

## Lexical approach

The term lexical approach was introduced in 1993 by Michael Lewis, who observed that "language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalised grammar" (The Lexical Approach, 1993).

The lexical approach is not a single, clearly defined method of language instruction. It's a commonly used term that is understood by almost everybody. The lexical approach identifies lexis as the basis of language and focuses on the principle that language consists of grammaticalized lexis. In second language acquisition, over the past few years, this approach has generated great interest as an alternative to traditional grammar-based teaching methods. From a psycholinguistic point of view, the lexical approach consists of the capacity of understanding and producing lexical phrases as non-analysed entities (chunks). The principles of the lexical approach have received interest since the publication of *The Lexical Syllabus* (David Willis, 1990) and *The Lexical Approach* (Michael Lewis, 1993). Since then, research on this matter has posted vocabulary at the centre of language teaching, because 'language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar'. The lexical approach is considered an alternative to grammar-based approaches and has been defended by many authors who see lexis as a fulcrum of the communicative competence in the command of oral and written skills. Although lexical approach doesn't contain a detailed learning theory this does not mean a break with the *Communicative Approach*. Michael Lewis makes a practical summary of the findings from first language acquisition research that, he thinks, are relevant to second language learning:

- The acquisition of grammar is a process of observation, hypothesis and experiment.
- language is not acquired by learning individual linguistic forms and then combining them, but by an increasing ability to break down wholes into parts.
- Whole phrases can be used without understanding their constituent parts.

Lewis' lexical approach concentrates students' improvement on lexis and word combinations. It focuses on the basis that language learning is directly associated with the capacity for comprehending and producing lexical phrases as unanalysed entities, or chunks, and that "these chunks become the raw data by which learners perceive patterns of language traditionally thought of as grammar" (Lewis, 1993, p. 95) Willis (1990, p. 72), in rationalizing an argument for a lexical syllabus, notes that "learners do accumulate language forms, often phrases". He suggests that a lexical syllabus should be matched with an instructional methodology focused on language use.

Schmitt (2000) makes a valuable contribution to a learning theory for the lexical Approach by affirming that the mind stores and processes these collocations or lexical chunks as individual wholes. Our mind can store large amounts of information in long-term memory, but it is much more limited in short term memory, for example when language is produced in speech. This means that it is much more efficient for the brain to recall a chunk of language as if it were one piece of information. "Database management systems" is, therefore, recalled as one piece of information rather than three

(or four) separate words.

Besides Schmidt (1990, p. 149) introduces the concept of *intake*, which he thinks is a fundamental key in language acquisition: *Intake* is what learners consciously notice. This requirement of noticing is meant to apply equally to all aspects of language (lexicon, phonology, grammatical form, pragmatics) and can be incorporated into many different theories of second language learning.

### **Collocations and fluency**

The organization of the 11 mental lexicon and the way words are stored and retrieved for processing and output have received considerable research. Our mental lexicon is efficient and highly organised where semantic related items are stored together. The most remarkable experiment done in this field has been word-association, in which a spontaneously generated word response to a prompt may be closely associated with that prompt word in the mental lexicon (Deignan et al., 1998). likewise, “an analysis of these responses [to a prompt word/s] may give useful information about how words might be linked together in a person’s mind” (Aichison, 1996, p. 24).

Besides, it should be noted that most studies in this psycholinguistic field have been carried out in first language acquisition. Firth (1951), who was thought to be the father of collocation, believed in the separation of lexis and Semantics because he thought collocation was the central part of a word’s meaning. Collocation is the way in which words associate with one another and can be defined as word clusters, which are regularly used in spoken and written English. Collocations or formulaic language units are also powerful and long lasting connections. Sinclair (1991) finds the connection between lexis and meaning according to syntagmatic (chain) as well as paradigmatic (choice) relations. He illustrates the idiom principle: “language is organised according to semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, that is, words do not occur at random in a text, even though they might appear to be analysable into segments” (1991, p. 110), e.g. the meaning of the phrasal verb log out, is not found by dividing and analysing its respective parts log and out, but rather in its full meaning as a phrase or chunk.

