

# Survey Study on the Use of Lexical Chunks in High School Students' English Writing

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## Abstract

The study aims to investigate the use of lexical chunks in English compositions among Grade 2 students at a high school in Pan Zhihua, Sichuan Province, involving 100 students. Research instruments encompassed student writing samples, questionnaires, and interviews. The study employed AntConc, EXCEL, and SPSS 26.0 for data analysis. The research questions addressed are: (1) What types of lexical chunks are employed by high school students in their English writing, and what is the frequency of their usage? (2) In comparison to the English Curriculum Standard (2017 Edition, 2020 Revised Edition) for high schools, which lexical chunks are underutilized in students' English writing? Findings reveal that senior high school students predominantly utilize four types of lexical chunks in their English compositions: discourse organizers, stance bundles, topic chunks, and institutionalized expressions. Among these, topic chunks and stance bundles are the most frequently used, while discourse organizers are the least utilized. Furthermore, in comparison to the English Curriculum Standard (2017 Edition, 2020 Revised Edition) for high schools, these lexical chunks are underused, primarily due to high repetition rates, monotony, and misapplication by students. These issues reflect deficiencies in language fluency, accuracy, diversity, and authenticity. The main reasons for students' inadequate use of lexical chunks include lack of motivation, learning strategies, influence of prior learning experiences, and teaching methods. In light of these challenges, this study proposes corresponding teaching strategies with the aim of informing English instruction.

## Keywords

Lexical Chunks; English Writing; High School Students.

## 1. Introduction

The importance of writing in language acquisition, particularly in senior high schools, cannot be overstated. It serves as a crucial indicator of learners' language proficiency, allowing them to demonstrate their understanding and flexibility in using the language. Additionally, the significance of English writing in senior high school is underscored by its weight in the college entrance exam, accounting for approximately 26% of the overall score.

However, numerous challenges plague the writing abilities of senior high school students. These issues include improper vocabulary use, the influence of native language thinking, lack of authenticity and correctness in word choice, weak organizational skills, and a lack of fluency. Many students also struggle with repetitive language use, resulting in monotonous and uninteresting content. Addressing these challenges is imperative for enhancing students' writing proficiency.

Lexical chunks play a pivotal role in measuring language competence and can significantly enhance writing levels through their accumulation and utilization. By directly extracting grammar, semantics, and context, they reduce memory burden, improve fluency, accuracy, authenticity, and vividness of language output, and alleviate writing anxiety. Given their critical

role, it is essential to study the use of lexical chunks in the English writing of high school students.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the current use of lexical chunks in high school students' English compositions, identifying the types of lexical chunks used and reasons for their inadequate use. The theoretical significance lies in enriching research on the application of lexical chunks in English writing, particularly in the field of second language acquisition. Practically, the study is expected to provide pedagogical implications for the teaching and learning of English lexical chunks in senior high schools, enhancing students' awareness and providing guidance for teachers in meeting curriculum requirements. Additionally, the study offers valuable materials and practical experience for scholars exploring teaching models, thereby advancing lexical teaching development.

In conclusion, the study's findings and recommendations are poised to contribute significantly to the improvement of high school students' English writing abilities and the advancement of lexical teaching practices.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Lexical Chunks

Linguists have approached the definition of lexical chunks from various perspectives, leading to a lack of consensus. The term "chunk" was first introduced by American psychologist Miller (1956) to illustrate the process of grouping information. Becker (1975) introduced the concept of "prefabricated chunks," which represent semi-fixed structures with specific grammatical characteristics. Pawley and Syder (1983) referred to "lexicalized sentence stems" as units of phrases or longer segments with predetermined grammar and lexical content, creating a standard label for culturally recognized notions.

Nattinger and Decarrico (1992) coined the term "lexical phrases" to describe multi-word lexical phenomena that fall between standard lexicon and syntax, emphasizing their conventionalized function and increased frequency. Michael Lewis (1993) proposed the formal idea of "lexical chunks" as recognizable, learnable, and encodable word combinations. Yao Baoliang (2004) defined lexical chunks as frequently used, prefabricated multi-word combinations, capable of conveying stable meaning and specific structure even after partial modifications. Ma Guanghui (2011) indicated that lexical chunks are composed of multiple words and independently used to form sentences or discourse, serving grammatical, textual, or pragmatic functions.

