

Task 1: what do the words in brackets have in common?

The principles of the Lexical Approach have [been around] since Michael Lewis published 'The Lexical Approach' [10 years ago]. [It seems, however, that] many teachers and researchers do not [have a clear idea of] what the Lexical Approach actually [looks like] [in practice].

Task 2: What makes this speaker highly fluent?

They're off and racing now and one of the best out was Speedy Cheval coming out at number two from El Red and also Floris Fella's away fairly well, a little wider on the track the favourite Race Ruler, Twilight Time is in behind those.

Task 3: How would you answer these students?

Student: So you say a *distant relative*. Can you say a *distant friend*?

Teacher: No, not really.

Student: Why?

Student: Can you say *Is permission for my immediate exit granted*?

Teacher: No, not really.

Student: Why?

Task 4: Which is more important – grammar or vocabulary?

"Without grammar little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed." (David Wilkins)

"A lexical mistake often causes misunderstanding, while a grammar mistake rarely does." (John Sinclair)

The lexical approach and its implementation

Learning outcome: at the end of this seminar you will ...

1. be familiar with the theory behind Michael Lewis' *Lexical Approach*.
2. be familiar with exercises that can put this theory into practice.

What's in the words?

An **approach** "refers to theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching." (Richards and Rodgers 2001)

"Some theorists distinguish between method and approach. Approach denotes a more general theoretical orientation, while a method is just one way that the approach is realised in practice." (Thornbury 2006)

Lexis is a technical term for the vocabulary of a language, as opposed to its grammar. The term 'lexical item' is used in order to get round the fuzziness of the word 'word'. Lexical item means any item that functions as a single meaning unit, regardless of its different derived forms, or of the number of words that make it up." (Thornbury 2006)

Positioning the Lexical Approach

- ❑ Connections with the **Natural Approach** and the **Communicative Approach**
- ❑ "The Lexical Approach values **comprehensible input** in the way outlined in Krashen's input theory." (Lewis 1997)
- ❑ "it is the **exposure to enough suitable input**, not formal teaching, which is the key to increasing the learner's lexicon." (Lewis 1997)
- ❑ "Acquisition, over which the teacher has no direct control, is valued, rather than formal learning." (Lewis 1997)
- ❑ "The lexical Approach re-emphasises much that was put forward in the original Communicative approach, most notably the **centrality of meaning**." (Lewis 1997)
- ❑ "When people use language for real **communication**, they instinctively pay attention to **only those mistakes which impede communication**. Why, then, do language teachers ever attend to anything else? Correcting anything other than written work is explicitly anti-educational." (Lewis 1997)

Theory of language

- ❑ **Grammar vs. vocabulary**
 - "Language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar." (Lewis)
 - "The standard view divides language into grammar (structure) and (vocabulary); the Lexical Approach challenges this fundamental view of language." (Lewis 1997)
 - "The grammar/vocabulary dichotomy is invalid; much language consists of multi-words 'chunks'." (Lewis)
 - "Language consists of chunks which, when combined, produce continuous coherent text." (Lewis 1997)
- ❑ **Language is holistic**
 - The central metaphor of language is holistic - an organism; not atomistic - a machine.
- ❑ **Probable vs. possible language**
 - "The Lexical Approach concentrates on actually-occurring or probable language and not on the possible sentences of English." (Lewis 1997)
 - "While stressing the importance of lexis and probable language, *the Lexical Approach* fully recognises that without a generative element, novelty and innovation – possibly language – become impossible." (Lewis 1997)
- ❑ **Language storage and fluency**
 - "We store much of our mental lexicon in complete, fully-contextualised phrases." (Lewis 1997)
 - "L1 conversational fluency does not come from the use of a lexicon of difficult words, nor from the most common words of the language, but from a repertoire of phrases and expressions made of the most common words." (Lewis 1997)

What is lexis?

- ❑ **Single words (*Certainly*)**
 - Old-fashioned vocabulary
 - Can stand alone
 - The largest category
- ❑ **Collocations (*make a mistake*)**
 - "certain words co-occur in natural text with greater than random frequency." (Lewis 1997)
 - "For language teaching, frequency is undoubtedly of interest, but strength may provide a more powerful organising principle." (Lewis 1997)
 - Range from fully fixed – relatively fixed – totally novel
- ❑ **Fixed expressions (*make a mountain out of a molehill*)**
 - Social greetings, politeness phrases, phrase book language, idioms
 - Much of what we say and write consists of prefabricated multi-word items
- ❑ **Semi-fixed expressions (*Could you pass me the __, please?*)**
 - Consist of a pragmatic / functional frame, which is completed by a referential slot-filler
 - Occur widely in speaking and written language
 - Almost fixed expressions which permit minimal variation, spoken sentences with a single slot, sentence heads, more extended frames

