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LEXICAL APPROACH TO TEACHING GERMAN IN TOURISM

The lexical approach concentrates on developing learners' proficiency with words and word combinations. It is based on the idea that an important part of language acquisition is the ability to comprehend and produce lexical phrases as unanalyzed wholes. The telephone communication is essential for the front office staff. In order to improve it and to make it easier for students and individual learners we selected the most frequent lexical patterns and classified them by communicative intentions. Lexical patterns are divided into the patterns used by receptionist and those used by guest or somebody asking for guest.

Key words: lexical approach, telephone communication, lexical patterns, front office, receptionist.

INTRODUCTION

The lexical approach to second language teaching has become popular in recent years as an alternative to grammar-based approaches. The lexical approach concentrates on developing learners' proficiency with lexis, or words and word combinations. It is based on the idea that an important part of language acquisition is the ability to comprehend and produce lexical phrases as unanalyzed wholes, or "chunks," and that these chunks become the raw data by which learners perceive patterns of language traditionally thought of as grammar (Lewis, 1993, p. 95).

The existence and importance of lexical units has been discussed by a number of linguists. For example, Cowie (1988) argues that the existence of lexical units in a language such as English serves the needs of both native English speakers and English language learners. Lewis (1997) suggests the following taxonomy of lexical items:

a) words (book, pen)
b) polywords (by the way, upside down)
c) collocations, or word partnerships (community service, absolutely convinced)
d) institutionalized utterances (I'll get it; We'll see; That'll do; If I were you)
   Would you like a cup of coffee?"

c) sentence frames and heads (That is not as . . . as you think; The fact is . . .
and even text frames (In this paper we explore . . .; Firstly . . .; Secondly
. . .; Finally . . .)

Within the lexical approach, special attention is directed to lexical patterns that
include institutionalized utterances and sentence frames. As Lewis maintains, "instead
of words, we consciously try to think of collocations, and to present these in
expressions. Rather than trying to break things into ever smaller pieces, there is a
conscious effort to see things in larger, more holistic, ways" (1977a, p. 204).

1. LEXICAL PATTERNS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Lexical patterns are multi-word lexical units which occur more frequently in
communication. As complete units they are stored in the lexicon as unanalyzed chunks
just like words. Being ready-made, they are easily retrieved and offer learners the
possibility of expressing themselves in the absence of rich linguistic resources. Porto
(1998:22) claims that beginners - children, elementary students and particularly adults,
who have already developed their cognitive and semantic structures but lack the
linguistic tools necessary to use the target language - become conversationally
competent without the need to know the underlying structure of these phrases. Lexical
patterns are highly motivating by developing fluency at very early stages and thus
promote a sense of achievement, what makes them particularly advantageous for
teaching purposes.

Lexical patterns have associated functional uses. They may be used to express
various communicational intentions, such as make a request, greet people, etc. For
instance, a basic phrase to express sympathy would be I'm sorry. As learners become
more proficient, the pattern may be expanded to obtain phrases like I'm (very)
terribly/awfully sorry about what you said; that's (awful/churlish) what a pity/what
shame! This functional feature of lexical phrases offers learners the possibility of expressing
the same idea in increasingly more difficult ways by replacing some of the initial formula.
Lexical patterns are stored as wholes and are therefore readily accessible. This means
that learners do not need to pay attention to grammar if they use these phrases. By
shifting their attention from grammar to features such as relevance, coherence, and
appropriateness, learners are able to organize their speech at discourse level and
maintain the flow of conversation.

