THE LEXICAL APPROACH

1.1. Overview

This chapter provides a detailed introduction to the theoretical background of the lexical approach. It lists out the principles of this approach as advocated by Lewis and provides a brief description of each of them. The chapter explains the term lexis and emphasises the role of lexis in language. It further highlights the importance of this approach in language teaching and learning. It also outlines five different frameworks used in the categorization of lexical chunks as propounded by the advocates of this approach. The chapter also presents the limitations of the lexical approach. Finally, the chapter enumerates the benefits of using comics in teaching and learning a language.

1.2. Introduction to the Lexical Approach

A few decades ago, there was a predominant view in the linguistic circles that vocabulary was subservient to grammar. Linguists at that time strongly supported the dichotomy of grammar and vocabulary and they preferred to lay emphasis on the structures of language rather than the words. Also, they were of the view that acquisition of a language is dependent on the mastery of grammatical rules of the language and vocabulary is of secondary importance.

But during the 1990’s there was an increased interest in vocabulary teaching and learning. The book Teaching and Learning Vocabulary (1990) by Paul Nation provided useful insights into vocabulary acquisition and it extended guidance on classroom pedagogy. At the same time, the advent of corpus linguistics and the COBUILD project of John Sinclair (1987) gave new impetus to theories
on language acquisition. Sinclair’s book *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation* (1991) and other corpus based studies shed new light on how language works and this led to a new understanding and description of language. Also, these studies revealed the widespread occurrence of multi-word units or lexical chunks in native speakers’ language. The studies then put forward a theory that is almost contrary to Chomskyan theory of language which holds that native speakers have a capacity of creating and interpreting unique sentences which they have never heard or produced previously. Moreover, Chomskyan theory believed that:

> *linguistic competence consists solely in the ability to deploy an innate rule- governed sentence-making capacity.* (Thornbury, 1998:8)

But with the advent of corpus based analyses, many linguists departed from the Chomskyan view to uphold the new theory of language.

With the publication of the book *The Lexical Approach: The State of ELT and a Way Forward* in 1993, there was a shift from the traditional approaches to a lexis based approach which holds that:

> *the building blocks of language learning and communication are not grammar, function, notions, or some other unit of planning and teaching but lexis, that is, word and word combinations.*

(Richards & Rodgers 2001:132)

To quote Lewis, *this approach focusses on developing learner’s proficiency with lexis, or word and word combinations.* (1993:95). He substantiates this view in the book *Implementing the Lexical Approach: Putting theory into Practice*, and states:
Fluency is based on acquisition of a large store of fixed and semi-fixed prefabricated items, which are available as the foundation for any linguistic novelty or creativity. (1997:15)

He holds that native speakers store chunks in their mental lexicon to retrieve and use them in their language. Also, he states that the ability to chunk language successfully is central to an understanding of how language works.

For this reason, Lewis suggests that language teaching should include the teaching of lexical phrases or chunks. In fact, he advocates that lexical phrases in any language offer more communicative and expressive power than grammatical structures. He further stresses that without chunking acquisition, comprehension and production of the language will be limited and slowed down. Thornbury substantiates this view and holds that chunking serves two purposes at early stages of language learning:

- It enables language learners to have chunks of the language available for immediate use.
- It also provides the learner with data to hold in reserve for subsequent analysis. (1998:8)

1.3. Principles of the Lexical Approach

Though this approach became popular in the 1990’s, there are many researchers who are not clear of the principles of this approach and how it is practised. It is apt here to list out the principles as enumerated by Lewis (1993:vi-vii) which most advocates of lexical approaches adhere to. It would also be apt here to examine all these principles in detail:
1. Language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar

The main tenet of lexical approach is its emphasis on lexis. According to Lewis language is made of lexical elements besides grammar. He feels that emphasis should be laid on structures made of word, clusters of words or lexical chunks rather than grammatical structures. Substantiating this view Thornbury writes:

*Lewis challenges the traditional view that language competence consists of having a foundation of grammatical structures into which we slot individual words. Instead, we store a huge assortment of memorised words, phrases and collocations, along with their associated ‘grammar’. The approach concentrates on developing learner’s proficiency with lexis, or words and word combinations.* (2002:114)

