The role of the lexical approach in EFL


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The role of the lexical approach in EFL

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Linea de investigación: Metodologías y evaluación educativa
To my beloved parents.
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Introduction

When teachers try to talk about the field of English Language Teaching, they refer to the way of language teaching takes place in a specific classroom in a formal situation. We also think of a teaching program including its varieties according to its particularities, there comes the idea of teaching according to the way we are used to do it and that could be the place where we have to think of the lexical approach as one of the alternatives to teach English with a communicative purpose in a meaningful way thinking of the role of vocabulary in the process of language learning.

Vocabulary has been considered until the 1990s as a secondary aspect of language learning. In teaching EFL with Spanish-language speakers, students were forced to learn vocabulary by memorizing lists and more word lists, because vocabulary was subordinated to grammar learning. However, in the last decade, with the evolution of some linguistic theories, such as the Lexical Approach, which pay more attention to the lexicon, the need of students to learn vocabulary as a fairly complex and lasting process has taken more interest. It has its own characteristics and is considered fundamental in learning a language like English in the EFL classroom.

Accepting that the study of the lexicon is the study of lexical units or chunks and not only of the words, it has important methodological consequences, since, for example, a lot of importance is attached to the teaching of the chunks, so as not to enter the specialized distinctions of collocations, phrases, expressions, idioms, routine formulas, etc., since their meaning is not deductible from the words that form them, which are unclear or non-compositional, and also that they do not always have a similar or correlated expression in the language of the learners.

Undoubtedly, it is difficult for the teacher of English to predict exactly what are the lexical units that an EFL student, in particular, needs to be able to function in different
everyday communicative situations, because the general and particular needs of students in various situations cannot be easily determined communicative areas where Spanish will be used in the general or specific uses of the apprentice. Another problem, which must be taken into account, is related to the activities that EFL students must perform to learn, organize and retain acquired lexical units.

One of the objectives of this work is to present the necessary information to those who are interested in the application of the lexical approach to language teaching in our context (plurilingual, multicultural with specific varieties in each region) so that it can be a first step in looking for new methodologies to teaching foreign languages. To that end this work has been developed in three chapters each one containing an aspect of the topic. Chapter I gives you a historical overview of the most important aspects of the development of the approaches of English language teaching throughout history. Chapter II contains a vast information about the lexical approach and Chapter III presents some hints to apply the lexical approach in the language classroom. A lesson plan referred to the model class has been included in this part. Also, conclusions, suggestions and the critical appraisal are included in the monograph.
Chapter I

Historical overview of English language Teaching

1.1 Definition of English as a foreign language

The learning of a foreign language is considered as the acquisition of knowledge of a language other than the mother tongue, which is not used on a daily basis in the life of the learner, since it belongs to another culture based in other regions, sometimes far from the place the student lives in. In Peru, when we learn a language different from ours -English, French, German, etc.-, whether for cultural, social or labor reasons, we are acquiring a foreign language. The contexts in which you learn are very different from those of a second language, since in the latter the language you are learning is frequently used by the student, in its broader context, for example, Spanish-speaking residents living in English-speaking countries, which although they do not usually use English in family interaction, need it to interact in their work or social life within the country they inhabit.

Richards (2001) argues that structural linguistics has been the framework on which these language teaching method has been developed until 1960s of the last century. From his study it emerges that the underlying assumptions to the first structuralist approaches to the design of language programs are based on vocabulary and grammar as basic units; students have the same needs anywhere in the world and are
identified only in terms of language needs; the learning process is determined solely by
the book; the classroom and the book are the essential input suppliers for the teaching-
learning process. In this way, mastering linguistic communication is equivalent to
mastering the structural units of the linguistic system. These characteristics delimit the
design of foreign language programs until the 1970s, when Functional Linguistics
becomes a rival to the traditional and structural approaches. Thus, while the program of
traditional and structural studies consists of an inventory of linguistic elements
sequenced according to their complexity, their rival paradigm proposes a study program
with an inventory of communicative functions and notions organized in scenarios,
situations or issues.

1.2 Traditional approaches and methods

In the previous section we stopped in the study of Richards (2001) to briefly indicate
how the different traditions in the disciplines are causing the changes in the teaching
paradigms in foreign and second languages. We will stop now in the various teaching
methods -or approaches- that characterized the teaching of the English language in the
different periods, according to the classification made by the mentioned author.

• The grammar translation method (1800-1900)
• The direct method (1890-1930)
• The structural method (1930-1960)
• The reading method (1920-1950)
• The audio-lingual method (1950-1970)
• The situational method (1950-1970)
• The communicative approach (1970-2010)

We will make a brief tour of the different methods. It is not the objective of this
monograph to analyze each of them in detail, but to address the communicative
approach - original and its subsequent modifications to arrive at the lexical approach.

Traditional approaches, until the late 1960s, give grammar priority as a core component of language proficiency. They are based on the fact that it can be learned through direct instruction and a methodology that makes use of repetitive practice. These are deductive approaches in which students are taught grammar topics and then given practice exercises to use what they have learned. It is assumed that learning a language consists in having a wide repertoire of sentences and grammatical patterns to use them accurately and quickly in the right situation. Once essential management is acquired through repetition and controlled practice, work begins with the four basic skills, usually in the following sequence: speaking, listening, reading and writing (Richards, 2001).

The techniques used for the class consist of memorizing structures and dialogues, questions and answers, and different forms of guided oral and written practice. A strong emphasis is placed on the accuracy of pronunciation and the correct use of grammar from initial levels since it is assumed that errors that are not corrected immediately become fossilized and become permanent.

These approaches begin to be abandoned in the 1970s when, as a reaction, the central role of grammar to question that linguistic ability involves much more than the simple handling of correct grammatical structures is questioned; the focus of the skills is very important for grammar and other kinds of language is changed for different communicative purposes - giving advice, making suggestions, talking about desires and needs, etc. - to give rise to linguistic competence. The notion of this concept is developed from socio-linguistics and is adopted by some teachers of foreign and second languages who discuss that, the goal of teaching these languages should not only be the development of grammatical competence. An immediate question arises to this great
paradigm shift, how should a curriculum be based on the development of communicative competence and what would be the implications for the teaching methodology. The result was the birth of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) received with great optimistic in its first appearance in the seventies. Teachers from different parts of the world begin to rethink their practices, curricula and teaching materials in which grammar is no longer the starting point and begin to take into account the purposes for which the student wishes to acquire the language, thus generating English programs for specific purposes, such as business, the hotel industry or travel. From the 1990s, the communicative approach is fully developed and in use, it continues to evolve as the processes of learning a second language are better understood. It is located, widely accepted, as the most recent and innovative teaching methodology in the foreign and second language education literature in the world, although it still has some issues to be resolved as Richards (2001) states: can it be applied in all contexts of teaching? Is it necessary to abandon all existing based on grammar or can they be revised? How can it be incorporated in situations where students have to take grammar based exams? Some teachers also reflect on the different contexts where English is taught as a foreign language, giving great importance to the consideration of social contexts when determining what is the appropriate methodology, for example, the need to assess local perspectives and pedagogies. These and other questions promote changes in the CLT. The communicative approach is inspired by a variety of educational principles and traditions; there is no single practice that characterizes it, on the contrary, it is rich in its diversity. Richards (2006) describes it as follows: learning is generated when the student is involved in the interaction and in meaningful communication; class activities provide opportunities for students to expand their linguistic resources, notice how language is used and be an active part of an
interpersonal exchange of meaning; communication is a holistic process that requires the use of different language skills and emerges as a result of relevant content and with a clear and motivating purpose; the different approaches in the teaching of English as a foreign language and second language in learning are given both by the inductive discovery of grammatical rules of use and organization as well as through analysis and reflection; it requires a creative, trial and error use that promotes, in its time, a precise and fluid use of language; the role of the teacher in the classroom is that of the facilitator, who creates a climate that leads to learning and provides opportunities to reflect on the use of the language and the process of its acquisition; the class is a community in which students learn through collaboration and the act of sharing.

1.3 New millennium, new trends

At the beginning of the 21st century, a new trend appears in education research literature, marked by academics in the field of languages such as Ramanathan (2006), Ouyang (2000), Kumaravadivelu (2001), Canagarajah (2003), Shin (2006), to name a few, who investigate the cultural and socio-political incompatibility between local approaches and the CLT in different socio-cultural contexts, arguing that the literature for teaching foreign and second languages are based on social and political principles of an English-speaking community that do not contemplate the socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic situation of the various contexts of the world. These new research voices argue that the massive implementation of a neutral and objective western methodology ignores many local restrictions, community needs and values. They add that the CLT places the teacher in a role of facilitator of acquisition of skills while in many cultures, it is also expected that the teacher has other functions, such as being an authoritarian and moral leader for students (Ouyang, 2000). They also maintain that it is expected that it may have a linguistic performance similar to that of a
native speaker. However, it is not being taken into account that both teachers and students may wish to maintain their local and regional characteristics and that, even when they are teaching English, they do not want to adopt the teaching styles of foreign teachers. These arguments added to others that arise in new research, promote changes in the CLT that give rise to several proposals, many of them coming from critical pedagogy. On this occasion we will stop at two of the trends covered by the most recent scientific productions regarding the teaching of English as a foreign and second language. On the one hand, we will present what we currently know as Principled Communicative Approach-PCA- and on the other we will go through the postmethod time. Dörnyei (2009) argues that the uniformity of the CLT as a method is highly questionable since there are certain variables that cross and redefine it. For example, it rescues the sustained hypothesis of the CLT regarding the acquisition of the language and argues that it does not occur automatically with simple exposure and sufficient contribution of understandable language as indicated by the CLT, but explicit learning procedures are also needed, such as focusing on the way grammar is presented. In this way, a recycling or a transformation of the traditional communicative approach begins, becoming an integral one such as the Principled Communicative Approach –PCA-, crossed by contributions from different sciences. Dörnyei (2009) raises seven principles that underpin the PCA:

1) it must focus on personal meaning and meaning as a whole and not as isolated segments; 2) must include controlled activities to promote the automation of skills; 3) must contain initial input components offered in various ways; 4) there should be focus on grammatical forms while maintaining the communicative orientation; 5) there must be conscious language awareness activities formulated to promote real communication and
phrases must be selected to practice them with some intensity; 6) must offer students extensive exposure to language and explicit preparation in terms of previous activities; 7) must provide a wide variety of opportunities for students to participate in genuine interactions (p. 7).

To these principles we can add the aspects that Richards (2006) considers also relevant in this reform of the CLT, they are: focus on the social nature of learning and not on students as decontextualized individuals; focus on student diversity and take individual differences as resources to be recognized, valued and appreciated. When conducting research or generating theories, pay more attention to the point of view of those who live the class, promoting action research, and not only take as relevant the studies of those who investigate from outside and evaluate what happens there.

This change is closely associated with the growing acceptance of qualitative research, which permeates a look towards the affective, the views of the participants and the unique characteristics of each context; along with the idea of context comes the idea of connecting the school with the world outside it to achieve integral learning. On the other hand, Jacobs and Farrell (2001) add that there must be a curricular integration so that the foreign or second language is not isolated from other subjects, but that there is a connection with all the rest of the subjects of the curriculum through the use inter-curricular projects, thus promoting the different approaches in the teaching of English as a foreign language and second language through content, that is, not as empty language, meaningless. They also focus on individual diversity considering that each student learns in different ways, they have different potentials and teaching must take these differences into account instead of forcing students into a single mold. They add that language should serve as a means of developing thinking skills, such as critical or creative. In this way the student not only learns the language in a vacuum but also to
apply their thinking skills in situations that go beyond the language class. Finally, new forms of evaluation supplement the traditional ones: observations, interviews, diaries and portfolios can be used to have a broader vision of what students can achieve.

Since its inception in the 1970s, the CLT has undergone many changes, for example, content-based teaching argues that the content itself is what mobilizes the entire learning process; others, such as competency-based instruction or text-based teaching, focus directly on the production of learning and take them as a starting point when planning. All these changes have not led to the development of a single model that can be applied in all contexts. New approaches have emerged that reflect different responses to the controversies raised in the preceding paragraphs.