Research (Porto, 1998:22) has shown that lexical phrases are easy to acquire
for two reasons. First, they occur very frequently. Recurrent phrases are acquired as
memorized forms. High frequency provides natural recycling of such frames. Second,
these formulas are context-bound and have situational meaning associated with them.
Being recurrently associated with a certain context, learners are able to recall these
phrases in similar situations (Huang and Hatch, 1978). Frequency of occurrence and
context association make lexical phrases highly memorable for learners and easy to
pick up. They can be easily acquired as wholes because of the recurrent association of
form-context-function without the need to know their internal constituents. Stored as
units, they are easily retrievable, highly accessible without the need for analysis by the
rules of syntax. Therefore, they constitute an efficient device for use. Sperber and

Wilson (1986:49) claim that "all human beings aim at the most efficient information
processing possible." Fixed phrases have a small processing cost and their contribution
is significant. They are a short-cut available to minimize effort (Porto, 1998:23).

2. INFLUENCE OF PRAGMALINGUISTICS ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE
ACQUISITION

The structural approach with its strong emphasis on grammatical competence
did not give learners the tools to access all the analyzed knowledge they possessed On
the contrary, the communicative approach based on pragmalinguistics provided
learners with a repertoire of patterns to be accessed in appropriate contexts of use, but
they remained grammatically incompetent. Lexical patterns offer a balance because
they allow teachers to foster both accessibility and analyzability and thus contribute to
the development of the learner's grammatical and pragmatic competence (Porto,

According to Fillmore (1974) pragmalinguistics explores the relations of
forms, meanings/functions and certain situations. From the point of view of the
pragmalinguistics the smallest speech unit is a speech act (Searle, 1969). Every speech
situation is in fact a combination of speech acts.

The goal of the pragmatic approach in the foreign language teaching is the
achievement of the communicative competence and not primarily teaching of grammar
and civilization. Due to the mentioned facts foreign language teaching based on the
communicative approach and especially teaching materials should include respective
communicative intentions and their most frequent possibilities of transfer into speech,
which means that the functional character of language takes the central position in the
modern foreign language teaching.

Many of new teaching materials provide lists with communicative intentions,
socalled catalogues with the most frequent lexical patterns (phrases) used in specific
situations. Vielau (1997:211) thinks that the mentioned catalogues are in every respect
problematic since they offer lexical patterns selected by the author. However, the
choice of lexical phrases depends not only on intentions but also on given
circumstances.

In spite of the remarks made by Vielau who are completely true, it would not
be recommendable to abstain from the teaching of communicative intentions because
of many reasons. Foreign language acquisition is a very long and demanding process.
Learning prerequisites differ in many ways - there are learners who tend towards
cognitive learning strategies and on the other hand there are passive learners preferring
passive strategies. Passive learners are the ones who memorize and also represent the
data mechanically. In spite of rather poor success of learning by using the passive
strategy, mechanical learning by heart plays a very important role for many teachers
and students and has no alternative. The majority of hotel and tourism staff would also
belong to passive learners who should be competent in many different situations and
that very often with lacking fundamental knowledge of the foreign language. As they
should be competent in requested situations, the acquisition of specific lexical patterns
seems to be the best possible solution. Due to that fact teaching materials for the staff
in the hotel and tourism industry should include the communicative intentions of
speech and suitable lexical patterns in order to either teach them or to make them study and practice it individually.

In the classroom context the patterns would be introduced as an analysed whole. Learners would be encouraged to understand the pragmatic meaning of the whole phrase, not its constituents, in relation to the context in which it occurs. If the unit is too long or unfamiliar for learners, drill activities may give them practice in articulating the new pattern. Lexical exercises would follow.

### 3. LEXICAL PATTERNS IN CROATIAN AND GERMAN TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION AT THE HOTEL RECEPTION

The telephone communication is essential for the front office staff. In order to improve it and to make it easier for students and individual learners we selected the most frequent lexical patterns and classified them by communicative intentions.

As the communication at the reception consists of short sentences, we did not select just lexical items without their natural context, but sentence patterns as they appear in communication and should be learnt as wholes.

The lexical patterns are divided into the patterns used by receptionist and those used by guest.

