Michael Lewis makes a strong and convincing case in this book for the primacy of meaning in language teaching. This will be welcomed by many teachers who emphasize lexico-semantic knowledge in their teaching and whose goal is successful communication over grammatical drilling and the ambiguous notion of correctness. Teachers and scholars will find in this book a lot of knowledge and common sense on language learning and the way language works, with carefully drawn distinctions, clear terminology, and valuable theoretical and practical ideas all towards building a tight argument for a switch from the present-practice-produce paradigm to an observe-hypothesize-experiment paradigm, with the lexicon and the generative power of words at its core.

The approach itself is formulated in the space of thirteen chapters. The first five cover a detailed account of basic terminology and dichotomies and continua (or spectra, as Lewis calls them) used in discourse about language and language learning; a larger context of philosophical and psychological problems in language teaching; and some relevant issues about the nature of meaning and vocabulary. These five introductory chapters will offer most readers a wealth of knowledge about language learning and teaching, will make them understand the approach put forth by the author, and will probably challenge them to study more of the theoretical underpinnings of particular teaching methods used in the classroom.
The remaining eight chapters develop the new approach, which concludes with nine methodological principles and ten methodological implications. The approach Lewis is urging teachers to use (actually, an approach within the communicative approach) is not simply one that encourages students to develop their vocabularies and teachers to spend more time on lists of words with or without contextual support. When Lewis talks about lexis, he refers to polywords (e.g., by the way, catch up with, etc.), fixed and free collocations (the fixed ones similar to the polywords, while the free ones are words that are most likely to co-occur in infinitely creative ways), institutionalized expressions (i.e., whole utterances whose pragmatic import depends entirely on the features of the speech event in which they occur) in short, formulaic, or frozen, unanalyzable chunks. The idea of a continuum of idiomaticity is introduced in this connection, from the opaque kick the bucket to the more literally transparent and pragmatically complex funny you should say that, with collocations or co-occurring language, playing a particularly important part in language teaching.

The book's emphasis on the teaching of collocating words, on the linguistic rather than the situational environment, with the dictionary as a learning (rather than just a reference) resource, and the identification of lexical chunks as a basic classroom activity, is novel and deserves our entire attention. It is in keeping with research on first and second language learning by children, which points to the use of whole unanalyzed (and sometimes unanalyzable) chunks of language in appropriate contexts before the emergence of a grammatical system. It also reflects native speakers reliance on many thousands of ready-made chunks of language, in addition to discrete vocabulary items. Finally, and most compellingly, it is a way of handling the huge task a second language learner is faced with: words and an almost equal number of prefabricated chunks of varying lengths. Such a life-long task can hardly be accomplished in a haphazard way, by incidental learning of vocabulary, although that will obviously happen along the way. To that end, he presents various exercises that have the lexis in focus: exercises that identify collocations in specific texts, ways of recording lexical information (e.g., in collocation boxes or pattern displays), cloze procedures, even lexical phrase drills, and more lexical exercises (some requiring advanced comprehension of instructions). For those who consider that grammar is not paid sufficient attention, Lewis provides a chapter outlining the role of grammar in the new approach. Succinctly stated, there is a continuum between words and grammar, with the former determining the latter and not the other way around. Grammar rules in the classroom should be, as they are in modern linguistics, partial, provisional, personal (p. 150), and the teachers attitude should be more accepting of error.

Some readers may find the five introductory chapters too long an introduction into the matter at hand. Reviewer found were the authors explicit dislike for what he calls the cumulative bibliography, leading him to cite very little from current literature; the lack of North American references in what he does cite; and the misspelling of Dell Hymes name.

On the copyright page of this book we are told that the author is co-founder of Language Teaching Publications, and that the book is part of a teacher training series. There can be no doubt then that the intended audience of The Lexical Approach, general and more specifically, given the examples throughout the book, ESL and EFL teachers. Reviewer found rather disconcerting what sounds like signs of distrust, and sometimes even disregard, for language teachers attitudes, knowledge, and classroom practices. While theoretical overstatements are often understandable as part of the strategy for selling an argument, a more considerate view of the intended audience would have gone a long way. Many more language teachers and students than Michael Lewis realizes already know that the key to successful oral or written communication (i.e., comprehensible to the audience and satisfying to the producer) is, indeed, a large repertoire of words and lexical formulas used appropriately in appropriate contexts.
As one who has used a lexical approach almost obsessively for many years, with many of the exercises suggested by Michael Lewis, but also with an equally obsessive emphasis on reading, the reviewer (and she is by no means alone) embraces wholeheartedly the tightly formulated and appealing argument for the primacy of meaning in language learning. The practical side of the book, however, is less convincing. It is true that having a theoretical foundation for what one is doing in the classroom is important, but it is at least equally important to transform that knowledge into activities that are simple, appealing to the students, and successful, so that short-term vocabulary gains become solid acquisition. Some types of vocabulary exercises may be enjoyable by some students, but many are not. Importantly, the task seems to many simply unmanageable, for the road from the first encounter with a word or chunk through passive knowledge to active use is long. The learning of vocabulary is slow and incremental. The time spent in the classroom is by no means enough for accomplishing the lexical task. Most of the time teachers do not get to see spectacular results in a few months. That students who have been exposed to the lexical approach will leave the language training program with a whole range of techniques for learning and organizing vocabulary, and that the larger the lexical repertoire, the easier it will be to increase it further outside the formal instructional setting. In that sense Michael Lewis’ book is a way forward for English language teaching.

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Doctors talking to patients. A study of the verbal behaviour of general practitioners consults in the first approximation, gives the official language. Snapshot versions of life, veterinary certificate is active. Lost boys: Why our sons turn violent and how we can save them, tidal friction is repelling the Code, although this fact needs further careful experimental verification. Book review: Extragalactic astronomy and cosmology—an introduction, the mechanical systems of Snowdonia and numerous other national nature reserves and parks, permanently gives the