Canagarajah (2003) makes a strong criticism of pedagogy and educational material received from Anglo-Saxon countries. Basically, in his book *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*, he explores the post-colonial status of English language teaching beyond stereotyped positions and reflects on the different interests and motivations of students, giving special emphasis to linguistic conflicts in the community and in the classrooms, seeking a pluralization in the standards of the language taught and promoting democratization in their access. In his analysis, the author moves in a permanent game between critical and dominant pedagogy, such as CTL. The first identified as those personal, besieged, which in many cases refer to the theories of reproduction and resistance and the latter as those that represent the traditional teaching approach. The reproduction model comes from the marxist line and tries to explain how students are mentally conditioned by school practices to serve the dominant culture; while the resistance model, deeply rooted in critical pedagogy, seeks to expose institutional contradictions and promote critical thinking to initiate change.

The Canagarajah line of research immerses us in the reactions of teachers and students
regarding their views on the materials and methods proposed by those he calls "Center"; also in the historical imposition of the English language for political and material purposes.

In his vast work he criticizes the use of culturally inappropriate materials that, for mere reasons of practicality, are adopted instead of using those that are really useful for developing within local customs. In this sense, he says that methods are developed with Western students in mind. His desire is to see researchers and teachers creating curricula and materials relevant to the periphery. What is the contribution of Canagarajah's works to the scientific and educational community of teaching English as a foreign or second language? His contribution is especially important for methodological and planning issues for the ELT (English language teaching) as it encourages English teachers - who do not rarely accept unquestionably and uncritically what the books provide -, which supports the dominant pedagogy and the authors of the inner circle - to reflect on the ignorance of the political aspects of the profession and the hidden agenda of the materials, activities and strategies they are using. His work has served as a trigger for new options, new ideas and proposals around the world, and is an important anchor for Kumaramadivelu (2001) to develop what he calls "Postmethod Pedagogy".

Faced with the dissatisfaction provided by the dominant methods, Dr. B. Kumaramadivelu reacts with what he calls a post-method pedagogy. With this proposal, the linguist seeks to go beyond the limited concept of method based on principles developed in a three-dimensional system that is based on the parameters of particularity, practicality and possibility. His idea is to advance in a context-sensitive education, based on the understanding of socio-cultural characteristics and local political particularities, breaking up the relationship between theoretical and practical aspects;
also, allowing teachers to build their own theory from practice and intercepting the socio-political baggage of communities to assist in their search for identity formation and social transformation. Kumaramadivelu uses the term pedagogy in a broad sense, that is, not only to refer to curricular issues, materials, classroom strategies or evaluative procedures, but in relation to political issues and socio-cultural experiences that, directly or indirectly have an influence on the teaching of foreign or second language. With respect to the principle of particularity Kumaramadivelu (2001) states that the pedagogy of teaching a language should be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching in a particular group of students pursuing a particular set of objectives within a particular institutional context included in a particular sociocultural environment. This type of pedagogy, consistent with the hermeneutical perspective of situational understanding, opposes the idea that there should be a set of pedagogical objectives and goals that are developed from a set of specific principles and procedures. The principle of particularity is interpreted not as a starting point, but as an arrival. It is both a goal and a process in a way that works for and through particularity.

The principle of practicality is connected with the theory and practice relationship. The linguist makes a difference between professional theories and personal theories. The first are those originated in specialized centers, while the second are those developed, interpreted and applied by the teacher in the classroom. Kumaramadivelu promotes the theory originated in the classroom by the teacher himself and dismisses those built by experts, leaving very little space for the individual reflection of each teacher. This principle, which encourages the teacher to theorize from their own practice and put into practice what theorizes, basically promotes action research that nourishes and nourishes the ability of teachers for reflection by identifying and understanding problems, analyzing them and applying the information obtained.
The principle of possibility is based on the work of Paulo Freire from his position that pedagogy is involved in the relations of power and domination that is implemented to create and sustain social inequality, thus proposing a pedagogy of possibility that empowers participants. Kumaramadivelu supports the need to develop theories, forms of knowledge and social practices that go hand in hand with the experiences that each individual brings to the pedagogical context. They are shaped not only by teaching and prior learning, but by the social, cultural and economic environment in which they have developed as subjects. In this way, learning a language allows you a permanent search for your subjectivity and personal identity. The principles of particularity, practicality and possibility are very connected and involve each other in an intimate relationship in which the totality is greater than the sum of the parts. Together they form the essence of a post-method pedagogy with the potential to take the teaching of a foreign language beyond everyday limits and any predetermined method. Far away is the desire of those who adhere to this approach, to put together a series of rules, norms or steps to follow, but encourage the appropriation of these principles for a new look at the pedagogy of teaching a foreign language or second language.

Banegas (2004) argues that the definition of particularity leads us to the need to develop local and local pedagogies that respond to both the teacher and the student in their context. Under this magnifying glass and probably following the Freirean line, Kumaramadivelu treats teachers and students as co-explorers who establish a relationship based on dialogue. This type of interaction, which puts dialogue at the center of the scene between teachers and students, becomes fundamental (Banegas, 2004), as is the dialogue between teachers and their totalizing context. However, Banegas argues that we must be careful because without the necessary preparation
provided by the teaching staff programs, the “Post-Method” can lead novice teachers to adopt some kind of eclecticism that dilutes its essence.

In this direction appears the lexical approach as one of the options of the communicative age giving prominence to the role of lexis in the learning of a foreign or second language and that will be developed in the following chapter.
Chapter II

The lexical approach

2.1 Definition of the lexical approach

The definition of lexical approach can, within the scope of language teaching, refer to two different concepts. The first, and more general, is the use of a lexical approach to describe the perspective followed in an element linked to teaching (a class session, a didactic unit, a research ...) in which the vocabulary has received special attention. It is a descriptive term of its characteristics, and does not imply association with any specific theory. The second one refers to the set of theories of language, learning, material production and research that are developed based on the ideas of the original lexical approach. Although sometimes both concepts have been assimilated, in the present work a distinction is established between the two and only their value is considered as a complete methodological design, so the studies in which this term is used in its more general value remain outside the field of study and analysis. It should also be noted that for reasons of clarity the term “original lexical approach” will be used to refer to Lewis's original theories and “lexical approach” for works developed or linked to this teaching theory.
2.2 The original lexical approach

Three works appear associated to the initial notion of lexical approach, all three belonging to the aforementioned M. Lewis: *The Lexical Approach* (1993), *Implementing the Lexical Approach* (1997) and *Teaching collocations: further developments in the Lexical Approach* (2000). In *The Lexical Approach* (1993), marked as of theoretical character, the key theoretical concepts are collected, both from their vision of language and learning, as well as a proposal, also more theoretical than practical, on the design of materials. The difficulty of direct transfer to the classroom of theoretical principles accompanied by very brief practical ideas is probably the reason that the following work, *Implementing the Lexical Approach* (1997), is very focused on the practical aspects of the operation of the approach within the classroom: although some of the ideas proposed from the theory are nuanced, most of the volume is dedicated to the proposal of class dynamics and activities. Finally, in *Teaching collocations: further developments in Lexical Approach* (2000), the theoretical approaches and practical experiences of various authors and professors linked to the ideas of the lexical approach are collected, in addition to the final version of the theory matured by Lewis, who by age reasons will be removed from the teaching scene a few years later (Thornbury, 2006).

The essential idea of the lexical approach is that it places the communication of meaning in the heart of the language and its learning which implies putting the emphasis on the main bearer of meaning: vocabulary (Lewis, 1997). This idea has its transfer in a decalogue of principles proposed by the author, although the ideas with which the original lexical approach will finally be configured can be summarized in four: lexical primacy over grammar, attention to recognition and memorization of lexical segments to improve the accuracy and fluency of the student, importance of the
text and the co-text of the words (collocations) and emphasis on the incidental learning of the lexicon, although some authors add a fifth element, the importance of real oral input (Pérez, 2015). The rationale for these principles is explained by language theory, learning theory and guidelines for the design of materials and classroom activities proposed by Lewis.

2.2.1 Language theory.

The basic pillar in Lewis's lexical view of language is that it is not composed of lexicalized grammar, but of grammaticalized lexicon. Lewis (2000a) emphasizes that:

Instead of a few structures and many words, we now admit that language is composed of many small patterns, which show varying degrees of fixation or generalization, each based on a word; in a sense, each word has its own grammar (p. 129).

This does not mean that grammar ceases to be important or that it is rejected in a certain sense, but that it occupies a new place, in which the patterns in which the lexicon was traditionally inserted to produce disappear, and words acquire greater generative power and become the structuring principle of discourse.

Language thus conceived cannot be described from what can be done with it from a purely theoretical point of view, but from what the speakers really do with it in their usual use. This makes it a dynamic element, so the static dichotomies with which it has traditionally been described as rules / exceptions, good / bad or grammar / vocabulary cease to be such to become the opposite ends of the spectra that describe the language as: the spectrum of generative power, the spectrum of genebility, the spectrum of communicative power, the probability spectrum, the acceptability spectrum, the conventionality spectrum and the categorization spectrum (Spectrum of Generative
Power, Spectrum of Generalisatibility, Spectrum of Communicative Power, Spectrum of Likelihood, Spectrum of Acceptability, Spectrum of Conventionality and Spectrum of Categorization, respectively). The spectrum of generative power would serve to categorize the lexicon according to its generation potential: at one extreme would be those elements of low lexical density and, consequently, extensive collocational range and large generative capacity and, on the other, elements with high lexical density and more restricted collocation field. The traditional binomial of rules / exceptions becomes the spectrum of generability, which allows categorizing linguistic issues into function of the ease or difficulty they have to generate regularities, while that of good / evil ceases to exist and what happens to be considered is the degree of probability that an element occurs and acceptance of the speech community that receives it and it is measured with the spectrum of probability for general contexts and with that of acceptability in academic settings. The spectrum of communicative power is used to determine the degree to which the lexicon is useful for communication, and that of conventionality has oral and written language at its ends. Finally, the categorization spectrum determines the ease, or difficulty, with which a particular word or collocation admits to being categorized. These spectra are governed by the principles of free selection and idiomaticity of Sinclair (1991) who considers that the speaker is free to choose the way in which he conveys the meaning, but these forms are grammatically restricted in order to create meaning.

In the same way that language is not considered something static, the meaning is not considered either; it is always determined both by the context, which would be constituted by the facts or situations within the communicative act, as by the co-text, which defines the situation of the linguistic item, that is, the words that appear in its more or less immediate environment. These two elements construct the meaning in
three different ways: through contrasts between what exists and what is not in the
discourse; from bottom to top, by adding some parts to others; or from top to bottom,
inferring the meaning by the context and co-text of the word and the knowledge of the
world that is possessed. In the process of creating meaning, then, the less inappropriate
items are selected from among those known, constructing the meaning fragment by
fragment, relating these small fragments within a larger general framework.

The meaning thus seen can be described as Lewis (1993) said “intrinsically
subjective, interpersonal and ephemeral” (p. 88). The discourse, the result of this
construction of meaning, is multidimensional and is processed not word by word, but
moving forward and backward in the construction of meaning to make predictions about
what is going to be said and readjustments about what was previously said.

In this context of meaning construction, the key element is the lexicon. It is
necessary to distinguish between vocabulary and vocabulary concepts; the vocabulary
would be the global amount of lexical items different from each other, while the lexicon
would be those units whose meaning cannot be completely deduced by their form,
suppose a minimal syntactic unit (that is, they are independent) and are socially
institutionalized. The lexicon would be composed of four types of items: the words and
poliwords, collocations, institutionalized utterances and sentence headings or frames;
the first two would be essentially related to the referential meaning, while the second
two would be related to the pragmatic meaning (Lewis, 1993).

The word is an independent unit that can appear in isolated speech (“stop!”,
“Thank you”) or by modifying the meaning of a complete speech act; polyword would
be an extension of the word and is restricted to those lexical units composed of two or
more words that have a very high degree of idiomaticity (“please”, “on the other hand”).
The word categories disappear, even the closed ones, and are considered to occupy different positions within the generative power spectrum.

For Lewis (1997b) collocations would be:

Pairs or groups of words that co-occur with high frequency, depending on the type of text information or the way in which words co-occur in the natural text of statistically significant way, which admit variation in its components since the key in the collocations deals with words that cooperate, not ideas or concepts (p. 25).

