

## **Lecture 9: I-The Lexical Approach (Lewis, 1990s)**

### **II-The Eclectic Approach/ Method (the pluralistic approach to teaching)**

#### **I-The Lexical Approach and Vocabulary Teaching**

##### **Introduction**

The Lexical Approach to second/foreign language teaching has received interest in recent years as an alternative approach to grammar-based approaches. Lewis coined the term Lexical Approach in 1993 to refer to the belief that the building blocks of language learning and communication are not grammar, functions, notions, or some other unit of planning and teaching but lexis, that is, words and particularly multi-word combinations. The latter is called ‘collocations’, a word coined by Firth in 1957.

##### **1. Theory of Language and Learning**

The Lexical Approach reflects the structural view of language. However, it added another level of “structure,” namely multi-word units. Lewis (2000, p. 184) proposed the following account of the learning theory assumed in his initial proposal for a lexical approach:

-Encountering new learning items on several occasions is a necessary but sufficient condition for learning to occur.

-Noticing lexical chunks or collocations is a necessary but not sufficient condition for “input” to become “intake.”

##### **2. Types of Activities in the Lexical Approach**

**2.1. Awareness activities:** These are activities that facilitate the noticing of lexical chunks.

**2.2. Training in text chunking:** Chunking exercises seek to raise awareness of chunks and how they operate.

**2.3. Memory-enhancing activities:** e.g. elaboration, that is defined by Boers and Lindstromberg (2009) as:

[T]hinking about a term's spelling, pronunciation, grammatical category, meaning, and associations with other words as well as thinking which involves the formation of visual and motoric images related to the meaning of the term. The more of these dimensions that are involved, the more likely it is that the term will be entrenched in long-term memory. (p. 35)

**2.4. Retelling:** after studying a text with a particular focus on the chunks that appear in it, students take part in retelling activities, where they summarize or retell what they have read but attempt to use the same chunks that appeared in the text. (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, pp. 221-222)

Nattinger (1980, p. 341) suggested activities used to develop learners' knowledge of lexical chains. They include the following:

- 1-Intensive and extensive reading in the target language.
- 2-First and second/foreign language comparisons and translation – carried out chunk-for-chunk, rather than word-for-word- aimed at raising language awareness.
- 3-Repetition and recycling of activities, such as summarising a text orally one day and again a few days later to keep words and expressions that have been learned active.
- 4-Guessing the meaning of vocabulary items from context.
- 5-Noticing and recording language patterns and collocations.
- 6-Working with dictionaries and other reference tools.

### **3. Principles of the Lexical Approach**

Burns (1972) defined vocabulary as “the stock of words which is used by a person, class or profession”. Hornby (1995) defined vocabulary as “the total number of words in a language; vocabulary is a list of words with their meanings”. It can be defined as “words we must know to communicate effectively; words in speaking (expressive vocabulary) and words in listening (receptive vocabulary)” (Neuman & Dwyer, 2009, p. 385). As explained by Ur “vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the words we teach in the foreign language. However, a new item of vocabulary may be more than just a single word: for example, post office, and mother-in-law, which are made up of two or three words but express a single idea. A useful convention is to cover all such cases by talking about vocabulary ‘items’ rather than ‘words’” (1996, p. 60). The Lexical Approach

reflects a belief in the centrality of the lexicon to language structure, second language learning, and language use, and in particular to multi-word units or “lexical chunks” (also termed lexical phrases, prefabricated routines/chunks, routine formulas, or formulaic expressions), that are learned and used as single items. Schmitt (n.d) explained that “the lexical approach can be summarised in a few words: language consists not of traditional grammar and vocabulary but often of multi-word prefabricated chunks” (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 215). Lewis further claimed that “language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar” (1993, p. 89).

