Etai Forum

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SPECIAL LEARNING DIFFERENCES ISSUE

English Teachers' Association of Israel

ETAI Mission Statement

ETAI (English Teachers' Association of Israel) is a grassroots, voluntary organization concerned with the professional development of its close to 1000 members. The membership list includes English teachers from all sectors and at all levels of education – elementary, junior high and secondary school, college and university.

ETAI offers professional support, information, forums for discussion and practical suggestions and resources to help English teachers deepen their expertise and grow in their careers through its local events, regional and national conferences and its journal The ETAI Forum.

The main driving force behind all the organization's activities is to encourage teachers to seek the appropriate avenues to keep up-to-date with the latest research in the field, materials, methodologies, technology, essential for their lives as English language teachers.

It is our job as a teachers' association to supply a variety of arenas to foster professionalism. These include organizing events throughout the country, keeping in touch with the English Inspectorate and the Ministry of Education and maintaining our connections with international English teachers' organizations as an affiliate of TESOL and an associate of IATEFL.

ETAI Membership Dues

Members	185 NIS
Full-time students*	130 NIS
New immigrants / New teachers	130 NIS
Retirees	130 NIS / 100 NIS**
Overseas members	200 NIS

*must present a valid student ID card

**a special reduction given to retirees who bring in a new member

New member / Membership renewal form can be downloaded from the ETAI site: etni.org.il

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

The idea for this special edition of the ETAI Forum was born at the July 2011 Summer ETAI Summer Conference called "The Power of Words." A number of sessions at that conference were part of a symposium called "Lexical dimension in ELT" which was organized by the British Council and featured leading experts in Israel on the lexical approach to teaching English. At the time, as editor of the Forum, I approached Leo Selivan who had organized the symposium for the British Council, and asked him if he would guest edit an edition of the ETAI Forum devoted to the Lexical Approach. He agreed, suggesting that the special edition be published during 2013 to mark the ten-year anniversary of the Lexical Approach.

This special edition of the ETAI Forum is a truly international one. The authors of the articles, all leading ELT educators and proponents of the Lexical Approach, currently work in England, Canada, Poland and Israel; they come from, and have worked all over the world.

Every ETAI event and publication is the result of cooperation and collaboration among ETAI members and other volunteers. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those involved in this issue: the authors of the articles for sharing their expertise and knowledge, Maizie Avihayil for the layout with ECB, Karen Berzon for coordinating ads and publication, Forum editor Renee Wahl for her support of this issue. An enormous thank-you and a great deal of appreciation goes to guest editor Leo Selivan for all the time, effort, blood, sweat and tears that he has invested in this issue. Thank-you all!

Michele Ben
ETAI Chair

It's a date

ETAI Winter Conference
Sunday December 1st, 2013
at Makif AMIT, Beer Sheva

Theme: "The Why and How of Enticing Them to Write"

Please submit form by November 3rd, 2013

See you there!

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the publication of Michael Lewis's *The lexical approach: the state of ELT and a way forward* (LTP, 1993). In this special issue of the ETAI Forum, contributors from all over the world pay tribute to Lewis's outstanding work that – for many - has changed the way they teach and see language.

Underpinned by the insights from corpus linguistics, the lexical approach places a premium on the ability to understand and produce collocations, lexical phrases and chunks of language that frequently occur in conversation and writing. Lewis argues that these are the building blocks of language which should be accorded the most important role in language teaching. In doing so, he criticizes the traditional grammar syllabus which seeks to present language as a set of rules with slots to be filled by vocabulary.

In the last 20 years, research has confirmed that language is highly patterned and that vocabulary and grammar are inextricably linked. There have been successful attempts to incorporate a more lexical approach into textbooks, namely the *Innovations* and *Outcomes* series (both by Cengage-Heinle). In our feature article, Hugh Dellar (UK), co-author of both *Innovations* and *Outcomes*, chronicles his journey through grammar teaching and describes how he has changed it over the years to give it a more lexical focus.

It would be safe to say that it is the role of vocabulary in language pedagogy that Lewis's work has had greatest influence on, and other contributors to this issue focus on vocabulary teaching with particular emphasis on collocations and multi-word phrases. Luiz Otavio Barros (Brazil), in yet another personal account, talks about how his approach to teaching vocabulary has changed owing to Lewis.

Most agree that learning vocabulary is an enormous task. Native speakers combine thousands of words into tens of thousands multi-word combinations. Helen Osimo (Israel) in her article argues that high priority chunks should be taught explicitly and proposes a framework for teaching idiomatic lexical chunks. Staying on the topic of course design, Hemda Benisty (Israel) describes how she devised a lexical syllabus for Junior High school.

On the research front, Dr Tina Waldman (Israel) reports the results of her study which looked at the production of collocations in student writing across three levels of proficiency and found that leaners at all levels underuse collocations.

We wanted to keep a balance between theoretical articles and classroom practice and have included a number of practical activities. Hannah Kryszewska (Poland) and Paul Davies (UK) share a number of activities for highlighting lexical chunks from their new book *The Company Words Keep*, the title of which is a paraphrase of the famous quote "you shall know a word by the company it keeps" by the British linguist J.R. Firth, who is often credited with coining the term "collocation".

Collocations are also the subject of Rene Wahl's (Israel) article in which she describes how she uses concordance software in class. More practical suggestions in the issue come courtesy of Ken Lackman (Canada), who often writes for *English Teaching Professional*, and Simon Mumford (Turkey), whose creative classroom ideas you can find in *Modern English Teacher*.

I hope theoretical insights and practical ideas presented in this issue will inspire you and help you add a more lexical focus to your teaching.

Leo Selivan
Guest Editor

MAKING THE LEAP FROM GRAMMAR TO LEXIS

Hugh Dellar (University of Westminster / National Geographic Learning) *(hughdellar@mac.com)*

Beginnings

I started teaching back in 1993 following a four-week CTEFLA course at Westminster College in London, the bulk of which was taken up with trying to instill into us trainees the basic tenets of the English grammar system. Day after day, we did language input sessions on modal verbs, passives, the perfect aspect and so on and - like many of you, perhaps - we consoled ourselves after class by moaning about how little grammar they had taught us at school. "Obviously I don't have any problems USING grammar", we'd tell ourselves, "it's just I don't know WHY. How am I going to be able to explain it all when the students start to ask me?" Almost from Day 1, I was primed to believe that what was really going to make or break me as a teacher was my ability to show grammar forms and to explain grammar meanings – as well as difference in meanings between different forms.

Of course, once I actually started teaching – first in the UK, at St. Giles, London - and then later on in Jakarta in Indonesia - the books I was given to use with my classes simply reinforced these notions. It is a depressing fact that even now, almost twenty years down the line, the vast majority of second-language courses still organize themselves around the gradual introduction and practice of tenses - the present simple, the present continuous (referring to activities around now), the past simple form of the verb *to be*, regular past simple forms and so on. My students in the early 90s seemed to very much expect this to be the way that things should be and so I spent the first year or so of my career parrot-learning all the explanations given at the back of the coursebooks I was using (and as these included *Headway*, some of the grammar notes were pretty copious and tricky to get your head round, even for me – so God only knows how the students must've handled them!) and then doing a bit of extra studying from things like Leech's *A-Z of English Grammar & Usage*. I memorized all the different concept questions I was supposed to ask each time I did one of my carefully planned and sequenced present-practice-produce lessons. "When is the sentence talking about - the past, present or future?" I would ask. "That's right. And do you know WHEN in the past? No. OK. So we use the present perfect simple to talk about actions in the indefinite past", I'd inform my class. A timeline would invariably follow, some drilling of weak forms and then some tightly controlled practice from Penny Ur's *Grammar Practice Activities* followed by some form-focused error correction.

The seductions of grammar

Once I'd mastered all of this, that was basically my first two or three years of teaching sorted – and strangely reassuring it all was, too. Rules themselves are satisfying - and even when students started pointing out exceptions, I could console myself that at least I was teaching 'useful generalisations', even if they weren't actually hard and fast rules. The notion of learning being made up of discrete blocks of information, which could be easily mastered one after another, helped me to feel I was keeping the tides of chaos at bay and brining order to an unruly world. The illusion that learning how to use one grammar structure through a present-practice-produce (PPP) lesson would then enable students to utilize this structure in whatever kind of conversation they needed to use it in was a comforting one.

The numerous recipe books and supplementary materials available in the staffrooms I frequented also had their allure. I could go over that grammar point my students still seemed to be struggling with yet again, but in a new and creative kind of way. Of course, on top of all of this, I also did skills lessons and went through comprehension questions and did some pronunciation work and taught lots of words. And when I say words, I mean **words**! Gradually, though, I settled into a grammar-heavy rhythm and there seemed little reason to change.

The rot sets in

And yet change I did - and quite dramatically, looking back on it. Partly this was due to my own experience of trying to learn a foreign language - Indonesian - that ran in parallel with my development at as a teacher. To begin with, I memorized endless lists of single words and studied all the grammar forms and meanings in a grammar book, in the process getting to manipulate such memorable sentences as *Anjing itu menggonggong* – the dog is barking – but when push came to shove, I always struggled to find the easiest, most natural, normal way of saying things. Coupled with this was a slow nagging feeling that not only were my students having similar problems with their English, but that my own enthusiasm for the classroom was starting to wane. Surely, I thought, there must be more to life than asking students to discuss the difference between *Mary left when Bill arrived* and *Mary had left when Bill arrived* or *Michael only spoke to Helen* and *Only Michael spoke to Helen*. I'd started to tire of texts which were contrived to contain as many of one structure as possible, I'd lost the will to endlessly mime and elicit *You're playing the guitar* or *You're running* and I'd started to feel that perhaps *The dog is barking* wasn't a very good example of the way that either the present continuous way generally used or the verb 'bark' was used. Or, in fact, even the word dog!

Revelations

The two crunch moments came soon afterwards. Firstly, as part of my DTEFLA, back in London, I had to read *The Lexical Approach* by Michael Lewis, where I came across the claim that "language is not lexicalized grammar; rather, it is grammaticalised lexis". I didn't fully understand this to begin with, but the idea that there was more to language than simply a bunch of structures which you just dropped the appropriate words into rang bells for me. Then, one day I was standing on the third floor at work, waiting for the lift up to the fifth and next to me was one of my Intermediate students, a Korean woman called Hye-Jung. The lift stopped, the doors opened and rather than getting in, Hye-Jung stood there, mouthing silently to herself and looking frustrated. I was quite intrigued by this, so I passed on the lift and asked her what was up. "I didn't know what to say", she confessed. "I know the present continuous: *I am + -ing, You are + -ing, It is + -ing*. I know the question forms: *Are you + -ing? Is it + -ing?* I know the word lift. I know the verbs *to go up, to go down*, but what to say when the doors open?"
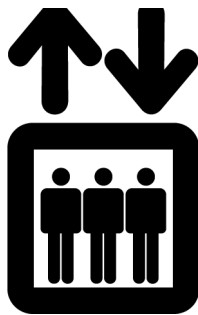
"Are you going up?" I said – at which point she looked aghast and said "Oh! So easy when you know!" Which of course it is. At this moment, I suddenly had an insight into what a ridiculously large task I'd inadvertently been forcing on my students for so long - teaching them grammar forms and meanings in one class, words in another, often with scant regard for how to actually say things in the real world, and then expecting them to somehow magically put the two together every minute of their English-language using lives.

From this point on, I resolved to stop thinking about language in this way and to try to ensure that in my classes I taught grammar in normal, everyday contexts with the lexis it's most often used with - and at the same time, I taught no more single words, but rather taught vocabulary in the contexts - and with the co-text – which students may want to use it and would hear it used. Context became far more central to what I did in class and out of this, what I've come to term *Lexical Teaching* emerged.

Into the unknown

The first thing to say about this is that in some ways making the move from teaching grammatically to teaching lexically is a leap – a leap of faith for some, perhaps; a leap in the dark for others, I'm sure – and like all major moves in life, it can be quite traumatic. All the things we find so reassuring about teaching

grammar get pulled out from under us when start to consider the lexis of the language as being the thing we should be spending most of our classroom time looking at. The average lexicon is far bigger, for starters. Even a modest Learner's Dictionary dwarfs the volumes of English Grammar In Use! The lexis of English is a vast, messy area. To tackle it, we're forced into honing our explanations of things that often seem inexplicable to us. We're thrown into a world of arbitrary collocations and expressions and usages, a world where the safety of rules seems a distant memory - and I'd be lying if I tried to tell you that walking in woods like these isn't tricky at times!

Yet walk we must, not only for reasons I've already outlined, but also – to be blunt – because when we're mainly teaching grammar, we're not actually teaching very much! Perfect tenses, for instance, essentially carry the meaning of *before* – before now (the present perfect), before another time in the past (past perfect) or before a point in time in the future (the future perfect). Continuous forms essentially signify that something is or was *unfinished*. Yet consider how much time we spend teaching these tenses relative to their communicative worth in terms of meaning. We certainly wouldn't spend that much time teaching the words 'before' or 'unfinished'. Yet what is trickiest of all about grammar is not the meanings or the forms. Rather, it's the myriad number of ways in which each structure can be lexicalized. Just as Hye-Jung struggled with 'Are you going up?', so you can be sure she'd also struggle with 'Prices are plummeting all across the Asian markets', 'I just feel like he's always trying to undermine my confidence' and 'It's absolutely bucketing down outside!'

It's to help all of our Hye-Jungs find what they want to say more easily than I'd like to suggest some basic principles that should help smooth your transition from grammar to lexis!

1 Examples are more useful than explanations

As part of the interview for training courses we run at University of Westminster, we often ask interviewees to do a bit of teaching and one of the things we ask them to do is imagine they're in a class where the item *rush* has come up in a listening or reading or vocabulary exercise. How would they deal with it? What frequently happens is candidates start running round the room like headless chickens saying "I'm late, so I'm rushing". Me and my fellow trainer, Andrew, adopt the role of the annoying student who keeps asking questions and shout out "*Rush* is like *run?*" "No, it's faster than running". "Oh, *rush* is *sprint*". "Yes, it's similar" and so on. The problems interviewees soon run into raises some interesting

points, I think. The main issues here are the problems with explaining and the problems with synonyms. It's worth looking at both at these in more detail.

