

# **Lexis, speaking and non-native speaker teachers**

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**Lexis is the key to fluency.**

**Lower levels:**

**Verb + noun collocations**

I'm going shopping.

You've made a mistake.

Do you want to get something to eat?

**Adjective + noun collocations**

The traffic was really heavy.

That's a difficult question.

**Fixed expressions**

How's it going?

Not too bad

Not very often

**Higher levels.**

### **Idioms**

It's on the tip of my tongue.

It completely slipped my mind.

### **Metaphors**

Sorry. We've got a bit sidetracked.

We're wasting precious time here.

I reached a bit of a crossroads in my life.

**Fluent speakers don't put their ideas together word by word. Instead, they remember and re-use.**

- multi-word units
- collocations
- expressions
- whole sentences
- whole conversations

If we want our students to do this, we need to make sure they spend plenty of time studying lexis, processing lexis and practising using lexis.

## **The first fear**

Lexis is more culturally-rooted than grammar.

**Do any of the lexical items below seem culturally-rooted to you? By this, I mean do they **have to** be explained by reference to specifically British cultural phenomenon.**

- I woke up late.
- She's had her nose pierced.
- I can't stand this song.
- I've lost my appetite.
- I'll give you a lift there.
- I'd give it a miss if I were you.
- This place is a tip!
- You shouldn't have said that.
- I felt like a fish out of water.
- Beggars can't be choosers.
- They gave the plan the thumbs-up.
- It's all part of the Nick Hornbyisation of Lad-Lit.
- It's like the Shankill Road round there.
- He was part of the old Loony Left.

## **The second fear**

My English isn't as good as a native speaker's.

## **The third fear**

I might get caught out!

## **The fourth fear**

I'm not sure I can trust my intuition.

*It's w\_\_\_\_\_ of my time.*

## **The final fear**

Monolingual classes are really different from multilingual ones.

## **Tell the person next to you about . . .**

- a song that means a lot to you.
- a film that means a lot to you.a public figure you respect.
- a public figure you DON'T respect.
- a dish you love.
- a place you love.
- something you worry about.
- something you're really looking forward to.

## Don't worry!

- The more culturally-rooted a piece of lexis is, the less useful it is to EFL students.
- The vast majority of your English is the same as mine.
- The language I know that maybe you don't has no place in the EFL classroom.
- You are better and more realistic role-models for your students. They can aspire to become as good as you.
- The fact you've learned English and also speak Russian means you're more aware of potential pitfalls than a native speaker would be with your classes.

- Being caught out is part of being a teacher! It happens to all of us!
- Developing language awareness and thinking about how language works is also part of being a teacher.
- There's no native speaker spying on your classes! You speak the best English in your class! Getting students closer to your English should be the goal.
- Lexis allows students to express their lives and personalities far more than a heavily grammar-dominated syllabus. This means the monolingual classroom is still allowed to be multicultural!
- You know loads about the cultural worlds your students live in. You can use this knowledge to hang English onto.

## How does INNOVATIONS deal with the realities of the monolingual classroom?

### 1. **Input-richness!**

- the problem of suitable topics
- the wisdom of a German teenager
- you learn language from language!

### 2. **Teacher's Book** helps you exploit and explain language

- the best kind of questions we can ask are those which generate language

Joe and I used to be really good friends, but we **fell** out a few years ago after he never paid me back the £250 I lent him to buy car!

- What happens when two friends fall out?
- What kind of things do people usually fall out about?
- What do you then need to do if you want to become friends again with someone?

### **3. Speaking in L2 is closer to speaking in L1**

- no pizzas vs. Paris!
- no wild swings from tightly-controlled accuracy to free-from fluency!
- models of how to have L1 conversations – in English
- plenty of chances for students to personalise new lexis

### **4. We accept the inevitability – and uses – of translation**

- Students are encouraged to translate lexically
- Teachers are free to use translation as much – or as little – as they see fit

## Expression organiser

This section helps you to record and translate some of the most important expressions from each unit. It is always best to record words in phrases, rather than individual words. Sometimes you can translate very easily. Sometimes you will need to think of an equivalent expression in your own language.

### Unit 1

Where are you  
from?

.....

Whereabouts  
exactly?

.....

Is anyone sitting here?

.....

What's it  
like?

.....

.....

It's in the west of the country.

.....

It's about 60 miles from Madrid.

.....

Are you from London originally?

.....

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