
Rules, Patterns and Words: Grammar and Lexis in English Language Teaching

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RULES, PATTERNS AND WORDS: GRAMMAR AND LEXIS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING. Dave Willis, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2003), viii + 238 pp. \$25.00 (pbk), ISBN 0-52-153619-7.

Like the other titles in the *Cambridge Language Teaching Library* series, Willis' *Rules, Patterns and Words* is written for an audience of graduate students and experienced teachers. It is a much needed volume that addresses teaching both the grammar and lexis of English.

This ten-chapter text begins with the firm statement that "What is taught may not be what is learnt." Willis then provides an overview of his views on grammar and lexis, ranging from the grammar of structure, the grammar of orientation, and pattern grammar, to class, lexical phrases, collocations, and words. These notions are further discussed in Chapters 4-8. Chapter 9 discusses the grammar of spoken English while Chapter 10 summarizes the discussion and makes recommendations for language teaching and syllabus and materials design.

A number of points in the text are worth noting. First, throughout the book, readers are constantly reminded about how to situate the teaching of grammar and lexis within the framework of recognition, system building, and exploration, or what Willis postulates as the three language learning processes, to address different classroom treatments of different aspects of the language. He also emphasizes the need for learners to have opportunities for language use in the classroom through improvisation and consolidation activities. Willis' central argument throughout the book is that classroom language learning should focus on acquiring lexis after which learners can be exposed to an increasing variety of texts. Willis acknowledges that one problem of learning lexical phrases is that there are so many of them. Admirably, he introduces the idea of a "pedagogic corpus" (Chapter 7) to address the problem. This refers to a set of texts which learners have processed for meaning and which the teacher can use to help learners familiarize themselves with valuable phrases.

The only quibble about this book is that it requires more careful editing. Minor editing errors include missing information in the reference list, incorrect page numbers

listed in the indexes, and typographical errors in the main text. On the whole, however, readers will find the book professionally stimulating and a number of the exercises and tasks of immediate practical use.

About the Reviewer

Chau Meng Huat is Research Officer at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. He recently gave a presentation entitled "Towards Realizing a Lexical Approach: Principles and Challenges" to teachers in the MEd. TESL program at the Universiti, drawing heavily from the discussion of this book.