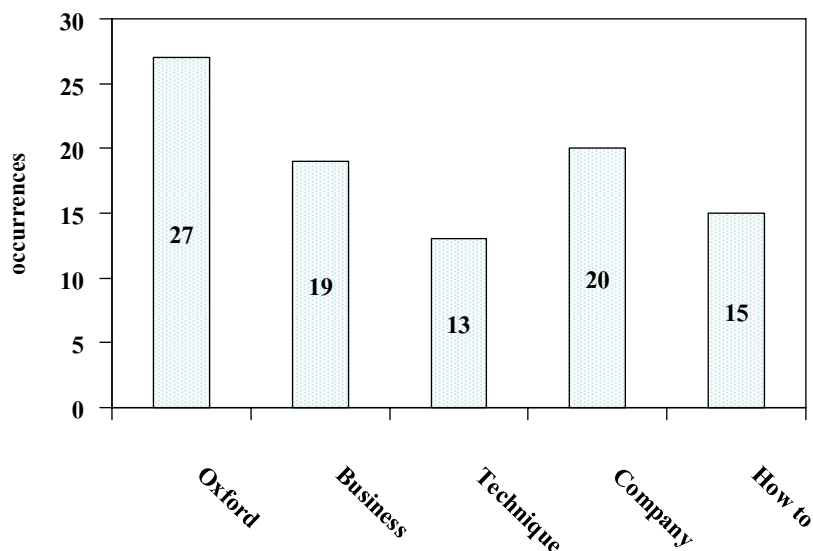


Figure 5 shows the number of lexical phrases occurring in each textbook. The total number of different types of lexical phrases appearing in the five textbooks is 30. The data present the lexical phrases occurring most in the textbook, *Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence*. The number of lexical phrases found second in the textbook was *Company to Company*, followed by the textbook, *Business Communication*, *How to Write Better Business Letters and Techniques in Writing Business Letters and E-mail* respectively. This can be explained by the number of letters appearing as samples in the *Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence* since it contains 32 model letters, the most compared with the other four textbooks and also contains the most number of lexical phrases. This is in contrast to the textbook *Techniques in Writing Business Letters and E-mail* as it consists of 16 model letters, which was the least number among the five textbooks.

Figure 6. Types of Multi-word Expression in Each Textbook

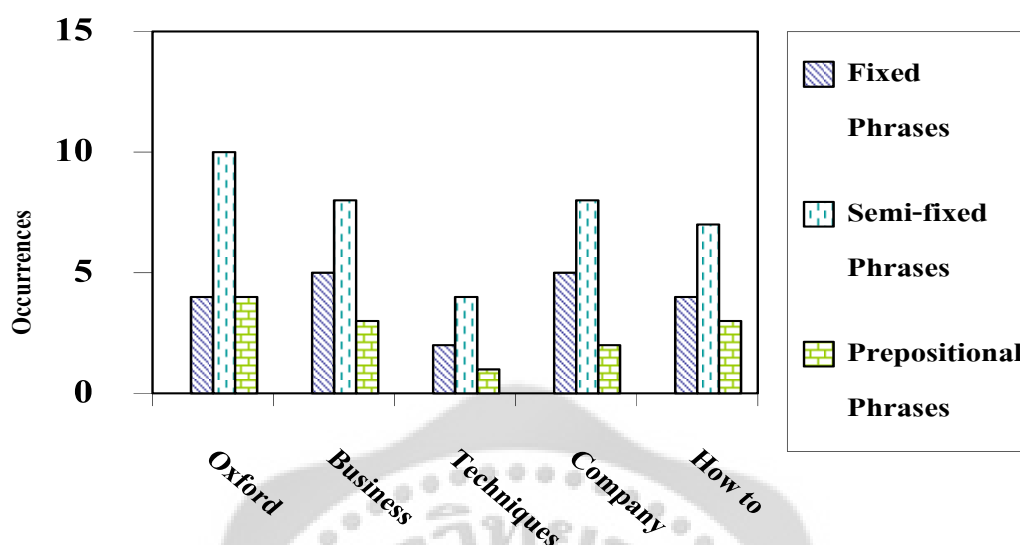


Figure 6 illustrates the types of lexical phrases in the five textbooks. The data show that the type of multi-word expressions occurring most in *Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence* was semi-fixed phrases with the frequency of 10 and fixed phrases occurred least with the frequency of 4 equal to prepositional phrases. Next, in *Business Communication*, semi-fixed phrases occurred most with the frequency of 8 and prepositional phrases occurred least with the frequency of 3. In *Techniques in Writing Business Letters and E-mail*, collocations appeared most with the frequency of 6 and only one frequency of prepositional phrase appears. In *Company to Company*, 8 frequencies of semi-fixed phrases had the most occurrence and two frequencies of prepositional phrase had the least occurrence. Lastly, in *How to Write Better Business Letters*, semi-fixed phrases also occurred most with the frequency of 7. It seems that semi-fixed phrases appeared most among different types of multi-word expressions, followed by fixed phrases and prepositional phrases were

found least. Therefore, it can be concluded that semi-fixed phrases were frequently used in the five textbooks.

Figure 7. Types of Collocation in *Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence*

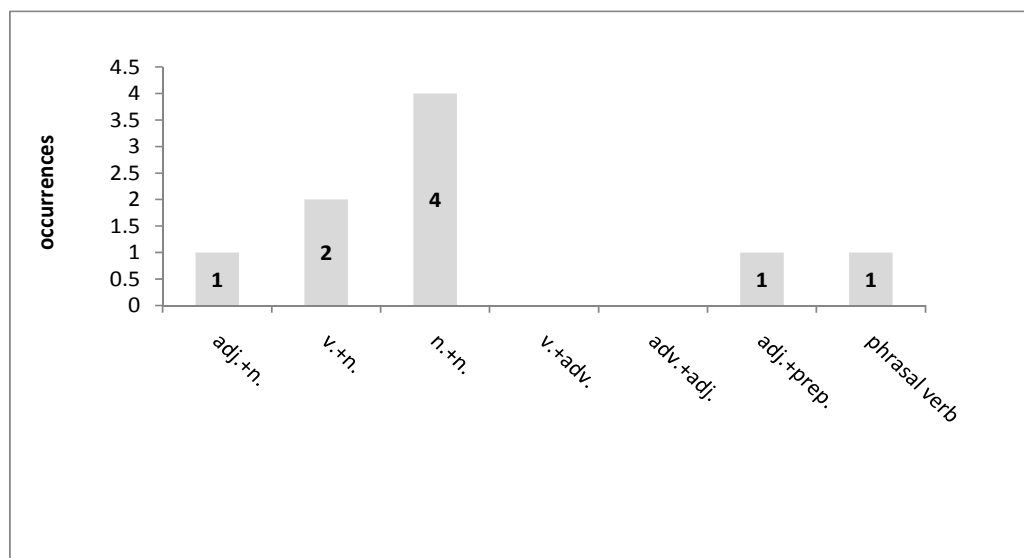


Figure 7 illustrates the different types of collocation appearing in this textbook. The structure *noun + noun* had 4 frequencies the most, followed by *verb + noun*. The lexical phrase *trade discount(s)* consisting of *noun + noun* appeared most with the frequency of 7 in this textbook while the patterns *adjective + noun*, *adjective + preposition* and *phrasal verb* occurred the least for one time equally. Moreover, none of the patterns *verb + adverb* and *adverb + adjective* appeared in this textbook.

Figure 8. Types of Collocation in *Business Communication*

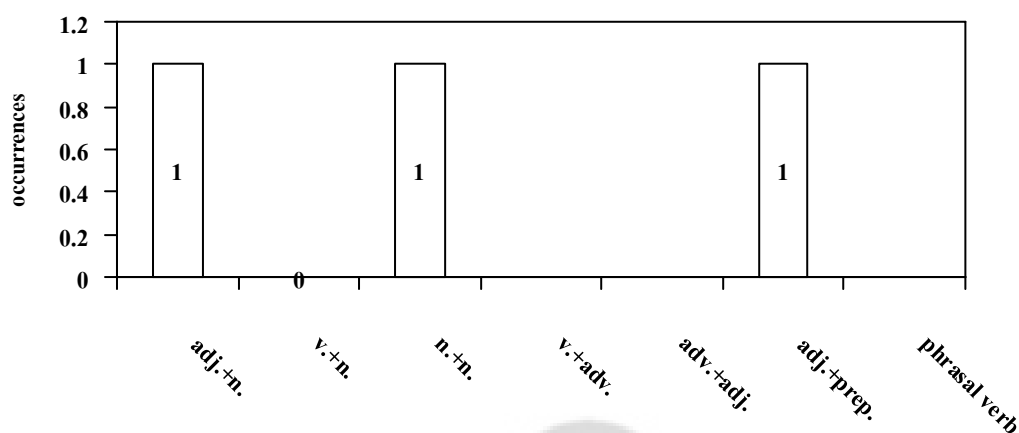
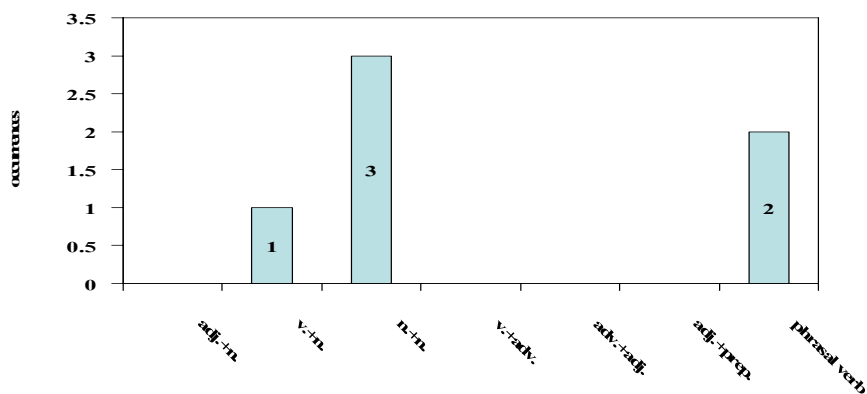


Figure 8 shows three sub-types of collocation: *adjective + noun*, *noun + noun*, and *adjective + preposition*, occurring once in this textbook. The other four sub-types were not found in this textbooks. Among these three types, the pattern *interested in* which is *adjective + preposition* occurred 6 times the most. The other four types of collocation: *verb + noun*, *verb + adverb*, *adverb + adjective*, and *phrasal verb* did not appear in this textbook.