In a sense, of course, the attempt to deal with the word *rush* outlined above is getting pretty close. When we *rush*, it is often to do with being late and it can involve running, though that isn't central to the action. The problem comes from trying to explain the word on its own rather than starting from thinking about what we actually say using it. Following this line of thought, the starting point for teaching it - assuming this is the context in which it's been met in the exercise the students have asked about, of course - would be to work backwards from the utterance and put that into a context I could explain. It'd go something like this:

OK. It's 5 to 9. I'm in Oxford Street. My class starts at 9. I meet someone I know. They stop me and start talking. "Hi. How're you? I haven't seen you for ages". I chat for a minute or two, but keep looking at my watch, before saying, "Listen, I'd love to stop and talk, but I'm in a rush. My class starts in two minutes."

And on the board, I'd then write that whole chunk:

Listen, I'd love to stop and talk, but I'm in a rush. My class starts in two minutes.

I might even add in **hurry** next to rush to show its equivalent – in this context. Despite the fact that this explanation perhaps takes a minute or two longer and there's more language on the board for students to deal with, I think this actually makes life easier for students in several key ways.

Less is not more

Firstly, it meets Hye-Jung's criteria of learning what to say in the situation when you want to use the word you're learning. As we've seen, this means doing far more than simply teaching meanings. In fact, I think a good dictum to teach by is that when students ask us "What does this word mean?" what they really want to know is "How can I use this word?" It also means that not only is the *context* clear, but so is the *co-text* and I guess I should explain what I mean by *co-text*. Co-text is simply language often found around the word we're teaching. In a sense, it's a slightly broader version of collocation. Where the collocation of *rush* here might be *to be in a rush*, the co-text is the language commonly used with that in the typical contexts it'd be used in. This is important for two reasons. The first is that writing the language up like this gives the students more support, more scaffolding, more to revise from at home. If you imagine simply writing up on the board to **rush** or even *to be in a rush*, no matter how clear your explanation of

that is, what do you expect students to do with this once they get home? They'll open their notebooks, go "Oh, OK. *To be in a rush*. Yep, I've got it." And yet when they want to try to use, they'll have to go through the Hye-Jung process:

OK. It's now, so it should be the present continuous. That's what we use to talk about things at the moment, so I am + -ing. OK. *I am being in a rush*.

And that would be that. By giving the whole chunk, you allow the possibility of students actually memorizing and re-using the thing as it stands. This means that teaching lexically places a much higher stress of the importance of memorizing. In a sense, I think we need to be honest and unashamed about admitting the fact that learning to speak a foreign language well requires a huge amount of memorization. There's simply no way round that, no short cut. Of course, not all students will remember the whole chunk wholesale. Some will remember 80%, some 60%, some only a couple of words of it. This isn't an argument for going back to teaching less. Teaching more language gives better students the possibility of learning the whole thing - and for those that don't, well 50% is better than nothing!

Teaching lexically means better grammar teaching

On top of this, there's one of the great ironies of teaching lexically, which is that this kind of teaching actually means students get more exposure to grammar and thus have more chance of slowly honing their accuracy. Traditionally, the idea has been that you do one big block of a structure in one lesson and that out of this, you're then somehow magically able to lexicalise the structure in all the different kinds of ways needed to help you talk about whatever you want. The problem being not only that this clearly doesn't happen, but also that there's a kind of blink-and-you-miss-it mentality to grammar. If you don't get the structure embedded in your brain in that one session, tough! That's it on that for the next hundred hours. Teaching lexically, however, means that because you're dealing with whole language, the most common structures come up time and time again, in each and every class. This can only be a good thing. One final point to make here is that this kind of exposure in class should aid students' receptive understanding of English. By showing them the words that go together, we're helping them at least to notice this stuff when they encounter it outside the classroom.

I did an embryonic version of this talk at a college in London in the summer and at the end, someone asked me "So what's the difference between lexical teaching and just teaching words in context?" It was a good question, I

thought, and in a sense the answer is basically nothing! On a deeper level, though, I guess teaching lexically means a switch to doing this kind of thing all the time, seeing this as the main thing we should be doing as language teachers in a language classroom. It also, I think, has considerable implications for classroom materials. Firstly, it means that we really ought to start using exercises that give students more support and scaffolding, more co-text. This may mean that pages look denser than perhaps some teachers are used to. This is simply because students learn language from language - not from pretty pictures or from empty, white spaces.

Learning language from language

I also think it means more use of gap-fill exercises. They seem to be the best way both of showing students typical co-text, and also of testing that words have been understood. Asking students to guess meanings isn't actually doing much teaching; giving students synonyms to match to new words operates on the assumption that words actually have direct equivalents which work in the same way, which of course they don't; giving single words or collocations is fine, but again only goes part of the way towards giving students what they want to say - they'll still have to do the hard part - the grammaticalisation - themselves! In contrast to all of this, a gap-fill, say this one, for example:

Listen, I'd love to stop and talk, but I'm in a ....
My class starts in two minutes.

is a pretty solid test of memory and understanding, whilst it also consolidates awareness of co-text, context and grammar that goes with the word. So - long live the gap-fill!

Of course, if all we do with gap-fills is simply give them to students to do, let them compare in pairs and then run through the answers, classes can get pretty dull, which brings us to another golden rule of sorts:

2 Ask questions about language as you're going through answers

Once we've explained what new language means and given students examples on the board, we can then use the class to expand on this. Learning how to ask questions about the language we're teaching in order to generate co-text is one of the things that has kept me interested in my job for this is one of the occasions where students get to bring their lives and experiences and countries into the English classroom. To look at how this works, let's start by taking the example of *rush* again. Once I'd got my model example sentences up on the board, I'd then just simply ask the class "Any other reasons why maybe *I'm in a rush?*" It's a great concept check, this, because

if you haven't explained the expression well enough, they'll be stumped! Of course, what may start happening is they grasp the idea, but aren't that great at expressing them in English, so they'll shout out things like "I have appointment my girlfriend" or "I don't want lose my train". This is absolutely fine. It shows they've got the idea - and it allows you to do some more teaching. Out of this, you might then end up with something like the following on the board:

Listen, I'd love to stop and talk, but I'm in a ....

My class starts in two minutes.

I'm meeting   my girlfriend   in ten minutes.
               some friends   in a bit.

I've got a train to catch. / I don't want to miss my   train.
                                                    bus.
                                                    flight.

Students appreciate you helping them to say what they're to say in better English. And the fact that they've come up with the meanings mean that side of things is already understood and instead, they're freer to focus on form. Where the comedy comes in is when one student adds "If I'm late" – and then mimes cutting his throat or "But is not important. Is only English class. Let's go for coffee".

The power of a well-honed question

In the same way, certain language-generating questions about certain bits of language can lead to some amazing stories. For instance, in an Upper-Intermediate class, the phrase *turn a blind eye* came up. I explained it, gave the example *of the police here in London often turning a blind eye to cannabis use* and asked anything else people could turn a blind eye to. One of my Chinese students, Fang-Li, launched into an impassioned retelling of the time him and three friends took on the school bullies when he was 16 - with knives and baseball bats! The teachers apparently not only turned a blind eye, but literally left the playground to avoid the carnage. Fang-Li's lot won, but he still has some tasty knife-slash scars on his forearm, which he showed the group. And to think, before then, we'd always thought he was such a nice boy!

Asking questions about the language you're teaching in order to generate co-text obviously involves a bit more Teacher Talking Time, but this is no bad thing. If students don't get this from us in the classroom, where are they going to get it from? I think it's time we reclaimed the dreaded TTT and realize than when we put it to good use, it's actually just called teaching! I think an interesting corollary here is that actually more of this kind of focused TTT also leads to more Student Talking Time and more whole-class involvement in the learning process.

Questions breed questions

One thing that starts happening much more in your classes when you teach more lexically is that students start asking you more questions about language too. One of the most common kinds of questions comes during the explanation stage. You'll often be in the middle of trying to explain and give examples for, say, *subsidy* and a student will shout out "It's like *a grant*?" Now, it's tempting just to gloss over these questions as they can be quite scary and can really put you on the spot – and when I first started my teaching career, that's exactly what I used to do. "Yes," I'd say, "it is a bit like *a grant*" and then move swiftly on. However, now I've come to realize that one of the core components of meaning is actually differential meaning and that what students are doing when they ask questions like is basically saying "Yes, I get the general idea, but could you explain to me exactly what the difference between a *subsidy* and *a grant* is, please?" As such, I think we'd do well to take the time to answer these questions quite thoroughly. In this instance, I ended up with the following on the board:

The UK is angry about the subsidies French farmers get from the EU.
They've cut state subsidies to public transport.
The government still subsidies the mining industry fairly heavily.
The whole industry is still quite heavily subsidised.

I got a special grant from the university to encourage me to do research.
They've thinking of cutting student grants.

Now, of course, you could just explain that "*a subsidy* is an amount of money paid by the government or another authority to help an industry or business or to pay for a public service, whereas *a grant* is an amount of money a government or another institution gives to an individual or organization for a particular purpose such as education or home improvement", but actually the examples more or less do that for you – though you could obviously still mention *subsidies* are usually to industries, *grants* to individuals – and of course they give that little bit extra too.

Real (language) teacher development

Taking the time to answer these kinds of questions may mean you don't always get everything you planned to do in class done – but it also means that you're teaching your class first and foremost and the material second – a much better way of doing things than vice versa! Obviously, being able to access the kind of information about collocation / usage needed to deal with these kinds of questions is an acquired skill and one that needs working

on. If it's any consolation, I still have questions which stump me and which I can't answer on the spot – and probably always will! It helps keeps the brain sharp and alive to language and to the way our students perceive it. I think perhaps the best way we can train ourselves to get better at explaining language is to use a dictionary as part of our preparation – or retrospectively to look up things that puzzled us – and not just to check meaning, but to get ideas about good examples of use as well. One thing we have to watch out at this stage is the difference between what things do and what we say about them. For instance, *balloons go up*, but we very rarely talk about them going up! *The balloon went up* isn't a good example of either *balloon* or *go up*. Far better would be something like *Can you help me blow up these balloons?* or *Prices have gone up a lot this year*. Dictionaries help us find these kinds of examples.

In the same way, perhaps the best and most developmental conversations we can have with our colleagues are those about the kinds of questions we get asked in class. Discussing the difference between, say, *oily* and *greasy* in the staffroom is more likely to lead to your long-term development than exchanging tips on great activities for revising the present perfect or new recipes for a wet Friday afternoon!

At the same time, though, I also feel that dictionaries are best kept out of the classroom generally. I'm not saying that there's not a place, early on in a course perhaps, for a ten- or fifteen-minute slot where we run students through how to use them, how to look for collocations and examples, what the abbreviations mean and so on. It's just that I don't think students pay to come to class in order to then sit and be told to look things up themselves. They can do that at home - for free! I think that as teachers we have to believe we can give better, more meaningful explanations and examples than dictionaries can - and that we can use the class more whilst doing so.

Don't go there!

Right - after a few Dos, some Don'ts! I think one thing we need to be wary of when teaching lexis is trying to teach every meaning of words all at once. Students will have enough problems trying to remember the first meaning you tackle. If you've gone for *Listen, I'd love to stop and talk*, *but I'm in a rush*, it's quite enough to explore extra reasons for why you're *in a rush* – without then saying "Oh, and then there's *rush hour* – but that's when everyone travels really slowly because they're all trying to get to work … Oh, and sometimes people who've taken ecstasy might say *I'm rushing* because the drug is starting to work … and you can *watch the*

rushes of a film, before the director has changed the first photographed scenes in any way!!" Stop! A basic rule of thumb would be to simply teach the words in the context they're present in – unless students themselves ask about other usages, in which case I think it's then fine to compare and contrast.

One of the great advantages of thinking and teaching lexically is that you realize that words always go together with other words, whether that be as part of collocations, fixed expressions or whatever. Once you get your head round this, residual fears you may have been harboring about supposedly difficult areas of the lexicon – phrasal verbs, separable and inseparable; transitive and intransitive verbs; idioms - all start melting away! These areas have traditionally been made to look and feel like even more grammar by coursebook writers, but in reality, they're no easier or harder to teach and learn that anything else. As such, don't scare students with jargon. Keep things simple and just show students the words that go together and explain what they mean. It's enough. I think it's also generally pretty unhelpful to only teach idioms or phrasal verbs together in big blocks – often as part of the run-in to FCE or CAE exams! They can come into classes much earlier on as they're part and parcel of the way we typically talk about all manner of everyday topics.

Connected to this is another don't – don't over-explain or try to explain why lexical items are the way they are. It's because that's how we say things! When students ask WHY we say *I felt like a fish out of water*, it's because we do. When they ask if they can say *I felt like a fish in the water* to mean they felt comfortable and at home, the answer is no! Why? Because we don't say it! Simple. Students generally have no problems accepting this as an explanation. Indeed, what other kind of explanation is there. Similarly, I don't think we do our students many favours by teaching them etymology or lexical history. Do students need to know the history of the girl guides to understand what *He's just trying to win some brownie points* means? I don't think so! Do they need to know that *barbarian* is derived from the Greek root *barbaros* meaning *stranger* or *non-Greek*? Definitely not! Let's try to keep all this cultural history and overly academic guff out of the EFL classroom and keep things simple and in plain English!

Teaching grammar as lexis

Another thing that starts happening more when you teach lexically is that you teach what you may perhaps previously have perceived as examples of grammatical structures as lexical items instead. This means students can start getting exposure to structures they were previously denied access to at a much earlier stage, thus priming them for closer encounters with them later on. An example might be the question *How long've you been doing that, then?* It seems to me that there's no reason why an Elementary student couldn't learn that question and some common answers – *Not very long. Only a few weeks*, *Quite a long time. Maybe four or five years* – and practise it. So long as our expectations are that we just want students to learn this question and be able to use it - at this stage - we won't be disappointed. It's unrealistic to expect greater, broader use of the present perfect continuous at this stage, though. There's plenty of time to get onto *I've been meaning to do it for ages, but simply haven't got round to it yet* at a later stage!

Apart from earlier – and more repeated – exposure to core structures, another advantage of teaching grammar as lexis is that you can side-step all the tricky questions students throw at you. If you correct '*It's a safety city*' to '*It's a safe city*' and are then asked why it was wrong, it's obviously tempting to say "Well, we don't use the noun *safety* before another noun, like city" but there'll always be the sharp student who says "Well, what about *safety zone*? And safety fears? And *safety helmet*?" Rather than trying to explain these 'exceptions' away and digging ourselves ever deeper into a hole in the process, simply say "Because it's wrong. We don't say *safety city*, we say *safe city*." In the same way, when a student asks why we use *won't* in the expression *You won't have heard of it* – which is talking about the past – it's because we do. It's a fixed expression!