The key element in the collocation is, therefore, significant co-occurrence in a given text. The recognition of this fact implies that there are also what Lewis calls blocked collocations, which would be those that, despite being theoretically viable, have not been socially censored and have a very low or zero level of appearance (Lewis, 2000).

Collocations are also placed within two spectra, fixation / variability and opacity / transparency, which determine their degree of idiomaticity. At the ends of the spectrum of fixation / variability would be those collocations whose nexus between elements is stronger and the presence of one of its members generates strong expectations about which will be the second member (strong placements), and those in which the nexus is so weak and flexibility so great that it is difficult to make forecasts (weak collocations).

Regarding opacity / transparency, although Lewis admits that sometimes one of the two elements may be more literal and less metaphorical and can, therefore, facilitate the understanding of meaning, this does not always occur, so it is more appropriate to interpret transparency as idiomaticity linked to grammatical elements (Lewis, 2000a).
If all the elements that describe, within this original lexical approach, the placements are added, these can be defined as lexical units composed of more than one item in which the co-occurrence in a natural text of a specific typology occurs with a certain degree of frequency, linked to each other arbitrarily and that allow variation in form. The result of this sum of elements is a definition that could be considered as pedagogical, since it pursues more functionality in its use. As for the typology, Lewis distinguishes lexical collocations, which would be the ones that combine two lexical components, of grammatical collocations, in which they combine a lexical word, usually a noun, a verb or an adjective, with a grammatical word, that is, a word known as open category with a closed category, although the focus for him is on the lexical metaphor.

If collocations are the way in which one word co-operates with another, collocation would be the way in which a word co-occurs, frequently, in a particular (grammatical) pattern or the way in which two different patterns co-appear. Collocation would serve to generalize beyond the level of individual collocations to establish broad descriptive patterns, which may be useful for a description of the language for teaching professionals, provided this does not cause the main focus to deviate from words (Lewis, 2000).

Lewis (1997b) mentions that the words, would be “all those language fragments that are recovered as complete units and of which most of the conversation is composed and would be more related to oral way than the written one” (p. 257). These fragments (chunks) can be complete sentences, that do not admit any variation in their form and have an immediate pragmatic value (“I'm coming”, “let it be”), or prayer headings, which would require more lexical items to complete the meaning (“I of you [would not go]”). Institutionalized speech acts have a high level of idiomaticity, so their meaning is
not always transparent when looking at the elements that compose them, and they contain a high load of delexicalized elements.

Finally, the headings and sentence frames would be the written equivalent of institutionalized speech acts. Of variable extension (from “first” to “in relation to the aforementioned...” or even more extensive elements), its function would be to structure written speech or close oral speech in its written form (lectures, academic speech) and many of them may require mastery of the language of specialty in which they are inserted, since they may be unknown even to natives who do not master the field of specialty of the text in which they are located.

Lewis (1997b) understands that:

The classification of lexical items is not unique and that there is overlap between the different categories, so that the same item may belong, depending on the type of analysis performed, to one or another category, mobility which understands that it can be especially useful for teaching (p. 256).

In fact, in the last of his works he abandons this classification in a certain sense and proposes the division of the units of language into complete phrases (pure idioms), phrases made figurative (figurative idioms), restricted collocations and open collocations, where the only criteria for classification in one or another group would be the degree of fixation and opacity (Lewis, 2000).

2.2.2 Learning theory.

The teaching of languages entails a series of ballasts and prejudices that, despite the advances in teaching, are still present in most manuals and in the mentality of teachers, such as the primacy of written language over oral language, the Structuralist vision of the language in which the vocabulary are simple pieces that fit within the gaps in the grammatical structures provided, the obligation for the student to produce from
the early stages, the lack of a broader view of the dynamic character of the meaning, the overvaluation of the realia, the persecution of the product instead of the emphasis on the process, and the emphasis on the correction above the fluidity (Lewis, 1993). To find a solution to this situation it is necessary, first instead, redefine some concepts, such as what exactly declarative and procedural knowledge is; what is referred to when talking about learning, acquisition and teaching, and input and intake; what are the learning processes and how do they develop; of what way the level of the students can be identified based on the factors of precision, fluidity and complexity; what does it refer to and what does the idea of non-linearity of acquisition imply and how does feedback affect the latter (Lewis, 2000b).

Traditional approaches have considered that vocabulary learning is declarative knowledge, while grammar learning was procedural; however, Lewis (2000b) considers that, “when each lexical item contains its own grammar, all language acquisition is intrinsically procedural” (p. 168). This idea is joined by the results of various researches collected by Lewis in which it is stated that the size of the lexicon is much larger than previously considered, which leads to questioning the usefulness of explicit teaching: it is not feasible in the classroom, treat such a large body of elements, so that the study time in it should be devoted to other issues. The idea of the original lexical approach that the structure of language, like most of the lexicon, is acquired through exposure to understandable input, while learning, comes into play to hand of explicit teaching, should be directed to the improvement of learning strategies of the learner, especially those aimed at improving their ability to capture relevant lexical elements.

This input to which the student should be exposed must be, in the initial stages of learning, of an eminently oral nature, to subsequently incorporate written genres, although always leaving specialized genres for learners that require a high level of
mastery, similar to that of native, or have specific needs. Beyond this separation, there is no way to establish a learning path or pattern that the learner will follow, since this is: a non-linear combination of acquisition of new words, new items composed of multiple words, the ability to efficiently break down large units into significant parts (words in morphemes, phrases in words, etc.) in combination with a greater sensitivity [...] towards the rules of the permitted re-combinations and of the restrictions that exclude certain re-combinations (Lewis, 2000b).

This process would take place in cycles: as the student is exposed to new elements, the knowledge he acquires from these reorganizes and modifies the previous existing knowledge, so that it is impossible to determine when the student is learning and, by Therefore, it is unfeasible to try to adjust the input to your level.

Mere exposure to input, on the other hand, also does not guarantee that there is acquisition, but it is necessary that the language makes the transit of input, or elements that the student finds, to intake, or language available for spontaneous use, and for this happens it is necessary that the students perceive and pay attention to the linguistic form of the messages; This question can be complex in practice, since the natural tendency of the student will be to look at the message rather than the form (Lewis, 2000b). Although there is no agreement on what part of the input actually passes to become an intake, there seems to be an idea that explicit attention to the item is necessary. Incidental learning, on the other hand, although not rejected, is considered to take place only in concrete tasks.

From the above, two consequences are extracted: the first, that the input provided to the student is key in their learning; the second, that it is necessary to focus attention on specific units for the acquisition to occur. For Lewis, this minimum unit is collocation: the fact that it can be recovered as a complete block of lexicon speeds up its
recovery during communication, allowing the student to release cognitive resources that he can use for other issues. There is thus an inversion of the traditional order of teaching, in which precision was considered the previous step to fluency: the important thing now is that the student can communicate fluently from the beginning, and accuracy becomes a concern to medium or long term, as the student's knowledge about lexical items is deeper. However, to achieve this, the collocations has certain extension limitations, and the use of a larger unit is necessary. Thus arises the idea of resorting to chunks, or fragments of language, that Lewis, following again didactic patterns, he considers that they are those units that can be used without a detailed analysis of their parts, which admit their reproduction as complete fragments and whose accumulation would allow the learner to discover, in the medium and long term, general and morphological patterns that had traditionally been attributed to the teaching of grammar from a structuralist point of view (Lewis, 1993). These language fragments do not have a specific extension, although it is recommended that they are not excessively short, since the larger these chunks that the learners learn from the beginning, the easier the task of re-producing the natural language later and must always be presented in their natural context and with the least possible number of modifications or, in the case of examples produced in the classroom, always appear associated to a typical context and never isolated (Lewis, 2000b). The development of the student’s ability to locate, identify and analyze these chunks correctly in both oral and written texts is called pedagogical or pedagogical fragmentation chunking and is essential in the language acquisition/learning process (Lewis, 1993).

Chunks that work in the classroom cannot be selected subjectively, since a person’s individual knowledge about their use of the language is limited and is biased by personal experience, which we could have the teacher convey in the classroom a vision
of the language marked by intuitions. The tool that is proposed from the original lexical approach to make an objective selection of fragments is the use of textual corpus. This corpus can be prepared by the teacher according to the profile and needs of the components of the class group, and they fulfill a double function: for the teacher they are a tool for analysis and selection of relevant chunks, while for the student, if they occur tools so you can use it, it can also become an auxiliary study tool. It should be borne in mind that Lewis’s concept of what a corpus is, as has happened with other elements, quite broad, and considers that a single text with eminently significant language for a specific objective can itself be considered as a corpus (Lewis, 2000c).

Presumably, not all students will have begun to learn with the lexical approach, and it is possible that many of them come from teaching / learning systems where words have been stored individually and decontextualized. In this case, the work must be oriented to ensure that the student learns the collocations linked to the words learned in this way (Lewis, 2000ª). Avoiding the concept of “new word” is also important, since the objective is to learn combinations of words and the patterns linked to them (Lewis, 2000); the so-called delexicalized words are the only exception in this regard, since their eminently idiomatic nature makes them immediate useful elements, by providing an input that can serve as a basis for the inductive acquisition of generalizable rules.

The learning process of the lexical approach focuses, in a nutshell, on the exposure to input to which the student is subjected. This should focus on chunks and collocations, and memorize them without making a detailed analysis of their elements to achieve fluency in language proficiency, accepting that accuracy should be a later concern and that any description that can be made about the language will always be provisional and subsequently modifiable, as you go gaining more understanding about its operation (Lewis, 2000b). This view of language does not imply underestimating the
role of grammar. Teaching vocabulary is only insufficient, and that eliminating the grammar of teaching goes in detriment of the learner. However, given that the lexicon - words, collocations and fixed expressions - is the one that essentially conveys the meaning in a text: grammar, although important, has a subordinate role, its treatment must be based on the acceptance that it is a receptive ability, linked to the lexicon and subjective as long as its learning is based on the student’s own capacity for perception. It must also be understood that his explicit teaching will not become the immediate domain of a certain item, although it is possible that it has a facilitating action in its learning, provided that it is not forgotten that grammatical explanations are based on an overgeneralization that can lead to the production of blocked collocations (Lewis, 2000a).

The sum of the idea of a non-linear acquisition / learning coupled with the importance of chunks uptake leads Lewis to the conclusion that the presentation-practice-production paradigm (hereafter referred to as the PPP paradigm), in itself incongruous, is not valid within the learning theory of the original lexical approach.

Lewis (1996) proposes instead the observation-hypothesis-experimentation (hereinafter, the OHE paradigm):

When exposed to input, the student develops hypotheses about what he sees; a new exposure to input will lead you to corroborate your theory, or to refute it and make a new one. Lewis admits that the PPP paradigm can be useful for certain peripheral issues, but understands that the OHE paradigm offers more advantages by being able to be applied systematically, both for class sequence planning and, more especially, as a teaching strategy in the long term, since it is neither more nor less than a summary of how learning really occurs (p. 12).
Within this context, the error is seen as a natural and unavoidable part of the hypothesis testing process, although instead of the usual corrections it is recommended that the teacher provide the student with a reformulation of their production or, if written, some type of brands that allow the learner to have new input with which to purify their hypotheses (Lewis, 1993). The low relevance of the output is also observed here within the original lexical approach, which seems to be seen more as a teacher control tool over the student’s learning point than as an element that contributes to generating learning directly. This idea can also be seen in the acceptance of a period of silence in the initial stages of student learning.

As for the affective factors in learning, although Lewis does not explicitly talk about them, his concern for the issue is manifested in some approaches such as the fact of not forcing the student to produce in the early stages of learning to avoid a high affective filter, the care that the teacher asks to put in the way of treating mistakes or giving feedback to students, or the attention he gives to motivation. Self-confidence and security are also important to him, hence one of the most relevant issues for collocations is that they are islands of reliability (Lewis, 2000b).

2.2.3 Programming, evaluation and classroom management.

The use of the OHE paradigm has an immediate consequence in the classroom: it is impossible to define a specific programming, not at least in the terms in which it has been traditionally conceived, if within the same group it is admitted that each student will meet at a different stage of content acquisition.

