

The Treatment of English Conversation Grammar in Modern Advanced EFL Textbooks

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Abstract

Not until recently has the grammar of spoken English been considered as a separate field of study; in fact, only with the appearance of audio recording and advanced technology has the analysis of spoken language been made possible. In spite of the fact that different scholars (Goffman 1983, Schegloff 2007, Sacks 1974, Sindell 2010) have emphasized the importance of the studies on conversation grammar, little attention has been paid to its actual teaching. The goal of this paper is to investigate up to what extent the grammar of conversation is present in modern textbooks. Within the general area of the grammar of conversation and following Biber et al. (1999), I will focus on the study of non-clausal units (i.e. grammatical items that lack finite clause structure) and, more particularly, on the so-called inserts (i.e. words and expressions that signal relations between speaker(s), hearer(s) and discourse).

Key words: conversation grammar, spoken language, teaching, textbooks

Introduction

Spoken English started drawing attention of linguists in the mid of the XX century and it was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that it was studied by such scholars as Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson who also were inspired by two important sociologists, Erving Goffman and Harold Garfinkel. However, even then the items and structures found in spoken communication have not been fully described, and most grammars of English have had a bias towards the written language (Carter & McCarthy, 2006:164). Thus, only with the appearance of audio recordings and advanced technology it became plausible to analyse the spoken language; so, even if the matter of conversation grammar appeared as a new trend in linguistics, still it is not considered as its separate field.

Today, with the change of language teaching skills preferences, conversation, i.e. spoken language, plays one of the most important roles in the curriculum of all educational institutions where English is taught as a second/foreign language. If twenty years ago it was enough to teach reading and writing skills to a student in keeping with the principles of the grammar-translation method, today emphasis is primarily placed on listening and speaking skills. Thus, the communicative approach to language teaching became one of the leading methods at present. In spite of all this, very little attention has been paid to the peculiarities of conversational structures. Taking into account the laconism, unpredictability, spontaneity and irregularity of spoken language, there is no doubt that the grammar of spoken language would differ exceedingly from the grammar of written language. Consequently, conversation and its grammar deserve particular attention in

their own right (Biber et al, 1999:1038) and they should be treated as a separate section in the language teaching materials, especially in textbooks which are considered to be the most universal guide in the teaching of language comprising in itself a hierarchical and structural consequence of language representation.

The aim of this paper is to investigate up to what extent the grammar of conversation is present in modern textbooks. For this purpose, I have analysed a sample of recent textbooks of upper-intermediate and advanced levels (levels B2-C1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference) which are widely used in Spanish language schools and universities. Taking the book of Biber *et al.* (1999) as a reference point, I will focus on the study of non-clausal units (i.e. grammatical items that lack finite clause structure) and, more particularly, on the so-called *inserts* (i.e. words and expressions that signal relations between speaker(s), hearer(s) and discourse). I will then touch upon such insert structures as interjections (e.g. *oh*), hesitators (e.g. *erm*), discourse markers (e.g. *well*, *now*), attention signals (e.g. *hey*), response forms (e.g. *right*), polite speech formulae (e.g. *thank you*), greeting and farewells (e.g. *bye*), etc, and see if these patterns are somewhat included in advanced modern textbooks.

The first part of the work starts by discussing the spoken language which is contrasted to written language; later, in the second part, I focus on the importance of conversation grammar reflection in modern textbooks. The study gives an account to the survey of definite textbooks used in Spanish language schools and universities and tries to find the sections and exercises that are aimed at teaching conversation grammar. The paper concludes with a discussion of the results presented in the form of graphs and tables, and some suggestions that could be used in the future textbook compiling and design.

1. Spoken language versus written language

Spoken language or oral language, as is sometimes called, is a spontaneous form of any language presentation. Spoken interaction may range from being intimate and informal to being formal and distant (Carter & McCarthy, 2006:207). The most obvious transactional events involving speech include situations like buying tickets, ordering a meal, describing symptoms to a doctor (Cheepen & Monaghan, 1990:3) and many other interactions that presume the oral language reproduction directed to the addressee. Thus, unlike other forms of language reproduction oral language possesses some peculiar features. According to Carter & McCarthy (2006:164) there are four main features of the spoken language:

- Spoken language happens in real time and is typically unplanned;
- Spoken language is most typically face to face;
- Spoken language foregrounds choices which reflect the immediate social and interpersonal situation;
- Spoken language and written language are not sharply divided but exist on a continuum.

