

Adding More Fuel to the Fire: A Study of Attrition in Formulaic Sequences by Adult Learners

Thamer Alharthi

Department of European Languages and Literature
Faculty of Arts and Humanities
King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

Because lexis constitutes the basis of pedagogic materials, foreign language (FL) learners are faced with the challenging task of acquiring a large vocabulary. One yardstick of fluent, accurate and idiomatic control of the language which has gained considerable popularity as a subject of research into second language (L2) is formulaic sequences, i.e. multiword items. Interestingly, there has been no research exploring the long-term attrition of formulaic language by L2 learners. This study has sought to begin addressing this gap. It aimed to find out whether adult non-native learners of English forget formulaic sequences knowledge that they have learned during their course of study. The participants were 81 male EFL learners. All participants were tested before and after the summer recess on their formulaic sequence knowledge using multiple-choice and close test formats. Quantitative findings show that different types of formulaic sequences are affected to different degrees by attrition. The results revealed greater attrition in recall (mean -22.90) than in recognition (mean -16.67) of formulaic sequences. More frequent or transparent formulaic sequences were retained more easily than infrequently used or less transparent ones. The pedagogical implications of these findings and suggestions for further research are discussed.

Keywords: Attrition, EFL, formulaic sequence, recall knowledge, recognition knowledge

Cite as: Alharthi , T.(2015). Adding More Fuel to the Fire: A Study of Attrition in Formulaic Sequences by Adult Learners. *Arab World English Journal*, 8 (3). DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol6no3.15>