

FOSTERING VOCABULARY EXPANSION IN READING ACTIVITIES IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: This study explores theoretical and psycholinguistic foundations, word-formation processes (derivation, conversion, compounding), and vocabulary classification by function, frequency, semantics, and difficulty. Pedagogical strategies such as extensive reading, morphological analysis, contextual learning, lexical chunks, and communicative practice are shown to enhance lexical competence. Integrating inferential approaches into instruction promotes learner autonomy, analytical thinking, and the transition from receptive to productive vocabulary, fostering linguo-cognitive competence.

Keywords: lexical inferencing, foreign language reading, morphological awareness, extensive reading

Аннотация: Tadqiqot nazariy va psixolingvistik asoslarni, soʻz hosil qilish jarayonlarini (derivatsiya, konversiya, kompaund) va lugʻatni funksiyaga, tez-tez ishlatilishiga, semantik turiga va murakkablik darajasiga koʻra tasniflashni oʻrganadi. Keng qamrovli oʻqish, morfologik tahlil, kontekstual oʻqitish, leksik bloklar va kommunikativ amaliyot kabi pedagogik strategiyalar leksik kompetensiyani oshiradi. Izohlash yondashuvlarini integratsiya qilish oʻquvchilar mustaqilligi, tahliliy fikrlash va qabul qiluvchi lugʻatdan produktiv lugʻatga oʻtishni ragʻbatlantiradi.

Kalit soʻzlar: leksik inferensiya, chet tilida oʻqish, morfologik xabardorlik, keng qamrovli oʻqish

Аннотация: Рассмотрены теоретические и психолингвистические основы, процессы словообразования (деривация, конверсия, компаундирование) и классификация словаря по функции, частоте, семантике и уровню сложности. Педагогические стратегии, включая широкое чтение, морфологический анализ, контекстное обучение, работу с лексическими блоками и коммуникативную практику, повышают лексическую компетенцию. Интеграция выводных подходов способствует автономии учащихся, аналитическому мышлению и переходу от рецептивного к продуктивному словарю, формируя лингвокогнитивную компетенцию.

Ключевые слова: лексическое выводное умение, чтение на иностранном языке, морфологическая осведомлённость, широкое чтение

Introduction

A key objective of foreign language instruction is to develop learners' ability to interpret unfamiliar lexical items during reading. In methodological research, this skill is associated with the concept of potential vocabulary. In applied linguistics and vocabulary pedagogy, potential lexis denotes words that learners can comprehend or infer despite not having encountered them before. Such understanding typically arises from knowledge of word-formation patterns, contextual cues, and cognitive processing

mechanisms. The concept is commonly examined within psycholinguistic frameworks of vocabulary acquisition and receptive lexical development. Potential lexis commonly emerges through productive word-formation patterns. Below are typical mechanisms with examples.

Derivational morphology (affixation). Learners recognize familiar roots and affixes and infer meaning. Examples: *develop* → *development*, *possible* → *impossible*. Even if the learner has never studied the word *development*, knowledge of *develop* and the suffix *-ment* allows them to infer the meaning. Conversion (zero derivation). Examples: *email* (noun) → *to email* (verb), *Google* (noun) → *to google* (verb), *text* (noun) → *to text* (verb). Compound formation. Meaning is inferred from the combination of known lexical items. Examples: *bookshop*, *language teacher*, *classroom management*, *online learning*. Contextual inference. Learners deduce meaning from surrounding discourse. Example sentence: *The researcher used an innovative method to improve vocabulary learning*. Even if *innovative* is unknown, the context suggests “new” or “creative.” From a psycholinguistic perspective, potential lexis is linked to lexical access, mental lexicon organization, and morphological awareness. Researchers such as Paul Nation [5] note that vocabulary learning involves not only memorizing lexical units but also developing the ability to generate and interpret new lexical forms.

The Concept of Potential Vocabulary. In language teaching methodology, potential vocabulary is defined as a group of lexical units that learners have not previously encountered but are able to understand by analyzing their internal structure or by relying on similarities between the foreign language and the native language. The possibility of understanding such words depends largely on their *derivability*, which refers to the ability to infer meaning based on the relationships between the elements that constitute the word. For example, the meaning of derived words such as *translator* or *constructor* can be deduced from the base verbs *translate* and *construct* and the suffix *-or*, which indicates the performer of an action. In this case, knowledge of word-formation patterns allows learners to determine the meaning of unfamiliar lexical units without direct translation.

In methodological literature, the concept of the vocabulary minimum is commonly classified into active and passive vocabulary. Many scholars have addressed this distinction, including V.A. Bukhbinder, G.V. Rogova, M.A. Pedanova, J.J. Jalolov, and H. Soynazarov [7], who emphasize the functional role of vocabulary in language acquisition. According to these researchers, active vocabulary consists of lexical units that learners can use productively in their speech. These words are actively employed in various types of communicative activities such as speaking and writing. with receptive language activities, particularly listening and reading comprehension.