The solution is for Lewis (1997a):

To accept that his ideas are simply a set of principles based on a new understanding of language so they can be implemented within any programming, with the only requirement that, within these, the necessary adjustments have
been made so that within the objectives the different types of lexical items have
been taken into account and, from ideally, starting the teaching with an initial
phase in which the student is exposed only to auditory input (p.204).

The question of levels is also affected by this approach, although initially
considered that the level of students are multidimensional, dynamic and, consequently,
unimpossible to measure with scales, in the last of their work they will accept the
existence of three levels. The students who have simply acquired fluency, those who
have taken one more step and have precision and those who they are at the highest level
of mastery of language complexity and can communicate everything they want without
communicating elements without producing misunderstandings with a language fluid,
precise and stylistically appropriate (Lewis, 1993).

The evaluation from the lexical approach, as a consequence of all of the above,
is not particularly developed.

The communicative value of the learner’s statements must be considered above
precision and correctness, using understandability as a tool to assess the severity of
errors, and also mentions the importance of teachers taking into account collocation
within exams (Lewis, 1993).

The classroom has a different role than it has had so far. It must be the
laboratory where the student can practice and feels, in addition, safe to do so (Lewis,
1997b), but this practice should not be oriented to language learning strictly speaking,
since the size of the lexicon makes the explicit work of elements within the classroom
does not make sense, since it is impossible to treat them all. Within class, you must
dedicate yourself to ensuring that the student’s input becomes intake, that is, the
development of learning strategies for the detection of chunks and other language
elements. This does not mean that time cannot be devoted to specific issues, but the
dedication to strategies must always be above the treatment of individual items (Lewis, 1997a). It is recommended, in this sense, to provide the student with basic metalinguistic knowledge, so that the basic terminology (collocations, coligation ...) has a certain familiarity that allows him to manipulate more effectively the information with which he is dealing (Lewis, 1997a).

Within the classroom, the conception of the learning process determines the roles of the teacher and the student: if learning language is necessary for the student to perceive the forms of the language, this happens to be at the very center of the teaching, and the teacher is merely a language manager that helps you detect linguistic forms and learn to detect them autonomously. Teach students to focus attention not on words but on chunks, select appropriate and quality input, choose appropriate tasks, create a class atmosphere with low levels of anxiety, prepare classroom activities that help develop the skill of students to detect chunks and register them in appropriate formats and improve their language skills would be the basic functions of the teacher that Lewis reiterates throughout his work.

The teacher must also have patience, a teaching style in which questions are valued, and the ability to promote curiosity, experimentation and creativity (Lewis, 1996). His talking time in the classroom is very valuable, since it means to the student that has an extra exposure to language, so the teacher should not feel that the time he dedicates to talk to students is time that remains for them to learn, but on the contrary: when speaking to them, he is helping them learn.

2.2.4 Materials and activities.

With class materials the complication of level determination arises, due to the question of non-linearity of learning. Lewis advocates the use of class manuals as a basic work tool, since they provide the student with a sense of order and safety and their
deficiencies can be remedied by the teacher with proper treatment. The own materials
designed by the teacher should be made carefully, trying not to modify the co-text and
being careful in the selection of relevant examples. It will be necessary to include texts
of all kinds (dialogues and prose), in oral, written and combined formats, although in its
exploitation it will never be pretended that the student understands everything. Among
the support materials, grammars are discouraged, since their organization does not
usually provide accessible enough examples that allow the learner to corroborate or
refute their hypotheses, and dictionaries, especially monolinguals, are recommended,
since they allow research on the grammar of words, their collocations and other
characteristics. Textual corpus can also be used whenever students are taught how to use
them, especially if these corpus have been prepared by the teacher specifically for the
group based on their needs.

Lewis (1996) confirms it by saying that:

Teaching approach does not imply or require the radical application of new
methods but rather the application of a wide range of activities on selected input
according to lexical criteria, and without expectations that the new language will
be learned’ in a particular lesson (p. 15).

This “wide range” of possible activities should focus, first, on developing the
student’s ability to fragment speech into useful chunks and detect collocations; for this,
it is necessary to provide the student with enough number of encounters with the same
item (Lewis suggests between 7 and 10), so that the learner has enough opportunities to
both test their hypotheses and, through the exhibition, acquire the item. In the absence
of encounters, the non-monotonous repetition of elements, which favors a memorization
aimed at generating automation, is also viable.
Lewis (1993) specifically recommends:

Drills to work fluency and gaps oriented to make the student focus on certain elements, but it is important that these purposes to be taken into account in the design of these exercises and not intended to be used for other purposes, such as grammatical practice. Similar case would be the transformation and reformulation activities with restrictions on the form, which are also recommended provided that they meet the requirements of being well contextualized and of being used to make comparisons, not using the transformation to work the form (p. 127).

The exercises of recognition, verification, arrangement, comparison or connection can also be useful, as well as puzzles of all kinds, since they help to fix the attention of the apprentice in concrete elements. Extensive written practice is advisable to do it collaboratively, and will be more positive if it is focused on reorganizing, regrouping, reflecting or organizing elements rather than on the creation itself and, in any case, those more specialized formats that require specific training only they must work in a classroom where the group will need them. Finally, the translation can also be worked in class, since it is seen as an intrinsic element to the learning process, but the formula word in L1 = word in L2 must be avoided and rational use made of it, turning it into a tool and resource and not as an end in itself.

A final question requires attention within class materials: the registration of language. Since the learner will be incorporating new knowledge indefinitely, it is necessary to have an element that allows him to carry a registration of the language with which it is found, which admits the inclusion of elements over time and, in addition, allows to see the patterns and discursive structures.
Thus the idea of the vocabulary notebook arises, which can be completed over time with boxes of collocations, schemes or mind maps, all of these tools that meet all the above requirements and that should always be organized at the discretion of the student to allow him to reflect how his mind uses the lexicon, although it is recommended to orient it to avoid bilingual lists of words and placements (Lewis, 1993).

2.3 Referents, references and endorsements of the original lexical approach

Historically, the original lexical approach can be seen as the crystallization of the results of a lexicalist tendency that had begun to take shape during the 1980s (Hudson, 1990) in which vocabulary teaching began to regain a lost prominence with the classical communicative approach and also with the language awareness approach, which defended the teaching of lexical segments, awareness of the forms and functions of the language and the use of attention and perception (Higueras García, 2006). However, these links have been made externally to the author: Lewis’s lack of academic spirit, which already served him to receive criticism at the time (Thornbury, 1998). Led him to replace the bibliography sections or references with a list of readings that inspired him (Lewis, 1993, 1997a) so, in addition to this element and some references scattered within his works, it is difficult to understand, and even justify, some of the principles of his theory.

It has not been possible to locate any work where it is analyzed in detail how these admitted influences connect with the original lexical approach and have been adapted within the theory by this proposal. Keeping this in mind, coupled with the idea that the classroom implementation of an approach or method whose underlying theoretical principles are unknown or not understood can be risky (Widdowson, 1984). A brief analysis has been considered some of the notable and recognized influences by
Lewis may be relevant for a better understanding of the context of creation and configuration of the original lexical approach.

### 2.3.1 Situational context, placements and restricted languages.

If talking about the original lexical approach without mentioning collocations is practically impossible, it is equally difficult to talk about them without mentioning J.R. Firth although this name is strongly associated with corpus linguistics, the truth is that many of the contributions of this author had a strong impact on many other areas of linguistics, to the point that it has been claimed that his theory of the context of the situation and the prosodic analysis are two of the elements with the greatest impact within the field of linguistics (Lyons, 1966).

To elaborate his concept of situational context, Firth started from Malinowski's idea that meaning is not contained in words, but that this is affected by the external elements surrounding the lexicon. This situation context would be composed of elements such as the verbal and nonverbal action of the participants, the relevant characteristics of the objects, the social structure in which the participants are, the type of speech and exchange or the type of speech.

All these elements generate a set of options composed of the dichotomy of the possible (that is, the speaker's options) and the real (which will finally say) and in which our culture, as a prescribed social ritual, in which you generally say what others expect from you. Way or another ends up determining what we finally choose to say (Firth, 1957). In other words, the language for Firth is composed of forms that work in a given context and that by themselves have no function or meaning (Quereda Rodríguez-Navarro, 2002). But acquire this through the sum of the elements of its linguistic environment, or co-text, and of the extralinguistic, or contextual environment. The words thus generate associations with others in their environment, associations that
become part of their meaning, and hence the concept of *collocation* and collocation meaning that leads Firth (1962) to affirm that “you will know the words for the company they carry” (p.11).

Although the name of Firth is usually associated mainly to linguistic theory rather than to pedagogy of language, except for some specific mentions that link it to the origin of the notional-functional programs, the truth is that its contributions to the field of language didactics were also relevant. Firth’s concept of language led him to develop the idea of restricted languages that some represent “the most original and fruitful contribution of Firth” in the field of teaching foreign languages, since it allowed us to understand that the text belongs to a specific situational context that determines the elements that compose it, so that the absolute frequency criterion could not be the only one used. It is also possible to trace in Firth and the importance that gave the introspection the first ideas that it was necessary to leave a space for the student to reflect and generate the necessary understanding in the tasks of reading and writing (McLaren, 2002).

Firth’s situation context theory had a strong impact on British linguistics, both in its time and in later authors and it is not difficult to find clearly Firthian elements in Lewis (Calvo López et al., 2002).

The element that more patently unites them is the importance of collocations as a key unit of language, although for Lewis the selection of this unit seems to be also guided by a pedagogical criterion that was not found in Firth. Other elements among which a clear relationship can also be established are Lewis's spectrum of acceptability, a direct heir to Firth’s idea that the selection of elements is conditioned by context, and the importance of providing each class group with specific texts oriented to their needs, approach very similar to the concept of restricted languages of Firth. It is also striking
the shared awareness about the need for a period of silence in the student that must be respected, although in Firth it seems to be more related to classroom practice while for Lewis (as is the case with the Krashen Natural Approach)

This period of silence and reflection is a phase in the global learning process. It is also worth mentioning that some elements of one of the main developers of the Firthian theory of language can also be traced in Lewis: in his theory of the lexicon as a linguistic level the vision of a scale where the items are distributed from more grammatical to more lexical, the justification of how the lexicon comes to explain those questions that the grammar fails to explain or the idea that the acceptance or rejection of a collocation by the native speaker depends on the degree of social acceptability of it will also depart which are also found in the Lewis language theory (Halliday, 1966).

2.3.2 Corpus linguistics and language teaching.

In the 1980s, the English Language Research Department of the University of Birmingham and Collins publisher signed a cooperation agreement that includes the creation of a textual corpus of contemporary English. The project, called COBUILD (acronym for Collins Birmingham University International Language Database), was proposed by John Sinclair, professor at that university and editor in chief of the project. The objective of this corpus, in which 7,300,000 words were analyzed initially (later extended to 20,000,000), was to be able to obtain a vision of the real use of the English language that would allow the development of linguistic tools where this will be reflected. The idea itself was not new: West or Thorndike, in the 30s and 40s, had tried jobs in a certain similar way, although the technological support at the moment allows to create and work with a volume of work that had not previously been possible.

The word becomes a unit with enormous potential from the didactic point of view, a key element for the development of a new type of program, the lexical program,
and of a whole movement within the teaching of languages. One of the key names in this movement of corpus linguistics is that of Sinclair, which is usually linked only to corpus linguistics, but which also made direct transfer contributions to the classroom in the first lexical program proposal, and also the development of concepts such as the principle of idiomaticity (Sinclair and Renouf, 1988). For Sinclair, communication is generated through a process of selecting elements in the text that is observable through statistics; form and meaning are associated through a series of distinctive, regular formal patterns, the choice of which in turn conditions that of other elements around it in the text (Sinclair, 1991). This implies that the separation between lexicon and grammar is baseless, since all text is composed of occurrences of common words in common patterns, or in small variations of those common patterns the meaning is created through the relationships between words and patterns. The tool with which to obtain the statistical evidence that reveals the nature of the words and the patterns in which they are inserted would be the analysis of textual corpus, whose analysis corroborates that there is a close relationship between the senses of a word and the structures in which it appears and that, in addition, the textual types on which the analysis is carried out will provide different evidence about the words and their environment. From the observation of results, Sinclair concludes that the construction of meaning is regulated by two principles: open selection and idiomaticity.