Figure 9. Types of Collocation in *Techniques in Writing Business Letters and E-mail*



According to the Figure 9, there are three types of collocation out of 7 types occurring in this textbook: *verb + noun*, *noun + noun*, and *phrasal verb*. The other four types of collocation did not appear in this textbook. Among these three types, the pattern *noun + noun* occurred most i.e. *terms of payment*.

Figure 10. Types of Collocation in *Company to Company*

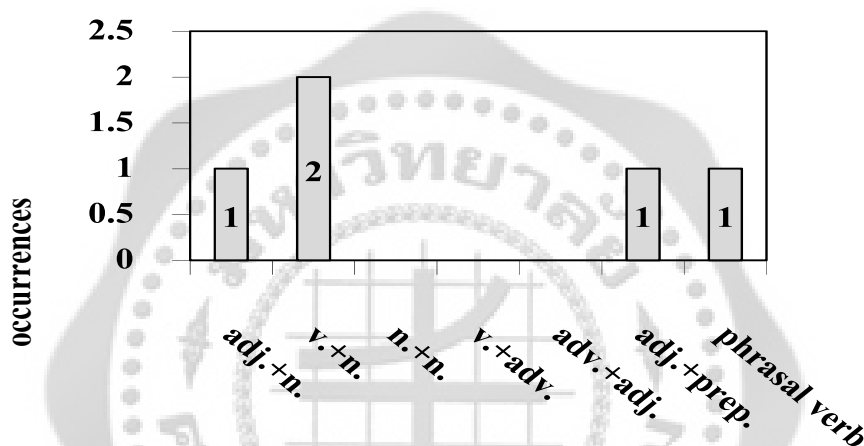


Figure 10 shows the occurrences of collocations in this textbook. Four sub-categories of collocation occurred while the other three sub-categories: *noun + noun*, *verb + adverb*, and *adverb + adjective* were not found in this textbook. The structure *verb + noun* occurred most, followed by *adjective + noun* in equal number to *adjective + preposition* and *phrasal verb*, one each. According to the structure *verb + noun*, the patterns *place order* and *take action* had an equal number, two each.

Figure 11. Types of Collocation in *How to Write Better Business Letters*

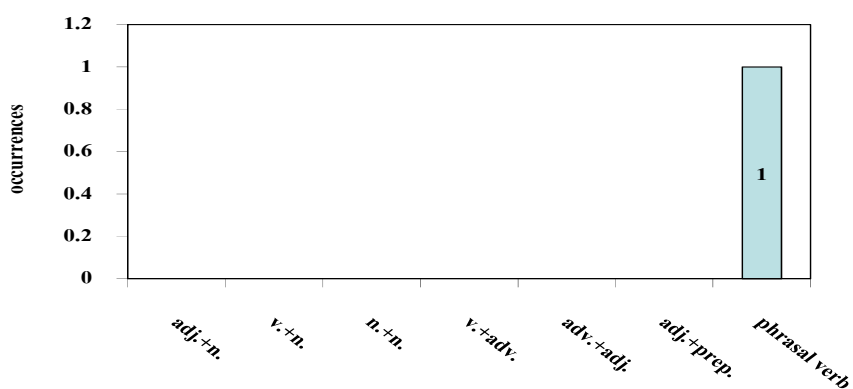


Figure 11 shows only one type of collocation i.e. *phrasal verb* occurring in this textbook among seven sub-types of collocation. The pattern *look forward to* was found once. This means that the author/publisher does not pay much attention to collocations in this textbook.



**APPENDIX G**

## Comparison of Lexical Phrases between the BLC and Textbooks in Terms of Form and Function

**Collocation.** The other 6 collocations in this study were arranged from the highest-frequency collocation in each sub-type as follows.

### *Catalogue and price list, trade discount, terms of payment and delivery date:*

The pattern *catalogue and price list* was the highest-frequency one with nine frequencies, ranked 9<sup>th</sup>, followed by the patterns *trade discount* with seven frequencies, ranked 11<sup>th</sup>, and *terms of payment* with four frequencies, ranked 14<sup>th</sup> similar to *delivery date*. The four patterns are considered lexical collocations with the combination of noun plus noun. They were analyzed under form and function as follows:

The pattern *catalogue and price list* is the combination of two main groups of noun: *catalogue* and *price list*. Normally, the word *catalogue* is the British variety and can be written as *catalog* in US English. The pattern *price list* consists of two words but they are written as one word, called a compound noun. This feature is similar to the patterns *trade discount* and *delivery date*. Table 15 illustrated the frequencies of this phrase in the BLC and textbooks.

Table 15

### *Frequencies of the Phrase in Different Versions*

Collocation (n.+n.)	Frequency	
	BLC	Textbooks
catalogue and price list	20	6
catalogue and price-list	10	3
catalogue and pricelist	-	-
catalog and price list	4	-
catalog and price-list	-	-
catalog and pricelist	-	-

The data in the table showed that the combination of the two words occurred in three patterns: two patterns found in the *BLC* and textbooks and another one pattern

found in the *BLC* only. In both sources, the pattern *catalogue and price list* appeared the highest. This means that in business letters the British version of the word *catalogue* is used rather than American version and the word *price list* is used most as a two word combination.

Considering the other three patterns, the head noun of the patterns *trade discount* and *delivery date* is focused on the second noun while it is reversed in the pattern *terms of payment*. The two forms are different in the structure since the latter is used to express possession by using the preposition *of* between two words while the former is a word formation consisting of two elements that are independent words. The pattern *delivery date* can be conversed with the preposition *of*, placed between the two nouns; however, none of this pattern was found in the textbooks. In the *BLC*, the pattern *delivery date* is used higher than *date of delivery*. It seems that the writers use these two forms interchangeably but the pattern *delivery date* is preferred in business letters. On the contrary, the pattern *trade discount* was not found in reverse. This may be because the pattern is a business technical term. Regarding singular and plural forms, *trade discount* was rather found in the singular in the textbooks and *BLC*. The pattern *terms of payment* is always in the plural form similar to the pattern *delivery date*, which rather occurred as the plural than the singular in both sources.

Under function, the word *catalogue* means a book with a list of all the goods that can be bought (*The Longman Advanced Learner's Dictionary*). *Price list* means a document or a listing of prices for different goods or services that customers can pay for (*The Longman Advanced Learner's Dictionary*). The phrase *price list* may be confused in meaning with the phrase *list price*. The following examples are their use in the *BLC* and textbooks.

Table 16

*Comparison of “price list” and “list price” in Meaning*

Pattern	Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
price list/ price-list	15 January and enclose our illustrated catalogue and <i>price list</i> giving the details requested.	Enclosed you will find our summer catalogue and <i>price list</i> quoting prices CIF London.
	I am enclosing our catalogue and <i>price-list</i> for the equipment you said you were interested...	The attached catalogue and <i>price-list</i> of various models of our auto-airconditioners,...
list price	The Mark II + has a suggested <i>list price</i> of \$250.00, but because you already own...	..., we can offer 25% off <i>list price</i> to our retailers and wholesalers,...

According to the data shown in Table 16, *list price* refers to the selling price of goods as stated in a catalogue or price list. However, the context of these two phrases implies the price at which something is offered for sale; often subject to discounts. The context following the phrase *list price* is the amount of money along with an amount or percentage to be deducted, whereas *price list* is followed by the details of the goods or services.

The word *discount* is substantially collocated with the noun *trade* and *cash* in business context. *Trade* is a noun referring to the buying and selling of goods and services and *discount* is a noun meaning a deduction from the usual cost of something (*Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence*). According to *How to Write Better Business Letter*, *trade discount* is defined, “a deduction in price given by the wholesaler/manufacturer to the retailer at the list price or catalogue price” (p.161) while cash discount is defined, “a reduction in price the creditor gives to the debtor in order to speed payment and thereby provide liquidity to the firm” (p.159). The data in the textbooks and BLC present their use as a promotional device to attract customers. There are numbers following or preceding the pattern *cash/trade discount* as follows.

Table 17

*Two Different Patterns of “trade discount” and “cash discount”*

Pattern	Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
trade discount	...number 2370 dated 10 September allows a <i>trade discount</i> of only 33.5% instead of the 40% to which... (in singular form)	Unfortunately, we cannot offer the 35% <i>trade discount</i> you asked for... (in singular form)
	We do not feel that we can offer the <i>trade discounts</i> which you have asked for, ... (in plural form)	We would like to know if you offer any <i>trade discounts</i> . (in plural form)
cash discount	The terms of payment allow the 2.5% <i>cash discount</i> only on accounts paid within 10 days of... (in singular form)	-
	...you details of trade, quantity, and <i>cash discounts</i> on our other products. (in plural form)	...and have enclosed a price list giving you details of trade, quantity, and <i>cash discounts</i> . (in plural form)

Table 17 presents the numbers following or preceding the pattern in percentages. *Cash discount* shows the period of time offered by a seller. It is obviously seen that cash or trade discount is a term of payment offered by a seller to his/her customers. In the examples shown in the table, the word *quantity* frequently appears with these phrases and it implies that cash/trade discount will be offered to a customer in case of ordering or buying the goods in lot quantity. A *trade discount* occurs if the customer accepts the conditions of the seller and places an order whereas *cash discount* is offered after the customer has already placed an order and the seller would like to shorten the period of time in payment.

In business dictionaries, the phrase *terms of payment* means conditions of payment agreed between a buyer and a seller for goods sold or services rendered. It is related to the terms the buyer and seller agree regarding discounts, methods of payment, shipment, and documentation. In short, it refers to conditions of payment.

Table 18

*The Two Different Structures of “terms of payment” and “payment terms”*

<b>Structural Pattern</b>	<b>Lexical Phrases in the BLC</b>	<b>Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks</b>
terms of payment	Please also state your <i>terms of payment</i> and discounts allowed on purchases of...	We would also like to know your <i>terms of payment</i> including what kind of discount is available on...
	...discount off net list-prices, and our <i>terms of payment</i> are normally 30-day bill of exchange, ...	Our <i>terms of payment</i> are normally 30-day bill of exchange, D/A.
payment terms	Delivery and installation schedules, <i>payment terms</i> , and all other conditions of the origin...	
	...you, and we feel that extending 30-day <i>payment terms</i> is part of that service.	

According to the data, it seems that if the situation is strictly related to an amount of money to be paid, the word *terms* will occur with the word *payment*.

Regarding the pattern *delivery date*, *delivery* is used when goods, letters, parcel, etc. are taken to a particular person or place whereas *date* means a numbered day in a month, often given with a combination of the day of the week, the month and the year or the particular date of a month (Definitions from *the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*).

