

PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES

ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEXICAL APPROACH IN EFL-CLASSROOM VIA USING SONGS

Selimov T.S.,

*2nd year Bachelor student
Institute of International Education
Moscow State Pedagogical University,
Moscow, Russia*

Melnikova K.A.,

*Teaching Assistant, Foreign Languages Department
Institute of International Education
Moscow State Pedagogical University,
Moscow, Russia*

Sepoyan A.V.

*Teaching Assistant, Foreign Languages Department
Institute of International Education
Moscow State Pedagogical University,
Moscow, Russia*

Abstract

The present work examines the effectiveness and possible limitations of the lexical approach in the process of teaching and learning vocabulary. The authors suggest ways to solve the issues of this approach that arise during its application, while maintaining its main advantages, by using Song-Based Approach in a foreign language classroom.

Keywords: Lexical Approach, Song-Based Approach, Vocabulary learning, Memory Retention, foreign language teaching

Introduction

One of the most difficult part of learning a foreign language is undoubtedly expanding students' vocabulary. The number of new words and expressions can be overwhelming for most students. But not only do they face the difficulty of getting aware of plethora of expressions, but also students have to retain the learned expression in their vocabulary and, if possible, use them actively. This paper gives some possible options on through what means we can help students achieve this aim.

Literature review

1.1 Overview of Lexical Approach.

Michael Lewis (1993), who is considered to be the first scholar of the lexical approach, suggests that vocabulary is the foundation of language, not grammar - vocabulary is misunderstood in language teaching when grammar is traditionally considered the foundation of language and mastery of the grammatical system is the basis for effective communication. According to Lewis (1993), a key principle of the lexical approach is that "language consists of grammaticalized vocabulary, not lexicalized grammar" [7, p.36]. One of the central organizing principles of any meaning-oriented curriculum must be the lexicon.

Within the lexical approach, lexical units in their various forms are considered to play an important role in the teaching and learning of mother and second languages. Nattinger (1980) believes that teaching should be based on the idea that language production is the collection of ready-made units, which are called chunks in Lexical Approach (Lewis, 1993), suitable for a particular situation. Basically, chunks and collocations which Lexical Approach is based on, can be represented as patterns, which has a certain meaning if spoken, read or

listened together in a sequence. Chunks and collocations, according to M.Lewis are the result of "an increasing ability to break down wholes into parts"

The idea of using chunks as "pre-fabricated units" has roots in the analysis of English language. At the turn of the 20th century, researchers have found frequently repeated multi-word lexical pieces of language in texts, suggesting that language is more repetitive than was assumed (Biber et al., 1999; Cortes, 2004; Sinclair, 1991). Therefore, a new term "Corpora Studies" was coined. According to Lewis (2000), corpora studies deeply analyze the English language; they give new descriptions of the English language and improve it as a result of analyzing large amounts of natural oral and written texts on computers. Moreover, a large number of corpora studies have shown that vocabulary plays a more considerable role in language organization and construction of meaning than it was thought before (O'Keeffe et al, 2007).

Hence, a need for a systematic understanding of a new perspective on lexical units aroused. Lewis in 2002 suggested the taxonomy of lexical items presented below [8, pp. 91-94]:

- Words (e.g., Book, pen).
- Polywords (e.g., By the way, upside down).

- Collocations or word partnerships (e.g., Community service, absolutely convinced).
- Institutionalized utterances (e.g., I'll get it; we'll see; that'll do; If I were you...; would you like a cup of coffee?)
- Sentence frames and heads (e.g. That is not as ... as you think; The fact is that/ The suggestion/ problem/ danger was ...) and even text frames (e.g. In this paper we explore...; Firstly...; secondly...; Finally ...)

Richards and Rodgers [12, p. 133] add that many other lexical units also occur in language. For example:

- Binomials: clean and tidy, back and front, pros and cons, up and down.
- Trinomials: cool, calm and collected.
- Idioms: dead drunk, to run up a bill.
- Similes: as old as the hills.
- Connectives: finally, to conclude.
- Conversational gambits: Guess what

1.2 The effectiveness of Lexical Approach

The use of Lexical Approach has been proven its efficiency by plenty of empirical researches. For example, Abdulqader et al. in their experiment proved that application of LA can enhance learners' performance in writing: "...significant difference in the mean scores of the post-test in favour of the experimental group taught according to the LA". For instance, Ying (2006) conducted research and as presented the approval of LA efficiency as the conclusion, because students feel affiliation between themselves and the language. Sewbihon-Getie as an outcome of his empirical work states that "...the current research work reveals the importance of the lexical instructional approach in teaching English as a Foreign Language" and "This study is congruent with studies by Tang (2012), Eidian et al. (2014), Chun-guang (2014), Chao (2016)". All aforementioned scientific works prove the effectiveness of implementing Lexical Approach in teaching English as a Foreign Language.

