

You cannot learn what you do not understand.

Professor Henri Adamchiewski, IATEFL
1992

*Grammar is what has always made
English a school subject.*

Jimmie Hill, Private Conversation 1984

*When students travel, they don't carry
grammar books, they carry dictionaries.*

Professor Stephan Krashen, British
Council Conference Milan 1987

*The human mind cannot help but make
meaning*

Sister Margaret Walsh, Crawley 1988

It may be helpful to provide a checklist of some of the changes in both content and methodology when implementing the Lexical Approach.

Put the following sentences in the categories below:

1. Lexis – different kinds of multi-word chunks
2. Specific language areas not previously standard in many EFL texts
3. Uncollocated nouns
4. Listening (at lower levels) and reading (at higher levels)
5. Activities based on L1/L2 comparisons and translation
6. Sentence grammar – single sentence gap-fill and transformation practices
7. Indiscriminate recording of ‘new words’
8. The use of a dictionary as a resource for active learning
9. Organising learners’ notebooks to reveal patterns and aid retrieval
10. Probable rather than possible English
11. Talking in L2 for the sake of it because you claim to use a ‘communicative approach’
12. The language which learners may meet outside the classroom
13. Preparing learners to get maximum benefit from text

More attention will be paid to:	Less attention will be paid to:

In the Classroom

• Topics or Semantic Fields

- **Collocations**
- **Lexical phrases**
- **Chunking**
- ***Grammar Practice***
 - **Jigsaws**
 - **Transformations**
 - **Receptive**
(recognising/checking/sorting/matching/sorting) developing awareness of language practices
 - **Productive (testing/written practice/oral practice)**

‘Language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar.’

Michael Lewis The Lexical Approach LTP 1993

The Lexical Approach: an approach to teaching languages that has a lot in common with the communicative approach, but also examines how lexical phrases, prefabricated chunks of language, play an important role in producing fluent speech. The Lexical Approach was first coined by Michael Lewis. The fundamental principle of the lexical approach is ‘language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalised

grammar.’ What this means is that lexical phrases offer far more language generative power than grammatical structures.

Accordingly, advocates of this kind of approach argue that lexis should move to the centre of language syllabuses. Justification for this theory comes from statistical analysis of language which show that we do indeed speak in chunks and collocations.

Definition taken from the ESL Glossary

Activities

- **Intensive and extensive reading/listening**
- **L1 and L2 comparisons and translation aimed at raising language awareness (chunk-for-chunk rather than word-for-word)**

- **Repetition and recycling of activities (to keep words and expressions that have been learnt active)**
- **Guessing the meaning of vocabulary items from context**
- **Noticing and recording language patterns and collocations**
- **Working with dictionaries and other reference tools**
- **Working with language corpuses created by the teacher or assessable on the internet**

Haunt

the theatre, stayed to **haunt** her for the rest of her life.
 His assassin he will not **haunt** him. Ah, the past is filled
 woman began to **haunt** him, and not only in his dreams
 the eyebrow continued to **haunt** him, and the Coming so
 anxious fantasies will **haunt** him; but a witch he can push
 eased for a single day to **haunt** him. What they whispered in
 vulnerable expression **haunt** his eyes, and wished I hadn't

Haunt [T not in progressive forms] **1** [often pass.] (of spirit, esp. of a dead person) to visit (a place), appearing in a strange form: *The ghost of a headless man haunts the castle / a haunted house* **2** [*usu. pass*] (esp. of something

strange or sad) to be always in the thoughts of (someone): *I was haunted by his last words to me. She had a haunted look, as if she were constantly anxious or afraid.* **3** *infml* to visit (a place) regularly; FREQUENT

Rah Shah in Dublin: Irish Times Magazine

1. Read the text. What do you think would make a good title for the text?
2. Look at the questions on the separate sheet. Put them back into the text.
3. Phrasal verbs.

Look back at the text. What do the following phrasal verbs mean in the context of the text.