Qi Yan, Jiang Yumei, and Zhu Xueyuan (2015) viewed lexical chunks as combination units of two or more words with complete grammatical structure, clear semantics, and fixed or semi-fixed characteristics, encompassing phrases, clauses, and sentence frames. Gao Xia (2017) proposed, from the co-selection theory perspective, that different lexical chunks are produced in communication, forming complex form-meaning functions that span semantics-syntax and semantics-pragmatics.

Building upon these definitions, this study defines lexical chunks as prefabricated patterns composed of multiple words, capable of being memorized, stored, and used as a whole, while encompassing functions of grammar and pragmatics.

Furthermore, scholars have categorized lexical chunks into distinct groups. Michael Lewis (1997) classifies them into Words and Polywords, Collocations, Institutionalized Expressions, and Sentence Frames and Heads, based on their internal semantic connections and syntactic functions. Nattinger and Decarrico (1992) categorize lexical chunks into Polywords, Phrasal Constraints, and Institutionalized Utterances, considering their length, structural characteristics, and fixed forms. Additionally, Biber (2004) identifies three categories of lexical

chunks based on their discourse and pragmatic functions: stance expressions, referential expressions, and discourse organizers.

In this context, the thesis classifies lexical chunks into four categories-discourse organizers, stance bundles, topic chunks, and institutionalized expressions-based on their functions and pragmatic roles.

## 2.2. Relevant Studies on Lexical chunks

The research on lexical chunks encompasses the cognitive psychological processes of lexical chunks, as well as the impact of lexical chunks on second language learning and language teaching.

In relation to the cognitive psychological processes of lexical chunks, it was observed by Wong-Fillmore (1976) that the majority of children's conversation consists of lexical chunks, underscoring the significance of lexical chunks in the development of language competence. The expansion of children's lexical chunk repertoire was identified as pivotal for language acquisition. Similarly, Skehan (1998) noted that lexical chunks are stored in learners' brains as whole units, facilitating quick extraction and use without the need for extensive memorization or analysis of their forms or meanings. This, in turn, reduces learners' cognitive burden in the process of knowledge acquisition and application, simplifying language processes, saving coding time, and enabling free communication.

Regarding the influence of lexical chunks on second language learning, the importance of lexical chunks in language expression has been recognized by various linguists. Pwley and Syder (1983) were among the first to study lexical chunks, finding that they constitute more than 50% of native speakers' discourse output, emphasizing their essential role in language communication and as the foundation for English idiom acquisition. Ellis (1999) highlighted the significance of lexical chunks as shared knowledge within a language community, emphasizing their importance in making learners' utterances more appropriate. It has been demonstrated that lexical chunks play a significant role in second language acquisition, enhancing language output and increasing learners' language capacity.

Numerous researchers have conducted studies on the application of lexical chunks in teaching (David Wills, 1975; Nattinger & Decarrico, 1992; Shen Minyu, 1999; Yang Yuchen, 1999; Lian Jie, 2001; Chang Chenguang, 2004; Jia Zhihui, 2016). David Wills (1975) advocated for the implementation of the "Lexical Approach" in teaching, attributing it to a significant contribution to learners' language ability. Nattinger and Decarrico (1992) proposed a novel approach based on lexical phrases for language instruction, emphasizing their value in reading, listening, writing, and speaking, as they offer more communicative and expressive power than grammatical structures. Chang Chenguang (2004) investigated the roles of lexical chunks in communication, highlighting the quick and holistic extraction of formulaic language from memory, without the need for grammatical analysis or organization. Jia Zhihui (2016) conducted an experiment on the inclusion of the lexical approach in writing instruction, demonstrating its effectiveness in enhancing students' writing performance.