A growing body of literature on L2 acquisition, on the other hand, has shown that fluency is an observable aspect of speech that can be linked with cognitive processing and is frequently used to describe language performance. Fluency is featured by a great number of patterned or ritualised sequences. Spoken fluency and lexical competence are united by a very powerful link which has made some researchers favour a pedagogy of second language fluency which integrates notions of automaticity and formulaic language units into classroom Amelia Torres Ramírez 242 Revista de lenguas para Fines Específicos, 18 (2012) practice. Such units are fundamental in understanding how oral fluency occurs in real-life discourse through interpersonal communication.

Bearing the above in mind, it is clear that spontaneous spoken language includes phrases that have been stored as entities. Miller and Weinert (1998, p. 394) affirm that they are not saying that “the entire set of spontaneous spoken utterances consists of prefabricated chunks... only that they contain a proportion of prefabricated chunks that ease the encoding and decoding load”. Fluency may be based on the combination of both prefabricated chunks and newly constructed stretches of language. These units help in both sentence construction and speed of speech. On this matter, Chambers (1998, p. 542) postulates: These phrases... focus the attention of the listener while allowing the speaker time to formulate the utterance further. What appears to enable learners to produce longer speech units is the increasing use of automatised chunks or clusters of words combined with newly assembled strings of words. These productive lexical and syntactic phrases are of particular value to foreign language

learners and can enhance their fluency by providing a frame to build a sentence as well as approaching the characteristics of native-like speech. Automatised repertoires of such chunks and clusters seem to be central to fluent speech. This knowledge can take us far in the direction of teaching fluency. (Cited in Wood, 2001, p. 578). in consequence, it seems increasingly evident that the control of large numbers of formulaic language units and sentence stems improves fluency.

### Teaching implications – collocations

Teaching collocation is one of the main issue if we focus on the fluency of L2 and wish to hear native-like and free utterance from our students. Collocation gives them the opportunity to be understood properly and express their ideas naturally and adequately, it enables them to be on the same level with the native speakers. Thus we consider it's important to clarify the system of learning collocations. In English the most common types of collocations are grouped as follows:

<i>Verb+noun</i>	<i>Adjective+noun</i>	<i>Verb+ Adjective +noun</i>	<i>Adverb+ noun</i>	<i>Adverb + Adjective</i>	<i>adverb+ Adjective +noun</i>	<i>Adjective preposition</i>	<i>Noun +noun</i>
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But for L2 learners this can be quite complex. An example might be in classifying a term such as an *application software* into an extension of the range *computer hardware*. Collocations must be acquired better through direct study and large amount of quality input. Learners generally have difficulties with lexical and grammatical relationship, and, undoubtedly, the most common problem they face when try to study collocations are in the area of understanding, production and recognition. Particularly, in the case of complex or very complex units. But classroom practice has shown that once grasped, the lexical approach can motivate learner interest and enthusiasm in the language.

Bearing in mind latest second Language learning theories, we must suggest that for the *lexical approach* to be fully successful it must be combined with the *Language Awareness Approach*. In this regard, Tomlinson (2003) points out in a language awareness approach, the main objective is to help learners notice for themselves how language is typically so that they will note the gaps and achieve learning readiness. Conscious process is vital in the language learning process. It is well known that students who have been taught the common collocations of words, since the first stage, use them far more naturally and have a better command of ready-made language, which contributes to fluency improvement.

In the complex of our University level, both upper-intermediate and advanced learners should be encouraged to use activities highlighting collocations. Some advanced students often lack motivation due to the fact that they think they know English Grammar. They generally produce active vocabulary and do not see the necessity for acquiring more new items. Here the teacher's guidance is essential. If

they only revise the English Grammar along with rarely used lexis, it will stick them and tend to make their speech full of unnatural sounding elements.

Learners should be encouraged to seek an increasingly large amount of exposure to both written and spoken language outside the classroom, and *noticing collocations* within that material.

- a) Reduce learners' stress as it minimizes the amount of planning and processing required within clauses while producing spoken language
- b) Promotes social interaction as it motivates learning
- c) Can be easily memorized because of its contextualization
- d) Can become models for further analysis.

