

**Design an in-service training day for the lexical approach in a context that you know well.**

**David Evans, University of Birmingham, April 2000**

## **1 Introduction**

The aim of this workshop would be to introduce teachers in a language school in Japan to some of the ideas presented by Michael Lewis in the 'Lexical Approach'. This has been chosen for the topic of the workshop as the actual classroom activities suggested by Lewis, would seem to fill a need that has been expressed by both teachers and students in the past. However, Lewis' beliefs about learning are at odds with most teachers' perceptions of how students learn, so this would need to be presented in a way that did not jeopardize the chances of the practical ideas being adopted. Kennedy and Kennedy, (1996:351) say of teacher training programmes that, 'if they are to be successful, they involve a change in teacher and student behaviour in the classroom' so to achieve this will involve careful presentation in the workshop.

As this workshop would be for in-service teachers rather than pre-service teachers, it would be particularly important that it be collaborative. That is to say, that whereas new teachers are often eager to adopt new ideas, experienced teachers will need to be able to feel that ideas being offered are an improvement on current practice. Roberts (1998:2) says of experienced teachers that 'their years of professional experience confirm a view of themselves which can be disrupted by proposed changes in practice'. Only by involving them fully in the decision as to whether or not the Lexical Approach should be adopted, would the proposed change be non-threatening. Lewis himself says (1993:25), 'we can learn and incorporate into our thinking only ideas which confirm, extend or modify the position from which we start'. Therefore this workshop would aim at what Lewis calls 'weak' implementation of the Lexical Approach.

On the same theme Stoller, (1994) says that, 'innovations should be presented so that they fall within the zone of innovation. That is, to ensure some degree of support from potential adopters, change agents must strive to introduce innovations so that they are viewed as neither excessively divergent nor too similar to current practices.' If the

distance of change between what is currently done and what the goal is too vast, the innovation is likely to fail, as too much ground needs to be made up. Similarly, if the change is too small it will fail, as there will seem little point in making the change. Therefore this workshop would target the middle ground

The goal of the workshop is for teachers to have practical teaching ideas that can be incorporated into existing practice. Although this 'bolt-on' approach is not one that Roberts (1998) would favour, it stands more likelihood of being implemented than a more radical overhaul. This is perhaps in part a reflection of my own teaching beliefs, which have been shaped by the Present, Practice, Produce approach, in which limiting target language is central. Having said that I do believe, as Richards says, that teachers (1998:72), 'interpret.... in different ways, as they deconstruct...in the light of their own experience and reconstruct ...drawing on their own beliefs and assumptions about themselves, language, teaching learners, and learning.' As will be discussed more fully later, as the teachers are also from a PPP background, a full-frontal attack on PPP, as Lewis seems adept at doing, is likely to make teachers unsympathetic to his beliefs, no matter how applicable the practical aspects might be to their situation.

The assimilation of the practical teaching ideas, rather than accommodation of the theory is the goal of the workshop. The discussion planned for Lewis' theory is something which I would wish teachers to reflect upon, but would not be concerned if it was rejected, or modified to fit existing beliefs. Prabhu (1987:105) writes, 'the impact of the new perception will ...be necessarily varied, but probably beneficial in most cases, since even its rejection will have involved a re-examination- hence a heightened awareness- of an existing one. Also, the impact in all cases is likely to be a modification (rather than replacement) of existing perceptions...'.

Roberts, J (1998:91) cites Fullan's recommendations for successful in-service innovations, writing that they, 'tend to be implemented effectively when the change itself is recognised as necessary and relevant by the teachers. At school level, change is supported where the head teacher gives active and visible support; where there are collegial relationships (where they exchange ideas and give mutual support); where teachers have the necessary skills to implement the new curriculum...by a high level of teacher participation...in dealing with implementation issues'. Whilst Fullan is

talking of the state sector and a new curriculum rather than private education and new teaching ideas, these aspects will be central to the successful implementation of the Lewis' ideas.

This essay will firstly outline the teaching situation of the school in Japan, as the context will be a major influence on the content of the workshop, and then detail the process of organising the workshop, the workshop itself, and follow-up afterwards.

