

# [Lexis treatment in language teaching](https://assignbuster.com/lexis-treatment-in-language-teaching/)

#### Part 1. Examine the treatment of lexis in two course-books. How are the items introduced, practised and tested? Take into account the authors intentions and illustrate your account by close reference to one unit/chapter from each book

“…we need to see English language teaching as located in the domain of popular culture as much as in the domain of applied linguistics.”

(Pennycock, 1998, p162 cited in Harmer, 2001, p94)

For the purpose of this essay, lexis is defined simply as the words that make up a language. It includes all levels from morphemes to lexical phrases (Nattinger, 1988 cited in Harmer, 2001. It also includes the manner in which we ‘ recast’ and reframe words with those that are similar, equivalent or alternative in order to fix, or negotiate (McCarthy, 1990), our understanding of the meaning.

The two selected course texts, Cutting Edge (Cunningham & Moor, 2004) and Matters (Bell, Gower & Cunninham, 1998) both integrate elements of a lexical syllabus into their approach. In the following two sections – Module 8 of C utting Edge and Unit 6 of Matters (see Appendix 1) – lexis is introduced and expanded through a number of methods. Whilst Cutting Edge expounds an engage- practise – activate style (Harmer, 2001) of learning cycle (see Walmsley, 1979 cited in Els et al for a exploration of unit based teaching cycles), both combine a discovery learning style with more traditional grammatical constructs.

For example, Unit 6 of Matters is entitled Are You Green? . The subject area is the natural world and the subheading is the environment. The language focus of the unit is:

“…sentence structure, in particular defining relative clauses (sometimes known as ‘ identifying’ or ‘ restrictive’ clauses); clauses of purpose and clauses of result and reason.” ( Matters, Bell & Gower, 1998, Unit 6)

This unit introduces a range of vocabulary and contextualises both its language style and content initially through a magazine article. These are then expanded through an intentionally inflammatory ‘ interview’. The exercises, although sometimes appearing initially divorced from the previous exercise, conform to a learning cycle approach. They relate to earlier learning as well as serving to re-enforce the meaning of the vocabulary and its contexts. The focus on relative clauses, as with lexical phrases, aims at acquiring a familiarity that enables the students to specific forms more naturally and correctly. In both texts, the material is introduced through oral presentation, discussion, reading and written work. Brainstorming serves t is similar to Greens (1993) word wall in that it provides the vocabulary and offers the opportunity for visual and oral re-enforcement.

Cutting Edge has a Language Focus Section. This follows the same practise of building language familiarity through building ‘ comparisons and talking about similarities’ (Cunningham & Moor, 2004). Both use individual pictorial comparison followed by group discussion to re-enforce vocabulary and make connections to specific situations. As with Matters the same language is used in several formats – a listening and a reading activity.

It is worth nothing that both texts recognise how age and culture affects the contexts of a lexicon. Matters warns that:

‘ In multinational classes, be careful: not all countries have the same level of sympathy for and awareness of environmental issues and scientific jargon’ (Bell & Gower, 1998, Introduction).

They acknowledge that, as Bowerman (1978) states, ‘ Lexical rules are language – and culture – specific.’ (cited in Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). However, both programs aim to move a student away from lexical over-generalisations (Backhouse, 1994) and increase depth of knowledge and breadth of vocabulary. Backhouse (1994) relates lexical development to intra and extra – lingual processes ie the “ semantic relations which hold between lexical items in a given language.” (p. 19) and the “ paradigmatic relations” or the specific fields that define meaning within that context. Assessment of student understanding looks at how individuals develop vocabulary around a subject area through discussion, class response and exercises.

In essence, it appears that both texts use a ‘ field theory’ approach that allows for lexical compartmentalisation and a hyponomic (see McCarthy, 1990, p19) focus on developing associated meanings (Carter & McCarthy, 1988). However, they do not limit themselves to associating specific vocabularly within specific fields.