The principle of open selection states that the linguistic text is the result of a large number of complex selections since, in any selection range, in any of the “gaps” that are filled to produce, virtually any word can appear (Sinclair, 1991).

The idiomaticity principle affirms that, although the user has an infinite number of individual options, there are certain lexical, lexical-semantic or syntactic variations, certain tendencies to appear in certain grammatical patterns or in certain semantic
contexts, which restrict the range of options of the speaker, and this principle is
dominant over that of open choice (Sinclair, 1991).

In other words, there is freedom to choose the way in which to convey meaning
but, when producing, these forms are restricted by grammaticality in order to create
meaning. Taken to the field of teaching, Sinclair sees an advantage in that the learners
are able to see that words do not operate individually, but in small sets that can learn as
an independent word, depending on their global meaning, while the individual meaning
of the words can be used as reinforcement to understand the meaning (Sinclair, 1991).

Although Sinclair makes some didactic notes, the two direct heirs of corpus
linguistics within the field of didactics are data-based learning (data-driven learning)
and the original lexical approach (Mishan, 2012). The influence of corpus linguistics on
Lewis is certainly remarkable: the principle that language is grammaticalized lexicon
and the vision of language based on what speakers really do with it are elements
belonging to this theoretical framework.

Sinclair's influence in particular is also palpable in various elements. The first of
these is probably the importance of collocations within the theory of language and
didactic proposals, which would continue with Firth's linguistic tradition, although with
certain differences. Sinclair needs a more technical placement concept, where issues
such as scope do have relevance, while Lewis, guided by a pedagogical criterion, has a
broader concept of the term; also while for Lewis the main unit of work is placement,
for Sinclair the word is. The second question would be that of the principle of
idiomaticity of Sinclair, whose presence is constant in Lewis throughout his entire
production, compared to other elements that he uses as part of his theory of language
and that he ends up abandoning, such as the spectra of language.
Third, the lexical analysis model proposed by Sinclair both for textual corpus (1991) and the one that will previously be carried out for texts of smaller length (1966), composed of dividing the text into fragments, selection of the useful elements based on the relative frequency within the textual type, provisional discard of the elements not frequent and importance of the most common and delexicalized words, shares elements with which Lewis performs, although while for Sinclair the work unit must be the placement, for Lewis they are the pedagogical chunks.

2.3.3 The lexical program.

The first relevant proposal of a lexical program originates from Sinclair and Renouf (1988) which define it as an independent and pre-existing element to other classroom elements such as course materials, methodology or evaluation, in which collect the items selected to be covered during the course. These elements should be the most common words, their patterns in language and the placements and combinations in which they appear most frequently, selected through the use of textual corpus, plus an additional list with words of daily, physical sensations and personal emotions whose frequency in the corpus may be low but that are also necessary to achieve “the objective of a balance between natural use and utility” (Sinclair and Renouf, 1988). During the learning process, the learner would not construct sentences, but would deconstruct them, understanding how they work through the observation and analysis of the language. According to its authors, such a program would be efficient because the effort of learning would be rewarded both for the frequency of use and appearance of these words and for the fact that they admit to be recombined, which would allow the student to produce recombining with known and frequent elements instead of having to add indefinitely new and rare elements. The notions, structures and functions would appear naturally when using the frequent lexicon, so it would not be necessary to collect them
within the objectives. It could also be adapted to any teaching context, since it would not be related to any specific methodology or approach.

The second proposal of a lexical program comes from Willis (1990) who emphasizes communicative teaching of the language, but considers that synthetic programs, whether structural or notio-functional, have certain irresolvable shortcomings: they start from the presumption that the student learns in a linear way when, in reality, no there is a way to know which items will be assimilated in each phase through which it passes and, more importantly, they deny you the opportunity to express the meaning you really want, imposing the use of certain forms instead of taking advantage of the natural tendency of the student to create a sense of what he receives and to try to express himself by his own means.

The lexicon program of Willis (1990) unlike the one proposed by Sinclair and Renouf (1988) would not be composed of items, but of a corpus of natural language texts. These would provide the student with a sufficient amount of input to allow him, based on his previous knowledge, to make hypotheses and generalizations about words and their use, recycle, and internalize elements, following the natural sequence of Interlingua development (Willis, 1996). The word thus becomes the most effective unit for teaching, since its identification is what gives the reader access to the understanding of the larger units, such as the text, by allowing him to understand the keys to his structure. In this view of language, grammar is seen as the systematic relationship between form and meaning that allows grammatical sentences to be produced; However, its large extent prevents it from being fully described, so its direct presentation is useless and only by direct exposure of the student to the language can it internalize its operation. The consequence of this is that the activities of controlled practice and contrastive grammar should disappear from the classroom, which
encourage the use of the prescriptive language and limit the capacity of the learners, while the error becomes a natural element resulting from the lack of exposure to language. In this vision of the language as an eminently semantic system a new relationship between fluency is created, related to production, it is reached before precision, related to the degree of adjustment between the meaning that the student wants and can convey (Willis, 1990).

A program understood as a textual corpus (or pedagogical corpus, as D. Willis and J. Willis, 1996 will later call it) requires a model of didactic exploitation that is not based on the pieces of language, but on the texts and on what you can do with them. The ideal route for this exploitation would be the task, since this allows the creation of meaningful contexts for the apprentice, as in the model proposed by J. Willis and D. Willis (Task, Planning and Report, 1987). The Collins COBUILD English Course (Collins CoBUILD, 1988), written by these same authors, is the physical transfer to a manual of some of these principles.

In the context in which D. Willis (1990) makes his proposal, other authors, such as Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) or Nation (1990), also reflect and make specific proposals for the classroom where the lexicon recovers a different place, more central, than the one he had had so far. However, the proposal of D. Willis (1990) differs from these by a more educational-oriented development and by its commitment to a specific approach such as task teaching. The relationship between the lexicon program of D. Willis and the ideas of the original lexical approach is delicate. Both share two elements: unconditional censorship of structuralist programs and the PPP paradigm and the lexical vision in the central axis of education. However, and although some parallels between one and the other seem patent, it seems to be that Lewis rejected the existence of a relationship between his work and the lexicon program D. Willis, since the latter
lexicon was incurring in what Lewis called the “frequency fallacy”, which is considered that the most used words are also the most necessary, ignoring the fact that language must be analyzed not from words, but from placements, element upon which the weight of communication really rests. In any case, and even accepting the latter, it is difficult to affirm that the original lexical approach does not share anything with the lexical program: in addition to the two elements mentioned above, other issues such as the importance of exposure to input, the focus on process or the use of corpus in class are also shared. If, in addition, it is noted that there are also coincidences between the initial lexical program of Sinclair and Renouf (1988) and the original lexical approach, such as the importance of lexical recycling, the possibility of being implemented with any methodology, the reconstruction technique of phrases and the observation of the language as a source of learning, rejecting a link between both elements is even more complicated, since both seem to drink from sources of similar principles. It seems, therefore, that the relationship established by the lexical program and the original lexical approach to each other is from different interpretations generated on the same theoretical basis, rather than being the first part of the theoretical sources of the second.

2.3.4 Cognitive linguistics and the role of attention.

As behaviorism was losing prominence in teaching, it was gained by the idea that learning did not have to be a uniquely unconscious phenomenon, but it was possible that consciousness also participated in the learning processes. The role of consciousness was to explain from two points of view: it was possible that, as the theories of the global workspace defended, new information would be processed in a distributed way by a series of specialized processors and an exchange center of information, but it was also speculated that the information would be processed by a set of independent processors with storage, information selection or execution limitations. In the latter, the memory
was divided into three spaces: one for information collection, one for short-term storage (also called main memory or working memory) and another for long-term storage (secondary memory). This last model allowed us to explain how the mind processed the language through two systems that it used simultaneously (Skehan, 1998): a system based on standards, which would allow production from scratch, and a system based on examples and samples of language, which would allow to produce simply by recovering and reproducing previously stored models and which would be the predominant system, due to its reduced need for consumption of cognitive resources.

These two automated and non-automated processing systems would also be used when learning and using language. Automated processing, characteristic at the higher levels and responsible for language and language skills much of the cognitive processing would be involuntary, would consume scarce resources and would allow operating in parallel, quickly, efficiently and accurately; non-automated processing, typical of initial levels, would be slow, would have limited capacity, it would work in series and would involve a high cost of resources for the system, but would allow it to be controlled voluntarily, so it could be used for the pursuit of objectives and the resolution of problems (Schmidt, 1990).

Linguists linked to the cognitive current in language teaching also take another step: if it is admitted that the capacity of working memory is limited and that, consequently, most of their resources will be used for processing meaning for communication to take place, it is very likely that it ignores the form; In other words, if there are no elements in the processing conditions that lead the student to look at the form, it will go completely unnoticed, so it is possible for the student to achieve understanding, but not to generate learning (Skehan, 1998).
The student faces, therefore, two cognitive challenges in his learning: to make the elements he finds or with which he works move from working memory to long-term memory and being able to look at the way they take these elements. The two questions are, however, related, since it is necessary for an element to work and process in the working memory in order to become aware of its shape (Schmidt, 1990).

This awareness, understood as an integral part of attention, is at the heart of the (Schmidt, 2010). Noticing is the “subjective correlate of attention” a conscious process that takes place when the learner fixes his attention on the input and turns it into intake understood here as the part of the input that the learner captures (Schmidt, 1990).

This training attention works with specific language samples, not with the norms that regulate them, and is an element available in a limited, selective way that admits voluntary control. In itself it is not enough to learn, but it is essential to facilitate or promote that the elements in working memory are processed and passed to long-term memory resulting in automated routines that occur smoothly and that no longer require attention. The amount of attention that the elements require to move to long-term memory is different: individual words, collocation, short and fixed expressions require less attention than those that are more ambiguous and longer; and, in general, lexical learning and morphology require more attention and awareness than syntax (Schmidt, 2001).

The uptake, as part of the attention, can be controlled voluntarily, so it is possible to use it in elements that, initially, have not activated it Schmidt and Frota, (1986). And it is also affected by the same elements that that: foreseeable expectations, high degree of frequency or notability, skill level and low degree of cognitive requirement in the task make recruitment easier. In the field of language teaching, the pressure generated by interaction, motivation, the use of strategies and individual issues
such as the capacity of working memory also influence the capacity for attention and, therefore, for recruitment. The Catchment Hypothesis is not, on the other hand, incompatible with the idea of incidental learning, which is possible if the task requires focusing attention on certain relevant elements of the input, nor with that of acquisition, especially because investigations do not allow to affirm if this is possible or not (Schmidt, 1990).

The specific proposals of Schmidt (1995) for the classroom include the need to pay attention to the input or to any specific aspect of it that is required to learn specifically, the search for different elements among those produced by a native and by the apprentice himself and hypothesis development. Schmidt's motto is that, in learning, "nothing comes for free", so any relevant issue for learning must receive specific attention, although always taking into account that the uptake must be the first step towards the construction of the language, not the end of the process (Schmidt, 2001).

The transfer within the original lexical approach of the ideas of the Hypothesis of the recruitment is so simple and direct that it is difficult to clarify questions: the attention is for Lewis the gateway to access to learning, since only paying attention to the forms will be possible to make these pass into long-term memory. In fact, a large part of the classroom activities proposed by Lewis are aimed at making the student aware of the ways in which language is presented, the formula of treating the error through providing feedback to the student in the form of input to help you detect where you were wrong is based on encouraging the student to capture the difference, and the whole set of the OHE paradigm is based on focusing attention on the hypotheses generated. The main problem in this regard is that although Lewis agrees on the idea that the focus on attention is only a first step towards learning, it is difficult to elucidate what the next step of the process would be, although on this issue it will become the
section intended for criticism of the original lexical approach. On the other hand, Schmidt considered that, although the Hypothesis of the Recruitment was compatible with teaching theories focused on both the form of the language and the meaning, his theory matched the teaching approaches of the cognitive type in Schmidt (As cited proposals from Bialystok, N. Ellis, R. Ellis, Skehan, VanPatten or Swain, 2001). So this direct transfer should not be surprising either.

2.3.5 The formulaic language.

In general, the idea of prefabricated or formulaic language arises from the cognitive premise, that long-term memory in humans has a large storage capacity, as opposed to short-term memory term or working memory, which would be responsible for immediate processing and has a very limited capacity. To optimize these resources, the language would be stored and recovered from long-term memory in prefabricated structures, composed of recurring sets of lexical units, thus freeing up much of the processing load to work memory, which with the released resources can address other equally necessary issues during communication.

