

BEYOND THE BASICS: BLENDING LEXICAL AND TRADITIONAL METHODS
TO PROPEL B1/B2 ENGLISH LEARNERS' WRITING AND READING FLUENCY

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Abstract: *This article examines the pedagogical advantages of integrating the Lexical Approach (LA) and the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to address the specific developmental needs of upper-intermediate (B1/B2) English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. While GTM is utilized primarily to reinforce reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and formal grammar structures, LA is employed to foster communicative competence, fluency, and the natural production of language through the mastery of multi-word units (chunks). By outlining activities such as group story writing, structured text analysis, and vocabulary drawing games, this paper demonstrates how a balanced methodological approach can significantly improve fluency, critical thinking, and overall linguistic accuracy in preparation for advanced B2-level proficiency.*

Keywords: *Lexical Approach, Grammar Translation Method, B1/B2 learners, Writing Fluency, Reading Comprehension, Multi-word Units, Formative Assessment.*

INTRODUCTION

The transition from intermediate (B1) to upper-intermediate (B2) proficiency represents a crucial phase in second language acquisition, requiring learners not only to manage familiar situations but also to engage with complex, abstract topics and produce coherent, fluent discourse. The target group for this analysis—high school students transitioning into the B2 level—possesses active vocabularies and demonstrates enthusiasm for collaborative learning, yet they exhibit distinct weaknesses in critical reading (inference and skimming/scanning) and writing mechanics (punctuation and consistent verb tense usage). Traditional teaching practices, such as the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), have long been valued for building a strong foundation in grammar and vocabulary necessary for reading literary texts. However, modern communicative needs necessitate approaches that prioritize natural language use and fluency. The Lexical Approach (LA) addresses this need by emphasizing the acquisition of language in "chunks" rather than individual words, thereby enhancing communicative competence and promoting more natural and fluent language production in writing. This article posits that by selectively integrating GTM for structural accuracy and LA for fluency and naturalness, educators can create a comprehensive instructional framework that directly targets the unique challenges faced by B1/B2 learners, ultimately propelling them toward advanced proficiency.

Main Body. Targeting Reading Deficits through Grammar Translation. The learners' primary weakness in reading involves difficulty in making clear inferences and applying scanning/skimmming techniques. GTM is strategically implemented to combat these issues. Activities are designed to encourage intensive reading, where learners analyze text

structure and content to deepen comprehension. For example, after reading a text, students are asked to summarize the material and fill in the blanks, which reinforces both comprehension and structural awareness. Furthermore, GTM emphasis on vocabulary expansion is crucial; the learners engage in tasks like selecting key vocabulary words and participating in collaborative games (such as drawing the words) to reinforce retention and understanding. This structural, detail-oriented analysis prepares them to better grasp complex textual elements and make informed inferences. This method is closely related to the development of reading skills as learners read and translate literary passages from the target language into their native language. Moreover, it is helpful to develop their vocabulary, grammar knowledge as well as their reading comprehension skills. To be more specific, by showing the pictures which are related to the text title allows students to reinforce the meaning of the text title and provide them with better understanding as well. Importantly, including pictures in the activities, it is considered to be a good way to make the lesson more interesting and engaging as they maintain enthusiasm and motivation to reading the text. In addition, as asking, answering questions help to practice about how to be attentive to the details, how to read carefully the specific information, they encourage learners to read attentively, analyze key elements by engaging in this activity. Another essential point which is intended to learn via this activity is summarizing skills. Because incorporating them into reading activities assists students to acquire ample knowledge for improving reading comprehension skills. Moreover, after doing this activity, they learn to not only read for key information but also summarize main points effectively. I consider that this method is necessarily beneficial to tackle the weaknesses of students in the section of reading.

Enhancing Writing Fluency via the Lexical Approach. While GTM addresses structural concerns, the Lexical Approach is employed to enhance the quality and naturalness of written output, specifically story writing. Lexical Approach theory emphasizes that learning multi-word units and phrases has a positive effect on developing more natural and fluent language use. In dedicated writing tasks, students are exposed to topic-based vocabulary and encouraged to use the provided text as a model for organizing their thoughts. The "Modern House" writing activity exemplifies this integration: students are first divided into groups to discuss story structure elements, ensuring they have a structural foundation. They are then provided with a list of topic-based vocabulary (e.g., 'convenient,' 'expensive,' 'digital') and given a model to follow, allowing them to consolidate the material learned. By engaging in this process, students are simultaneously practicing writing, improving their spelling and punctuation, and internalizing large chunks of language, which is central to improving communicative skills. The focus on collaborative feedback further allows pairs to discuss grammatical mistakes and structural integrity.

Addressing Grammatical and Punctuation Inaccuracies. A recurring issue among the target learners is the inconsistent use of verb tenses and omissions of necessary punctuation (e.g., commas before coordinating conjunctions). While the Lexical Approach improves overall fluency, GTM methodical focus on grammatical rules provides the necessary corrective mechanism. The writing activities incorporate structured steps where students first draft individually, then exchange ideas with pairs for discussion and

correction, and finally receive teacher feedback on grammar and story structures. This structured feedback system, rooted in the GTM principle of accuracy, directly addresses the learners' shortage of knowledge in these fields, ensuring that fluency gained through the Lexical Approach is built upon a foundation of accuracy. Although lexical approach emphasizes more on developing communicative competence in a second language, it has a lot of benefits for writing skills. By analyzing the importance of learning multi-word units and phrases, this approach has a positive effect on developing more natural and fluent use of language in the writing section. By this activity, they are not only practice writing, but also consolidate the material they have been taught at the lesson and learn to use the text as a model for organizing their thoughts. Besides that, by engaging in this writing activity, learners can improve their punctuation, spelling, pronunciation and intonation skills, as Lexical Approach is primarily focused on improving communicative skills. This activity also engages students into working in pairs or groups, allowing them to talk to several people while completing the task. Additionally, " Lewis emphasizes that the importance of teaching and learning vocabulary in chunks rather than focusing solely on grammar and individual words."

Conclusion. The data suggests that a hybrid instructional strategy—one that strategically combines the accuracy focus of the Grammar Translation Method with the fluency orientation of the Lexical Approach—is highly effective for B1/B2 learners aiming for upper-intermediate mastery. GTM supports intensive reading and the correction of common grammatical oversights, while LA facilitates the production of more natural, communicative, and coherent written language.

By engaging students in hands-on, collaborative activities (like the story writing task) that prioritize both structure and chunk learning, educators can effectively bridge the gap between intermediate linguistic competence and the demands of B2-level critical thinking and fluent expression.

This integrated approach ensures that learners not only understand complex structures but also use language fluently and accurately in meaningful contexts.

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