SULTAN ZARİF KILIÇ

# THE USE OF FORMULAIC LANGUAGE BY ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) LEARNERS IN WRITING PROFICIENCY EXAMS

A MASTER'S THESIS

BY

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THE PROGRAM OF TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
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2015

*To my beloved family*

# The Use of Formulaic Language by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learners in Writing Proficiency Exams

The Graduate School of Education
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Sultan Zarif Kılıç

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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

The Use of Formulaic Language by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learners in Writing Proficiency Exams

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Oral Defence: May 2015

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

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# ABSTRACT

THE USE OF FORMULAIC LANGUAGE BY ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) LEARNERS IN WRITING PROFICIENCY EXAMS

Sultan Zarif Kılıç

M.A., Program of Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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June 2015

This study investigates the ways EFL learners use formulaic language that is taught in their curriculum through course books when taking writing proficiency exams and whether there is a relationship between their formulaic language use and their scores of coherence, total writing and overall proficiency. The study was carried out with 150 EFL learners with the same exit level of proficiency at Yıldız Technical University, the School of Foreign Languages. In order to explore how formulaic language was used by the participants, a content analysis of the course books was carried out to determine the target formulaic language list and their frequency of occurrence in the books. Following that, a content analysis of the participants' writing proficiency exam papers was conducted so as to see their formulaic language use. The results of the two content analyses were compared to draw conclusions. In order to find a possible relationship between the students' formulaic language use

and their scores of coherence, total writing and overall proficiency, the scores that the students have received for coherence and total writing in the final writing proficiency exam and their overall proficiency score at the end of the academic year were taken into consideration.

The results of the content analyses conducted by counting the number of formulaic expressions presented in the course books and used by the students in the writing proficiency exam revealed that the students mostly used the formulaic expressions that were more frequently represented in the course books accurately while the expressions they used inaccurately were less represented in the course books. The data gained through the analysis of the relationship between the students' formulaic language use and their coherence, total writing and overall proficiency scores revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between the related variables implying that the concepts are not directly interconnected. These findings suggest that the students use formulaic language taught in their curriculum through course books; however, their formulaic language use is not related to their scores of coherence, total writing and overall proficiency.

In light of the findings, the study provides insights into the future teaching practices in regards to formulaic language. It also offers implications for all stakeholders such as administrators, language instructors, and curriculum and material developers in order to design curricula, develop materials, and conduct classes accordingly.

Key words: formulaic language, meta-discourse markers, coherence, overall proficiency, writing proficiency exams, course book

# ÖZET

## İNGİLİZCEYİ YABANCI DİL OLARAK ÖĞRENEN ÖĞRENCİLERİN YAZMA SINAVLARINDA KALIP İFADELER KULLANIMI

Sultan Zarif Kılıç

Yüksek Lisans, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi

Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Deniz Ortaçtepe

Haziran 2015

Bu çalışma, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin yazma sınavlarında, müfredatlarında ders kitapları yoluyla yer alan kalıp ifadeleri nasıl kullandıklarını ve kullanımlarının bağdaşıklık, genel yazma ve dil yeterlilik notları ile ilişkisini incelemektedir. Çalışma, Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu'nda, yıl sonu yeterlilik seviyesi aynı olan 150 İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrenciyle yürütülmüştür. Katılımcıların kalıp ifadeleri nasıl kullandığını incelemek amacıyla, ders kitaplarının içerik analizi yapılmıştır ve her bir ifadenin kitapta geçme sıklığı belirlenerek hedef ifadeler listesi oluşturulmuştur. Akabinde, öğrencilerin kalıp ifadeler kullanımını incelemek amacıyla yazma sınav kağıtlarının içerik analizi yapılmıştır ve her iki içerik analizinin sonucu karşılaştırılmıştır. Öğrencilerin kalıp ifadeler kullanımını bağdaşıklık, genel yazma ve dil yeterlilik notları ile ilişkilendirmek amacıyla, öğrencilerin yazma sınavındaki bağdaşıklık ve genel yazma için aldıkları puanlar ve sene sonu dil yeterlilik puanları göz önünde bulundurulmuştur.

Her bir ifadenin kitapta kaç kere geçtiği ve çalışmanın katılımcıları tarafından kaç kere kullanıldığı sayılarak gerçekleştirilen içerik analizlerinin sonuçları göstermiştir ki öğrenciler kitaplarında sıklıkla geçen ifadeleri genelde doğru bir şekilde kullanırken hatalı kullandıkları ifadeler kitaplarında daha az yer bulmaktadır. Öğrencilerin kalıp ifade kullanımı ile bağdaşıklık, genel yazma ve dil yeterlilik notları arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi sonucu, bu değişkenler arasında istatiksel olarak önemli bir ilişkinin bulunmadığı ve bu değişkenlerin birbiriyle doğrudan bağlantılı kavramlar olmadığı ortaya konulmuştur. Çalışmanın bulguları, öğrencilerin ders kitapları yoluyla müfredatlarında bulunan kalıp ifadeleri kullandıklarını, fakat bu ifadeleri kullanmalarının bağdaşıklık, genel yazma ve dil yeterlilik notları ile doğrudan bağlantılı olmadığını belirtmektedir.

Bu bulgular doğrultusunda, çalışma kalıplaşmış dil ifadelerinin gelecekteki öğretim uygulamaları konusunda iç görü sağlamaktadır. Aynı zamanda, müfredat ve materyal geliştirme ve dersleri yürütme konularında yöneticiler, dil öğretmenleri, materyal ve müfredat geliştirenler için çıkarımlar sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kalıp ifadeler, söylem ifadeleri, bağdaşıklık, dil yeterliliği, yazma sınavları, ders kitapları

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

Writing is more complicated than the other language skills in that it reveals the extent to which people can use a language to express ideas, argue opinions, and synthesize a variety of perspectives. Thus, effective writing is one of the requirements for establishing successful communication (Crowhurst, 1990; Smith, 2013), and thereof considered as an essential component of second language (L2) learning. In this sense, learners' competence in written communication and the problems they encounter when writing in L2 have always been of great importance. One of the many difficulties that learners face in L2 written communication is creating entirely coherent texts (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Lorenz, 1999). However, there are ways to build coherence in written discourse, one of which might be use of formulaic language.

Formulaic language is addressed by various terms and definitions (Foster, 2001; Schmitt & Carter, 2004; Wood, 2002). However, it fundamentally refers to multi-word structures that convey specific meanings as a single unit. One of many functions of these multiword units is that they facilitate fluent linguistic production and communication (Hyland, 2008; Ohlrogge, 2009) because they are beneficial for organizing ideas, specifying the relations between them, and signaling the text structure (Li & Schmitt, 2009). Therefore, the use of formulaic language (i.e., interactive meta-discourse markers) can enable learners to achieve coherence in written communication. On the condition that formulaic language use plays a facilitative role in written communication and coherence, it is likely to provide benefits to language learners in proficiency exams in the same way as suggested in

the literature (Ustunbas, 2014; Yorio, 1989). Since the use of formulaic language is regarded to be helpful in building coherence and enhancing overall proficiency, it can be hypothesized that exposure to formulaic language is necessary for language learners. However, opportunities for such an exposure are considerably limited in contexts where English is a foreign language (EFL). As suggested by Meunier (2012), in instructed contexts, the main sources of exposure to formulaic language are only teacher-talk, classroom materials, and course books.

This study aims at exploring how English language learners use formulaic language taught in their course books when taking writing proficiency exams. More specifically, this study will examine whether there is a relationship between their formulaic language use and their scores of coherence, total writing, and overall proficiency.

## Background of the Study

Formulaic language has been named and defined by various researchers in different ways. As an umbrella term, formulaic language (Wray, 2002) refers to various types of multi-word structures that convey a single meaning as a whole; however, there are also other terms referring to similar or even the same notion of word co-occurrence (Chen & Baker, 2010). Some of these terms used in the literature are formulaic sequences (Schmitt & Carter, 2004), lexical bundles (Biber & Barbieri, 2007), lexical phrases (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992), clusters (Hyland, 2008), and recurrent word combinations (Adel & Erman, 2012; Altenberg, 1993). As to the definition of formulaic language, there is no consensus among researchers. However, formulaic language is generally referred to as multi-word units of language that are recalled from long-term memory as single units (Myles, Hooper & Mitchell, 1998; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Wood, 2002). Within the varying terms and

definitions, the current study adopts the term formulaic language since it is based on the most accepted definition which is suggested by Wray (2002):

> a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar. (p. 9)

Formulaic language has been the center of interest among researchers for a long time since it is considered to have a profound effect on language learning, communication and production (Weinert, 1995). In this sense, Jones and Haywood (2004) state that acquisition of formulaic language constitutes a significant proportion of language learning. As to the communicative function, Wei and Ying (2011) argue that formulaic language can help learners achieve their interactional purposes and become successful communicators although they lack enough linguistic knowledge. In addition to communication, Hyland (2008) emphasizes the role of formulaic expressions in language production as the use of these expressions helps to construct text meanings and contributes to sense of distinctiveness in a register.

Another effect of formulaic language on production is that it enhances coherence in writing by indicating the discourse structure and linking ideas (Hyland, 2005; Li & Schmitt, 2009; Wood, 2002). Bamberg (1983) defines coherence as the effective use of textual structures which "help readers anticipate upcoming textual information, thereby enabling them to reduce and organize the text into an understandable and coherent whole" (p. 419). More recently, Lee (2002) suggests that coherence refers to the connections between ideas in a text that help readers create meaning. In terms of the relationship between formulaic language use and coherence, Hyland (2008) emphasizes that the absence or misuse of formulaic expressions may indicate lack of fluency in writing. Additionally, Li and Schmitt

(2009) argue that failure to employ these native-like expressions makes learners' writing sound non-native**.** In regards to the aspect of coherence in writing, both Hyland (2012) and Boers and Lindstromberg (2012) claim that the use of formulaic language enhances the interpretation of messages in a text, makes comprehension easier in particular contexts, and increases the coherence of a text.

Within formulaic language, meta-discourse markers which are defined as "aspects of a text which explicitly organize the discourse, engage the audience and signal the writer attitude" (Hyland, 1998, p. 437) are gradually gaining additional attention. This is because they are considered to enhance coherence in writing when used appropriately (Hyland, 2008). In general, meta-discourse markers help learners change a difficult text into coherent and reader-friendly prose (Hyland, 2008). Specifically, the textual function of meta-discourse markers enables learners to organize a coherent text (Vande Kopple, 1985). However, Yang and Sun (2012) asserts that there should be more research on the use of cohesive devices, namely meta-discourse markers, in writing since the findings of relevant studies are neither consistent nor conclusive. Yang and Sun (2012) further suggest that majority of language learners still fail to use cohesive devices appropriately, so both researchers and teachers should update their approaches and methods in order to help them overcome this problem.

Last but not least, formulaic language use is regarded as an indicator of overall language proficiency (Cortes, 2004; Forsberg, 2010; Hyland, 2008). Ellis (1994) describes proficiency as a process in which learners use different linguistic forms appropriate for the linguistic and situational contexts. From a formalist perspective, Bialystok (1998) views proficiency as "an ultimately unknowable abstraction that reflects the universal competence of native speakers" (p. 502). Considering the association between formulaic language use and native-likeness, it

can be assumed that employing such native-like expressions elevates language learners' proficiency level. In their study, Stengers, Boers, Housen, and Eyckmans (2011) claim that formulaic sequences facilitate L2 oral proficiency by increasing learners' fluency in speaking. Likewise, Yorio (1989) indicates a correlation between successful use of formulaic language and grammatical proficiency, and as a result posits the view that formulaic sequences are a marker of proficiency and therefore deserve to be further studied.

In light of the abovementioned facilitative roles of formulaic language on language learning, communication, and production, it can be argued that language learners' exposure to formulaic language is essential. In this respect, Biber, Conrad and Cortes (2004) state that textbooks are one of the most important registers in which formulaic language can be found; however, little is known about the language used in this register. Similarly, Meunier (2012) suggests that textbooks are one of the main sources of input in language learning contexts; therefore, the link between textbooks and formulaic language should be analyzed.

## Statement of the Problem

In recent years, a great deal of research that has been conducted on formulaic language found evidence that formulaic language is essential to language development and production (Wood, 2002). The researchers have mainly investigated the possible effects of formulaic language on the development of language skills, especially writing. Within the research on formulaic language and writing, the studies have looked at the most frequently used word combinations in native and nonnative speakers' academic writing (Chen & Baker, 2010; Ädel & Erman, 2012), the use of formulaic language in academic writing in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) context (Jones & Haywood, 2004), disciplinary variation

of formulaic expressions (Hyland, 2008), and the effect of explicit teaching of formulaic language on writing (Ergin, 2013). The results of the related studies indicate that formulaic language is influential in learners' writing performance. One reason is that formulaic expressions are pragmatically efficient in that many of them (i.e., interactive meta-discourse markers) function as guideposts signaling the discourse structure and as a result building coherence in writing (Li & Schmitt, 2009). Another reason why the use of formulaic expressions is important in writing is that they are considered to enhance overall language proficiency. Yorio (1989) suggests that a direct and positive relationship is likely to occur between learners' overall proficiency and the use of formulaic expressions. Ustunbas (2014) also argues that there is a positive relationship between formulaic language use and overall proficiency. These studies provide convincing evidence that there should be more empirical studies investigating whether formulaic expressions are useful tools for proficient writing.