One other thing we can do when thinking about teaching grammar as lexis is to show patterns clearly. For instance, if you're doing a lesson where you're teaching students to get better at having conversations with old friends they haven't seen for a while, you might - with a little help and some suggestions from your students – end up with something like this on the board:

Leo! Long time, no see.

I know! I haven't seen you for ages. So what've you been upto?

Oh, I've been really busy	*studying for my exams.*
	applying to different universities.
	working.
	finishing off my dissertation.

Here students get grammar and lexis combined. They get to see how to say what they might well want to be able to say!

Practice makes perfect

One final do is do get students to practise. This doesn't necessarily just mean getting them to write example sentences of use. It can also mean giving them clear, simple, personally meaningful contexts in which to connect the new lexis to their own lives. This is often most simply done by simply asking them questions using the new language. These could be things such as the following:

• Which industries are most *heavily subsidised* in your country? How do you feel about that?
• Do students in your country *get grants* to study?
• Do the police in your country sometimes *turn a blind eye* to things? What?
• Have you ever *felt like a fish out of water*? When? Why?

Alternatively, some bits of vocabulary lend themselves more to a kind of role-play. Students could walk around talking to different students asking "*So what've you been upto*?" and giving different "*I've been busy -ing*"

answers each time - or could cut the conversations short by saying "*Listen. I'd love to stop and talk, but I've got to rush*" and giving a different excuse why each time. The important thing is they get the chance to talk.

One final point to make here is that this will mean yet more opportunities for students to bring their personalities, their stories, their lives to the class – which is one more way for you to stay enthused about the job you've got!

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WHO NEEDS NEW WORDS?

Luiz Otávio Barros *(luizotaviobarros@gmail.com)*

Up until fairly recently, I didn't pay too much attention to how I taught vocabulary. My main concern was to help students understand and produce grammatical structures as accurately as possible. Teaching vocabulary was some sort of byproduct of whatever grammar or skills work I happened to be doing at the time.

Cut to 1997, when teaching vocabulary gained more prominence in my career. Way back then, I began teaching and devising courses in which grammar was supposed to play a less central role. It looked like the ever-swinging ELT pendulum had finally swung toward teaching vocabulary – or so I thought at the time. So, guess what, I had to find a way to teach words more effectively, which, in hindsight, was perhaps the wrong way to phrase the problem. I was trying to find a way to teach words when there's so much more to teaching vocabulary than words. When teaching vocabulary, why focus on "issue" when, in fact, it's "address a key issue" that ought to be stressed in class? Why simply tell students that "cut down on" means "reduce" instead of practicing the whole chunk "cut down on the number of (hours online)" or "cut down on the amount of (sugar I eat)."

These are insights I derived from the work of a man called Michael Lewis, whose ideas on teaching vocabulary and sheer impact on ESL and EFL will only be adequately assessed a few years from now, I believe. Though I could have done without some of Lewis' contentious and sometimes slightly dogmatic views, especially on grammar acquisition and the role of production in class, his books have taught me something that still informs my practice to this day:

When teaching vocabulary, a lot of useful/usable, high-frequency vocabulary is not made up of "new" words, but of combinations of "old" words.

This means that having an "advanced" command of vocabulary does not necessarily mean knowing 10 ways of walking or, say, what sounds different animals make. Progress at higher levels entails mostly – though not exclusively, of course – learning 'old' words in new chunks and contexts. Here's a simple example:

Way

I found a way around the problem

You have a way with words

If I had my way, I'd …

A is way better than B.

All these phrases and sentences are made up of words students already know, of course. What is "new" is the way they're combined. Seems logical, doesn't it? Trouble is, these "old" words used in new ways don't usually leap off the page as much as "new" words do, so students often ignore them - and so do we. This means that without some sort of teacher intervention, students are less likely to notice phrases like "I found my way around the problem" or "my expectations were met" than, say, "I was flabbergasted" or "He lives down in the boondocks".

So, in this sense, when teaching vocabulary to ESL / EFL learners, part of our job as teachers and course designers is to make the invisible visible, as it were. Here are 5 simple tips:

Tip 1. When teaching vocabulary, point out patterns and ask students to write them down and find other examples. Ask questions like: *What's the verb before "expectations" in the second paragraph?* Again, when teaching vocabulary, don't assume students are noticing collocations and chunks for themselves.

Tip 2. After students have read a text and done comprehension exercises, have them choose three interesting phrases (rather than words) they would like to learn for active use. Tell them these phrases should not contain any unknown vocabulary. That way, students are more likely to notice phrases like "jump to conclusions", "needless to say" or "I've been meaning to call you", which again, are made up of "old words", which in themselves aren't particularly noticeable.

Tip 3. Instead of asking, "Is there anything you don't understand in paragraph 2?" try "Is there anything you'd like to learn for active use?"

Tip 4. Get into the habit of pointing out to students which lexical items are most useful and train them to do the same. For example, choose a mix of high frequency/useful/usable and less useful vocabulary from any given text and tell students to rate each phrase as:

*** very useful   ** useful   * interesting for recognition only.

Then carry out a class survey to discover which lexis students found more useful.

Tip 5. Encourage your EFL / ESL students to record their new phrases as they find them rather than in a generic form. For example: "The odds that he will come are pretty slim" rather than "odds" or "Smoking has been banned" rather than only "ban."

Incidentally, regardless of the (rather contentious) title of the article, I do believe students also need to learn "new" words. ELT has had enough of fads, dogmas and one-size-fits-all solutions. Teaching lexis should be no exception.

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PUTTING INTO PRACTICE:
Supplementing the syllabus with the study of chunks

Helen Osimo *(helen.osimo@netvision.net.il)*

The importance and benefits of incorporating lexical chunks in language teaching has been well-documented. This paper demonstrates how a sub-set of lexical chunks – idiomatic lexical chunks (ILCs) – can be integrated systematically into a general syllabus, by grouping them according to common components.

I will briefly discuss what counts as an idiomatic lexical chunk and then show how strategies promoted for vocabulary acquisition can be applied to the explicit study of idiomatic lexical chunks.

But first a true anecdote which serves as a criticism of relying on authentic exposure –as opposed to explicit instruction – for the acquisition of ILCs.

In the English Department at Oranim all interaction is conducted in English. In one of my lessons a couple of years ago, I was forced to express my dissatisfaction that many students in that class were not reading the set academic material. I spoke for several minutes about the importance of reading background material, and, with a modicum of irritation, I ended my brief discourse by saying:

"Have I made myself clear?"

Two or three days later my colleague in the department reported on a meeting she had had with a student from the same group. She had asked the student to explain the content of her essay which my colleague had found confusing. The student explained step by step to her lecturer what she had meant. And then finished by saying

"Have I made myself clear?"

The student had noticed and memorized the form of this lexical chunk through natural exposure but she had used it literally and incorrectly. She had not been explicitly taught the function – which was in fact an idiomatic chunk generally expressing a reprimand with definite pragmatic restrictions of a reprimand!

What are idiomatic lexical chunks

In my terms idiomatic lexical chunks are neither full and totally opaque idioms, such as *someone let the cat out of the bag*, which is colourful but relatively rare, nor are they transparent grammatical chunks, such as *Who has been eating (my porridge)?* which are highly frequent, promote fluency, but are rule-governed and systematic. The following is my definition of ILCs based on Wray (2002:33):

an idiomatic lexical chunk is a multiword unit that is (i) grammatically irregular, that is, at least one component does not follow regular grammatical rules. Irregularity includes fixedness and grammatical constraints, such as **all being well; by and large; come to think of it;**

and/or

(ii) semantically opaque in varying degrees, that is, at least one component in the unit does not convey its conventional meaning, such as **[make] up [your] mind; [it] [has] nothing to do with; it [occurs] to me**.

Explicit instruction or authentic exposure?

Why is there an ongoing debate on whether to teach lexical chunks explicitly or to rely on authentic exposure? The case in favour of relying on authentic exposure, and thus hoping for incidental learning, is based on first language (L1) acquisition research, which indicates that for the native speaker formulaic sequences (lexical chunks) are stored holistically in the mental lexicon, along with single-word vocabulary items, and retrieval by native speakers is automatic. Therefore any sort of analysis is artificial. (Wray 2000:463).

My foregoing illustration of incidental learning through authentic exposure regarding *have I made myself clear*, demonstrates only too well the risks in relying fully on exposure.

On the other hand, there is increased evidence for explicit instruction with regard to single-word vocabulary items: Carter & McCarthy (1997), Lewis (1997), Nation (2001), Schmitt (1997, 2000), Laufer (2005), among others. A closer look at Batia Laufer's proposition for vocabulary learning eminently suits the teaching of idiomatic lexical chunks:

Planned Lexical Instruction (PLI) …ensures noticing, provides correct lexical information, and creates opportunities for forming and expanding knowledge through a variety of word focused activities. Laufer (2005: 311)

PLI combines the instruction of lexical forms and their meanings together with 'noticing' and thus allows for the role for incidental learning through exposure. My experience is that once learners are made aware of the phenomenon of idiomatic chunks, they start noticing them everywhere – in the songs, video clips, films etc. – that pupils are rigorously exposed to today. Raising pupils' awareness to the widespread usage of ILCs goes a long way towards teaching them. The following flow-chart illustrates the adaptation of PLI.

```
┌─────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
│ explicit instruction│ ──────────▶  │ noticing in authentic│
│ of ILCs in identifying│            │ language: songs, video│
│ and usage           │              │ clips, films …      │
└─────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘
            │                                 │
            └──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┘
                           ▼   ▼
                  ┌─────────────────────┐
                  │ Incidental learning │
                  │ reinforced with more│
                  │ explicit instruction│
                  └─────────────────────┘
```
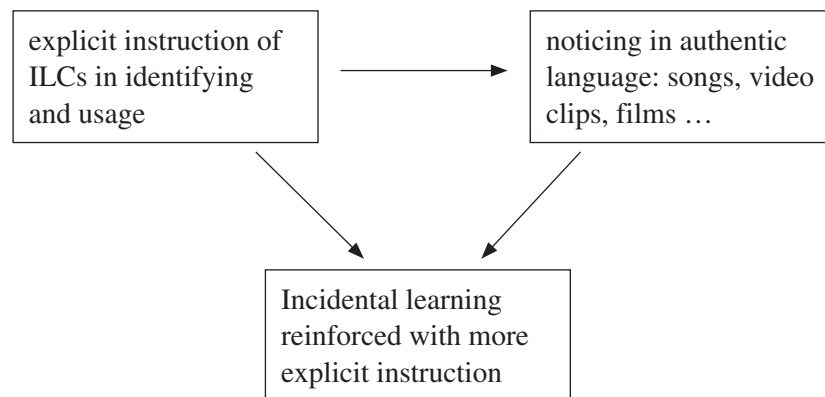
Criticism of explicit instruction

While the balance is in favour of explicit instruction, it is worthwhile learning from criticism:

> high-priority chunks need to be taught … [but] the 'new toy' effect can mean that formulaic expressions get more attention than they deserve, and other aspects of language--ordinary vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and skills--get sidelined. (Swan, 2006:5)

Adopting and adapting vocabulary research and pedagogy

Taking into account all of these points relating to vocabulary acquisition, I suggest a six-point 'planned lexical instruction' for the teaching of ILCs which are by nature a highly disorderly language phenomenon.

(i) **Organise** chunks into manageable teaching clusters as a mnemonic device, where one component may be constant. For example cluster chunks around the verb get or take:

get on [my] nerves; get rid of; get in touch with; get used to;

Cluster chunks according to known grammatical structures, for example time adverbials:

occasionally: once in a while; now and again; from time to time;

or *if* structures: *if I were you I'd [V]; if you like; if you happen to [V]*

(ii) **Prioritize** by selecting high frequency items (using a corpus) and/or items relevant to learners' needs.

(iii) **Focus on identifying:** Idiomatic chunks are, by definition, difficult to identify and learners have a lot of trouble at first in identifying. Exercises in identifying provide opportunities for noticing so it is important that criteria are made clear and a extensive practice is given in identifying them in context.

(iv) **Provide lexical information:** The use of L1 translation, (Nation 2001:351) and bilingual dictionaries (Schmitt, 1997: 219) are sometimes possible for idiomatic chunks. There are some chunks with word for word Hebrew translations and this is a useful place to start. Otherwise paraphrase and extensive exemplification are crucial.

(v) **Link new knowledge to old.** The main way of doing this is by "finding some element already in the mental lexicon to relate the new lexical information to" (Schmitt, 2000: 132).

This is more relevant in chunks than in vocabulary acquisition, because chunks are composed words that are high frequency and often very familiar to the learner. Clustering them provides a framework for teaching and eases the burden on memory for learning.

(vi) **Reinforce and move from receptive to productive skills**

Create opportunities for reinforcement through multiple encounters with a variety of activities focused on idiomatic lexical chunks.

Supplementing the syllabus: a sample unit

The following applies the above six-point planned lexical instruction to the teaching of a sub-category of chunks – "modal chunks" – which are chunks where one component is a modal verb. Such a unit can be well-integrated into a unit teaching modal verbs from a grammatical standpoint. Modal auxiliaries are highly frequent in English but meanings change according to tense and context. Sometimes it is easier to learn the chunks which contain modals that to give rules about these changes in meaning.

The ILCs in this unit are those that occur with *would*, *can*, *could*, and *might*

Before getting into the 6-point plan, it is necessary to check whether "modal chunks" meet the above criteria of being idiomatic. Modal chunks are different from grammatically regular patterns of modals. The modal auxiliary is not optional and not variable; it is a fixed part of the chunk and therefore fits the criterion of having grammatical restraints. Compare

<div align="center">

I can / can't /couldn't see the lake from my house.

with

I couldn't care less about seeing the lake.

but not

* I can't care less

 * I can care less

* I could care less

* I can care more

</div>

The following is a list of 'modal chunks' which also fit at least one of the foregoing criteria, together with their frequency rates (explained below) and are to be subjected to the six point check list of planned lexical instruction:

(i) Organize chunks into manageable teaching/learning clusters

> • [I] would like (1,987)
> • [I] would rather (547)
> • would [you] mind [asking] (174)
> • as luck would have it
>
> • [I] could do with ((433)
> • [I] couldn't care less
>
> • [I] can't help [thinking] (207)
>   that can't be helped
> • [I] can't be bothered with (382)
> • [I] can't stand
>
> • [we] might as well (994)

(ii) Prioritize: select high frequency items.

