

An example of a successful submission (with thanks to Zhivka Ilieva for her permission to use this paper)

Lexical approach with young learners

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Introduction

Children easily remember stories and whole books in their native language. They can do so in English as well. The supporters of the lexical approach claim that language should be taught in chunks. Why not start from an early age? At this stage children cannot write down phrases in their vocabulary books but they can memorize whole sentences from their favourite book.

Using stories and books for children in teaching young and very young learners to build a stock of whole phrases

Lewis (2008: 50) states that "...the lexical approach encourages the introduction of powerful patterns as lexical items – that is without analysis of their internal structure – appropriately early in the syllabus." Stories are part of children's acquiring their native language. They create natural environment for remembering large phrases in the foreign language and guarantee turning the input into intake. Children's books contextualize the foreign language not only through the text but through the pictures as well. Using the book and other visuals we can activate certain phrases (e.g. *full of, a pair of*).

Activities over children's books

The book *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown is introduced at the end of three successive classes. During the first two we read a colourful page and the following black and white pages. Each time we start from the beginning. During the third class we read the whole book. Two more times we read the whole book and do certain activities and then we read occasionally. Reading the whole text or larger excerpts is supported by Lewis (2000: 181) "...phrases are easier to remember than words; breaking things into smaller pieces does not necessarily make them simpler."

- Using pictures we can create the following sentences:

In the great green / yellow bottle there was a big / small / pink fly.

At the second stage of this activity we change the places of the constituents in the phrase: first say *what*, then *where*.

There is a blue butterfly on the big mushroom.

There is a frog / ladybird under the big mushroom.

The same pictures are used so that children acquire the phrase both ways – the way it is met in the story and the way it is naturally met.

Comment [T1]: See the guidelines for details of fonts, etc.

Comment [T2]: Name and affiliation. No job title needed. If self-employed, use 'Freelance'.

Comment [T3]: Nice introduction that (a) sets out the issue very clearly, and (b) captures the reader's attention with a good question!

Comment [T4]: Since the topic is the lexical approach, we have a quotation from Michael Lewis. Try to give some theoretical background where possible. The theory-to-practice approach is often very effective.

Comment [T5]: Minor errors in grammar will not hurt your chances of acceptance. Here, an article is missing; that's easily fixed in editing.

Comment [T6]: In this section Zhivka shows the process of what she does in class, moving from simple sentences to the treatment of complex grammar. The use of sections and subheadings is not required, but it is nice. Here, the paper is divided into several sections for ease of reading.

Comment [T7]: The preposition here is not perfect, but again, easily fixed in editing.

Comment [T8]: Zhivka focuses on one particular book. This book is well known worldwide among YL teachers; the paper becomes immediately relevant to teachers outside the context of Bulgarian schools.

It's possible that Zhivka uses other children's books in class, but she wisely chooses to focus on one. Don't try to cover too much ground in a paper of this length.

Comment [T9]: Don't hesitate to use 'I' or 'we' in your paper, as Zhivka has done. It's better to write in a clear and accessible style than in an overly formal register.

Comment [T10]: The use of specific words and phrases makes the paper come alive for the reader.

- Using pictures the children practise the expressions *a ... full of ...* (e.g. *a bottle full of milk, a box full of chocolates*) and *a pair of* (*gloves, shoes, scissors, glasses, trousers*). Later on the second expression can be expanded by adding colours: *a pair of blue / red socks, jeans*.

Children remember some of these pictures for life and the view or the memory of the picture unlocks the corresponding expression in English. This way we provide expressions ready to be used in sentences.

- There is a complex sentence with an attributive clause. Although it is too complicated for young learners they learn it by heart and the formula stays in their mind to illustrate grammar later on. The children enjoy practising this complex sentence with pictures (*a crazy/happy young lady/boy/girl (who is) shouting Hooray!*).

Building a story

The primary school students fill in more slots in the first sentence:

“In the *adjective* room there was a/an *adjective noun* who loved/hated + -ing or + noun

This is the opening sentence of a new story.

One sunny / cloudy / foggy day he / she / it (X) went to the X wanted (to buy) a (new) (pair of) socks / jeans / T-shirt. It was / They were magic. When X put it / them on ...

This can be done as a whole class activity with 4th grade students: either the class discussing and the teacher writing the suggestions on the board or each student in turn adding a new sentence to the story.

Conclusions

As a result of our work the children learned the phrases from *Goodnight Moon* and could say the words as soon as the teacher turned the page. They also enjoyed working with books and learned the next one as well.

Using real books in the foreign language classroom we develop positive attitude to books and reading, interest in books in English and build a stock of ready to be used expressions.

In a similar way various sentences from any book can be turned into funny activities. Young learners practise phrases and reinforce vocabulary. Acquiring such sentences and having practised the structures with various fillers the children can easily break the formulae and actively use them later on.

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References:

Brown M. W. 1996. *Goodnight Moon*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Lewis, M. 2000. ‘Learning in the lexical approach’ in M. Lewis (ed.). *Teaching Collocation: Further Developments in the Lexical Approach*. Hove: Thomson Heinle.

Lewis, M. 2008. *Implementing the Lexical Approach: Putting Theory into Practice*. Andover: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Comment [T11]: Here Zhivka moves into expansion of the lexis learned from the book. The bullets work well here to separate these items. Try to avoid long lists of bulleted points, though, especially single words.

Zhivka has no need for charts, tables, etc. in this paper. If you wish to use these things, please try to limit them to two. Papers with excessive use of tables and charts are unlikely to be published.

Comment [T12]: Another specific example of the kind of language being learned. Readers can see very clearly what is happening here.

Comment [T13]: Another new section because now we move into extension activities. There is a clear take-away for the reader here; YL teachers in different contexts could use this technique.

Comment [T14]: It's important to end with a conclusion. Here Zhivka summarises her main points.

Comment [T15]: This paper is 745 words (not including refs). Keep the word limit in mind as you are writing.

Comment [T16]: Give your email address so readers can contact you for more information. If you do not want your email address published, let me know—otherwise, it will appear in the book.

Comment [T17]: References to published works show where the reader can learn more about the topic. See the Guidelines for details on how to reference works in *Selections* style. No more than three references, please!