Several studies have focused on the use of lexical chunks in students' writing (Wiktorsson, 2003; Susie Kima & Matt Kessler, 2022; Diao Linlin, 2004; Ma Guanghui, 2009; Huang Kaisheng & Zhou Xinping, 2016), as well as the relationship between lexical chunks and writing fluency (Yangjiao, 2019; Peng Chen & Bao Zhen, 2021). Wiktorsson (2003) studied the use of prefabricated chunks by Swedish English learners in writing, finding a positive correlation between the utilization of lexical chunks and writing level. Other researchers (Alloc, 2018; Hou, 2018; Mohammed & Al-Khazaali, 2020) emphasized the use of the lexical approach to significantly enhance the frequency of lexical chunk use and the writing quality of second language learners. Susie Kima and Matt Kessler (2022) investigated the influence of lexical chunks on academic writing scores, while Yang Jiao (2019) explored the effect of chunk

technique on junior school students' writing competence and motivation to study, concluding that lexical chunks can improve writing proficiency and motivation to learn. Similarly, some researchers (Cao Fenglong & Zhang Chenchen, 2016; Qi Yan & Xia Jun, 2016; Chen Rongjuan, 2018; Peng Chen & Bao Zhen, 2021) also emphasized that the level of lexical chunk teaching and using was significantly positively correlated with the level of writing, translation, reading and speaking, and the richness of lexical chunks was also improved.

To sum up, lexical chunks are critical in second language acquisition and can assist learners in mastering the target language more effectively. While previous researches are mainly focused on the link of lexical chunks with writing as well as the mastery and teaching models of lexical chunks. There is few research on the usage of lexical chunks in writing, the majority of which is conducted on college students. Therefore, high school students' English compositions are studied in this thesis to analyze the situations of lexical chunk use, aiming to make some supplements to the previous studies on lexical chunks and writing.

### 3. Research Questions

This study aims to investigate the situations of lexical chunks used by senior high school students in English writing, intending to answer three questions:

(1) What types of lexical chunks are employed by high school students in their English writing, and what is the frequency of their usage?

(2) In comparison to the English Curriculum Standard (2017 Edition, 2020 Revised Edition) for high schools, which lexical chunks are underutilized in students' English writing?

## 4. Method

### 4.1. Participants

The subjects of this study were 100 students from two classes of a senior high school in Pan Zhihua, with an average age of 17 years old, who had been studying English for at least seven years. A total of 200 compositions were gathered, and 100 questionnaires were delivered to the 100 students from both classes at the same time, with the goal of gaining a better understanding of the current situation of lexical chunk learning. Eight students with different English levels were selected for the students' interview. In addition, six English teachers were selected for the teachers' interview, who aged 25-49, including three experienced English teachers that had taught English for nearly ten years and three novice teachers who had taught for less than five years.

### 4.2. Instrument

Corpus of Students' Writing. Students were required to write compositions according to the given information. The corpus was from the composition part of an academic level test for Grade 2 in a high school in Pan Zhihua in November 2021, which included two parts, practical writing and continuation writing. The title of the practical writing was Introduce the Experience of Water Diving, the requirement of the continuation writing was "continue to write two short stories according to the contradiction between the mother and daughter". Then 200 students' English compositions were collected to analyze the types of lexical chunks as well as the number and frequency of each classification of lexical chunks.

#### 4.2.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire aims to analyze what factors lead to an insufficient use of lexical chunks by senior high school students in their English writing. The questionnaire used in this study is self-designed. According to the four aspects, a questionnaire including students' attitudes towards lexical chunks, their strategies for lexical chunk learning, their use of lexical chunks and their

attitudes towards teachers’ lexical chunk teaching is designed. In the questionnaire, students’ attitudes towards lexical chunks are covered in questions 1 to 3, students’ strategies for lexical chunk learning are covered in questions 4 to 7, students’ use of lexical chunks is covered in questions 8 to 11, and students’ attitudes toward teachers’ lexical chunk teaching is covered in questions 12 to 15. Likert scales was adopted in this questionnaire (A= always B= often C= sometimes D=rarely E= none). 100 questionnaires were distributed, 99 of which were valid. So, the recovery rate was 99%, all of which was used in data research. Meanwhile, according to SPSS28.0, the Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.806. For students’ understanding, the questionnaire of this investigation was written in Chinese.

**Table 1.** Reliability statistics of questionnaire

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.806	.808	15

**4.2.2. Interview**

The interview aims to supplement the deficiencies in the above data, deeply analyzing the reasons for students’ insufficient use of lexical chunks in their English writings. The interview included two parts, students’ interview and teachers’ interview, which were semi-structured interviews. Each interview involved three questions. For students’ interview, eight students were selected from two classes. For teachers’ interview, three novice teachers and three experienced teachers were included respectively. The time for each interviewer was within twenty minutes. The interview content was recorded and transcribed.