Implementing the lexical approach

- ❑ **Focus on lexis, chunking and collocations rather than structures and individual words**
 - "Recognition of the lexical nature of language means many activities are slightly modified to ensure a lexical, as well as, or rather than, grammatical focus to the activity." (Lewis)
 - In the classroom: raise students' awareness of and develop their ability to 'chunk' language successfully, highlight expressions that have a generative status; highlight frequency and strength in collocations; emphasise the pronunciation of lexical chunks, not individual words
- ❑ **Replace *Presentation – Practice – Production* with *Observe – Hypothesis – Experiment***
 - "The theoretical underpinning which supported the PPP paradigm is now largely discredited but its influence remains widespread. In broad terms, seen as MMM, it remains valid. Learners Meet, Muddle through, and (eventually perhaps) Master some features of L2; but the period over which the process occurs may be weeks or even years. Formal teaching of isolated points may contribute to a developing understanding, but such points simply cannot be taught in particular lessons." (Lewis 1997)
 - "Any suggestion that real and lasting learning occurs in a specific lesson is both theoretically indefensible and practically counter-productive, setting up wholly unrealistic and unachievable expectations." (Lewis)
- ❑ **Use noticing and consciousness-raising activities**
 - "The key idea of noticing informs all exercises and activities in the Lexical Approach." (Lewis 1997)
 - In the classroom: have learners search for pattern/usage, do classification exercises, compare L1 and L2
- ❑ **Focus on input and exposure rather than output**
 - "Increase student talking time is dismissed as a principle; learners are encouraged to participate fully in lessons, but we recognise that although they may participate through speaking, they can also do so, perhaps sometimes more effectively, by listening, noticing, and reflecting." (Lewis 1997)
- ❑ **Record lexis in chunks and train learners to do the same**
 - recording adjective + noun rather than noun alone
- ❑ **Focus on receptive skills**
 - In the classroom: give receptive skills, particularly listening, an enhanced status.

Lexical exercises

- ❑ **Text search - noticing, identifying and recording chunks (adjective – noun, noun – noun, verb – noun, verb – adverb)**
- ❑ **Matching collocations, expressions, lines of dialogue, etc.**
- ❑ **Completion of gaps that test fixed collocations or relatively fixed expressions**
- ❑ **Categorising of lexical patterns, negative vs positive connotations, formal vs informal register, etc.**
- ❑ **Sequencing expressions from a dialogue**
- ❑ **Deleting / odd-one-out**
- ❑ **Green Cross Code**
- ❑ **Word dominoes**
- ❑ **Collocate word of the week / lesson**
- ❑ **Examine a word using a concordance**
 - <http://www.collins.co.uk/Corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx>
- ❑ **Concordance confusable words (say vs tell, do vs make)**

Sample exercise 1

List 1	List 2	List 3
By and	end	Immediately
Every now and	run	Occasionally
Once in a blue	then	Repeatedly
In the long	again	Ultimately
In the	away	Rarely
Straight	now	Eventually
There and	moon	Immediately (past)
Time and	large	Previously
Up to	again	generally

Sample exercise 2

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Helpful		Suggestion
Efficient		System
Careful		Piece of work
Safe		Choice
Light		Green
Light		suitcase

Sample exercise 3

Bright	Idea	Green	Smell	Child	Day	Room
Clear	Attitude	Need	Instructions	Alternative	Day	Road
Light	Traffic	Work	Day	Rain	Suitcase	Lunch
New	Experience	Job	Food	Potatoes	Baby	Year
High	Season	Price	Opinion	Spirits	House	Time
Main	Point	Reason	Effect	Entrance	Speed	Meal
Strong	Possibility	Doubt	Smell	Influence	Views	Language
Serious	Advantage	Situation	relationships	Illness	Crime	Matter

Sample exercise 4

Absent from ...			
Guilty of ...			
A bar of ...			
Suspicious of ...			
It's not relevant to the present ...			
We had a ... time.			
It was very ... equipped.			
Things went ... wrong.			
Could you turn the ... off, please?			

Sample exercise 5

<i>How it long will take?</i>
<i>What do you size take?</i>
<i>Don't to things home your forget take?</i>
<i>I'll for responsibility full happens what take.</i>
<i>I'll to a just have chance take.</i>
<i>Nobody the of parents your can place take.</i>
<i>I more any can't take.</i>
<i>If you you'll my it with do do nothing have advice.</i>

Sample exercise 6

1) She's got rather a accent.
2) I don't really want to a decision until I have more information.
3) I know you haven't had time to think about it yet, but what's your reaction?
4) I'm convinced that things will work out for the best.

Sample exercise 7

1) I'm wondering ...	a) To concentrate, to understand it but I can't, to remember where I put them
2) I'm trying ...	b) Quite pleased with myself, a bit off colour, more confident than I did
3) I'm feeling ...	c) What I can about it, nothing yet!, the best I can
4) I'm doing ...	d) What we can do about it, if it makes any difference, if anyone else knows yet

Sample exercise 8

It's obvious something's gone wrong.	(quite)
There's no chance of me changing my mind.	(absolutely)
It's too late to do anything about it now.	(far)
I was disappointed but there was nothing I could do about it.	(bitterly, absolutely)
I was grateful for their help.	(really, all)
I was annoyed that he was late.	(really, so)

Sample exercise 9

1) Did you enjoy your trip? You must ___ us about it.
2) If I may ___ so, that doesn't sound like a very good idea to me.
3) She gets very lonely since her husband died. She has nobody to ___ to, you see.
4) I can't ___ for anyone else, but I think it's a good idea.
5) If you think it would help, you know you can ___ to me about it at any time.
6) It's still a secret, you know. I hope you didn't ___ anything to anyone.
7) Could you ___ me the time, please?
8) He ___ about football all the time. It gets very boring.