Sacks (1995:521) also adds that 'any naturally occurring conversation is a more or less extraordinarily complicated thing'. Consequently, the main feature which makes the spoken language to be complicated is its being unplanned and spontaneous, and at the same time chaotic and unorganised. If during the written language we have plenty of time to think, to correct, to rewrite, and even cut and paste, in spoken language thinking time is limited; pauses, repetitions and rephrasing are very common. The flow of a communication may also be affected by interruptions or by overlaps with other speakers or by external factors in speech situation (Carter & McCarthy, 2006:168).

Thus, nowadays, one of the biggest tasks in linguistics is to find the considerable distinctions that can differentiate the spoken language from the written one. Palmer & Blandford (1969:13), for example, indicate that the term spoken English should be taken to mean that variety of English which is generally used by educated people in the course of ordinary conversation or when writing letters to intimate friends, whereas the term written English may be taken to cover those varieties of English that we generally find in printed

books, reviews, formal correspondence and sometimes the speech that we hear from the public speakers and orators. At the same time, the most obvious distinction is in sentence type which normally requires a response whereas in written language the response is almost unnecessary. Focusing on the response forms, we should emphasise the lack of their full grammatical completeness and its consistence of a single word. The main distinction of conversation grammar from general written grammar is that the first one is much freer and does not obey any tough rules. Moreover, standard spoken English grammar will be different from standard written English grammar in many respects if we consider 'standard' to be a description of the recurrent spoken usage of adult native speakers. What may be considered 'non-standard' in writing may well be 'standard' in speech (Carter & McCarthy, 2006:168). Thus, there are a lot of reasons that explain why the grammar of conversation is so different from the grammar of written English; and why unlike the grammar of written English, the conversation grammar is so unstable and may vary from speaker to speaker. Carter & McCarthy (2006), for example, explain it by two major factors: first of all, many items and structures in spoken grammar reflect the interpersonal dimension rather than the content of the message. Secondly, speakers also express stances, attitudes and feelings towards their messages and reactions to what others say, all in real-time face-to-face interaction, with listeners' sensitivities in mind. Spoken grammar therefore also has important affective features. Thus, most of the responses are generally constructed by means of non-clausal elements such as interjections, backchannels, discourse markers, etc. which are definitely absent in high percent of the written language.

Being one of the most important forms of spoken language, conversation is the richest form of speech situation (Cheepen& Monaghan, 1990:90). It is typically spontaneous, so that speakers are continually faced with the need both to plan and to execute their utterances in real time, 'online' or 'on the fly' (Biber, *et al.* 1999:1048). In all the conversations there are always two or more speakers who are involved into a deliberate participation in which they are participating together (Cheepen & Monaghan, 1990:44). Thus, Carter & McCarthy (2006:164) outline the following features of conversation:

- Sentences in the written sense are difficult to identify in spoken language. What seems more important is the production of adequate communicative units and the taking of turns rather than the transition from one sentence to another;
- Speech is marked by small units of communication often consisting of just single words or phrases, rather than complete sentences, and these units may be separated by pauses, intakes of breath, falls and raises in pitch, and so on;
- The minimal unit of communication is the tone unit, which consists of at least one intonation contour which ends in a rising or falling tone. If a unit does not have one such intonation contour, it is heard as incomplete. A tone unit typically coincides with a clause, hence the clause may be considered the basic unit of grammar in spoken language, but the tone units can also be phrases or single words.

All in all, today, when the world is seized by globalization and integration; when the borders became so transparent that each person (especially people of young generation and mostly the students) has an access to a foreign culture and communication, speaking skill became one of the most important one to be taught to students. Today, we should clearly differentiate the teaching of spoken language from the teaching of written one and put the concrete borders between their peculiarities and mainly structures that should be presented to students. Thus, basing on this, we may say that half of the task is completed since the structure of the written language in the language teaching curriculum has been existing 'for ages'. The most important duty at the moment is to identify the structures of the spoken language and see up to what extent it can be added to the teaching materials in order to be successfully taught to present day students as a variety of daily used languages.

2. The importance of conversation grammar in present day textbooks

According to Cheepen & Monaghan (1990), the study of English conversation has traditionally been the concern of two major traditions – *discourse analysis*, a field represented by such scholars as Halliday, Sinclair and Coulthard, Crystal and Davy, and Edmonson – and *conversation analysis*, which originated in the USA with a group of scholars (such as Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson) with a background in sociology or more specifically in ethnomethodology. As to Biber et al (1999:1042), conversation is typically carried out in face-to-face interaction with others which means that we share not just immediate physical context of time and space, but a large amount of specific social, cultural, and institutional knowledge. At the same time, conversation has a strikingly low lexical density and a remarkably low degree of grammatical elaboration.