“ Lexical phrases or ‘ language chunks’ are like prefrabricated building units.” (Lewis, cited in Harmer, 2001, p. 21)

#### Part 2. How effective is the treatment of lexis in the two chosen units for a group of learners with whom you are familiar? What changes would you make in using these units with the learners you have identified?

Class Profile

This class consists of seventeen males and five females, all L1 Arabic speakers. They come from six countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa. It is an intermediate level class. 30% are students, 40% are supervisory/managerial levels of employees in Government departments or from private businesses. 20% are self-employed private businessmen and the remaining 10% are homemakers. The age range is 20-58 years. They are currently about half way through a twenty week English course.

Whilst the treatment of lexis in the two chosen units is efficient and effective, it does benefit from some individual tailoring towards the above class. For example with some of the students I would perhaps encourage a move towards a more self directed learning plan (Pemberton et al , 2001). Others need more scaffolding. I have also tried to cater for learning styles so that a variety of exercises are supported by a variety of materials and presented in more than one way. I have not simply repeated specifics, but changed the way they are communicated. Clearly, cognitive tools vary according to each individual and the situation so no assumptions should be made (see Papademetre & Scarino, 2000 for an exploration of class and culture) based on ones own parameters. However, the attached are two lesson plans that I have adapted to suit this class.

These are adapted to work on this classes particular understanding of certain collocations. Common patters are re-iterated:

verb + noun(fly a kite)adjective + noun(a light snowfall)adverb + verb(to boldly go)adverb + adjective(totally different)adjective + preposition(similar to)noun + noun(a collocation dictionary)

(adapted fromhttp://www. eli. ubc. ca/teachers/lexicon. html)

However, as Schmitt 2000) and Thornbury (1999) both stress, idioms, idiomatic phrases and expressions – especially those with different meanings – are further developed. The aim is to provide the students with an all round lexical confidence supported by a good knowledge of vocabulary as well as lexical phrases. Where specific lexical approaches have been used, they are mentioned in the lesson plans and sequences.