## **2 The context**

This section will discuss the context in which the workshop will take place because, as Williams and Burden (1997:188) say, 'learning never takes place in a vacuum'. Holliday (1994:2) asserts the importance of training being customised to the needs of the participants, writing 'teachers return from training programmes unable to implement what they have learnt, because it does not fit the conditions, needs and philosophies of their classrooms, students institutions and communities'. This section will therefore look at the particular circumstances that this workshop will occur in. The principal, the teachers, the students, the trainer (change agent), and the beliefs they hold towards education contribute to a unique situation, which needs to be addressed in the workshop.

### *2.1 The school*

The school is the largest private language school in Hiroshima, Japan. The owner is British, and is interested in Michael Lewis' work which is vital, as without his agreement that the Lexical Approach be encouraged within the school, the workshop would not happen. White, R (1988:137) observes that the owner-managed language school, 'is like a spider's web, with a central power source or authority figure, from whom influence radiates'. This is important to remember as the language school has developed its own 'brand' of teaching, and to move it too radically from its established style could have repercussions for student numbers. Also as Fullan says, the support of the principal would be important in giving credence to the Lexical Approach in the eyes of the teachers.

The school is run on educational grounds rather than financial ones, but as White R et

al (1991:166) note 'a privately-funded language school will have to generate profits in order to remain financially viable'. In this context the workshop is not in response to a problem, such as losing students, but as a way of improving current practice, so if there was any sign that the innovations were negatively affecting attendance, the changes would have to be abandoned.

## *2.2 The students*

In the context of a language school, students are not only students, but 'clients' as well. As there are plenty of alternative language schools, it is vital that any proposed changes to the style of teaching are acceptable to the students. For this reason, all students are routinely asked to complete feedback forms once a year and are encouraged to do so more frequently, if they wish. This seems to foster a sense of ownership and loyalty to the school, and it would be important to ensure that students receive feedback forms after this workshop.

The workshop would be primarily aimed at the advanced classes as these are the students whose current style of teaching is closest to the Lexical Approach and so it would not seem such a radical departure. However, this level is the most vocal in terms of feedback. The students have often come to the school for more than ten years, and consequently are quick to complain if the lessons do not deliver what they expect. If the teachers are confident and willing to implement the Lexical Approach, but the students are not persuaded by it, then the proposed change would have to be abandoned.

The aim of the students in these advanced classes is generally to develop a native like mastery of English. However most of them do not actually need to do so. Few use English for work purposes. For a substantial number of students, English is a 'hobby', and it also needs to be remembered that the vast majority of students at this level (about 80 students in the main school) have learnt English in Japan, through the grammar translation method, and have done so successfully. Therefore, Lewis' (and current SLA theorists) arguments about how a second language is acquired and the implications of how English should be taught are not as persuasive as they might be with lower level students.

### *2.3 The teachers*

The staff are predominantly British, and range in age from early-twenties to mid-forties. A requirement to work in the school is to have the RSA certificate, which helps explain the prevalence of the PPP method (for more detail see Willis: 1996). This has implications for the workshop because of Lewis' outspoken views on it. To alienate the teachers would reduce the chance of the Lexical Approach being accepted, so the theory which accompanies the pedagogical aspect would need to be carefully presented. There is also a school 'culture' especially amongst younger male staff in particular, to be cynical of academia. Wallace says of this divide between researcher and teacher, (1991:11) 'researchers can be contemptuous of teachers because 'they never read'. Teachers can be antipathetic to researchers because they are seen as 'refugees from the classroom.'" Consequently the main thrust of the workshop would need to be practical, and the theoretical side discussed not in terms of right or wrong, but as to whether there are aspects which are applicable to this setting.

Furthermore, as this is a language school, where staff teach twenty-three hours a week and where teachers are required to travel quite extensively, any change must not significantly increase preparation time. As Herzberg et al have identified, 'hygiene' factors are significant in determining attitudes towards work, and if the teachers' attitudes towards the change is seen in terms of the extra workload, rather than benefits, the chances of successful implementation would be slim.