2. The grammar/vocabulary dichotomy is invalid: much language consists of multi-word ‘chunks’:

Lewis is of the view that vocabulary cannot be differentiated from grammar. Nattinger and De Carrico consider a lexical phrase or a chunk as a *lexico-grammatical unit which exists somewhere between the traditional poles of lexicon and syntax* (1992:36). Lewis advocates that every word has its own grammar and it is not suggestable to create a distinction between vocabulary and grammar. Instead of viewing language as simply words and grammar, he suggests that language be viewed as consisting of multi-word chunks. He states that language acquisition is faster when it is learnt in chunks rather than in isolated individual words.
3. A central element of language teaching is raising students' awareness of, and developing their ability to ‘chunk’ language successfully:

Lewis holds that noticing lexical chunks in the language is a prerequisite for learning language. He argues that increased awareness helps in converting input to intake. Added to consciousness-raising, he feels that importance should be given to developing in learner the ability to chunk the language. According to him:

*the central idea to efficient acquisition and effective communication is chunking. Unless you chunk a text correctly, it is almost impossible to read with understanding, and unless you speak appropriate chunks, you place a serious barrier to understanding between yourself and your listeners.* (Lewis 1997:58)

4. Collocation is integrated as an organising principle within syllabuses:

Collocation is central to the lexical approach because the way words combine in collocations is fundamental to all language use. Lewis stresses on the importance of learning the patterns of collocations because much of the spoken and written language comprises them. Hill says that we need to add the concept of collocational competence to our thinking as it aids us in avoiding errors in our language. Thus, proficiency in a language is greater when there is a focus on collocations (2000:48). As Oxford Collocations Dictionary puts it:

*No piece of natural spoken or written English is totally free of collocation. For the student, choosing the right collocation will make his speech and writing sound much more natural,*
more native speaker-like, even when basic intelligibility does not seem to be at issue. A student who talks about ‘strong rain’ may make himself understood, but possibly not without provoking a smile or a correction, which may or may not matter. He will certainly be marked down for it in an exam.

(2009:V)

5. Evidence from computational linguistics and discourse analysis influences syllabus content and sequence:

Advances in computer-based studies of language, such as corpus linguistics have provided huge databases of language corpora. In particular, COBUILD project provided an accurate description of English language and laid a foundation for lexical syllabus. Willis& Willis (1989) made an attempt to develop a syllabus based on lexical rather than grammatical principles. Willis’ syllabus specifies the usage of words, their meanings and patterns of the common phrases in their most natural environments. Unlike Willis’s, Lewis’s lexical syllabus

recognises word patterns for de-lexical words, collocation power for semantically powerful words, and longer multi-word items, partially institutionalized sentences, as requiring different and parallel pedagogical treatment.

(1993:109)

6. Language is recognized as a personal resource, not an abstract idealisation:

In the lexical framework, language is perceived as a personal resource rather than as an abstract idealisation. By extension, learning a language enables a learner to become resourceful in using it.
7. **Successful language is a wiser concept than accurate language:**

Like the other communicative approaches, which stress on communicative proficiency, the lexical approach too highlights the importance of successful communication rather than the production of accurate language. It believes that acquisition of lexical chunks makes a learner’s communication more effective.

8. **The primacy of speech over writing is recognized; writing is acknowledged as a secondary encodement, with a radically different grammar from that of the spoken language:**

Contrary to the traditional approaches which advocated the primacy of writing over speech, the lexical approach believes that the learners at first should speak fluently in the language before they could learn writing. Lewis feels that any learner can acquire a language if he/she tries to emulate the ways adopted by a native speaker.

9. **It is the co-textual rather than situational elements of context which are of primary importance for language teaching:**

Lewis feels that co-textual elements of language are more important for language learning than contextual elements. While contextual elements aid the learner in comprehending the situation of utterance and the situation of occurrence of the speech, co-textual elements help in knowing the discourse preceding and following a particular word. He further states that the awareness of the co-textual elements makes us understand the co-occurrence of various words which in turn leads to effective learning.
10. **Socio-linguistic competence-communicative power-precedes and is the basis, not the product, of grammatical competence**:

Lexical approach recognises the importance of socio-linguistic competence and communicative power in attaining mastery of a language. It advocates that the ability to use a language and the ability to respond to the language appropriately in a social setting are the bases to achieve grammatical competence in a language and not vice versa.