Today, the study of conversation has got such a great importance that we may talk about its grammar as a separate subject inside the language teaching domain. However, yet we cannot talk about the stability of the spoken language as there have not been any written rules for it that could be taught to us from the very childhood as it was done with written language. Nevertheless, today, resting upon such works as the work of Biber et al (1999) or Carter & McCarthy (2006) it is quite possible that the grammar of spoken language may be as much presented in the textbooks as the grammar of written language, and later it can acquire a fixed status.

One of the most important matters in this paper is to see up to what extent spoken grammar is reflected in modern textbooks. One may ask why a spoken grammar should be present in textbooks; and if students really need to learn the grammar of conversation. Before answering this question I would like to refer to the role of speaking section in the language teaching process. I am pretty sure that every language instructor the most frequently faces the problem when his brilliant students, who are very smart and cheerleading in the class, simply get stuck when they see a foreigner in the street who asks them the simplest question like showing direction or even asking the time. A mere reason for not being able to response relevantly and on time is that while speaking people usually do not obey the rules of the written language, which we are accustomed to learn from the textbooks, letting themselves use typically spoken constructions. As Biber et al (1999:1048) say, to save time and energy, speakers aim to reduce the length of what they have to say. Speed of repartee, making an opportune remark, getting ‘a word in edgeways’ in a lively dialogue, or reaching the point quickly, may all add urgency to the spoken word. In fact, conversation speed communication can vary a great deal according to the needs of encoding and decoding. Thus, it is extremely important to show the students not only a written and a rule-governed side of the language but its free and liberal side as well.

Sacks (1995:522) writes that it is perfectly plain that lots of conversations begin with a greeting exchange; and also that lots of conversations end with a closing exchange, a terminal exchange, i.e., an exchange of goodbyes. Thus, even these opening and closing phrases often should be taught to a student as they do not always coincide with those of their mother tongue. One of the most evident examples is the greeting ‘How do you do’ which in most cases is followed by the answer ‘thank you, I am fine, and you?’ instead of ‘how do you do’. Moreover, according to Cheepen & Monaghan (1990:9), the way speakers organise ‘who speaks when’ is by a turn taking system, which is composed of a ‘turn-constructive component’, a ‘turn allocational component and a set of rules which cover both the construction and the allocation of turns. Hereby, all this is the matter of the spoken grammar which students do need to know.

Thus, why spoken grammar should be given as a separate section in modern English language textbooks?

It is very true that it is difficult fully to represent spoken grammar in a written textbook. (Carter & McCarthy, 2006:164), nevertheless, every language, and particularly English as the principle language of my

studies, possesses such specific words and structures which are often used to mark boundaries in conversation between one topic, one stage or phrase of the conversation, or one bit of business and the next: for example, items, such as *anyway, right, okay, you see, I mean, mind you, well, so, now* (Carter & McCarthy, 2006:174). These words are called discourse markers and are considered in conversation grammar. However, each bilingual or multilingual person will agree that such items very often do not coincide in different languages, like even the interjection ‘ouch’ which is used when a person hurts him/herself will sound quite different in many other languages than English. That will be also a matter of consideration to use English ‘hey’ or even French ‘coucou’ which will have the same phonetic representation for Russian or Azerbaijani students in conversation even if they talk to a good friend of theirs as these words are considered as highly impolite and sometimes insulting (especially English ‘hey’). As we deal with teaching English to foreign students, we should not forget that our audience is people of different nationalities and cultures. Thus, no one will blame me for making the comparison of Spanish discourse marker ‘venga’ (which literary means ‘go’), Russian ‘давай [davay]’ (which literary means ‘give’), French ‘allez’ (which literary means ‘go’), and even Azerbaijani ‘oldu’ (which grammatically means ‘happened’) in their common meaning of ‘come on’, ‘go ahead’, or ‘here you go’. I can hardly believe that many of the students can individually acquire such kind of spoken patterns which are so different in all these languages. One of the instances from my own experience while I was teaching TOEFL is when students have to listen to different tracks which cover not only lectures and seminars, but also some informal conversations between the students who do not keep to the norms of written grammar but use spoken tricks. Another example from TOEFL can be teaching pragmatic understanding, when in order to find the correct answer, the students need to understand the function of intonation, inserts, and particularly discourse markers. There exist thousands of such examples, especially concerning the listening and speaking sections of the modern testing programs, the main emphasis of which is put on spoken language and its grammar which differs so much from traditional written grammar taught at schools and even some universities. Consequently, the presence of spoken grammar should be a big concern for the present day textbook writers.