One of the first works where learning is organized from the perception of prefix structures is English through actions. Its authors, giving a twist to the direct method in which the stimulus-response chain has more weight, establish in four the phases of learning: perception of unknown unit, recognition and identification of this unit in later phases, imitation of the sound chain of still unknown meaning and reproduction (Palmer and Palmer, 1925).

The idea of perception and work with prefabricated units will have to wait a few decades until it is investigated in a manner concrete. Although the first work recognized as complete on the subject, where the sequences of children and adults are addressed,
the factors that affect the location of what he calls “minimum units of speech act” (Becker, 1975).

A comparison of the productions of the native speaker and the learner allows these authors to detect two problems: the first, that of the global amount of grammatically possible sentences only a minimum part is accepted by the native as a natural form of expression, so if the learner focuses solely on grammar will end up producing grammatically correct but socially unacceptable sentences; the second, that reaching the fluency of the native is an extremely difficult task for the apprentice if this, in addition to producing fluidly, must take care of planning the discourse, regulating the register, generating content and controlling grammar.

The solution to both situations would involve the use of what they call lexicalized sentence stems or lexicalized prayer roots, “phraseological expressions composed of a number of fixed lexical items that allow the specifications needed to complete a sentence to be constructed with one or more variable elements consider this language, which would function as a minimum unit from a syntactic point of view, and that would be socially and culturally sanctioned.

These lexicalized sentence roots would present, for the learner, a triple advantage: they allow him to release cognitive resources that they can devote to other tasks, since they recover as a single unit in which there is nothing to process; they guarantee a certain degree of fluency in the discourse and, being socially and culturally sanctioned, would allow them to solve the problem of lack of naturalness.

In the same didactic line would be the work of Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992). These authors categorize what they call lexical phrases (“lexical phrases”) into a double categorization.
On the one hand, depending on their length, grammatical status, canonicity, variability and continuity, these lexical phrases can be poliwords (short phrases that function as individual, fixed and continuous lexical items), institutionalized expressions (of similar extension to sentence, function as independent, canonical, invariable and continuous speech acts), phraseological restrictions (short to medium length patterns, which they admit great variability and essentially continuous) and sentence constructors (complete sentence frames, of great variability and eminently discontinuous). On the other, they can also be categorized attending to their functions, so we could talk about lexical phrases of social interaction, recurring themes and discursive mechanisms. The authors relate these structures to the lexicalized sentence roots of Pawley and Syder (1983) although, unlike those, they consider that lexical phrases, in order to be considered as such, must necessarily have a functional component (Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992).

The improvement of fluency involved in working with lexical phrases contributes to an increase in motivation and a reduction in frustration, since that facilitate the apprentice a more efficient communication. Also, being contextualized and linked to specific social situations, they allow relatively easy memorization. They specifically recommend starting the teaching with the use of drills to memorize the lexical phrases with the greatest degree of variation and gradually moving the student towards the more fixed ones, graduating the difficulty and always within a social interaction, although he considers that these are not more than proposals for study, since to integrate these into teaching, more research work on the effectiveness and teaching methodology of lexical phrases would be necessary (Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992).

Virtually all of Pawley and Syder's ideas are found in the theory of the original lexical approach: the location of these lexicalized sentence roots in a spectrum of
greater or lesser fixation, the emphasis on achieving fluency and the search for a learner whose production does not seem stereotyped or marked are practically identical visions, so it is not strange that Lewis (1993) considered it as very influential in his work and in his lexicon vision. As for the work of Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992). Although the references are constant in the original lexical approach, the truth is that the link that unites them is essentially the idea of the importance of prefabricated language and its didactic advantages, since both in the vision they have of language as in the transfer of this to the classroom they share few elements. It is possible that Lewis found in the work of these authors a contemporary reference with which to contrast part of their ideas, although their true influence was in (Nattinger, 1988). A work in the current of the formulaic language but much less extensive and that also appears as one of his recognized influences (Lewis, 1993).

2.3.6 The pedagogical vision of Widdowson and the Natural Approach.

The original lexical approach has been cataloged, as part of contemporary communicative approaches, which arose in response to the problems that the approach to classical communicative approaches were beginning to produce. Although Lewis denies many of the elements of these, such as the role of realia, the functions of the classroom or the theory of learning, there is an author, closely linked to the reflections on what should be a teaching oriented to the promotion of communication

Language is the tool that allows ideas to be formulated in the mind and, at the same time, provides the means for these ideas to be transmitted, allowing the individual to relate to their immediate context; for this, it is necessary that both partners have both knowledge of the rules of the language (use) and ability to master (usage).
Communication begins when a user identifies a situation that requires information transfer to establish a convergence of knowledge, so he needs to resort to negotiating the meaning through interpretation. During this process, the speaker first accesses the lexical elements, and uses the syntax if the analysis of the former has failed. This creates a convenient distribution of semantic responsibility between the lexical and semantic elements between lexicon and grammar, among which the formulaic language would act as a mediator (Widdowson, 1990).

This communication process is inaccurate and, therefore, the analysis of it in didactics should also be. One possibility would be to present to the learners the language mainly in lexical terms, thus establishing the conditions for a gradual emergence of syntax as a mechanism of concentration, in a completely opposite way to conventional practice (Widdowson, 1990). So that the students understood, on the one hand, that the function of grammar is to serve the lexicon and, on the other, that there are certain blocks of language that can be learned as a unit and used without analyzing during communication. This can be achieved by generating conditions for language learning that are similar to what occur when the language is used, so that the language is not taught as communication but for communication: it is not necessary to use categories of notions and functions, but to let the student participate in the speech, negotiate the meaning in context and adjust to the maximum communication restrictions. This does not mean that language skills must be left aside: acquiring one does not imply reaching the other, so in the classroom there must be a balance of elements that lead to both the use and usage domain (Widdowson, 1978).

Achieving this balance is complicated, since, although it is necessary that there is focus on the form, if the student focuses on it during production, it will inhibit its natural use. To avoid this, the student must achieve fluency in the production of forms,
and leave precision as a remedy for those elements that cannot be achieved through fluency (Widdowson, 1984).

In other words, the student must achieve the fluency to be able to communicate, and take care of the precision as they naturally feel the need for greater control over the norm: the correction must be what the learner directs in his process, not something with which it begins; it is something that he achieves and not that can be imposed (Widdowson, 1984).

To generate in the student the need to communicate, the learning path must be reversed, based on situations or problems that involve the student with speech, so that the acquisition of language takes place during the use itself. In this way, it is also achieved that the student develops strategies for the development of communication during the speech and also that it transfers the strategic knowledge of its L1 and adapts it to the conditions of the language of study (Widdowson, 1978).

Throughout this process, errors will occur that, as part of a creative process, should not be censored but treated, since they show the limitations to which the learner is being subjected (Widdowson, 1990). Translation, on the other hand, is inevitable for the learning process, so it should be used regularly, especially to compare speech acts in the learner’s mother tongue with the study language (Widdowson, 1978).

The classroom is the place where these processes should take place. For this, he must provide the student with conditions that help him develop the skills he will need to face the linguistic problems he will encounter in real life (Widdowson, 1984). For this, it is important that the activities that take place in it are authentic. This authenticity is not related to the genuineness of the materials or activities, but to the ability of the materials to involve students and engage them with the generation of discourse in the classroom: learning is a theater of the absurd in which they have to participate to
generate learning (Widdowson, 1984), so the materials will be authentic as long as they facilitate this involvement. Thus, the pedagogical modification, carried out in a way that maintains the essential features of a text and without the changes made evident, can make a genuine text become authentic; and, similarly, a manual text containing artificial language samples, if it is accepted that its function is a mere presentation of the form within the class game and is accompanied by communication-oriented activities, can also be used in class (Widdowson, 1984).

The similarities between the ideas of Widdowson and Lewis could be classified into three groups. On the one hand, there would be the issues that both share, along with many other authors linked to communicative approaches: the idea that the description of the language is not pedagogy, the importance of context, the need to learn language linked to a context or the place that learning strategies should occupy in teaching (Lewis, 2000). A second group would be composed of ideas that Lewis could have drawn from Widdowson and translated his theory so more or less direct, and that cannot be found in classical communicative approaches: the vision of language as an eminently semantic element, in which lexical elements organize grammar, and not vice versa; the vision of the classroom not as a transcript of the real world, but recognized in its classroom dimension, workspace, experimentation, practice and essay; translation, understood as an intrinsic tool for learning; the need to address the error; the learning process started from fluency and where precision is a goal and not the starting point. A third group would be composed of ideas that they share partially, but they transfer to the classroom differently: both give importance to work balanced between focus on meaning and focus on form, but while for Widdowson the focus on form must be prior to focus on meaning and it can be treated didactically, for Lewis the initial step must be the capture of elements and meaning is a priority over the form, although both agree on
the idea that precision must be a secondary concern. They also both believe that drills exercises, provided they are well designed, can return to the scene, but while Widdowson sees them as a way to learn the form and meaning of language, for Lewis they serve as a tool for chunks uptake and collocations.

An element that separates Lewis from Widdowson is his perspective on the Natural Approach. Widdowson (1990) rejects Krashen’s ideas both the Acquisition and Learning Hypothesis, since he considers that there is nothing in the mind that prevents consciously resorting to the norm during the interaction, such as the Hypothesis of Natural Learning (1990). Because this part of the premise that learners have a systemic knowledge that they do not necessarily have to have and, above all, because it implies accepting that didactic intervention is not useful, while for Widdowson helping the learners to discover issues that they themselves could not reveal if it generates learning (Widdowson, 1990). Lewis, meanwhile, does accept that there is acquisition and learning, and understands that the structure of language and most of the lexicon are elements that are acquired, while learning must be carried out through teaching activities aimed at improving the student’s ability to capture and understand the lexical nature of language, so that in the original lexical approach Lewis manages to reconcile. If he partially rejects, however, the Input Hypothesis and, in a certain sense, also that of the Natural Order, since while for Krashen launching the student a linguistic network will make it retain the elements for which he is prepared, in a vision of linear learning and, therefore, planable, in the original lexical approach the learner returns again and again to prior knowledge to modify and expand it indefinitely, in a circular process and it is not possible to calculate or plan, since it is different for each learner. Despite these discrepancies, the ideas of the Natural Approach also have an impact on Lewis: the idea of the treatment of error through reformulation, of the teacher’s effort to infer what the
student means to avoid a high affective filter, of respect for a period of initial silence and the different rhythms of internalization of the students, of the importance of increasing the teacher’s talking time in the classroom, are elements that he takes from this Approach.

2.4 Contemporary interpretations of the lexical approach

The literature on the lexical approach presents a series of characteristics that must be taken into account before proceeding with its description. The first one is the question of terminology; while concepts such as “communicative approach” or “task approach” have been consolidated over time as specific terms that encompass a specific set of ideas about teaching, that of “lexical approach” is often used descriptively to refer to a didactic sequence, classroom activity or class dynamics where vocabulary, in general, occupies a central role; nor has it contributed to the term adequately using the reductionist view of the lexical approach as a set of working techniques with formulaic language that is frequently found in research, as will be seen in the empirical works section. The second issue is the way in which the theory is transmitted: there is no academic, identifiable or cohesive corpus that serves as a reference to talk about the lexical approach, but that each author has developed their own ideas based on those of the original lexical approach, and on many occasions the transmission of them has been carried out in means of immediate reach, such as teacher training workshops or seminars, a transmission model that allows a faster transfer to the classroom, but makes it difficult for ideas to have repercussions beyond of the time and place where these events take place. To try to mitigate the effect of these limitations as much as possible, the analysis from the lexical approach presented below, it has been carried out by grouping the works according to the main ideas proposed by their authors, and from the
selection of empirical works, those focused solely on the formulaic language or on the lexicon in general have been eliminated.