11. **Grammar as structure is subordinate to lexis**:

The lexical approach rejects the notion that grammar is superior to lexis. The advocates of this approach believe that:

*Language is primarily lexical and grammar is largely an illusion created by different models of language.* (Rani 2009:162)

This approach argues for bringing lexis to forefront while learning a language and it emphasises teaching of lexis rather than grammar or individual words. Lewis substantiates this view when he says:

*Language consists not of traditional grammar and vocabulary but often of multi-word prefabricated chunks.* (Lewis 1997:3)

He strongly argues that every word has its own grammar and holds that if a lexical item is learnt, the grammar of it is also implicitly learnt without much emphasis. For example: *Eat a chocolate.* The encounter of the word ‘eat’ makes the learner notice that it is in its present tense. He holds that grammar is inbuilt in lexical items. This thesis focuses mainly on learning language through lexical chunks. Since a number of studies already exist on the teaching of grammar, the
present study has explored only teaching of lexis. References to grammar are made only wherever found relevant.

12. *Grammatical error is recognised as intrinsic to the learning process:*

    Lewis is of the view that any learner is prone to make grammatical mistakes while learning a language. Production of erroneous sentences according to him is a part of learning. Unlike traditional approaches which do not encourage the production of incorrect language, the lexical approach welcomes mistakes in speech and considers them as intrinsic to the process of learning.

13. *Grammar as a receptive skill, involving the perception of similarity and difference, is prioritised:*

    Grammar is not a productive skill as is purported to be in structuralist descriptions of language. It cannot be acquired through mere mechanical drilling of structures. The perception of similarity and difference in the way grammar works is seen as more important in the lexical approach.

14. *Sub-sentential and supra-sentential grammatical ideas are given greater emphasis, at the expense of earlier concentration on sentence grammar and the verb phrase:*

    The lexical approach involves an increased role of word grammar (sub-sequential grammar) and text grammar (supra-sentential grammar). It holds that the word grammar and word partnerships are more important while acquiring a language than sentence grammar. At the same time it attaches significance to text grammar and discourse markers in the process of learning a language.
15. Task and process, rather than exercise and product, are emphasised:

As in task-based, procedural syllabuses of Communicative Language Learning, the lexical approach also underscores the importance of the process of learning rather than its product.

16. Receptive skills, particularly listening, are given enhanced status:

Lexical approach believes that production of a language is based on its reception. It further states that the amount of exposure to a language determines the production of a language. So, it stresses on the need to enhance the listening skills of the learners which play a pivotal role in language acquisition.

17. The Present-Practise-Produce paradigm is rejected, in favour of a paradigm based on the Observe-Hypothesise-Experiment cycle:

The approach rejects the Present-Practise-Produce paradigm as it is similar to the rote repetition of a language. It is more of a teacher-centred paradigm where the teacher presents the information to be learnt, makes the learners practise it and finally makes the students produce it without much of their involvement. But the Observe-Hypothesise-Experiment cycle makes the learners engross themselves in the activities assigned to them. They are provided a chance of probing into the language and making predictions and also experiment on it in their own way. This paradigm grants them considerable freedom to apply their knowledge in the process of acquiring a language.

18. Recycling and reviewing the language taught:

Lexical Approach adopts the strategy of recycling and reviewing to teach the language. Lewis believes that learners should be first taught
to recognize and produce the chunks of language. He says that they should be given chances to revise what has been learnt before. Then, through repetition, he thinks learners will be able to produce them eventually with some automaticity, thereby improving fluency. As, Lewis (1997: 45) states recycling should be done in an interesting and refreshing way, so that learners’ interest is still engaged. Following these points, the study has made every attempt to make a revision of the chunks the learners are introduced to. Activities and exercises are devised in such a way that they create interest in the learners.