Frequency searches on the British National Corpus (BNC) yielded the above numbers of occurrences for each chunk. The BNC is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken language. Two words per million is considered high frequency in research on chunks, therefore 200 occurrences is the frequency threshold. Those that do not meet the frequency threshold have been included not only for their relevance to the needs of our learners, but also for the ease with which an equivalent Hebrew chunk can be found.

(iii) **Focus on identifying**

> Read the text and find 8 chunks with modal verbs.
>
> #### What a surprise
>
> Maya, Tammy and Ben have stayed in the classroom for a chat during the break; their best friend Ruthie is going away for a year with her parents on their sabbatical leave.
>
> **Maya:** I would like to make a surprise party for Ruthie as she is leaving. We need to have it when all the class can come.
>
> **Ben:** Well, as we are nearly at the end of the year, we might as well wait until the summer holidays.
>
> **Maya:** O.K. How about the first Saturday in the summer holiday? Now where should we have it – in one of our houses or on the beach?
>
> **Ben:** Oh, I would rather have it on the beach
>
> **Tammy:** Yes, me too.
>
> **Maya:** If we're going to have it on the beach, we could do with some help from the parents. We'll **need to take the stuff down by car.**
>
> **Tammy:** Right! I'll volunteer my parents. Then we'll need music. Ben, would you mind bringing your guitar?
>
> **Ben:** Great idea! You know, I can't help thinking that Ruthie may not want a really big party. She's quite a shy person in crowds.
>
> **Maya:** Oh that can't be helped – I know she'll love it after the first shock. Everyone loves a beach party!!
>
> As luck would have it, just then Ruthie walked into the classroom! Her friends suddenly stopped their conversation.
>
> **Ruthie:** Hi guys! I'm so glad I've caught the three of you together. My parents have told me they want to throw a goodbye party for me at the end of the year – I wanted you to be the first to know!

(iv) **Provide lexical information: translate or paraphrase**

> Copy the modal chunks next to their meanings (which are in jumbled order)
>
> I prefer _____   I keep thinking _____
>
> we need _____   unfortunately or fortunately* _____
>
> I want _____   do you object? _____
>
> we can't avoid that* _____   this is a reason to (do something) _____

     * The equivalent Hebrew chunks are more helpful than the paraphrase

(v) **Link new knowledge to old**

> Here are three more chunks with *can't* and *couldn't* with their meanings:
>
> • I couldn't care less about … I really don't care
>
> • I can't stand ... I hate …
>
> • I can't be bothered with … I won't make the effort

(vi) **Reinforce …**

(I) Read the dialogues about the party; underline the modal chunks and their meanings.

1. **Ben:** Would you rather have pizza at the party or hamburgers?

   Ruthie: Oh, I prefer pizza. Everyone likes pizza.

2. **Tammy:** There'll be a terrible mess as there will be a lot of people

   Ruthie: That can't be helped – it's a class party.

   Tammy: Yes, we can't avoid a mess. Don't worry – we'll stay and clean up.

(II) Answer the questionnaire about parties (circle the one closest to your view!)

1. *What is your view of surprise parties?*

   (a) **I would much rather** know about my party.

   (b) **I would like** a surprise party.

   (c) **I can't** stand surprise parties.

2. *What kind of food is best for parties?*

   (a) **I would rather** have snacks than real food.

   (b) **I couldn't care less about** the food.

   (c) Everyone likes pizza so **you might as well** have that.

3. *Do you like playing games at parties?*

   (a) I **can't be bothered with** games; I prefer to dance.

   (b) I **can't stand games**; they're usually childish.

   (c) I **would rather not** play games; I'm a bit shy.

and move from receptive to productive skills: The second-hand cloze (Laufer & Osimo 1991)

Here is an email that Ruthie is sending to her cousin Dalia telling her about the party. Complete the gaps with the modal chunks you have learned.

Hi Dalia,

I am having a going-away party on 5th July and I (1) _____

to invite you. Bring your things to sleep over – we (2) _____

make a whole weekend of it. I'm a bit worried about the music. I

think we (3) _____ more disks, so (4) _____ bringing

some of your latest ones?

Bye for now, Ruthie

Summing up

I have proposed the criteria of grammatical irregularity and semantic opacity for establishing what counts as an idiomatic lexical chunk and for identifying them in texts. I have also briefly made a case for providing explicit instruction over relying on exposure. The strategies for promoting explicit instruction for single-word vocabulary acquisition are itemized and a sample unit demonstrates how these strategies can be applied to the teaching and learning of idiomatic lexical chunks.

The motivation for the methodology is the aim for raising awareness of our learners to this very prevalent phenomenon. More than other areas of language, awareness of idiomatic chunks is a crucial step in acquisition. There are thousands of idiomatic chunks in English; many are opaque in meaning, they have erratic variability and restrictions. We

cannot aim for near-native usage or accuracy as with grammar and we cannot efficiently supply service lists as for vocabulary. We can, however, aim for thorough knowledge of high priority items, and we can feature them sufficiently in the syllabi so that learners will develop awareness and notice that idiomatic chunks are indeed everywhere in the language they hear and need.

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TARGETING VOCABULARY ACQUISITION FOR JHS – INTRODUCING A LEXICAL SYLLABUS

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In the early 1990s' the *Lexical Approach* challenged the traditional view that language divides into grammar and vocabulary. Instead, it identified vocabulary as the basis of language, both for comprehension and production (Lewis, 1993). Lewis was not alone in his claim for the centrality of vocabulary in language acquisition. Researchers like Laufer (2003), Nation, (2001) and Schmitt, (2008), among many others, realized how crucial vocabulary is for the functioning of the four skills of the language: listening, speaking, reading and writing – much more than grammar. In fact, these researchers argue that the teaching of useful vocabulary should be considered a primary goal in language acquisition.

In addition, advances in information technology have facilitated the development of various linguistic corpora which include the use of a large, representative database of natural spoken and written texts, and the employment of computer-tools to quantitatively analyze this natural language (O'Keeffe et al., 2007). Sinclair was the first to propose the utilization of computational analysis for TEFL, and Willis (1990) pioneered the utility of frequency-based wordlists in the design of what was later known as the first *Lexical Syllabus*.

The strongest argument in favor of this syllabus focused on the centrality of the most frequent words in natural language (Willis, 1990). An observation of the frequency of these words in a large corpus of English revealed a picture where the first approximately 2,000 word-forms accounted for more than 80% of all the words in spoken and written texts, and each consecutive band of 2,000 words covered a progressively smaller proportion (Nation, 2001). This empiric categorization has made researchers, such as Nation (2001), Schmitt (2008), and Willis (1990), reach the conclusion that this group of 2,000 most frequently used words has an enormous power and should, therefore, comprise the most important vocabulary learning goal. They claim that these words deserve all kinds of attention so that they are well learned as quickly as possible. Though frequency cannot be the sole criterion in designing a syllabus, the idea of using corpora to specify which lexis to include in a syllabus clearly emerged as a result of this first lexical syllabus (Lewis, 1993).

In the context of teaching English as a foreign language in Israel, despite wide recognition of the value of lexis, in practice there is no clear instruction which lexis should be taught at each grade level. In 2001, the Ministry of Education published *The Israeli English Curriculum for All Grades*, which does not incorporate a lexical syllabus. Unlike its predecessor, this syllabus does not include a list of specific lexical items to be taught in every grade level. Vocabulary is not defined in it as a domain, but rather as a means of assessing students' progress in each of the four language domains outlined in it. Consequently, each teacher or school can decide which vocabulary and how much of it to teach in each grade level. In this case, teachers tend to rely on textbooks for their choice of vocabulary and on the activities suggested in them for its mastery. Although publications must be approved by the Ministry of Education, not all implement the insights on vocabulary presented in professional literature. Thus, the consequences of no lexical syllabus are evident in a lack of uniformity and emphasis on vocabulary which has, in turn, been marginalized in favor of a focus on grammatical structures (Willis, 1990).

In light of the research on the importance of vocabulary acquisition, a lexical syllabus is a crucial component of any foreign language curriculum. It itemizes *what* vocabulary is needed for a specified purpose in the form of decontextualized lists of words and patterns of the language, initially categorized by criterion of *utility* – namely *frequency* and *range*. These lists rely on evidence from computational linguistics and discourse analysis (O'Keeffe et al., 2007). Though a syllabus' primary goal is to define the content and sequence of a program, a lexical syllabus also encourages the use of communicative methodology to exemplify the target vocabulary, which also helps learners make productive generalizations about natural language, including its grammar (Willis, 1990).

As part of my M.Ed. studies in TEFL at Oranim College of Education, I compiled a lexical syllabus which was inspired by courses taken in the program especially with Dr. Elisheva Barkon who also supervised the process. This lexical syllabus is an experimental supplement for Israeli intermediate schools designed to complement the current Israeli English Curriculum (2001) which, until writing these lines, still does not include such a syllabus. The suggested syllabus is designed to help junior high school teachers facilitate vocabulary acquisition by setting goals for its acquisition and addressing methodological aspects enhancing its use.

Research advocates setting numerical goals for vocabulary acquisition only after analyzing students'

needs. To that end, vocabulary tests were administered to ninth grade students in A and B level classes at a typical school serving a middle-class population in the northern area. The tests were meant to assess vocabulary size and dimensions of knowledge- receptive knowledge and one aspect of productive knowledge. The results indicated that students in the A stream scored 80% on knowledge of the first 1,000 most frequent words but only 56% on the second 1,000 most frequent words. Students in the B stream scored 53% for the first 1,000 most frequent words and only 20% for the second 1,000 most frequent words. These results clearly highlighted the pressing need to focus on the minimum of the 2,000 most frequently used word families which professional literature describes as essential for all learners and, therefore, must be well learned as quickly as possible. These tests also confirmed the assertion that the vocabulary component of language instruction must take into consideration the importance of the productive aspects of the target vocabulary in addition to its size, and this is especially true for the first 2000 most commonly used words in the language. Even though it has been repeatedly demonstrated that the two correlate and that active vocabulary increases with vocabulary growth, productive aspects of vocabulary must be explicitly aimed at to enable fluency (Laufer & Paribakht, 1998; Nation, 2001).

As stated above, frequency cannot be the sole criterion in designing a syllabus. Although researchers like Koprowski (2005) and Nation (2001) amongst many others agree that *utility* is the most basic criterion for vocabulary selection for a course, they also call for a cautious and logical use of information provided by various corpora. Sometimes the boundary between high-and low-frequency words can be an arbitrary one (Nation, 2001). In many cases, a lexical item which is categorized into one of the first 2,000 high-frequency word family lists of a certain corpus can be located in the low-frequency list of another. Therefore, researchers point out other criteria that must be considered other than frequency and range when designing a lexical syllabus for a certain purpose.

There are a number of other criteria, presented below, to be taken into consideration when designing a lexical syllabus. Willis (1990) and Schmitt (2008) advocate the importance of the lexis particularly useful in classroom management, and the selection of vocabulary that students want to learn to motivate their learning. They also point out the importance of taking into account the students' environment and culture in selecting vocabulary for instruction. This takes expression in words pertaining to

the social, political and religious context of the specific country, which, while they do not appear on the first and the second frequency lists, must be considered to enable the students' functional and meaningful use of the language.

Lastly, teachers must take into account Laufer's (1990) finding that words differ in the level of difficulty involved in their learning. This difficulty can be determined both by *intralexical* features stemming from features in the words themselves (phonological, morphological and semantic) and *interlexical* features, namely the interaction between the new words and other words familiar to the learners in their native language or the foreign language. Nation (2001) maintains that the specialized vocabulary emerging from the application of all these criteria should be treated with the same importance as the high-frequency vocabulary.

Thus, in addition to frequency, three other criteria were used in compiling the suggested lexical syllabus: (1) usefulness for teaching English as a foreign language (2) relevance to the learners' world, and (3) *learning burden* – a term introduced in Nation (2001) – which refers to the amount of time and effort required to learn the various aspects of a lexical item, implying that knowing a word means much more than learning its meaning and sound. The underlying principle for the learning burden suggests that the more the learners know about the item, from diverse sources like their mother tongue, previous knowledge in the target language or any other language, the less the burden of learning.

The starting point in compiling the complementary lexical syllabus was the list of first- and second- thousand high-frequency words. The *West's General Service List* was adopted as a recommended linguistic reservoir, as the words in it assured the most reasonable coverage in any usage, both spoken and written (Nation, 2001; O'Keeffe et al., 2007; Schmitt, 2008). All inflections of verbs, adjectives and nouns were excluded from the lists. This decision is supported by the fact that learners in the JHS are assumed to have acquired some basic understanding of the inflectional system of the English language, especially in the case of the singular and plural forms of nouns and the existence of different verb forms. Function and content words that learners are expected to have mastered by the JHS stage were also excluded from the lists. In addition, irrelevant items for learners in the context of TEFL in Israeli schools were removed from the lists and replaced by others considered relevant according to the three other selection criteria listed above.

In line with the perspective that vocabulary growth is incremental in nature and that depth of vocabulary knowledge is as important as vocabulary size (Schmitt, 2008), the remaining items in the vocabulary lists were massively extended to provide such depth. Using both the *Oxford Student's Dictionary* and the *Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English*, different common chunks essential for basic communication and fluency were manually identified and added to most of the head words, incorporating all criteria identified in the literature as essential for designing a lexical syllabus. It should be noted that despite the advances computer software has made and the developments in corpus linguistics over the years, computers still do not recognize idioms or collocations. At present, computers can generate massive lists of recurring strings of words based on their frequency of occurrence which in many cases lack semantic or syntactic integrity (O'Keeffe et al., 2007). The lists of chunks that do display integrity can be compared to the manual lists as described below. When software improves its linguistic applications, this complementary lexical syllabus can be further changed and adapted.

The outcome is a syllabus comprised of two vocabulary lists for two consecutive stages in junior high school: the first stage estimated to end roughly by the middle of the eighth grade and the second, at the end of ninth grade. The syllabus is presented in American English as it is assumed to be more common in Israel; learners should, however, be informed that some words are spelled differently in British English. These words are often given in parentheses next to the American spelling to help develop this awareness. The basic unit of counting used in this lexical syllabus is the word family, with the exception of chunks that cannot be found in any other category. Headwords are alphabetized and bolded to enable effortless access, other parts of speech are underlined to ensure their recognition. Different senses of the same part of speech are distinguished by the use of lower case letters in brackets and short definitions are provided for further explanations. Collocational information is usually entered with all other parts of speech the item naturally combines while gearing towards the most common choice of collocations and expressions learners in the JHS level can cope with. In regard to collocations, it is important to note that due to time limitations, not all the collocational information for each of the lexical items can be explicitly taught. Yet, when aiming at developing the productive aspect of learners' knowledge, basic collocations are among the crucial factors, contributing to this development. The complete syllabus appears on a disc as this format was considered most appropriate in light of the length of the lists and the wish to encourage adaptability and changes required by its users.