Considering the aforementioned effects of formulaic language on writing and overall proficiency and learners' inefficient use of formulaic language, the extent to which students use formulaic language presented in course books requires attention because course books are one of the very limited forms of exposure to formulaic language in instructed foreign language learning contexts. However, little research has been conducted on formulaic language use in registers like course books (Biber, Conrad & Cortes, 2004). In this sense, there is a need to investigate the extent to which formulaic language is used in course books and whether its use in exams boosts coherence in writing and overall proficiency. Additionally, to the best knowledge of the researcher, there is no study that has investigated how EFL learners use formulaic language taught in their curriculum when taking writing proficiency exams.

In Turkey, EFL learners in language education programs experience certain problems in productive skills, notably in writing. As far as the researcher has observed, one of the most common problems that affect learners' performance in writing proficiency exams is coherence. For this reason, it is beneficial to investigate some ways of promoting coherence. One possible way might be the use of discourse markers which are the formulaic expressions used in written register. These expressions are present in the curriculum of education programs through course books. However, most EFL learners unfortunately fail to use or even notice them, which naturally result in incoherence and disconnectedness among the ideas in their texts and hinder communication. If the use of formulaic language has a positive effect on writing in terms of coherence, it is beneficial to create awareness of formulaic language in learners, and to utilize it in order to improve writing performance and overall proficiency. In that sense, the present study will address the following research questions:

## Research Questions

1. In what ways do EFL learners use the formulaic language that is taught in their curriculum through course books when taking writing proficiency exams?
2. Is there a relationship between EFL learners' use of formulaic language and their scores of:
    a) coherence?
    b) total writing?
    c) overall proficiency?

## Significance of the Study

Recent studies on formulaic language have revealed the significance of using formulaic language and its role to support language learning and production (Wray, 2008; Wood, 2006). Therefore, some concepts like coherence (Hyland, 2005) have gained more importance. In that sense, this study attempts to investigate how English language learners use formulaic language taught in their curriculum when taking writing proficiency exams, and whether there is a relationship between formulaic language use and coherence. Thus, it may contribute to the existing literature by providing further support for the understanding of the connection between formulaic language use and building coherence in writing. The results of the study may also shed light on whether there is a relationship between learners' formulaic language use and their overall proficiency.

At the local level, this study is expected to be beneficial for EFL learners, language teachers, and curriculum and materials development units in helping them understand the importance of formulaic language for improving writing skills. If the study provides evidence for the positive effect of formulaic language on coherence, it may help learners overcome some of the difficulties they have in writing by using multi-word units. Moreover, the study may encourage language teachers to put more emphasis on teaching formulaic language that is included in course books. Last but not least, curriculum and materials development units of language programs may take the study as a reference to integrate formulaic language into their practices.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the significance of the study as well as the research questions of the study and key terminology that will recur throughout the thesis have been provided. The next

chapter will review the relevant literature on formulaic language, meta-discourse markers, and coherence in writing. In the third chapter, the methodology which describes the participants and settings, instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis of the study is presented. In the fourth chapter, the results of the data analysis are explained by providing the quantitative data and the content analysis. The last chapter presents some conclusions drawn from the results in Chapter IV, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

# CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

## Introduction

The present study addresses the questions of how EFL learners use formulaic language in writing proficiency exams and whether formulaic language use has an effect on students' coherence in these exams. Therefore, this chapter aims to review the literature for the related issues and present an overview of them. To achieve this purpose, the literature will be reviewed in three main sections. In the first section, an introduction of formulaic language will be provided with its terms and various definitions. The section will also explain classifications and functions of formulaic language, and the significance of formulaic language in language development. In the second section, information about meta-discourse markers including definitions, different classifications, advantages in language learning, and related studies will be presented. In the third section, the term coherence will be introduced with its definition and measures accompanied by the studies in the literature. This section will conclude with studies on the relationship between formulaic language and coherence.

## Formulaic Language

### Various Terms and Definitions of Formulaic Language

It is well accepted that most of the language people produce is formulaic in a sense that they do not generate sentences from scratch every time but benefit from formulas (Ellis, 1994; Erman & Warren, 2000; Wei & Ying, 2011; Wray, 2002). Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) specifically state that "a great deal of language that people are exposed to every day is very routine and predictable" (p. 27). While the

existence of formulaic language is widely accepted, there is little consensus on its definition (Wray, 2008). For this reason, there are various definitions of formulaicity in the related literature. Wood (2002) defines formulaic sequences as "multi-word or multi-word strings produced and recalled as a chunk, like a single lexical item, rather than being generated from individual items and rules" (p. 3). According to Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992), lexical phrases are "multi-word lexical phenomena that exist somewhere between the traditional poles of lexicon and syntax, conventionalized form/function composites that occur more frequently and have more idiomatically determined meaning than language that is put together each time" (p. 1). In addition, Stengers, Boers, Housen, and Eyckmans (2011) describe formulaic sequences:

> as a cover term for a variety of related phenomena also referred to as lexical phrases or chunks, including collocations (e.g., tell a lie; heavy traffic), idioms (e.g., turn the tide; back to square one), binomials (e.g., cuts and bruises; research and development), standardized similes (e.g., clear as crystal; dry as dust), proverbs and clichés (e.g., When the cat's away…; That's the way the cookie crumbles), discourse organizers (e.g., On the other hand; Having said that) and social routine formulae (e.g., Nice to meet you; Have a nice day). (p. 322)

Hyland (2012) also defines formulaic sequences as "extended collocations that appear more frequently than expected by chance, helping to shape meanings in specific contexts and contributing to our sense of coherence in a text" (p. 150). However, the most accepted and comprehensive definition belongs to Wray (2002):

> a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar. (p. 9)

Since formulaic language has been studied and defined by various researchers, a great variety of terms are used to express different perspectives on it (Schmitt & Carter, 2004). These terms are summed up by Wray (2002) (See Figure 1):

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amalgams – automatic – chunks – clichés – co-ordinate constructions – collocations – complex lexemes – composites – conventionalized forms – F[ixed] E[xpressions] including I[dioms] – fixed expressions – formulaic language – formulaic speech – formulas/formulae – fossilized forms – frozen metaphors – frozen phrases – gambits – gestalt – holistic – holophrases – idiomatic – idioms – irregular – lexical simplex – lexical(ized) phrases – lexicalized sentence stems – listemes – multiword items/units – multiword lexical phenomena – noncompositional – noncomputational –nonproductive – nonpropositional – petrifications – phrasemes – praxons – preassembled speech – precoded conventionalized routines – prefabricated routines and patterns – ready-made expressions – ready-made utterances – recurring utterances – rote – routine formulae – schemata – semipreconstructed phrases that constitute single choices – sentence builders – set phrases – stable and familiar expressions with specialized subsenses – stereotyped phrases – stereotypes – stock utterances – synthetic – unanalyzed chunks of speech – unanalyzed multiword chunks – units

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*Figure 1.* Terms used to describe aspects of formulaicity (Adopted from Wray, 2002, p. 9)

As seen in the literature, there is a wide range of terms to refer to formulaic expressions; however, this study will use the common term *formulaic language* which has various characteristics and classifications.

**Characteristics, Identification and Classification of Formulaic Language**

The variety of terms and definitions of formulaic language makes it more crucial to discuss its characteristics so as to identify formulaic expressions based on these particular characteristics (Schmitt & Carter, 2004). Some main characteristics of formulaic expressions are phonological coherence, greater length and complexity of sequences, community-wide use of a sequence, and situation dependence (Coulmas, 1979; Weinert, 1995; Wood 2006). Institutionalization, fixedness and non-compositionality are some other characteristics that help identify multi-word items (Moon, 1997, as cited in Schmitt & Carter, 2004). Frequency of occurrence is also regarded as one of the characteristics of formulaic language since it is claimed that "if a sequence is frequent in a corpus, this indicates that it is conventionalized by the speech community" (Schmitt & Carter, 2004, p. 2). The other characteristics of formulaic expressions are stated by Schmitt and Carter (2004) as follows:

> Formulaic sequences appear to be stored in the mind as holistic units, but they may not be acquired in an all-or nothing manner (p. 4);
>
> Formulaic sequences can have slots to enable flexibility of use, but the slots typically have semantic constraints (p. 6);
>
> Formulaic sequences can have semantic prosody (p. 7);
>
> Formulaic sequences are often tied to particular conditions of use (p. 9). (emphasis original)

Although certain characteristics of formulaic language have been proposed and generally accepted by the researchers, they are not considered to be satisfactory enough to identify these multiword units. For this reason, the literature provides different descriptions of formulaic language. Wood (2002) identifies formulaic language as "fixed phrases and idiomatic chunks such as *on the other hand, all in all, hold your horses*, and longer phrases, clauses, and sentence-building frameworks of

words such as *the bigger the better* or *if X, then Y*" (p. 2). More recently, Wray (2008) also puts forward a set of criteria to identify formulaic language:

1. There is something grammatically unusual about the word string;
2. All or part of the string lacks semantic transparency;
3. The string is associated with a specific situation or register;
4. The string performs a function other than or in addition to the meaning of its component words;
5. This formulation is typical of this speaker in conveying this idea;
6. This word string has an associated action, orthographic phenomena, or phonological pattern, and/or the speaker/writer is repeating something just heard/read;
7. This word string has been marked grammatically or lexically to give it status as a unit;
8. It is highly likely that the speaker/writer has encountered this precise formulation in communication from other people;
9. While this string appears novel, it is clearly derived from something which is formulaic;
10. This string is formulaic but unintentionally applied inappropriately
11. This string contains linguistic material which is too sophisticated or not sophisticated enough to match the speaker's general competence. (pp.119-121)

Due to the varying perspectives of researchers in identifying formulaic language, it is classified in different ways in the research literature (Wood, 2010). However, there are two main classifications: functional and structural.

As one of the examples of functional classification, Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) identify formulaic language in three general categories as social interactions,

necessary topics and discourse devices. One category is composed of social interaction markers which are related to social relations and conversational maintenance (e.g., what's up, see you later, if you don't mind). The second category is necessary topic markers which are lexical phrases that deal with the topics in daily communication (e.g., my name is…, how much is…?) The last category includes discourse device lexical phrases that enable the connection between meaning and structure of the discourse (e.g., nevertheless, in other words). Also using a functional framework, Yorio (1980) categorizes formulaic language into four types; situational formulas (e.g., how are you, excuse me), stylistic formulas (e.g., in conclusion, by way of conclusion), ceremonial formulas (e.g., may I have your attention please, ladies and gentlemen), and gambits (e.g., it is your turn, what do you think).

There are also researchers who have discussed formulaic language from a structural point of view. According to Boers and Lindstromberg (2012), there are such categories of formulaic language as collocations (e.g., blow your nose, running water; complex verbs (e.g., give up, talk it over); exclamations: (e.g., What the heck, no kidding); idioms: (e.g., get an even break, jump the gun); pragmatic formulae (e.g., See you later and I'm so sorry to hear that); and discourse organizers: (e.g., on the other hand, having said that).

Based on both functional and structural classifications of formulaic language, it can be concluded that "formulaic sequences are pragmatically efficient" (Li & Schmitt, 2009, p. 86) in a sense that they include social interaction markers, pragmatic formulae and discourse organizers, which provide language learners some benefits in terms of their language development.

**Role of Formulaic Language in Language Development**

The significance of formulaic language in language acquisition and language development is emphasized by many researchers (Ellis, 2002; Millar, 2011, Wei & Ying, 2011; Weinert, 1995; Wray, 2000). Specifically, Wood (2002) states that "formulaic language is basic to language development, processing, production and learning" (p. 2). Therefore, it is essential to clarify the roles of formulaic language in language development.

One of the main roles of formulaic language in language acquisition and development is to save language processing effort since it is stored in and extracted from long-term memory as a whole (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Pawley & Syder, 1983; Wood, 2002; Wray, 2002). More specifically, Wei and Ying (2011) state that "formulaic sequences are proved to be stored and retrieved by speakers as unanalyzed wholes and therefore relieve the cognitive load in language processing" (p. 708). Likewise, many studies provide support that formulaic expressions have a processing advantage. For example, Conklin and Schmitt (2008) investigated whether formulaic language provides language users an advantage in terms of processing by comparing the time native and non-native speakers spent on reading formulaic sequences with their non-formulaic equivalents. The findings revealed that in regard to language processing, formulaic language is more advantageous than non-formulaic language since formulaic expressions are processed in a shorter time than non-formulaic language by both groups. Another study on the role of formulaic language in language processing was conducted by Underwood, Schmitt, and Galpin (2004). The researchers investigated how formulaic sequences are processed through eye-movement during reading texts. Their results are consistent with Conklin and Schmitt's (2008) study in that formulaic expressions facilitate language processing.

Formulaic language also plays a facilitative role in fluent language production (Hyland, 2008; Pawley & Syder, 1983; Stengers, Boers, Housen, & Eyckmans, 2011; Wei & Ying, 2011; Wood, 2002). In order to reveal the effect of formulaic language on language production, many studies have been conducted. For instance, in his study Wood (2006) investigated whether the use of formulaic language affects the development of fluent language production or not. The findings of his study showed that language learners use a great number of formulaic expressions with different functions and the use of these expressions increases their fluency in language production. Also, the study conducted by Pawley and Syder (1983) emphasizes the role of some formulaic expressions, especially discourse markers, in saving planning time for language users, thus supporting the claim that formulaic language contributes to the fluency of production.