### *2.4 The trainer*

As the teacher trainer organising the workshop, it is an advantage for me that I have been responsible for the previous training of these teachers with advanced classes. This helps in that I know what input teachers have had, and that I am aware of the common difficulties in teaching this level. I have also observed many classes at this level, so know what teachers typically do in the classroom, at least, when they are being observed! It is also beneficial that I have taught the advanced classes for ten years so am familiar with this particular context. This should mean that the workshop would be directly applicable to the teachers in their situation, rather than as an idealised workshop, which teachers would find difficult to relate to their particular context.

### *2.5 Current Practice*

The advanced level classes receive a file, once every three months, with articles photocopied from newspapers or magazines. Students prepare these before the lesson, so that all new vocabulary has been looked up in a dictionary before the class begins. A class lasts for ninety minutes, and typically the first forty-five minutes is spent on 'language work' and the remainder is spent on discussion of the article. This workshop would mainly be concerned with 'language work' though the lexical approach would also raise the issue of correction, which would be relevant to the discussion section.

## **3 The workshop**

This section will discuss the preparation before the workshop, the content, and the reasons for choosing this format and the follow-up afterwards. The workshop would be two hours long (see Appendix A for the timing of the workshop). It would be held in lieu of classes, as the pre-service training would be happening concurrently, and to enable the new teachers to have classes to teach, classes would be taken from the teachers who would attend this workshop. This should also help in getting a positive attitude to the workshop.

### *3.1 Prior to the workshop*

A form would be given to teachers asking what aspects of advanced classes they felt were problematical. A checklist would identify possible areas, and also a section would be left blank so that other possibilities could be considered. Assuming that ideas for exploiting the text were a major concern, teachers would be asked to prepare a future text to be used with advanced classes (see Appendix B), and to choose the language that they would focus on and why they would do so. By choosing an article which teachers will use, it is hoped that the relevance of the workshop will be increased.

The last questionnaire from advanced level students would be examined to see what comments had arisen from this feedback. In the past students at this level have requested 'more listening to the teacher' and 'more correction'. As a result these two

areas would be discussed in the workshop, as well as any more that were stated.

Roberts, and Williams and Burden, emphasise the importance of knowing what teachers currently think, because unless you know where they are starting from you can not change their perceptions. As the aim of this workshop is not explicitly to change perceptions but merely to make teachers question them; this will not be the starting point. The aim is to change the teaching method then, by asking teachers to prepare a lesson in advance, it is possible to know what they currently do and to start from there as a basis for change.

### *3.2 Aims of the workshop*

The main aims of the workshop would be;

- the distinction between possible and probable language;
- to learn what ‘chunking’ is;
- practise in identifying collocation, fixed, and semi-fixed expressions;
- activities to use with students to concentrate on these points;
- to discuss whether translation should be used as a tool for learning,
- to discuss correction, whether to correct, and if so, how;
- the role of teacher talking time in the classroom;
- to discuss ways of reviewing new input;
- to suggest changes to the material chosen for advanced classes;
- to discuss what extent the approach suitable for other levels of classes.

### *3.3 Discussing the targets chosen by teachers from the text*

Roberts (1998:240) says the ‘first and last sessions of a course or workshop are of particular importance’, and they ‘set a tone for the group which is difficult to change afterwards’. Therefore as the aim is for the trainer to act as ‘provider’ in supplying the new ideas, but not to ‘impose change attempts’ (Roberts: 1998:98) I would make it clear at the outset that the aim of the workshop was to discuss possible new ways of teaching the advanced classes. Implementation would depend on their own judgement as a group.

The first part of the workshop would be to discuss what ‘targets’ have been chosen from the text ‘A Dangerous Pursuit’ and why. Supposing that there were eight

teachers at this workshop, I would ask teachers to compare their choices in pairs first of all, as this would foster 'collegiality' and give them the opportunity to talk about teaching. It would be my intention for teachers to help each other in lesson preparation after the workshop, so to begin in this way would set the pattern that I would like to see continued after the workshop. Furthermore, students at this level are encouraged to work in pairs, so the workshop would mirror the way that students are asked to study. This style could perhaps be what Woodward (1991:8) describes as 'Push and Pop' though the teachers would not be asked to do the activities in a foreign language.