Table 19

*Two Different Patterns of “delivery date” and “date of delivery”*

<b>Structural Pattern</b>	<b>Lexical Phrases in the BLC</b>	<b>Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks</b>
delivery date(s)	You were promised a <i>delivery date</i> of May 15, but received the order on May...	...to complete the order well within the <i>delivery date</i> which we gave you of 18 June, but...
	...goods well in advance of the promised <i>delivery dates</i> , and the filing cabinets to which your...	...we could not have known about when we accepted your <i>delivery dates</i> .

(Continued)

Structural Pattern	Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
date of delivery	...terms of payment and earliest possible <i>date of delivery</i> .	-
	...our next shipment arrives regarding a <i>date of delivery</i> .	-

In Table 19, the phrase *delivery dates* in plural form refers to a period of time for delivering goods while this phrase in singular form specifies the exact date (day and month) like *May 15* and *18 June*. If the sentence specifies the time, the phrase *delivery date* is used rather than *date of delivery*.

***best wishes and further information:*** The pattern *best wishes* occurs in the BLC only in the 16<sup>th</sup> rank and *further information* occurs in the textbooks only in the 10<sup>th</sup> rank. Both of them are considered lexical collocations with the combination of adjective plus noun. In this study, the word *best* and *further* are used as the adjectives and it is known that *best* is the superlative form referring to being highest in quality. The noun *wish* is always in plural form when it collocates with the adjective *best*. In contrast, *information* is an uncountable noun; therefore, it always appears in singular form. The use of *best wishes* in sentences is shown in the table as follows.

Table 20

*Use of the Phrase "best wishes"*

Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
<i>Best wishes</i> for a very successful meeting... (used as a fragment)	<i>Best wishes</i> for a successful convention. (used as a fragment)
...a part of your growth and extend our <i>best wishes</i> to all of you for continued success. (used as an object of the verb <i>extend</i> )	-
...all our thoughts and <i>best wishes</i> go with you. (used as a subject of the verb <i>go</i> )	-

The data in Table 20 demonstrate the phrase located at the beginning as a fragment or in the middle of the sentence. It can be followed with the preposition *for* (+something) and the preposition *to* (+ someone). The pattern *best wishes* used as a letter closing or salutation is excluded in this study.

Regarding the pattern *further information*, in the textbooks, *further* occurred with the noun *information* most, followed by the nouns *delay* and *question* respectively. Similarly, in the *BLC* concordancer, it occurs with the noun *information* most, followed by the noun *question* and *detail* respectively. It can occur with a noun in the plural (*questions* or *details*) or an uncountable noun (*information* or *delay*). In the textbooks, the word *any* is substantially used before *further* in conditional clauses (87.5%).

Table 21

*Use of “further information”*

Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
If you have <i>some further information</i> we have not yet considered or if you ...	-
If there is <i>any further information</i> you require, please contact us.	If there is <i>any further information</i> you need, please contact us, or go to our website at the address above.
<i>For further information</i> please contact either David at the above...	-

The data in Table 21 show the various use of *further information* with *some* and *any* with the preposition *for*. Both of these determiners refer to a quantity of something. In this study both of these determiners are used to mark the quantity of the noun *information* without changing the meaning. The last example in the *BLC* showed the preposition *for* preceded the pattern *further information*. In this case, the pattern *for further information* appearing as a fragment but it is used as an if-clause in the main sentence meaning *if you want to know more*.

Under function, the phrase *best wishes* is used by the writers to show that they hope the readers fulfill with happiness. In business letters, the phrase *best wishes* normally appears in the plural. Similarly, in the *BLC* and textbooks, this phrase appears in the plural since the writer wants to express his/her great feeling towards the reader. Further, it can be implied that this is not the first contact in business since this phrase shows a close or good relationship between writers and readers.

Before ending a business letter, some people may not put anything at all. But, others feel they should put something since they feel wrong or impolite to just stop. Then, they add this phrase in the sentence hoping that the readers will be successful in work or have good luck. In addition, the pattern *best wishes* is used as a blessing in the coming year e.g., ...*and extend our very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year (BLC)*.

Concerning the pattern *further information*, writers prefer using *information to data* in business letters. The word *further* is used to mean more or additional. The phrase *any further* is used to ask whether there is some of a particular thing or to suggest that there might be. In the textbooks, when writers want to mean something extra, the adjective *additional* is frequently found with the noun *information* whereas the word *more*, the comparative form of *much* and *many*, is used higher in the *BLC*. These two words can be used interchangeably as the examples demonstrate below.

If you need any additional information on a prospect, contact the marketing...  
If you need any more information or have any questions, please feel free...

**Multi-word expression.** In this study, the other 22 multi-word expressions were analyzed under form and function as follows.

*so that ,due to and as a result:* These three patterns are considered fixed phrases. They function as discourse connectors related to logic/reasoning. Considering one of the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases in the *BLC* and textbooks, the 1<sup>st</sup> pattern

occurred in both sources, ranked 10<sup>th</sup>. The 2<sup>nd</sup> pattern occurred in the *BLC*, ranked 13<sup>th</sup> and in the textbooks, ranked 10<sup>th</sup>. The last pattern occurred in the textbooks only, ranked 14<sup>th</sup>.

The patterns *so that* and *as a result* are similar in structure since each of them is used to connect two independent clauses whereas the fixed phrase *due to* is followed by a noun/noun phrase. The fixed phrase *as a result of* can appear at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the sentence whereas the fixed phrases *so that* and *due to* can appear either at the beginning or in the middle of the sentence. The examples of the fixed phrase *so that* are shown as follows.

Table 22

*Structure “so that” in the BLC and Textbooks*

Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
But let me know <i>so that</i> , if necessary, I can make other arrange... (with a comma after)	If there are any problems let me know, <i>so that</i> I can make enquiries here. (with a comma preceded)
Please write to me <i>so that</i> we may discuss the idea further. (without a comma)	May we have your decision as soon as possible <i>so that</i> we will be able to give you prompt delivery? (without a comma)

In the table, the fixed phrase *so that* can be used with a comma or without a comma in the *BLC* and textbooks. It should be noted that it was mostly used with (modal) auxiliary verbs such as *can*, *could*, *will* and *may* and followed by a clause.

The structure of the fixed phrase *so that* is similar to the conjunction *in order that*; for example, ...*should be obliged if you would inform us in order that we may make the necessary adjustment*' (*BLC*). The conjunctions *in order that* and *in order to* are similar in meaning but different in structure since the latter is followed by an infinitive phrase e.g. ...*for our copying and printing service in order to accommodate our customers' needs* (= *so that/in order that we can accommodate our customers' needs*).

Normally, it is used either in the middle or at the beginning of the sentence to connect two clauses. There were two examples of this conjunction in the *BLC* and none example appeared in the textbooks. It seems that writers prefer using *so that* to *in order that* and the use of the latter is more formal in business letters. The following examples in the *BLC* showed the use of these two conjunctions located at the beginning of the sentence as follows.

*In order that* we can trace this payment, please would you...  
*In order that* you better understand what has happened...

*So that* our meeting can be most productive, I have...  
*So that* we may extend our normal terms of net 3...  
*So that* you may find the physician that best suitable for...

The fixed phrase *as a result* has similar meaning to *accordingly*, *consequently*, *in the end*, *then*, *therefore*, *thus* and so on. Its structure appears as follows.

Table 23

*Use of the Pattern "as a result"*

<i>as a result</i>	
<b>Lexical Phrases in the BLC</b>	<b>Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks</b>
<i>As a result</i> , you now have three weeks fewer to make... (used at the beginning with a comma after)	<i>As a result</i> , we are temporarily out of copies. (used at the beginning with a comma after)
<i>As a result</i> any service work will require a charge... (used at the beginning without a comma)	-
...way to increase our effectiveness and, <i>as a result</i> , spend more time selling. (used in the middle with commas)	-
...encouraging it was to see such work and <i>as a result</i> I have a number of proposals to make to... (used in the middle without a comma)	-
...the last three years and invested in it <i>as a result</i> . (used at the end without a comma)	-

Table 23 demonstrates the phrase *as a result* appearing at the beginning (the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> samples), in the middle (the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> samples) or at the end of sentence (the last sample). If it introduces an effect of the situation stated in the sentence before it, a comma is used after the transition word. In the other two samples, the phrase is followed by a clause before or/and after.

The phrase *as a result* is frequently found with the preposition *of*, followed by a noun/noun phrase. It has a similar meaning to *because of*. The examples are shown as follows.

Table 24

*Use of the Pattern “as a result of”*

<i>as a result of</i>	
Lexical Phrase in the BLC	Lexical Phrase in the Textbooks
<p><i>As a result of</i> the meeting, I think we both communicate...</p> <p>(+ noun phrase: the meeting)</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>...compensation of damages incurred by us <i>as a result of</i> delayed delivery of the ordered material...</p> <p>(+ noun phrase: delayed delivery)</p>	<p>It occurred <i>as a result of</i> staff shortage during this unusually busy season and...</p> <p>(+ noun phrase: staff shortage)</p>

In Table 24, the phrase *as a result of* cannot be used at the end of the sentence since this phrase has to be followed by a noun or noun phrase.

The structure of the fixed phrase *due to* occurs as a compound preposition, followed by a noun/noun phrase. It can be located at the beginning or in the middle of the sentence. In the textbooks, nearly all samples use the pattern *v. to be + due to + noun/noun phrase* (75%). The following examples show the use of this fixed phrase.

Table 25

*Use of “due to” in the BLC and Textbooks*

Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
<i>Due to</i> your efforts, our second quarter shows... ( at the beginning + noun phrase)	-
...that team, and much of our success is <i>due to</i> your fine work... (modifying the noun: success)	I apologize for the errors. These were <i>due to</i> a software fault which has now been fixed. (modifying the noun <i>errors</i> )
...the deletion of a few lines that we made <i>due to</i> space limitations. (modifying the verb <i>made</i> )	-
At first, we thought this might be <i>due to</i> the disturbed political situation in your.. (preceded with a modal verb: might+v.1)	...can only assume that the damage must be <i>due to</i> rough handling in transit. (preceded with a modal verb: must+v.1)
...has probably doubled during that time, <i>due to the fact that</i> we have entered overseas markets, which... ( = due to/because)	We stopped producing and distributing this fly spray last year <i>due to the fact that</i> we now specialize in agricultural products’ ( = due to/because)

The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> samples in Table 25 demonstrated the phrase beginning with *due to* which was separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma, followed by a main clause. The 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> samples presented the use of this phrase in the mid-sentence position to introduce a cause (reason) for the situation stated in the other clause; therefore, it did not take a comma. The last example showed *due to* as an acceptable synonym for *because of* in the structure of *due to the fact that*, followed by a main clause.