1.4. Lexis

Though the terms lexis and vocabulary are often stated in the same context and mostly treated as synonyms, there exists a difference in meaning between these two terms and they are not one and the same. The distinction will be made clear by making a note of these definitions put forward by two advocates:

*The entire store of lexical items in a language is called its lexis.*

(Wikipedia)

*Lexis refers to strings of words which go together.*

(Lewis 1997:213)

*Lexis is a more general word than common vocabulary. Vocabulary is often used to talk of the individual words of language; lexis covers single words and multi-word objects which have the same status in the language as simple words, the items we store in our mental lexicons ready for use.*

(Lewis1997:217)

*Lexis includes not only the single words but also the word combinations that people store in their mental lexicons.* (Olga 2001:1)
Different scholars have referred to these multi-worded units by different terms:

- Holophrases (Corder 1973)
- Prefabricated patterns (Hakuta 1974)
- Gambits (Keler 1979)
- Speech formulae (Peters 1983)
- Lexicalized stems (Pawley and Syder 1983)
- Lexical phrases (Nattinger & Decarrico 1992)
- Multi-worded items (Lewis 1993)
- Lexical items/chunks (Lewis 1997)
- Prefabricated chunks (Williams 1998)

1.5. The Role of Lexis

Wilkins, a supporter of the lexical approach, was the first to stress the importance of the role of vocabulary in language teaching. He stated *without grammar very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed* (1992:11). Sinclair (1995) also agrees with Wilkins’ view and points out: *A lexical mistake often causes misunderstanding, while a grammar mistake rarely does* (cited in Lewis, 1997:16)

In his advocacy of a new role for lexis, Lewis (1993) proposed the following major ideas:

1. **Lexis is the basis of language.**
2. **Lexis is misunderstood in language teaching because of the assumption that grammar is the basis of language and that mastery of grammatical system is a prerequisite for effective communication.**
3. One of the central organising principles of any-meaning-centred syllabus should be lexis.

4. The key principle of a lexical approach is that “language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalised grammar.”

   (cited in Olga 2000:1)

1.6 Lexical Approach in Language Teaching

   It is clear that in a lexical approach, lexis plays an important role in language teaching and learning. Nattinger says that teaching should be based on the idea that language production is the piecing together of ready-made units appropriate for particular situation (1980:34). So, the understanding of such units is dependent on knowing the predictable patterns in different situations. Lewis holds that implementing lexical approach in the classroom would entail teachers paying more attention to:

   - Lexis of different kinds
   - Specific language areas
   - Listening (at lower levels) and reading (at higher levels)
   - Organising learners’ notebooks to reveal patterns
   - The language learners may meet outside the classroom (songs, films, books, Internet)
   - Preparing learners to use text for their benefit
   - Preparing learners to chunk the language
   - Creating a habit of using dictionaries as learning sources

   (1997:15)
1.7 *Lexical Approach in Language learning*

In the lexical approach, lexis in its various types is thought to play a central role in language learning. The lexical approach recommends the learning of multi-word items as they aid the learner in producing the language without much effort. To quote Lewis:

*Lexis helps us to handle highly probable events fluently and effortlessly by providing us with prefabricated ways of dealing with them.*

(1977:41)

But at the same time Lewis emphasises that the lexical approach does not undermine the importance of grammar. As he puts it,

*The Approach in no way denies the value of grammar, nor its unique role in language.*

(Lewis: 1977: 41)

According to Lewis students should also follow a few things while practising this approach in learning a language:

- Concentrating on what words mean and how words are used
- Participating by listening to the language, noticing and reflecting
- Learning to chunk the language
- Maintaining lexical notebooks to record selected chunks of the language
- Doing the exercises and activities designed in the text
- Using dictionaries as learning resources.

(1997:58)
1.8. Lexical Categories

The lexicalists classify lexical items into different categories using different terminology. At least five different classifications could be identified and a detailed examination of these five classifications is provided below:

1.8.1 Pawley and Syder’s Classification

Pawley and Syder were first to divide lexical chunks into two types:

1. Memorized sentences
2. Lexicalized stems

According to them, Memorized Sentences are not capable of expansion and are spoken as they are. For example, Can I come in?, There’s no pleasing some people.

The second category in their opinion is capable of expansion and substitution unlike memorized sentences. Ex: Tell the truth/Tom seldom tells the truth.