In this work I analyse the recent textbooks designed for upper-intermediate and advanced levels (levels B2-C1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference) which are widely used in Spanish language schools and universities. The levels are chosen basing on the two main criteria suggested by Biber et al (1999):

- The grammar of spoken English is intended to be used chiefly by foreign adult students of English, and by all teachers of spoken English. The fact that it is written in English shows that it is not intended to be put into the hands of beginners but is designed to help: a) those who are already able to understand written English, and b) the English teachers who teach living English speech.
- Such a grammar helps foreign students by economizing time. It is impossible to learn a language by memorizing it word by word and sentence by sentence, because the number of possible sentences in a language is particularly limitless. If, when we form original sentences of our own, we build them up synthetically by piecing together the units of which they are composed, what usually results is a foreign caricature of some sentences of our own language.

Finally, the paper considers the conversation grammar from the point of view of Biber et al. (1999) *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* according to which I have led my studies. Though the conversation grammar is widely presented in this book, the scope of my investigation allows me to study just, in my opinion, one of the most important parts, the ‘non clausal units’ which are presented in Table 1. The reason for choosing these constructions is first of all, their being the most frequent items that are used in everyday informal conversation, and secondly, these items differ greatly from the grammar constructions of the written language, and at the same time they can be more or less reflected in textbooks. Moreover, the

scope of the subject of conversation grammar is so immense that it cannot by any means be described exhaustively in one paper.

Table 1

Non-Clausal Units									
	Interjections	Greetings & Farewells	Discourse markers	Attention signals	Response elicitors	Response forms	Hesitators	Polite speech-act formulae	Expletives
Examples	Gosh	Hello	Coz	Hey	OK	Yeah	Er	Please	Damn
	Jeez	Bye	Great	Look	Right	Yep	Um	Thanks	Shit
	Oh no	Ta-ta	I mean	Just think	See	Nope	Erm	Sorry	Fuck it

3. The Study

3.1 Objectives

As explained above, the main purpose of this study is to see up to what extent conversation grammar is present in modern textbooks. I am particularly interested in non-clausal constructions which may appear in different sections of the textbooks or as a separate grammar patterns as well. In case that the conversation grammar is present in the selected textbooks, one of my concerns will be to see the ways and the scope of its reflection. Moreover, it is of high importance to investigate the direct form of presentation of non-clausal units and to see if they can be later included as a separate section in any textbook. Finally, I do believe that today the English language has reached such a high level that not only its written side but an oral side should be taught in its ultimate way.

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Materials and procedures

For this preliminary study a total of 6 textbooks were selected, 4 of which were of upper-intermediate level (B2), and the remaining 2 of advanced level (C1). The textbooks are: *Speak Out* (B2: 2011), *Global* (B2:2011, C1:2012), *Straight Forward* (B2:2012, C1:2013), and *Face to Face* (B2:207). The reason for the selection of these textbooks was, first of all, their belonging to recent publications, i.e. from the last seven years (2007-2013). It was also important that the books were widely used in Spanish language schools and universities, and finally, all of them belong to the most popular publishing houses (*Straightforward* and *Global* to Macmillan; *Face to Face* to Cambridge University Press; *Speak Out* to Pearson). The levels are chosen according to the main criterion: more attention to the spoken language is normally given at the higher levels where the students more or less can freely express themselves not only resting upon a standard written grammar and vocabulary but some peculiarities of the spoken language as well. Being a part of ongoing project, the number of the selected textbooks cannot be considered as a big one to make some decisive conclusions; still it can be a good jerk in future analysis and in possibility to study conversation grammar as a separate section in language teaching materials and particularly in textbooks as a main guide of any language teaching process. Thus, later on, the tendency can be easily extrapolated to other EFL materials and will contribute to further discussions on this matter.

The structure of the selected textbooks is more or less alike, the number of the units varies from 10 to 12, the unit sections mostly coincide (see table 1). Thus, three books: *Global-* upper intermediate level, *Speak Out-* Upper-intermediate level and *Global-* advanced level consist of ten units, whereas the remaining three: *Straightforward* – upper-intermediate level, *Face to face* – upper intermediate level and *Straightforward* – advanced level comprise twelve units in them.

