LEXICAL APPROACH AS A COMBINATION OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS, CORPUS LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODOLOGY

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Abstract

The article looks at the Lexical approach as a practical methodology of teaching languages that traces the developments in linguistics.

Modern trends of linguistic research are characterized by the pragmatic tendency, since the main task of scientific research is to describe the language functioning in the real context. Furthermore, one of the main directions of research in the field of applied linguistics is corpus linguistics which deals with building electronic databases of language corpora.

Electronic corpora provide a rich linguistic material for educational and research purposes. A number of classic electronic foreign language databases have been developed; the most famous of them are the British and the American National Corpora of English, the Longman Corpus, Bank of English. The most available and widely used by teachers of English are British National Corpus Sampler, The Longman Corpus.

The paper studies the core elements of the methodology such as word combinations, phrases and expressions (lexical chunks) in the communication context. According to Lexical approach methodology the ability to speak fluently depends on storing in mind large amounts of words and phrases. A sufficiently large mental lexicon affects the "naturalness" of speech and teaches students to think in a foreign language, removing the phase of translation from mother tongue to a foreign language, and also allows learners to understand the laws of grammar (language patterns).

The article assigns a special reference to phrases, expressions and templates that serve to develop the ability to "recognize the pattern" in books, songs, movies. It studies how it is possible to master the learners' ability to modify already known patterns, complementing them with new words. For example: meet somebody + at the weekend/ in the evening / next week/everyday; for advanced learners to use collocations for speaking: take / retake / pass / fail / scrape through an exam.

The Lexical approach to language teaching is closely connected with Dictogloss technique. This technique is aimed to focus learners on remembering useful phrases, expressions, key patterns of a teacher speech, from movies, video and communication with native speakers.

The growing awareness of the rich contextual relationships in spoken and written discourse means that collocation and word grammar need to become established categories for both teaching and learning languages.

Keywords: Corpus, lexical chunks, lexical co-occurrence, word frequency, concordance, language patterns, co-textual environment, syntagmatic relations, lexical ambiguity.

1 INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, modern trends of linguistic research are becoming affected by the pragmatic direction, for the main task of scientific research is not the analysis of structural features of language but its functioning in the real context.

Another significant achievement of linguistic research is a position stating that the success of verbal communication fully depends on the ability of students to interact adequately in accordance with the goal of communication which is known as communicative competence (Galskova: 4). Appropriately, lexis is one of the components of communicative competence. Willis (1990), Lewis (2000) applied the term "lexical approach" to language teaching methodology which is characterized by the emphasis on the centrality of lexicon.

Lexical approach reveals the idea of priority of meaning of a word in communication in which grammar plays an auxiliary function. Although grammar remains an important part of language acquisition, the

supporters of this approach believe that the main strategy in learning is understanding a word sense and different interpretations of meaning in context. In other words, the meaning comes before the grammatical structure.

Functional links of words, paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations in particular, manifest themselves in the process of functioning in speech. Syntagmatic relations play an important role in speaking, so they are presented in various word combinations, collocations, phrases, idioms. The mis-collocations or the wrong choice of words the learners make in their production of language is most likely a result of limited lexicon or "the chaos of lexicon" (Carter & McCarthy: 49).

1.1 The Role of Lexis in Language Learning

The role of lexical patterns (polywords, sentence frames, collocations) have been contemplated and analyzed in both first and second language acquisition research (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

The main concept on which Lexical approach is based is the use of the methods and techniques of teaching a foreign language directed at understanding and producing of lexical chunks: phraseological units, collocations, language patterns. According to Lewis (2000) these chunks of lexis contain collocations, phrasal verbs, idioms, politeness categories, parenthesis, as well as individual words. These models remain in learners' mental lexicon in the process of their continuous use in the speech.

Lexical approach draws attention to the form, content and function of the grammatical phenomenon in language learning. The grammatical skills are acquired by students in the form of patterns, language models without concentrating on grammatical rules. Lexical and grammatical aspects become integrated and develop learners' language awareness.