The methodological aspects proposed for the lexical syllabus are designed to facilitate the productive utilization of the selected vocabulary. They highlight the importance of teaching vocabulary not only for passive use in listening and reading, but also for active use in speaking and writing. The focus on this dimension relies on both research and the needs analysis conducted prior to the planning of this syllabus which indicate that the transition between the two cannot be taken for granted and that specific methodology should be applied to promote productive language usage.

Multi-word lexical items or "chunks," are recognized in the literature on corpus linguistics and by proponents of the *Lexical Approach* as a key factor contributing to successful language acquisition, especially its productive aspects. Corpus linguistics provides the statistical basis for the claim of chunk density in both oral and written language, while the *Lexical Approach* advocates describe the important contribution of chunks to the production of language, maintaining that this should lead to a paradigm shift in the way language instruction is perceived. Both approaches underscore the importance of deliberate instruction of functional, everyday lexical phrases, especially collocations and expressions, for the development of language use at any level (Koprowski, 2005, Nation 2001, Schmitt, 2008).

The importance of analyzing students' needs before applying any lexical syllabus strongly emerges from the process of the planning and designing of this syllabus. The syllabus was designed based on the needs of students in a specific school, and, therefore, will require many revisions when adapted to other schools. Furthermore, in the future, an evaluation, another most important component of any curriculum, must be carried out to assess the efficacy of the experimental lexical syllabus. This is particularly important in light of the fact that this syllabus focuses on phrasal vocabulary and not only on isolated words as has been the case so far. Teachers are strongly encouraged to contribute their insightful comments and suggestions.

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RESEARCH

COLLOCATION USE IN WRITING AMONG ISRAELI LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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There is little dispute that mastery of multi-word units is currently viewed as a necessary component of L2 lexical competence. Knowledge of phraseology makes learners come across as proficient and fluent (Boers et al, 2006), and distinguishes advanced learners from intermediate ones (Thornbury, 2002). Conversely, lack of this knowledge may impede the comprehensibility of learners' expression. Hill observes that learners often produce long winded and error ridden utterances because "they don't know the four or five most important collocations of a key word that is central to what they are writing about (1999: 5)."

The study described here (for the entire study see Waldman, 2009) investigates the use of collocations by Israeli EFL learners of three proficiency levels in free written production. Collocations do not have one simple and precise definition. Researchers seem to include under the term 'collocations' most multi-word units, including idioms, e.g. *kick the bucket*, fixed expressions, e.g. *to and fro*, *leap year* (Nation, 2001), and even functional expressions, e.g. *excuse me*, and proverbs e.g. *let's make hay while the sun shines* (Boers et a., 2006). In my study, I adopt the approach of earlier phraseologists e.g. Cowie (1981), so that I consider multi-word units such as *throw a disk*, *pay money* to be free combinations (words are replaceable following grammar rules), *throw a party*, *pay attention* to be collocations (restricted co-occurrence and semantic transparency), *throw someone's weight around*, *pay lip service* to be idioms (whose meaning is often opaque).

The study

Three factors motivated the study reported below: the belief in the importance of multi-word units in general and collocations in particular; the realization that collocations present a difficulty to language learners, including advanced learners; the conviction that learner language corpora can provide an invaluable source of data on language performance. Hence, the study is an analysis of collocations on the basis of a learner corpus. In this study, I investigated three groups of learners at three proficiency levels, and compared each group's performance to each other in order to trace any possible changes in group performance.

Research questions

The specific research questions were as follows:

1. Is there a relationship between accuracy in learners' production of verb-noun collocations and their level of language proficiency?

To answer this question, the following relationships were explored:

a. between the number of well-formed verb-noun collocations and the learners' level of language proficiency

b. between the number of deviant verb-noun

collocations and the learners' level of language proficiency

2. What proportion of collocation errors are due to L1 influence at each level of proficiency?

Corpus used in the study

I collected the data for the learner corpus from learners in educational institutions all over Israel. The corpus consists of 759 argumentative and descriptive essays that were produced as part of the learners' course work at school, college and university. Care was taken to collect essays written only by speakers of Hebrew or Arabic as L1.The corpus contains one essay per learner.

I divided the corpus according to proficiency groups and called the level of essays written by 9th and 10th graders 'basic', the level of 11th and 12th graders 'intermediate', and the level of the college and university students 'advanced'. The 'basic' sub corpus contains 200 essays, 41,621 words. The 'intermediate' sub corpus is compiled from essays written by 252 learners and comprises 47,117 words. The 'advanced' sub corpus comprises essays written by 307 learners and contains 202,311 words. The average length of the essays varies in the sub corpora: in the 'basic' corpus it is 210 words, in the 'intermediate' it is 187 words and in the 'advanced' it is 504 words. The size of the corpus is small when compared to native speaker corpora since it consists of 291,049 words. However, it is large when compared to other learner corpora. For example the GeCLE (German Corpus of Learner English), which Nesselhauf (2005) used in her study of collocation production by German learners of English, comprised 154,191 words.

Procedure

I began the procedure by extracting nouns from each of the three learner sub corpora using a baseline of 220 high frequency nouns retrieved from analysis of a native speaker corpus compiled from essays of NS of comparable age (see Laufer and Waldman, 2011). Some of the nouns are *child, question, knowledge, school, life, baby, aim, opinion, end, idea, law, guilt, place, television*. I analyzed the entire list with the Vocabulary Profile available at www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/staff/paul-nation/nation.aspx and at www.lextutor.ca. Most of the nouns (201) belonged to the first 2000 most frequent words (e.g. society, money), 10 to the third thousand (e.g. benefit, damage), 4 to the fourth (e.g. access, welfare, approach), and 1 to the fifth. Four words appeared in lower frequency lists (e.g. Sabbath). The high frequency meant that I could expect the learners to know not only the meaning of these words, but also their usage, including their collocations. The following

step in the procedure was to retrieve the collocations in which these frequent nouns appeared in each of the learner sub corpora.

I created concordances for each of these nouns so that the verb-noun combination in which they occurred could be identified and extracted. Subsequently, the extracted verb-noun combinations were checked in two dictionaries: the Benson, Benson, and Ilson Dictionary of English Word Combinations (1997), and Hill and Morgan's Language Teaching Publications Dictionary of Selected Collocations (1997). If the verb-noun combination was listed as a collocation in either one of them, it was noted as a collocation. Advanced learners produced altogether 852 collocations involving 13,805 noun tokens, intermediate learners produced 162 collocations using 3,057 noun tokens, and the basic learners – 68 collocations with 553 noun tokens.

An additional feature of the analysis of the learner corpus was the identification of erroneous collocations. A verb-noun combination was defined as an incorrect collocation when the intended combination (according to the context of the essay in question), should have been a collocation, and one of its components, usually the verb, was judged to be incorrect by a native speaker, and was not found in the BNC and the dictionaries of collocations. Here are some examples of deviant collocations found in the learner corpus: get the aim, inflict arguments, bring babies to the world, use a chance, learn children, do a decision, solve the disease. As one of my objectives was to investigate L1-Hebrew influence on collocations, all the deviations were examined for interlingual influence reflected mainly in word-for- word translation.

Results

Table 1 displays the following data for each sub corpus, (relative frequencies per 40,000 words are shown in brackets): the number of well-formed collocations, the number of deviant (erroneous) collocations, and the percentage of deviant collocations and the number of all 'collocation attempts' (correct + deviant collocations). Table 1 also shows the number and percentages of errors exhibiting potential influence from Hebrew. It can be seen that the learners at the three levels of proficiency produced a fairly high number of deviant collocations, which accounted for about a third of all the collocations they attempted to produce.

Table 1: Well-formed and deviant collocations in the Israeli learner sub corpora

	Learner Advanced	Learner Intermediate	Learner Basic
Well-formed collocations	852 [169] 6.2%	162 [137] 5.3%	68 [65] 4.4%
Deviant collocations	400 [79] 31.9%	82 [70] 33.6%	34 [33] 33.3%
Deviations exhibiting potential Hebrew influence	258 [51] 64.5%	52 [44] 63%	15 [14.4] 44%
Total collocations	1,252 [248]	244 [207]	102 [98]

Advanced learners produced 400 deviant and 852 correct collocations, intermediate – 82 deviant and 162 correct, basic – 34 deviant and 68 correct. An additional comparison of number of errors to the number of all the words in each of the compared sub corpora revealed a relationship between learner proficiency and the number of deviant collocations ($x^2 = 26.27$, p < 0.0001, Cramer's V=0.01). These results show that the advanced learners and the intermediate learners produced significantly more deviant collocations than the basic learners. Hence, not only is there no decrease in the number of errors with a growth in proficiency, but there is an inverse relationship between proficiency and correctness of collocations.

Research question 2 addressed the issue of L1 based errors in the deviant collocations of learners. I compared the three proficiency groups on the number of deviant collocations that appeared to be affected by Hebrew influence by relating them to the number of all deviant collocations produced in the three learner sub corpora (The raw scores of these errors were, in the advanced sub-corpus 258, in the intermediate 52, in the basic 15). No significant relationship was found between learner proficiency and the number of collocations potentially reflecting L1 influence $x^2 = 2.12$, p = 0.35).

Discussion

The results of the study are based on an analysis of a relatively large corpus of Israeli learner English that provided data for comparison of learners at three levels of language proficiency. My results showed a significant growth in the occurrence of verb-noun collocations only in the advanced learner sub corpus when compared to the sub corpora of the basic and intermediate levels. This suggests that the development of collocation use is slow and uneven. It was also found that learners at the three proficiency levels produced a fairly high number of deviant collocations, about a third of all the collocations they attempted to produce. Here, my results are similar to the results of other studies, e.g. Nesselhauf (2005). However, if I consider the actual number of errors in the sub corpora in relation to all the words produced, the advanced learners and the intermediate learners produce significantly more deviant collocations than the basic learners. The two groups attempt to use more collocations than the basic learners, probably due to a higher degree of confidence, but with flawed success. Since a third of the attempts results in error, this means that learners who attempt to produce more collocations are likely to err more often. To put it differently, not only is there no decrease in the number of errors with a growth in proficiency, but as proficiency increases, the frequency of errors increases. L1 influence appears in about half of the erroneous collocations at all levels of proficiency, and does not decrease with time.

This study shows that collocation use constitutes a problem even for advanced learners. I attribute this problem to the inherent nature of collocations, and the nature of some teaching practices that stress input-based learning. Collocations are usually semantically transparent, e.g. *make a decision, send a message, offer help, submit an application, hand in a paper*, etc., since they are constructed from frequent individual words. Therefore, when encountered in the input, they may not be noticed by learners and teachers as problematic. Similarly, production is often difficult since "equivalent" collocations in L1 may often include at least one word that is different from L2. For example, English *break the law* is *l'aavor al ha-chok* '*pass the law*' in Hebrew, *give examples* is *lehavi dugmaot 'bring examples'*.

My results showed that collocations are problematic even for advanced learners, most of whom in the present study have been taught by communicative techniques. I suggest that in order to raise learners' awareness of collocations and the difficulties they present, communicative, task-based teaching should be supplemented by form-focused instruction involving pre-planned activities which single out the target items and has learners practice them out of an authentic, communicative context. These activities could follow two principles: emphasis on production, and cross-linguistic comparison. The first principle is motivated by the nature of collocations. Many of them are transparent in meaning, and therefore easily understood. Teaching efforts should concentrate on eliciting the collocations in exercises requiring matching the appropriate verbs or adjectives to nouns, selecting the missing part of a collocation from semantically

similar options, completing parts of collocations without given options. The second principle is rooted in the influence that L1 has on the learners' collocations and the persistence of L1-based errors at advanced levels of learning, as shown by my results. Empirical evidence is available that shows that a brief explanation of L1-L2 differences in specific collocations and translation practice of these collocations proves more effective than other teaching methods that ignore the cross-linguistic differences (Laufer & Girsai, 2008). I hope that further research will explore the development of collocations over an extended period of time in additional learner populations, and will suggest instructional practices that can improve collocation learning.

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THE COMPANY WORDS KEEP

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The aim of this paper is to promote a more lexical approach in an English language class. Most current coursebooks do not pay enough attention to learning English through lexical chunks, despite the fact that data from Corpus Linguistics supports a more lexical approach. We present five practical activities which are instantly usable in the classroom and establish the importance of chunks in the learners' strategies for learning.

Introduction

Thinking about language chunks as the main building blocks of language is a relatively new way of thinking about language acquisition and language learning. This approach puts lexis before grammar, and lexical phrases (Nattinger, 1992) or lexical chunks (Lewis, 1993, 1997) are seen as the crucial building blocks of the language which 'prime' certain grammar (Hoey, 2005). Insights into how we learn our mother tongue confirm that we learn it through such chunks which get gradually stored in our heads and retrieved when needed. First come single words, then come so called 'holophrases' (single words that have the function of a sentence), next the stored chunks get longer and longer but there is a limit. We know that the chunks cannot usually be longer than 7 elements (Miller, 1956, pp. 243–352). These chunks are then used to string utterances together, and grammar is wound around them. What is important is to recognize that when we use mother tongue we notice the company words keep, then store and retrieve whole chunks. This helps in effective reading, writing and speaking. ELT can benefit greatly from adopting a more lexical approach. In our new book "The Company Words Keep" (Davis & Kryszewska, 2012) we have designed activities which promote more focus on chunking, learner training towards storing chunks and also teacher training to help teachers modify their way of using the coursebook and other materials.

Start with one word

The first step may be showing the learners how important a single word is. Here is a sample activity which helps the learners become aware of that.

1. Get the learners to prepare a dialogue in pairs, to be read out to whole class. Each utterance should have one word and one word only. This is an example of student text:

   - *I …*
   - *No.*
   - *Mm.*
   - *No*
   - *Please.*
   - *Oh.*
   - *Yes?*
   - *Well.*
   - *Thanks.*

2. When they are ready, get them to read their dialogues out loud.

   This activity looks artificial but, by restricting the learner to single-word utterances, we get a more natural result – which illustrates that lexis is often used at the expense of grammar when speaking. The reading aloud forces learners' awareness of the importance of intonation in conveying meaning.

   Instead of presenting the dialogues in front of the class, the learners can circulate their dialogues and read them in pairs. In this way, they get more practice in intonation.