Under function, the fixed phrase *so that* is mainly used to introduce a reason for committing the action that the writer has just mentioned. In this situation, they use *so that* to indicate a purpose e.g., *I will call you in a few days so that we can discuss it* (BLC) or *If there are many problems ,let me know so that I can make enquiries here* (Littlejohn, 2005). Its function is different from the fixed phrase *as a result* since the latter indicates the relationship in meaning between two clauses to show a cause-and-effect relation (as

shown in Table 23 and Table 24).

The fixed phrase *due to* is used to introduce a cause for something happening. *The Collins Cobuild English Dictionary Dictionary for Advanced Learners* states that some speakers of English believe that it is not correct to use *due to* in this way. However, in the BLC and textbooks, there are more than 50 examples of this fixed phrase used to mean that (as shown in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> examples in Table 25). According to the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> examples in Table 25, if an event is due to something, it happens as a direct result of that event. The fixed phrase *due to* has various functions; for example, it functions as a preposition in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> examples in both sources. It can be construed as an adjective in the 3<sup>rd</sup> examples in both sources. The 4<sup>th</sup> example in the BLC shows its function in certain context which can serve as an adverb. In the 5<sup>th</sup> example, it can serve specific linguistic function stating a cause or reason. In this case, it almost precedes verb to be because it functions the same way a predicate adjective does.

***such as*:** The fixed phrase *such as* appeared 215 frequencies in the BLC only as one of the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases, ranked 14<sup>th</sup>. It was found only two frequencies in the textbooks. In the BLC and textbooks, this phrase did not appear at the beginning of the sentence. According to *the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, *such as* has similar meaning to *for example* and *like*. Also, the dictionary states *for example* is similar in meaning to *for instance*. In the BLC, the phrase *for example* appeared 54 frequencies in the BLC and none was found in the textbooks. *For instance* occurred five frequencies and one frequency in the textbooks. The word *like* used as a preposition and the abbreviation of Latin phrase *exempligratia e.g.* appears 177 frequencies and two frequencies respectively and none of them occurs in the textbooks.

Table 26

*Different Structure of Phrases with Similar Meaning to “such as”*

Structural Pattern	Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
<b>such as</b>	Companies <i>such as</i> General Electronics, McTavish Restaurant, ... (+ a group of nouns)	-
	...manufacturers of earth moving vehicles, <i>such as</i> caterpillars, tractors and bulldozers. (a comma preceded, + a group of nouns)	-
	...can certainly include loyal customers <i>such as</i> you. (+ noun: you)	...fans which have been especially designed for hot climates <i>such as</i> Thailand. (+ noun: Thailand)
<b>like</b>	...that came from requests from people <i>like</i> you. (+ noun: you)	-
<b>for example</b>	...particularly interested in what equipment; <i>for example</i> , an overhead projector, 35-mm slide pro... (+ a group of nouns)	-
	Last week, <i>for example</i> , we shipped < number > units and handle... ( + clause)	-
<b>for instance</b>	-	Would you please supply information about your facilities, <i>for instance</i> , the conference room and rates and let us know whether you... (+ a group of nouns)
	<i>For instance</i> , it would be very helpful for me to... (+ clause)	-
<b>e.g.</b>	...to international health organizations, <i>e.g.</i> , the World Bank, U.S. Agency for... (+ a group of nouns)	-
	...me have some details of the Institute, <i>e.g.</i> how many people are trained... (+ clause)	-

The data in Table 26 show the pattern *such as* and *like* followed by a noun or group of nouns whereas *for example*, *for instance* and *e.g.* as an abbreviation of *for example* can be followed by a noun or clause. In the BLC, the patterns of sample 1 and 2 of *such as* are similar, being following by a set of things. The difference is the use of a

comma preceding the phrase. All the samples of the phrase *such as* in *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* and *the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* do not show the use of a comma placed before and after the phrase. Similarly, the two samples in the textbooks do not show the use of comma before and after this phrase. In the *BLC*, some samples show the use of a comma before, but not after the phrase. The structure of the samples with a comma prior the phrase is not different from those without a comma.

Other conditions *such as* item 6, air fare and living allowance...  
The other conditions, *such as* Item 6, Air Fare and Living Allowance;...

The two samples above have very similar patterns. They are different in the use of a comma before *such as*. It seems that a comma used prior this phrase can be left out. However, in the *BLC*, when the phrase is followed by a series of items, most samples show the use of a comma prior it. This means that the use of a comma can be used to avoid confusion with series of long phrases.

Concerning the phrases *for example* and *for instance*, the data in Table 26 show the use of commas before and after the phrases when they were not located at the beginning of the sentence. Also, a semicolon can be used before the phrase (see the 1<sup>st</sup> sample of *for example*).

Under function, the two words *such as* are frozen as a sequence of words when giving an example or list of examples to illustrate what is being discussed. Thus, it is a discourse connective which provides clarification or illustration. In Table 26, the examples function as a preposition, used before mentioning a specific thing, person, place, and so on. The data present that *such as* is close in meaning to *like* (the 3<sup>rd</sup> sample in the *BLC* and textbooks), *for example*, *for instance* and in short form *e.g.* For example, the 3<sup>rd</sup> sample of the phrase *such as* in the *BLC* and textbooks has similar meaning to *like*, used

when someone or something is in the same situation as another person or thing. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> samples of the phrase *for example* are used to introduce an example or the set of things. According to the frequencies shown, it seems that writers are fond of using *such as* when they want to introduce an example or list of examples.

***as soon as possible***: This fixed phrase *as soon as possible* appeared 166 frequencies in the *BLC*, ranked 19<sup>th</sup> and 12 frequencies, ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the textbooks. In email, this expression is normally used in a short form *asap*. The data below show this phrase appearing in the middle of the sentence, but not at the beginning.

Table 27

*Structure of “as soon as possible” in BLC and Textbooks*

Lexical Phrases In the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks	Frequency and Percentage	
		BLC	Textbooks
Please let me know <i>as soon as possible</i> so that we may revise the proposal to...  (at the end of the 1 <sup>st</sup> clause)	...would urge you to place an order <i>as soon as possible</i> as there has been a huge response...  (at the end of the 1 <sup>st</sup> clause)	52 (31.32%)	5 (41.7%)
I shall be in touch with you again <i>as soon as possible</i> to re-schedule our meeting.	-	9 (5.42%)	-
I hope to hear your reply <i>as soon as possible</i> .  (at the end of the sentence)	Please let us know your decision <i>as soon as possible</i> .  (at the end of the sentence)	105 (63.25%)	7 (58.3%)

Under function, this expression *as soon as possible* is considered a temporal connector indicating the time. It acts as an adverb used in order to make the receiver feel confident in what was said will be finished/will be done at the earliest possible time. Some writers use this phrase in the last paragraph before ending their letters in order to state what they want the readers to do for them, as samples shown in Table 27.

***we can...***: The pattern is considered a semi-fixed expression, ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the *BLC* and textbooks with the frequencies of 1,098 and 21 respectively. In the *BLC*

concordancer and textbooks, the pronoun *we* was used most among examples of this phrase. In both sources, this phrase rather appeared in the form of positive than negative. Some writers get confused between the use of *can* and *be able to*. Grammatically, the modal verb *can* is possible only in the present and has no infinitive form e.g., *This request is one we can accommodate with minimal disruption or...* (BLC) or *However, we can offer you another model of equally high quality* (Parisuthiman, 2005) whereas the phrase *be able* can be used with other tenses or the infinitive e.g., *It looks like we have been able to reach an agreement on the meeting date...* (present perfect) or *If a further discount is not possible, we would like to be able to pay in installments* (infinitive) (BLC) or *I am sorry that we were not able to clear your November statement for...* (past simple) (Geffner, 2007). Table 28 shows the use of these two features with the pronoun *we*.

Table 28

*Comparison of the Patterns “can” and “be able to”*

Structural Pattern	Frequency and Percentage	
	BLC	Textbooks
we + can	1,098 (0.22%)	21 (0.15%)
we + be able to	153 (0.014%)	11 (0.08%)

According to the data, it was obviously seen that the pattern *we can* was apparently used in the BLC and textbooks comparing with the other patterns.

Under function, writers frequently use *can* in the sentence since it is more common word to use whereas *be able to* seems a bit more formal and not really appropriate for everyday situations. This is supported by the data shown in Table 28. According to *the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, the modal verb *can* refers to various meanings such as to be able to do something, to be allowed to do when someone is given permission to do something, to ask somebody to do something and to talk about what is possible whereas *be able to* is used to refer to the ability to do something at that

time, not as permanent as *can*. However, in the *BLC* concordancer and textbooks, when the modal verb *can* and the phrase *be able to* occurred with the pronoun *we*, they had similar meaning as follows:

1. to refer to the ability to do something. According to the dictionary, *able* functions an adjective meaning having the power, skill or means to do something. The sentence *We are able to send you...* is like saying *We can send you...* The phrase *be able to* can be used instead of *can* for ability since both of them are interchangeable in certain tones and constructions of sentences and contexts. The examples are shown in Table 29.

Table 29

*Use of “can” and “be able to” Meaning Ability*

Structural Pattern	Lexical Phrases in BLC	Lexical Phrases in Textbooks
we can...	...monthly statements to find out more ways <i>we can</i> improve services to our customers.	I am pleased to tell you that <i>we can</i> install your new wireless network one month earlier than we thought.
we are able to...	...dates will be forthcoming as soon as <i>we are able to</i> complete a draft plan.	-

According to the data, the phrases *we can...* and *we are able to...* refer to what is possible.

2. to refer to possibility. It is noted that the modal verb *could*, which is the past simple of *can* is not used to refer to the past time but to mean what is possible e.g., *The meeting is on March 13 and we could meet in the lobby at 12.30 (BLC)* or *We would appreciate it very much if we could have your reply before that time (Parisuthiman, 2005)*. When writers want to refer to the past time, they use *be able to* instead e.g., *With the three-year term, we were able to reduce the monthly payment... (BLC)* or *I am sorry that we were not able to clear your November statement for...* (Littlejohn, 2005). Similarly, when they want to refer to the future time, they use *be able to*. For example, *I am pleased*

that you will be able to attend the annual meeting of... (BLC) or we are confident that we will be able to complete delivery by the middle of next month (Ashley, 2003).