Within the Lexical approach, the activities of presenting language input include:

- listening and reading in the target language;
- learning words of the definite semantic sphere (if a word is a noun, students are given all possible collocates with adjectives and verbs in various contexts);
- translation with the help of gestures, pictures, synonyms, antonyms, situation modeling;
- predicting the meaning of words;
- working with different texts (recording, reproducing)
- working with language corpora presented by the teacher and available on the Internet as the British National Corpus or COBUILD Bank of English.

As pointed out by David Wilkins (1972), "Without grammar little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed." The grammar is studied at an intuitive level through lexicon, because actions as well as objects are expressed verbally. In addition, it is necessary to consider word frequency. English past tense verbs, for example, was (frequency 3366582), had (frequency 1498255), did (frequency 768121) are considered to be very frequent according to the COCA corpus (Corpus of Contemporary American English).

1.1.1 Collocational Competence

The analysis of special literature shows that one of the main reasons, complicating communication in a foreign language, is the insufficient knowledge of collocations – combinations of words which is traditional, habitual for native speakers. The collocation represents a typical lexical environment of the word. Under "traditional", "habitual", "typical" the high probability of co-occurrence of the words making a collocation is understood.

Experience of teaching English shows that students possessing a certain vocabulary do not know rules of lexical co-occurrence of words, which native speakers store in mind. Therefore, learners make mistakes in written and oral speech communication. The obvious example of this mistake is the incorrect choice of a synonym in producing of the phrase which leads to lexical ambiguity.

The term "collocational competence" was described for the first time by J. Hill in 1999. However, it has been mentioned earlier by Schmitt and McCarthy (1997). Despite the recognition of the term in foreign language teaching methodology, the accurate formulation of "collocational competence" is met only in several sources. The most exact, in our opinion, is the following definition of collocational competence: collocational competence is a learning skill to form lexical units (chunks of language) according to the

rules of lexical co-occurrence. Likewise, mastering of the competence results in the fluent, correct and stylistically organized speech in a foreign language (Jaen, 2007).

On the other hand, the reason for using the term "collocational competence" is determined by transition from structural to lexical approach in foreign language teaching. This transition is caused by contemporary approaches to language studying that offer new insights into studying the semantics of words. Corpus linguistics derives its novelty from the use of corpora – large quantities of real language taken from a variety of sources. The present study sets to present Lexical approach as a language teaching methodology that combines the progressive developments in linguistics and teaching techniques in which the key role is played by a collocation, prefabricated chunks of language, language corpora. The big contribution to development of this vision of language was made by such scientists as Sinclair, Willis, Carter, McCarthy and many others.

1.2 Language Corpora and Learning

One of the major problems mentioned in the process of foreign language teaching is the lack of adequate educational text materials and relevant vocabularies, while the daily workload of teachers in the current preparation of new aids for motivating activities remains consistently high. In this area, much assistance can be provided by applying the methods of corpus linguistics: automated extraction of information, corpus-based data teaching, textual search in large-scale corpora using natural language processing techniques.

The notion of "a text corpus" on the basis of which corpus linguistics develops has become increasingly widely used by linguists. A text corpus is usually understood as "a unified, structured and marked up set of language (speech) data in electronic form, intended for certain philological and, more broadly, the humanities research" (Zaharov: 52).

The corpus of texts can be also regarded as "a complex organized ontology of speech activity reflecting all the variety of genres of written and spoken word presented in it" (Rykov: 18).

As a complex verbal unity the corpus includes a wealth of information not only on the composition and structure of its speech material, but also other formal methods of its representation (words' indexing, morphological information, etc.). Consequently, it can also be considered as specially constructed semiotic system (Rykov: 21).

Corpus linguistics as a modern science dealing with the creation and analysis of text corpora originated in the United States and Western Europe in the late 1960s. Since the mid-1980s with the increasing capabilities of modern computer technologies corpus linguistics has gained a strong impetus for its rapid development resulting in the appearance of various corpus projects carried out for different purposes on the basis of different languages.