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|  |  | Class of 22. Level | Intermediate – 02 | TITLE: ARE YOU GREEN?  Adapted from Matters- Intermediate (Bell & Gower, 1998) Unit 6 |
|  |  | Date | 31 st January 2006 |  |
|  |  | Lesson duration | 60 minutes |  |
|  |  | Resources: handouts, cassettes, audio-player, white-board, OHP and transparencies  Course text books |  | |
|  |  | Lesson Aims:   * Reading skills: magazine article on the ‘ ungreen’ Moore family * Comprehension check. * Vocabulary and pronounciation skills * Develop familiarity with colloquial and informal spoken and written English. * Develop language for use both in and out of classroom. * Develop language around a major current topic – environmentalism – that is widely relevant * Awareness of word fields * Contribute to discussion * Contribute to brainstorming sessions * Work independently with confidence * Work confidently with lexical variations eg the ‘ schwa /?/ | * Familiarisation with colloquial English publications (newspaper, magazines, journal excerpts etc) * Contact with everyday English * Teacher modelling * Raise student awareness eg of pronounciation and meaning changes through stress syllabuls. * Phrasal words * Language ‘ chunking’. * Awareness of expression and collocations, their usefulness and frequency * Develop OHP transparencies or posters of mind maps and word fields |  |
|  |  | Anticipated Problems   * problems with reading new vocabulary * technical problems eg OHP, audio-player * timetable fit | * have a ‘ hit list’ of potential problem words and definitions ready * elicit and drill (time allowing) problem words where possible * encourage students to develop a ‘ power word’ list (Cary, 2000) of their own. * Have English/Arabic dictionaries ready but use to note and refer to later * Stand-by handouts if OHP fails * Stand-by audio player * Ensure good time keeping |  |
| 19. 00  19. 05  19. 05  19. 15  19. 25  19. 30  19. 35  19. 45  19. 50  20. 00 | Introduction and warm up. Small talk, humour or anecdotes etc  Elicitthe word green and discuss culturally specific colour associations eg in the UK blue can mean sad, yellow cowardice, red danger and green innocence, jealousy or environmental issues. Discuss and support with modelling and writing on white board.  Lexically this exploration of meanings associated with colour will help students understand language extension, engage through subject matter, encourage higher order thinking and build vocabulary necessary for the lesson.  Pairwork. Set the theme: two environmental problems facing the world presently ie global warming, loss of wildlife and habitiat etc. Elicit words and write on board. Set students to work together on this.  The connotations associated with environmental issues eg wildlife, habitat loss, global warming are real and relevant to most students. This exercise requires students to develop a lexical framework to support both facts and opinions and know which areas they wish to find more language to fill.  Ask students if in their countries they have an equivalent of the Green/Environmental Party? Explain what the Greens are and stand for. Set a discussion of this again in pairs.  This has the same lexical aim as the previous section.  Displaya picture or poster of the Green Party on the white board. In pairs of threes readAre these people criminals? When finished reading, complete the exercise matching the paragraph number with the figure or object on the right of the page (see appendix 1) Read through the answers with the students.  Matters, p42/43. Set exercise 2 p. 43. to do individually or in pairs.  Lexical rationale – aim for students to use and apply new language.  Go through answers a to e with the students, giving a verbal explanation of each and support on the white board.  Ask students to work in pairs and make a list of verbs on handouts eg: save, recycle, buy, ban, use, prevent. Show the students how these can be used in collocations and phrasal words from the text.  Lexical rationale – starting to extend vocabulary into actions associated with environmentalism and using a discursive exercise to encourage their recognition and usage.  HandoutsSet exercise 3, a practise in relative clauses, and give out handouts. Students read through the test and complete it. Go through the answers with students answering one by one.  Lexical rationale – aims towards students developing referencing skills by looking up words either individually or in pairs.  Listening and speaking skills: pronounciation focus on the schwa. Students listen to the recording and take notes. Go through the exercise marking the syllables and stress in word pronounciation. Go through the answers on the white board.  Lexical rationale – as part 1 explored, pronounciation and stress hightens student awareness of how intonation affects meaning.  Second tape recording. Listen to the second recording and go through the rubric with the students. Students give answers back around the class and then practice in pairs the sentences in exercise 2. Matters p. 45.  Lexical rationale – extension of pronounciation focus.  Wordspot focus . A lexical exercise to recap, re-iterate and re-enforce.  FINISH. Issue handouts of target text. Put a transparency of the “ Something” word-field flow chart on the OHP. Divide the students into A’s and B’s. A reads the instructions on p. 135 and B on p138. (answering each others questions.) Issue handouts f the word-field for homeword and ask students to add at 4-5 new phrases with ‘ something’ in them. Follow up first thing next lesson.  Develops autonomous lexical growth at students own rate of learning ie with no time pressure |  | | |
|  |  | Class of 22. Level | Intermediate – 02 | TITLE:  Adapted from Cutting Edge – Intermediate (Cunningham & Moor, 2004) Module 8 |
|  |  | Date | 04 th February 2006 |  |
