

VOCABULARY AS CORE ELEMENT IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract:

Today, it aims to improve the quality of learning and make language acquisition more effective. Vocabulary is central to speaking skills and overall language use. This article discusses why teaching vocabulary is the most important part of learning in foreign language.

Keywords: Educational process, knowledge, lexical skills, learning efficiency, vocabulary acquisition, active vocabulary minimum.

Introduction

Vocabulary acquisition is universally recognized as a fundamental component in the process of learning a new language. It serves as the bedrock upon which all other language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—are built. Without a robust vocabulary, effective communication becomes challenging, as words are the primary means through which thoughts and ideas are conveyed. This article delves into the multifaceted role of vocabulary in language learning, drawing upon insights from cognitive science, applied linguistics, and pedagogical research to underscore its significance. In the XXth century, advances in linguistics, psychology, and teaching methods addressed many issues related to language mastery. A major challenge remains how students acquire vocabulary. Some words are easy to remember, but others need specific exercises to learn well. Differentiated teaching can help students build a basic functional vocabulary. Language teachers have created methods that apply to all types of communication. They have also developed dictionaries, textbooks, and curricula that organise language material for both active and passive learning. These resources emphasise using different exercises—receptive and reproductive—to teach spoken language effectively.

Recognising a word and understanding its meaning are crucial skills, not just for reading but also for speaking. Good communication depends on quickly recalling the right words and fitting them into the conversation. This requires more than just knowing vocabulary; it demands real mastery. Mastery depends on developing strong lexical skills. It is important to aim for complete vocabulary mastery, not just familiarity. A person should have enough words to communicate comfortably in different situations, no matter which activity they are doing.

Vocabulary is a core part of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is essential in every language activity. This is why building lexical skills remains a primary goal for teachers. Even with new teaching methods, a full theory covering both active and passive skills has not been developed. No effective method to reach complete vocabulary proficiency exists yet. Vocabulary remains vital for all forms of speech. Teachers continue to see developing lexical skills as a key part of language education.

The importance of vocabulary in language learning has been extensively documented in linguistic research. Schmitt (2000) emphasizes that vocabulary knowledge is central to communicative competence, asserting that without sufficient vocabulary, learners cannot fully understand or express themselves. Similarly, Nation (2001) describes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use as complementary: knowledge of vocabulary enables language use, and conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge. These perspectives highlight the dynamic interplay between vocabulary and overall language proficiency.

Vocabulary is the collection of words in a language. The words used by a person, whether spoken or written, form their active vocabulary. A larger, more varied vocabulary makes language use easier. The main goal of teaching words is to improve skills in both understanding and expressing ideas. Different levels of language ability guide what students should be able to do at various ages.

Furthermore, cognitive linguistics offers valuable insights into vocabulary acquisition. Li (2024) explores how theories such as conceptual metaphor theory, prototype theory, and schema theory can enhance vocabulary learning by linking new words to existing mental structures, thereby facilitating deeper understanding and retention. These cognitive frameworks suggest that vocabulary learning is not merely about memorizing words but involves integrating them into a network of related concepts and experiences.

Considering these points, it is evident that vocabulary constitutes a fundamental element of speech activity within the framework of language. This underscores its significant role in every foreign language lesson, with the development of lexical skills remaining a primary focus for educators. However, despite advancements in teaching both active and passive language skills, a comprehensive theory encompassing these two distinct aspects of language proficiency has yet to be established, nor have effective methods for achieving such proficiency in the learning process been developed. Thus, this issue remains pertinent today. Vocabulary, as a critical component of linguistic means, plays a vital role in all forms of speech activity, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This reinforces its importance in foreign language instruction, where the cultivation of lexical skills is consistently prioritized by teachers.