1.8.2 Nattinger & Decarrico’s Division

1. Lexical Phrases
2. Institutionalised Phrases
3. Phrasal Constraints
4. Sentence Builders

The division places Lexical phrases as they call, into four categories which is lengthier than the previous one. The first of this division is Polywords. These are short phrases which function very much like individual lexical items (1992:38). Ex: for the most part, in a nutshell.
The second one they call *Institutionalised Phrases*. These are *lexical phrases of sentence length, usually functioning as separate utterances* e.g: *How do you?*, *There you go*, *Long time no see*. (1992:39).

The third one is *Phrasal Constraints*. By this, they mean *short-to-medium length phrases associated with a wide variety of functions*. Ex: *a _______ ago, See you______* (1992:41)

The fourth category is *Sentence builders* which they say are *lexical phrases that provide the framework for whole sentences*. e.g: *I think (that) X__________, My point is that _________.* (1992:42)

### 1.8.3 Moon’s Classification

Moon (1997) includes five categories of multi-word items

1. Compounds
2. Phrasal verbs
3. Idioms
4. Fixed Phrases
5. Prefabs

According to her, the first division *Compounds* is the largest and most tangible group. In this category, it is possible to see the movement of language at work, for example in the case of *Car Park*--- the words are slowly being pushed together to form a compound: *Car park, Car-Park, Carpark*.

The second category she suggests is *Phrasal Verbs*. They are combinations of verbs and particles: *bring out, head off*.
The third division is *Idioms* which are multi-word items: To quote Moon, *they have holistic meanings which cannot be retrieved from the individual meanings of the component words*. For ex: *Spill the beans* (1997: 46),

The fourth one is *Fixed Phrases*. These are grammatical and discourse items. E.g. *Of course, at least, by far*. Also similies: *White as a sheet* and

Greetings: *How do you do?*

The fifth category is what she calls *Prefabs*. Moon states

> these are pre-constructed phrases, phraseological chunks, stereotyped collocations, or semi-fixed strings which are tied to discoursal functions and which form structuring devises. (1997:47)

### 1.8.4 Williams’s Division of Lexical Categories

Unlike Nattinger and Moon’s classification, Williams describes the prefabricated language as comprising three types of chunks:

1. Functional Stems
2. Purely lexical chunks
3. Semi-lexical chunks

Williams defines *Functional stems*, as *recognisable components of what are presented as functional exponents in published materials*. e.g: *I don’t think* and *Can I just* (1998:48)

Williams describes *Purely Lexical Chunks* as *fully lexical items which are of little interest because they are linked to a specific context*. e.g. *the new system* (1998:51)
The third division Semi-lexical chunks according to Williams:

is the traditional division of lexis into content and function words is over-simplistic. Many lexical items are delexicalized or semi-lexical and find their reference and meaning in their context. E.g. in terms of, on the basis, on the basis of (1998:54)

1.8.5 Lewis’s Division of Lexical Chunks

Though there are different types of classifications of the chunks, this study adopts the division postulated by Lewis.

Lewis (1997:8) identifies multi-word items as falling into four types:

1) a) Words
   b) Polywords

2) Collocations

3) Fixed Expressions

4) Semi-Fixed Expressions

1.8.5.1 Words and Polywords

The first category is sub-divided into Words and Polywords. The former is a familiar one and refers to what we traditionally call vocabulary. It constitutes the largest of all the four categories. The lexical approach also recognizes ‘individual words’ as a part of lexis but it holds that there are several types of lexical items of which individual words are one type. Lewis states that words which can stand alone (OPEN, CERTAINLY!) are lexical items, as are words where a single substitution produces a totally new meaning: salt/pepper in could you pass the ______ please? (1997:8)
The next sub-category *Polywords* is a small group of lexical items which falls between words and major multi-word categories. These chunks are normally not reversible. For eg: *bread and butter*. Lewis considers adverbial phrases of different kinds as polywords. To quote him

“They are nearly always very short 2- or 3-word phrases which are obvious units. They are often, but by no means exclusively, adverbial phrases of different kinds”.