The most important achievements and advances in the field of corpus linguistics are widely used in teaching linguistics. It has become practice for leading universities of the world to use corpora data as an empirical constituent part of various lecture courses, assignments for students and their independent projects. It is evident that the corpus approach is optimal for visual presentation of such aspects of the language, as historical, geographical and social variation and changes in the language system giving in parallel a live opportunity to learn the basic principles of corpus methods of linguistic analysis (Lamy & Mortensen).

Among the rapidly developing current projects a very important place is occupied by the British corpus of the English language which represents a variety of genres and types of the language: from the records of spoken English and newspaper articles to full texts of novels. British National Corpus (BNC) is one of the most famous and well-known corpora of the English language. It is one of the first national corpora which served as a model for creating modern corpora of different other languages.

The size of the corpus is 100 million words. The corpus includes metatextual and morphological markup. It is balanced in accordance with genre characteristics. It presents the samples of written speech (90%) including texts of diverse genre, style and subject matter, such as newspaper and magazine texts, letters, school essays and the like. The samples of oral speech constitute 10%. The corpus is characterized by using full texts. This is a synchronous corpus intended for general use. It reflects the state of the British English of the late XX - early XXI centuries.

The corpus can be used primarily as a source of live speech samples in teaching English or for research purposes in order to identify new trends in the development of language.

However, the most ambitious project of greatest interest is the creation of the Bank of English undertaken by the largest publishing house Collins COBUILD. Bank of English is a continually expanding corpus of the English language. The present corpus is 650 million words of which 65-70% represent British English, 25-30% - American English, 5% - other varieties of the language.

This corpus is a sub-corpus of one of the largest linguistic databases of Collins Corpus which is used to create modern dictionaries. The corpus served as the basis of creating Collins COBUILD Dictionary (Sinclair, 1988). Its database is updated monthly due to continuous monitoring of web sites, newspapers, magazines, books, radio and TV programs. The available public version of the corpus gives an opportunity to choose a subcorpus: British books, newspapers, magazines, radio programs and others (36 million samples of word use); American books, radio-programs, and others (10 million samples of word use). British spoken language comprises 10 million samples of word use. Written texts include unpublished materials: letters, unpublished manuscripts. This corpus is aimed at tracking changes in word usage (monitor corpus) through regular replenishment of new texts and comparing the frequency parameters, such as the change of word and grammatical structures frequency, new words, etc. (Educational Portal. English Corpora).

In this connection it is interesting to note that the Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary, one of the first English dictionaries based on the computerized corpus registers meanings of words in accordance with frequency of their use in the most typical contexts which acquire special importance for society due to their high occurrence in the composition of discourse.

The reality of spoken language use requires a broader view on the word, knowledge of the "word grammar" and syntactic features of its functioning. This serves as the basis for a textual study of lexical units suggesting not the opposition of vocabulary and syntagmatics but their correlation.

Corpus linguistics offers to study the communicative use of the language on the basis of large amounts of data which differs from strictly regulated data about the language used in the normative publications illustrating grammatical rules.

2 METHODOLOGY

The rules of using the right collocations in the proper context are difficult to formulate, because they do not exist neither at the level of syntax nor conceptual meaning, they occur in the habitual practice of using of lexical units. Examples of this kind include "limited collocations" such as "bitterly cold" or "unbearably ugly" and combinations with a vast range of collocates: "completely new / different / free".

Learning individual words without the co-textual environment, especially polysemantic and ambiguous ones, doesn't guarantee their correct usage in various combinations. Therefore, teachers of a foreign language have to focus on teaching collocations. Studying collocations becomes one of the most advanced strategies which finally can promote effective foreign language communication.

2.1 Teaching Techniques

The Lexical approach involves different teaching techniques aimed at developing learners' vocabulary skills and language awareness. All the activities and exercises accomplish two purposes – firstly, using new collocations in the context and building learners' lexicons.

2.1.1 Language Patterns

Language patterns represent structures with repeated or similar elements. The effectiveness of using language patterns is alteration of the structural elements that enhance the language learning process. Learners start systematizing already known models and develop grammar skills. As you practise the models more and more, you may find that they emerge naturally and transform from ready-made units to natural speech.