Language units can by themselves stored automatized units in memory, learning these new items involves storing them first in our short-termed memory before transferring them to long-term memory. Wrey (2002) is in favor of automatic repetition of these units for their acquisition and argues that the storage of these sequences is produced holistically, as if they were single units. This process facilitates acquisition because, as we detailed before, learners do not need to analyse morphologically or syntactically such units for comprehension. Three graded steps are recommended in the process of acquiring formulaic sequences:

1. Automatization
2. Contextualisation
3. Production

The first is related to guide activities, the second and the third are related to semi-guided and free production activities. This pedagogical approach allows learners to work independently during the first two steps, whilst the teacher will indulge the practice of oral skills. Learners can be motivated to use a variety of methods using topics and categories for organizing. Among consciousness raising activities, meaningful tasks, such as dictogloss, seem to be the best option for lexis acquisition. So we strongly recommend dictogloss of texts containing collocations, as it leads to automatization of the utterance. These tasks encourage students to analyse and process language more deeply, facilitates both 1) the learning and 2) retention of information in long-term memory.

The tasks should be selected to allow the automatic retrieval of the language. Here are some recommendations given below:

- Handling with general and specific dictionaries
- Making vocabulary learning enjoyable and stimulating
- Guessing the meaning of the lexical item from context
- Using real situation
- Produce group-work: helps learning independence and exchange knowledge
- Practicing rhetorical functions
- Noticing language collocations and language patterns
- Repetition of tasks (recycling)
- Intensive, extensive reading and listening
- A variety of language association games and exercises.
- Further hints for understanding

Now I would like to present a number of consciousness raising tasks based on the pedagogical practice of noun compounds. I also try to produce their original headings:

### Matching and definition

1. *Define a number of noun compounds according to the examples provided:*

Bar code= a code which is made up painting bars

Drum plotter=a plotter which has a drum

#### Exercises for learner:

color monitor

Impact printer

Voice recognition device

disc driver

Line printer

Storage device

2. *Choose the correct definition for the multi-word noun compound:*

a. Optical character recognition input

b. Basic telecommunication access method

3. Building compounds: teacher should collocate enough pieces of text to be able to give at least half of one to each student. A page or two is not enough for this exercise.

*In class:* 1. Pick up a noun combination where at least one item is new for them. Fix six such combinations and teach the meaning to the rest of the class clearly and briefly. Then ask them to use them in the context.

2. Dived the board into eight parts, students put their collocations in two columns and we teach them to the class. Then the group is asked to produce other nouns that combine well with the first noun. Hope the student volunteers a combination and other students are invited to volunteer to each one of their six combinations until the board is full.

This paper gives the general methodological combinations of the lexical approach and its implications in formal teaching system. The recent L2 research indicates, learning collocations leads to the improvement of written and spoken fluency. Following Lexis's ideas (2000, P.15) "fluency is based on the acquisition of a large store of fixed and semi-fixed prefabricated items, which are available as the foundation for any linguistic novelty or creativity". In conclusion the understanding of collocation is essential for all learners, on every level, especially for upper-intermediate and advanced courses.

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აკაკი წერეთლის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი  
**ლექსიკაზე დაფუძნებული სწავლება**  
რეზიუმე

ლექსიკაზე დაფუძნებული სწავლება ერთ-ერთი მნიშვნელოვანი მიდგომაა ენის სრულყოფილიად შესწავლის გზაზე. სწავლების ეს მიდგომა ფოკუსირებულია ლექსიკის ათვისებასა და ლექსიკურის სწავლებაზე მათი სიხშირისა და გამოყენების მიხედვით. ლექსიკური მიდგომა არ არის ენის სწავლების ერთი, მკაფიოდ განსაზღვრული მეთოდი. ეს არის საყოველთაოდ გამოყენებული ტერმინი, რომელიც ცუდად ესმით უმეტესობას. ამ თემაზე ლიტერატურის შესწავლა ხშირად აჩვენებს, რომ იგი გამოიყენება წინააღმდეგობრივი გზით. იგი ძირითადად ემყარება იმ ვარაუდს, რომ გარკვეული სიტყვები გამოიწვევენ პასუხს სიტყვების კონკრეტული ნაკრებით. ენის შემსაწავლელებს შეეძლოთ გაეგოთ, რომელი სიტყვებია დაკავშირებული ამ გზით. ისინი მოელიან, რომ ისწავლონ ენის გრამატიკა სიტყვების ნიმუშების ამოცნობის საფუძველზე. წინამდებია სტატია უფრო ვრცლად გაშლის ენის შესწავლის მეთოდებს სადაც ჩართული იქნება სიტყვთშეთანხმებების შესწავლის აუცილებლობის გაგება და მეთოდიკა, ასევე, ენის ათვისების ძირითადი მიდგომები და სიტყვთშეთანხმებების საუბარში თავისუფლად გამოყენების აუცილებლობის გაგება.