Last but not least, the use of formulaic expressions helps language learners sound more native-like and be regarded as proficient language users (Boers, Eyckmans, Kappel, Stengers, & Demecheleer, 2006; Pawley & Syder, 1983; Wei & Ying, 2011; Yorio, 1980). As an example, Boers et al., (2006) examine whether there is a connection between the use of formulaic expressions and oral proficiency. The results of their study indicate that formulaic language facilitates L2 oral proficiency and helps learners come across as proficient L2 speakers. In addition, Pawley and Syder (1983) argue that language learners can achieve native-like word selection and native-like fluency through the use of formulaic expressions. Kecskes (2007) highlights the role of formulaic expressions in achieving native-likeness by stating that “Formulaic language is the heart and soul of native-like language use. In fact, this is what makes language use native-like” (Kecskes, 2007, p. 4).

Overall, Wei and Ying (2011) summarize the roles of formulaic language in language acquisition and language development and conclude that formulaic

language promotes native-like selection, native-like fluency, and therefore overall language proficiency; therefore, both language teachers and learners should pay attention to the use of formulaic expressions.

**Significance of Formulaic Language in Language Teaching**

The roles of formulaic sequences in language development contribute to the significance of these sequences in language learning and teaching. In that sense, Nattinger (1980) suggests that language teaching should focus on ready-made units since most language production and comprehension depend on the knowledge of these units. Similarly, Wood (2002) emphasizes that

> if formulaic sequences are a key element of natural language production, it would seem that a large amount of exposure to natural, native-like discourse, be it oral or written, would be an important part of a pedagogy designed to promote their acquisition. (p. 9)

Acknowledging the importance of formulaic language in language teaching, exposure to these native-like multi-word units becomes essential for language learners. Wood (2002) argues that repeated exposure to formulaic language enables learners to gain confidence in expressing themselves more naturally in English. However, the sources of exposure to formulaic language in EFL contexts are limited to authentic classroom materials, teacher-talk and course books (Meunier, 2012). Meunier (2012) claims that the assessment of the proportion of authentic classroom materials is difficult and teacher talking time composes almost 70% of classroom time; however, course books are still the most commonly used sources of formulaic language in instructed contexts.

Considering the role of course books in language classrooms, it can be assumed that the frequencies of formulaic language used in such materials might

influence the proficiency level of language learners. That is mostly because the more formulaic language learners are exposed to through course books the more they may use these native-like chunks. In this sense, Tekmen and Daloglu (2006) claim that extensive reading facilitates incidental vocabulary learning since the frequency of encounters is higher in such kind of reading. Likewise, Ellis, Simpson-Vilach and Maynard (2008) suggest that when learners encounter a group of words more than the others, they most likely acquire the more repeated words. More recently, Webb, Newton and Chang (2013) also emphasize the significance of repeated exposure by stating that formulaic expressions can be learned when they are encountered at least 15 times.

While the above mentioned studies focused on the significance of exposure to formulaic language through course books, there is one study that examined the use of formulaic expressions in proficiency exams (Ustunbas, 2014). In her study, Ustunbas (2014) analyzed and compared the formulaic language use in 190 students' oral proficiency exams and the course books they used. The results of the study revealed a positive relationship between students' use of formulaic language and their oral proficiency scores. Additionally, the study found that students generally used the formulaic language presented in their course books accurately in their oral proficiency exams. In a similar way, Boers et al., (2006) investigated the effect of formulaic language on oral proficiency. Their participants were exposed to formulaic language through authentic listening and reading materials for 22 teaching hours. After that, the participants took an oral proficiency exam (semi-structured interviews). The researchers counted the frequencies of formulaic expressions they used, and found that their counts were consistent with the participants' oral proficiency scores.

## Meta-discourse

### Definitions of Meta-discourse

Within the area of formulaic language, meta-discourse which enables the connection between sentences, ideas, readers and the writer with the help of its specific markers has attracted the attention of many researchers, especially with its role in writing. Similar to formulaic expressions, meta-discourse has also been defined in various ways (Tan & Eng, 2014). Crismore, Markkanen and Steffensen (1993) define meta-discourse as "Linguistic material in texts, written or spoken, which does not add anything to the propositional content but that is intended to help the listener or reader organize, interpret and evaluate the information given" (as cited in Hyland, 2005, p. 19). According to Hyland and Tse (2004), meta-discourse is a linguistic device in writing which is used to organize discourse and show the writer's stance towards the text or the reader. Therefore, Hyland and Tse (2004) define meta-discourse as

> an umbrella term to include a heterogeneous array of cohesive and interpersonal features which help relate a text to its context by assisting readers to connect, organize, and interpret material in a way preferred by the writer and with regard to the understandings and values of a particular discourse community. (p. 157)

More specifically, Vande Kopple (1985) proposes a division in meta-discourse as textual meta-discourse and interpersonal meta-discourse. Textual meta-discourse is defined as the linguistic device that "can help us show how we link and relate individual propositions so that they form a cohesive and coherent text and how individual elements of those propositions make sense in conjunction with other elements of the text" ( Vande Kopple, 1985, p. 87). On the other hand, interpersonal meta-discourse is described as the linguistic device that "can help us express our

personalities and our reactions to the propositional content of our texts and characterize the interaction we would like to have with our readers about that content" (Vande Kopple, 1985, p. 87).

As can be understood from the definitions, use of meta-discourse involves various functions. For this reason, researchers have constructed their own classifications of meta-discourse indicating different functions.

**Classifications of Meta-discourse**

Hyland (2005) states that "given the breadth of meanings realized by meta-discourse markers, there are a number of different ways which these features have been categorized" (p. 32). Yet, the most common classifications of meta-discourse are proposed by Vande Kopple (1985), Crismore, Markkanen, and Steffensen (1993 as cited in Hyland, 2005) and Hyland (2005).

According to Vande Kopple (1985), the kinds of meta-discourse are text connectives, code glosses, illocution markers, validity markers, narrators, attitude markers, and commentary; however, some specific words or group of words can be found in more than one category (See Figure 2).

| Category | Function | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| **Text connectives** | Text connectives are used to guide readers through the text and help them understand how texts are organized and how various parts relate to each other | **Sequences:** *first, next, in the third place* **Logical or temporal relationship:** *however, as a consequence, nevertheless* **Reminders about materials presented earlier:** *as I noted in Chapter One* **Statement of what material one is on the verge of presenting:** *what I wish to do now is to develop the idea that* **Topicalizers:** *for example, there are, as for, in regard to* |
| **Code glosses** | The main function of code glosses is to aid readers to interpret the appropriate meanings of components in texts by the help of definitions and explanations provided in the text | |
| **Illocution markers** | Illocution markers are used to hypothesize, sum up, make claims, make promises, and give examples | *as I hypothesize that, to sum up, we claim that, I promise to, for example* |
| **Validity markers** | Validity markers are used to indicate the probability, validity, and truth of the meaning that the writer conveys | **Hedges:** *perhaps, may, might, seem, to a certain extent* **Emphatics:** *clearly, undoubtedly, obviously* **Attributors:** *according to Einstein.* |
| **Narrators** | Narrators are used to assist readers recognize who said or wrote something | *Mrs. Wilson announced that, the principal reported that* |
| **Attitude markers** | Attitude markers let the writers express their attitudes toward the propositional content | *surprisingly, I find it interesting that, and it is alarming to note that* |
| **Commentary** | Commentary is used to remark on readers' possible reactions to writers' material, recommend a mode of procedure, let the reader know what to expect | *most of you will oppose the idea that, you might wish to read the last chapter first, you will probably find the following material difficult at first* |

*Figure 2.* Vande Kopple's classification of meta-discourse (Adapted from Vande Kopple, 1985, p. 83-85).

Another classification belongs to Crismore, Markkanen, and Steffensen (1993, as cited in Hyland, 2005). Reorganizing and developing Vande Kopple's (1985) classification, Crismore et al., (1993, as cited in Hyland, 2005) categorize

meta-discourse as textual meta-discourse and interpersonal meta-discourse (See Figure 3).

| Category | Function | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| ***Textual Meta-discourse*** | | |
| **Textual Markers** | | |
| ***Logical connectives*** | Show connections between ideas | Therefore; so; in addition; and |
| ***Sequencer*** | Indicate sequence | First; next; finally |
| ***Reminders*** | Refer to earlier text material | As we saw in Chapter 1 |
| ***Topicalizers*** | Indicate a shift in topic | Well; now I will discuss… |
| **Interpretive Markers** | | |
| ***Code glosses*** | Explain text material | For example; that is |
| ***Illocution Markers*** | Name the act performed | To conclude; in sum; I predict |
| ***Announcements*** | Announce upcoming material | In the next section… |
| ***Interpersonal Meta-discourse*** | | |
| ***Hedges*** | Show uncertainty to truth of assertion | Might; possible; likely |
| ***Certainty Markers*** | Express full commitment to assertion | Certainly; know; shows |
| ***Attributors*** | Give source/support of information | Smith claims that… |
| ***Attitude Markers*** | Display writer's affective values | I hope/agree; surprisingly… |
| ***Commentary*** | Build relationship with reader | You may not agree that… |

*Figure 3.* Crismore et al.'s categorization of meta-discourse (as cited in Hyland, 2005, p. 34)

In his *Interpersonal Model of Meta-discourse*, Hyland (2005) classifies meta-discourse into two main categories: interactive and interactional (See Figure 4). While interactive meta-discourse is used to organize the written discourse to guide readers through the text, interactional meta-discourse has a function of conveying the writer's emotions and reactions to the readers.

| Category | Function | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| ***Interactive*** | ***Help to guide the reader through the text*** | ***Resources*** |
| **Transitions** | express relations between main clauses | in addition; but; thus; and |
| **Frame markers** | refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages | finally; to conclude; my purpose is |
| **Endophoric markers** | refer to information in other parts of the text | noted above; see Figure; in section 2 |
| **Evidentials** | refer to information from other text | according to X; Z states |
| **Code glosses** | elaborate propositional meanings | namely; e.g.; such as; in other words |
| ***Interactional*** | ***Involve the reader in the text*** | ***Resources*** |
| **Hedges** | Withhold commitment and open dialogue | might; perhaps; possible; about |
| **Boosters** | Emphasize certainty or close dialogue | in fact; definitely; it is clear that |
| **Attitude markers** | Express writer's attitude to proposition | unfortunately; I agree; surprisingly |
| **Self-mentions** | Explicit reference to author | I; me; my; our |
| **Engagement markers** | Explicitly build relationship with reader | consider; note; you can see that |

*Figure 4*. An Interpersonal Model of Meta-discourse (Hyland, 2005, p. 49)

Overall, the understanding of meta-discourse can mainly be obtained by investigating different researchers' classifications (Vande Kopple, 1985). More importantly, such classifications of meta-discourse clearly display meta-discourse markers and their different functions which play a significant role in language learning.

**Advantages of Meta-discourse in Language Learning**

Vande Kopple (1985) suggests some advantages of meta-discourse for writers and readers. First of all, one kind of meta-discourse (i.e., text connectives) helps readers identify the connection between the parts of the text and the discourse organization (Vande Kopple, 1985). Another kind of meta-discourse (i.e., illocution

markers) helps writers make the discourse act clear to the readers at a particular point (Vande Kopple, 1985). Last but not least, when writers know the functions of meta-discourse, they might be more competent in using the appropriate meta-discourse for certain needs of the readers (Vande Kopple, 1985).

According to Crismore (1983), the benefit of meta-discourse in writing is that it helps writer inform the readers about;

> Changing the subject (e.g., Let us now turn to…); coming to a conclusion (e.g., In conclusion); asserting something with or without certainty (e.g., Surely, probably); pointing out an important idea (e.g., It is important to note…); defining a term (By x, I mean…); acknowledging a difficult line of thought (That's a difficult notion…); noting an existence of a reader (e.g., You will remember that…); indicating cause or other relationships between ideas such as contrasts (e.g., thus, but); continuing the discourse (at least, second); expressing an attitude toward an event (e.g., Interestingly…). (p. 4-5)

Hyland (2005) emphasizes the advantages of meta-discourse by arguing that as an essential part of a text, meta-discourse helps readers infer meaning from a text by indicating the way a text is presented and read, and therefore, it should be integrated into texts. Hyland (2005) lists the advantages of meta-discourse as follows:

1. It provides a context in which to place propositional information.
2. It injects a human presence into a written text and so makes students more attentive and engaged with a text.
3. It increases the persuasiveness of a text.
4. It aids comprehension and recall of text content.
5. It assists coherence and relates issues clearly to each other.
6. It helps mediate the real world and the school world through a real writer.

7. It highlights writer uncertainties and makes readers aware of the subjective interpretation of truth.

8. It helps show the author's position on the propositional information in a text.

9. It indicates the writer's attitude to the reader of the text, including intimacy, relative power, status, etc.

10. It relieves the reader's processing load by highlighting important points, indicating direction, anticipating structure, linking sections and ideas.

11. It shows readers that the writer recognizes their needs and is seeking to engage them in a dialogue.

12. It reveals the writer's awareness of the interactional conventions of a community. (p. 179)

Overall, there are three main advantages of meta-discourse (Hyland, 2005). First, it enables readers to comprehend the cognitive demands of texts and process the information in them better. Second, it helps writers to take an appropriate stance in their statements. Third, it provides writers a way to negotiate this stance and have a convenient dialogue with the readers. Therefore, it can be concluded that meta-discourse plays a facilitative role in written communication, and in this respect, meta-discourse markers are of great importance for language learners and users.

**Formulaic Language and Meta-discourse Markers in Writing**

The significance of formulaic language in writing is emphasized by Li and Schmitt (2009) who state that knowledge of formulaic expressions is a prerequisite for writing, and thus learning to write well is a result of appropriate integration of such expressions into texts. In the same way, formulaic expressions, especially meta-discourse markers are an essential element of successful writing since the use of such

expressions enables language learners to complete their writing tasks more easily, create coherent and well-organized texts, write in different genres, improve their overall writing performance, and sound like proficient users of the target language (Biber, 2006; Ergin, 2013; Hyland, 2007; Intaraprawat & Steffensen, 1995; Li & Schmitt, 2009; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Tan & Eng, 2014; Wood, 2002).