Table 30

*Use of “we can” and “we are able to” Meaning Possibility*

Structural Pattern	Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
we can...	<i>We can send over some display pieces by messenger,...</i>	We hope that <i>we can send</i> one to you not later than December 15.
we are able to...	...but we are confident that <i>we are able to arrange</i> to get our materials and deliver...	...if you want to take part in the Fair, <i>we are able to arrange</i> visas.

3. to refer to polite offer. In this situation, the phrase *we can* is applied in the sentence for polite offer(s) of help. It also implies willingness of the writer. There are no instances of the phrase *we are able to* appearing in this context. The data are shown in the following table.

Table 31

*Use of “we can” Referring to Polite Offer*

BLC	Textbooks
<i>We can help with scheduling, warehousing, and delivering...</i> ( <i>can + help</i> )	-
I shall be delighted if <i>we can</i> be of service to you in any way. ( <i>can + be</i> )	-

**this is...:** This phrase is considered a semi-fixed phrase with 520 occurrences, ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the BLC concordancer and 11 frequencies in the 7<sup>th</sup> rank in the textbooks.

The word *this* is a determiner or demonstrative pronoun. It can exist with verb to be *is* and be located at the beginning or in the middle of the sentence. It can be preceded with a comma. Also, the comma can be placed after the pattern. The use of *this is* is in contrast

with the pattern *that is*. The data in the *BLC* and textbooks present the use of these two expressions as follows.

Table 32

*Comparison of “this is” and “that is”*

Structural Patterns	Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks	Frequency and Percentage	
			BLC	Textbooks
<i>this is</i>	<i>This is</i> because we would like you to continue the...	<i>This is</i> because our suppliers recently increased the price by 15%.	520	11
	<i>This is</i> due to the introduction of the new operating...	<i>This is</i> due to the recent fall of the dollar.		
	<i>This is</i> to confirm that I received your phone call...	<i>This is</i> to confirm the details of my telephone call this morning.		
	<i>This is</i> , unfortunately, a long process and we...	-		
	...contacted very soon by our office, <i>this is</i> an immediate notification.	As I said in my email of 24 February, <i>this is</i> a result of problems at your suppliers' factory.		
	...your report makes perfectly clear that <i>this is</i> a logical development in a period of...	We feel sure you will agree that <i>this is</i> a very competitive estimate, bearing in mind that we use...		
	We are sure that <i>this is</i> an oversight on your part <i>but</i> must ask you to give the..	-		
<i>that is</i>	<i>That is</i> why we must find out the reason so we...	<i>That is</i> why I wondered if any problems have arisen which I might be able to help you with.	125	1
	<i>That is</i> , they cause serious damage to the...	-		
	...for all major internal-use purchases -- <i>that is</i> , anything over \$50.	-		

The data show the use of the pattern *this is* had higher proportion in occurrence than *that is* (520 and 125 frequencies or fourfold). Grammatically, *that/this is* is followed by a clause (the conjunction *because/due to + reason*). The 3<sup>rd</sup> samples show their use with noun phrases (*a logical development* and *a very competitive estimate*) and the 4<sup>th</sup> samples present their use with infinitive *to*.

Under function, the phrase *this is* is used to refer to a person, thing, idea, event, time, and so on. Writers use this expression when they want to emphasize the present or immediate future time whereas *that is* is used to indicate a more distant. However, the pattern *that is* is sometimes viewed as a better choice in referring to what has preceded. In the *BLC* and textbooks, the examples of the phrase *this is* used to introduce something that the writer is going to speak about. It is noted that the last example demonstrated the use of this phrase in the situation of shifting a topic (*this is...but...*). Regarding the examples of the phrase *that is* in the *BLC* and textbooks, they are used in case of explanation, clarification, or making an example to be more accurate. It can be concluded that *this is* is used to emphasize what the writer is mentioning now and *that is* is used to explain what is mentioned earlier stating to be more obvious.

***we would like...:*** This expression is considered a semi-fixed expression with the pronoun *we* rather than *I* in the *BLC* and textbooks. In the *BLC*, there were 291 frequencies, ranked 8<sup>th</sup> and 17 frequencies, ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the five textbooks. Grammatically, the modal verb *would* is followed by the base form on a verb (*like*). This expression has many uses, as shown in Table 33.

Table 33

*Different Uses of “we would like...”*

Structural Pattern	Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the textbooks	Frequency and Percentage	
			BLC	Textbooks
+ <i>to infinitive</i>	We would like very much <i>to be</i> your guests, but unfortunately...	In particular, we would like <i>to know</i> the name of the ship that you are using, ...	228 (78.36%)	15 (88.24%)
	We would like <i>to</i> , at a minimum, <i>get</i> a maintenance...	-		
+ <i>object + to infinitive</i>	...to open a charge account last week and we would like <i>you to know</i> how much we appreciate this...	We would like <i>a collator</i> to run off more than 25 copies at any one time.	40 (13.75%)	2 (11.76%)
	We would like <i>consulting help to decide</i> whether we should...			
+ <i>noun/noun phrase</i>	We would like <i>official confirmation</i> in writing.	-	21 (7.22%)	-
+ <i>past participle (passive form)</i>	However, there are some points we would like <i>answered</i> before we make a decision.	-	2 (0.69%)	-

The data show the infinitive *to* is substantially used with the pattern in the BLC and none of other patterns appeared in the textbooks. It is noted that an object (*you* or *consulting* in gerund) can be used after the phrase and followed by the infinitive *to*. In the BLC, this phrase can be followed by noun/noun phrase or past participle phrase (v-ed).

Under function, when *would* is used with *like*, it has meaning similarly to *want* used to imply a desire if writers wish or if they could choose something. This phrase expresses politeness e.g., *We would like very much to be your guests, but unfortunately...*(BLC) or *We would like to make it clear that we are holding you to your delivery contract, and ...*(Ashley, 2003). In the BLC and textbooks, the examples of this phrase mostly expressed requests politely e.g., *The order has not already be in shipped,*

*we would like it sent air express because our stock...* (BLC) or *We would like to know the name of the ship that you are using...* (Littlejohn, 2005). The verb following the phrase can be in passive when something experiences the effect of an action such as the last example shown in Table 33 when some points are needed to be answered before making a decision.

Writers may get confused between the pattern *would like* and *should like*. In the BLC, the latter appeared 39 times whereas none was found in the textbooks. For example, *This allowance is made because we should like to do business with you* (+ to infinitive), *...before drafting the formal agreement we should like you to confirm them.* (+ object + to infinitive) and *...we should like some information about their financial...* (+ noun phrase). According to *the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, *should like* is substituted for *would like* when the subject is *I* or *we* since it is formal and mainly used in British English. With the frequencies of these two patterns in the BLC, it seems that writers prefer using *would like* (291) to *should like* (39) although the latter is considered more formal.

***please call...***: This pattern is considered a semi-fixed expression. In the positive form, the verb *call* is used most with the word *please* in the BLC with 288 frequencies, ranked 9<sup>th</sup> and followed by the phrase *please let me know*, *please accept*, *please send* and *please contact* respectively. However, *please call* did not appear at all in the textbooks. The verb used most with the word *please* in the textbooks was *send* with 12 frequencies, ranked 6<sup>th</sup> and followed by *please let us know*, *please contact*, *please accept* and *please confirm*. Table 34 shows various verbs used with *please*, ranked 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> in both sources.

Table 34

*Different Verbs Used with “please”*

Structural Pattern	BLC	Textbooks	Frequency and Percentage	
			BLC	Textbooks
<i>please + verb</i>	please call...(1)	please send...(1)	288	12
	please let me know...(2)	please let us know...(2)	214	9
	please accept...(3)	please contact...(3)	209	8
	please send...(4)	please accept...(4)	167	4
	please contact...(5)	please confirm...(5)	146	3

As shown in the data, almost all the verbs appearing with *please* in both sources are requests. In a request, *please* is put at the beginning or at the end of the sentence. The data demonstrate the verbs *call* and *send* appearing most with *please* in the *BLC* and textbooks. The former is both intransitive and transitive while the latter is transitive. The use of *please call* as a transitive verb significantly appears more than intransitive with the frequencies of 256 and 32 in the *BLC*. The phrase *please call* is followed by different patterns as follows.

Table 35

*Use of “please call...” in Two Different Patterns*

Structural Patterns	Sample lexical phrases in the BLC
<i>transitive</i>	<i>Please call</i> us with any questions you may have. ( <i>us</i> =object form of ‘we’)
<i>intransitive</i>	If that appeals to you, <i>please call</i> , and we can discuss the details.

In intransitive verbs, the prepositions used with this verb in the *BLC* are various such as *in*, *on* or *for*, but in the *BLC*, the preposition *at* occurs most with 122 frequencies. The examples of *please call* followed by prepositions are as follows:

Table 36

*“Please call” with Various Prepositions and Meanings*

<b>Intransitive</b>	<b>Lexical Phrases in the BLC</b>
<i>preposition: at</i> + telephone number/place	<i>Please call</i> at 1-800- 246-6660 or write. Therefore, <i>please call</i> at the credit office on the...
<i>preposition: on</i> ( <i>call on</i> = formally ask someone to do something)	..., or other Roberts Company products, <i>please call</i> on my personal line (612) 555-0819.
<i>preposition: for</i> ( <i>call for</i> = publicly ask for something to be done)	...financial difficulties at the moment, <i>please call</i> for an appointment to discuss the problem...
<i>preposition: in</i> ( <i>call in</i> = ask someone to come)	<i>Please call in</i> and see us; we are confident that you...
appearing with <i>if-clause</i>	<i>Please call</i> if you have any questions.
appearing with <i>to infinitive</i>	<i>Please call</i> to set up a meeting.

The data show the use of this phrase as an intransitive can be followed by *if*-clause or infinitive *to*. The following table presented the use of *please send*, which appeared most in the textbooks. The examples are as follows.

Table 37

*Comparison of the Pattern “please send” in the BLC and Textbooks*

<b>Lexical Phrases in the BLC</b>	<b>Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks</b>
So <i>please send</i> this information as soon as possible. (+ direct object)	<i>Please send</i> five dozen crystal vases as soon as possible. (+ direct object)
Therefore, <i>please send</i> us a check or a money order. (+ indirect object)	If you can provide this accommodation, <i>please send</i> me a copy of your brochure and also your... (+ indirect object)

According to the data, the pattern *please send* occurred with direct and indirect objects in both sources since it is transitive verb. In the textbooks and *BLC*, it is followed by an indirect object with higher frequencies (9 out of 12 and 107 out of 167 respectively).