Pennington (1996:327) in an evaluation of forms of input by trainees found that 'the most successful forms of input were those which were most accessible, that is, those with which participants were most familiar...' I also think that this would be beneficial as a new approach to presenting the workshop could become a distraction from the main aims, with the possibility of confusion for both the trainer and trainees.

### *3.4 Lewis' categories*

The second stage would be to briefly describe Lewis' four categories and then, as a group, work through the first column, choosing language that fits these divisions. Lewis himself says these divisions are often arbitrary, but it would be a useful framework for focusing on what 'chunks' to highlight.

Once the teachers seemed confident doing this, they would be asked to continue with the next column, firstly as individuals and then to compare their choices in pairs. It is important to try this individually at first, as it is possible that one teacher could dominate when doing it in pairs. It is also something that the teachers will need to feel comfortable doing on their own, as the success of the workshop will be dependent on teachers using these categories as the building blocks of their lessons. If they find this difficult, it is important to recognise the problem as soon as possible, so that more time could be devoted to identifying these 'chunks'. There would be little point in progressing until teachers felt relatively comfortable in doing this, as the whole approach is dependent on 'chunking' as a starting point.

By working in pairs, not only will collaboration be fostered, but it will give teachers

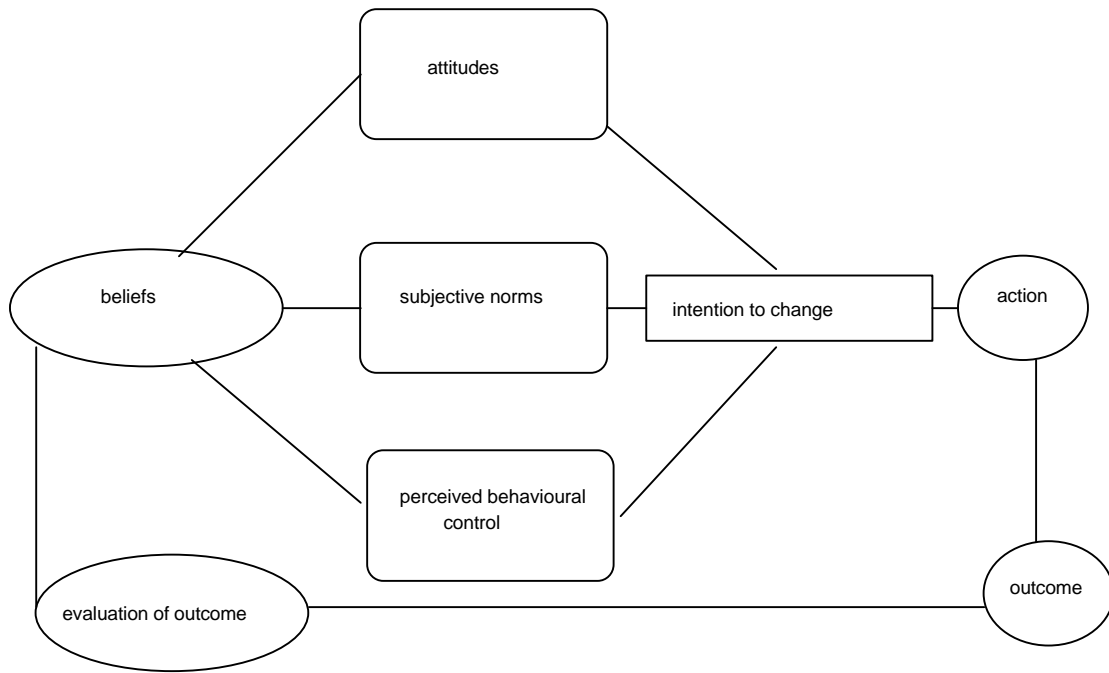


the opportunity 'to recognise and understand their tacit knowledge' (Knezevic and Scholl, cited in Roberts (1998:45)). Roberts (1998:46) emphasises that 'productive dialogue depends on the right conditions. To talk openly, on issues of concern, it is critically important for teachers to have a sense of control and participation in the process of change'.

