

Lexis treatment in language teaching



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

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 *Cutting 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 noting 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 vocabulary within specific fields.

“ Lexical phrases or ‘ language chunks’ are like prefabricated 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 these classes particular understanding of certain collocations. Common patterns 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 from <http://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.

Class of 22. Level	Intermediate – 02	TITLE: ARE YOU GREEN? Adapted from <i>Matters- Intermediat e</i> (Bell & Gower, 1998) Unit
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6

Date 31st 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 pronunciation skills
 - Develop familiarity with
 - Familiarisation with colloquial English publications (newspaper, magazines, journal excerpts etc)
 - Contact with

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| colloquial and | everyday |
| informal spoken | English |
| and written | • Teacher |
| English. | modelling |
| • Develop | • Raise |
| language for use | student |
| both in and out | awareness |
| of classroom. | eg of |
| • Develop | pronounciat |
| language around | ion and |
| a major current | meaning |
| topic – | changes |
| environmentalis | through |
| m – that is | stress |
| widely relevant | syllabuls. |
| • Awareness of | • Phrasal |
| word fields | words |
| • Contribute to | • Language ‘ |
| discussion | chunking’. |
| • Contribute to | • Awareness |
| brainstorming | of |
| sessions | expression |
| • Work | and |
| independently | collocations |
| with confidence | , their |
| | usefulness |

- and
 - frequency
 - Develop OHP transparenc
 - ies or
 - posters of
 - mind maps
 - and word
 - fields
- Work confidently with lexical variations eg the ' schwa /?/

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/Ara
bic
dictionaries
ready but
use to note
and refer to
later
- Stand-by
handouts if
OHP fails
- Stand-by
audio
player
- Ensure
good time
keeping

1 Introduction

9. and warm up.

0 Small talk,

0 humour or

1 anecdotes etc

9. Elicit the word

0 green and

5 discuss

1 culturally

9. specific colour

0 associations

5 eg in the UK

blue can

1 mean sad,

9. yellow

1 cowardice,

5 red danger

1 and green

9. innocence,

2 jealousy or

5 environmental

1 issues.

9. Discuss and

3 support with

0 modelling and

1 writing on

9. white board.

3 *Lexically this*

5 *exploration of*

1 *meanings*

9. *associated*

4 *with colour*

5 *will help*

1 *students*

9. *understand*

5 *language*

0 *extension,*

engage

2 *through*

0. *subject*

0 *matter,*

0 *encourage*

higher order

thinking and

build

vocabulary

necessary for

the lesson.

Pairwork. Set

the theme:

two

environmenta

l problems

facing the

world

presently ie

global

warming, loss

of wildlife and

habitat etc.

Elicit words

and write on

board. Set

students to

work together

on this.

The

connotations

associated

with

environmenta

l 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.

Display a picture or poster of the Green Party on the white board. In pairs of threes read Are 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
environmenta
lism 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:

pronunciation

focus on the

schwa.

Students

listen to the

recording and

take notes.

Go through

the exercise

marking the

syllables and

stress in word

pronunciation.

Go through

the answers

on the white

board.

Lexical

rationale – as

part 1

explored,

pronunciation

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
pronunciatio
n 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 homework
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

TITLE:

Adapted

from

Cutting

Edge –

Class of 22. Level

Intermediate – 02

Intermediat

e

(Cunningha

m & Moor,

2004)

Module 8

Date

04th 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 pronunciation 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
- 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

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| brainstorming | and |
| sessions | collocations |
| • Work | used in |
| independently | everyday |
| with confidence | English |
| • Establish | • Teacher |
| preparation for | modelling |
| next class | • Phrasal |
| | words |
| | • Language ‘ |
| | chunking’. |
| | • Awareness |
| | of |
| | expression |
| | and |
| | collocations |
| | , their |
| | usefulness |
| | and |
| | frequency |
| | • Develop |
| | OHP |
| | transparenc |
| | ies or |
| | posters of |
| | mind maps |

and word

fields

- Set

grammar/la

nguage

points, p44

(Matters),

for home

work

reading

(using

scanning

and

familiarisati

on) in

readiness

for the next

class

Anticipated Problems

- Some problems with reading and pronunciation
- problems with reading new

- have a 'hit list' of potential problem words and definitions ready

- vocabulary
 - technical problems eg OHP, audio-player
 - timetable fit
- 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 previous 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/Environmentalists' 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	Introduction and warm
19. 00	up. Go over points
19. 05	from previous lesson.
19. 10	Small talk, humour or
19. 15	anecdotes etc (if time
19. 20	permits!) Review
19. 25	homework exercises
19. 30	concerning phrases
19. 40	and collocations from ‘
19. 55	Something.’
20. 00	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
words inventor and successful. Get associated
words too – invent,
invention,
succeed from 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
potential of
something, a dot, a s
screen, a button, a
know.

*Lexical rationale – re-
enforcement of
vocabulary plus the
added re-
pronunciation 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.

Handouts and 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.

Pronunciation 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 the button 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

a compound nouns. Go through the two rules -noun + gerund and gerund/noun + adjective on the whiteboard. Repeat a couple of examples showing where the stress is 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 pronunciation
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
pronunciation 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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