Table 2

Textbook	Book Sections						
Global –B2 (2011)	Grammar	Reading	Listening	Writing	Vocabulary	Speaking & Pronunciation	Language Focus
Straightforward B2 (2012)	Grammar	Reading& Listening	Pronunciation	Writing	Vocabulary	Speaking	Function Language
Face to Face – B2 (2007)	Grammar	Reading	Listening	Writing	Vocabulary	Speaking	Real World
Speak Out - B2 (2011)	Grammar	Reading	Listening	Writing	Vocabulary	Speaking	Pronunciation
Global - C1 (2012)	Grammar	Reading	Listening	Writing	Vocabulary	Speaking & Pronunciation	Language Focus
Straightforward – C1 (2013)	Grammar	Reading& Listening	Speech Pronunciation	Writing	Vocabulary	Speaking	Speech Feature

As shown in Table 2, all the textbooks contain Grammar, Writing, Vocabulary, Reading, Listening and even pronunciation sections. Apart from these traditional textbook sections, each coursebook contains one additional section which often does not coincide. Thus, *Global*(B2, C1) calls it ‘Language Focus’, *Face to face* (B2) names it Real World, and even *Straightforward* calls it differently according to its level: in B2 it is ‘function language’ and in C1 it is called ‘speech feature’. An interesting fact is that such an unusual section is totally absent in *Speak Out* (B2); instead of this, one can find a separate pronunciation section in this coursebook.

Since the main intention in this work was finding the traces of conversation grammar in modern textbooks, I have selected the already described books which could fit to the present day language teaching format and to see up to what extent the patterns of conversation grammar proposed by Biber et al (1999) may be found in these textbooks. No doubt, that before conducting this project I had some expectations and the most expected thing was finding the traits of conversation grammar explanation patterns and exercises mainly in such textbook sections as speaking and listening. For a deep analysis and in order not to miss a single explanation or exercise, I was studying page after page. This gave me a chance not only to investigate the presence of conversation grammar in the textbooks but also to see the ways it is given if existed.

3.3 Analysis and discussion of the results

In order to obtain the data that could shed light on some important issues, I have set several questions.

Question 1: Is conversation grammar and particularly non-clausal units present in the textbooks analysed?

Normally, the questions like these may involve two alternative answers which are ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and to what extent; however after a thorough study of each page it became difficult to give such a direct answer. The reason for such an unclarity is in previous indetermination of the ways that I needed the inserts to be present in the textbooks, i.e. if they are present in direct way, i.e. with general explanation and implication on their belonging to conversation grammar or as just random structures that could be found on each page of the textbook. However, the main intention in this work was searching for the concrete patterns with explanation

and accompanying exercises given in a direct and overt way; otherwise, there is no point to discuss a randomly found inserts that may come across in each exercise and task and be simply translated as vocabulary structure. Thus, according to the table 1, I may say that there are not numerous cases of conversation grammar and particularly inserts in the selected textbooks. As we see from the table, there are only 22 tasks out of hundreds that cover exercises and task with non-clausal patterns. However, emphasising direct and indirect ways of inserts representation, the matter is that even if these tasks and exercises are focused on inserts, still they are not presented to the students as a part of conversation grammar but go inside such language skills practicing as listening, grammar and sometimes vocabulary.

Question 2: What aspects of conversation grammar are present?

Basing on the first question that revealed a small number of tasks and exercises, it was possible to discuss each of the exercise and activity in detail. However, I will touch upon those sections where conversation grammar patterns are frequently present in textbooks and somehow act as separate oral practice patterns with some exercises for their consolidation. Thus, I would like to start from *Global B2*. The only section in this textbook that touches the conversation grammar upon is 'language focus'. Here, there are just several tasks on conversation grammar. On page 51, the author gives 2 exercises on filters and repetition. I will not take into account the repetition, as it is not the matter of non-clausal units, but will focus on filters which are used to cover some patterns of inserts. Thus, exercise 2 first explains that filters are extra words that give us time to think what we are going to say, and then it asks to identify filters that are used in exercise 1: (See the exercise below)

Match the beginning of each phrase (1-6) with the end (a-f)

1. I think, er, twice a month I see, um,
 2. You know, I can't ...
 3. In the middle of the night
 4. ...and it like started at my feet and started coming up...
 5. it was dusk and it did disappear...
 6. and then, then this body of mine ...
- a) ...and up and up
 - b) ... it didn't run away anyway, it disappeared
 - c) ... you know, with this presence...
 - d) I can't explain how, how it happened to me...
 - e) ...it was a night trip. Yeah, and it takes ten hours...
 - f) ... I see my body when I sleep.

As we may see from the exercise, it gives a lot of hesitators, such as 'er, um, you know, yeah, etc'. Even if these non-clausal units are used in the exercise, the author does not differentiate between their types and gives very narrow explanation.