Also in linking the workshop to Azjen's 'theory of planned behaviour', the biggest stumbling block is likely to be 'perceived behavioural control'. That is whether the teachers will feel confident that they can incorporate the 'Lexical Approach' to their classrooms, or as Azjen (1988:132) says it 'refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour...' It is essential that teachers leave the workshop believing that they can transfer the ideas of the workshop to the classroom.

### *3.5 Activities for Lewis' categories*

These (see Appendix B) would be given to the teachers, firstly to understand the rationale behind each activity, and secondly for the teachers to evaluate. By evaluating the activities, this would help to emphasise that the teachers have control over the proposed change and by being able to criticise them, they would necessarily need to understand the activities first. Again we would use the article as a base for planning the activities. I would also like to brainstorm at this point, so that teachers can contribute any ideas that they use successfully with these classes. If the teachers have ideas to amend the activities of Lewis this would be beneficial. As Woodward (1992:7) says 'the idea will mutate as you use it', and this should be encouraged, as it will increase the likelihood of the ideas actually being used. This would also, in terms of Azjen's theory, make the teachers; both as individuals (attitude towards behaviour) and as a group (subjective norms) have more positive feelings towards the Lexical Approach. Again, this should increase the likelihood of success.



(from D. Kennedy 1999:32)

### 3.6 Discussions on the thinking behind the Lexical Approach

This part of the workshop would aim to discuss the theoretical thinking behind the lexical approach and to see how it relates to the teaching context that exists in the school in Japan. Depending on the reaction of the teachers so far, this section might be brought forward if the prevailing atmosphere is one of miscomprehension as to why the teachers are being asked to do these exercises. This would need to be an ‘intuitive’ decision says Roberts (1998:161). The reason for leaving this section to the end is that some of the theory is going to be in direct conflict with teachers’ current thinking about how students learn. Although there is no absolute certainty on this point, current second language acquisition does reject the logic behind the PPP method, and therefore this will clash with teachers’ intuitions. To have discussed this prior to looking at the pedagogical application could have jaundiced teachers’ reactions to the exercises presented previously. I would hope that by separating the practice from the theory, that even if the theory is rejected, teachers would still feel the activities to be of value.

The aim of the discussion would be to select aspects of Lewis’ thinking and to evaluate how far they are applicable to the context in which the teachers here operate. There would be no attempt to persuade the teachers to adopt the ideas, but rather to

make them aware of a different perception of how students learn. I would not wish to convince the teachers that Lewis is 'right' partly because I am far from convinced myself, but more importantly, because it would be a futile exercise. Each teacher will take what they want from the workshop (as Richards said), and the aim from my position would be to encourage teachers to re-evaluate how they teach, but not to prescribe how they should teach.

This section of the workshop would be done in the same vein as the other sections, with teachers first noting their own opinions, which gives them a 'silent thinking period' (Roberts 1998:175) and would then open into what Roberts calls a 'free-for all' as the teachers know each other well. If necessary I would provide more details on what Lewis says and why, but it would be advantageous if the discussion took its own direction as other more pressing concerns of the teachers might appear.

### *3.7 Concluding the workshop*

Whilst there would be no coercive attempt made to change the way teachers think, there would be a deliberate effort made to make the teachers experiment with the practical ideas of the workshop. In concluding I would ask teachers in pairs to be ready to report back on how the ideas have been received in the classroom, and to evaluate them in terms of their effectiveness, and in terms of the student reaction to them. Because of the difficulties of timetabling meetings in a language school, (as teachers are often working in different locations), I would ask the teachers to arrange to meet with a colleague to discuss how the activities have been received, and to suggest changes to improve them. This should mean that teachers would not simply abandon the ideas at the first problem.

I would also ask the teachers to be prepared to give feedback on each activity for the follow-up meeting in two months time, when the decision would be taken, with the principal, as to whether the trial has been successful or not.