Lewis (1997:8)

Here are some examples:

*Sentence adverbs:* on the other hand, in some ways

*Expressions of time:* the day after tomorrow, every now and then

*Prepositions of place:* on either side of, upside down

Lewis (1993:92) treats phrasal verbs as *one kind of polywords* and this he feels the only one to be featured prominently in conventional language teaching. e.g: put off, look up, look up to

1.8.5.2 Collocations

The second major category of lexical items is *collocations*. These are chunks of lexical items that naturally co-occur by mutual expectancy. The following definitions offer varied views on the concept of collocation:

*You shall know a word by the company it keeps.* (Firth 1957: 179)

*We may use the term node to refer to an item whose collocations we are studying, and we may define a span as the number of lexical items on each side of a node that we consider relevant to that node. Items in the environment set by the span we will call collocates.*

(Sinclair 1966:415)
The study of lexical patterns.... (Brown 1974:1)

A sequence of words that occurs more than once in identical form and which it commonly associates.... (Kjellmer 1987:133)

Collocations describe specific lexical items and the frequency with which these items occur with other lexical items....... A collocational unit consists of a ‘node’ that co-occurs with a ‘span’ of words on either side.

(Nattinger & De Carrico 1992: 20)

A recurrent co-occurrence of words. (Clear 1993: 277)

The way individual words co-occur with others. (Lewis 1993:93)

The readily observable phenomenon whether certain words co-occur in natural text with greater than random frequency (Lewis, 1997:8)

A collocation is a predictable combination of words (Hill, 2000:51)

Collocations are common combinations of words (Lewis 2000:127)

It is interesting to note that like polywords which are mostly irreversible in their usage, collocations too are not normally interchangeable. For example: make a mistake and do the work. Though ‘make’ and ‘do’ are considered near synonyms, they cannot be used interchangeably. In a collocation, a node is the main word referred to and collocate is the word which co-occurs with the node. For example; scrambled egg. Here, egg is the node and scrambled is its collocate. Other words like boiled, fried, soft-boiled can be the collocates of the node egg.

Hill (2000:63) finds collocations falling into four types:

1. Unique Collocations : e.g. foot the hill
2. Strong Collocations : e.g moved to tears
3. Weak Collocations: *e.g* a good weekend

4. Medium Collocations: *e.g* do the laundry

Noting the importance of teaching collocations, Jimmie Hill points out:

> In the same way that we teach individual words- vocabulary- we need to teach collocations... there is no point in knowing the meaning of the words... unless you also know the collocation. (Jimmie Hill, 2000:60)

Lewis (2000:51) suggests that teachers should draw learners’ attention to collocations of different kinds.

- Adjective + Noun magnificent bird
- Noun+ Noun talent show
- Verb+ Adjective+ Noun revise the original plan
- Verb+ Adverb recover immediately
- Adverb+ Verb well rewarded
- Adverb+ Adjective totally safe
- Verb+ preposition + Noun seething with anger

### 1.8.5.3 Fixed Expressions

The third division of items is *Fixed Expressions* which is also known as *Institutionalized Expressions*. Lewis states:

> these are comparatively rare and short. These are chunks a speaker stores as units and uses in speech. (1997:9)
Lewis feels that language teaching has always recognized some types of fixed expressions. The most frequent examples that have featured in teaching materials:

- Social Greetings: *Good morning; How are you?*
- Politeness Phrases: *No thank you, I’m fine.*
- Phrase Book Language: *Can you tell me the way to………. Please?*
- Idioms: *Hang on, you’re putting the cart before the horse there.*

Lewis suggests that fixed expressions should be taught without internal analysis and students should be introduced to the idea that such expressions exist in their own language too.

### 1.8.5.4 Semi- Fixed Expressions

The last category is *Semi-fixed Expressions*. This category according to Lewis is an important one ‘that contains a spectrum’. These expressions range ‘from very long and from almost fixed to very free’. He also states:

> these are often verbless expressions in the spoken language for managing everyday situations’ (Lewis,1997:11)

Lewis categorizes fixed expressions into various types:

- Almost fixed expressions, which permit minimal variation: It’s / That’s not my fault
- Spoken sentences with a simple slot: Could you pass………. please ?
- Expressions with a slot which must be filled with a particular kind of slot-filler: *Hello. Nice to see you. I haven’t seen you + time expression with for or since.*
Sentence heads, which can be completed in many ways: *What was really interesting/surprising/annoying was.......*

More extended frames such as those for a formal letter or the opening paragraph of an academic paper. For example: *These are broadly speaking two views of.........The more traditional, usually associated with.......* (Lewis,1997:11)

Though there have been different categorizations of the chunks, this study adopts Lewis’s categorization of lexical chunks.

