



THE LEXICAL APPROACH: REVOLUTIONIZING LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract: *The lexical approach is a teaching methodology that emphasizes the importance of vocabulary and lexical chunks—combinations of words that frequently occur together—in language learning. Coined by Michael Lewis in the 1990s, the approach challenges traditional grammar-focused methods by arguing that understanding and using language effectively is largely dependent on acquiring a rich repertoire of vocabulary and phrases.*

Keywords: *a teaching methodology, understanding, vocabulary and phrases.*

INTRODUCTION

The lexical approach shifts the focus from grammar rules to the acquisition of words, collocations, and chunks. Rather than learning isolated words or memorizing grammar structures, learners are encouraged to study language as it naturally occurs in phrases, expressions, and patterns.

Examples of lexical chunks include:

- Collocations: “make a decision,” “fast food.”
- Fixed Expressions: “How are you?” “It’s up to you.”
- Phrasal Verbs: “pick up,” “run out of.”
- Idioms: “Break the ice,” “burn the midnight oil.”

Principles of the Lexical Approach

1. Language as a Lexical System



Language is made up of words and word combinations that carry meaning. Grammar emerges naturally through the use of these lexical patterns.

2. Input over Rules

Exposure to authentic language input—such as conversations, texts, and media—is essential for acquiring vocabulary and patterns.

3. Chunks as Building Blocks

Lexical chunks form the foundation of fluent and natural language use.

4. Learning Through Context

Vocabulary and phrases are best learned in context rather than in isolation.

5. Focus on Meaningful Communication

The ultimate goal is practical, real-world communication, rather than mastery of abstract grammar rules.

Benefits of the Lexical Approach

1. Fluency Development

Learning lexical chunks helps students speak more fluently, as they rely on pre-assembled phrases rather than constructing sentences word by word.

2. Natural Language Use

Emphasis on real-life expressions makes learners sound more natural and native-like.

3. Ease of Acquisition

Memorizing chunks is often easier and more practical than mastering complex grammar rules.

4. Improved Listening Skills

Familiarity with common phrases and collocations enhances listening comprehension, as learners can predict and recognize patterns.

5. Cultural Insight

Learning idiomatic expressions and phrases provides a deeper understanding of the culture behind the language.



Challenges of the Lexical Approach

1. Limited Focus on Grammar

Critics argue that the approach may neglect grammar, which is essential for accurate and complex communication.

2. Resource Dependence

Implementing the lexical approach requires rich, authentic language input, which may not always be readily available.

3. Individual Differences

Some learners may find it challenging to infer grammar rules or patterns from context without explicit instruction.

4. Assessment Difficulties

Measuring progress in lexical knowledge can be harder than evaluating grammar proficiency.

SUGGESTION

Strategies for Using the Lexical Approach

1. Expose Learners to Authentic Input

Use real-life materials like movies, podcasts, newspapers, and conversations to introduce natural language patterns.

2. Encourage Noticing

Train learners to identify and analyze chunks, collocations, and patterns in the input they encounter.

3. Practice Through Repetition

Reinforce learning by having students repeat and use lexical chunks in various contexts, such as dialogues and writing.

4. Focus on Collocations

Highlight words that commonly appear together, such as “strong coffee” or “heavy rain.”

5. Incorporate Technology



Leverage language apps, corpora, and online resources to provide examples of authentic usage and collocations.

6. Use Contextualized Exercises

Design activities like gap-fills, matching, or sentence completions that emphasize meaningful use of lexical chunks.

Applications of the Lexical Approach

- Language Teaching: Helps learners improve speaking, listening, and writing skills by focusing on real-world usage.
- Business English: Equips learners with industry-specific phrases and jargon.
- Test Preparation: Enhances vocabulary for standardized exams like IELTS or TOEFL, where lexical knowledge is critical.

Conclusion

The lexical approach represents a paradigm shift in language teaching, prioritizing vocabulary and natural language use over traditional grammar instruction. While it has its challenges, the approach is highly effective for learners aiming to achieve fluency and practical communication skills. By focusing on lexical chunks and authentic input, the lexical approach empowers students to use language confidently and naturally in real-world situations. It's a methodology that not only teaches a language but also brings it to life.

REFERENCES

The most of information is collected from the TKT teaching knowledge course. Second edition. (By Mary Sparatt, Alan Pulverness and Melanie Williams). Cambridge University Press and University of Cambridge ESOL examination