### *3.8 Post-workshop*

As many teacher-trainer specialists point out, 'one-shot' training sessions are widespread but ineffective' (Roberts 1998:92) as if problems arise afterwards there is no opportunity to consult about such problems. Fullan writes that 'research on

implementation has demonstrated beyond a shadow of doubt that these processes of sustained interaction.... are crucial, regardless of what the change is concerned with' (cited in Roberts 19998:92). Williams and Burden emphasise the point, (1997:121) 'motivation is more than arousing interest. It also involves sustaining that interest and investing time and energy into putting in the necessary effort to achieve certain goals'. Unless a concerted effort is made to follow-up the workshop, there is a strong likelihood, as Pascale (1990:20) says, that 'ideas acquired with ease are discarded with ease'.

An advantage of the situation described here is that as all of those attending the workshop would work in the same school, this problem could be avoided. As I have said, a follow-up meeting to discuss the merits and de-merits of the activities would be arranged, and also an evaluation form for the workshop would be given out, so that teachers could, after a period of reflection, ask for more clarification on any ideas that were not presented clearly.

In addition to this I would arrange for feedback forms to go to students, so that they could also voice their opinions on their perceptions of the changes. Although I would hope that teachers would discuss the changes with the students, before introducing them, students in Japan can be reluctant to be critical face to face, so this would give them the opportunity to be critical, should they so wish.

I would not 'observe' classes after the workshop unless teachers asked for this to happen. White R (1988:149) writes 'what seems to be clear is that evaluation can be regarded as threatening, can lead to misconceptions and can be destabilizing because evaluations are... political: by definition they entail value judgements, and there are a number of political danger-zones'. If schedules could be manipulated to accommodate it, teachers would have classes covered so that they could watch a colleague experiment with the Lexical Approach. This would help maintain the impetus of the workshop.

#### **4 Conclusion**

Michael Swan (1985:87) when talking about the advent of the Communicative

Approach urges teachers to ask ‘not ‘Is it true’ but ‘What good does it do?’ ’ and the same advice would be equally relevant with the Lexical Approach. The aim of the workshop would be to experiment with the ideas to see what ‘good’ they do, and to marry them with the existing practice of teachers. Michael Fullan (1993:13) says of change that, ‘it is not a good idea to borrow someone else’s vision’ so the workshop has been designed to tailor Lewis’ vision to the local environment, which would mean not adopting his vision in its totality. In fact Lewis partially agrees (1997:13) saying, ‘implementing the Lexical Approach involves a big change in the teacher’s understanding of language, but only small consistent changes in the classroom so that the Approach can be introduced without serious upheaval’. This workshop would be selective in deciding which ideas to concentrate on, because the context in which the ideas would be implemented (if at all) would not allow a ‘strong’ implementation of the approach.

The context has been the over-riding concern in designing this workshop, for as Roberts says (1998:223) ‘the unique mix of circumstances: school culture, working relationships past history, physical layout and pupil characteristics all create a novel ‘cocktail’ of conditions’. The views of students are particularly important, as the context is that of a private language school.

The other major factor has been to fully involve the teachers, not just in terms of the workshop, but also in determining what is of value in the Lexical Approach. By asking the teachers to ‘trial’ the ideas, there is some coercion on my part to make the teachers experiment with the Lexical Approach, but any decision to implement this as a general approach for advanced classes would depend upon them, the teachers and the principal. Even if it were ultimately decided not to continue with the Lexical Approach, it would be worthwhile for the reasons that Prabhu gave, - it would challenge teachers to think more deeply about what they do, even if they reject the ideas in their entirety.

The format for the workshop is rather conservative and unimaginative, but I believe justified on the grounds that clarity might be sacrificed, if a novel approach were adopted. Although the workshop would have a plan, I would happily drop it, if it emerged that there were more important issues to be addressed, as far as the teachers

were concerned. A danger which Rudduck points out (cited in Roberts 1998:93) is that 'providers over prepare or overload content, which leads to 'one-way' interaction'. There is a real risk of this if too much explanation of Lewis' theory is required, so this would be something that I would need to be conscious of.