High-Frequency and Low-Frequency Lexis. Vocabulary is also classified according to frequency of use. High-frequency lexis includes the most commonly used words in everyday communication. Low-frequency lexis occurs rarely and often appears in specialized texts. According to corpus linguistics research, knowledge of *the most frequent 2000–3000 words* allows learners to understand a large proportion of everyday texts.

Productive and Receptive Lexis. Many researchers use another classification similar to active/passive vocabulary. *Productive lexis* – words learners can use in speaking and writing. *Receptive lexis* – words learners can understand in reading or listening but rarely produce.

Methodology. Lexis in language teaching methodology can be classified according to different criteria such as frequency, function, semantic characteristics, and communicative use. Researchers distinguish several types of vocabulary, including active and passive lexis, general and specialized lexis, concrete and abstract vocabulary, as well as productive and receptive lexical units.

One of the most widely recognized approaches to vocabulary development is extensive reading. According to Krashen [3] and Nation [5], exposure to a large amount of comprehensible input enables learners to acquire new lexical items incidentally. Through repeated encounters with words in meaningful contexts, learners gradually internalize vocabulary and integrate it into their mental lexicon. This process enhances both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge.

Another effective strategy is contextualized vocabulary learning, which involves acquiring lexical meaning through contextual clues within authentic texts. Nation [5] emphasizes that contextual learning not only facilitates comprehension but also promotes deeper cognitive processing of lexical items. From a psycholinguistic perspective, contextual exposure contributes to the formation of semantic networks within the mental lexicon, allowing learners to establish meaningful connections between newly acquired words and previously stored lexical knowledge [8]. In addition, morphological awareness plays a crucial role in vocabulary expansion. Knowledge of word formation processes, including affixation, compounding, and derivation, enables learners to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words. Schmitt [6] argues that learners who develop morphological awareness are better equipped to decode complex lexical structures and expand their vocabulary repertoire more efficiently. Another important factor in vocabulary acquisition is repetition and spaced practice. Psycholinguistic studies indicate that repeated exposure to lexical items strengthens memory traces and enhances long-term retention. Ellis [1] suggests that frequency of exposure significantly influences the acquisition and retrieval of lexical items, as repeated encounters reinforce neural connections associated with word recognition and production.

Furthermore, communicative use of vocabulary is essential for transforming receptive knowledge into productive competence. According to Harmer [2], learners consolidate lexical knowledge more effectively when they actively employ vocabulary in meaningful communicative activities, such as discussions, presentations, and written tasks. Such activities promote deeper processing of lexical items and contribute to their integration into learners' productive vocabulary.

Another influential perspective is the lexical approach, which emphasizes the importance of learning vocabulary in the form of lexical chunks and collocations rather than isolated words. Lewis [4] argues that language fluency largely depends on the acquisition of frequently occurring word combinations. Consequently, teaching collocations and lexical patterns enables learners to produce more natural and fluent speech.

Discussion.

Teaching students to understand unfamiliar lexical units should not be treated as an additional activity outside the curriculum. On the contrary, it is a fundamental component of teaching reading comprehension. Exercises designed for this purpose should focus not on memorizing specific lexical items but on developing learners' ability to infer meaning independently. Effective instruction typically involves several steps. Students first analyze the structure of the unfamiliar word and identify its

components. Next, they formulate a tentative interpretation of its meaning. Finally, they verify this interpretation by examining the surrounding context and adjusting their understanding if necessary.

Results

Sources of Potential Vocabulary. Several linguistic sources contribute to the formation of potential vocabulary.

- *International words* are lexical units that have similar forms and meanings in many languages. Examples include *film*, *text*, *radio*, and *doctor*. Their structural and semantic similarity to words in the learners' native language facilitates comprehension. However, learners must also be aware of so-called *false friends*, such as *magazine* or *artist*, which resemble words in other languages but have different meanings [9].

- *Derived Words*. Derivation through affixation is one of the most productive word-formation processes in English. Research indicates that approximately thirty percent of content words in English texts are derivatives. The comprehension of such words is based on knowledge of the base word, the meaning of the affix, and the grammatical category of the resulting word. For instance, nouns formed with the suffix *-er* generally denote the performer of an action, as in *teacher* or *reader* [10].

- *Compound Words*. Compounding involves combining two or more lexical stems into a single unit. In many English compounds, the second component represents the central concept, while the first element modifies it. For example, *hairbrush* can be interpreted as "a brush for hair." Understanding compound words often requires analyzing the semantic relationship between their components [11].

- *Polysemantic Words*. Another source of potential vocabulary is polysemy, which refers to the presence of multiple related meanings within a single word. The correct interpretation of a polysemantic word depends heavily on context. For example, the word *foot* may refer to a part of the body, the base of a mountain, or the leg of a piece of furniture [12].

Conclusion

In conclusion, effective vocabulary development requires the integration of multiple pedagogical strategies that address both cognitive and communicative aspects of language learning. Approaches such as extensive reading, contextualized learning, morphological analysis, repetition, communicative practice, and lexical chunk instruction contribute significantly to the development of learners' lexical competence. From a psycholinguistic standpoint, these strategies facilitate the organization and retrieval of lexical items within the mental lexicon, thereby enhancing overall language proficiency.

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