**5. Data Collection**

The study primarily utilized data from students' compositions, questionnaires, and interviews. The corpus of students' compositions comprised 100 practical writing and 100 continuation writing, which were converted from images to text format and stored in a computer. The analysis of the compositions was conducted in alignment with Biber's and Lewis's classification of lexical chunks, focusing on their pragmatic functions. The categorized lexical chunks were then input into Excel for further analysis.

Additionally, 100 questionnaires were distributed to students, and the data collected was uploaded to SPSS 26.0 for analysis. For the interviews, an open atmosphere was fostered to ensure the authenticity of the responses. The interview records were transcribed and analyzed based on key themes.

**6. Data Analysis**

Based on the corpus that was collected, it was observed that the following four types of lexical chunks were frequently utilized by students in their compositions: discourse organizers, stance bundles, topic chunks, and institutionalized expressions. Regarding the frequency of lexical chunk usage, it was noted that topic chunks were employed most frequently, followed by stance bundles, with institutionalized expressions and discourse organizers being the least utilized. Furthermore, differences in the utilization of lexical chunks were discerned between the two composition genres.

The corpus revealed a total of 228 discourse organizers, constituting 11.3% of the entire corpus, 600 stance bundles, accounting for 29.8% of the corpus, 273 institutionalized expressions, representing 13.5% of the corpus, and 910 topic chunks, comprising 45% of the corpus. Consequently, it is evident that students predominantly employed topic chunks, followed by stance bundles, while discourse organizers and institutionalized expressions were the least utilized in both types of compositions. Additionally, within the category of topic chunks, verb phrase chunks were the most frequently employed.

The rationale behind the students' use of these lexical chunks is closely associated with their characteristics. The category of topic chunks encompasses three subcategories: verb phrase chunks, noun phrase chunks, and adjective, adverbial, and prepositional phrase chunks. The majority of these lexical chunks are fixed phrases, serving as independent functions in sentences, primarily entailing content descriptions of constituent parts of speech. Students can articulate content in accordance with the subject's attributes, particularly in the context of continuation writing, where these lexical chunks are frequently employed. Moreover, these lexical chunks are characterized by a concise structure, often occurring together, and can be directly utilized after retrieval from memory without necessitating alterations in form or function, thereby aiding in alleviating students' cognitive load, ensuring accurate spelling, and bolstering their confidence in writing.

In both practical and continuation writing, students employed 29.8% of the stance bundles. When composing their pieces, students frequently utilized numerous stance bundles to articulate their personal attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and positions on events. Furthermore, stance bundles are instrumental in enabling students to express certainties or uncertainties, thereby contributing to the construction of evaluative and interactive discourses.

Moreover, discourse organizers are utilized to provide a framework for the entire sentence, thereby rendering the sentence structure more flexible. Students are only required to populate the vacant slots with clauses or gerunds, infinitives, and other structures that convey complete meaning. The meaning and form of the filled words should align with the sentence structure, exhibiting robust generative capability. Additionally, the use of discourse organizers can enhance the coherence, accuracy, and logical progression of writing. Notably, in the present study, due to the constraints of the composition topic, institutionalized expressions were predominantly employed in continuous writing.

Regarding the frequency of lexical chunk usage across two composition genres, it was observed that students most frequently employed topic chunks and stance bundles, followed by discourse organizers, with institutionalized expressions being used least frequently. Notably, due to the distinct composition genres, it was also found that students used topic chunks and specific conversational bundles more frequently in comparison to practical writing. This observation indicates the varying frequency of usage of the four lexical chunks in practical and continuation writing.

The frequency of topic chunks, stance bundles, institutionalized expressions, and discourse organizers was determined to be 23.67, 33.97, 74.92, and 82.1, respectively. It is evident that students most frequently utilized topic chunks and stance bundles, followed by discourse organizers, while institutionalized expressions were employed least frequently. This suggests that a topic chunk appeared approximately every 23.67 words, a stance appeared every 33.97 words, and a discourse organizer and an institutionalized expression appeared every 74.92 and 82.1 words, respectively.

Furthermore, based on the number and frequency of the aforementioned four types of lexical chunks, a positive correlation was identified between the number and frequency of topic chunks and stance bundles. However, it was observed that there were more institutionalized

expressions than discourse organizers, yet their frequency was lower than that of discourse organizers.