Vocabulary refers to the set of words within a specific language. The words utilized by an individual in both oral and written communication constitute their active vocabulary. A richer and more varied vocabulary facilitates easier language use. The primary aim of teaching lexical material is to enhance students' lexical skills, which are essential for both expressive and receptive forms of speech activity. There is a scale of proficiency in a foreign language for reception, production and interaction, which gives an idea of what younger students should be able to, starting to learn the language:

A number of reasons explains the increased attention to this aspect of foreign language speech:

- the content of the statement primarily depends on the degree of proficiency in vocabulary;
- the vocabulary to be learned is not homogeneous in its psychological, psycholinguistic characteristics;
- the acquired lexical minimum should be considered as basic (pivotal) vocabulary;
- skills in the use of linguistic units, material at the lexical level are an important component of such types of speech activities as listening, reading and speaking;
- there is a need to work on the systematization of previously studied lexical units.

From a methodological point of view, the complex process of mastering a foreign language vocabulary includes many components: presentation, explanation, various exercises for training and application, control over the process of formation and formation of lexical skills. The lexical rules play an important role

in the development of mechanisms for the lexical design of an utterance. The complexity of the problem of lexical rules requires consideration of such factors as

the legitimacy of the selection of lexical rules, their content and organization in training. To solve the questions posed, units of the lexical minimum and units of learning are allocated, for which lexical rules are needed. According to V.L. Skalkina and N.V. Varezhkina "educational lexeme-semantic unit:

- is aimed at teaching and as such already contains the beginnings of a methodological typology;
- is focused on the speakers of another (specific) language and, therefore, takes into account the conceptual and semantic grid characteristic of a different linguistic society;
- by its nature it is already a selective unit, that is, a lexical unit passed through the "sieve" of elementary selection".

In terms of expression, an educational token-semantic unit can consist of one, two, three or more words, up to a sentence; can be a simple, complex, derivative, abbreviated and converted word. In terms of the content of the meaning, educational lexeme-semantic units are very heterogeneous: these are basic, additional, normative-direct, figurative-figurative, connotative, style-register, socio-areal, onomastic and other meanings. Selection principles are indicators of various functional characteristics of lexeme-semantic units. Their service function helps to highlight the principles of word-formation value and combat ability. The semantic function of educational lexical-semantic units is revealed due to the principles of semantic and thematic value, prevalence, stylistic unlimitedness and polysemy, compatibility and exclusion of synonyms. The correct choice of the method of semantization, selection of examples of use, highlighting differentiating features, training and practice, systematization and typology of educational lexeme-semantic units, that is, all methodically expedient actions and explanations, depends on how competently the teacher comprehends the features of each educational lexeme-semantic unit for the formation of lexical mechanisms. When determining the content and role, lexical rules, it is also necessary to take into account data on the formation and qualities of the corresponding foreign language from the position of an active approach to learning.

In the interpretation of E.I. Passov, "a skill can be defined as an independent relative action in the system of conscious activity that has become this activity." Active lexical skill involves mastering a number of operations, such as transferring educational lexical-semantic units from long-term memory to operational memory, combining words in meaning and form according to certain schemes, replacing a free position and using them in oral and written forms of communication.

Since the systems of concepts in different languages do not coincide, when studying a foreign language, it is necessary to learn a new system of concepts simultaneously with the form of a word, which always requires clarification, Academician Shcherba rightly asserts. Lexical-semantic units used in education should be grouped under the term "lexical rule," following P.Y. Galperin's concept of their components.

Modern methods see all translation techniques and continual word meaning development as falling under the category of lexical rules. I.F. Komkova adds that these rules include word formation, semantic compatibility, and stylistic norms. Word formation rules are especially complex because they cannot be easily split into grammatical or lexical categories. Understanding how words combine—semantic compatibility and syntactic structure—is crucial. The meaning of nouns and their ability to combine are closely linked because of their specific content and nuance. Compatibility depends on each word's meaning, linguistic tradition, and cultural habits. When learning a foreign language, students face many challenges. These include understanding a word's content, form, usage, and the size of its synonym group. They must also handle interference from their native language and other languages.

All parts of lexical skills should be considered when introducing new words, practising with a dictionary, working with texts or exercises, and actively using vocabulary during language learning.

Vocabulary acquisition is not merely a component of language learning but its foundation. Insights from cognitive science, applied linguistics, and pedagogy converge on the understanding that robust vocabulary knowledge is essential for language comprehension, expression, and fluency. Therefore, prioritizing vocabulary acquisition through research-backed strategies is imperative for language learners and educators alike.

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