Under function, the word *please* is normally used to make a request or suggestion to be more polite. All examples of the phrases *please call* and *please send* in

the *BLC* and textbooks showed their function as a request. The verb *call* has various meanings depending on the context (see Table 36), but the meaning appeared in the *BLC* most is to telephone someone. In the *BLC*, the phrase *please call* was found occurring with the verb *collect*. In the context, *collect* was not used as a verb but collocated with the main verb *call* meaning to make a telephone call which is paid for by the person who receives it (The definition of *call collect* from *the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*). The dictionary states that *call collect* is used by the American while the British use *reverse (the) charges*. *Call...collect* appeared 6 times in the *BLC* and none was found in the textbooks e.g., *If you'd rather respond by phone, please call (me) collect at 123-456-6789*. However, none of the phrase *reverse the charges* occurred in both sources. This means that most writers prefer using the phrase *call collect* in American to British English.

***I'm sure...***: This pattern is a semi-fixed expression occurring in a short form most in the *BLC*, ranked 18<sup>th</sup> whereas in the textbooks the full form *we are sure* appeared most, ranked 11<sup>th</sup>. Also, the adjective *certain* appeared in use in both sources. In the *BLC*, the pattern *I'm certain* appeared in a short form rather than a full form whereas in the textbooks, there was only one pattern of *I am certain* used in a full form. The structural pattern of these two patterns appearing in both sources is similar since they are followed by a noun clause [+ (that)] most (see Table 38).

Table 38

*Comparison of the Two Patterns Using “sure” and “certain” in Short and Full Forms*

Structural Pattern	Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases In the Textbooks	Frequency	
			BLC	Textbooks
<b>I'm sure</b>	<i>I'm sure</i> we can resolve the matter and clear the... (in a short form)	-	93	-
<b>I am sure</b>	<i>I am sure</i> that we can set up a gradual increasing... ( <i>that</i> can be left out)	The statement lists a purchase for \$83.95 , including tax, which <i>I am sure</i> I did not make.	76	2
<b>we're sure</b>	...relationship we used to have, and which <i>we're sure</i> you valued as much as we did.	These products are among the finest made, and <i>we're sure</i> you'd like to receive your purchase without further delay.	8	1
<b>we are sure</b>	<i>We are sure</i> that you will be satisfied with not only...	<i>We are sure</i> you will enjoy your stay here and look forward to seeing you.	73	7
<b>I'm certain</b>	<i>I'm certain</i> you could make a significant contribution...	-	11	-
<b>I am certain</b>	<i>I am certain</i> that under the circumstances you will...	<i>I am certain</i> my colleagues will find this information extremely interesting.	5	1
<b>we're certain</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>we are certain</b>	We are certain that a trial order will give you full...	-	7	-

Under function, the adjective *sure* is mostly used when people want to represent a feeling of confidence to another person. The word *certain* is similar in meaning to *sure*, but the latter ends to sound a little less formal. This means that they are interchangeable. Normally, people use *sure* to make confident maybe 90-99% true. The pattern *I am sure/certain* is a discourse device used as an evaluator to judge something. The data in Table 38 demonstrate *that* as a conjunction used after the adjective *sure* or *certain* to introduce a clause which shows what the writer writes or thinks, or states a fact

or reason. It can be said that *sure* is a word that denotes something that is certain or a fact of something that may not be changed. The data show the function these two patterns as follows:

1. for future events e.g., *We are sure you will be very satisfied with the consignment and look forward to your next order* (Ashley, 2003) or *...this action is necessary, but I am certain that under the circumstances you will be impressed with...*(BLC).

2. for an event that may have already taken place e.g., *I am sure that what I learned from your talk will...* or *I'm certain no one there felt that he or she did...*(BLC).

3. for an event that indicates a possibility rather than a certainty e. g., *I am sure that we can set up a gradual increasing...* or *...because I'm certain I could make a significant contribution...*(BLC).

***we are pleased...***: This pattern is considered a semi-fixed expression appearing 149 frequencies in the *BLC*, ranked 20<sup>th</sup> and five frequencies, ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the textbooks. The adjective *pleased* used at the beginning of the sentence did not appear in the *BLC* and textbooks. The expression e.g., *Pleased to meet you* is considered a fragment which is rather used in spoken language than written language. Grammatically, it can occur with various prepositions such as *about*, *with*, and *for*. However, in both the *BLC* concordance and textbooks, it occurred with the only preposition *with*. Table 39 shows the examples of this expression used with three patterns occurring in the *BLC* and textbooks.

Table 39

*Different Patterns of “we are pleased...” in the BLC and Textbooks*

Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks	Frequency and Percentage	
		BLC	Textbooks
Regarding your order No. 150, <i>we are pleased to</i> inform you that your consignment of... (+ to infinitive)	<i>We are pleased to</i> have received your letter of August 19, 2008 together with... (+ to infinitive)	137 (91.95%)	4 (80%)
<i>We are pleased (that)</i> you have been satisfied with our past... (+ that-clause)	<i>We are pleased (that)</i> you will be participating in the Ecology Colloquium sponsored by the... (+ that-clause)	9 (6.04%)	1 (20%)
May we add that <i>we are pleased with</i> the way you executed this order. (+ preposition: <i>with</i> something)	-	3 (2.01%)	-

The data demonstrate the expression used with *to* infinitive most since it had a substantial number of percentages in both sources. The adjective *pleased* in the 2<sup>nd</sup> examples is followed by a *that*-clause which could be left out. None of prepositions appeared in the textbooks.

Some writers may get confused between *I am/we are pleased* and *I/we (would) appreciate*. The latter also frequently appeared in business letters. The expression *we (would) appreciate* appeared 116 times in the *BLC* concordancer and 10 times in the textbooks. The word *appreciate* is a verb and mostly used at the beginning of a sentence with the pronoun *we* rather than *I* in both sources. Its structure is different from *I am/we are pleased*. This expression is followed by a noun/noun phrase (see the examples 1, 2, and 3 in Table 39). If it is followed by the pronoun *it*, *if*-clause is used (see the examples 4 and 5) as a subordinate clause. The use of this pattern is shown as follows.

Table 40

*Different Pattern of “we (would) appreciate...”*

Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
<i>We would appreciate</i> a prompt response as we need the material... (+ noun phrase: <i>a prompt response</i> )	<i>We would appreciate</i> your sending terms and conditions. (+ noun phrase: <i>your sending terms and conditions</i> )
If no problems exist, <i>we would appreciate</i> payment by return mail at (address). (+ noun: <i>payment</i> )	<i>We would appreciate</i> delivery within the next six weeks, and look forward to your acknowledgement. (+ noun: <i>delivery</i> )
<i>We appreciate</i> the opportunity to assist you in your future... (+ noun phrase: <i>the opportunity</i> )	<i>We appreciate</i> your interest in our product and our and your giving us the opportunity to... (+ noun phrase: <i>your interest</i> )
<i>We would appreciate it</i> if you would distribute some copies... (The modal <i>would</i> is used in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> clause)	<i>We would appreciate it</i> if you would consider our proposal to act as your sole agency in Thailand. (The modal <i>would</i> is used in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> clause)
<i>We would appreciate it</i> if you could look into why payment... (To signal displeasure in complaints)	However, <i>we would appreciate it</i> if you could clear the account as soon as possible. (To signal displeasure in complaints)

Under function, the expression *we are/I am pleased* is used as a response to express endorsing. Writers may misunderstand and use the patterns *I am/we are pleased* and *I/we (would) appreciate* interchangeably. Regarding the word *appreciate*, it is used to thank someone in a polite way or to say that they are grateful for something he/she has done (*the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*). This means that both of them have different meaning. Thus, in writing business letters, the writers should pay attention to them and select the right word for the appropriate context. The expression *we would appreciate it if you would/could...* functions as a request and the modal verb makes the sentence sound more polite. It should be noted that this pattern can be used where the formality of polite ending is deliberately suspended to discourage further communication with regard to a particular matter (see the last examples in Table 40). In the *BLC*, there are some adverbs used with these two expressions to give emphasis on feeling. The top

three adverbs occurring before the adjective *pleased* were *very*, *so*, and *most* e.g., *we're so pleased to hear from you after having read...* And, the only adverb occurring before or after the verb *appreciate* was *very much* e.g., *...send the information before <date>, we would appreciate it very much* or *We would very much appreciate your help in this matter.* In the textbooks, none of adverbs appeared.

***I am writing...***: This pattern is considered a semi-fixed expression occurring 122 times, ranked 26<sup>th</sup> and 13 times in the textbooks, ranked 5<sup>th</sup>. The first person pronoun *I* is used with this expression more than *we* in both the BLC and textbooks. Present participle is used to form continuous tense. Almost all the examples (104 out of 122 frequencies or 85%) of the expression occurred with the infinitive *to*. In the textbooks, the pattern was followed by a phrase *in connection with* most (6 out of 13 frequencies or 46%) most while there was only one instance of the phrase appearing in the BLC. In the BLC, the prepositions used with this expression were *in*, *on*, and *with* e.g., *I am writing in response to your complaint about the...*, *I am writing on behalf of everyone at <location>...*, *I am writing on Modern Business Organisation, ...* or *I am writing with the thought you may from time to...* while there were two prepositions (*in* and *on*) used in the textbooks.

Under function, when this expression is used in the sentence, it refers to the activity of writing is happening now or around now. It functions as an opening to indicate the purpose for writing a business letter. In the BLC, it is noted that a writer uses the phrase *as a matter of urgency* to add emphasis that he/she wants to dealt with a reader as soon as possible e.g., *Not having heard from you, I am writing as a matter of urgency, to ask you to...* Its use in various structures is as follows.

Table 41

*Different Patterns of "I am writing..."*

Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
<i>I am writing</i> to ask for your cooperation in bringing... (+ <i>to</i> infinitive)	<i>I am writing</i> to complain about our advertisement which appeared in your newspaper on 10 July. (+ <i>to</i> infinitive)
<i>I am writing to you</i> concerning your order, No.11... (British version)	<i>I am writing to you</i> concerning your order, No.CU11542d, which... (British version)
<i>I am writing you</i> because of my interest in joining your... (American version)	-
<i>I am writing</i> in connection with a planned visit to Japan... (as a intransitive verb)	<i>I am writing</i> in connection with your order 2789 for... (as an intransitive verb)
<i>I am writing</i> this letter in reference to the work... (+ object as a transitive verb)	-
<i>I am writing</i> hoping to obtain some information... (+ -ing verb: hoping)	<i>I am writing</i> concerning our invoice no.H931 for \$919.63, a copy of which is enclosed. (+ -ing verb: concerning)

***We/I regret...***: The pattern is considered a semi-fixed expression. The pattern *we regret* occurred with the frequencies of 122, ranked 26<sup>th</sup> in the *BLC* and *I regret* was ranked 12<sup>th</sup> occurring 6 times the most in the textbooks. The expression *we/I regret* is rather used at the beginning of the sentence in both the *BLC* concordancer and the textbooks. In both sources, the patterns followed by this expression are shown in Table 42.

