

Oita English Teaching Seminar 2010 Presentation

The Lexical Approach at Elementary and Junior High School

HANDOUT

- **Collocation**

Why do certain words go together?? As an example, make 2 word groups with

take the / _____ / _____ "bus" stop / _____ / _____ / _____
_____ / _____ / _____ / _____ _____ / _____ / _____ / save "money"
"pledge" _____ / _____ / _____ / _____
_____ / _____ / _____ / _____ "score"

- **Fixed and semi-fixed expressions**

Can you unscramble these phrases? How long does it take? Why?

1. do how do you

2. meet to you nice

3. birthday happy

4. sugar pass you can the

What does this tell us about language? *Much of what we say and write is stored in our memory as pre-formed phrases. This is what allows us to speak and write quickly and fluently*

- **Tone Units**

Compare these two texts (taken from Junior High School textbook). Which is easier to read?

Last Wednesday was Clean Up Day. We were very busy. We cleaned up the park and streets near the school. We collected a lot of cans in a few hours. Then we took them to a recycling center.

Last Wednesday	was Clean Up Day.	We were very busy.
We cleaned up	the park and streets	near the school.
We collected	a lot of cans	in a few hours.
Then	we took them	to a recycling center.

Why? *The second version is easier to look at, easier to say (due to "rest" sections) and also easier to translate*

● **The role of L1:**

How do you say these in Japanese?:

way = _____, **the** = _____, **by** = _____

is = _____, **it** = _____, **not** = _____, **nice** = _____

How about these?

By the way = _____

Nice, isn't it? = _____

Denying the use of Japanese translation simply makes no sense – the students will be translating anyway so why not show them an effective way to do it, rather than leaving them to wander down the wrong path?

As can be seen, translating individual words is unhelpful when dealing with phrases, but matching equivalent phrases is a very important skill.

3. Chunk Conversation

Practice this conversation with a partner. ***DON'T add any extra words yet!!

- | | | | |
|---|---------------|---|---------------|
| A | good weekend? | B | went shopping |
| A | buy anything? | B | new T-shirt |
| A | what colour? | B | dark blue |
| A | who with? | B | mum and dad. |
-

4. Lexical notebook

Complete the following

my _____

not _____

_____ friend

What are the benefits of this kind of recording? **Students start to build a stock of phrase 'chunks' and also get to personalize the language**

The benefits of 'grammaring up!'

Match the following:

Who's your

not happy

I'm today

your name

Where's

best friend

What's

your bag

How does this kind of activity allow grammar understanding to emerge (rather than be 'taught')

Reading Activity

Read Part 1 and write down all the verb / noun pairs. Read Part 2 and write down all the noun / adjective pairs.

**highlighted in red here

Part 1

Last Friday my friends and I **visited** a **farmer**. When we **arrived** at the **field**, he was **planting rice**. We **helped** him.

Part 2

The **mud** was **cold**, and the **work** was **hard**. But we had a **good time**. The farmer said, "You did well."

Turn your paper over and try to re-write the story!!

Can you "grammar up" the conversation?

A _____ good weekend?

B _____, _____ went shopping

A _____ buy anything?

B _____, _____ new T-shirt

A what colour _____?

B _____ dark blue

A who _____ with?

B _____ mum and dad.

hot

red

Car

birthday

fast

bath

happy

card

Christmas

cake

pen

food

play

lunch

study

a bath

do

English

tennis

get

make

homework

up

take

kendo

practice

a mistake

have

Why I won't say good-bye to the Lexical Approach

Hanna Kryszewska, BC, University of Gdansk, Poland.

Downloaded from: www.hltmag.co.uk/mar03/martmar032.rtf

3 Chunking for beginners

It is often believed that the concept of chunks is useful with more adult learners at higher levels. You need sophistication and good command of the language. In my teaching experience I have found that this is not necessarily true. One of the first things that my young learners aged 11-12 at elementary level learned was that they can communicate fluently and effectively without using full sentences.

What is wrong with full sentences?, you might ask. Full sentences are a real trap when learners at elementary level try to communicate. They make a lot of mistakes, in fact, they make lots of attempts (mistakes in structures and language the learners haven't been taught yet) rather than errors or slips (mistakes in structures they have been already taught). We teachers can control the language if it is some form of controlled or semi-controlled practice; we lose control when it comes to production and communication. The danger of making a lot of mistakes (attempts) in the language our learners use to communicate with is that these faulty attempts become fossilized and, later, very hard to eradicate. A learner who for a certain period of time happily and successfully communicated using sentences like *Yesterday I go to the cinema.*, or *If the weather will be nice I will go for a walk.*, will one day find it very hard to switch into: *Yesterday I went to the cinema.*, or *If the weather is nice I will go for a walk.*. One of the reasons being that old habits die hard. It will also take the teacher a long time to undo the negative effects the learner's ingenuity and creativity in using the language in free communication. Hence the teachers might avoid genuine communication at lower levels for fear of the learners' mistakes. This can lead to allowing the students to use the target language only in artificial, limited and structured activities and exchanges, which is not very motivating.

Chunks are a perfect solution to the problem of personalization and freer expression with learners at very low levels. I find I can have good conversations with my low level learners of any age when we use chunks. Imagine a conversation with an elementary student about his/her last weekend when Simple Past is a structure that has not been taught yet. Seems impossible, and yet a conversation like the one below is part of my standard practice and many of my lessons start like, say this:

- *Maciek. Your weekend... Tell me.*
- *Oh, nice. Very nice.*
- *Your grandmother's house?*
- *Yes, in Malbork.*
- *A long walk?*
- *Yes, to the castle.*
- *And later?*
- *Computer games.*
- *How long?*
- *2 hours. My limit. You know.*

But what happens next Maciek (11) takes the initiative and the conversation takes a new turn:

- *And you.*
- *Oh typical.*
- *Much work?*
- *Well, some.*
- *And then?*
- *A film on TV.*
- *What title?*
- *Don't remember. About the war.*
- *No walk?*
- *No, too lazy.*

When you analyze the conversation you can see that:

- a. communication took place
- b. both speakers, the teacher and the learner, enjoyed equal status
- c. the learner made no crucial grammar mistakes
- d. intonation was very important
- e. the length of chunks was of varying length, from single word chunks to routines
- f. the learner took the initiative
- g. the learner both made statements and asked questions.

What I find particularly hard about these conversations that as a teacher I have to restrain myself and stick to chunks, in other words grade my language down. The learners quickly adjust to the idea of chunks and it helps their self esteem. They can have a perfect complete conversation and the conversation moves swiftly. They see that with the little language they have got they can communicate. *A little is a lot*, as Gattegno said. However, if by mistake I as a teacher or simply a more competent language user I get carried away and used a full sentence, say, in the Past tense, the learners would want to do the same and start making attempts. Conversations and communication through chunks are also well received by low level adult learners. What they find attractive is that when communicating they do not often make mistakes. An adult learner will often delay engaging in conversations until he/she is sure of an error-free utterance. This may unnecessarily delay authentic communication.