   Single word dialogues often feature in modern literature and can be used in class to get learners used to 'single word chunks'. This example is from *After Liverpool* by James Saunders:

   - *Hey!*
   - *Hm?*
   - *Catch!*
   - *Thanks.*
   - *Eat!*
   - *Catch.*
   - *Thanks.*
   - *Eat.*
   - *Catch.*

Expanding chunks

Then we can move onto phrases which are not full sentences and contain very little grammar.

Prepare a set of different pictures or photos (any sort will do), one per pair of learners, and approximately ten slips of paper per learner.

1. Spread out the pictures or photos on tables. One per pair. Give each learner a set of ten blank slips.

   • They work in pairs, mingle and look for English words for things that appear in the pictures. For example: *red, woman, big*.

- They write the words on separate slips of paper and leave them next to the picture, face up.

- They then move on to another picture.

2. Make sure they write single words at this stage, not phrases or sentences.

3. Stop when the learners have used up most of their slips.

4. In pairs, the learners go from picture to picture and identify any words written on the slips that they don't know. They can ask the teacher or their classmates.

5. Stop the activity when you see they have seen most of the pictures and worked with most of words on the slips.

6. Now ask the pairs of learners to take pens and move from picture to picture. This time, they add one word to the words on the slips – *red hair, young woman, big car*. They write their words on the slips. Make sure the word order is correct.

7. Stop the activity when most of the words have been made into two-word chunks.

8. Tell the learners to keep moving around. This time, they add a third word where it is possible. You will need to monitor and check, for example, *big red car* rather than *red, big car*.

9. Discuss the various chunks with the whole class.

10. If possible, display the pictures, along with the chunks, on the wall or some other display area for further reference. The learners are usually interested to see what the others have written.

This activity can be followed up by a writing or speaking activity in which the learners describe the pictures using the chunks.

Learning and storing chunks

Learners have the habit of writing down mainly single words in their exercise books. They tend to think that they will make progress if they learn a lot of single words. Yet they need to realise that they also need to store a variety of new chunks some of which are made up of words they already know. This activity illustrates the issue.

You need a set of various dictionaries, some old-fashioned and some corpus-based.

1. Choose a very simple English word, ideally one that is a cognate in the learners' L1. For example: *sport*. Write the word in the middle of the board.

2. Ask the learners to work in threes and to come up with as many meanings and chunks with the word that they know.

3. Pool the findings and write them on the board. As far as possible, similar ones should be grouped together.

4. Give out the dictionaries, ask the learners to research the word and add their new findings to those already written up.

5. Discuss with the learners what they have discovered about the word *sport*, and how a word only becomes meaningful in a chunk.

6. Assuming the class is using a variety of different types of dictionary, ask them which ones deal with word partnerships and chunks best.

This sample text below shows the end product when learners worked with the word 'sport' and it contains the words the learners have pooled and added what they have found in the dictionaries:

to make sport of (joke about)   *It's sporting of you*
                                                        (generous)

                                 It's a sport
                                 (gamble)

to sport shoulder length hair

Hello sport!

(mate)   *sportsmanship*
(matey)

                                                He is a good sport
                                                        spoilsport

SUV

                                 Sport   *sport supplement*

                                 sports car

sportive

                                 a sporting chance
                                 (how likely)

sporting occasion
sporting family
sporting hero

                                 sports drink   *sportscast*
                                                                sportscasters

sports jacket

                                 sporty

                                 Sporty Spice   *sports centre*

Revising coursebook chunks

Learners need to have ample opportunities to practise the chunks they have encountered. They need to revise and recycle chunks they have observed in their coursebook and other materials. The next activity focuses on recycling and helps learners to retrieve chunks from memory and work on accuracy in the production of chunks. It encourages them to experiment, activating and extending single words, expanding them into meaningful chunks.

Prepare a grid for a simple board game. Write key words in each box, make enough copies for groups of three or four learners, and bring enough dice to class.

1. Tell the learners they are going to play a board game to practise some of the vocabulary from the coursebook. Everyone needs to find their own counter (a coin or a ring will do).

2. Divide the learners into groups of three or four, distribute the boards and dice and explain the game:
   • They throw the dice.
   • As they move onto a square, the learners must say a chunk with this word.
   • The rest of their group decide if they think the chunk is correct.
   • If it is not correct, the learner has to go back three spaces.
   • If a group cannot decide whether a chunk is OK, they can call you in to check.

3. The winner is the person who finishes first.

Using on-line resources

Using the Internet and on-line resources is very useful in learner training and researching chunks. This activity is one with which you might start looking at lexical chunking using ICT. The learners are introduced to Google as a kind of giant corpus which they can access easily, getting a picture of English as a language used by native speakers from various countries as well as non natives. They work with Google frequency in a fun, competitive way, activating the chunks they already know.

You need a class with internet access for each pair of learners.

1. Write the chunk *my best friend* on the board and ask the learners to predict how many times it appears in Google.

2. Google the chunk 'my best friend'.

3. Show the learners where the information comes up: in the upper right-hand corner: 'Results 1–10 of about 140,000,000 results (0.23 seconds) / January 2012'

4. Divide the class into pairs and tell them they are going to play a game.
   • Each learner says a chunk in English.
   • They write the chunks down on a piece of paper.
   • The learners google the chunks.
   • They see whose chunk appears more often.
   • The learner whose chunk is more frequent scores a point.

5. The learners play six rounds, then the winners go to quarter finals, etc.

6. Finally, you announce the winner: *Chunk Champion of the Month*.

Instead of coming up with chunks on their own, the learners can look through their coursebooks or other texts they have used in class. If they like the activity, you can repeat the contest on a regular basis.

Conclusion

Since most coursebooks do not really promote a lexical approach, apart from occasional work on collocations or idiom, it is vital we supplement our classes with lexical activities. "The Company Words Keep" is such a source of ideas and inspiration. You may also want to look up many contributions to Humanising Language Teaching on-line magazine (Davis, 2003, Kryszewska, 2003, 2003) at www.hltmag.co.uk especially in the *Corpora ideas* section.

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SLOT-FILLER RELAY RACE

Ken Lackman (*klackman@kenlackman.com*)

This is a great activity to get students to see the generative value of specific semi-fixed expressions and just generally to reinforce the importance of semi-fixed expressions in terms of developing language proficiency. The students work together with a group of expressions to come up with as many variations of them as they can within a set time. One of the best aspects of this activity is that the learners produce the slot-fillers completely on their own without input from the teacher or any other resource. This task should emphasize to students the flexibility of semi-fixed expressions as well as give them the confidence to experiment more with them in the future.

The activity is meant to be used with a text and requires that the students first pick out a number of semi-fixed expressions from that text. Once they have done that, elicit the expressions and list them on a large sheet of paper or on the very top of the board (you'll need most of the board later). Somewhere between six and ten expressions should suffice. Then number each expression and underline the parts of each one that could be varied. You could get the students to help you identify these slot-fillers. Then divide the class into two teams and have each team look at the list of expressions and discuss which ones they feel they could vary the most, i.e., provide the most slot-fillers for. You could even ask them to rank them all in descending order. Then you are ready to start the competition.

Get one of the teams to choose an expression and have them stand in a line in front of the board. Then write their expression across the board, underline the part that is to be changed and draw a line to form a column beneath it. In some cases, there will be two parts to be changed and you will need two columns (see example below). You should also make any adjustments to allow for singular or plural slot-fillers (see below). Then tell students that they will be given 90 seconds or two minutes (for lower levels) to list as many different slot-fillers in the column(s) as they can and it will be done as a relay race. When you give the signal to begin, the first member of the team takes the marker, goes up to the board, fills in a slot-filler, hands the marker to the next student and goes to the back of the line. The next student does the same. Note that when there are two slots, each student has to fill in both. And let them know that if their teammate at the front is having problems thinking of something, they can help them by shouting out possible answers.

When time is up, stop the students, eliminate incorrect or repeated slot-fillers, make any spelling or grammar corrections, and award a point for each correct slot-filler. Then the other team takes their turn. Continue having teams alternate turns until each has worked with an equal number of expressions and then total the scores to determine a winner. For an example of how the board might look, below are some sample slot-fillers that would fit the semi-fixed expression from the first sentence of this paragraph.

This These	activity mouse pens chair socks headphones printer map	is (are) meant to be used with	a text a laptop a whiteboard a desk hiking boots an iPhone a computer a guidebook

One other very important aspect of this activity is that in getting students to choose which expressions they think they can vary the most, it is training them for autonomous learning. It will hopefully encourage them to analyze the generative value of semi-fixed expressions whenever they come across them. And you should emphasize to them that this practice will not only help them choose useful expressions, but the cognitive processing that goes into the analysis will help them remember the expressions. To follow up this activity, try giving them homework consisting of noticing a certain number of semi-fixed expressions, identifying the variable parts and then ranking the expressions in terms of most generative value.

Ken Lackman spent many years in Prague and Warsaw teaching and developing materials before returning to his native Canada in 2003. After spending five years as Director of Studies at EF Toronto, he left to pursue a career as a freelance teacher trainer and writer. He has had several articles published in English Teaching Professional and is a frequent presenter at conferences in Canada as well as the IATEFL conference in the UK.

RAISING AWARENESS OF COLLOCATION IN ELT

Simon Mumford (*simon.mumford @ieu.edu.tr*)

The way that words work together is an essential feature of language, and therefore it is important that language learners start to think in chunks rather than single words as early as possible in the learning process. The following activities are designed to make learners think about collocation or 'chunks', and the way particular words combine to create meaning.

Collocation box

paper	pencil	in
hat	hard	fall
coat	winter	snow

Each pair of adjacent words forms a collocation. Different types of collocation are represented: noun + noun (eg *pencil and paper*), adjective + noun (eg *hard fall*), noun + noun (*winter coat*), verb + adverbial particle (*to pencil in = to make an arrangement that may be changed later*). Pairs of nouns (eg *hat and coat*) are the easiest to understand. Adjectives or nouns modifying a noun are more difficult, because they often have a specific meaning, eg *a hard hat* is a type of protective headwear, *a paper hat* is a hat make of folded paper, usually by children, *snow fall* describes the amount of snow on the ground. The verb + preposition combinations are the most difficult, as they have often idiomatic meanings, eg *fall in (with someone or something) = agree to the course of action decided by another person or plan*. After these explanations, give the students another box, with exercise, as below.

around	work	great
switch	light	meal
off	rain	cold

Identify the following (answers in brackets)
• *a small lunch (light meal)*
• *to press a button on a machine (switch off)*
• *change the position of two things (switch around)*
• *eg a picnic (cold meal)*
• *a device to turn a lamp on (light switch)*
• *cancelled because of the weather (rained off)*
• *to change your plans due to a problem (work around something)*
• *praise for achievement (great work!)*
• *easy tasks, eg dusting (light work)*
praise for cooking (great meal!)

• *bad weather (rainy and cold)*
• *bad weather that is not a serious problem (light rain)*

Page-break collocations

It is possible to predict the next word when you turn the page of a book because a unit of meaning, i.e. collocation, can coincide with the end of one page and the beginning of the next. Guessing the first word of the next page can be a good activity for more advanced learners. The following examples are all from the 'The Grapes of Wrath' by John Steinbeck. The backslash (/) represents the page break.

• *'And maybe twenty thousand / people'*
• *'Make out like he's / dead'*
• *'You can't stay / here.'*
• *Ma opened the oven and / took out*
• *The children walked away and left the scraped kettle on the / ground.*
• *Texas and Oklahoma, Kansas and Arkansas, / New Mexico*
• *A walnut tree whose branches spread halfway across the / road*
• *The string band took a reel tune and played / loudly*
• *Pa looked at the western ills. Big grey / clouds*

For lower level learners, use a graded reader at the appropriate level, or make your own page-break sentences on slips of paper with the last word on the back of the slip, for example:

• *Please can you shut the / door.*
• *Could you tell me the / time?*
• *I want to be rich and / famous.*
• *Could I have a cup of / coffee?*
• *I come from a big / family*
• *Can you give me your email / address*
• *Please do not walk on the / grass*
• *I have been working all day, I am tired and / hungry.*

Pass the strips around the class and let students guess before turning over. Then reverse the process, i.e. see if they can remember the sentence by looking at the last word. Then ask them to identify the collocations, *eg come from* and *big* both collocate with *family*.

New abbreviations

Personal adverts are creating new abbreviations for chunks, ie two or more words which combine to create a phrase. These are common in lonely hearts ads, eg

• **ND** – Non Drinker
• OHAC – Own house and car

• **TLC** – Tender loving care

• **NS** – Non smoker

• **YO** – Years old

• **OFAC** – Own flat and car

• **WLTM** – Would like to meet

• **GSOH** – Good sense of humour

Here are some abbreviations of my own invention. Students match the new abbreviations in the box with their meaning (answer:1 g, 2 b, 3 c, 4 i, 5 a, 6 e, 7 d, 8 f, 9 h). Then, they use them to fill in the blanks in the Lonely Hearts ad below (answers given in bold).

New abbreviations		
1 HBW	2 NAP	3 HGAN
4 HEO	5ATW	6 WayWaf
7 DNL	8 REX	9 FALT

Meanings
a. at the weekend, b. not a problem, c. ha / ve / s got a new...,
d. do/es not like, e. What are you waiting for?,
f. really excellent,   g. ha/ve/s been waiting, h. for a long time,
i. had enough of

__HEO__ loneliness! I __HBW__ for the right person __FALT__ . 30 YO Male, NS. __HGAN__ car. __DNL__ loud music, dogs or sport, loves food, __REX__ cook, WLTM Female with similar interests for days out __ATW__ . London area prefered but distance __NAP__ . If this is you, **WayWAf** ?

Collocations in authentic texts

At more advance levels, different types of collocations can be highlighted in a reading text. In the three versions of the same text below, collocations are coded with different fonts as follows: verb + noun / noun + verb; **adjective / noun + noun;** preposition + noun.

George Osborne gives cautious welcome to rise out of recession

George Osborne was given (much needed but probably temporary) respite as the UK economy raced out of recession, growing 1 % in the three months to September, the fastest rate for five years. But the majority of the growth was due to one-off factors, leaving the chancellor to face business and political calls to do more to stimulate growth in the autumn statement in six weeks' time, or risk the economy slipping into recession for a third time in 2013.

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Source: http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/oct/25/george-osborne-recession

As can be seen, the text consists of chains of chunks which overlap to create a highly integrated and formulaic text. When you add other chunks, such as names (*George Osborne*) and adverb + adjective chunks (*much needed*), there very few words that are not deeply integrated.