The important role of formulaic language in L2 writing is also noted by Coxhead and Byrd (2007):

> a) the [formulaic sequences] are often repeated and become a part of structural material used by advanced writers, making the students' task easier because they work with ready-made sets of words rather than having to create each sentence word by word;
>
> (b) as a result of their frequent use, such [sequences] become defining markers of fluent writing and are important for the development of writing that fits the expectations of readers in academia (pp. 134-135)

Within formulaic language, the use of meta-discourse markers enables L2 learners to construct meaningful and coherent texts (Hyland, 2008). Additionally, such markers help language learners write well-organized texts (Hyland & Tse, 2004). In terms of attaining the ability to write in different genres, many studies on L2 writing show that the use of meta-discourse markers is essential in different genres, especially in argumentative essays which require meta-discourse markers the most (Williams, 1989, as cited in Hyland, 1999). In general, the use of certain meta-discourse markers is a necessity in completing different writing tasks (Reid, 1990, as cited in Wood, 2002). Moreover, use of meta-discourse markers affects learner's writing performance positively as suggested by many researchers that found a positive relationship between the use of meta-discourse markers and writing quality (Ergin, 2013; Intaraprawat & Steffensen, 1995). Since the effective use of meta-discourse

markers is an essential part of written discourse, its absence is regarded as a sign of novice L2 writers (Hyland, 2008; Li & Schmitt, 2009). Therefore, it can be assumed that when language learners integrate meta-discourse markers into their texts, they might sound more like proficient language users.

Overall, formulaic expressions are significant in successful writing because they carry different functions. They help language learners write various types of essays easily and coherently, and as a result, sound like a more advanced language user. Thus, it can be concluded that while writing in different genres, L2 learners need to make use of such expressions and their functions in order to construct as coherent and well-organized texts as proficient language users do (Cortes, 2004; Hyland, 2007, 2008; Li & Schmitt, 2009).

## Coherence

### Definitions of Coherence

Coherence has been described as "the relationships that link the ideas in a text to create meaning for the readers" (Lee, 2002, p. 135). However, there is a lack of consensus on making a general definition of coherence (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996) since it is "a complex concept, involving a multitude of reader- and text-based features" (Johns, 1986, p.247). This lack of consensus over the meaning of coherence has led to a variety of definitions within the literature.

Coherence is considered to derive its meaning from both text-based and reader-based properties; therefore, it can be defined from two different perspectives; as internal to the text and as internal to the reader (Lee, 2002). In terms of text-based properties, Halliday and Hasan (1976) suggest that linguistic signals in a text construct coherence by helping writers connect ideas and guiding readers to get the meaning intended by the writer. In addition, Cheng and Steffensen (1996) argue that

meta-discourse markers contribute to coherence in a text by helping readers organize and interpret the information provided by the writer. Therefore, it can be concluded that coherence is internal to the text since the use of linguistic forms in the text increases the connectivity between ideas, and facilitates readers' understanding of the text (Lee, 2002). In terms of reader-based properties, it is claimed that readers' knowledge of the world and text structures help them make sense of a text (Lee, 2002). Bamberg (1983) suggests that such kind of knowledge enables readers to predict the information that will follow in the text, and therefore, help them understand the text as a coherent whole. Moreover, Williams (1985) declares that coherence:

> is a property ascribed to a discourse when the decoder judges that it successfully executes the encoder's intentions and that it meets the decoder's expectations of what the discourse should be, given his [sic] perception of the context, goals and intentions underlying the language event. (p. 474)

In trying to make sense of numerous definitions of coherence, Lee (2002, p. 139) provides all the features of coherence emphasized in these definitions as follows:

1. Connectivity of the surface text evidenced by the presence of cohesive devices (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).
2. An information structure which guides the reader in understanding the text and contributes to the topical development of the text (Connor & Farmer, 1990; Firbas, 1986; Lautamatti, 1987).
3. Connectivity of the underlying content evidenced by relations between propositions and how these relations contribute to the overall discourse theme and organization (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978).

4. A macrostructure with a characteristic pattern or shape appropriate to its communicative purpose and context of situation (Hoey, 1983, 1991).
5. Reader-based writing signalled by appropriate meta-discoursal features (Cheng & Steffensen, 1996; Chrismore et al., 1993).

(emphasis original)

All in all, coherence has been defined by various researchers from different perspectives since it has been regarded as a subjective and complicated concept with its features and roles in writing. However, it is important for language learners first to understand coherence, and then achieve a sense of coherence in their writing with the help of some strategies, one of which could be the use of formulaic language, especially meta-discourse markers.

**Formulaic Language and Coherence**

As one of requirements of written discourse, coherence is considered to be constructed and facilitated by the use of certain formulaic expressions, namely meta-discourse markers (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012; Hyland, 2008, 2012). Therefore, the use of formulaic language is considered to help learners write more coherent essays and convey their messages more effectively.

The previous studies in the literature which examine the effect of formulaic language on coherence indicate that the use of formulaic language contributes to the sense of coherence in a text (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012; Hyland, 2012). Within the formulaic language, meta-discourse markers are of great importance in organizing the written discourse, indicating the discourse structure, and facilitating efficient communication by helping writers express their ideas and thoughts in a more organized way (Basturkmen & von Randow, 2014; Biber & Barbieri, 2007; Hyland, 2008, 2012; Li & Schmitt, 2009; Schmitt & Carter, 2004).

In their study, Basturkmen and von Randow (2014) aim to investigate meta-discourse markers in advanced English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writing in order to understand how such markers were used and presented to create coherence in a text. For this purpose, they analyzed 20 samples of postgraduate students' argumentative writing. The writing task required students to write about a discussion topic in 55 minutes, and the writing was graded on 1) sentence structure and vocabulary 2) content and 3) coherence and cohesion. The total of these three scores gave the overall score. The researchers analyzed 10 samples that received relatively high overall scores including high scores for cohesion and coherence and 10 samples that received relatively low overall scores including low scores for cohesion and coherence. One of the findings of the study was that the higher graded samples of writing included more meta-discourse markers.

Bunton (1999) also analyzed the Ph.D theses of 13 Hong Kong research students to investigate the way these students use meta-discourse markers to guide their audience. His corpus consisted of 3000 pages and 600,000 words. One result of the study was that meta-discourse markers play a significant role in maintaining coherence throughout the whole theses.

Last but not least, in their study, Yang and Sun (2012) analyzed the argumentative essays of second-year and fourth-year under-graduate Chinese EFL learners in order to explore the differences and similarities in the use of cohesive devices. The results of the study revealed a positive relationship between the (correct) use of cohesive devices and students' writing quality, regardless of their EFL proficiency levels. Moreover, the results showed that the correct use of cohesive devices positively affected the students' writing scores, especially in the senior group. However, Yang and Sun (2012) criticized that the findings of the previous studies relating cohesive devices to learners' writing scores are hardly conclusive

due to their methodology. They also argued that a great number of language learners still fail to correctly use coherence facilitating markers in their writing. Therefore, Yang and Sun (2012) suggested that researchers should conduct further research with different approaches and methods in order to promote the teaching of such markers and help learners overcome the difficulty of writing a coherent text.

Overall, use of formulaic language is considered to be essential for proficient writing; however, language learners still fail to use formulaic language effectively write coherent texts. Thus, there should be more research on the use of formulaic expressions, especially meta-discourse markers in writing (Tan & Eng, 2014; Yang & Sun, 2012).

## Conclusion

In this chapter, the relevant literature about formulaic language with its varied definitions, terms and characteristics have been presented. Next, the identification, classification and significance of formulaic in language development and language teaching have been explained. Then, definitions and classifications of meta-discourse together with its advantages in language learning have been reviewed. Moreover, the connection between formulaic language and writing skill has been discussed. Finally, the chapter has presented the definitions of coherence, which is one of the components in evaluating writing, and studies on the relationship between formulaic language and coherence. The next chapter will provide information about the methodology of the study including the setting and participants, the research design, materials and instruments, and finally the data collection procedures and data analysis.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

The aim of this descriptive study is to investigate the extent to which Turkish EFL learners use formulaic language in writing proficiency exams. The study also attempts to examine whether there is a relationship between their use of formulaic language, and their scores of coherence in writing, overall writing and language proficiency. In this respect, the present study addresses the following research questions:

1. In what ways do EFL learners use the formulaic language that is taught in their curriculum through course books when taking writing proficiency exams?
2. Is there a relationship between EFL learners' use of formulaic language and their scores of:
    a) coherence?
    b) total writing?
    c) overall proficiency?

This chapter gives information about the methodology of the study. It consists of five main sections: the setting and participants; the research design; materials and instruments; data collection procedures; and data analysis. In the first section, the setting and the participants of the study are described in detail. In the second section, the research design employed in this study is explained. In the third section, the materials and instruments used to collect data are presented. In the fourth section, the procedure for data collection is explained step by step. In the last section, the procedure for data analysis is provided.

## Setting and Participants

This study was conducted at the School of Foreign Languages of Yıldız Technical University, which is a state university in Istanbul, Turkey. In this university, a one-year compulsory English preparatory program is provided for undergraduate students at the Basic English Department of the School of Foreign Languages. At the beginning of each academic year, a proficiency exam is conducted in order to determine students' level of English language proficiency. When students score 60 or above out of 100 in the test, they are exempted from this program and allowed to go on to their studies at their departments. However, if students score below 60, they fail the exam and study intensive English for a year. Considering the exam scores, these students are placed in classes in accordance to their proficiency level. At the Basic English Department, there are three proficiency levels: A, B and C levels (from highest to the lowest); however, students are expected to reach the same exit level of proficiency, which is intermediate, by the end of an academic year. In order to complete the program, at the end of the academic year, students have to take and pass a final proficiency exam which includes three parts: reading and vocabulary; listening; and writing. Writing part consists of an essay question while the other parts include multiple choice questions.

This particular institution was chosen due to various reasons. First of all, it provides sampling to the researcher who has access to the writing proficiency exams compiled and kept in the archives of the school. Moreover, the course book used at this school includes a great number of formulaic expressions (See Appendix A). The book adopting communicative methodology and task-based approach provides examples of how these expressions are used in writing through frequent analysis of text models, plenty of writing tasks and exercises. In addition, the curriculum in the school is skill-based, allowing certain amount of time in teaching writing. Hence, a

writing pack which is created by the Writing Office coordinator of the school is used in the classes. This writing pack is also rich in formulaic language use (See Appendix B). As a result, students are exposed to these expressions to a great extent, and they have the opportunity to practice and produce the formulaic language in their written work.

The participants of the present study were 150 students who studied in classes of different proficiency levels and were supposed to be at intermediate level at the end of the program. All the participants took the final proficiency exam at the end of the 2013-2014 academic year. The present study is based on these participants' writing proficiency exam, which required them to write either an opinion essay or a problem solution essay (See Appendix C). Since archival data was used in the study, the researcher did not have the chance to meet the participants in person. Upon getting the required permissions from the university, the researcher used the school archives for writing proficiency exam papers and marking sheets. At the time of data collection, only the researcher was allowed to use the archive of the school. The participants of the study were selected in a random way among those who chose to write opinion essay instead of problem-solution essay since most of the exam papers were on the opinion essay question rather than the problem-solution essay question. Moreover, when choosing the participants equal gender distribution was taken into consideration in order to avoid any possible gender effect.

## Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design of quantitative studies in order to investigate the ways EFL learners use formulaic language that is integrated into curriculum through course books in writing proficiency exams. Therefore, as a first step, a content-analysis of the course book was conducted to determine the

extent to which formulaic language was part of the curriculum through the course book. As a second step, students' writing proficiency exams were analyzed in order to observe their formulaic language use. The data collected from the exams and marking sheets were also analyzed to see if a relationship exists between students' formulaic language use and their scores of coherence, total writing, and overall proficiency. The materials used for this research design will be discussed in detail in the following section.

## Instruments and Materials

### The Course Book and the Writing Pack

A content analysis of the course book and writing pack that are used at the School of Foreign Languages in Yıldız Technical University was conducted in order to define the extent to which formulaic language is taught in the curriculum through materials. The course book taught in the school is *Language Leader* (2011) by Pearson Education Limited, which uses a communicative methodology and a text and task-based approach, and provides plenty of text models and writing practice. Although there are four levels of the book, the first three levels are used in the school throughout an academic year. While B and C level students use all three series, A level students use only two of the series.

Another material used in the school by students in all levels is the writing pack which is developed for fall and spring terms by the Writing Office coordinator of the same institution. The pack is created by using numerous writing materials, and includes a large number of exercises, good models of writing and meta-discourse markers. Since only two essay types; opinion essay and problem-solution essay are taught in this institution, the writing pack is prepared to teach various structures and

meta-discourse markers that students can benefit while writing in these specific genres.

**Analytical Framework**

For the analysis of these materials, Hyland's (2005) *Interpersonal Model of Meta-discourse*[1] is adopted as a framework. The rationale to choose Hyland's (2005) model for this study is that its categorization is more concise and comprehensive than others, and its positive qualifications have also been acknowledged by Vazquez-Orta, Lafuente-Millan, Lores-Sanz, and Mur-Duenas (2006) who also used Hyland's (2005) model in their study on meta-discourse (Tan & Eng, 2014).