The data collected through questionnaires revealed that lexical chunks are known to 85.85% of the students, with 84.84% and 43.43% acknowledging the importance of lexical chunks and expressing a preference for using them in their English writing. This indicates a serious attitude among students towards lexical chunks, as they recognize the significance of these linguistic units in writing and are inclined to incorporate them into their English compositions.

It is evident that students seldom independently accumulate lexical chunks, as only 11.11% of them consistently engage in this practice. Additionally, 38.38% and 23.23% of students do not habitually review the acquired lexical chunks after class. Furthermore, half of the students do not memorize lexical chunks as cohesive units, instead mastering them individually. Consequently, they predominantly construct sentences using isolated words, resulting in nonstandard and nonnative-like language usage. Moreover, 80.8% of students rarely or never consult dictionaries or seek assistance from teachers when encountering unfamiliar lexical chunks, indicating a lack of effective learning strategies for lexical chunks.

Following instruction from teachers, students do not actively summarize or review lexical chunks, nor do they habitually input lexical chunks. Furthermore, when recalling lexical chunks, students tend to treat them as disparate elements rather than as cohesive units, leading to an increased memory burden.

In terms of application, 42.42% and 22.22% of students sometimes or rarely utilize the learned lexical chunks in their English writing, while 34.34% and 27.27% often or always express themselves based on Chinese thinking, a practice only avoided by 24.24% of the students. Additionally, 34.34% and 29.29% of students sometimes or rarely recall relevant topic-related lexical chunks when presented with a composition prompt. The inability to swiftly locate and employ essential words and phrases is identified as a significant challenge for many students in their composition endeavors.

Moreover, 30.3% and 29.29% of students often or always utilize commonly-used lexical chunks when writing, with only 27.26% incorporating new ones. This suggests that, despite recognizing the importance of lexical chunks, students struggle with flexibility in writing, primarily due to difficulties in retrieving learned or effective lexical chunks during composition and in connecting newly acquired lexical chunks with existing ones. The influence of Chinese thinking on their writing is also apparent.

Regarding the role of teachers, 38.38% and 27.27% of students believe that teachers often or sometimes teach lexical chunks during English writing instruction, with 30.0% noting that teachers frequently emphasize the transcription of lexical chunks in class. However, only 24.24% of students perceive teachers as rarely emphasizing the recording of lexical chunks. When it comes to the use of new lexical chunks for self-expression, 35.35% of students feel that teachers frequently encourage the use of creative and new lexical chunks. Additionally, 43.43% of students believe that most of the lexical chunks taught by teachers have already been learned, indicating a tendency for teachers to focus on familiar rather than new lexical chunks.

In summary, the data suggests that teachers are earnest in their approach to teaching and explaining lexical chunks to students, actively promoting their use in compositions. However, it is apparent that the instruction primarily focuses on familiar lexical chunks, with limited emphasis on introducing new ones.

The English Curriculum Standard (2017 Edition, 2020 Revised Edition) for high schools serves as the foundation for the textbook, ensuring alignment between the lexical chunks in the textbooks and the stipulations of the English Curriculum Standard. Upon conducting a comparative analysis of the lexical chunks employed in the corpus with those present in the four textbooks of FLTRP, this study revealed an underutilization of certain lexical categories by

students, including institutionalized expressions, stance bundles, topic chunks, and discourse organizers. Notably, institutionalized expressions were found to be misapplied in students' English compositions, thereby contributing to deficiencies in fluency, accuracy, authenticity, and diversity within their written work. The classification of lexical chunks within the textbooks, as undertaken in this study, yielded a total of 1829 instances, indicating a high frequency of lexical chunk presentation within the textbooks. Despite two years of high school English education, it is expected that students in their second year should have acquired proficiency in a diverse array of lexical chunks as per the extensive content covered in the textbooks. However, it was observed that students did not fully leverage the relevant lexical chunks in their writing endeavors.