#### 1. Lexical patterns used by receptionist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Kako će se recepcioner javiti na telefon?</th>
<th>1. Wie wird sich der Rezeptionist am Telefon melden?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel ...., 1 recepcija i dobro moreno.</td>
<td>Hotel ...., 1 Reception guten Morgen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension ...., 1 dobar dan.</td>
<td>Pension ...., 1 guten Tag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autokamp ...., 1 dobro vecer.</td>
<td>Campingplatz ...., 1 guten Abend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Kako će recepcioner pitati s kim razgovara i kako će pridržiti telefonski poziv?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. S kim razgovaravam?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. S kim sam razgovaravao (razgovaravala)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vase ime, molim? Kako se zovete, molim?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Možete li srisati (slovakuv) Vaše ime?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Trematka, spojte mi Vas. Ostanite na telefonu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Trematka, da mi Vam mogu koga/moju kolegju.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Wie wird der Rezeptionist nach dem Namen des Anrufers fragen und Telefonate vermitteln?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mit wem spreche ich, bitte?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mit wem habe ich gesprochen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ihr Name, bitte? Wie heißen Sie, bitte?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Können Sie ihren Namen herausschreiben?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4. Kako će recepcioner pitati justified u kojem terminu želite rezervirati sobu? |

| 1. Za kada želite rezervirati sobu?       |
| 2. Za koji datum, molim?                  |
| 3. U kojem terminu želite rezervirati sobu? |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Wie wird der Rezeptionist den Gast nach dem Termin der Reservierung fragen?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Für wann möchten Sie das Zimmer reservieren?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Für welches Datum, bitte?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In welchem Termine möchten Sie das Zimmer reservieren?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5. Sto će se recepcioner kazati, u hotelu nema slobodnih soba? |

| 1. Žao mi je. U tom terminu nemamo nijednu slobodnu sobu. |
| 2. Nemamo nijedan nijedno slobodno sobu. |
| 3. Nažalost potpuno smo popunjeni. |
| 4. Hotel je nažalost popunjen. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Was kann der Rezeptionist sagen, wenn im Hotel kein Zimmer frei ist?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Wir haben leider keine Zimmer mehr frei.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Leider sind wir voll belegt (besetzt).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Das Hotel ist leider ausgebucht.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 6. Kako će recepcioner reagirati na otkazivanje rezervacije sobe? |

| 1. U red, gospodine ...! gospođa ... i hvala što ste narevali. |
| 2. Žao mi je što se ne možete doći i hvala na pozive. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Wie wird der Rezeptionist auf die Absage der Zimmerreservierung reagieren?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In Ordnung, Herr ... / Frau ... und danke für den Anruf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Es tut mir leid, dass Sie nicht kommen können und danke für den Anruf.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 7. Kako će recepcioner reći da nije dobio vezu i da je željena osoba nije dostupna? |

| 1. Broj je nažalost zauzet. |
| 2. Linija je nažalost zauzet. |
| 3. Linija nažalost nije slobodna. |
| 4. Na tom broju nikto se ne javlja. Da pokušam još jednom kaznjuje? |
| 5. Nikto se ne javlja. Štočete li ovanu posebnu? |
| 6. Žao mi je, gospodina/gospoda ... trenutno nije tu (nije dostupan/vani je). |
| 7. Nazovite još jednom kaje. |
| 8. Da mušet je neko poznati? |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Wie wird der Rezeptionist sagen, dass er keine Verbindung bekommt und dass die gewünschte Person nicht erreichbar ist?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Die Nummer ist leider besetzt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Die Leitung ist leider besetzt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Die Leitung ist leider nicht frei.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Unter der Nummer meldet sich niemand. Soll ich später noch mal versuchen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Niemand meldet sich. Wollen Sie eine Nachricht hinterlassen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Tut mir Leid, Herr/Frau ... ist im Moment nicht da (ist nicht erreichbar) ist außer Haus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Soll ich Ihnen etwas ansprechen (bestellen)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Kako će receptioner preuzeti poruku za gosta?
1. Da, odmah ću ga u porednjevati.  
2. U redu. To će mu/sjouj poručiti.