Below are some examples of language models for learners studying modals should / shouldn't. Grammar explanation is given for them to understand the meaning of the modal, and later they start producing sentences according to the template.

We composed and structured examples using a text "Table Manners" from the educational site British Life and Culture.

You should wait until your host starts eating. (It's a good thing to do.)

You shouldn't talk with food in your mouth. (It isn't a good thing to do.)

Complete with should / shouldn't

1. You _____ chew with your mouth open.

2. You _____ say thank you when served something.

3. You _____ have your elbows on the table while you are eating.

4. You _____ reach over someone's plate for something.

5. You _____ chew and swallow all the food in your mouth before taking more or taking a drink.

6. You _____ use your fingers to push food onto your spoon or fork.

2.1.2   Identifying Collocations in Texts

The meaning of a word is expressed in the context which can expand or narrow the lexical value of a word, so the contextual way of interpretation of a lexical meaning of the word is very effective. The surrounding words give the opportunity to understand the meaning by context clues that help to comprehend the meaning and the structure of the lexical unit.

Teachers have to focus their students' attention on collocations and surroundings of the word, for the students themselves will not pay attention to them because the words are not new; students think that words are not worth noticing if they know the translation, but the particular occurrence may change the word sense.

The example text is given to show the collocation search.

Diet Tips for Teens (British Life and Culture)

Hidden calories and empty calories are causing teens to become increasingly heavy and nutrient deficient at the same time. As kids enter their teenage years, their nutrient requirements suddenly increase to adult levels, and for minerals like phosphorus, magnesium and calcium they actually need more than adults do.

Teens also take in substantially more of their daily calories from snacks than adults do. Choosing snacks wisely is a great first step. Snacks like ice cream (high in saturated fat), candy (high in empty calories), chips (one 7-ounce bag of sour-cream-and-onion potato chips averages 1,051 calories) and soda are fine once in a while, but they should not be part of your daily intake. Buy plain popcorn or pretzels instead. Instead of a shake, ice cream or a Starbucks Creme Frappuccino (870 calories, 32 grams fat), choose a smoothie made with real fruit and skim or low-fat milk.

And remember to eat breakfast: A recent study showed that young adults who did not eat breakfast every day were almost twice as likely to be overweight as those who did. Instead of a doughnut, full of fats, have unsweetened cereal and fresh fruit with low-fat milk, or scrambled eggs and whole-wheat toast.

The students are asked to complete the following sentences.

Food high in calories and low in nutrients: coke, ……….

Food high in nutrients: freshly squeezed juice, ……………..

Another task is to find collocation in the text.

_____ calories; become _____; nutrient _____; _____ intake; _____ milk shake

hidden, empty calories; become heavy; nutrient deficient; daily intake; low-fat milk shake

The important thing to note is that within a relatively small text, it is possible to create a mini-corpus of words that occur in the particular context.

2.1.3   Specific Collocations

There are some specific collocations which are difficult to understand because students do not possess cultural knowledge of the country of the target language. Here is an example of metaphorical use of the term *rope-a-dope* which is a boxing fighting style of Muhammad Ali against George Foreman. Muhammad Ali used *rope-a-dope* to neutralize Foreman's power and to wear him out.

The students are given the task to read the article and explain the metaphor "brilliant *rope-a-dope* of the entire a campaign".

...Obama rarely directly attacks. He subtly baits. His most brilliant *rope-a-dope* of the entire campaign was against Bill Clinton in the spring. In a newspaper interview, Obama cited Ronald Reagan as the last transformational president. He didn't mention Clinton. The former president was offended by being implicitly discussed, took the bait and unleashed a series of unwise public *scoffs* at the young Democrat. Suddenly, black Democrats *abandoned* Clinton's wife, and the Clintons' base collapsed. Obama merely stepped out of the way as the Clintons self-destructed. He didn't just end their campaign; he helped to bury their reputation (The Sunday Times).

It is a very interesting task for prediction of the meaning of the metaphor in the political context. The teacher may ask students to give predictions with the help of the context and then give the information about the fighting and some interesting facts about American sportsmen.