The institutionalized expressions found in students' compositions predominantly consist of oral expressions, while proverbs and aphorisms from this category are notably underutilized. Notably, the FLTRP textbooks contain various examples of such lexical chunks, including phrases like "with butterflies in my stomach," "have a frog in one's throat," "think carefully before jumping in with both feet," and "never say never." However, students demonstrate a limited utilization of these lexical chunks, indicating a low level of internalization of such expressions. Additionally, the word "sorry" is notably repeated 35 times in the corpus, reflecting a lack of diversity in expressions. Instead of employing richer expressions such as "I am so sorry for...", students often resort to Chinese expressions like "It's my mistakes," thereby reflecting a lack of authenticity in their use of lexical chunks in their English writing.

The usage of stance bundles by students is characterized by monotony, stiffness, and repetition. For instance, the phrases "I can" and "I should" appear 20 and 28 times, respectively, indicating a tendency among students to construct sentences according to Chinese formulaic language and stylistic rules, which do not align with English expression habits. While textbooks offer diverse and authentic expressions to enhance their compositions, such as "I am supposed to" and "I ought to," students fail to utilize these resources effectively. Similarly, the use of topic chunks exhibits monotony and high repetition, with phrases like "a lot of" and "so many" appearing 19 times, while alternative lexical chunks provided in the textbook, such as "plenty of" and "a wealth of," are underused. This pattern suggests that students struggle to flexibly apply the learned lexical chunks.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that students' writing lacks diversity and authenticity due to the limited use of discourse organizers, as evidenced by a lower frequency of their usage in practical and continuation writing. Most students rely on expressions like "There be" and "and then," with "There be" appearing 52 times and "and then" appearing 16 times in the corpus. The underutilization of discourse organizers impacts the fluency and cohesion of students' compositions. Additionally, students often misuse paired lexical chunks, such as writing "turn up my eyes" instead of "open my eyes," "give it a try" instead of "have a try," and "make an impression for me" instead of "make an impression on me," indicating a lack of firm grasp and contextual understanding of lexical chunks. Consequently, students' use of lexical chunks exhibits low accuracy, affecting the depth of their writing.

The analysis of the questionnaires encompasses four dimensions: students' attitudes towards lexical chunks, their strategies for lexical chunk learning, their use of lexical chunks, and their attitudes towards teachers' lexical chunk teaching. Each of these dimensions is individually examined in this study. It is evident that 85.85% of the students are familiar with lexical chunks, and 84.84% and 43.43% of them consider lexical chunks to be important and express a preference for using them in their English writing. Therefore, it is apparent that students hold serious attitudes towards lexical chunks. The majority of students place significance on lexical chunks, acknowledge their value in writing, and are inclined to incorporate them into their English compositions. Furthermore, 44.44% of the students seldom accumulate lexical chunks on their own, and only 11.11% of them consistently engage in this practice. Additionally, 38.38%

and 23.23% of the students do not habitually review learned lexical chunks after class. Moreover, half of the students do not memorize lexical chunks as a whole, but rather master them individually. Consequently, they predominantly utilize words to construct sentences, leading to nonstandard and nonnative-like language usage. Furthermore, 80.8% of students rarely or never consult dictionaries or seek assistance from teachers when encountering unfamiliar lexical chunks. These findings indicate that students lack effective learning strategies for lexical chunks. Following instruction from teachers, students do not actively summarize or review lexical chunks, nor do they habitually input lexical chunks. Additionally, when recalling lexical chunks, students tend to treat them as disparate units instead of integrated wholes, thereby increasing the cognitive load.

The questionnaire results reveal that 42.42% and 22.22% of the students occasionally or rarely apply the lexical chunks they have learned in their English writing. Moreover, 34.34% and 27.27% of them consistently or frequently express themselves based on Chinese thinking in their writing, a behavior exhibited by only 24.24% of the students. Furthermore, 34.34% and 29.29% of the students infrequently or rarely recall related topic lexical chunks after encountering the composition topic. For many students, the most challenging aspect of composition is their inability to swiftly locate and utilize essential words and phrases. Additionally, 30.3% and 29.29% of the students consistently or frequently use commonly-used lexical chunks when writing, with only 27.26% of them employing new ones. These findings suggest that although students deem lexical chunks to be crucial, they exhibit inflexibility in their writing, primarily due to their inability to retrieve learned or effective lexical chunks during composition and their struggle to integrate newly acquired lexical chunks with existing ones. Chinese thinking continues to influence their writing.