**Writing Proficiency Exam Papers**

The writing proficiency exam is developed by the Writing Office coordinator and checked by the Testing Office coordinator. The questions are prepared in accordance with the curriculum taught at the institution. In the proficiency exam, all students are mixed since they have the same exit level, and they are asked to write either an opinion essay or a problem-solution essay. Based on the same rubric, their writing exam papers are assessed by two different raters one by one and at different times, and the writing proficiency exam constitutes 40% of overall proficiency evaluation at this institution. All the writing exam papers, the rubric and the marking sheets are saved in the archive. In the present study, 150 writing proficiency exam papers of students with different proficiency levels from the 2013 - 2014 academic year were used.

**Rubric/Marking Sheets**

In this study, the archival data of marking sheets which were used by the raters in order to assess students' writing performances in the writing proficiency exams were employed (see Appendix D). The marking was based on a rubric which

[1] See Chapter II: Literature review p. 24 for detailed information

was developed by the Writing Office coordinator of the same institution in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) B1 level description. The rubric included five items which are *Content; Coherence; Grammar; Vocabulary; Punctuation; Spelling and Capitalization*; and the highest score for each item is 8, 6, 5, 4 and 2 points respectively (see Appendix E). Each rater can assign up to 25 points as a *Total Score*, but the average grades of two raters for each student constitute the final grade. In order to ensure the inter-reliability of the raters, there is a criterion: The accepted difference between the grades of the raters is up to 6 points. If the difference is more than six points, a third rater assesses the exam paper and the average grade of three raters is assigned as the final grade.

## Data Collection Procedures

The researcher first requested a permission from the directorate of the School of Foreign Languages at Yıldız Technical University in order to use the archival data for the study. After receiving the required permission, the researcher looked through the archive for the marking sheets and writing proficiency exam papers of the 2013-2014 academic year.

When the instruments and materials for the study were gathered, the writing proficiency exam papers were chosen randomly to decide the number of participants. With the aim of recording the participants' use of formulaic language, an evaluation chart was developed by the researcher for each student using Hyland's (2005) *Interpersonal Model of Meta-discourse* (see Appendix F). After that, the students' three course books and the writing pack were analyzed to have a list of the meta-discourse markers in these materials. The purpose of this procedure was to determine whether students used the meta-discourse markers to which they had been exposed in their course books and writing pack or not. Once the content-analysis of the materials

and selection of the participants were completed, students' scores of coherence, total writing, and overall proficiency that were stated in the marking sheets and school records were noted in the evaluation chart. The rationale for this procedure was to provide a basis to see whether there is a relationship between students' formulaic language use and their scores in certain aspects of language assessment. In order to investigate students' use of formulaic language, the next step was to analyze their writing proficiency exam papers.

The writing proficiency exam papers of each student were analyzed and the formulaic expressions encountered in these papers were noted down in the evaluation chart. In order to increase the reliability of the analysis of the exam papers, a second researcher who was trained for this type of analysis analyzed 10% of the 150 exam papers used in the present study. The comparison of these analyses revealed that the two researchers' agreement on the students' formulaic language use was 92%.

Following the content analysis of the exam papers, the researcher compared the absolute and relative frequencies of the expressions in the book to the frequency of expressions used by the students, and noted down the ways students used the formulaic language. For the first part of the second research question, the scores out of 6 that students received for coherence section in the rubric were considered in the light of this analysis since the researcher tried to relate formulaic language use to coherence in writing. For the second part of the same research question, students' total writing scores were associated to the content-analysis in order to investigate the relationship between formulaic language use and overall writing performance. For the last part, the overall proficiency scores that students received at the end of the academic year were taken into account with respect to the relationship between formulaic language use and language proficiency. As a result, quantitative data were gathered for data analysis. Figure 5 shows the data collection procedures.


*Figure 5.* Data Collection Procedures

## Data Analysis

In the present study, quantitative data analysis was used in order to determine the extent to which students used formulaic language in writing proficiency exams and the relationship between their formulaic language use and their scores of; coherence, total writing and overall language proficiency. The data collected from writing proficiency exam papers and marking sheets were analyzed quantitatively by using version 20 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

In order to answer the first research question, the content analysis of formulaic language in the course books and the writing pack was conducted, and the data were compared with the expressions that students used in the writing proficiency exam. Hence, the researcher examined whether the most frequent expressions that took place in the course books were the ones the students used most frequently or not. The researcher also analyzed the students' accurate and inaccurate use of the formulaic language in the course books and the writing pack.

For the second research question, students' formulaic language use and their scores for certain aspects of language assessment were analyzed. In order to answer the first part of the second research question, students' scores for *Coherence* section of the rubric were used. For the second part of the same research question, the association between students' formulaic language use and the total writing scores was analyzed. For the third part, students' overall language proficiency scores were

related to their use of formulaic expressions so as to analyze the relationship between the two variables. All the scores were analyzed quantitatively in order to investigate whether there is a relationship between the students' formulaic language use and their scores of coherence, total writing and overall proficiency by using SPSS.

## Conclusion

In the methodology chapter of the present study, the setting and participants; research design; instruments and materials; data collection procedures; and data analysis procedures were presented in detail. The next chapter will provide a detailed analysis of the quantitative data gathered from the 150 participants through writing proficiency exam papers and marking sheets.

# CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

## Introduction

This descriptive study aimed to explore the extent to which EFL learners use formulaic language in writing proficiency exams and the relationship between their formulaic language use and their scores of coherence, total writing and overall proficiency. The research questions addressed in the study were as follows:

1. In what ways do EFL learners use the formulaic language that is taught in their curriculum through course books when taking writing proficiency exams?
2. Is there a relationship between EFL learners' use of formulaic language and their scores of:
    a) coherence?
    b) total writing?
    c) overall proficiency?

In order to answer the research questions of this study, data were collected from 150 students studying at the School of Foreign Languages of Yildiz Technical University in the 2013-2014 academic year. As a first step of data collection procedure, the content analysis of the students' course books and the writing proficiency exam papers was conducted to determine the extent to which the students use formulaic language presented in the course books while taking the writing exam in which they were asked to write an opinion essay. As a result, all the formulaic expressions occurring in the course books and in students' exam papers were listed with their frequencies of occurrence, and the data gathered from the course books and the students' exam papers were analysed quantitatively by comparing the

absolute and relative frequencies. As a second step of data collection procedure, the marking sheets for the writing part of the proficiency exam and the results of the proficiency exam were collected in order to investigate whether there is a relationship between the students' use of formulaic language and their scores of coherence, total writing and overall proficiency. In this data, coherence score referred to the grades that the students received for the coherence section of the marking sheet of the writing proficiency exam, the total writing score referred to the average grade of two raters for each student's writing performance and overall proficiency score referred to the average language proficiency success that students attained at the end of the academic year through in-term assessments such as portfolios, quizzes and midterms and end-of-term proficiency exam (see Appendix E for the rubric). As a result, the number of the formulaic expressions used by the students and their aforesaid scores in the proficiency exam were analysed quantitatively by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 for their correlations.

In this chapter, the results of the quantitative data analysis will be presented in reference to the research questions in two sections. In the first section, the results of the content analysis of the course book and writing proficiency exam papers will be presented with regard to formulaic language use in these materials. In the second section, the correlation analysis results of the relationship between students' formulaic language use and their scores of coherence, total writing and overall proficiency will be explained in detail.

# Results

## Research Question 1: The ways EFL learners use the formulaic language that is taught in their curriculum through course books when taking writing proficiency exams

In order to investigate the extent to which students use the formulaic language taught in the curriculum through course books in their writing proficiency exams, the three course books and the writing pack adopted in the School of Foreign Languages at Yıldız Technical University were transformed into computerized texts. Following that, a content analysis of these materials was conducted so as to identify the frequency of formulaic expressions using Hyland's (2005) framework of interactive meta-discourse markers categorized as code glosses, endophoric markers, evidentials, frame markers and transition markers. Next, students' writing proficiency exam papers were analysed in order to calculate the frequency of each formulaic expression used by the students. Last, the findings of the two content analyses were compared by testing their correlations.

In terms of the use of meta-discourse markers, the results showed that both the exam papers and the course books contained different numbers of meta-discourse markers with different frequencies of occurrence. The reason for the difference in these numbers is that each category of meta-discourse markers has a certain function within a text, and therefore, the use of such markers varies according to the types of texts. More specifically, the course books contained 121 different meta-discourse markers with the frequency of 8974, while the students preferred to use only 61 different markers with the frequency of 2703. The frequency of 61 meta-discourse markers that the students used in the exam was 2399 in the course books.

Regarding the categories of meta-discourse markers, the results revealed that more transition markers and frame markers were used both in the course books and

in the exam papers than other types of meta-discourse markers. Table 1 shows both the number and the frequency of the meta-discourse markers in the course books and in students' writing proficiency exam papers according to their categories.

Table 1

*Use of Meta-discourse Markers in the Books and in the Exam*

| The absolute and relative frequencies | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Meta-discourse markers | | In the books | | | In the exam | |
| Category | Token | *f* | % | Token | *f* | % |
| Code glosses | 21 | 1352 | 15,07 | 9 | 301 | 11,13 |
| Endophoric markers | 15 | 1028 | 11,45 | 3 | 11 | 0,41 |
| Evidentials | 1 | 19 | 0,21 | 1 | 15 | 0,55 |
| Frame markers | 43 | 1200 | 13,37 | 18 | 556 | 20,57 |
| Transition markers | 41 | 5375 | 59,9 | 30 | 1820 | 67,33 |
| Total | 121 | 8974 | 100 | 61 | 2703 | 100 |

As can be seen in the Table 1, transition markers were used the most frequently both in the course books and in the exam papers. However, the second most frequently occurring meta-discourse markers were code glosses in the course books and frame markers in the students' exam papers. This difference showed that the students preferred to use the meta-discourse markers which were more appropriate for the administrated writing exam which was to write an opinion essay. Thus, the findings indicated that although students used most of the formulaic expressions that they were exposed to in the course books, they did not use them to the same degree. In this respect, Table 2 displays 5 samples of meta-discourse markers in each category with regard to their frequency of occurrence in the course books and in the students' exam papers.

Table 2

*The Comparison of the Frequencies of Meta-discourse Markers*

| Category | Meta-discourse markers | Frequency in the books | Frequency in the exams |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Code glosses** | or X | 885 | 84 |
| | for example | 52 | 79 |
| | such as | 54 | 49 |
| | for instance | 14 | 48 |
| | say | 136 | 33 |
| **Endophoric markers** | X before | 153 | 7 |
| | X above | 86 | 3 |
| | X later | 29 | 1 |
| | (In) Chapter X | 1 | - |
| | (In) Part X | 12 | - |
| **Evidentials** | according to X | 19 | 15 |
| | (date)/(name) | - | - |
| | (to) cite X | - | - |
| | (to) quote X | - | - |
| | [ref. no.]/[name] | - | - |
| **Frame markers** | first | 246 | 111 |
| | second | 55 | 70 |
| | all in all | 6 | 51 |
| | in conclusion | 9 | 34 |
| | secondly | 14 | 24 |
| **Transition markers** | and | 3540 | 765 |
| | because | 235 | 195 |
| | on the other hand | 23 | 135 |
| | however | 77 | 133 |
| | so | 179 | 105 |

*The frequencies are listed from the highest to the lowest according to the students' use.

As also seen in Table 2, the most frequently used meta-discourse markers by the students belonged to the categories of transition markers and frame markers. Within transition markers, the students most frequently used *And, Because, On the other hand, However* and *So* with the frequencies of 765, 195, 135, 133 and 105 respectively. Among frame markers, the students most frequently used *First* and *Second* with the frequency of 111 and 70 respectively. There is an example of the use of the most frequently used meta-discourse markers *And* and *Because* by a student below:

*Writing proficiency exam*

*Opinion essay question* (*see Appendix C*)

Student 147:

On the other hands, there are some people who think that living abroad is very expensive **and** they say that there are cheaper language education in Turkey. However, if you want to learn English perfectly, you must pay for your childrens educations and lifes.

Finally, speaking english is necessary in our life **and** we should learn english in foreign country. **Because** this is the best way.

*Figure 6.* Examples of the use of *And* and *Because*

As shown in Table 1, Table 2 and Figure 6, the students used certain amount of the meta-discourse markers presented in the course books in their writing proficiency exam. Additionally, the findings showed that the students only used the meta-discourse markers taught in the course books. Within the categories of meta-discourse markers, only one evidential (i.e., according to X) was used both in the course books and in the exam papers. However, other evidentials were neither presented in the book nor used in the exam by the students. This also means that the students did not use all the expressions in the target meta-discourse list. Table 3 shows a sample of the meta-discourse markers with their frequencies of occurrence in the book that students did not use in their writing proficiency exam.

Table 3

*The Sample List of Meta-discourse Markers that Students did not Use in the Writing Proficiency Exam*

| **Category** | **Meta-discourse markers** | **Frequency in the books** |
|---|---|---|
| **Code glosses** | e.g. | 104 |
| | called | 24 |
| | that is | 13 |
| | i.e. | 11 |
| | in other words | 8 |
| **Endophoric markers** | Page X | 388 |
| | X below | 194 |
| | Table X | 67 |
| | (In) the X part | 33 |
| | Example X | 19 |
| **Frame markers** | then | 257 |
| | last | 116 |
| | overall | 10 |
| | so far | 7 |
| | in short | 5 |
| **Transition markers** | again | 242 |
| | though | 24 |
| | result in | 12 |
| | rather | 10 |
| | further | 4 |

Table 3 also confirms the finding that the students mostly made a preference among meta-discourse markers that were relevant to the opinion essay type, and did not use irrelevant meta-discourse markers. Additionally, as can be deduced from the findings in Table 1 and 2, the students also frequently used those meta-discourse markers which are less represented in the course books. Therefore, the frequencies of meta-discourse markers in the course books and in the writing proficiency exam require a more in-depth analysis that can reveal a possible relationship.