1.3 Limitation of Lexical Approach

Despite its indisputable advantages in learning foreign languages, Lexical Approach does have some limitations and issues. First and foremost, it's a heavy load on students' memory. Sinclair (2004a: 282) states that there can be "the risk of a combinatorial explosion, leading to an unmanageable number of lexical items" and Harwood [6, p. 142] warns teachers about "learner overload", highlighting that "implementing a lexical approach requires a delicate balancing act between exploiting the richness of fine-grained corpus derived descriptions and keeping the learning load at a manageable level". The authors cannot help agreeing with these statements, since Lexical Approach-oriented student books for EFL usually present more lexical units, that more traditional ones. For example, in Outcomes Elementary (2011, Dellar and Walkley) there are 24 new lexical units presented on one page, whereas in more traditional Solutions (2013, Falla, Davies, 2013) this number is usually limited by 10 new lexical units per page. Harwood in his work says: "...this low frequency of collocations in selected course books implies is that

textbook writers do not pay much attention to the recycling of collocations and the studied course books in this research are not reliable sources in directing students' attention toward collocational patterns and cannot have effective influence on increasing learners' collocational knowledge».

The problem

As it can be seen, the most criticized component of Lexical Approach is memory retention of a large number of chunks learnt. Therefore, the authors can formulate the problem: How to enhance learners' memory retention and adjust comfort revision of the lexical units within Lexical Approach for better performance?

Methods of the research

The major method of the research is literature review and analysis of empirical data. Moreover, in this work we will use the method of modelling to work out the possible implementation of the outcomes of this research in EFL-classroom.

Key Results

In the seek for solution of the problem stated above, the authors decided to pay attention to other teaching methods, which could help to enhance the memory retention and spur learners' academic performance when studying English using Lexical Approach. One of the ideas was to embark on using songs or chants to better remember the whole language units. This method seemingly has the following advantages:

- 1) Songs or chants can be constructed appropriately for Lexical Approach, so they contain the whole chunks
- 2) Songs or chants enhance memorizing new lexis, because the melody and rhythm help students to do so
- 3) Songs or chants offer not explicit and non-compulsory way of revising new lexis

Nevertheless, suggested thesis needs empirical basis and here it is needed to refer to previously conducted researches.

The problem of music and enhanced vocabulary retention has been discussed in many researches as stated in Rockell's work "Musical looping of lexical chunks: An exploratory study" (Hashim & Abd Rahman, 2010, p. 4; Medina, 1990, p. 18; Mora, 2000, p. 152; Salcedo, 2010, p. 19). Moreover, recently this issue has been empirically examined Pavia et al. (2019) in his work exposed one group students to listening to the songs while learning vocabulary and another one was taught without song-based approach. The first group showed better result in memorizing the vocabulary. As the author states "a frequency of exposure to songs in the EFL classroom leads to improved vocabulary acquisition and retention". The research directly interconnected with Lexical Approach was conducted by Tomczak and Lew (2019). In the study "The Song of Words": Teaching Multi-Words Units with Songs" they claim that the group of students exposed to listening to the songs while learning chunks had better performance than a non-song group. Authors state that multi-words lexical unit would retain better in students' memory when taught through songs. Shakerian et al. (2016) as well argues for better vocabulary learning and

retention when using songs in EFL classroom. Tegge (2015) in her massive work “Investigating Song-Based Language Teaching and Its Effects On Lexical Learning” proved in a classroom-study that use of songs in teaching language is effective: “The main findings of the quasi-experimental intervention study provided evidence that the presentation of text in the format of a song can result in higher retention of verbatim text both in immediate and one-week delayed testing”.

As it can be seen, the effectiveness of songs when implemented in learning vocabulary and especially chunks have been proved. It has positive impact on both

student’s retention and their active use of focus vocabulary in free speech (Rockell, 2015).

Discussion

Based on the conducted research, which showed an effectiveness of Lexical Approach and prospect for enhancing its use via the use of songs in EFL classroom, the authors worked out a model lesson which incorporates these principles. The procedure is fully described below:

1) Presentation (Figure 1). Students are given new chunks (ranked 1-6) and their equivalents in the familiar words. They need to match them correctly.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No bed of roses 2. To take a bow 3. To kick off 4. To cool it off before you burn it out 5. We’re gonna make it 6. To reach the top | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) To achieve the goals b) To stop because of death c) To be praised because of the great job d) A situation when not only good things happen e) To stop doing something not to become too tired f) To do something that is top-notch for you |
|---|--|

Figure 1. The presentation stage

2) Controlled practice (song-based). Students are given short pieces of songs where they can hear the chunks in use. Their task is to identify the chunks used in songs (Figure 2). After this part students make their own examples with the chunks.

