**2. The Lexical Syllabus**

**2.1 Introduction**

According to Michael Lewis (Date and page removed) ‘language consists not of traditional grammar and vocabulary but often of multi-word prefabricated chunks.’ These are the lexical phrases, the collocations, and idioms, which form such an important part of the language. Lewis suggests that fluency is the result of the acquisition of a large store of these prefabricated items which are available as the foundation for any linguistic novelty or creativity’ (…………………..).

This concern about a part of the language, that, may be, was previously less considered has had a real impact in fostering discussions about what should learners learn. This lexical approach does not over-concentrate on syntax (with vocabulary slotted into the grammar patterns), but favors the teaching of phrases which show words in combination, and which are generative in a different way from traditional grammar substitution tables. Thus, instead of teaching will for the future, we might instead have students focus on its use in a series of ‘archetypical utterances’ (Lewis1993:97), I’ll get back to you as soon as I can, I’ll be back in a minute, I’ll see what I can do, you will never get away with it (Coady and Huckin ,……………….).

**2.2Assumptionsbehind Lexical Syllabuses**

The concern about the importance of vocabulary in learning languages dates back in the late part of the 17th century where the philosopher John Locke believed that ‘ concrete words were best described by pictures rather than by paraphrase or definition’ (cited in Carter and Mc. Carthy………………….).Many other scholars were involved in this area of research such as the French Francois Gouin who attempted a new system for the learning of vocabulary, that consisted of ‘…arranging words into sets corresponding to typical sequences of actions and processes’(cited in Carter and McCarthy……………..).During the 30s there appeared ‘the vocabulary control movement’ under the guidance of some figures such as C.K.Ogden and I.A. Richards. These scholars ‘tried to provide a basic minimum vocabulary for the learning of English’(Carter and McCarthy……………..),which consisted of limiting the number of words to 850.Whereas, Michael West list consisted of 2,000 words with semantic and frequency information drawn from a corpus of two to five million words. It was asserted that ‘knowing these words gives access to about 80 per cent of the words in any written text’ (ibid, 7).

However, as the structural approach dominated the scene between the 1940s and the 1960s, the interest allotted to vocabulary started to lose popularity, in contrast to a rising interest in the language system. As Fries commented “ a person has ‘learned’ a foreign language when he has thus first , within a limited vocabulary mastered the sound system (that is, when he can understand the stream of speech and achieve an understandable production of it) and has, second, made structural devices (that is, the basic arrangements of utterances) matters of automatic habit”(1945:3).

However, in the 1970s the role of vocabulary in language teaching was reconsidered again. Wilkins’ arguments that ‘while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed’ (……………….).He carries on to explain that, provided ‘one knows the appropriate vocabulary, then some form of interchange of language is possible. Without vocabulary it is impossible’(Ibid).In the same line of thought, Krashen and Terrell (1983:155) who claim that ‘indeed, if our students know the morphology and the syntax of an utterance addressed to them, but do not know the meaning of key lexical items, they will be unable to participate in the communication. This proves the rising interest in vocabulary.

**2.3. Critiques to Lexical Syllabuses**

Harmer (2001) believes that it is possible to design a lexical syllabus on the basis of vocabulary and lexis, but what is not easy to realize, he states, is applying syllabus design criteria to this kind of syllabus as there are many facets of lexis such as:

• The vocabulary related to topics (e.g. art, clothes, crime).

• Issues of word formation (e.g. suffixes and other morphological changes).

• Compound lexical items (e.g. walking-stick, multi-storey car park).

• Connecting and linking words (e.g. when, if, he/she).

• Semi-fixed expressions (e.g. would you like to….?, If I were you, I’d….).

• Connotation and the use of metaphor.

Harmer (2001) continues on arguing that lexical syllabuses may face another problem which concerns the relationship between lexis and grammar. Should phrasal verbs be taught as simple multi-word lexical items as they occur, or as a grammatical class? At what phase is teaching word formation more suitable, and when will it be useful to introduce fixed and semi-fixed expressions? What grammar should be included with new words, and how should that be selected and graded?

In spite of the fact that syllabus designers may not have to struggle in applying design criteria to individual words, melding all the other concerns of lexis into a coherent order to produce a sound lexical syllabus has not yet been shown to be feasible(ibid.).