### 1.9 Limitations of the Lexical Approach

Like many approaches, this approach also has many shortcomings. Firstly, many linguists deny lexical approach as an approach for the reason that it does not provide any coherent theory of language or language learning. As Thornbury puts it:

*Lexical Approach is not an approach, not in the strict sense, since it lacks a coherent theory of learning and its theory of language is not fully enough elaborated to allow for ready implementation in terms of syllabus specification.* (Thornbury, 1998:12)

Secondly, though Lewis has a theory about the nature of language, *Language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar.* (1993: vi) Lewis does not specify the sort of syllabus he favours. Also, he recommends the use of language material which is text-based and discourse-based, but he does not specify the selection and organisation of such texts and discourses.
Thirdly, Lewis emphasizes on noticing and memorization of the chunks of language. But, he offers no clear guidelines as to the selection and grading of the chunks.

Moreover, Lewis assumes that it is the exposure to language and not formal teaching that can increase the learner’s lexicon. But, this raises the doubt if the teaching ideas included in Lewis’s books are redundant.

Though the adoption of this approach in language classrooms may not lead to methodical changes, it might change the teachers’ and learners’ mind set. So, to implement this approach, there should be a rationale and design for lexically based language teaching. More so, a focus on lexical syllabus should be made to concentrate much on language use.

The main criticism levelled against the lexical approach is that it makes no suggestions about how the principles of this approach can be translated into a syllabus. Though Willis’s book *The Lexical Syllabus* does suggest some guidelines they are not found to be practically useful.

Except for McCarthy’s books on *Collocations in Use, Phrasal Verbs in Use, Idioms in Use*, there are not any significant text cum work books on lexical items in use. There are no such books/materials at all on lexical items written by Indian authors. The present project is a modest step towards filling that gap by attempting to prepare a kind of work book on different lexical items collected from thirty different comics.
1.10  Role of Comics in Teaching/Learning Lexis

Lexical Approach believes in the principle that language should be taught through authentic texts. As Lewis puts it:

*The single most distinctive feature of the lexical approach is that it proposes a fundamentally different attitude to the treatment of text.......It recognises the importance of co-text and therefore prefers text or discourse in language teaching.* (Lewis 1997:106)

Texts not only provide the learners with interesting content, but also supplement the learners with many lexical items. Since the study adopts the framework of lexical approach, it has chosen comics, which are also authentic texts.

Besides, the research has found that comics are a rich source of all the lexical categories identified in the lexical approach.

1.10.1 Advantages of using comics in Language Learning/Teaching

There are several benefits in incorporating comics into language teaching:

- They contain natural, conversational English that is comprehensible.
- They have a visual appeal on the readers.
- Learners try to predict, deduce and infer from the pictures in the comics.
- They project the culture of the place they represent.
- They can be read quickly with no strenuous effort.
• They can, to a great extent, evoke humour in the learners.

• They can be highly effective in breaking the monotony that crops up during the process of language learning /teaching.

• They narrate stories which are very easy to follow.

• They provide us an excellent opportunity for exposure to authentic language.

• They can, to a considerable extent, relieve us from our tensions.

Taska substantiates the afore said points and notes that

*the delightful thing about some of the comic strips is that while they appeal to learners of all ages and backgrounds, they also furnish language material that is culturally based and pedagogically useful.* (Taska 1979:373)

He further notes the advantages of comics in this way:

*They are short and complete enough to be read and understood quickly. The main point is often obvious and easy to grasp. They reflect an authentic slice of life and tell us something of the society they represent.* (Taska 1979: 373)

It is for all the above stated reasons that the present study has taken up comics as materials for teaching lexis.

1.11 Summary

This chapter, as stated in the overview, has given a detailed introduction to the theoretical background of the lexical approach and has briefly explained the principles of the lexical approach. It has given a detailed description of the term lexis and its role in language learning.
It has also highlighted the importance of the approach in language teaching and learning. It has also listed the lexical categorizations put forward by different advocates. At the end it has noted the advantages of using comics in teaching and learning lexis.