This highlighting method can be used for a number of activities. For example,

• students look at the highlighted text then try to underline one type of collocation on an unmarked version of the same text from memory

• in pairs, one student reads 3 or 4 consecutive words aloud and, without looking at the text the other says whether it is a chunk or not. For example, *a third time* is a chunk, but ***needed but probably*** is not

• in pairs, one reads a collocation, the other says what type it is students

• highlight text in other paragraphs in the same way

Mind-reading dictation

Give a dictation (see text below), but tell students that some of the words will not be read aloud, instead they will have to 'read' your mind. Read the text slowly, but when you come to the words brackets, instead of reading, close your eyes and pretend to concentrate hard, and ask students to visualise the word.

I was born (in) England. When I was 10 years (old) my family moved to Italy. We lived there for 9 (years). Then we moved back to (England). I can still speak fluent (Italian), and I often visit Italy during the (holidays). Sometimes I miss Italian (food), especially real Italian spaghetti. Last year, I spent two (weeks) in Rome, and I met some of my old school (friends). I was really sad when I had to (leave). I am looking forward to my next (visit) in August. I think that I will return to live in Italy again one (day).

When you have finished, ask students to compare answers and then pretend to be amazed at their telepathic powers. Finally, discuss the reasons why they were able to find the unspoken words, i.e. because they form strong collocations with the surrounding words. This light-hearted activity makes a serious point: often we can finish other people's sentences for them, or understand them even if they do not finish the sentence because our understanding of collocation allow us to predict words.

Chunks in different languages

Collocation means different things in different languages. For example, according to Google Translate, *How are you?* is expressed in five words in Afrikaans, four in Filipino, three in Irish and Latvian, and only two in many languages, including Greek, Spanish, Italian, Hungarian, Basque and Swahili. However, in Turkish, which is an agglutinative language, it is only one word. This means that the connection between 'units of meaning' in English may be less explicit than in languages like Turkish, and learners from these backgrounds may need help in recognising that separate words are part of the same unit of meaning. One possibility is to write English text in a way that reflects the word structure of the L1, as in the following story for Turkish learners.

One day, Iwaswalking along theroad, when Isaw acat. itwasbeautiful. Itwas aPersian cat and ithad wonderful soft fur. Isaid 'hello, mydearlittlecat'. 'Hello', itreplied. Iwas shocked! Istood ontheroad side for afew seconds. 'What didyousay?' Iasked. 'Areyoudeaf?' itsaid. 'Not deaf, but abit mad', Ithink'. After that, Iwent tomyfriend's house, and Itold him mystory, but hedidnotbelieve me!

This may help elementary learners understand how English words relate to each other.

Guessing nouns from their adjective collocations

In a collocation dictionary (eg Macmillan Collocation Dictionary), find a noun that your students will be familiar with. Read out a list of collocations, from the most difficult to the easier ones, until one student is able to guess the noun they collocate with. For example:

Hair: windswept, matted, unkempt, messy, cropped, shiny, ginger, shoulder-length, straight, curly, dark, blonde

Ask the class how many collocations they think they need to hear before they can guess the next word. If your class are competitive, ask individual students to bid for the lowest number. Alternatively, divide the class into two teams. The team who bids lowest gets the chance to guess, but they cannot find the word after the number of collocations bid, the other team get the chance. Here are some more nouns with collocations in order of difficulty.

• *Conversation: meaningful, informal, lively, casual, face-to-face, telephone, private, brief, long*

• *List: chronological, impressive, endless, detailed, huge, full, alphabetical, short, long*

• *Manager: commercial, production, retail, effective, successful, experienced, middle, assistant, top, good, sales,bank*

• *Friend: lifelong, faithful, canine, long-lost , childhood, school, college, dear, close, new, best*

A metaphor for collocation

The mathematical device known as pair of compasses (sometimes called dividers) can be a metaphor for collocation. The two parts are connected at the top, but the two arms are separate. The distance between the two arms can vary, and this decides the size of a circle drawn. Similarly, the words in a collocation are connected by meaning, but may be different distances apart. The words can be adjacent, eg *He spends a lot of time* <u>*sending*</u> *emails*, or distant, eg <u>*Emails*</u> *complaining in strong terms about the poor service were* <u>*sent*</u> *to the manager*. Students can be asked to search texts for collocations that are separated by other words, and compete to find the collocations that are furthest apart.

Conclusion

Collocation is an important concept at all levels of language learning, whether in simple texts about personal topics or academic reading texts, and in all four skills. It also has implications for grammar because of the way certain words and structures combine, for example, the verb *wait* often coincides with Present Perfect Continuous to emphasize duration. It is also interesting to compare languages; phrases with prepositions, eg *at the weekend* are strong collocations, and these concepts are expressed as a single word in some languages. Students will also need to be aware that collocations are groups of words unified by meaning, but that these are not necessarily consecutive words in texts.

An awareness of collocation can also help teachers produce new and motivating activities, based on the language as it is actually used, and thus help to bring about a fuller understanding of English, and languages in general.

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☙ **It's a date** ☙

ETAI Winter Conference

Sunday December 1st, 2013

at Makif AMIT, Beer Sheva

Theme: "The Why and How of Enticing Them to Write"

Please submit form by November 3rd, 2013

See you there!

TEACHING WITH CONCORDANCING TOOLS

Rene Wahl (*wahlschool@gmail.com*)

One of the biggest challenges to EFL teachers is to help our pupils expand and enrich their vocabulary. Over the 30 years that I have been teaching at high school and university level, I have been looking for effective, efficient and creative ways to meet this challenge.

To my mind, the burning questions are where to start and how to proceed along a continuum that starts with survival vocabulary and continues to a rich variety of usage. When we start teaching vocabulary, at the lowest grade levels, we use cognates (words that are similar in English and Hebrew: banana- בננה,

radio- רדיו. These words are known to our youngsters and give them a certain level of comfort and self-confidence in the new experience of learning another language. The next stage is to teach words for classes of everyday items such as colors, numbers, food, animals, family, etc. The methodology is mostly listening and speaking.

At the next stage, children are taught the alphabet, phonics and decoding and we teach them to recognize and / or decode many of the words that they have already learned orally. At this stage, phonetic decoding seems to take preference over vocabulary acquisition. What I mean is that when teaching the short 'a' sound, the words used might be, "The fat cat sat on the mat." These words are important for teaching the 'a' sound, but how important is it for the pupils to learn the meaning of 'fat' or 'mat'? If our pupils get "stuck" at this stage, the result will often be 8th graders who can "read" a text beautifully, but who have little or no idea what that text means. I have taught 9th graders who don't know the meaning of 'with'.

There is an excellent tool to help us make sure that our pupils are acquiring the basic vocabulary that they need. Lists of word frequencies can be downloaded from the Internet. Here are some links to follow, or simply Google "word frequency lists":

http://havefunteaching.com/worksheets/english-worksheets/high-frequency-words-worksheets or try this shortened link http://tinyurl.com/q2ebe4h

www.logicofenglish.com/resources/spelling-lists/high-frequency-word-lists

www.esltrail.com/2008/08/sight-words-vocabulary-list.html

These lists give the most frequently used 200, 500, 1000, 2000 etc. words in the English language listed according to frequency. Most of these lists start with 'a', 'the', 'and' and such. In any given text, the first 250 most frequently used words will make up 50-60% of that text. (See the marked up text below taken from an old Module F exam) My conclusion is that we should make sure our pupils learn these words. I gave my weak ninth grade pupils a list of the 250 most frequent words and asked them just to tick off the words they were sure they knew. I was shocked at the gaps! Since then, I actively teach these words and include words from the lists in every quiz and test.

Developing depth of vocabulary knowledge

Once we get up to the fifth year of EFL classes, our pupils need a deeper understanding of vocabulary than just the English word and its Hebrew translation. They begin to write using a dictionary and come up with infelicities such as:

It is difficult for adults to <u>contact</u> with teenagers.

When we point out that the correct word here is communicate, they insist that the dictionary provides 'contact' as ליצור קשר and that this is perfectly correct.

We need to point out that some words in Hebrew have multiple synonyms in English and vice versa. Leo Selivan provided me with the following examples:

There are different Hebrew words for picking fruit /vegetables. Ask learners to imagine that they had to explain the difference to an English speaker and why different Hebrew verbs go with olives (למסוק), with oranges (לקטוף) and grapes (לבצוע) They'd be stuck.

How about translating the word to 'put on' clothing: put on socks (לגרוב), put on a sweater (ללבוש), put on a hat (לחבוש). They will find that the difference between them is not their denotational meaning but rather how they are used, i.e what they go with (= collocate). It works the other way around too – from Hebrew to English: Why is להשיג different for goal (reach), accomplish (task), achieve (success)?

I think it was at an International ETAI Conference in the 1990s that I heard Michael Lewis discuss collocations and the "Lexical Approach" to language learning for the first time. Lewis's ideas made sense and I began to try them out in my classes.

When I first started using the Lexical Approach, the tools available were various academic concordances which gave sentence fragments with the target word highlighted and showing its immediate neighbors to the left and right (see example below for the target word, ACCEPT)*

> having to **ACCEPT** steadily falling conditions
> forced to **ACCEPT** only one of these
> willing to **ACCEPT**. Ape's final 115 votes
> asking him to **ACCEPT** a signed photograph
> that they **ACCEPT** ultimate responsibility
> ready to **ACCEPT** the existing borders
> choose to **ACCEPT** from (but not terminate
> could learn to **ACCEPT** the animals like me
> he therefore may **ACCEPT** the offer of someone

From this, we can learn that the verbs that collocate with 'accept' include: *having to, forced to, willing to, ask someone to, ready to, choose to, learn to*, and by the number of times each of these verbs appears in the list, which are the most common. We can also see some of the objects (appearing after the word) that 'accept' collocates with: *conditions, votes, responsibility, borders, offer*.

The first thing I used this concordance for was to help my pupils understand when to use *'make'* and when to use *'do'*. Following Lewis's suggestion, I gave my 11th grade pupils printouts of a concordance output for each word and we tried inductive reasoning – to extract a rule from the many examples. After demonstrating to the whole class how a concordance output works, I found that pair and group-work are good methods to use for this activity. It worked very well, but it is time-consuming and at best I can do it only once in a while and with a class that is cooperative.

Since those early Lexical Approach days, much thought has gone into creating new tools and methodologies for implementing this approach. At the British Council, pre-ETAI-Conference workshop last summer, we were introduced to several new lexical tools. Among these, www.netspeak.org and http://www.just-the-word.com

Using a projector I showed my pupils how to look up the collocations for a word on www.netspeak.org. Their homework was to look up the words *usual, ordinary, regular, routine* and try to find the difference in their usage, i.e. which words they collocate with. They did a pretty good job for the first time and are on their way to recognizing that usage of a word is as important as its translation.

In my next lesson, I used just-the-word to find collocations that would explain the difference between the words *achieve, accomplish, attain, reach*. In addition to giving a list of collocations, just-the-word has another very useful feature. Clicking on the button, "View in Wordle", will give a graphic representation (see below) of the relative frequencies of the collocations. My pupils loved it.

I can't say that all my pupils were enthusiastic about our spending so much time on collocations. They tend to prefer a simple translation, definition or rule. However, I wasn't deterred too much by "Is this for the Bagrut?" type complaints. We ended on a humorous note:

What's the difference between 'complete' and 'finished'? After all, if you complete your work, you've finished it. In Hebrew, the translation for the adjectives of these words is the same – הושלם. I let them discuss this for a while and then told them that the best answer to this question I've heard was:

> *If you marry the right woman, you are complete.*
> *If you marry the wrong woman, you are finished.*
> *If the right woman ever catches you with the wrong woman, (and a few of*
> *my pupils who got it right away, called out) you are completely finished!*

* From Lextutor, http://www.lextutor.ca/concordancers/concord_e.html, Nov 15, 2012.

Julia on the Go

Learning to Relax   Module F

Last week I received a letter from one of this column's regular readers. Just back from a week of exploring Hawaii's volcanoes, she was eager to share her experiences. "There's nothing like watching the lava flow into the ocean before your very eyes," she wrote. "People who spend their holidays just lying on the beach don't know what they're missing."

Actually, I've been receiving quite a few letters like this lately. For a growing number of vacationers, it seems, rest and relaxation are no longer the name of the game. Instead, they are looking for ways to expand their horizons. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), edu-tourism Ñ short for educational tourism Ñ is the fastest growing segment of the industry. The demand has prompted museums, universities and wildlife organizations to offer vacationers the opportunity to study anything from volcanoes in Hawaii to art in Paris and marine life in the Mediterranean.

Not surprisingly, the best place to find your educational vacation of choice is the Internet, where dozens of companies cater to every taste. If you're seeking cultural enrichment, try In the Know *(intheknow.com)*, which organizes art and theatre tours to world capitals. Or you can turn to *where2.com* for a list of travel companies specializing in music festivals. For those of you looking for something more adventurous, there are plenty of science tours providing a glimpse into hidden corners of the natural world.

The Rainforest Rover Company (*rainrover.com*) offers a week of bird-watching in Jamaica, home to more than 25 endangered species. Or you might decide to join a safari and go watch African mountain gorillas in their natural surroundings (*gorillawatch.com*).

Tourists who want the education without forgoing the relaxation can opt for one of the many deals offered by hotels worldwide. Hotel Capricio in Venice will give you a gondola ride around the city, followed by a glass-blowing workshop. And at Crater Lodge in Phoenix, Arizona, guests bored with sitting around the pool can take part in a workshop on desert photography. For other tempting offers, try *holidayup.com*.

Whatever your preference, you won't get the most out of your educational vacation without a highly-qualified guide. Most companies pride themselves on employing top experts in their field Ñ historians, art critics, zoologists Ñ but it's probably a good idea to check out their credentials before making your choice.

Finally, veterans of educational vacations often speak of an added bonus: You don't have to endure the awkward silences that are common among strangers on package tours. Apparently, when you've just come face to face with a giant gorilla, there's plenty to talk about.