Finally, another quote from Swan who says, (1985:87), 'we shall probably benefit from the next teaching revolution if we can keep our heads, recognize dogma for what it is, and try out new techniques without giving up useful older methods simply because they have 'proved wrong'.' If the workshop succeeds in encouraging this, it would have been successful.

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## Appendix A

### Workshop plan (Two hour workshop)

- 1 Outline aims of workshop, stress that the aim is to see if the ideas from the Lexical Approach are compatible with what teachers currently do, and to ask teachers if they will, trial the ideas. If they do not like them after the trial period they will not be used. (5 minutes)
- 2 Discussion of targets they have chosen from ‘A Dangerous Pursuit’ and why (10 minutes)
- 3 Explanation of Lewis’ taxonomy of words, collocations, semi-fixed and fixed expressions. (5 minutes)
- 4 Identifying these categories for the first column in ‘A Dangerous Pursuit’, first individually, then in pairs, finally as a group. (20 minutes)

Words	Collocations
By this time	blinding lights wrapped around pronounced dead recover from shock stumbled across official investigation
Fixed expressions	Semi-fixed expressions
there was still no sign of him the area was cordoned off palm of his hand be back in just a few minutes on and on and on	the first thing (he) saw was... (he) was the kind of (boy) who... when it got to.... embedded in the side of..

- 5 Discussion of what teachers think of the ideas (10 minutes)
- 6 Presenting the ideas for exploiting these ideas. Ideally with no pre-amble, they should be self explanatory. More would be available if needed such as ‘Pause reading’ and correction reading (1998:126/127) (20 minutes)
- 7 Get initial reactions from teachers, see which ideas they think will work with their classes. Ask for ideas that they feel will improve them. (15 minutes)



- 8 Discuss the implications of the Lexical Approach for selected aspects of teaching in this school in groups (15 minutes)
- 9 As a group, discuss objections and advantages of the approach (15 minutes)
- 10 Conclude workshop by asking teachers to trial the ideas that they like. Ask them to work with other teachers in improving the suggestions. Ask teachers to keep a record of how the students have reacted, and on which ideas have worked best. Ask teachers to look through Lewis' books to choose any other ideas that they like, to try them out, and report on them at the later meeting in two months at the school 'training day'. (5 minutes)

## APPENDIX B

### A DANGEROUS PURSUIT

Dennis Homer says **the first thing he saw was** the blinding lights. A cluster of police cars wrapped around one spot, on the Wolverhampton road, barely two minutes from his house in Birmingham. And those blinding lights, **like something from a Spielberg film**. It was December 1995, and he was out **looking for** his son, Neil, who had celebrated his birthday only a couple of days earlier. Neil had taken his girlfriend home, would **be back in just a few minutes**. He was the kind of boy who never arrived home later than he had promised. He had left at 12:15, and when it got to two and there was still **no sign** of him, his mother Dianne **sent Dennis** to look for their son.

At 2.40am, he **came across** lights. **The area was cordoned off**. Dennis got out of his car and told one of the policemen he was looking for his son. The officer asked him for the registration of his car. "He then **looked into the palm of his hand**, and I saw part of Neil's registration written on it. The officer just paled." Then Dennis saw a police car embedded **in the side of** a police car **crushed like a Coke can**. **By this time** Neil was in hospital. At 3.20am, he was **pronounced dead**.

When the Homers began to **recover from shock**, they asked questions. Why had they not **been informed about** the crash? Was the police car speeding? Had it **gone through traffic lights** on red? Few of these questions were answered. They did discover that the crash had happened more than two hours before Dennis **stumbled across** it. The police told the family they could not answer their questions because there would have to be an **official investigation**.

The enquiry went **on and on and on**, in secrecy. Twenty months it took. Not only had Neil Homer been killed, so had the officer in the passenger seat of the police car. "The key issue was who went through the red lights: was it Neil or the police? And **we had to live with that question till** the court case"

Except he didn't. One day soon after the incident, Dennis went on to the radio to ask for witnesses. Two boys rang in to say **they'd heard everything**. They had tuned into a police wavelength with their scanner and listened in on the most sickening pursuit of a stolen car. When the boys began to go into details the presenter **cut them off** for legal reasons.