Table 42

*Pattern “we/I regret...” in Different Uses*

Lexical Phrase in the BLC	Lexical Phrase in the Textbooks
<i>We regret</i> (that) we had no reply to our letter of... (+ that-clause)	..., <i>I regret</i> (that) we must turn down... (+ that-clause)
<i>We regret</i> , therefore, that we can not accept your... (+ adverb: therefore + that-clause)	<i>We regret</i> , however, that we cannot supply the goods... (+ adverb: however + that-clause)
Although we appreciate your order, <i>we regret</i> to note (that) the prices of our products... (+ to infinitive + that-clause)	<i>We regret</i> to inform you (that) we are unable to deliver the... (+ to infinitive + that-clause)
I would like to say how much <i>we regret</i> having to take that action. (+ v.ing)	-
...inconvenience in clearing your calendars, and <i>we regret</i> the misunderstanding. (+ noun phrase)	<i>I regret</i> this unfortunate situation over which we had no control and apologize for the inconvenience caused. (+ noun phrase)

The data in both sources show the pattern was mostly used with that-clause.

*That* is used to connect a subordinate clause to the preceding verb (*regret*). The phrase *I/we regret...that* comes from the full form *I/we regret the fact that*. In the example 2 and 3, the pattern could be followed by *adverb* and *to* infinitive, which could be omitted and the meaning would not be changed from the original sentence. The data in both sources show the only two adverbs (*therefore* and *however*) appearing with this expression. It seems that the pattern followed by *to* infinitive refers to something being done now whereas *v.ing* (*gerund*) referring to something done in the past. The structure with gerund was not found in the textbooks.

The data in the *BLC* and textbooks show the verb *apologize/apologise* mostly used with the preposition *for*. The pronoun *we* is used most with the verb

*apologize/apologise* in the *BLC* and textbooks with the frequencies of 56 and four frequencies respectively. The following examples are shown below.

Table 43

*Verb Phrase “apologize/apologise...for” in Different Patterns*

Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
I <i>apologize for</i> any difficulty I may have caused you. ( + preposition <i>for</i> + noun phrase)	..., and <i>apologize for</i> the inconvenience caused. ( + preposition <i>for</i> + noun phrase)
We <i>apologize for</i> applying the wrong discount to your order... ( + preposition <i>for</i> + v.ing/gerund)	-
First let me <i>apologize for</i> not having cleared your June statement... ( + preposition <i>for</i> + not + v.ing)	First let me <i>apologize for</i> not having cleared out June statement or replying of your letter of 10 August. ( + preposition <i>for</i> + not + v.ing)
I <i>apologize</i> once again <i>for</i> the inconvenience we caused you and hope... (+ adverb as modifier + preposition <i>for</i> )	We <i>apologize</i> once more <i>for</i> the inconvenience we have caused you. (+ adverb as modifier + preposition <i>for</i> )

Under function, this phrase functions as a refusing and also is a marker to express sympathy. It has similar meaning to the verb *apologize* (UK usually *apologise*). The American version is used more than the British version in both the *BLC* concordancer and textbooks. In business letters, it is used by the writer to explain the reason for the mistake or offense he/she has made before discussing something else in the letter. According to the data shown in the *BLC* and textbooks, the meaning of the two verbs *regret* and *apologize/apologise* is not different. When the sender writes that he/she regrets something, it means he/she apologizes to have to give the receiver some displeasing information.

***I have enclosed...:*** This pattern is considered a semi-fixed expression with 179 frequencies, ranked in 17<sup>th</sup> in the *BLC*. It was not ranked as one of the top 30 lexical phrases in the textbooks. The word *enclosed* can be in the form of an adjective; however,

in this study, it is mostly used as a verb in the form of the present perfect tense. In the *BLC* and textbooks, the pronoun used with this verb most is *I*. In the *BLC*, the two expressions were mostly occurred in full forms and the occurrences occurred in the textbooks were all full forms.

It is noted that some examples in the *BLC* substitute the verb *attach* with *enclose*. The phrase *I have attached* appeared 28 frequencies in the *BLC*. The structure of *I have enclosed* is not different from *I have enclosed*. The parallel structure of these two expressions is as follows.

*I have attached a brochure of the latest models of PPc..*  
*I have enclosed a brochure of the hotel so you can select..*

Table 44

*Use of “I’ve/have enclosed” and “I’ve/have attached”*

<b>Structural Pattern</b>	<b>Lexical Phrases in the BLC</b>	<b>Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks</b>
<b>I’ve/have enclosed</b>	<i>I have enclosed supporting documents to show why this...</i> (+ a noun phrase)	<i>I have enclosed a bank draft for US \$ 7.50 covering the cost of the order and...</i> (+ a noun phrase)
	<i>I’ve enclosed a brochure with color photographs, a detail...</i> (used as a short form)	-
<b>I’ve/have attached</b>	<i>I have attached to this letter a summary of error...</i> (+ a noun phrase: <i>a summary of error</i> )	-
	<i>I’ve attached an executive summary of a business plan...</i> (used as a short form)	<i>I’ve attached details of the materials that we require to complete these orders.</i> (used as a short form)

The examples in Table 44 present the use of the two verbs in different patterns *I’ve/have enclosed* and *I’ve/have attached*. In the textbooks, there was only one example of the pattern *I’ve attached* in a short form. It obviously seems that *I have enclosed* can be

substituted for *I have attached* according to the examples shown in both the *BLC* concordancer and the textbook.

Under function, the expression *I've/have enclosed* appeared in business letters since writers want to indicate another purpose in writing. According to *the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, *attach* refers to fasten or become firmly fixed together and *enclose* refers to send something in the same envelope or parcel; not attached to the letter. However, in both the *BLC* and textbooks, the use of *I have attached* is similar to *I have enclosed* since both of them refer to the action which have not been completed. The writers are in the process of sending something to the readers. However, it seems that the latter is more formal since the former is frequently used in emails which are considered less formal than letters. Therefore, it can be said that the verb *enclose* is used in more formal situation than *attach*.

***within + period***: This pattern is considered prepositional phrase. In the *BLC* concordancer, it was ranked 21<sup>st</sup> and frequently followed by a number plus the noun *days* most with 143 frequencies and plus a noun *week(s)* with 65 frequencies secondly. In the textbooks, the pattern *within...days* was ranked 12<sup>th</sup>, occurring 6 times equally to the pattern *within...week(s)*.

Under function, if the whole phrase answers the question *when*, it will function as an adverb modifying the verb and specifying when the action needed to be done. The preposition *within* is a function word to indicate a situation taking place before the end of a specific time. For instance, *...shipped the next day and usually arrive within 2-3 working days (BLC)* or *It would be no trouble to send them within the next fortnight (Ashley, 2003)*. In these two examples, the prepositional phrase *within...* modifies the verbs *arrive* and *send*.

Table 45

Pattern “*within + time period*”

Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
<p>..., you will certainly receive the goods <i>within a week</i>,...</p> <p>(stating the period of time)</p>	-
<p><i>Within 10 working days</i> from the date of this letter, we must have a payment in full.</p> <p>(specifying the certain time)</p>	<p>Unless we hear from you <i>within seven days</i>, we will be force to take legal action.</p> <p>(specifying the certain time)</p>

According to the 1<sup>st</sup> example in Table 45, the seller guarantees the goods which will be sent to the customer within 7 days or sooner than 7 days. In this case, the word *certainly* as an adverb is used to state something without doubt. As shown in the data, it is noted that when a writer assures a receiver of doing something within a certain time frame, the receiver would feel reassured as well. The last sample taken from the Textbooks demonstrates the use of the prepositional phrase to insist the receiver that he/she has to pay the complete amount of money he/she owes and if it has not been received 10 days starting from the day that is written on the letter, it is too late. In this sample, the modal verb *must* is used by the writer as an order for the receiver to do something inside a particular period of time. Regarding the last example in the textbooks, the receiver has to do something within the particular time, otherwise the writer would use the legal system to settle the argument.

Some writers get confused between the prepositions *within* and *in*. For example, the phrase *in 4 years* means a situation will occur in 4 years time while *within 4 years* means sometime between now, and not more than 4 years. It can be seen that the pattern *within + period of time* typically had a summarizing function.

***from you soon***: This prepositional phrase was found 133 frequencies in the 22<sup>nd</sup> rank whereas nine frequencies appeared in the textbooks in the 9<sup>th</sup> rank. It does not

appear at the beginning of a sentence but at the end of a sentence instead. It is used before ending a letter. The words located between the pronoun *you* and the adverb *soon* are *again*, *very* and *again very*. These adverbs are used to modify the word *soon*. In *BLC* concordancer and textbooks, the verb used with this phrase most is *hear*. The other verbs used with this phrase are *receive*, *buy* and *need* respectively and appear with the various nouns (*payment*, *order*, and *reply*),

Under function, it expresses the writer's willingness to deal with the receiver in the future. Moreover, it implies that the writer would like to get in contact with the receiver within a short time. This supports the reason why the verb *hear* is used with this phrase. The prepositional phrase *from you soon* could not be used with the verb *see*, but the verb *hear* only e.g., *I look forward to hearing from you soon (BLC)* or *We hope to hear from you soon (Sawangvaroros, 2006)*. The adverb *again* is frequently used to emphasize that something has happened and will happen again e.g., *I hope to hear from you again very soon (BLC)* or *We look forward to hearing from you again soon (Ashley, 2003)*. In the *BLC*, this adverb was used with the phrase *from you...soon* most. The verb *see* was used with the pronoun *you* without the preposition *from*. The adverb *again* can occur with the verbs *see* and *hear* as a modifier, but only the verb *see* can be followed by the date or place.

***in the future, in the past* and *at this time*:** These three prepositional phrases were ranked in 15<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup> place with 207, 125 and 122 frequencies respectively in the *BLC*. They begin with a preposition, followed by a determiner and ending with a noun. The phrase (*the future/the past/this time*) serves as an object of the preposition (*in/at*). The object consists of the determiner (*the/this*) acting as an adjective to modify the noun (*future/past/time*). These prepositional phrases can be located at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a sentence. *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary*

*English* states that *in future/in past* is UK English whereas *in the future/in the past* is US English. In the *BLC*, the American version substantially appears higher than the British version (207 and 30 frequencies respectively). In the textbooks, none of the British version was found. The examples of these three prepositional phrases located in different positions are shown as follows.

