

# The Importance of Teaching Vocabulary

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**Abstract:** This article is devoted to highlight the importance of teaching vocabulary. Nobody can deny that increasing vocabulary is an essential part of our life and realizing its importance in language acquisition is a key to academic success in language learning. In addition to this, without vocabulary knowledge any language skill cannot be developed. Teaching vocabulary plays a pivotal role in the learning of a new foreign language and increasing word knowledge is a dynamic and meaningful way to develop it. Recent researches found it that nowadays, more and more students have problems with learning vocabulary because of not having exact and suitable strategies to learn it. Especially, second language learners cannot manage with vocabulary. They face with some problems due to only memorizing the words in different contexts and the words they heard. Also, they are not confident about with what methods they can learn effectively. However, there presented several methods in this work and the ways of how to increase word knowledge. Actually, it can be concluded that vocabulary is the words that everyone uses to communicate with others, to share their ideas and express their opinions. That is the main reason why it is quite important to teach vocabulary. Word knowledge is the basic resource in this process as it can make better students' comprehension and literacy skills. The main point there is to increase the word knowledge regularly. The aim of the research work is to establish the peerless importance of teaching vocabulary and determine how to increase and develop vocabulary knowledge in language acquisition.

**Keywords:** word knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, comprehension skills, academic success, literacy development, vocabulary acquisition, preservice teachers, academic instruction, language components.

## INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is crucial for everyone who wants to learn a language in their life. "Vocabulary, as one of the knowledge areas in language, plays a great role for learners in acquiring a language" (Cameron, 2001). Without developing it, almost no one can achieve success in language learning. In other words, as Harmon, Wood & Keser (2009) as well as Linse (2005) mentioned that "Vocabulary is an important aspect of their language development." Therefore, teachers should understand its importance if they want that their students will achieve academic success in the language learning.

"Although it has been neglected for a long time, researchers have increasingly been turning their attention to vocabulary" (Mofareh Alqahtani, 2015). Teachers have started to understand its matter, value in teaching language, but they have not realized yet or have not found exact methods about how to teach learners, which can be effective ones.

## The Importance of Increasing Word Knowledge

According to several researches, it is proved that "vocabulary is a critical skill that can be comprehended through listening and reading." That's why word knowledge plays a key role in the development of vocabulary and teaching vocabulary.

If students have enough word knowledge, they can understand the text they are reading, the words they are listening. It is said by Ashley G., that "for many, lack of vocabulary knowledge could be a reason that students are not able to access the meaning of a text" (Ashley G. 2018). Therefore, everyone who is learning a language should increase their word knowledge at the first place.

In other words, personally, I would say that the word knowledge is the foundation of the progress of the language acquisition as well as in the literacy development. In the teaching progress, the majority of the students claim that they cannot understand the meaning of a word and a large number of them fail in doing tasks because of lack of vocabulary knowledge.

On the other hand, when students start learning, they do not know which words they need to learn to communicate, to develop their other skills as well. "The problem is that how we can determine which words that need to be taught to increase vocabulary knowledge" (G. Ashley, 2018). Therefore, to increase and improve word knowledge, every teacher utilizes various strategies and methods.

There is the need for increased vocabulary instruction to gain word knowledge. However, as National Reading Panel (NRP; 2000) suggested that students should learn vocabulary through a variety of methods, and no single method is optimum.

“If a method such as direct instruction is used, students still need to receive repeated and multiple exposure to the new vocabulary words. Given this knowledge, not only must preservice teachers be taught how to determine an appropriate strategy to teach, they must also be able to consider students’ prior knowledge of words. Familiarity with students’ prior word knowledge allows teachers to determine which words they need to implement in their classrooms. Careful consideration is needed when determining which words to teach” (G. Ashley, 2018). It shows that it is quite important for teachers to know what words to teach and when to teach pupils.

Also, the importance of word knowledge can be shown by its influence on the comprehension skills. The more word knowledge increases on students, the more their comprehension skills get better. But, if they do not pay attention to their vocabulary growth, they cannot increase the ability on themselves to understand key points of a text which can lead to difficulty in comprehension.

“When a student demonstrates difficulty in recalling key details such as the plot of a story, character names, and settings, it becomes an evident that the student lacks foundational literacy experiences. Furthermore, background knowledge is an indicator of likeliness that students are able to connect to a text” (Butcher & Kintsch; 2003 Schallert & Martin, 2003). Thus, the relationship between vocabulary and comprehension reinforce the need for supporting preservice teachers in identifying pedagogical practices and strategies that will increase students’ word knowledge through vocabulary instruction” (G. Ashley, 2018). I think it is the prove of the importance of word knowledge. Word knowledge is not only needed to develop comprehension skills, but also it is the foundation to the literacy as well. That’s why teachers should pay close attention to this when they teach beginners. But these things are also different in all learners. Additionally, it highly depends on the age of the learner, whether they are adult or children. Teachers should include these psychological things in language acquisition.

It is said a lot that word knowledge plays a pivotal role in language acquisition, and it is natural that if there appears any question about how to improve and increase word knowledge and vocabulary. The first thing that all should know is that the best effective way is learning new words regularly. “It is vital that the continuation of strong literacy instruction remain as students become proficient readers” (G. Ashely. 2018). I think these words related to the vocabulary learning process, also. If a learner keeps learning regularly, that person can learn a lot and can be a good language learner.