Another exercise on non-clausal unit is on page 122, where the *polite speech act formulae* are used as formal and informal means of people interruption. (see appendix 2, exercise 1). However, once again, there is nothing to mention about conversation grammar and its non-clausal units at all.

It will be even less to say about *Straightforward B2*, where there are just several exercises on conversation grammar in *function language* section among which we should emphasise page 15, where the author explains different ways of saying 'no' in a polite way; page 63 again teaches how to use polite structure for asking for clarification and explaining what you mean; page 82 gives just some expressions on the change of subject where the non-clausal units are used as well; and particularly page 109 that focuses on vague language (see appendix 2, exercise 3). However, none of these exercises gives any explanation to the rules

or does not even mention their belonging to conversation grammar by naming them non-clausal units or other.

There is no point to talk about *Face to Face B2*, as in this textbook there are only two exercises one of which on page 53, asks students to continue polite questions and the second one on page 68 suggests some forms of apologizing which avoids any kind of structure explanation.

Speak Out presents only two exercises where the conversation grammar patterns are used: one is on page 45 (see appendix 2, exercise 4) in vocabulary section and another one is on page 84, also in vocabulary section. The non-clausal units are just random patterns here which are inevitably used in dialogues.

Global C1 has the same book structure as *Global B2* and presents some of the case of conversation grammar in *language focus* section. In exercise 3 on page 26 the author asks to categorize the expressions (see appendix 2, exercise 5) again avoiding any kind of explanation. Exercise 3 on page 38 has nearly the same intention as the previous exercise (see appendix 2, exercise 6). Finally, exercise 1 on page 50 gives no explanation to polite speech act formulae, asking students to differentiate between polite and impolite ways of asking for repetition.

Thus, there is very little to say about *Straightforward C1*, which contains only two exercises on conversation grammar which are also selected randomly and under some different headings; one is an exercise on ellipsis in the grammar section which is out of the scope of this study and another is on page 82 also in the grammar section which explains what the discourse markers are and later on gives a listening exercise where the students have to select the discourse markers pronounced in the track by matching them to the general statements.

All in all, after considering each of the exercises, it became quite obvious that conversation grammar is practically not used in modern textbooks as there are very few tasks in it, and if occurs, then, only randomly without showing its belonging to any spoken grammar but as a part of any section. What concerns non-clausal units, most of the patterns that I came across with were discourse markers, hesitators, interjections and sometimes attention signals. The remaining ones are practically not used.

Question 3: How is the presence of non-clausal units? Is it a part of any section in particular?

The minimal presence of non-clausal units is quite obvious from the previous questions. Nevertheless, it was of great interest to see in which textbook sections these several tasks could be found: are they found in conversation section as I expected, or maybe they are present in listening or any other sections? Turning back to table 1, we may see that most of the tasks in all six books are found in one extra section which is called 'language focus', 'real world' or 'function language'. The striking point is that speaking section practically does not contain any exercise targeted on conversation grammar and its teaching. Apart from the already mentioned sections, it could be possible to see the tasks containing non-clausal units in such section as vocabulary, listening and even grammar. Still, we cannot talk about any particular section that could present conversation grammar as a separate part of any textbook.

Question 4: How many tasks are devoted to conversation grammar and what types of tasks are they?

In order to be more precise with the findings and to demonstrate how much of conversation grammar and particularly non-clausal units present in textbook and what activities are used for their presentation, I would like to go through each of the textbook again. It was a bit unexpected to see two exercises on this matter in writing section that suggested the use of informal discourse markers in e-mail writing. Another example which was accidentally found in the textbook is the existence of the word 'gonna' in speaking and pronunciation section, but even if this structure belongs to conversation grammar and is also suggested by Biber et al (1999), I should not consider it since it is out of my investigation scope. Finally, a new textbook section which is language focus, suggests just several exercises that touch upon some patterns of

conversation grammar. For example: on page 51, there is an exercise on filters and repetition. By the word filters, the author means hesitators and gives very little explanation on it. On page 98 there are two exercises one of which is selection of formal and informal phrases, whereas in the second exercise students should find the similar meanings from column b to column a

Example:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Really? | a) That's wonderful news! |
| 2. No way! | b) I don't know what to say. |
| 3. Wow! | c) I don't believe it |
| 4) I'm speechless! | d) Are you serious? |

Unlike '*Global- B2*', the traces of conversation grammar in '*Straightforward – B2*' are seen just in section 'Function language' where some exercises are just present in several units and no explanation of those patterns is given, neither we can see the slightest hint on the belonging of those patterns to conversation grammar. The most frequent name for elicitors, discourse markers, interjections and other patters is 'vague language' or 'empty words'.