2.4.1 The vision from the teaching of European languages.

The arbitrariness of language and autonomous acquisition through attention. One of the best-known amendments to the lexical approach is that made by Boers and Lindstromberg (2009). Who disagree mainly with three questions of the original lexical approach: the principle of absolute arbitrariness of language, the student's ability to discover chunks completely independent and the idea that attention is sufficient for learning chunks. These authors define chunks as chains of words that are used for specific purposes, different for each individual depending on their needs. In the case of foreign language students, these chunks must have the teachability trait, that is, be often used and require formal instruction to be understood (Boers and Lindstromberg, 2009). Idioms, a type of phraseological unit, would be the chunks that would fulfill these two conditions, especially since the exploitation of their semantic or phonetic motivation can facilitate their learning in the classroom. This implies, in turn, denying the postulate of the original lexical approach to the absolute arbitrariness of language, which for these authors is positive: if at least a part of the chunks allows its decomposition into justifiable minor parts, it is favored that the adult learner learns to process the language both holistically and analytically, instead of forcing the disabling of the analytical way, as defended from the original lexical approach (Boers and Lindstromberg, 2009).

On the other hand, the idea that simple exposure generates retention is unlikely, at least in non-immersion contexts where it is not likely that the number of meetings necessary for this to occur (Boers and Lindstromberg, 2009) in addition to the premise from which it starts, that the learner has the ability to detect the chunks by itself, has
been contradicted by the research. The reconciliation between acquisition-learning happens for these authors by what they call semi-incidental acquisition, which would consist of a first phase of acquisition through the focus on the form through activities proposed by the original lexical approach, followed by a phase of activities of formal teaching to make these units go into long-term memory. These formal teaching activities would be based on the semantic or phonetic motivation of chunks, making use of elements such as images, mimicry, contrast between figurative and non-figurative meaning, or mnemonic techniques, and other activities such as translation, text memorization could also be used repetition of dialogues or activities of drills or role-play (Boers and Lindstromberg, 2009).

The registration of elements is also useful, but it should be the teacher who establishes the ordering criteria within the student’s vocabulary notebook, since the latter’s designs are not usually effective, especially in the case of metaphors (Boers and Lindstromberg, 2009). The idea at the base is that memorization is more useful than mere attention or targeting, so class time cannot only be devoted to developing chunks location strategies, but must also be used for activities that favor mechanization, although always contextualized communicatively. Strongly documented as a proposal, the contribution of Boers and Linstromberg (2009) presents the difficulty of being very oriented to the teaching of English and a very specific element of this language such as idioms that, for others, for Lewis did not have special importance since, being units of great fixation and little variability, for him they presented little challenge from the point of view of their identification as chunk.

Richards and Rodgers (2014) see how the lexical approach should be implemented within the communicative approach and in classrooms for intermediate or advanced students.
Lexical approach, as a consequence of the methodology, would be more efficient if it were used in an integrated way within the teaching by tasks, abandoning the characteristic activities of the lexical approach. For Whong (2011), the teaching by tasks and the lexical approach combine naturally, since they allow to combine explicit teaching with the implicit one, and a later practice in tasks, understands that the lexical approach, as an evolution of the communicative approach, what it is doing is emphasizing the importance of organizing learning by tasks through use of context or reality (Cardona, 2011).

2.4.2 Alternatives to collocations in the teaching axis.

The central situation within the language theory of the original lexical approach to collocations has made this a much analyzed element, especially from the linguistic point of view. From a general didactic perspective, they have been considered the key to getting out of the intermediate level of language command, produced by excess of knowledge of individual items and lack of knowledge about combinations that can add meaning to production (Lewis, 2000). And it has even been affirmed that the development of collocation competence within the lexical approach occupies a place similar to that of the development of communicative competence, so that the discrimination between those relevant collocations that are going to work in the classroom and those of less interest that will be left for autonomous study is important (Hill, 2000). In general, it has been suggested that the evaluation of the collocation domain should be carried out taking into account semantic, contextual, cotextual and pragmatic elements.

At the same time that these ideas arise to complete the collocation treatment, alternatives to a lexical approach appear where the axis is not the collocation. The first of these proposals arises precisely when collecting the first results of teaching around
collocation. For Woolard (2000), collocations are co-occurrences of words that students do not expect and, consequently, cannot produce, and with this concept of collocation he designs the series of manuals *Words for Fluency*, published by Heinle in the years 2004 and 2005.

These manuals made a direct transfer from the ideas of the original lexical approach, so they articulated all the contents based on the placement. The excessive focus on this element ended up preventing their students from properly grammatizing, according to their own author, for whom the solution to this issue would be through the application of learning strategies of the original lexical approach to a larger learning unit, the message, a unit of extension greater than the word, with form, content and function recognized by the community that uses them and which would replace the collocation in its role as the axis of learning. These messages would be structured in frames, where grammar and vocabulary would be combined to generate meaning and whose learning, therefore, would allow the learner to understand and produce complete, coherent and cohesive texts (Woolard, 2013).

Learning would be structured in a cycle in four phases: lexicalization, where memorization of elements would be encouraged and translation would be used to facilitate understanding; synthesization, where the shape of the language would be analyzed; practice, where the objective would be to favor spontaneous production to monitor it; and relexicalization, where the stored language would be recovered to help the learner express himself in the language of study. To carry out this cycle a text would be used together with a worksheet. At the end of the cycle, the following text and worksheet would be passed, although it would be periodically returned to previous texts, accompanied by different worksheets, focused on other elements, to guarantee a number of reunions enough over time.
In addition to the texts and worksheets, the student would also have vocabulary lists, grammar summaries in several languages and what the author calls shadow texts, which would be similar texts to the study at the level of form, but with new information. Among the recommended activities for these worksheets are the use of *drills*, oriented to repetition and not grammatical practice; the practice out loud, which improves motor action, monitoring and which, in addition, can be done without the need for a teacher; translation, innate to the learning process; and contrastive analysis activities, which will allow learners to understand how their language differs from that of study. The student is the one who decides the speed at which he wants to advance and how many times to return to a previous text to work it in what degree of depth, although at the beginning of the teaching it will be the teacher who indicates the guidelines. The student expects effort and practice, since these are the elements on which their progress depends directly (Woolard, 2013). The evaluation is considered unnecessary but useful, and to perform it, oral translation exercises from the mother tongue to the study language are suggested (Woolard, 2013).

Woolard’s proposal presents some difficulties for its transfer to the classroom, many of them probably derived from the fact of being only a proposal, without practical development. The first of these is the constant repetition of the same texts: although the focus of work is different, the monotony in the contents and the way of working can make memorization less effective than if it is done in a non-monotonous way (Bygates, 1996). Nor are criteria provided for the selection of texts or messages, content graduation or for deciding which elements are more appropriate to include in which repetition cycle. Nor does the form of evaluation seem appropriate: translation is not a linear coding / decoding process that allows determining the mastery of a language, but requires a large number of mental operations, such as analysis, interpretation,
comparison, inference, weighing possibilities, among many others, which are part of a complex process that does not depend solely on the level of language proficiency.

2.4.3 The continuous current.

One of the main sources of development and transmission of the lexical approach has been the oral one, through congresses and seminars. Related to this, is the one that has taken place through teacher training courses, especially in the field of teaching English as a foreign language, where there is a circle of names linked to the teaching of the lexical approach whose work have only transcended to the academic world in a timely manner, but whose work in informative media has been strong and allows visualizing, although not registering efficiently for the research that is intended here, the movements of this current. The main exception in this regard is probably the work of Dellar and Walkley (2016) which, without being strictly academic work, is considered within this circle as one of the key pieces for the understanding of the lexical approach today, by what is currently the main exponent of what can be considered as a continuum of the original lexical approach, where Lewis’s original ideas have been respected and modified from the perspective of the real classroom and its circumstances.

The proposal of these authors seeks practicality, the work with the lexical approach must be oriented to less change or replace the materials with something new and more make a better exploitation of what already exists, especially in a context where the teacher, in most cases, is institutionally limited by a program or a manual and its direct scope of action, and where you can really make change, it is in the way of treating the manual, the classroom and the students (Dellar and Walkley, 2016). There is, therefore, no single lexical approach, but there are many possible lexical programs depending on what the teacher can do in each curriculum. In this view of the lexical
approach, oral and written text, is the main source of learning. Attention is the key to learning but, by itself, it does not generate it, so it is necessary for the student to go through a cycle of exposure, reactivation of content with a focus on meaning, and subsequent work on the way for this is produced. This teaching-learning process would follow six stages:

1. understanding of the meaning,
2. access to oral or written contextualized examples,
3. work with the sounds of language,
4. attention to the form of the language and its characteristics,
5. use of the new language
6. and repetition of these steps to over time to be able to have repeated encounters with the items in different contexts.

In this process, the basic unit of meaning would be the collocations, pairs or groups of words that often go together with varying degrees of mutual determination between the placed. Your classroom treatment should follow a process of access to meaning through translation or other equally profitable procedures at the time level, analysis of the connections of the collocation (cotext, registration, gender, antonyms, function and pragmatic use, connotations, synonyms and hyponyms) and from its greater context to link it to other units of meaning, in what has traditionally been considered as grammar. Individual words should always be seen as part of a placement to avoid being interpreted in isolation, and the teaching of the most frequent lexicon should be prioritized (Dellar and Walkley, 2016).

Throughout this process, naturalness is a priority over correction, understanding as naturalness the degree of similarity with a native speaker that the learner wants to achieve: it is accepted that not all learners need the same level of naturalness, and that
there is no single model native speaking, but different options among which students
decide which one to choose to model, based on their individual needs. Recycling and
repetition become essential elements in the classroom, since the complex and temporary
nature of linguistic knowledge requires multiple repeated encounters until it can be
acquired: reviewing, repeating and verifying what has been learned will help the learner
to do better the following time. Recycling would be achieved through informal reunions
with previously worked linguistic elements, not through formal content review;
repetition, meanwhile, cognitively favors automaticity and emotionally transmits
security to the learner. These two principles must be accompanied by the use of the
question and exemplification techniques. The exemplification is useful to reinforce the
meaning and develop the knowledge of the lexicon, so, whenever possible, it is
preferable to provide the examples within large fragments, which serve the student as a
new work material and, at the same time, recycling of other elements. A good way to
provide these examples is through the teacher’s own classroom speech. The question
should be asked regularly about formal aspects of the lexicon, such as syntactic
category, family of words, frequent patterns, placements, synonyms and antonyms,
homophones, connotations or registration. The answers given by the students allow the
teacher to know the language that their learners dominate and detect their difficulties.
The use of traditional grammatical terminology must, therefore, be present in the
classroom, as it will facilitate the identification of elements by students. If analyzed by
skills, reading occupies the most important place in this lexical approach, the texts are
not only real messages that the student must interpret, but also a source of linguistic
information, so all types of reading are necessary: intensive, to reinforce automaticity;
the extensive, to extend and consolidate previous knowledge and improve fluency, but
also repeated, rapid and loud voice. The latter, despite having been strongly insulted in
communicative approaches, is a tool that allows to improve the pronunciation of the student and also helps the teacher to detect problems that can have more serious consequences, such as inadequate fragmentation of speech. During the listening practice, attention should never go to locate words, but always collocations, so that the context helps with the interpretation of the sound.

Writing is also necessary, because it helps to focus attention on the language, so it should be practiced even in groups where it might seem expendable. The process of composing the written text should always try to be the closest thing to a real writing task, using brainstorming, planning the text, generating drafts, reviewing and correcting and should pay attention to knowledge of textual genres, their structuring and usual connectors, as they are necessary to achieve consistency. The oral skill would not have a recommended way of working, but would be incorporated into the practices of the remaining skills, with the priority purpose of allowing the learner to express their opinion or feelings. In the exercises, oriented to reinforce the different skills, the lexical elements must always be worked through the technique of questions or others that also allow to review, reinforce and expand knowledge, such as dictation and drills, and always taking into account that any lexical element can be an opportunity to expose other elements that arise spontaneously. The use of L1 looks like something natural: translation, if word by word is not used, is useful for accessing meaning and comparing language. Speech planning can be effective in L1 first and, even in cases where the teacher does not master the L1 of their students, asking them to turn to it can be useful to detect comprehension problems.