The next way to increase word knowledge is practicing at least for an hour a day with different encyclopedias. There are plenty of famous vocabulary encyclopedias which have acquired vocabulary words. In addition to this, “this can provide students the opportunity to create vocabulary packets, and the opportunity to reflect upon their vocabulary learning through the use of reflective or interactive journals as G. Ashley mentioned. Also, he suggests that in these encyclopedias, on each page the student is expected to write the word, write the definition, include a picture and add any other pertinent information about the word”. It is pretty good idea to increase word knowledge in the learners and it can give an opportunity for the students to realize the word fully and learning that words deep. If learners use these methods for several months when they are a beginner language learner, they will have a chance to have enough vocabulary to communicate with people and understanding the texts, getting the meanings of the words they are listening and others.

On the other hand, the NRP (2000) suggest that multimedia is a strategy to increase students’ vocabulary knowledge. Nowadays, in the century of technologies, it is possible to increase students’ vocabulary with the tool of multimedia easily. Learners can use several e-dictionary apps, websites, multimedia resources effectively. I believe this is more effective than other strategies. Because modern earners are more tend to use multimedia tools.

“Engaging students in high academic instruction in all subject areas will support word knowledge and vocabulary. .... Preservice teachers should be encouraged to use authentic literature outside of scripted curriculum to engage students and effectively increase implementing interactive read alouds as a for vocabulary instruction.” With this prior knowledge, all learners use even a little part of them, they can just develop a high academic vocabulary and they will be real successful learners.

### **The Importance of Learning Vocabulary**

Nation (2001) further 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.

Vocabulary acquisition is something that we cannot imagine the language speaker without knowing it. Its role, its value, its importance is just limitless in teaching language. Word itself is a such thing which gives us the opportunity to express our ideas, emotions and even something we want to show. Learning, understanding, even realizing one word in the learning process is a real success and gaining the new words, increasing the number of words we know can give us an enormous help to learn the language well.

The more words we learn, the more we can express our ideas pure and clear as it shows the importance of vocabulary. Any language learner, no matter whether it is the English language or the Chinese language, any language learner should understand its pivotal and core role in the process of learning.

Majority of students and lots of teachers claimed that knowing or learning grammar rules is more important than vocabulary knowledge. However, it is clarified by several researches that if the students do not have enough vocabulary, they cannot use the grammar rules in practice. That means before learning grammar rules students should learn new and necessary words first.

On the other hand, keeping learning both grammar and vocabulary at one time is just super. Keeping them together and equal means a real achievement in learning language. If the students know the grammar rules good, they can use them only if they have enough vocabulary and word knowledge also. It is said a lot and a lot that vocabulary is the foundation of the language acquisition and teaching it to the learners have a pretty good effect on students' development.

Accordingly, "In English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) learning vocabulary items plays a vital role in all language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Nation,2011).Rivers and Nunan (1991), furthermore, argue that the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary is essential for successful second language use because without an extensive vocabulary, we will be unable to use the structures and functions we may have learned for comprehensible communication." (Mofareh Alqathani, 2015). All of these are the bright examples to show the value and importance of teaching vocabulary.

"Oxford (1990) also claims that vocabulary is "by far the most sizeable and unmanageable component in the learning of any language, whether a foreign or one's mother tongue, because of tens of thousands of different meanings" Despite these difficulties that language learners face in L2 vocabulary, they still have to deal with it in their examinations as "vocabulary has traditionally been one of the language components measured in language tests" (Schmitt, 1999, 189). Furthermore, many learners see second language acquisition (SLA) as essentially a matter of learning vocabulary and therefore they spend a great deal of time on memorizing lists of L2 words and rely on their bilingual dictionary as a basic communicative resource. As a result, language teachers and applied linguists now generally recognize the importance of vocabulary learning and are exploring ways of promoting it more effectively. Some of this research takes the form of investigation of strategies learners use specifically for vocabulary (VLS), which is our focus of attention." (Mofareh Alqathani, 2015). That's why teaching vocabulary to the learners is becoming more and more important, but one factor that makes us happy is that, learners are realizing its importance. They are paying close attention to work on their vocabulary skills. When the problems related with teaching vocabulary be solved, it becomes exactly easier to learn a language and everyone will have an opportunity to choose suitable method in vocabulary acquisition for themselves. Language learners can develop their vocabulary knowledge with lots of ways, just it depends on the learner, even some people can keep learning vocabulary with developing other skills as well. Because they know the peerless importance of vocabulary.

## Conclusion

This piece of work is devoted to highlight the importance of teaching vocabulary as an essential part of language acquisition. It is true that it has been claimed a lot to develop other skills or paying attention to other skills more than doing it to vocabulary knowledge, but as it mentioned before, in the last decades, it became one of the best "hot" topics for the researchers. It is almost proved that vocabulary stands in the first place to be taught and learned. Without developing this crucial skill, no one can achieve success in language acquisition.

Many learners have been facing with some problems in language learning for centuries and almost all of these problems related with vocabulary knowledge. The core skill of the language is having a good word knowledge and learning word structure. Although there is not any exact strategy that says it can help 100 % to teach vocabulary to the students, many researchers have conducted several ways such as multimedia, encyclopedias, websites and so on. But the researchers also mentioned that the ways or strategies would be different for different learners.

It highly depends on the student, especially, to the learners' characteristics such as their age, level of education, and what kind of learner they are. Including all of these things below, before teaching vocabulary, the teacher or the learner should identify these things on the students or on themselves. The most important thing is realizing the importance of learning vocabulary, then they can act in the right way which lead them to the academic success.

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