9. Kako će receptioner dati gostu upute za koristenje telefona?
1. Najprije birajte pozivni broj za zvaničnu.  
2. Onda birajte prednji grada, ali bez mule.  
3. Nakon toga birajte dotični broj.

10. Kako će receptioner umiriti gostu?
1. Ne brinite. Ne je to loše.  
2. Bez brige. To nije ništa problem.  
3. Snimite se.

11. Kako će se receptioner nakon razgovora oprostiti?
1. Do slanja.  
2. Do viđenja.  
3. Do suta. / Do sljedećeg tjedna. / Do sljedeće godine.

12. Kako možete formulirati najavu za telefonsku sekretaricu?
1. Dobar dan, ovdje hotel ... / turistička agencija ...
2. Zatevorni smo zbog ... od ... do ... / U tom vremenu možete nas dobiti na broj ...

II. Lexical patterns used by guest

1. Kako će gost telefonom rezervirati sobu?
1. Dobar dan. Imate li jednu jednokrevetnu/dvokrevetnu sobu?  
2. Dobar dan. Ja bih od ... do ... bio rezerviran sobu.  
3. Da li biste mi za ... mogli rezervirati jednu jednokrevetnu sobu?

1. Wie wird der Gast telefonische Reservierung machen?
1. Guten Tag. Haben Sie noch ein Doppelzimmer frei?  
2. Guten Tag. Ich möchte vom ... bis ... ein Einzelzimmer (Doppelzimmer) reservieren.  
3. Können Sie mir für den ... ein Einzelzimmer reservieren?

4. SOME ASPECTS OF LEARNING LEXICAL PATTERNS

Short German courses for hotel staff are based on high-frequency lexical patterns, which should be learnt as unanalyzed wholes. It is unimportant if students do not know which category a lexical pattern belongs to. What they do need is to develop an ability to notice chunks of different kinds. So, one of the central activities is to encourage students to identify language items in authentic materials.

Another important point is that language units should be learned in context. Lexical items can be, in theory, learned de-contextualized, but it does not ensure mastery of the item. Contextualized learning is preferable, because learning vocabulary is not a simple memorization of lexical phrases. They must be integrated into the learner's linguistic resources so that they are spontaneously available when needed. Vocabulary usage is not the same as its knowledge. And it is a teacher's job to activate these items in a classroom. This means that learners must process this newly acquired vocabulary. Therefore, a logical follow-up is a multi-step procedure: 1) checking comprehension of authentic passages; 2) providing more practice; 3) revision and 4) consolidation.
Our experience has proven that traditional ‘fill in the blanks’ way is effective for checking comprehension as it encourages learners to consider the context of the sentence to work out a probable missing word. At the same time, students are being exposed to the typical linguistic environment for an item. They perceive other words that can co-occur with the target word and grammatical context in which the item can occur.

Oral practice for processing target vocabulary is advisable. Revision and consolidation are required parts of the process of vocabulary acquisition. The process of forgetting is very fast. According to research on memorising, a human being forgets 80 per cent of new information in 24 hours. It might sound exaggerated, but there is some truth in it, though these figures are different for different people. But the fact remains that the less a person is interested in something, the faster the process of forgetting is. Thus, revision and consolidation must take place after a lapse of time. A learner must use all available methods for developing all language skills, some of which are matching pairs, sorting exercises, pictorial schemata, problem solving tasks, values clarification, discussion, role-play, including oral presentations and writing summaries.

CONCLUSION

Lexical patterns are an important feature in language acquisition, so they offer advantages for language teaching. They are context-bound and occur quite frequently, which makes them highly memorable for learners. They are invaluable for developing students’ competence in language.

Lexical patterns may be treated similarly as other ready-made or prefabricated language units which, once they are learnt, are easily retrievable and accessible. As learning foreign languages in multi-word chunks means a change for the better in the vocabulary acquisition, we hope this research will help the German learners to improve their telephone communication at the reception.

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