(Adapted from "Learning to Relax", *Newsweek*, April 19 / April 26, 2004)

Words from the Dolch list of 1-250

251-1000

1001-2000

Collocations with *achieve* using View in Wordle function
on just-the-word

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ESSENTIAL LEXICAL TOOLS

Leo Selivan (*leosel@hotmail.com*)

Other contributors to this issue have extensively highlighted the need for presenting new words with surrounding co-text and importance of teaching collocations and multi-word phrases consisting of already known words. But how do you find the most frequent collocations of a word or common multi-word expressions? In this article I look at some online resources which I personally find useful when teaching lexis starting which what might seem obvious …

Online dictionaries

Corpus research has had a profound effect on the way dictionaries are compiled. Today, most authoritative dictionaries provide authentic, 'real world' examples derived from the corpus. The three dictionaries listed below are my personal favourites. Unlike some other, super-annuated dictionaries available online, these ones are compiled with the needs of language learners in mind and do not define a word using the same word (e.g. *scientific = pertaining to science*) or contain more difficult words in the definition than the word being defined (e.g. *bicycle = a vehicle with two wheels in tandem propelled by pedals*)

Cambridge Dictionaries Online

http://dictionary.cambridge.org

Cambridge was the first publisher to offer a free online version of their learner's dictionary. Its strong point is in the natural examples it provides, highlighting common collocations and useful patterns. You can choose British English or American English from the drop-down menu and, if the level is too high, you can easily switch to the Learner's Dictionary.

Macmillan Dictionary

www.macmillandictionary.com

Based on the fairly recent and well-balanced World English Corpus, this dictionary is easy to navigate. Unlike the Cambridge Dictionary you don't have go to a different page for a different sense of the same word; all the senses of the word are listed on the same page. Occasional collocation boxes are a valuable addition and a definite plus (see example below).
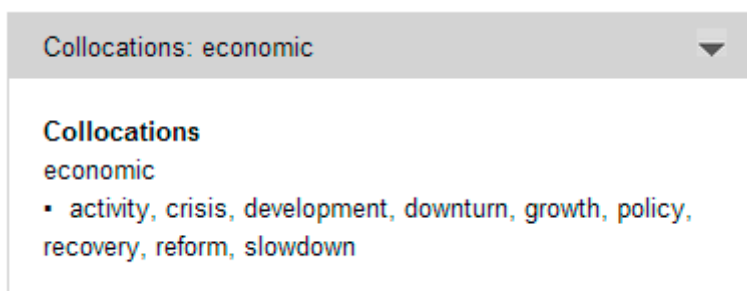
The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

www.ldoceonline.com

Another corpus-based dictionary but not as good as its paper version. Unlike the other two, LDOCE doesn't allow you to search multi-word units. For example, if you want to look up a phrasal verb (e.g. *put off*), you have to look up the key word (*put*) and then scroll down until you find the item you're looking for. A useful feature is word frequency. S1, S2 or S3 indicate whether the word is one of the 1000, 2000 or 3000 most commonly words in spoken English. W1, W2 and W3 are the same symbols for written English.

Collocation dictionaries

Unless you're mathematically inclined, corpus websites, for example http://corpus.byu.edu, which hosts two most authoritative corpora – the British National Corpus (BNC) and Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), may not readily appeal to you. But don't despair! These days there are plenty of corpus-'lite' tools which make searching for collocations and useful patterns easy and enjoyable. Renee Wahl has already mentioned **Just-The-Word**, the other two collocation dictionaries I recommend are: http://forbetterenglish.com and http://ozdic.com

Both are really easy to use. Just type in a word and get a list of its collocates with examples. Remember that most frequent collocates may not necessarily be the most useful for your learners. Frequency should always be balanced by the consideration of relevance to the learner. And who knows your students better than you?

Phraseup*

www.phraseup.com

Know what you want to say but can't find the right word? Phraseup* is a writing assistant which suggests several possible alternatives to fill in the words you can't remember. A useful tool for students to use when writing.

Netspeak

www.netspeak.org

Similar to phraseup* in that it helps find missing words, **Netspeak** will suggest the most common combinations organised by frequency. By clicking on the plus sign you can view example sentences from Google. Great for checking intuitions about recurring patterns such as:

if all goes… well
it all fell into… place
it never ceases to… amaze (me)
it's never too… late
it sets a good… example
with all due… respect

which may not be considered idioms or fixed expression in dictionaries but are nevertheless very cohesive.

Concordancer

www.lextutor.ca/concordancers/concord_e.html

Concordancer is a tool for extracting data from a corpus. It searches for all occurrences of a given word and then lists the examples in contexts. You can select the examples you want from the long list or get the concorancer to further extract random lines for you.

Tip: choose All of above (Brown Corpus, BNC Written and BNC Spoken) from the drop-down menu when searching.

This is what I got when I searched for the word "chance" (sorted by 2 words to the left of the keyword). You can also gap the key word and get your students to guess it from the surrounding text.

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100. ☐  can be just as successful in the dog world if it is given a CHANCE. Last year Robert Harris, a leading Junior Handler en
101. ☐  Right. should be told the evaluation personally and given a CHANCE to appeal if they feel it is too high. Okay. Thanks v
106. ☐  . I've got a tied up cat here. Oh. Where's the you've got a CHANCE to go of course. Oh yeah. Picture. Ah mama ma ma, mam
122. ☐  his father's wheels beginning to turn. Before Harmony had a CHANCE to reply, Rod cracked his long whip over his thin oxe
123. ☐  I was loaded with suds when I ran away, and I haven't had a CHANCE to wash it off. Mmmm, it sure itches". "You might as
134. ☐  e left fielder threw and it was a good one. But Mike had no CHANCE of being tagged. The Anniston catcher was straddling
153. ☐  for me to do them, but in Underwater Western Eye I'd have a CHANCE to act. I could show what I can do". ## As far as I w
155. ☐  house is a town treasure, and the townspeople should have a CHANCE to save it. We were hoping that it could be saved whe
163. ☐  when they're being whisked on a bus to school. They have no CHANCE to notice or see anything erm and make them observant
173. ☐  e recently purchased second car. He was glad. It gave him a CHANCE to unload the stuff and get it down to the cellar wit
183. ☐   too nervous to negotiate for peace as long as there is any CHANCE to negotiate. It is said that fear in human beings pr
195. ☐  nd grounds. Efficiency was enforced and nothing was left to CHANCE. Mr. Kennedy did not neglect to cultivate the persona
200. ☐  n as you understand one part of what it means, you lose any CHANCE of understanding the rest." She looked over at me, br
206. ☐  . The receiver clicked in my ear. She didn't even give me a CHANCE to refuse. Well, there wasn't any law that said I had
223. ☐  ournalists on Monday, saying that they had been offered the CHANCE to open their own newspaper. The President's announce
259. ☐  hen I think that he's had a an appointment, I might stand a CHANCE of having one afterwards, I don't know. Yeah. But old
263. ☐  e?" "No, Prentice; I mean too much taste. You never stood a CHANCE with a woman that choosy." I pulled away and looked d
265. ☐  uned to the sophisticated Ivies, still gives its students a CHANCE to get up early in the morning and drive along back r
277. ☐  icap and his recent home form suggests it is worth taking a CHANCE with him as he is on the upgrade. Neil Graham has alw
333. ☐  ht it in the kitchen actually. Oh, I thought I'd give you a CHANCE to put on your I don't care! your posh accent. Ray, h
```

Reviewing lexis

Quizlet is a popular website for creating online flashcards. It's great for getting students to learn and review vocabulary independently. The most obvious use is to have a word on one side and translation or definition on the other. But, if approached creatively, Quizlet can also be used to focus on collocations and lexical chunks.

You have to create an account or sign in with your Facebook. Click on Create at the top of the screen to create a new set. Give your set a title, for example Travel or Health. Then start entering the items you want your students to

practice. After you've finished, click on Save at the bottom and your set is now ready to be shared with your students. To create a set of collocations, enter the first word (e.g. *economic*) in the right column under Definitions and the second word (e.g. *development*) in the left column under Terms: http://quizlet.com/_ejpee

Check out some of the others sets I have created:

Delexicalised verbs (e.g. *go, make, take*): http://quizlet.com/_gto6p

Words with example sentences: http://quizlet.com/_citgd

Phrases with L1 equivalents: http://quizlet.com/_ftkj1

Ask your students to first go through the set and review the words you learned in class. Make sure they select Definition under Start with (1). To check if they remember the word they should click on Flip Card (2). After they've reviewed the set they can choose one of the following options at the top of the screen. I list them here in order of difficulty (moving from receptive to productive knowledge)

Scatter - The terms and definitions (or whatever you entered under these categories) are scattered on the screen and you put them back together. If matched correctly, they disappear from the screen. Perfect for matching parts of collocations.

Speller – as the name suggests, it's good for working on spelling. You type in the words as they are spoken.

Test - generates a graded quiz. Questions can be open-ended, multiple choice or true/false. This mode is more suitable for words with definitions or translations.

Learn – tests students' active knowledge of the items. They have to type in the answers themselves.

Race (formerly called Space Race) is the most difficult game. The items shoot across the screen while you type the answer.

But this isn't all. You can also create classes and assign a few sets to the same class or the same set to different classes. You can browse dozens of other sets created by other teachers. Lots of them include images too – I never get that creative so all my flash cards look rather dull.

You can "adopt" other teachers' sets by clicking on Copy in the Tools section. Other tools include Print which allows you to create a paper version of the set which can be printed as cards or on one page – great for review in class.

Finally, Quizlet has a mobile app which has most of the functions described above so students can learn vocabulary on the move.

Concordle – a not-so-pretty cousin of Wordle

http://folk.uib.no/nfylk/concordle

Many of you will be familiar with Worlde. It's a tool that creates word clouds of all shapes and forms from the words you input (or the whole text). Just like Wordle, Concordle created word clouds but the similarity ends there. You can't choose colours or shapes – all you get is text. But unlike Wordle, every word in Concordle is clickable. Clicking on a word brings up concordance lines (lines from the text where the word appears in context – see above). Using these concordances you can point out different collocations or useful patterns with a word.

021 (1) 150 (1) [elevator] (1) abbott (1) about (1) accessible (1) achievable (1) added (1) adults (1) all (1) another (1) answered (1) any (1) around (1) avoiding (1) building (1) buildings (1) cars (1) centres (1) computer (1) conquer (1) day (1) designed (1) diane (1) doing (1) each (1) every (1) far (1) feet (1) first (1) found (1) from (1) games (1) government (1) has (1) have (1) health (1) helping (1) hour (1) hours (1) how (1) included (1) increasing (1) indication (1) instead (1) into (1) join (1) just (1) key (1) largest (1) lift (1) local (1) look (1) nation's (1) nine (1) numbers (1) often (1) online (1) other (1) over (1) parks (1) plan (1) playing (1) politician (1) questions (1) rather (1) recommends (1) reverse (1) revolution… (1) schools (1) screens (1) see (1) she (1) shops (1) should (1) showed (1) sports (1) stairs (1) suggests (1) survey (1) then (1) there (1) they (1) thing (1) truly (1) two (1) using (1) video (1) walk (1) want (1) ways (1) work (1) 'worrying' (1) "walking (1) "we (1) activity (2) cent (2) charity (2) exercise (2) minutes (2) most (2) need (2) one (2) pandemic (2) physical (2) their (2) walked (2) was (2) way (2) you (2) **britain (3) british (3) for (3) inactivity (3) less (3) more (3) per (3) that (3)** said (4) than (4) walking (4) week (4) research (5) this (5) people (7)

(Baby) Concordle Cloud   Ordered-Cloud   Clear concordances   All words ordered   Foggy All words

	Research	has found that 25 per cent of
less than two hours per week. This	**research**	suggests people need to do more exercise.
people are doing less than this. The	**research**	is from an online survey of 2,
parks. Britain's largest walking charity said the	**research**	showed that there was an 'inactivity pandemic'
conquer this inactivity. " Politician Diane Abbott	**said**	the research was a 'worrying' indication of

The British government recommends 150 minutes of	**physical**	activity every week. Most British people are
More and more people are avoiding any	**physical**	exercise. The charity said: "Walking is the

walk for less than one hour each	**week.**	That's just nine minutes a day. Another
walked for less than two hours per	**week.**	This research suggests people need to do
recommends 150 minutes of physical activity every	**week.**	Most British people are doing less than
questions about how far they walked a	**week.**	This included walking to work, schools or

Wordcount

http://www.wordcount.org/main.php

One final tool I would like to share is Wordcount which shows you the frequency of words in English. Compare for example *blonde* and *arise*. The majority of the teachers Andrew Walkley surveyed ranked *blonde* as more frequent – see his blog post *ELT teachers shouldn't prefer blondes*! (http://blog.westminster.ac.uk/celt/2012/10/09/elt-teachers-shouldnt-prefer-blondes) In actual fact, *blonde* is not even in the first 5000 most common words in English - with a distant ranking of 6758 on Wordcount, whereas *arise* ranks 2941. According to Walkley, we are likely to overestimate the frequency of "tangible" words that we can see or hear, such as *blonde, pear, ski, microwave, crowded, purple* and underestimate the frequency of more abstract words such as *provide, policy, arise, adequate, extent, grant*. Wordcount is great for checking word frequency or quick warmers.

All the tools described above can be found in the Essential Lexical tools section on my blog Leoxicon: http://bit.ly/lextools

Leo Selivan has been involved in ELT for more than 12 years in all sorts of roles: teacher, examiner, teacher trainer, senior teacher and materials developer – mainly with the British Council in Tel Aviv but also other countries in the region. Currently he is a lecturer giving courses to pre-service and in-service teachers in Foreign Language Acquisition, teaching methodology, vocabulary teaching and using technology in the classroom. He has written for the TeachingEnglish website, Modern English Teacher and other professional publications.

Call for articles!

Share your knowledge and experience with ETAI Forum readers!

We are looking for contributions that cover topics of interest to EFL teachers at all levels, from young learners through university: practice-oriented articles that inspire and suggest improvements to teaching and learning. Here are some ideas:

• helpful information for professional development

• ideas for improving teaching

• sharing of personal growth experiences that have influenced your own teaching

• opinions based on experience and new ideas

• descriptions of programs,

• research-based solutions to problems with an emphasis on explaining and interpreting results, rather than on methodology.

The deadline for submission is February 10, 2014. Articles can be up to 2500 words long. Please send your article to: etaiforum@gmail.com as a WORD 2003 (.doc) (not Word 2007, .docx) file in an attachment to an e-mail. The name of the file should be your family name and the title of the article, or part of it: i.e. Jones_Teaching vocabulary. In the future, past issues of the ETAI Forum may be posted on the ETAI website.

Keep the language non-sexist; use *they* rather than *he/she*.

If you include references, they should be written out in APA style. You can find this in the "OWL Handouts" published by Purdue University – http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/. Cite page numbers in the body of the article if you use a direct quotation.

At the end of the text, include biodata of about 30 words in length, including your official job title, your institution/affiliation, and your email address. This information will be included with your article.

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