Sample exercise 10

1) I'll get back to you ...	a) as long as you like.
2) We'll get there ...	b) as good as you'll find.
3) This is top quality, it's ...	c) as far as I know.
4) The meeting is still on ...	d) as clear as can be.
5) You can stay ...	e) as fast as we can.
6) There's no other explanation ...	f) as soon as I know.

Sample exercise 11

Away from it all	oOooOo
At the crack of dawn	oOooo
There was nothing for it	oOoooOo
An absolute nightmare	ooOoOo
It seemed to take forever	ooOo
In the first place	ooOoO

Sample exercise 12

1) What / your areas / responsibility?
2) Happy / offer?
3) Best way / contact you?
4) How soon / make a decision?


Sample exercise 13

When I ___ my exam results, they weren't very good and I ___ quite upset, and my father ___ annoyed because he thought I hadn't done enough work. My mother just said, 'Well, you'll soon ___ over it. You'll just have to ___ a job.' At least I ___ a chance to earn some money before I'm 23! If I'd ___ to university, I might have ___ better qualifications but I'm not sure I'd have ___ through the course. I've ___ interests, but studying hard isn't one of them!

Sample exercise 14

WINDSOR: OPENING ACTIVITIES

Read All About It
 Choose a short magazine or newspaper article and prepare a short summary of it. Use the framework below. Then work in groups and tell each other about your articles.



I'd like to tell you about an article that was in...
 Its title is... and it's about...
 In summary, the article says...
 What I found particularly interesting was...
 What surprised me was...
 What I never realised was...
 From reading the article I've learnt...
 What I'd like to know more about is...
 Some of the interesting vocabulary from the article is...
 Do you have any questions to ask me about the article?

Sample exercise 15

What I found surprising / shocking / interesting / annoying / amusing was ...

I already knew that ... but I was surprised / shocked that ...

I know it says ... but I don't really believe it. I think it's more likely that ...

Parts of this are ridiculous / shocking / outrageous / unbelievable / just not true. For example, it says that ...

What did you think was the most ... about the text?

Was there anything in the text that really ... you?

According to the article, what ...?

What reasons does it give for ...?

In what way would ...?

Do you agree with the idea / suggestion that ...?

Task: are any of the following sentences different from each other in any way(s)?

- 1) *I'll see you on Monday.*
- 2) *It takes a while to settle into a new house.*
- 3) *Are you alright? You don't look very well.*
- 4) *I'm going to buy the blue one even if it is a bit more expensive.*
- 5) *It's clouding over.*
- 6) *We do need to do something about the broken pane in that window.*
- 7) *It's time we were on our way.*
- 8) *She tried to warn them, but they went ahead and did it anyway.*
- 9) *Don't worry. I'm sure it'll turn up.*

Summary of changes

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>More attention to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Lexis and chunks <input type="checkbox"/> Listening (lower levels), reading (higher levels) <input type="checkbox"/> L1/L2 comparison <input type="checkbox"/> Use of dictionary as a resource for learning <input type="checkbox"/> Probable rather than possible English <input type="checkbox"/> Organising notebooks to reveal patterns <input type="checkbox"/> The language which learners may meet outside the classroom | <p>Less attention to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sentence grammar <input type="checkbox"/> Uncollocated nouns <input type="checkbox"/> Indiscriminate recording of new words |
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If you use a lexical approach you will...

- Consciously take every opportunity to expand learners' phrasal lexicon
- Develop learners' awareness of word-grammar as well as sentence grammar
- Highlight fixed expressions and prototypical examples
- Encourage accurate observation and noticing by learners but without excessive analysis
- Use many different ways to increase learners' awareness of the value of noticing, recording and learning multi-word items
- Encourage learners to keep a well-organised lexical notebook
- Encourage lexical, but not structural, comparison between L1 and L2
- Help learners hear and learn language in multi-word units
- Talk more informally but in a carefully controlled way with your class
- Increase carefully controlled teacher talking time
- Take a global, holistic view of pronunciation
- Value successful language at all times, even if it is not formally accurate

You will not

- Ask learners 'are there any words you don't understand?'
- Encourage learners to record many single L1 = L2 word items
- Worry about ship-sheep style pronunciation problems of individual words
- Worry unduly about natural grammar errors, which disappear with exposure and time, not formal instruction and correction
- Indiscriminately teach what native speakers really say to classes where such language may be of limited use
- Throw away years of experience of good practice, only add a lexical perspective to that experience

Sources

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Post-session reflection

Do you agree with the theory behind the lexical approach?

Is there anything from the approach that you would like to try to use in your lessons?

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