First of all, the descriptive statistics of the frequencies of meta-discourse markers in the course book and in the students' exam papers were analysed and a normality test was conducted to see whether these two variables had normal distribution. Descriptive statistics showed that the two variables were non-normally distributed, with skewness of 9.55 (*SE*= 0.22) for the frequency in the book and 7.85 (*SE*=0.22) for the frequency in the students' exam papers and kurtosis of 98 (*SE*=0.43) for the frequency in the book and 72.9 (*SE*= 0.43) for the frequency in the students' exam papers. (see Appendix G.1) The Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a] normality test confirmed the non-normality as the significance level was .000 (see Appendix G.2).

Following the normality test, a nonparametric Spearman rank order correlation test was conducted so as to analyse the correlation of the frequencies of the two variables. As a result of the test, a significant relationship between the frequencies of the expressions in the course books and in the students' exam papers ($r(121) = .534$, $p < .01$) was found (see Appendix H). It can be deduced from this significant correlation that the frequency of occurrence of each meta-discourse marker in the course books plays a role in students using such markers frequently or infrequently in the exams. As a result, this relationship explains the fact that the students mostly used the meta-discourse markers that they were more frequently

exposed to in the course books in their writing proficiency exams. Yet, the accuracy of students' use of meta-discourse markers is another issue of concern.

**Accurate/Inaccurate use of meta-discourse markers.** The findings of the content analysis of the 150 students' writing proficiency exams showed that all the students used meta-discourse markers in their exams in a correct or incorrect way.

Table 4

*The Frequencies of Accurate and Inaccurate Use of Meta-discourse Markers in the Exam*

| Categories | Accurate use | Inaccurate use |
|---|---|---|
| Code glosses | 296 | 5 |
| Endophoric markers | 11 | - |
| Evidentials | 15 | - |
| Frame markers | 554 | 2 |
| Transition markers | 1814 | 6 |
| Total | 2690 | 13 |

The findings also revealed that the students mostly used the meta-discourse markers which were frequently presented in the course books correctly. The most frequent meta-discourse markers that students used correctly in their writing proficiency exams were *And, Because,* and *Or* which were also presented in the course books frequently (see Table 2). On the other hand, the meta-discourse markers that the students used incorrectly were *Such as, Besides, In conclusion, As a result, Thus, Leads to* and *On the other hand* which were presented in the course books less often with frequencies of 54, 11, 9, 34, 11, 11 and 23 respectively. While the code gloss *Such as* was used incorrectly five times by the students, the transition marker *Besides* and the frame marker *In conclusion* were used incorrectly twice. The

transition markers *As a result, Thus, Leads to* and *On the other hand* were used incorrectly once.

Below are the examples of the correct and incorrect use of the meta-discourse markers by the students:

---

*Writing proficiency exam*

*Opinion essay question* (*see Appendix C*)

Student 77:

**On the other hand**, some people disagree with this idea. In their opinion, going abroad **and** living there is too expensive **and** language courses are more expensive. I disagree with them **because** people can find some chances for cheaper travels to abroad **such as** Inter rail **or** they can try work/travel. **In addition**, they do not have to go English courses. They can learn English naturally.

++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++

Student 90:

All in all, learning English in English-speaking country is better than learning English in your own country. If you want to learn English, you must take an action and you must go abroad.

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*Figure 7.* Examples of the correct use of the meta-discourse markers

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*Writing proficiency exam*

*Opinion essay question* (*see Appendix C*)

Student 114:

For instance, if you work in that country **such as** in a market, you must listen and speak with them.

---

*Figure 8.* An example of inaccurate use of *Such as*

*Writing proficiency exam*

*Opinion essay question* (*see Appendix C*)

Student 53:

**Besides this**, some of people who want to learn english is very shy and they usually cannot talk english in class.

*Figure 9.* An example of inaccurate use of *Besides*

*Writing proficiency exam*

*Opinion essay question* (*see Appendix C*)

Student 78:

**To conclusion**, I strongly believe that it is the worst way to learn another language in us country. This way shouldn't be good for us from all reason above.

*Figure 10.* An example of inaccurate use of *In conclusion*

*Writing proficiency exam*

*Opinion essay question* (*see Appendix C*)

Student 104:

On the other hand, there are those people believe that this is waste of money. They say that we spend a lot of money, when we go to abroad. They fail to consider that many people purpose to learn english well and they go to english course. **Result of this**, many people spend a lot of money.

*Figure 11.* An example of inaccurate use of *As a result*

*Writing proficiency exam*

*Opinion essay question* (*see Appendix C*)

Student 92:

Secondly, the one of the most difficult skills of English is speaking and listening. Many of people can know English grammar **thus** they usually do not understand people speaking English or foreign people do not understand the people.

*Figure 12.* An example of inaccurate use of *Thus*

*Writing proficiency exam*

*Opinion essay question* (*see Appendix C*)

Student 65:

On the other hand, some people believe that people of going to abroad in order to learn English can have culture shock. This situation **leads that** they are unhappy.

*Figure 13.* An example of inaccurate use of *Leads to*

*Writing proficiency exam*

*Opinion essay question* (*see Appendix C*)

Student 110:

**On the other side**, some people strongly believe that living English-speaking country can cause some problems such as paying a lot of money for language schools,high costs of living abroad.

*Figure 14.* An example of inaccurate use of *On the other hand*

Overall, the findings of the content analysis of the students' writing proficiency exam indicated that the students used a variety of meta-discourse markers in an accurate or inaccurate way. While they mostly used the meta-discourse markers that were more frequently represented in the course books correctly, the meta-discourse markers they used incorrectly were less represented in the course books. As a result, these findings led to the question of whether the students' use of such expressions plays a role on their scores in the writing proficiency exam.

**Research Question 2: The Relationship between EFL Learners' Use of Formulaic Language and (a) Their Coherence Scores, (b) Their Total Writing Scores and (c) Their Overall Proficiency Scores**

In order to see whether there is a relationship between students' formulaic language use and their scores of coherence, total writing and overall proficiency, a correlation test was conducted through SPSS. As one of the variables in the analysis, the students' coherence scores in the writing proficiency exam were taken into consideration to answer the first part of this research question. Two raters assessed the students' writing performance based on a rubric which was developed in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) B1 level description. The rubric included sections such as *Content; Coherence; Grammar; Vocabulary; Punctuation, Spelling and Capitalization* (see Appendix E). For the coherence section, the highest score that could be assigned for each student was 6 points. The students' total writing scores in the proficiency exam were another variable in the analysis. In order to answer the second part of this research question, their total writing scores were analyzed. The average grade of two raters for each student was the total writing score which could be assigned up to 25 points. To answer the last part of this research question, the students' overall proficiency scores

were taken into account. Overall proficiency referred to the success scores attained by the students at the end of the academic year. As a result, the variables in this research question included the amount of formulaic language used by the students and their coherence, total writing and overall proficiency scores. In order to see whether these variables have a normal distribution, first their descriptive statistics were calculated and a normality test was conducted to confirm the results. Lastly, in order to calculate their correlation, a correlation test was conducted.

Table 5

*The Descriptive Statistics of the Variables*

| | Skewness | | Kurtosis | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | *SE* | Statistic | *SE* |
| Formulaic language use | 0.34 | 0.19 | -0.19 | 0.39 |
| Coherence | -0.59 | 0.19 | 0.38 | 0.39 |
| Total writing | -0.25 | 0.19 | 0.22 | 0.39 |
| Overall proficiency | 0.60 | 0.19 | 0.42 | 0.39 |

*Note*: N = 150

Although the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a] normality test revealed that the significance level was .000 for formulaic language use, .000 for coherence score, .200 for total writing scores and .017 for overall proficiency scores (see Appendix I), as seen in Table 4, the Skewness and Kurtosis values for each variable was between +1 and -1, enabling a parametric test to be conducted for the correlation. In this respect, the correlations between formulaic language use and the mentioned scores were calculated by Pearson product-moment correlation (see Table 5).

Table 6

*The Correlation Values of the Variables*

| | | Coherence | Total writing | Overall proficiency |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Formulaic lang. use | r | .044 | .106 | .104 |
| | *p* | .593 | .197 | .203 |

As shown in Table 5, there was no statistically significant correlation between the students' formulaic language use and their scores of coherence, total writing and overall proficiency.

Overall, the results for the second research question which aimed to investigate the relationship between the students' use of formulaic language and their coherence score, total writing score and overall proficiency score were not statistically significant.

## Conclusion

In this chapter the data obtained from the content analysis of the course books used at the School of Foreign Languages of Yıldız Technical University and the writing proficiency exam papers of 150 students studying at the same school in 2013-2014 academic year were analysed quantitatively and discussed in two sections. In the first section, in order to answer the first research question related to the extent of formulaic language use, the content analysis of the course books and students' writing proficiency exam papers were presented along with tables and figures displaying the frequencies of occurrences of formulaic expressions and the ways students used such expressions. This section also included the discussion of students' accurate and inaccurate use of formulaic language. In the second section, the findings of three correlation tests were reported in order to answer the second

research question that aims to investigate whether there is a relationship between EFL learners' formulaic language use and their scores of coherence, total writing and overall proficiency. The next chapter will present an overview of the study, the findings and discussions, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

# CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

## Introduction

The purpose of this descriptive study was to investigate the use of formulaic language by EFL learners in writing proficiency exams and the relationship between their formulaic language use and their coherence, total writing and overall proficiency scores. In this respect, the research questions addressed in this study were:

3. In what ways do EFL learners use the formulaic language that is taught in their curriculum through course books when taking writing proficiency exams?
4. Is there a relationship between EFL learners' use of formulaic language and their scores of:
    a) coherence?
    b) total writing?
    c) overall proficiency?

This chapter consists of four main sections. In the first section, the findings emerging from this research will be discussed in detail referring to the relevant literature. In the next section, the pedagogical implications will be introduced. In the third section, the limitations of the study will be discussed, and in the final section, suggestions for further research will be presented in the light of the limitations of the study.

## Findings and Discussion

### The Ways EFL Learners Use Formulaic Language that is Taught in Their Curriculum through Course Books when Taking Oral Proficiency Exams

As suggested in the literature, text books are one of the main sources of language learners' exposure to formulaic language (Meunier, 2012). In this respect, the first research question of the study aimed to explore EFL learners' use of formulaic language that is taught in the curriculum through their course books. To this end, the content analysis of the meta-discourse markers, a type of formulaic language, used in both students' course books and their writing proficiency exam papers was conducted by counting their frequency of occurrence and identifying whether they were used accurately or inaccurately.

The content analysis results of the course books revealed that as a source of input, the book contained a great number of meta-discourse markers. More specifically, the book included 121 different meta-discourse markers with the frequency of 8974. In terms of the categories of meta-discourse markers, there were 41 transition markers, 43 frame markers, 21 code glosses, 15 endophoric markers and 1 evidential in the course books with the frequencies of 5375, 1200, 1352, 1028 and 19 respectively. Moreover, the content analysis results of the students' writing proficiency exam papers indicated that all 150 students used meta-discourse markers in the exam. There were 61 different meta-discourse markers used by the students with the frequency of 2703. The frequency of these 61 markers was 2399 in the course books. In detail, the exam papers included 30 transition markers, 18 frame markers, 9 code glosses, 3 endophoric markers and 1 evidential with the frequencies of 1820, 556, 301, 11 and 15 respectively. Therefore, one of the important findings that emerged from these analyses was that within the meta-discourse markers, transition markers such as *And, Because, So* were the most frequently used

expressions both in the course books and in the students' exam papers. In this sense, it can be concluded that the formulaic expressions that students mostly used in their writing proficiency exam were the ones that they were most frequently exposed to in the course books.

The second most frequently used meta-discourse markers in the exam papers were frame markers such as *First* and *Second*, while in the course books, it was code glosses such as *Or* and *Say*. This finding indicated that there were also differences in the frequencies of expressions used in the course books and in the students' exam papers. Thus, it can be concluded that the students made a preference among meta-discourse markers which were more appropriate for the administered task type which was opinion essay.

In terms of the accurate and inaccurate use of formulaic language, findings showed that the students mostly used the formulaic expressions that were more frequently presented in the course books correctly, while the inaccurately used expressions by the students were the ones that were less presented in the course books. These findings imply that the students' knowledge and use of formulaic expressions are mostly related to the frequencies of the expressions in the course books and the administered task type.

The findings of the study are consistent with the literature related to the significance of formulaic expressions in language teaching, the frequencies of exposure to these expressions and the effect of task type on formulaic language use (Nattinger, 1980; Ustunbas, 2014; Wood, 2002; Wray 2000). Wood (2002) suggested that repeated exposure to formulaic expressions should be a part of curriculum since it plays a facilitative role in the acquisition of such expressions. The findings concur with what Wood (2002) suggested in the sense that the course book contained a great number of formulaic expressions, and in the exams, the students mostly used the

more frequently presented expressions in the books than the less frequently presented ones. The results of the study conducted by Ustunbas (2014) are also parallel with this finding. In her study, she analysed the use of formulaic language by EFL learners in oral proficiency exams and found that when taking the exam, students used the most frequently presented formulaic expressions in the books more than the less frequently presented ones. Moreover, the use of most frequently presented expressions by the students can be explained by the effect of frequency of occurrence since Tekmen and Daloglu (2006) stated that frequency of encounters promotes vocabulary learning. Likewise, Ellis, Simpson-Vilach and Maynard (2008) suggested that the more frequently repeated words that learners encounter are more likely to be acquired. Also, Webb, Newton and Chang (2013) claimed that learners can acquire formulaic expressions upon repeated encounters. Thus, it can be concluded that the students' use of formulaic language may be related to the frequency of formulaic language presented in the course books.

