

Hanna Barbolina

*Kurakhove Base Secondary School No. 5, Kurakhove City Council, Donetsk Region
(Kurakhove, Ukraine)*

THE POWER OF TWO: BINOMIAL PAIRS AS A TOOL FOR ENHANCING LEXICAL RANGE IN SENIOR STUDENTS

Studying English in senior school is not solely about grammar; it is also about "developing the ability to communicate in a manner that is authentic to oneself. One of the best ways to do this is by using binomial pairs" (Chen, Z., & Fang, N., 2024). These are simple expressions where two words are joined by a word like "and" or "or", such as *peace and quiet* or *more or less*. For students in their final years of school, these phrases are very important. They help students move away from simple, "textbook" English and start using more natural language. When students use binomials, they sound more confident and their English feels more organised. These expressions act like ready-made "building blocks, making it easier for students to express their thoughts without stopping to think of every single word. Anybody who wishes to perform well on tests and interact with others in the real world must master these pairs" (Albelihi, H. H. M., 2022).

Binomial pairs have a significant influence on the written output of senior students. At the B2 level, students are expected to produce formal essays and reports that demonstrate a varied and precise vocabulary. Binomials provide a sophisticated framework for organising arguments. Instead of using basic transitional words, "a student who employs *first and foremost* to describe a primary point immediately demonstrates a higher level of lexical control" (Nam, D., & Park, K., 2020).

Moreover, binomials also serve as coherent tools. Expressions like *by and large* or *all in all* are far more effective for concluding a paragraph than simple adverbs. These expressions assist pupils in avoiding the "repetitive word trap", which occurs when they employ the same fundamental descriptors repeatedly in a book. In formal contexts, using pairs such as *rules and regulations* or *terms and conditions* gives the writing a

professional, academic tone that is essential for scoring highly in secondary school assessments.

In terms of oral communication, binomial pairs are vital for achieving a natural-sounding flow. Native speakers use expressions like *peace and quiet* or *safe and sound* instinctively. When senior students adopt these pairs, they move away from the "translated" feel that often characterises non-native speech. Spoken English is inherently rhythmic, and binomials—many of which use alliteration or rhyme—contribute significantly to this cadence.

The ability to employ binomials makes pupils sound more assured during class discussions. For example, saying "I'm *sick and tired* of this situation" is much more idiomatic than saying "I am very annoyed." Since these pairs are "lexical chunks," the brain remembers them collectively. This reduces the cognitive load during speaking, allowing students to focus on their ideas rather than searching for individual words, which directly improves their overall fluency.

One of the greatest challenges for senior students is understanding authentic English as it is used in British media and daily life. Binomial pairs are ubiquitous in the UK, from the *hustle and bustle* of city life to the *bits and pieces* of information found in news reports. By studying these expressions, students gain better access to authentic materials.

The study of binomials also introduces students to the concept of "irreversibility." Understanding that we always say *fish and chips* and never "chips and fish" teaches students about the fixed nature of English collocations. "This awareness is a crucial step towards native-like fluency. It shifts the student's perspective from seeing English as a collection of individual words to seeing it as a network of interconnected phrases" (Du, L., Elgort, I., & Siyanova-Chanturia, A., 2021), making their own language use appear much more "natural" to a listener.

Scientific research into language acquisition suggests that the human brain is wired to learn language in "chunks" rather than isolated fragments. Binomial pairs are the perfect example of these chunks. Many of them use internal logic like rhyme (*wear and tear*), alliteration (*pick and choose*), or synonymy (*leaps and bounds*). These features act as "memory hooks," making the phrases incredibly easy for senior students to memorise and retain long-term.

When a student learns *dos and don'ts*, they are storing a single, complex concept in their memory. This "chunking" method helps prevent mental fatigue during long lessons or exams. By focusing on these pairs, teachers are essentially working with the brain's natural learning processes, leading to faster vocabulary acquisition and better recall under pressure.

International tests such as the Cambridge B2 First or the IELTS frequently show senior students how to use binomials practically. Examiners specifically search for "less common lexical items" in order to give higher grades. A student who uses *more or less* instead of "approximately," or *loud and clear* to show understanding, demonstrates a mastery of the English register.

In the "Use of English" sections, binomials frequently appear in multiple-choice cloze or word transformation tasks. Students can more easily navigate these challenging parts by identifying these patterns. Additionally, binomials offer a "stylistic polish" in the writing assignments that separates a typical passing mark from an outstanding one. It demonstrates that the learner is genuinely proficient in English rather than merely functional.

Finally, incorporating binomial exercises into the curriculum makes the learning process more dynamic. Unlike traditional vocabulary lists, "binomials are fun to practice through matching games, gap-fills, and role-plays" (Albelihi, H. H. M., 2022). They encourage students to experiment with the "musicality" of English. For senior students, who are often motivated by the practical utility of their studies, seeing the immediate improvement in their ability to express themselves is a powerful incentive. By treating

binomials as a "short-cut" to advanced English, teachers can help students build a robust lexical range that will serve them well in their future academic lives.

To sum up, teaching binomial pairings is an easy yet effective technique to assist senior students get better at English. These expressions are not just extra words; they are essential tools for better writing and more natural speaking. By using binomials, students can make their work sound more professional and their speech feel more fluent. It enables students to advance from the fundamental level of English to a stage when they can speak confidently and stylishly. For a teacher, focusing on these pairs is an excellent way to prepare students for the challenges of adult life and higher education. In the end, these little words have a significant impact on how the outside world perceives a student.

REFERENCES

1. Albelihi, H. H. M. (2022). Intermediate English as a Foreign Language learners' formulaic language speaking proficiency: Where does the teaching of lexical chunks figure? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 949675. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.949675>
2. Chen, Z., & Fang, N. (2024). Chinese EFL learners' processing of English binomials: The role of interlexical and intralexical factors. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1425856. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1425856>
3. Du, L., Elgort, I., & Siyanova-Chanturia, A. (2021). Cross-language influences in the processing of multiword expressions: From a first language to second and back. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 666520. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.666520>
4. Nam, D., & Park, K. (2020). I will write about: Investigating multiword expressions in prospective students' argumentative writing. *PLOS ONE*, 15(12), e0242843. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0242843>