|  |  | Lesson duration | 60 minutes |  |
|  |  | Resources: handouts, cassettes, audio-player, white-board, OHP and transparencies, Course text books |  | |
|  |  | Lesson Aims:   * To reinforce reading and listening skills * To reinforce comprehension. * Vocabulary and pronounciation skills * Develop familiarity with colloquial and informal spoken and written English. * Develop language for use both in and out of classroom. * Awareness of word fields * Contribute to discussion * Contribute to brainstorming sessions * Work independently with confidence * Establish preparation for next class | * Reading and listening exercises * Vocabulary building exercises * Excerpts taken from Cutting Edge follow on from previous reading and listening exercises but focusing on how to use words (nouns, verbs, adjectives) in phrases and collocations used in everyday English * Teacher modelling * Phrasal words * Language ‘ chunking’. * Awareness of expression and collocations, their usefulness and frequency * Develop OHP transparencies or posters of mind maps and word fields * Set grammar/language points, p44 (Matters), for home work reading (using scanning and familiarisation) in readiness for the next class |  |
|  |  | Anticipated Problems   * Some problems with reading and pronounciation * problems with reading new vocabulary * technical problems eg OHP, audio-player * timetable fit | * have a ‘ hit list’ of potential problem words and definitions ready * elicit and drill (time allowing) problem words where possible * encourage students to develop a ‘ power word’ list (Cary, 2000) of their own. * Have English/Arabic dictionaries ready but use to note and refer to later * Stand-by handouts if OHP fails * Stand-by audio player * Ensure good time keeping |  |
|  |  | Rationale for lesson focus   * Students need to practice their reading, listening and speaking skills more. * They need to further their informal vocabulary * In the previouse lesson (Are you Green?) issues were featured and discussed at some length. This lesson aims to restore a balance and put into perspective the alternative view featuring some of the benefits of the modern world so it is not always perceived as a wholly negative experience as can be construed by ‘ Green/Environmentalist’ action groups. This could be important to avoid confusion in some students minds. (The fact that alternative opinions exist regarding the controversy surrounding this subject across the world. |  | |
|  | Timing  19. 00  19. 05  19. 10  19. 15  19. 20  19. 25  19. 30  19. 40  19. 55  20. 00 | Introduction and warm up. Go over points from previous lesson. Small talk, humour or anecdotes etc (if time permits!) Review homework exercises concerning phrases and collocations from ‘ Something.’  Appoint one student to write the answers on to the chart of white board.  Go around the class an dget their answers and their explanations from each student. Tell students to note down answers. Brief review of work then move on.  Flip chart of ‘ somethings’ word-filed attached to white board.  Focus and elicit upon the wordsinventorandsuccessful. Get associated words too –invent, invention, succeedfrom the students. Ask students to predict/guess what kind of advice/information will be found in the text from comparing pictures on the left to those on the right.  Handouts. Issue reading excerpts ‘ How to be a successful inventor.’ Tell students toscanthrough the reading in 2-3 minutes. Readtext individually. ( Cutting Edge Teaching notes and coursebook.)  Checkfor understanding especially words and phrases likelight bulb, to be patient, purpose, to understand the porential of something, a dot, a s screen, a button, a know.  Lexical rationale – re-enforcement of vocabulary plus the added re-pronounciation of read words, explanation of phrases indicates a development allowing for lexical phrases as well and comparative meanings.  Put the answers on the OHP and go through these one by one.  Handoutsand transparency.  Group work. Set students to discuss this task in groups of four or five. Apoint one from each group and get their feedback in turns.  Listening and vocabulary skills( Cutting Edge , p. 81)Handouts.  Pronounciation and pair work. Emphasise with the students beforehand that they only have to identify which machines are being discussed in the tape. Do one example for the students in A. Press tehbutton down then play cassette 1 stopping after each phrase is used to check answers. Discuss the answers to B in pairs.  Pair work. Set task 3, p81. Give students a few moments to think it over, preferably ones their partner is unfamiliar with students can draw it to explain it to the, Use examples each student is familiar with personally. Go around the class helping and prompting as needed. Explain using examples what acompound nounis. Go through the two rules –noun + gerund and gerund/noun + asdjectiveon the whiteboard. Repeat a couple of examples showing where thestressis to be found in both words ie laptop computer. Etc  Lexical rationale – as covered in part 1, stress is extremely important for realisation of language variability and meaning. In this case the lexicon is integrated with a grammatical function. Pair work and individual response help to focus students on the task in reinforce the lanaguage learning.  Give the students a little time to work this out then play cassette 2.  Listen and practisepronouncing the words before giving out the answers to the pronounciation task.  Set home work task (reading to familiarise only) Cutting Edge p81 handout.  FINISHread ahead of time p44, Unit 6, Matter’s Intermediate Unit 6. Go over again also the reading and pronounciation work taught in class today in preparations for the next lesson’s review of this. Check students again for clarification and understanding of these. |  | |

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