Dennis met the boys, who **had told him all they knew**. The police car had been pursuing a stolen car for eight minutes. In that eight minutes they had travelled eight and a half miles through a built-up area. They shot through one set of red lights at 98mph. That was when Neil had the misfortune to be turning left on a green light. The boys said the

**noise of the impact was like** a bomb exploding. The stolen car escaped.

**The boys knew every last detail, including the fact that** the police had relayed a message saying that they thought Neil's white was travelling with the suspect car, - that Neil was an accomplice. They heard the panic of police passenger PC Dallow as he tried to stop his driver PC Collins. They even heard his dying screams.

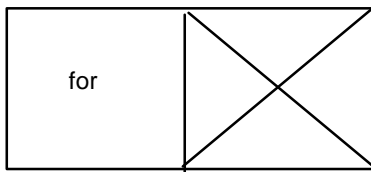
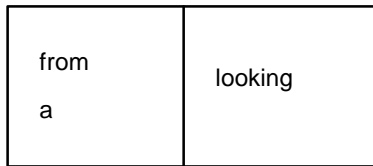
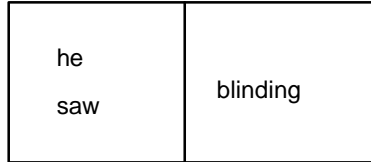
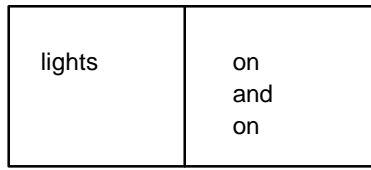
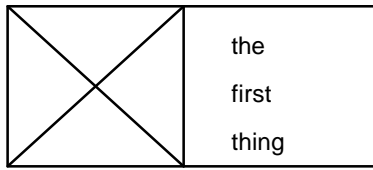
Dennis Homer **promised himself he would find the whole truth about** his son's death. **The more he talked to witnesses the more outraged he became**. He discovered that although his family had not been told about the crash, the families of both officers had been informed immediately afterwards. He discovered that officers who said they heard no siren just before the accident later claimed the siren was working; that some had even claimed the police car went through the lights on green. He heard from people whose houses bordered on the wreckage how they had offered to get blankets for Neil to make him more comfortable and the police had told them to mind their own business. "They told me my son had been dragged from the car like a piece of meat, and just dumped on the roadway. They treated him like a suspect even when he was dying."

In February 1997, the case came to court. PC Collins was convicted of dangerous driving, jailed for three months and banned from driving for two years. Eight other officers were eventually warned or formally admonished for neglecting their duty.

The deaths of Neil Homer and PC Dallow **caused such a stink** that it led to **radical changes** in pursuit guidelines. He believes action was only taken because he happened to come across **incontrovertible evidence** of what happened.

The most recent Home Office police research group study of incidents involving police vehicles reveals that between 1990 and 1993 at least 1,025 people suffered serious injury in collisions with police vehicles, of whom 92 died. Only 7% of police drivers involved in these incidents were found to be blameworthy, 2% of drivers were prosecuted for careless or dangerous driving, and 1.4% of police officers were removed from driving duties. More than 80% of fatalities were suffered by members of the public. According to the Police Complaints Authority (PCA) Collins is the only police officer in Britain who has been jailed for dangerous driving.

**WORD DOMINOES**



1	the	first	thing	he		+++++
2	blinding		+++++	+++++	+++++	+++++
3	like	something			+++++	+++++
4	+++++	in	just	a		
5			boy	who		+++++
6	+++++	+++++		sign	of	him
7	+++++	the	palm			
8	+++++			side	of	+++++
9			a	coke	can	+++++
10	+++++	+++++		dead	+++++	+++++
11	+++++	gone		red		
12	+++++	stumbled		+++++	+++++	+++++
13	+++++	+++++	stumbled		+++++	+++++
14	+++++	on	and			