Listen to 0:30-1:05 of “Vienna” by Billy Joel. What two phrases from the last exercise did you hear? Write one sentence for each of them. (3 minutes)

<https://youtu.be/wccRif2DaGs>

Listen to 1:15-1:40 of “We Are The Champions ” by Queen. What two phrases from the last exercise did you hear? Write one sentence for each of them. (3 minutes)

<https://youtu.be/KXw8CRapp7k>

Listen to 0:40-1:00 of “We’re Gonna Make It” by Twisted Sister. What two phrases from the last exercise did you hear? Write one sentence for each of them. (3 minutes)

https://youtu.be/14v2_KPkcrs

Figure 2. The controlled stage

3) Semi-controlled practice. Students are given the statements about the video they are about to watch (Figure 3). These statements contain the focus vocabulary (chunks). Students watch the video and mark statements True or False.

Now watch the video about the successful Queen's song "Killer Queen". Mark these statements T or F. (8 minutes)

<https://youtu.be/iVuXKpzWnEQ>

1. Not to **kick off**, Brian May decided to **cool it off before he burnt it out** while recording the song
2. Queen didn't **take their bows** for "Killer Queen", it wasn't a hit
3. Freddie Mercury was sure that it was necessary to repeat the same song formula to **reach the top**
4. Queen's promoter was sure than the song was **going to make it** and he did his best to put it on every radio station
5. It was **no bed of roses** for Queen before the release of this song

Figure 3. Semi-controlled practice stage

4) Free practice (Figure 4). Students need to retell the story, using the target vocabulary (chunks).

Find any story of success in English (it should be a short interview or audiopodcast) that inspires you. Write a brief summary of it using all the phrases from the previous exercise. (10 minutes)

If you're struggling with searching for the appropriate option, here's one I like.

https://youtu.be/ta1_iTiduSc

Figure 4. Free practice stage

5) Homework. As the part of homework are to listen to the songs containing chunks and pay attention to the use of them. Hence, students will revise the vocabulary in a fluent way.

Conclusion

Lexical Approach, being one of the most advanced innovations in ESL, has proved its efficiency through many of empirical researches conducted in last decades. However, it has some downsides, for instance, heavy load of vocabulary on students and hence, difficulty of memorizing new lexical units. The authors believe, that songs when implemented on the fusion with Lexical Approach in the EFL-classroom would spur the efficiency of learning vocabulary and students' motivation.

References

1. Abdulqader H. B., Murad I. H., Abdulghani M. I. The impact of the application of lexical approach on developing students' writing skills at a university level //European Scientific Journal. – 2017. – T. 13. – №. 32. – C. 130-141.
2. Biber D. et al. Longman grammar of spoken and written English. – London : longman, 1999. – T. 2.
3. Cortes V. Lexical bundles in published and student disciplinary writing: Examples from history and biology //English for specific purposes. – 2004. – T. 23. – №. 4. – C. 397-423.
4. Dellar H., Walkley, A. Outcomes Elementary Students Book//Heinle Ceingage Learning- 2011.
5. Falla T., Davies P.A, Solutions Pre-Intermediate Students Book //Oxford University Press – 2017.
6. Harwood N. Taking a lexical approach to teaching: Principles and problems //International Journal of Applied Linguistics. – 2002. – T. 12. – №. 2. – C. 139-155.
7. Lewis M. The lexical approach. – Hove : Language teaching publications, 1993. – T. 1. – C. 993.
8. Lewis M. et al. Implementing the lexical approach: Putting theory into practice. – Hove : Language Teaching Publications, 1997. – T. 3. – №. 1. – C. 223-232.
9. Nattinger J. R. A lexical phrase grammar for ESL //TESOL quarterly. – 1980. – C. 337-344.
10. O'keeffe A., McCarthy M., Carter R. From corpus to classroom: Language use and language teaching. – Cambridge University Press, 2007.
11. Pavia N., Webb S., Faez F. Incidental vocabulary learning through listening to songs //Studies in Second Language Acquisition. – 2019. – T. 41. – №. 4. – C. 745-768.
12. Richards J. C., Rodgers T. S. Approaches and methods in language teaching. – Cambridge university press, 2014.
13. Rockell K. Musical looping of lexical chunks: An exploratory study //JALT CALL Journal. – 2015. – T. 11. – №. 3. – C. 235-253.
14. Sewbihon-Getie A. The Effectiveness of Using the Lexical Approach to Developing Ethiopian EFL Learners' Vocabulary Competence //HOW Journal. – 2021. – T. 28. – №. 1. – C. 69-93
15. Shakerian P. et al. Investigating the role of pop songs on vocabulary recall, attitude and retention of Iranian EFL learners: The case of gender //Advances in Language and Literary Studies. – 2016. – T. 7. – №. 2. – C. 121-128.
16. Sinclair J., Sinclair L. Corpus, concordance, collocation. – Oxford University Press, USA, 1991.
17. Tomczak E., Lew R. "The Song of Words": Teaching Multi-Word Units with Songs //3L, Language, Linguistics, Literature. – 2019. – T. 25. – №.4.