To get back into

To be into sth

To give up

To be on

To cut down

To set s.o. up

To pig out

To have people over

To go round to

4. What do these idiomatic chunks mean?

- I do a great chicken curry from scratch
- I get my five portions a day
- This year is all about work
- We've had a good few reunions
- My routine went out the window
- I'm a kept man
- Laid back places
- Your *Death Row* last meal
- You are what you eat
- Lunch on the run
- I'm not a massive breakfast person

1. Which *four* techniques do you personally prefer? Why?

2. Which *one* technique would make the words 'stick' best? Why?

3. Which *one* technique do you consider to be the least effective? Why?

4. Which techniques were commonly used when you were first learning a foreign language?

5. Which techniques are especially popular in your teaching situation now?

6. What other techniques (if any) do you know for presenting new vocabulary?

Acetate 1b

Lexical Approach

Ideas for vocabulary (Young learners: Sarah Phillips 1993)

Flashcards

Vocabulary Networks

Guess the words

A very long sentence

Odd words out

The lost pet

Keeping the rules

Colour parsing

Word dominoes (Michael Lewis 'Implementing the Lexical Approach'
LTP 1997 p116)

PRACTISING IN THE LEXICAL APPROACH

Learner participation

The value of repetition

Noticing

Consciousness-raising

The importance of negative evidence

THE CENTRAL STRATEGY: PEDAGOGICAL CHUNKING

What classroom activities do you already use which help learners to see or hear text correctly chunked?

Can you think of any activities you currently use which make it more difficult for learners to think in terms of chunks, in other words, activities which may be counter-productive?

Discuss

Which of these ways do you think learners use to store language in their brains?

- L1 word – L2 word. What about L2 word = L1 word? Is that the same/
- L1 phrase / expression = L2 phrase / expression. Is there a limit to the length of the expressions ?
- By individual sounds – for example words beginning /m/ or /str/
- By similarity of stress profile: *by the way* / *not at all* / *on the tip of my tongue*
- In bits, for novel assembly: *semi* - , hence *semi-conscious*, *semi – detached*

TASK

What activities, including the things you already do, can you suggest which will help learners add to their phrasal lexicon

Suggested ideas

1. Any dialogue from the coursebook should be **heard** at least once, but better twice.
2. Read part of text aloud, asking learners to notice some feature of the chunking. This only needs 2 /3 minutes and no elaborate follow-up
3. Ask learners in small groups to chunk a printed version of something they are going to hear, and then compare their version with a version you have done on transparency, and finally with what they actually hear. This helps provide a lexical focus and increases the potential acquisitional value of the activity for a minimum of extra time or effort
4. Ask learners in small groups to identify chunks of different kinds in a printed text: fixed collocations, discourse patterns. Do the same activity yourself on a copy of the text you have on transparency. Let learners compare between groups, and with your copy. Read a short section, or with more capable learners, ask one or more to do so
5. Put a short section of text on a word processor and chunk it using line breaks, font changes etc. so learners can see something of how the text sounds.
6. For advanced learner
Listen to cassette and mark the natural breaks into tone units
Listen again and repeat them exactly as you hear

TASK

Please categorise the following sentences according to whether you feel they belong under the Lexical Approach or not

Worry about *ship* / *sheep* style pronunciation problems of individual words

Develop learners' awareness of word-grammar as well as sentence grammar

Value successful learning at all times

Worry unduly about natural grammar errors, which disappear with exposure and time, not formal instruction and correction

Highlight Fixed Expressions and proto typical examples, so ensuring learners have maximum benefit from the language they meet

Encourage learners to record many single L1 word = L2 word items

Encourage lexical, but not structural, comparison between L1 and L2

Help learners to hear and learn language in multi-word units

Tell simplified anecdotes: increase carefully-controlled teacher talking time

Ask learners *Are there any words you don't understand?*

Encourage accurate observation and noticing by learners, but without excessive analysis

Discuss the following questions with your partner.

1. What exactly do we mean when we say 'vocabulary'?
2. What's the distinction between 'receptive' and 'productive' vocabulary?
3. What should be dealt with during a vocabulary presentation?
4. What are not (super) necessary for 'receptive' vocabulary?
5. What techniques can we use to present vocabulary?

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