

A Review on the Important Role of Vocabulary Knowledge in Reading Comprehension Performance

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Vocabulary learning is a dominant feature of language acquisition. Students and teachers alike know that many of the reading comprehension breakdowns experienced by students involve word recognition and lexical access. This review is an attempt to broaden knowledge of the relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension performance.

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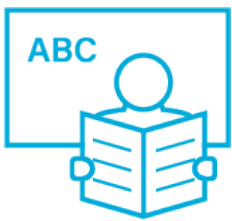
- Language acquisition is an active procedure that requires learners to continually acquire vocabulary from the target language.
- The amount of familiar and unfamiliar vocabulary is one of the most significant elements in discerning a text's degree of complication.
- Ignorance of the differences between second language (L2) and foreign language can result in confusion in the practice of language learning, teaching, and research work.

Defining vocabulary knowledge

- Vocabulary knowledge refers to knowledge of the following: the spoken form of a word, the written form of a word, the parts in a word that have meaning, the link between a particular form and a meaning, the concepts a word may possess and the items to which it can refer, the vocabulary that is associated with a word, a word's grammatical functions, a word's collocations, and a word's register and frequency.
- Receptive/passive vocabulary knowledge is the language input that learners receive from others through listening or reading and try to understand it.
- Productive/active vocabulary knowledge is the language output that learners convey as messages to others through speaking or writing.
- Educated native-English speakers know approximately 20,000 word families and each year of their early life they learn (on average) 1,000 word families.
- Knowledge of the most frequent 5000 words should provide sufficient vocabulary to facilitate reading authentic texts.
- Depth of knowledge is a network of links between words; it refers to the way they associate and interact with each other, and may be restricted in use according to register and context.

Significance of vocabulary learning

- Vocabulary appears to be a sound indicator of language ability because learners regularly make use of dictionaries (rather than grammar books).
- A large number of words are required to become competent in a foreign language.
- Vocabulary knowledge breadth and depth correlate quite significantly (approximately .8) and are both capable of explaining a considerable portion (over 50%) of the variance in reading comprehension scores.
- Vocabulary knowledge is fundamental in reading comprehension because it functions in the same way as background knowledge in reading comprehension.



Summary

- Vocabulary knowledge is essential for reading comprehension.
- Both aspects of vocabulary knowledge—depth and breadth—are required.
- Depth of vocabulary, breadth of vocabulary knowledge, and reading comprehension are highly and positively correlated.