Being one of the oldest publications among the selected textbooks, '*Face-to-Face*', does not contain any tracks of conversation grammar in any section except several exercises in the 'Real World' section in just two units; even those units have their main emphasis on the use of phrasal verbs without any identification of the conversation structures. All in all, I would say that this textbook has nothing to do with conversation grammar at all.

The same can be said about '*Speak Out*' (B2) which does not cover any pattern of conversation grammar in any of its sections or units except two exercises in vocabulary section, where these patterns are just random coincidences because of being inside the dialogue, which is one of the conversation forms that mostly contains conversation grammar structures.

The most astonishing fact is that advanced level books, i.e. '*Global*' (C1) and '*Straightforward*' (C1) contain the same anecdotal number of exercises which are based on conversation grammar as their B2 level textbooks, where the former textbook presents them in language focus section, whereas, surprisingly, '*Straightforward*' represents two exercises in grammar section. Thus, according to the preliminary statistics, only 4 percent of the exercises in both B2 and C1 textbooks contain the traces of conversation grammar which mostly appear in dialogues.

Resting upon the questions 1 and 2, it is quite obvious that there is not much to say concerning the amount of conversation grammar activities and exercises in the selected textbooks. However, in those exercises where it became possible to find the elements of conversation grammar, I would like to clear up what activities are used for its teaching. For this, let's have a look at appendix 2. Thus, as we may see, the first exercise is given by the author as a compliment to the listening exercise which has nothing to do with conversation grammar, whereas the compliment exercise emphasises the interruption phrases by using polite speech act formula. In the second exercise the students are asked to put the phrases from the previous exercise according to the scale of formal and informal ones. It is quite obvious that even in these exercises we can find just several sentences or words that may belong to conversation grammar. Exercise 3 gives a text where the students should find and underline vague language. However, there is no exact explanation of what vague language is, why it is used, and where it can be used. Exercise 4 I find quite random as the main task here is to complete the conversation with some phrases that are given in the previous exercise and that has nothing to do with conversation patterns. The inserts that we find in the exercise are just random cases which are normally used in the dialogue. Exercise 5 gives a lot of inserts; however, the focus of the task is to divide these expressions according to the degree of agreement. Again, no explanation of the conversation grammar, but just the use of general grammar knowledge, vocabulary and sometimes intuition may work in

this task. Finally, exercise 6 may be considered as one of the most appropriate ones for the teaching of conversation grammar; however, as there is no previous explanation and the exercise presumes listening, the author probably rests upon the student's intuition and their understanding of intonational stress because these two main factors can define such emotions like *interest, sympathy, gladness and surprise*.

Finally, even if I could find some exercises where the traces of conversation grammar are slightly seen, I should admit that none of the tasks or activities is specially designed for teaching conversation grammar, and even if these patterns happen to occur in the tasks, they are just occasional phenomena which can often be found in dialogues or accompany the exercises in vocabulary or other sections particularly focusing on words or structures of emotions, position of agreement or disagreement, speech culture, manners, etc. Still, none of the books focuses on conversation grammar patterns as an autonomous task or activity.

One may also ask why I have not studied each of the non-clausal unit in particular. The answer is that, the general number of exercises and tasks is so limited and the non-clausal units found in this small number of tasks are so random and untargeted, that there is no need and also no possibility to study each of the units in particular.

4. Conclusions and suggestions for further research:

In this section, I will start from several considerations that can be important for further studies.

- Research project like this may become a matter of consideration for present-day textbook writers. For this, it may be highly useful to apply the patterns of conversation grammar in classes and to see which of them can be introduced into the textbooks so that later a conversation grammar acquire a more structural shape as a written grammar does.
- Taking into account the value of non-clausal units which are integral part of any conversation or spoken language in general, these patterns should indispensably be included into textbooks.
- Undoubtedly, conversation grammar is a very important part of oral language representation; nevertheless, there should be right ways of its teaching. Textbook writers should not only include it into their coursebooks but they should also find effective and interesting teaching approaches.
- The amount of conversation grammar representation in textbooks should be well balanced in comparison to other sections and should be correctly distributed among the upper levels of the textbooks.

The results obtained in the study should be regarded as totally preliminary since the number of chosen textbooks is not sufficient and the area of conversation grammar is limited and focused on particular patterns. Therefore, it will be necessary to conduct a more profound research that could, first of all, include a larger number of textbooks, and simultaneously, I would recommend to conduct a second research that could let experimenting the conversation grammar patterns in the English language classes in order later to become aware of those conversation grammar patterns that further could be included into textbook for their successful and reasonable teaching. No doubt that such an investigation may contribute to appearance of a new section in textbooks that may be of high importance in elaboration of students' speaking skills. Finally, I hope that this work will serve to promote further discussions on conversation grammar representation in future textbooks and will help to explore the ways and methods of its reflection.