Furthermore, 38.38% of the students believe that teachers frequently or occasionally teach lexical chunks during English writing instruction, and 30.0% of them indicate that teachers often prompt them to transcribe lexical chunks in class. Only 24.24% of the students perceive that teachers "rarely" request them to record lexical chunks. Regarding the use of new lexical chunks for self-expression, 35.35% of the students feel that teachers frequently encourage them to utilize creative and innovative lexical chunks. Moreover, 43.43% of the students believe that they have already acquired most of the lexical chunks taught by teachers in class. These findings indicate that teachers approach lexical chunks with seriousness, consistently teaching and explaining them to students, and actively encouraging their usage in written compositions, which serves to motivate students. However, Question 15 reveals that the majority of the lexical chunks taught by teachers have already been acquired, with few new ones being introduced.

## 7. Results and Discussion

The study offers a comprehensive investigation into the current utilization of lexical chunks in the English compositions of senior high school students. Through an analysis of the corpus of students' compositions, comparison with curriculum standards, and the administration of questionnaires and interviews, the research provides valuable insights into students' use of lexical chunks.

The analysis revealed a diverse range of lexical chunks employed by students, including discourse organizers, stance bundles, topic chunks, and institutionalized expressions. For example, in their compositions, students frequently used stance bundles such as "in my opinion," "I believe," and "it seems to me," to convey their personal viewpoints. However, the underutilization of certain categories of lexical chunks, such as discourse organizers and institutionalized expressions, was evident. For instance, students often neglected to use discourse organizers like "on the other hand" or "in conclusion," which affected the coherence and logical flow of their writing.

The functional characteristics and pragmatics of lexical chunks significantly influence students' choices, with different types being selected based on contextual requirements. For instance, the prevalence of stance bundles in conveying emotions and opinions reflects students' inclination to express emotional tones in their compositions. However, the overreliance on basic stance bundles led to a lack of nuance and sophistication in their expression of opinions.

In contrast to Zhang Xin's (2012) findings, which emphasized phrasal constraints as the most frequently used lexical chunks, followed by poly-words, sentence builders, and institutionalized expressions, this study presents a distinct pattern of lexical chunk usage among students.

Upon comparing students' use of lexical chunks with those found in FLTRP textbooks, it becomes apparent that students' utilization of lexical chunks is inadequate. Issues such as spelling mistakes, misuse, and monotony indicate a lack of firm grasp and accuracy in employing lexical chunks. For instance, students often used the topic chunk "the importance of" in a repetitive and formulaic manner, leading to a lack of originality and depth in their exploration of topics.

Furthermore, certain categories of lexical chunks, particularly stance bundles and topic chunks, are underutilized, leading to repetitive and simplistic expressions, thus compromising the variety and flexibility of students' writing. This lack of variety and flexibility resulted in compositions that lacked depth and sophistication, affecting the overall quality of their writing.

The analysis of questionnaires and interviews highlighted a crucial finding: while students possess an understanding of lexical chunks and their functions, they lack awareness of effective learning strategies and the accumulation of lexical chunks. Many students exhibit reluctance in using new and complex lexical chunks, indicating a lack of motivation. For instance, students expressed hesitation in using advanced stance bundles or topic chunks due to a fear of making mistakes, leading to a limited range of expression in their writing.

Additionally, teachers' constraints in explaining and integrating lexical chunks within limited classroom time, combined with uniform teaching approaches, contribute to students' inadequate use of lexical chunks. To address these issues, it is imperative to provide specific examples of lexical chunks used by students and demonstrate how their inadequate utilization affects the overall quality of their compositions. Additionally, the discussion could be enhanced by including suggestions for addressing the identified issues, such as specific teaching strategies or interventions to improve students' awareness and motivation in learning lexical chunks. For example, incorporating interactive activities and games to make learning lexical chunks more engaging, providing opportunities for students to practice using lexical chunks in authentic writing tasks, and offering personalized feedback to encourage the exploration of new lexical chunks could all contribute to improving students' proficiency in utilizing lexical chunks effectively.