2.1.4 Dictogloss Technique

Dictogloss technique has a special teaching trajectory that allows learners to develop lexical and grammatical skills simultaneously. It improves "accuracy" of speech and excludes mechanical repetition of mistakes. This technique helps to learn and remember useful phrases, expressions, language patterns from movies, videos and communication with native speakers. Students have to listen to the text and then to be able to reproduce it with the help of the key words which have been previously noted.

The following task is organized within the Ditogloss technique trajectory. Students are involved in listening to the Oscar award ceremony speech and are given a transcript of the speech with the blanks which they have to fill in. Having finished the completion exercises they are asked to reproduce the speech.

Oscar Speech

I would like to thank the Academy from the bottom of my heart. I don't feel very 1 _____ of this in your presence. I would like to – I wouldn't be in this auditorium, let alone up here, if it wasn't for two 2 ___ 3 ___ men. Our director John Madden, thank you so much for all that you gave me. You are so inspiring. And to my 4 _____ partner, Joseph Fiennes, who I share this with. I wouldn't be here without him. I would like to thank the rest of our 5 _____ cast and crew. I would like to thank my 6 ____ agent Rick Kurtzman who is a beautiful man and a wonderful agent and in his case that is not an oxymoron. I would not have been able to play this role had I not understood love of a 7 _____ magnitude, and for that I thank my family.

2.1.5 Concordances

A concordancer is a computer program that constructs a list of all variants of occurrences of a definite lexical unit in the context, sometimes with references to the source it was taken from.

The concordance is one of the basic concepts of Corpus linguistics. Concordances are often used in applied linguistics: in lexicography, in the text analysis, in teaching languages and in translation.

Concordances are used for the solution of the following linguistic tasks: comparison of various uses of one word, analysis of keywords, analysis of word frequency, translation search, creation of lists of words, which is used in publishing.

Below is an edited example of a concordance for the word *ambition* taken from COCA Corpus.

Webb unseated in 2006, wants his seat back. He obviously still has national *ambitions*. So this is a lot of money that is going to be involved in

from reading these articles that it is an attempt to further the President's political *ambitions* for the sake of his re-election at the expense of our national security.

like to swing the election by siphoning abortion foes away from Obama, his long-term *ambitions* are even bigger. " The goal is to get people in government with the

June 22-July 22 # The Sun in Aries at this time of year intensifies your *ambitions*, but it won't be until Mars turns direct on the 14th that you

Braziel, P. M., &; McClannon, T. W. (2010). Career *ambitions*: A comparison of youth with and without SLD. Remedial and Special Education,

history of roadable aircraft, as their proponents call them, is littered with frustrated *ambitions*. Glenn Curtiss's failed 1917 Autoplane, which was supposed to usher in

The students are asked to complete the sentences and to suggest ways of collocations from the concordance.

Many people have _____ (great) ambitions such as travelling or doing voluntary work.

Many people have _____ (long-term, political, career) ambitions such as _____ or _____.

Thus, the teacher gets a set of examples of a grammatical function of the word and its lexical form. The student is exposed to natural examples of collocations for analysis and may independently conduct linguistic research.

3   CONCLUSION

The present paper has tackled the Lexical approach as a language teaching methodology that focuses on acquiring large vocabulary. This method proved to be challenging and innovative due to the combination of a teaching methodology and methods of Corpus linguistics. The Lexical approach serves to obtain the following results: first, learners are exposed to analysis of real word usage in the natural language environment. Second, it is possible to create a mini-corpus of words within texts selected by a teacher. Third, special computer software can be used in automatic and interactive operation modes. Fourth, students learn prefabricated chunks and models to overcome language barrier, and constant practising of language   models results in producing fluent and natural speech.

In our view, it is not possible to learn unlimited number of chunks and avoid classical methods of grammar teaching, but it is beneficial for learners to get access to the lexical chunks and get the experience of analyzing them. Lexical approach is successful in learning in combination with other methods of teaching languages, for example integration with the Communicative approach produces favorable results in the class. On the whole, linguistic and methodological features of the Lexical approach are the perspective directions in the field of teaching foreign languages.

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