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Appendix 1

Global – Level B2 (2011)							
Book Sections	Grammar	Reading	Listening	Writing	Vocabulary	Speaking & Pronunciation	Language Focus
Unit 1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 3	X	X	X		X		X
Unit 4	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Unit 5	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 6	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Unit 7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 8	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Unit 9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 10	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Straightforward Level B2 (2012)							
Book Sections	Grammar	Reading & Listening	Pronunciation	Writing	Vocabulary	Speaking	Function Language
Unit 1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 5	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 6	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Unit 7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Unit 8	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Unit 9	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Unit 10	X	X	X	X		X	X
Unit 11	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Unit 12	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Face to Face – Level B2 (2007)							
Book Sections	Grammar	Reading	Listening	Writing	Vocabulary	Speaking	Real World
Unit 1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 5	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 6	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Unit 7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 8	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Unit 9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 10	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 11	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 12	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Speak Out - Level B2 (2011)							
Book Sections	Grammar	Reading	Listening	Writing	Vocabulary	Speaking	Pronunciation
Unit 1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 4	X	X	X	X		X	X
Unit 5	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 6	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 7	X	X	X	X		X	X
Unit 8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 10	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Global - Level C1 (2012)							
Book Sections	Grammar	Reading	Listening	Writing	Vocabulary	Speaking & Pronunciation	Language Focus
Unit 1	Ellipsis	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Unit 3	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Unit 4	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Unit 5	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 6	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Unit 7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 8	X	X		X	X	X	X
Unit 9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 10	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Straightforward – Level C1 (2013)							
Book Sections	Grammar	Reading& Listening	Speech Pronunciation	Writing	Vocabulary	Speaking	Speech Feature
Unit 1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 5	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 6	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 7		X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 8		X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 9	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Unit 10	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 11	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unit 12	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Appendix 2

Ex 1. Look at sentences from the listening. Underline the phrases used for interrupting.

1. Mat I interrupt for a moment? Could you just draw the curtains?
2. Just a second, don't you usually cycle to work?
3. Could I just say something here? Are you sure that...
4. I'd like to say something if I may. I think...
5. Wait a minute, how come you didn't notice?
6. Excuse me for interrupting, but what I think the others were trying to say...
7. Hang on, didn't you think it was a bit odd.

Ex 2. Put the phrases in the exercise 1 on the scale of formal to informal.

Formal

Neutral

Informal

Excuse me...
 Sorry, but...

Ex 3. Find and underline ten vague expressions in the text.

My girlfriend's really into, like, mountain climbing and stuff like that, so every year she spends, you know, a couple of weeks or so in the Alps or somewhere. And for six months, more or less, before she goes, she goes running and lifts weights and so on. It kind of worries me when she's up a mountain or something, but I'm sort of getting used to it now.

Ex 4. Complete the conversations with one of the sayings in Exercise above.

1. A: Shall I enter the talent show?
B: Oh, go on! After all, _____
2. A: Did you eat snake in China?
B: Yes, you know what they say: _____
3. A: Joe was fired but now he's found an even better job!
B: Really? Well, _____
4. A: You should buy your new phone online.
B: No, last time my card details were stolen. _____
5. A: Since my accident, Pam's been so helpful.
B: You were always there for her. _____
6. A: Alain said he wasn't dating Kim.
B: Well, I've seen them together, and _____
7. A: What happens with our picnic if it rains?
B: I think it's unlikely but anyway, _____
8. A: The company can't survive another year!
B: Look, we're still in business and _____

Ex 5. Categorise the expressions.

1. Absolutely!
2. Come on!
3. Exactly!
4. Me neither.
5. Seriously?
6. Me too.
7. Precisely.
8. That's true.
9. I couldn't disagree more.
10. I totally agree.
11. Do you think so?
12. Right!

Strong agreement: Absolutely!

Agreement:

Disagreement:

Strong disagreement:

Exercise 6. Put the listeners' responses into four categories: interest, sympathy, gladness and surprise

Yeah!

You must have been so annoyed!

Fantastic!

How incredible!

You are joking!

What a nightmare!

Right!

What a relief!

It must have been awful!

Oh, no!

I bet you were worried!

Uhuh!

Poor little thing!

That was luck.