In terms of the effect of task type on formulaic language use, the results of this study might also corroborate with the findings of the research conducted by Ustunbas (2014) in the sense that her participants made a preference among formulaic expressions appropriate for the tasks administered in the exams. Additionally, Reid (1990 as cited in Wood, 2002) argued that the choice of formulaic expressions is affected by the nature of certain writing tasks. Hence, the students' language selection might also be based on the task type. Overall, these findings imply that formulaic language which is necessary for particular task types might be learnt by EFL learners in the classrooms through their course books, which are the main sources of input for language learners to be exposed to formulaic expressions.

**The Relationship between EFL Learners' Formulaic Language Use and Their Scores of Coherence, Total Writing and Overall Proficiency**

The second research question of the present study aimed to investigate whether there is a relationship between students' formulaic language use and their coherence, total writing and overall proficiency scores. A correlation test was conducted to explore any possible relationship between these variables. The results of the analysis indicated that there is no statistically significant relationship between students' formulaic language use and their scores of coherence, total writing and overall proficiency.

This finding contradicts the previous studies that found a positive relationship between formulaic language use and coherence, writing performance or overall proficiency (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012; Bunton, 1999; Cortes, 2004; Ergin, 2013; Howarth, 1998; Hyland, 2005, 2008, 2012; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Intaraprawat & Steffensen, 1995; Jones & Haywood, 2004; Li & Schmitt, 2009; Ohlrogge, 2009; Ustunbas, 2014; Wei & Ying, 2011; Wood, 2002; Yang & Sun, 2012; Yorio, 1989).

In terms of formulaic language and coherence, Basturkmen and von Randow (2014), in their study, investigated how meta-discourse markers were used and presented by advanced EAP students to create coherence in their writing. It was found that the students who got higher grades for coherence used more meta-discourse markers. In another study conducted by Bunton (1999), the ways Ph.D students used meta-discourse markers in their thesis to guide the readers were investigated. The results of his study revealed that meta-discourse markers were facilitative in maintaining coherence in a text.

Considering the relationship between formulaic language and overall writing performance, Yang and Sun (2012), in their study, analyzed undergraduate EFL learners' use of formulaic language when writing argumentative essays, and found a

positive relationship between the (correct) use of formulaic expressions and the writing scores. Moreover, Intaraprawat and Steffensen (1995) analysed the use of meta-discourse markers in persuasive essays written by 12 English as second language (ESL) learners. The results of their study showed a positive relationship between the use of meta-discourse markers and learners' writing quality.

In respect to the influence of formulaic language use on overall proficiency, the finding of the present study also contrasts with what is suggested in the literature (Ohlrogge, 2009; Ustunbas, 2014; Yorio, 1989). For example, in a study conducted by Yorio (1989), it was found that there was a positive relationship between EFL learners' formulaic language use and their overall proficiency. Likewise, in her study, Ustunbas (2014) analysed the oral proficiency exams of 190 EFL learners in order to investigate their formulaic language use, and found a positive relationship between the use of formulaic language and overall proficiency.

This contradictory finding can be explained by what Yang and Sun (2012) suggested in their study. They claimed that the studies investigating the relationship between learners' formulaic language use and their writing quality are inconsistent and hardly conclusive since each study has its own specific methodology. Therefore, this finding might be attributed to the participants and the setting of the present study. At this point, it is noteworthy to mention that this study was conducted at the School of Foreign Languages in Yildiz Technical University with 150 participant students taking the final proficiency exam that contained three parts as reading and vocabulary, listening, and writing. The opinion essays written by each student as the writing part of the proficiency exam were analysed in the light of Hyland's (2005) *Interpersonal Model of Meta-discourse* (see Appendix F). Additionally, the marking sheets showing the raters' assessment of the students' writing performances were analysed. The assessment of the essays was based on a rubric which included five

sections: *Content; Coherence; Grammar; Vocabulary; Punctuation, Spelling and Capitalization* (see Appendix E). The average grades of two raters constituted the total writing score of each student.

There might be various reasons underlying the findings of the present study that indicated no statistically significant relationship between the students' formulaic language use and their scores of coherence, total writing and overall proficiency. In terms of the relationship between formulaic language use and coherence, the findings revealed that even though the students used a wide range of meta-discourse markers, their coherence scores were not affected. Thus, it might be concluded that achieving coherence in writing is not only based on the use of formulaic language. This result can be supported by what Lee (2002) suggested. In defining coherence, Lee (2002) argued that along with the presence of meta-discourse markers, such textual elements as information structure, connectivity of the underlying content and macrostructure appropriate for context of situation help writers achieve coherence in a text. Lee (2002) also suggested that the students should know and use all these textual elements in order to create coherence in a text. Similarly, the reason why there is no relationship between formulaic language use and total writing scores might be explained by the lack of linguistic elements in the exam papers such as meaningful content, good grammar and a wide range of vocabulary. The participants of this study were informed that they would write an opinion essay and they were taught the required formulaic expressions for the target essay type through their writing pack. Thus, although they knew how to use the formulaic expressions, their scores for content, grammar and vocabulary sections specified in the rubric might have influenced the raters' assessment of the students' overall writing quality. Considering the finding related to the relationship between formulaic language use and overall proficiency, it might also be based on the lack of linguistic elements in the students'

writings. As stated in Ellis' (1994) description of proficiency, various linguistic forms appropriate for the linguistic and situational contexts are used by learners in the process of acquiring language proficiency. Hence, overall language proficiency might not only be affected by the use of formulaic language.

In the light of the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that even though EFL learners are exposed to formulaic expressions through course books, and they use these expressions in writing proficiency exams, their coherence, total writing and overall proficiency scores are not positively affected. That might be because there are other linguistic elements in writing such as content, grammar and vocabulary that help students achieve coherence in writing, and increase their writing quality and overall proficiency. Therefore, these linguistic elements might be taken into consideration in writing along with the use of formulaic expressions.

## Pedagogical Implications

The most important conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that EFL learners use formulaic expressions that are taught in their curriculum through course books when taking writing proficiency exams and they mostly use these expressions accurately. In that sense, the present study points out important pedagogical implications that can provide insights into the future teaching practices regarding formulaic language.

The first and foremost pedagogical implication that can be drawn from this study might be for administrators and other people who are responsible for course book selection and exam preparation. They should pay attention to choose course books which include a great number of formulaic expressions, and conduct writing proficiency exams that require the use of formulaic expressions by the students. Moreover, the literature claims that course books are the main source of input in the

instructed contexts (Meunier, 2012), and learners use the formulaic expression taught in the course book in their proficiency exams (Ustunbas, 2014). Thus, it is of great importance for administrators and other people who are in charge of choosing the course books and preparing the proficiency exams to consider the formulaic language use both within the course books and by the students.

Another pedagogical implication of this study can be for curriculum and material developers. First of all, curriculum developers should integrate formulaic language teaching into the existing curriculum or when developing a new curriculum along with the teaching of grammar since the findings of the present study suggest that students use the formulaic expressions they get exposed to; however, formulaic language use does not play a facilitative role when used with poor grammar and unsatisfactory content. Likewise, material developers should develop such materials that students can practice the use of formulaic expressions along with grammar and additional vocabulary. They should also develop more writing models, exercises and activities in order to create opportunities for students to see and use formulaic language within meaningful and grammatical contexts. Moreover, the literature supports the claim that the use of formulaic expressions is of great importance in written discourse and using them appropriately is a requirement of writing well (Hyland, 2005, 2008, 2012; Li & Schmitt, 2009). As a result, students might see and understand formulaic language both in course books and in supplementary materials, and make better use of it in their writing.

Language instructors might also benefit from the findings of the present study in various ways. One of the pedagogical implications for instructors might be that they should provide more opportunities for students to see and practice the use of formulaic language in written discourse. Especially in teaching writing, they should focus on the use of formulaic language in grammatical and meaningful contexts.

Hence, they can draw students' attention to formulaic language use. Another implication for instructors can be that they should provide students with both good and problematic model of writings that include formulaic expressions. In this way, students might understand that the use of formulaic language does not make sense with poor grammar and unsatisfactory content.

To conclude, all administrators, curriculum and material developers, and language instructors can draw on the findings of the present study to develop curriculum and materials, and conduct classes accordingly.

## Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of the present study suggesting that the findings should be interpreted with caution. The major limitation of the study was that it was carried out with 150 students at Yıldız Technical University through the content analyses of the course books adopted in this school and the students' writing proficiency exam papers regarding the formulaic language use in these materials. Therefore, it might not be possible to generalize the findings since they might change depending on the number of the participants, the course books used, and the institution where the study is conducted.

Another limitation of the study was that although formulaic expressions were extensively presented in the course books and used by the students in the writing proficiency exam to a certain extent, whether these expressions were taught explicitly in the classroom by the teacher was not questioned in the scope of the present study. Therefore, the students' use of formulaic expressions might not be related to the assumption that these expressions were taught explicitly in the classroom.

The fact that assessment of writing is considerably subjective may have also affected the results of the study. One of the research questions focused on the students' coherence and total writing scores. As for the scoring procedure, norming session was conducted for raters before the writing proficiency exam, an analytic rubric was used for the assessment, and the average grade of two raters was assigned as the final score in order to provide inter-reliability. However, the raters could have still been subjective when assessing the students' writing proficiency exam papers since they probably do not have the same sense of coherence, and coherence is not defined explicitly in the rubric they use.

## Suggestions for Further Research

On the basis of the findings and the limitations of the study, suggestions can be made for further research. To start with, in order to investigate the extent of students' exposure to the formulaic language, the course books used in the institution where the study was conducted were analysed. In a further research, as another source of input, classroom teaching might also be integrated into the study. Moreover, classroom observations can be implemented in another research design in order to see whether formulaic expressions are taught in the classroom or not.

The present study adopted Hyland's (2005) categorization of meta-discourse markers as a framework, and only focused on the category of interactive meta-discourse markers that include evidentials, frame markers, code glosses, transition markers and endophoric markers since this category is considered to help writers build coherence in writing. However, a more comprehensive data might be collected when the interactional meta-discourse markers within the categorization provided by Hyland (2005) is also included in a further study. Another research design could also

be based on a different categorization provided by another researcher in order to analyse the use of formulaic language specified in that categorization.

The content analysis of the present study indicated that the students used some formulaic expressions more frequently when compared to others; however, the study did not aim to investigate the formulaic expressions that students use more frequently and the reasons of why they use these specific expressions. Therefore, further research may be conducted to investigate which formulaic expressions students use more in their writing and why they prefer these expressions.

## Conclusion

This descriptive study, conducted with 150 EFL learners, investigated the ways EFL learners use formulaic language when taking writing proficiency exam and whether there is a relationship between formulaic language use and scores of coherence, total writing and overall proficiency. The findings revealed that EFL learners use formulaic language that is taught in their curriculum through course books when taking writing proficiency exams. Moreover, the findings showed that learners mostly use formulaic language more frequently represented in the course books accurately while the inaccurately used formulaic expressions were the less frequently presented ones. EFL learners also made a preference among formulaic expressions to use in a certain writing task type. The findings also indicated that there is no statistically significant relationship between EFL learners' formulaic language use and their coherence, total writing and overall proficiency scores. While the findings of the study related to the use of formulaic language in text books and by students are in line with the literature which emphasize the significance of formulaic expressions in language teaching and the frequencies of exposure to these expressions (Ellis, Simpson-Vilach & Maynard, 2008; Nattinger, 1980; Tekmen &

Daloglu, 2006; Webb, Newton & Chang, 2013; Ustunbas, 2014; Wood, 2002; Wray 2000), the findings related to the relationship between formulaic language use and scores of coherence, total writing and overall proficiency contrast with the findings of previous studies in the literature (Bunton, 1999; Cortes, 2004; Intaraprawat & Steffensen, 1995; Li & Schmitt, 2009; Ohlrogge, 2009; Wei & Ying, 2011; Yorio, 1989).

One of the major problems EFL learners face in writing might be to write coherent texts by using formulaic language (Tan & Eng, 2014; Yang & Sun, 2012); however, to the knowledge of the researcher, whether the use of formulaic expressions helps language learners to build coherence in writing and the ways learners use these expressions in writing have not been subjected to any research before. Hence, this study might contribute to the literature by shedding light on the ways formulaic language is used in writing and how it should be taught. To conclude, it is hoped that findings of the present study and pedagogical implications discussed in this chapter will assist practitioners to gain insights into the effectiveness of formulaic language teaching and help learners overcome the problems they experience in writing.