## 8. Conclusion

The main findings of the study are as follows. It was observed, based on the corpus of students' English compositions, that the following four types of lexical chunks are frequently utilized by students in their compositions: discourse organizers, stance bundles, topic chunks, and institutionalized expressions. Regarding the frequency of lexical chunk usage, topic chunks were found to be the most commonly used, followed by stance bundles, with institutionalized expressions and discourse organizers being the least utilized. Furthermore, the study revealed differences in the usage of lexical chunks across different genres of compositions. Specifically, students exhibited a higher frequency of usage of topic chunks and specific conversational bundles in comparison to practical writing. This variation in usage can be attributed to the diverse functions and structures of lexical chunks.

Additionally, a comparison of the lexical chunks in the entire corpus with those in 4FLTRP textbooks revealed that institutionalized expressions, stance bundles, topic chunks, and discourse organizers were underused by students. Furthermore, it was observed that topic chunks were often misused in students' English compositions. The primary manifestation of this issue is the monotonous use of lexical chunks by students, who tend to rely on simple lexical chunks learned in the past. This practice does not align with curriculum standards and results in a high repetition and error rate in their usage of lexical chunks. Consequently, students' compositions lack fluency, authenticity, accuracy, and diversity, which hinders their writing performance.

Moreover, the study findings from questionnaires and interviews with teachers and students indicated that students do not pay attention to lexical chunks in instructional materials when learning English. Additionally, students seldom employ effective strategies for lexical chunk learning, accumulate or review lexical chunks taught in class, or demonstrate learning motivation. Instead, they repeatedly use lexical chunks they have already mastered, leading to inadequate usage and poor quality of compositions. The study identified several principal reasons for students' insufficient use of lexical chunks, including the lack of learning motivation, strategies, influence from previous learning experiences, and teaching methods.

In conclusion, the study findings underscore the importance of effective lexical chunk usage in English writing and highlight the need for students to develop comprehensive learning strategies and motivation to enhance their use of lexical chunks. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the significance of aligning instructional materials with students' learning needs and promoting a diverse and accurate usage of lexical chunks to improve the quality of compositions.

Based on an analysis of the corpus of students' compositions, as well as data obtained from questionnaires and interviews, several pedagogical implications emerge.

Firstly, it is recommended that teachers raise students' awareness of lexical chunks and promote self-learning capabilities. Given the diversity of lexical chunks, the constraints of teaching time, and varying student proficiency levels, mastering a large number of lexical chunks is challenging. Thus, heightened awareness and sensitivity to recognizing lexical chunks should be instilled in students through regular teaching. Employing a validation mechanism, teachers can reinforce and consolidate lexical chunk knowledge, thereby fostering students' independent learning and gradual expansion of lexical chunk repertoire.

Secondly, it is suggested that emphasis be placed on enhancing students' lexical chunk output training to improve their writing and oral skills. Students' writing and oral proficiency is closely linked to their ability to produce lexical chunks. Therefore, teachers can employ diverse forms of lexical chunk output training, allowing students to practice lexical chunks in context, such as constructing sentences and narrating stories using lexical chunks. Encouraging students to incorporate learned lexical chunks into their English writing can significantly enhance their lexical chunk production ability.

Thirdly, it is advisable for teachers to cultivate authentic English thinking among students through a variety of instructional activities, thereby enhancing language accuracy and authenticity. In the teaching process, students should be encouraged to delve into the cultural backdrop of English-speaking countries, deepening their comprehension of cultural nuances. Additionally, providing students with suitable English articles for reading can aid in comprehending the disparities between English and Chinese expressions, fostering authentic English thinking through comparative language analysis.

Furthermore, students should heighten their awareness of lexical chunks and develop effective strategies and motivation for learning them. Recognizing the significance of lexical chunks in language expression, students are encouraged to expand and accumulate lexical chunks

through various channels. Strategies such as categorizing chunks in notebooks based on themes and conducting regular self-reflection on the accurate and rational use of lexical chunks in writing can enhance both writing performance and confidence in English learning.

However, this study has certain limitations. Firstly, the sample size was relatively small, consisting of 100 students from two classes of a high school, with only 8 students and 6 teachers being interviewed. This limited sample may not fully represent the English writing proficiency of all Chinese high school students. Moreover, the study spanned only four months, and a longer duration could have yielded more robust conclusions and reliable data. Considering these limitations, future researchers are advised to expand the sample to include students from different grades and schools, thereby enhancing the persuasiveness of the findings. Additionally, extending the research period and diversifying the research methods would bolster the credibility and persuasiveness of the study's conclusions and recommendations.

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