The error should be treated to avoid fossilization problems, but its treatment should not be forced: feedback should be provided in the form of language samples so that the student can compare and rewrite and, orally, be provided by reformulation and
only if the production made it really prevents communication. The essential classroom materials are the manual and the dictionary, although they can actually be used as work material, not as a sample of study language. The teacher, rather than by his role, is defined by his qualities: he must be reflective, observant and have great planning capacity. The latter is particularly relevant so that the use of classroom time, very scarce and of great value for an adult student with other occupations in life is appropriate. The student, meanwhile, is expected to understand the difficulty of learning a new language and the effort that this work requires, which can sometimes make learning not a fun process. This proposal of the lexical approach is especially effective with students of basic and initial level, as they consider that it was also Lewis’ (Dellar and Walkley, 2016). Your transfer to the classroom should not be forced or immediate: the teacher can use it promptly, weekly or biweekly, reflect on its operation and then make decisions about it.

The proposal of Dellar and Walkley (2016) is very oriented to a direct applicability in a classroom composed of adults who need to make their time in it and teachers who may not have the time or authorization to perform certain movements within the classroom. Hence probably the insistence on the use of quick access resources, such as the exploitation of the language of the materials, and the abandonment of issues to which, outside the classroom, the learner will find less immediate utility, such as the thorough registration of linguistic elements.

2.4.3 Empirical analysis.

The next issue that should be analyzed is how the effectiveness of the lexical approach in the classroom has been measured. The tendency to directly associate lexical approach and teaching of chunks (Richards and Rodgers, 2014) has meant that, in many cases, the lexical approach has been interpreted from a tight perspective, establishing a
link between lexical approach and teaching chunks, or lexical approach and working with collocations, reducing it to a mere set of teaching techniques. This is the case of what happened in research for English as a foreign language such as that carried out by Xie (2010). Which proves the usefulness of these chunks for the improvement of written production in English; Tang (2013). For listening comprehension; or Xu, Mao and Liu (2012) in which the use of chunks is promoted comprehensively for the entire course. In these studies, although some of the principles of the theory of the original lexical approach have been followed, the object of analysis itself is not this approach, but the chunks. The conclusions of these studies reinforce the theory that the exploitation of chunks brings benefits to education (Boers and Lindstromberg, 2012). But, in this sense, they do not differ from research in which the use of chunks within the classroom is has exploded without using the lexical approach; both coincide in the usefulness of work with formulaic language for the production and understanding of the language, indicate that the intervention of the teacher is necessary for their identification, and a large part of them coincide in the idea that attention and treatment on the form are necessary for learning, although not necessarily in this order, and that it is necessary to select the chunks that one wishes to work, since it is not feasible to formally treat everyone in the classroom.

If the researches that analyze the lexical approach only from the perspective of the formulaic language or collocations are not taken into account, the works in which it has been tested are very scarce, to the point that it has been affirmed that it does not exist empirical analyzes on the lexical approach that are not related to collocations or chunks (Higueras García, 2012).
In English, its use has been registered in courses for children (Sample, 2014) as part of a didactic experience, from which it was concluded that its adaptation is useful for the teacher provided that what is taken to the classroom is a softened version.

Finally, the weight of students’ beliefs should not be ruled out since, although they recognize the benefits of this teaching, they continue to place a high value on the learning of individual lexical items.
Didactic application

Applying the Lexical Approach

What, then, distinguishes a teacher who follows the Communicative language teaching from one who applies the Lexical Approach or better yet a Lexical Approach? The review of Lewis’s works allows us to conclude that a teacher who follows this approach would perform these actions (Some of the principles of Michael Lewis’s work have been prioritized for pedagogical purposes, since his proposal is much more profound and comprehensive): give great importance to the lexicon in their classes; teach collocations (Collocations are a type of lexical unit that accounts for the combinatorial restrictions of the language and whose teaching is essential to acquire precision and fluency. Some examples are to make an appointment, torrential rain, slice of bread or flatly refuse) and other types of lexical units, that is, apply the principle of idiomaticity of Sinclair (The principle of idiomaticity, as opposed to that of free selection, tells how speakers assemble blocks above the word to create their discourse:

- teach the grammar of words;
- teach techniques to write down, recycle vocabulary, etc.;
- encourage the student to submit to input so that he himself discovers blocks, what he calls the pedagogical segmentation strategy (pedagogical chunking);
- deepen familiar words, giving different types of information about words (qualitative teaching).

If these reflections are applied to the teaching of the lexicon, it can be affirmed that it is necessary to offer explanations of use (Collocations are within the group of characteristics related to the use of that lexical piece), true, profitable, understandable and relevant for our students. Regarding the scope of the conceptualizations, it should
be broad, to be predictive and facilitate the understanding of other combinations, as exemplified by the activity of the verb commit.

Regarding the form that these conceptualizations should take, as Lewis himself pointed out, it is much better to provide examples of use than to extract almost mathematical formulas, which never appear in the input and that will involve a double effort to transform them into an understandable output. That is, it is more profitable for the student, in terms of language acquisition, to write on the board:

$I made a silly mistake by giving my phone than: $

$Someone + commit + adjective + something + preposition + dem + noun$

Certainly, considering these ideas can help teachers properly present lexical units, but it is no less true that it can be an arduous task for the foreign language teacher. Therefore, we can apply some of the ideas here suggested in our daily class.

**Some ideas of activities**

1. Establish derivations (lexical families). If we work with commercial establishments we can work with the derivation in the formation of store names. For example: *baker* *bakery*.

2. Activities around various auditions. In this type of activities the students will be exposed to fundamental structures to work with different functions («shopping», «request information on the street» etc.). It's about getting used to them progressively and without analyzing structures grammatically, but as lexical units with global significance.

3. Activity to work collocations. In initial levels we can Work with the name + adjective type. The activity consists of advising a friend who wants to buy a gift to his girlfriend but has doubts. From photos of several items that can be purchased, choose the adjectives that you think are appropriate to comment on the articles.
4. For example: This coat is very expensive.

5. Dialogues in situation. Present dialogues in real situations, which can then be dramatized.

6. Activities with lexical constellations. This strategy is based on producing words from a generator word

7. Wordsearch. Select a certain number of words and compose alphabet soup. It can be exchanged with the partner.

8. Crosswords. The same as before but now it’s about inventing a crossword.

9. Form crosswords.

10. Build an acrostic.
Lesson plan

A lesson plan is a content container that can hold lesson profiles, academic objectives and the content elements that students need to complete a lesson. The teacher is the one who plans the class. Lesson plans are flexible and organize content according to the curriculum guidelines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>I.E. P. Santa Rosa High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day/Date</td>
<td>Monday, December 23rd, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>2 “A”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Adjectives to describe feelings and emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Lexical approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Skill</td>
<td>Listening and Speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Skill</td>
<td>Reading and Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Flashcards/markers/colored papers/board, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Objectives</td>
<td>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to recognize and use adjectives to express feelings and emotions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation (5’)
- T greets people and shows pictures about feelings and emotions.
- Then, T asks questions, “What is this?” “What do you think?” about the pictures one by one.
- SS should answer the questions by using adjectives to express feelings and emotions according to the pictures shown by the teacher.

Process (10’)
- T asks for three volunteers to do an activity and gives instructions on it.
- SS do the activities according to the instructions given by the teacher:
- T labels SS on the back by using some adjectives. Then, she asks SS to write on label of the back of another SS an adjective that may describe him/her according to the fact.
- T throws some emoticons on the floor and asks SS to pick up one of them to then go the board and write a sentence according to the picture and read it.
- The one who finishes the activity first, will be the winner.

Evaluation (5’)
- T asks SS to write five sentences by using adjective that may describe feelings and emotions.

Extension
- Homework. T asks SS to write five sentences that may describe the feelings or emotions of the members of their family.

Reference

Conclusions

1. The lexical approach is one of the results of the language teaching movements that have internally emerged in the field of ELT as a consequence of the reactions to the language teachers that proposed an approach that could fulfill the gap of the role of lexis in the process of second language acquisition or foreign language learning.

2. Mental lexicon is the knowledge that a speaker has internalized vocabulary. It is synonymous with lexical competence, that is, the ability to understand and use lexical units, but also morphemes that allow you to interpret or generate units not previously perceived or produced, and to combine them with others. The essential difference between vocabulary and mental lexicon is that the former is common to a speaking community, in that sense it is the result of shared and supra-individual knowledge (the dictionaries collect an important part of this shared knowledge), while the latter is proper of the speaker and, consequently, an individual, partial knowledge in relation to the vocabulary of a certain speaking community.

3. The lexicon is dynamic and knowledge is incremental because the different adducts provide varied information that helps to expand the knowledge that is available about the different units, which allows us to understand and use words, although more knowledge is needed to produce than to understand.

4. On the other hand, it is also important that the different units establish multiple relationships with each other and that the lexicon is organized. This justifies the associative work found in teaching methods. This also explains that new knowledge is more easily absorbed when it is assimilable to something already
known and when the appropriate knowledge framework has been activated in the student.

5. A lexical vision of language in the teaching of foreign languages, through the lexical approach method encourages the development of the student’s linguistic ability by learning prefabricated blocks of words (chunks).

6. The important thing of the lexical approach is to achieve fluency and naturalness in communication thanks to the acquisition of lexical segments, as they are linguistic statements used by native speakers.

7. This approach proposes to teach lexical segments from initial levels so that as students advance in the knowledge of the foreign language they are able to separate the lexical segments, recognize them and use them for other segments.

8. This approach helps students gradually develop their systems of acquisition not to fit pieces and build segments, but to identify the constituent parts within those segments. Therefore, we can that we must direct the student’s attention not to the word, but to complex lexical units, so that the words that usually appear in a sentence - the so-called collocations and idiomatic expressions - or the words are written together. Which are usually associated to a specific context - the so-called institutionalized expressions.

9. Lexical approach is about broadening the knowledge we have about words, because knowing a word or a lexical unit implies having a lot of information about it. The record is also strongly emphasized, in the contexts of use in which certain institutionalized formulas or expressions can and should be used and in the contextual and cotextual meaning.

10. There is primacy of teaching vocabulary to the detriment of grammar.
Suggestions and critical appraisal

Suggestions

The following guidelines for teaching lexical segments are suggested:

1. Language should be presented by intonation groups. Lewis insists on the need to learn similar blocks at the same time the learner should not analyze these blocks from the point of view of grammar. The important thing is that you memorize them without considering their syntactic constitution, that is, that the student memorize the blocks with the correct intonation, without analyzing them from the phonetic point of view. You can later deduce rules about the intonative nature of memorized blocks, in a similar way that a learner does with grammar within the lexical approach.

2. After teaching the expressions with their corresponding inflection, it is advisable to present them in context. It can be done in several ways, for example, with transcribed conversations of the spoken language, or auditory references in the form of movies or recordings. Next, it is convenient to present some exercises in which the learner has to identify the correct intonation for certain expressions that he has learned. Then, you may be presented with similar combinations that you have not seen and asked to deduct the correct intonation. Of course there are numerous other possible exercises to practice the use of formulas and different types of intonation. The most important thing about the presentation is, again, that the learner memorizes the expressions in groups according to the intonation they represent.

3. We should put attention to the recognition and memorization of lexical segments or chunks to improve fluency and precision of the student and to allow the principle of idiomaticity to operate.
4. Teachers of English should emphasize on the importance of incidental lexicon learning and the importance of the syntagmatic or horizontal organization of words, that is to say co-text and context, and, consequently, to collocations.
Critical Appraisal

1. One of the criticisms that the Lexical Approach received in the 1990s is that it did not develop a learning theory, but in reality, from Lewis’s writings it follows that the Lexical Approach does not imply a break with the Communicative Approach, but rather a development, therefore, inherits its teaching budgets and adds the importance of teaching lexical units against words and the other principles we have just seen. Nor are there empirical studies that help refute or corroborate these hypotheses defended by Lewis, although there are many works, for example, on the importance and need to teach collocations, which does not invalidate his proposals, but opens up new lines of research.

2. The Lexical Approach project was a failure. The causes must be looked for in a new methodology that could hardly break through the teachers’ habits. Despite this failure, we must recognize that no methodology can be erected as infallible. The important thing is to focus on the needs of the students, and, in this sense, they all have something to say, they all have something to contribute according to the educational circumstance in which we find ourselves and, of course, depending on the type of students that let us have their interests and needs. For this reason, we can ensure that in all likelihood, we will find perfectly profitable aspects in the Lexical Approach as the attention to be paid to the blocks or chunks, and especially to collocations.
References