Table 46

*Different Positions of the Three Patterns “in the future”, “in the past”, and “at this time”*

Prepositional Phrases	BLC	Textbooks
in the future	<i>In the future</i> , we would appreciate it if you would send us... (at the beginning)	-
	We will, <i>in the future</i> , address all invoices to your Accounting... (in the middle)	-
	I promise to be more careful <i>in the future</i> . (at the end)	...we hope the steps we are now taking will ensure the safe arrival of all your orders <i>in the future</i> . (at the end)
in the past	<i>In the past six months</i> , our office supplies budget... (at the beginning, a comma is used)	<i>In the past few weeks</i> a number of faults have appeared in the electrical circuits and the flooring... (at the beginning, a comma is omitted)
	Thanks for the consideration you have given us <i>in the past</i> . (at the end)	-

*(Continued)*

Prepositional Phrases	BLC	Textbooks
	<i>At this time</i> , we do not have any specific plans for... (at the beginning, a comma is used)	-
at this time	The only other option I can suggest <i>at this time</i> is to find another business currently... (in the middle)	-
	...we will remove your offer from our list <i>at this time</i> . (at the end)	-

Under function, the prepositional phrase normally functions as an adverb to modify a verb. These three prepositional phrases *in the future* indicated a period of time that is coming, *in the past* expressed the time before the present, and *at this time* referred to around the time period of now. In Table 46, the examples of the phrase *in the future* expressed a decision about the plan or action which is expected to happen after the present time. The examples of *in the past* presented the period before and until, but not including the period of time before and until the present. And, the examples of *at this time* related to a situation which is happening at the moment of writing. When it is used, a writer would like to inform the reader that what has been mentioned in the letter is happening at the present time, not in the past or in the future.

***before the end of***: This prepositional phrase appeared 6 times, ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in the textbooks, but did not appear in the list of the top 30 high-frequency lexical phrases in the *BLC*. There was only one example of this phrase appearing at the beginning of the sentence whereas none appeared in the textbooks. The examples are shown as follows.

Table 47

*Pattern “before the end of” in Different Position*

Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
<i>Before the end of the month</i> payments are due to us from a... (at the beginning without a comma)	-
...put it on the Japanese market sometime <i>before the end of this year.</i> (at the end)	...put it on the Japanese market sometime <i>before the end of this year.</i> (at the end)

Under function, this prepositional phrase denotes time. In the textbooks, other prepositions used with *the end of* were *by* and *until* whereas in the *BLC* the preposition used most with *the end of* was *at*, followed by the preposition *by* and other prepositions appearing were *around*, *from*, *for*, and *through*. Some writers get confused with the prepositions *by* and *at*, which were frequently found in business letters. The pattern of these three phrases is similar but there is a slight difference in their context.

Table 48

*Use of Three Different Prepositions before the Pattern “the end of”*

Structural Pattern	Lexical Phrases in the BLC	Lexical Phrases in the Textbooks
before the end of..	...as my claim is unlikely to be settled <i>before the end of</i> next month.	-
by the end of..	...you will be able to settle your account <i>by the end of</i> next month.	We have now settled into our new offices and will have a fully trained staff <i>by the end of</i> next month.
at the end of..	I will call you <i>at the end of</i> next month, probably early in the morning.	-

The examples in Table 48 show the three phrases followed by the point of time. The time period of the phrase *before the end of next month* is shorter than *by the end of next month*. If a writer uses *by the end of*, he or she means it has to be settled no later than the end of next month. This means the deadline is at the end of next month. Further, *by the end of next month* and *at the end of next month* are not the same. The latter means

the time in the final day of next month whereas the former refers to the time before next month has ended. Thus, the time related to *at the end of next month* is more restrictive. Some writers use *before the end of...* as a promise for customers, so that those will be pleased for a shorter waiting period. Generally, in order to set the time for both buyer and seller, the use of phrase *by the end of...* is chosen rather than *before the end of...*

***in fact*** and ***with regard to***: Both of these prepositional phrases are considered logical connectors. The phrase *in fact* had 129 frequencies in the 23<sup>rd</sup> rank and no frequency found in the textbooks whereas *with regard to* occurred five frequencies in the textbooks and 39 frequencies found in the *BLC*. Both phrases are located at the beginning of the sentence rather than in the middle of the sentence. Their features are presented as follows.

Table 49

*Two Phrases of “in fact” and “with regard to” in the Different Positions*

Structural Pattern	BLC	Textbooks
	<i>In fact</i> , many of our customers have been able to... (at the beginning, with a comma)	-
	<i>In fact</i> there already have been requests that you... (at the beginning, without a comma)	-
	The tools are <i>in fact</i> still with forwarding agents... (in the middle, without a comma)	-
in fact	...is documentation which verifies that, <i>in fact</i> , your conditions have already been met. (in the middle, with commas)	-
	...been a top priority with our company; <i>in fact</i> , good customer relations are the keys... (in the middle, with a semi-colon)	-
	...similar to ours for a lower price – <i>in fact</i> , you can buy them many times over. (in the middle, with a dash)	-

(Continued)

Structural Pattern	BLC	Textbooks
	<p><i>With regard to</i> your offer, I should tell you straight...</p> <p>(+ noun phrase, used at the beginning with a comma)</p>	<p><i>With regard to</i> the electrical fault, we have found that spotlights have either failed to work,...</p> <p>(+ noun phrase, used at the beginning with a comma)</p>
	<p><i>With regard to</i> the electrical faults we have found that...</p> <p>(+ noun phrase, used at the beginning without a comma)</p>	-
with regard to	<p>If you have any further questions <i>with regard to</i> the contract, or anything else, please...</p> <p>(+ noun phrase, used in the middle without a comma)</p>	<p>..., we suggest them to contact them <i>with regard to</i> compensation.</p> <p>(+ noun phrase, used in the middle without a comma)</p>
	<p>...suggest we amend present company policy <i>with regard to</i> accepting signatures under power of...</p> <p>(+ gerund, used in the middle without a comma)</p>	-
	<p>Describe their technical background <i>with regard to</i>?</p> <p>(at the end, without a comma)</p>	-

A comma is added after the two phrases *in fact* and *with regard to* when they are used to begin the sentence. When they are placed in the middle of the sentence, the comma can be added or left out. The phrase *with regard to* is followed by a noun phrase or gerund with or without a comma. Also, it can be preceded with the dash or semicolon. This means that the dash or semicolon could substitute a comma before the phrase. The two phrases are used to join two independent clauses and the comma, dash or semicolon indicate that the two independent clauses are part of the same larger idea.

#### Table 50

#### Use of “*in fact*” in the BLC concordancer

The sole purpose of this letter, *in fact*, is to say 'Thank you' for your...  
 This offer is too hot not to cool down. *In fact*, it will be dead cold by < date >, and...  
 The tools are *in fact* still with forwarding agents.  
 ...receive the PRODUCT 1300 yesterday, when *in fact* we had ordered the 2300.

Table 50 shows the phrase *in fact* in the 1<sup>st</sup> example could be left out without changing the meaning of the sentence. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> example, the writer used the phrase to say more about a previous statement. It is noted that when the sentence was short, no comma was applied in the sentence (see the 3<sup>rd</sup> example). In the last sample, the word *when* appearing with this phrase functioned as a conjunction linking the two independent clauses.

Under function, if the writer wants to slow down the reader in order to add emphasis on what he/she had just stated, the phrase *in fact* would be used. Also, it shows its use to emphasize that the truth about a situation is the opposite of or different from what has been mentioned (see the last example in Table 50).

Regarding the phrase *with regard to*, it can be substituted for some phrases in this study. According to *the Longman Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the synonyms of the phrase *with regard to* are *in regard to*, *as regards*, *in* or *with reference to* or *with respect to*. None of these phrases were found in the textbooks. The frequencies of each phrase are shown as follows.

Table 51

*Synonyms of “with regard to” in the BLC Concordancer*

Structural Pattern	Lexical phrase	Frequency
with regards to	Thank you for all your efforts on my behalf <i>with regards to</i> the LL Bean organization.	1
in regard to	<i>In regard to</i> our proposal for a joint project with the...	9
in regards to	<i>In regards to</i> your inquiry of NOV. 14 shipping your...	1
as regards	<i>As regards</i> your letter requesting our products...	7
with reference to	...use shall review the shipping documents <i>with reference to</i> the approved list from the General...	29
in reference to	<i>In reference to</i> your advertisement in the Japan Times on...	4
with respect to	...but to reduce our export to you by 10% <i>with respect to</i> the 1981 figure from the coming September...	13

These phrases are compound prepositions and could be located at the beginning or in the middle of the sentence. In the table, the phrase *with reference to* occurred most, followed by *with respect to* and *in regard to* respectively. The word *regard* is a noun and considerably occurs with the preposition *with* or *in*. Grammatically, the preposition *with* can be substituted for *in* and both of them have a similar meaning, but *with regard to* is slightly more formal. The phrase *in regard to* appeared nine frequencies while *in regards to* and *with regards to* appeared once each. It is noted that the *regard* is the singular and a noun following should be in singular as well. The website of *Dictionary.com* supports that *regard* is traditionally used in the singular in the phrase *in regard (not in regards) to*. This means that the two phrases *in regards to* and *with regards to* are considered nonstandard in written language.

Some writers use the prepositions *about*, *on*, *with*, *in* or *for* to substitute these prepositional phrases since these prepositions are considered too direct. The examples of *in regard to* and *with regard to* were demonstrated as follows.

..., we were thoroughly satisfied ***in regard to*** quality, timeliness of completion, and... (= *with*)  
***With regard to*** your letter dated September 10th, 1988, ... (= *in, for*)  
 ...may be able to give him information ***with regard to*** the type of products that we would need...  
 (= *in, on, about, for*)

The first example was taken from the textbook while the other two were taken from the *BLC*. The prepositions which have similar meaning to these prepositional phrases are shown in the brackets.

Under function, *regard* has positive connotations. When the connectors *in regard to*, *as regards*, *in* or *with reference to*, and *in* or *with respect to* are used, they refer to concerning or about. *Regards* in plural is usually used as a means to express *best wishes*. The data in Table 51 show the phrases *with regards to* and *in regards to* rarely occurred. It seems that if it is applied in a sentence, it should be *as regards*. Referring to

the last example, the phrase *with regards to* was used as a complimentary close to a letter to indicate personal consideration. Consequently, in writing business letters, the writer should use context and sentence rhythm in choosing the most suitable phrase to be applied in sentences.





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