In other words, the Lexical Approach makes a distinction between vocabulary – traditionally understood as a stock of individual words with fixed meanings – and lexis, which includes not only the single words but also the word combinations that we store in our mental lexicons. The Lexical Approach defended the renewed importance of lexical phrase drills in maintaining that lexis can well be learnt de-contextualized; in insisting on training in pedagogical chunking; or in emphasising input through extensive reading and listening, but always combined with a direct approach to vocabulary teaching. and making language lessons a combination of input, awareness-raising, learner training, and language practice. Input is indeed prioritised in the Lexical Approach so that it is considered beneficial to increase teachers’ talk time as a valuable source of input and to correct errors through reformulation rather than formal correction. Such input, in order to ensure its effectiveness, must obviously be comprehensible. Receptive skills (especially listening) are also accorded more weight than productive ones.

## **Conclusion**

The status of lexis in language teaching has been considerably enhanced by developments in lexical and linguistic theory and by recognition of the role of multi-word units in language learning and communication. However, lexis still refers to only one component of communicative competence. Thus, the Lexical Approach lacks the full characterisation of an approach or method, and may be merged effectively with other approaches, such as Communicative Language Teaching.

## **II-The Eclectic Approach/Method (the pluralistic approach to teaching)**

### **Introduction**

The “single” method approach has been called into question since it has not fulfilled the objectives of language learning/teaching. The whole concept of a separate method is no longer a central issue in language practice. None of the methods has proved to be effective, Stern (1983) explained “teachers vainly searched for the ultimate method that would serve as a final answer” (p. 251). Similarly, Nunan (1991, p. 228) commented “it has been realised that there never was and probably never will be a method for all” (p. 228). As a result, there has been a call for a “pluralistic” approach to language teaching. The eclectic method of learning was advocated in the beginning of 1990’s and became fashionably popular these days. Thus, teachers need an intergrated approach to language teaching or eclecticism which is considered by the majority of language specialists as a legitimate solution to the lack of universal solutions offered by any single method. In other words, language teaching is a cumulative knowledge that underlies everything that happens in the classroom and that enables the teacher to diagnose the needs of students, to treat students with successful pedagogical techniques, and to assess the outcome of those treatments (Richards & Renandya, 2009, p. 11). As explained by Adamson:

Despite the claims of proponents of some methods, no consensus has emerged, nor is likely to emerge, as to the “best” or “right” method to teach a language. Indeed, there have been calls to abandon the search for what Richards (2001, p. 167) calls the “supermethod”. Hence, teachers have to be equipped with a repertoire of methods and skills that can be used selectively in different contexts. (2004, p. 604)

### **1. Definition of the Eclectic Method**

Eclecticism originated from the Greek word ‘eklektikos’, meaning “selective”. The Eclectic method is defined as:

- 1-“a type of methodology that makes use of the different language learning approaches instead of sticking to one standard approach” (Al-Hamash et al., 1985, p. 22).
- 2-“a combination of different methods of teaching and learning approaches” (Kumar, 2013, p. 1).

3-“is a language teaching method that combines various approaches and methods to teach language depending on the objectives of the course and the abilities of the learners. It is also known as mixed-methods” (Iskan, 2017, p. 150).

4-“is a method that combines a variety of methods tailored to the learning objectives, the nature of the subject matter, the ability of students, even the condition of the teacher” (Krisbiantoro & Pujiani, 2020, p. 41).

In short, the teacher should be flexible and able to select the right method and techniques according to the content to be taught and the context of teaching as well as learners’ needs. As explained by Wali:

[O]ne of the premises of eclecticism is that teaching should serve learners not methods. Thus, teachers should feel free in choosing techniques and procedures inside the classroom. There is no ideal approach in language learning. Each one has its merits and demerits. There is no royalty to certain methods. Teachers should know that they have the right to choose the best methods and techniques in any method according to learners’ needs and learning situation. Teachers can adopt a flexible method and technique so as to achieve their goals. They may choose whatever works best at a particular time in a particular situation. (2009, p. 40)

Consequently, language teaching should follow what Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Mellow (2000) called *principled eclecticism*. The latter is one of different concepts that have been used to refer to eclecticism. As stated by Mellow (2002, p. 1), these concepts are:

- effective or successful eclecticism (i.e., based on specific outcomes) (Olagoke, 1982),
- enlightened eclecticism (Hammerly, 1985, p. 9; Brown, 1994, p. 74),
- informed or well-informed eclecticism (Hubbard et al., 1983, Brown, 1995; Yonglin, 1995),
- integrative eclecticism (Gilliland et al., 1994),
- new eclecticism (Boswell, 1972),
- planned eclecticism (Dorn, 1978),
- systematic eclecticism (Gilliland & Bowman, 1994),

-technical eclecticism (Lazarus & Beutler, 1993).

## **2. Characteristics of the Eclectic Method**

1-Teachers are given a chance to choose different kinds of teaching techniques in each class period to reach the aims of the lesson.

2-There is flexibility in choosing any aspect or method that teachers think suitable for teaching inside the classroom.

3-Learners can use different kinds of teaching techniques and aids, that help to make lessons much more stimulating and ensures better understanding of the material on the other hand.

4-Solving difficulties that may emerge from the presentation of the textbook materials.

5-It saves both time and effort in the presentation of language activities. (Ali, 1981, p. 7). Similarly, Parupalli (2018) mentioned the following characteristics of eclecticism:

1-Eclecticism makes teaching more enjoyable and innovative.

2-It enhances the active interaction between students and teachers.

3-Caters to the individual needs of learners.

4-Enhances practical teaching as it facilitates retention and builds self-confidence.

5-Eclecticism enables instructors to achieve the learning objectives easily.

6-It is a problem-based approach to teaching languages that solves the problems encountered by the students in class.

7-Testing is not a separate element but a part of this approach.

8-Learners would have a clear vision of what they are learning.

9-This approach includes various tasks such as higher interaction, lively learning, correlative learning and fast results.

10-Eclecticism connects life experiences of learners to the ideas presented in language learning.

## **3. Selection of Activities in the Eclectic Method**

Melow's principled eclecticism is based on two explicit principles which guide the teachers' selection of activities. First, properties-based activities which are 'categorized' according to two dimensions. In the first dimension language is seen as '*form or function*'; that is to say the focus is

on the structure or the meaning of the language. The second dimension considers learning as '*construction or growth*'. Construction means that the learner constructs knowledge about the language through 'cognitive processing' and 'attention, practice, and automatization' of input. Growth is the acquisition of language by 'exchanging meaning' in a natural context (2002, p. 3). Second, the *centring principle* that highlights the 'coherence' of courses through the use of activities which keep "the same forms, functions, and/or signs" (2002, p. 9).

For example, teaching writing under an eclectic approach implies that a variety of activities have to be applied in the classroom under a wide range of strategies. Here, the activity is varied according to the genre which the learners are expected to master. For instance, if the aim is to teach story writing, eclecticism includes first the stage of reading a sample story, then identifying the steps of writing a story by giving exemplifications from the model: the situation, the setting, the plot...etc. After that, the learners would engage in the task of writing a story by collaborating with the teacher who acts as a guide, a feedback provider, and a facilitator who helps the learners by simplifying the task of word choice and grammar. So, the teacher should be so competent and effective that s/he could vary his/her activities according to the context of learning, the genre to be taught and the students' needs.

#### **4. Criticism of the Eclectic Method**

The main criticism of the eclecticism is that "it does not offer any guidance on what basis and by what principles aspects of different methods can be selected and combined" (Stern, 1983).

#### **Conclusion**

Necessity to adopt an eclectic approach to language teaching has led to the implementation of a variety of strategies and the adaptation of various techniques of more than one method to their own teaching context and according to the learners' needs. River (1981) asserted: "the best type of eclectic teacher is imaginative, energetic and willing to experiment. As a result, his lessons are varied and interesting" (p. 6).

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