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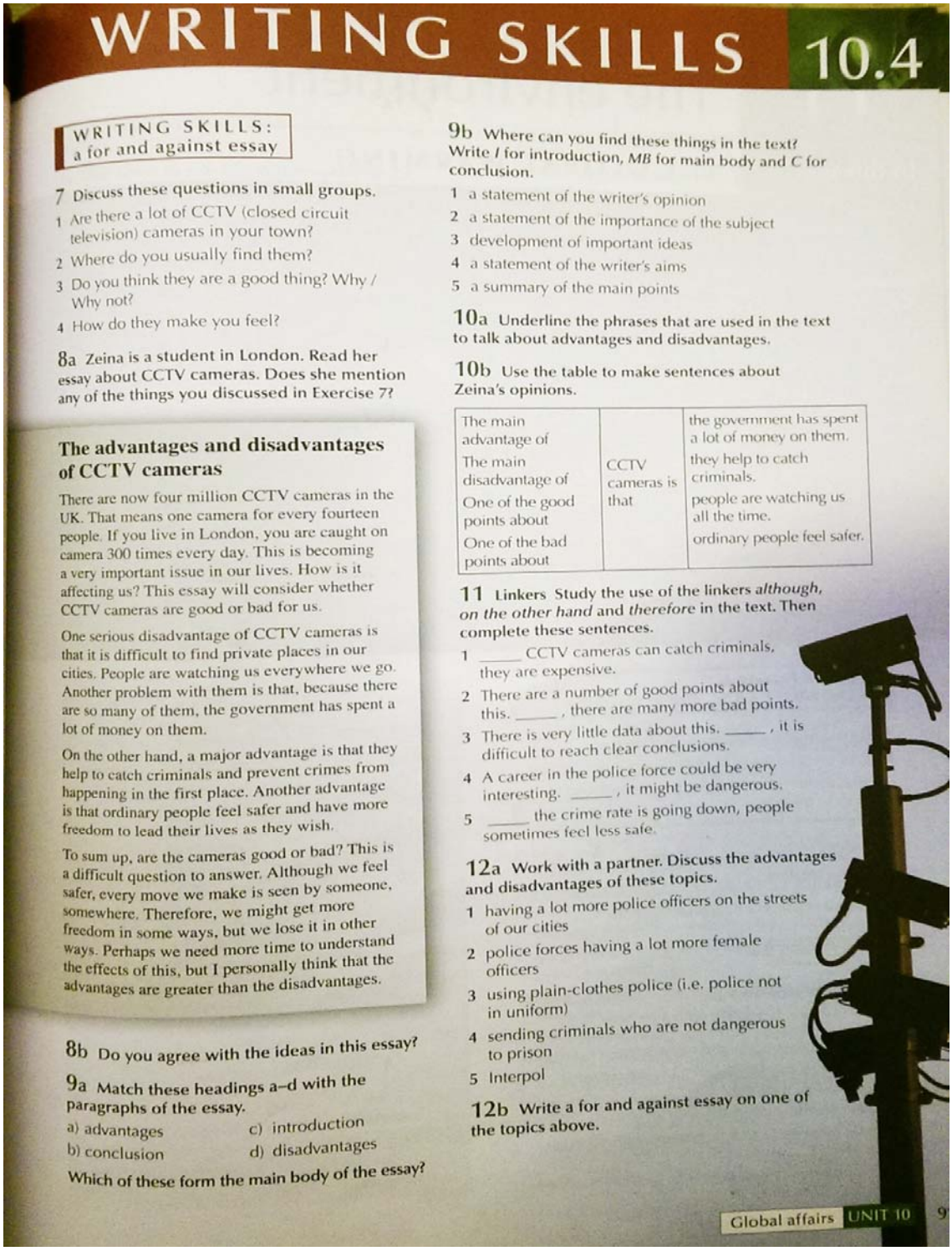
# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: A Snapshot of the Course Book



# WRITING SKILLS 10.4

**WRITING SKILLS:**
**a for and against essay**

**7** Discuss these questions in small groups.

1 Are there a lot of CCTV (closed circuit television) cameras in your town?
2 Where do you usually find them?
3 Do you think they are a good thing? Why / Why not?
4 How do they make you feel?

**8a** Zeina is a student in London. Read her essay about CCTV cameras. Does she mention any of the things you discussed in Exercise 7?

### The advantages and disadvantages of CCTV cameras

There are now four million CCTV cameras in the UK. That means one camera for every fourteen people. If you live in London, you are caught on camera 300 times every day. This is becoming a very important issue in our lives. How is it affecting us? This essay will consider whether CCTV cameras are good or bad for us.

One serious disadvantage of CCTV cameras is that it is difficult to find private places in our cities. People are watching us everywhere we go. Another problem with them is that, because there are so many of them, the government has spent a lot of money on them.

On the other hand, a major advantage is that they help to catch criminals and prevent crimes from happening in the first place. Another advantage is that ordinary people feel safer and have more freedom to lead their lives as they wish.

To sum up, are the cameras good or bad? This is a difficult question to answer. Although we feel safer, every move we make is seen by someone, somewhere. Therefore, we might get more freedom in some ways, but we lose it in other ways. Perhaps we need more time to understand the effects of this, but I personally think that the advantages are greater than the disadvantages.

**8b** Do you agree with the ideas in this essay?

**9a** Match these headings a–d with the paragraphs of the essay.

a) advantages
b) conclusion
c) introduction
d) disadvantages

Which of these form the main body of the essay?

**9b** Where can you find these things in the text? Write *I* for introduction, *MB* for main body and *C* for conclusion.

1 a statement of the writer's opinion
2 a statement of the importance of the subject
3 development of important ideas
4 a statement of the writer's aims
5 a summary of the main points

**10a** Underline the phrases that are used in the text to talk about advantages and disadvantages.

**10b** Use the table to make sentences about Zeina's opinions.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The main advantage of | CCTV cameras is that | the government has spent a lot of money on them. |
| The main disadvantage of | | they help to catch criminals. |
| One of the good points about | | people are watching us all the time. |
| One of the bad points about | | ordinary people feel safer. |

**11 Linkers** Study the use of the linkers *although, on the other hand* and *therefore* in the text. Then complete these sentences.

1 _____ CCTV cameras can catch criminals, they are expensive.
2 There are a number of good points about this. _____, there are many more bad points.
3 There is very little data about this. _____, it is difficult to reach clear conclusions.
4 A career in the police force could be very interesting. _____, it might be dangerous.
5 _____ the crime rate is going down, people sometimes feel less safe.

**12a** Work with a partner. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of these topics.

1 having a lot more police officers on the streets of our cities
2 police forces having a lot more female officers
3 using plain-clothes police (i.e. police not in uniform)
4 sending criminals who are not dangerous to prison
5 Interpol

**12b** Write a for and against essay on one of the topics above.

Appendix B: A Snapshot of the Writing Pack

4. She isn't tall. She isn't short. (neither...nor...)

**She is neither tall nor short.**

5. Both my parents and my sister are coming tomorrow. **(not only...but also)**

**Not only my parents but also my sister is coming tomorrow.**

6. The manager didn't approve of the plan. My colleagues didn't, either. (neither.....nor.....)

**Neither the manager nor my colleagues approve of the plan.**

7. The students might have made a mistake. The teacher might have made a mistake, too.

**(Either...or...)**

**Either the students or the teacher made a mistake.**

**4. CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS**

These conjunctions join independent clauses together.

The following are frequently used conjunctive adverbs:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *after all* | *in addition* | *next* |
| *also* | *incidentally* | *nonetheless* |
| *as a result* | *indeed* | *on the contrary* |
| *besides* | *in fact* | *on the other hand* |
| *consequently* | *in other words* | *otherwise* |
| *finally* | *instead* | *still* |
| *for example* | *likewise* | *then* |
| *furthermore* | *meanwhile* | *therefore* |
| *hence* | *moreover* | *thus* |
| *however* | *nevertheless* | |

**Exercise 12: Complete the sentences with appropriate conjunctions (whereas, when, in case, as long as, until, unless, as soon as, so that, despite, before, although, even if).**

1. Make sure you close all the windows ...**before**.....it starts to rain.
2. I would not necessarily be happy ...**even if**..... I was the richest person in the world.
3. ...**Although**.....she was exhausted, she continued to study.
4. ...**Despite**.....being a little overweight, he is actually quite fit.
5. Most Westerners like to eat large portions of meat, .....**whereas**..... the Chinese prefer to consume meat in the form of thin strips

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# Appendix C: The Writing Proficiency Exam Questions

**YILDIZ TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY**
**SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

0550

**2013-2014 PROFICIENCY EXAM**

**16th June 2014**
**Duration: 60 min**

**Name Surname:** .....
**Exam Room:** ..... **Exam Number:** ..... **Student Number:** .....

**WRITING (25 pts.)**

**Choose ONE of the topics below. You can use the prompts if you like. Write at least 250 words.**

**Assessment Criteria**

- **Content:** 8 pts.
- **Coherence:** 6 pts.
- **Grammar:** 5 pts.
- **Vocabulary:** 4 pts.
- **Punctuation, Spelling, Capitalisation & Formatting:** 2 pts.
- **Total:** 25 pts.

**1.** "The best way to learn English is to go to an English-speaking country and live there."

Do you agree or disagree with the statement above? Write an **opinion essay** discussing the statement.

| | |
|---|---|
| * practice with native speakers<br>* good language schools<br>* forcing you to learn<br>* high motivation<br>* perfecting your listening & speaking skills | * paying a lot of money for language schools abroad<br>* cheaper language education in your own country<br>* different accents in an English-speaking country<br>* culture shock affecting learning<br>* high costs of living abroad |

**2.** Some people prefer package holidays where everything is arranged for them. Others prefer exploring new places having their own holiday program and exploring new places on their own. Which do you think is better? Write an **opinion essay** discussing the topic.

| | |
|---|---|
| * tour guides<br>* scheduled daily trips<br>* accommodation that is arranged beforehand<br>* easy transfer between destinations<br>* including all expenses<br>* luxurious hotels | * exploring freely<br>* flexibility<br>* not worrying about schedule<br>* hostels, pensions<br>* more economical |

**3.** When their parents get divorced, children are negatively affected. What kind of problems do children have when their parents get divorced? What can be done to solve these problems? Write a **problem solution essay**.

| **Problems** | **Solutions** |
|---|---|
| * psychological problems<br>* behavioral problems<br>* failure at school<br>* feeling insecure or guilty<br>* problems with friends/teachers | * psychological help<br>* effective communication with the kid<br>* creating a peaceful life for the kid<br>* help from other people |

**4.** Some people become parents at an early age, so they face some challenges while raising their kids. What are the problems that young parents have? How can these problems be solved? Write a **problem solution essay**.

| **Problems** | **Solutions** |
|---|---|
| * financial problems<br>* lack of life experience<br>* lack of freedom<br>* not knowing how to take care of kids | * support from relatives<br>* financial support by the government<br>* psychological help from experts<br>* training about childcare |

# Appendix D: Marking Sheet

**2nd marking (Exam Room: _____)**

| | Name & Surname | Exam Number | Content (8 pts) | Coherence (6 pts) | Grammar (5 pts) | Vocabulary (4 pts) | Punctuation, Spelling & Capitalisation (2 pts) | Total 2nd marking (25 pts) | Total 1st marking (25 pts) | Difference | Average (25 pts) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 19 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20 | | | | | | | | | | | |

Marked by: _____

Appendix E: Rubric

**YILDIZ TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY**
**School of Foreign Languages**
**Basic English Department**
**2013-2014 Academic Year/ PROFICIENCY EXAM WRITING KEY**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** PLEASE USE CORRECTION SYMBOLS SO THAT SECOND GRADER CAN SAVE TIME WHILE GRADING THE ESSAY.

Grammar-**GR**
Vocabulary-**VOC**
Wrong Order-**WO**
Wrong Word-**WW**
Punctuation-**P**
Spelling-**SP**
Not clear: **?**

**ASSESSMENT for OPINION ESSAY (25 pts.)**

| | **POOR** | **GOOD** | **VERY GOOD** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Content: 8 pts** | 1 2 3 | 4 5 6 | 7 8 |
| **Coherence: 6 pts** | 1 2 | 3 4 | 5 6 |
| **Grammar: 5 pts** | 1 2 | 3 4 | 5 |
| **Vocabulary:4 pts** | 1 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Punctuation, Spelling & Capitalisation: 2 pts** | 0 | 1 | 2 |

Appendix F: Evaluation Chart

| STUDENT 1: | STUDENT 2: |
| --- | --- |
| However x 2<br>And x 4<br>On the other hand x 1<br>Because x 3, … | Thus x 1<br>On the other hand x 1<br>So x 3, … |
| TOTAL: | TOTAL: |

Appendix G.1: Descriptive Statistics of Frequencies

**Descriptive Statistics**

| | N | Skewness | | Kurtosis | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error |
| in the course books | 121 | 9.546 | .220 | 98.030 | .437 |
| in the exam papers | 121 | 7.842 | .220 | 72.910 | .437 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 121 | | | | |

Appendix G.2: The Values of Normality Test for Frequencies

**Tests of Normality**

| | Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a] | | | Shapiro-Wilk | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | df | Sig. | Statistic | df | Sig. |
| in the books | .413 | 121 | .000 | .187 | 121 | .000 |
| in the exam | .386 | 121 | .000 | .291 | 121 | .000 |

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Appendix H: The Values of Correlation Test for Frequencies

**Correlations**

| | | | in the course books | in the exam papers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | in the course books | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .534** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 |
| | | N | 121 | 121 |
| | in the exam papers | Correlation Coefficient | .534** | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |
| | | N | 121 | 121 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Appendix I: The Values of Normality Test for Formulaic Language Use, Coherence, Total Writing and Overall Proficiency

**Tests of Normality**

| | Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a] | | | Shapiro-Wilk | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | df | Sig. | Statistic | df | Sig. |
| FL USE | .105 | 150 | .000 | .980 | 150 | .031 |
| COHERENCE | .164 | 150 | .000 | .951 | 150 | .000 |
| TOTAL WRITING | .066 | 150 | .200* | .989 | 150 | .292 |
| PROFICIENCY | .081 | 150 | .017 | .974 | 150 | .007 |

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction