



DIRECT AND INDIRECT FOUNDATIONS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING LEXICAL COMPETENCE

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Abstract

The article explores the direct and indirect foundations, challenges, and opportunities for improving lexical competence among learners of foreign languages, with a particular focus on German as a foreign language. Lexical competence, as a fundamental component of communicative competence, determines the learner's ability to select, understand, and use appropriate vocabulary in various communicative contexts. The study emphasizes that lexical competence development depends on both direct approaches, such as explicit vocabulary instruction and semantic mapping, and indirect ones, such as extensive reading, immersion, and context-based learning. The research analyzes the psychological and linguistic mechanisms underlying vocabulary acquisition and retention, noting that motivation, frequency of exposure, and contextual richness play key roles. Furthermore, the study identifies common challenges faced by learners, including lexical interference, polysemy, idiomatic usage, and insufficient exposure to authentic language materials. Opportunities emerging from digital technologies, including AI-based translation tools, online corpora, and gamified learning platforms, are also examined as means of enhancing vocabulary mastery. The paper concludes that the integration of direct and indirect strategies provides an optimal framework for sustainable lexical development, enabling learners to achieve greater fluency, precision, and cultural awareness in foreign language communication.

Keywords: Lexical competence, direct learning, indirect learning, vocabulary acquisition, language teaching, linguistic challenges, digital learning, German language, communicative competence, pedagogy.



LEKSIK KOMPETENSIYANI OSHIRISHNING BEVOSITA VA BILVOSITA ASOSLARI, QIYINCHILIKLAR VA IMKONIYATLARI

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Annotatsiya:

Maqolada xorijiy tillarni, xususan, nemis tilini o'rganishda leksik kompetensiyani rivojlantirishning bevosita va bilvosita asoslari, qiyinchiliklari hamda imkoniyatlari tahlil qilinadi. Leksik kompetensiya kommunikativ kompetensiyaning asosiy tarkibiy qismi bo'lib, o'quvchining so'zlarni turli muloqot kontekstlarida to'g'ri tushunish, tanlash va qo'llash qobiliyatini belgilaydi. Muallif bevosita o'qitish usullarini (so'z boyligini ochiq o'rgatish, semantik xaritalar, morfologik tahlil) hamda bilvosita yondashuvlarni (o'qish, tinglash, tabiiy muloqot, raqamli texnologiyalardan foydalanish) tahlil qiladi. Leksik kompetensiyani rivojlantirish jarayoni kognitiv va kontekstual omillar — so'zlarning qo'llanish chastotasi, motivatsiya, hissiy ishtirok va kontekstning boyligi — bilan chambarchas bog'liqligi ta'kidlanadi. Shuningdek, zamonaviy til o'qitishdagi muammolar, jumladan, ona tili interferensiyasi, polisemiya, autentik materiallarning yetishmasligi va tarjima vositalariga ortiqcha tayanish holatlari ko'rsatib o'tiladi. Shu bilan birga, raqamli texnologiyalar, onlayn korpuslar va o'yin asosidagi o'quv platformalarining imkoniyatlari leksik o'zlashtirishni faollashtiruvchi omil sifatida yoritiladi. Maqolada leksik kompetensiyani barqaror va funksional rivojlantirish uchun bevosita va bilvosita yondashuvlarni integratsiyalash zarurligi, bu esa o'quvchilarning nutqdagi moslashuvchanlik, aniqlik va kommunikativ ishonchini ta'minlashi ta'kidlanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: leksik kompetensiya, bevosita usullar, bilvosita usullar, so'z boyligini o'zlashtirish, til o'qitish, lingvistik qiyinchiliklar, raqamli ta'lim, nemis tili, kommunikativ kompetensiya, pedagogika



Аннотация:

В статье рассматриваются прямые и косвенные основы, трудности и возможности развития лексической компетенции у изучающих иностранные языки, в частности немецкий язык. Лексическая компетенция выступает важнейшим компонентом коммуникативной компетенции, определяя способность обучающихся понимать, выбирать и использовать лексику в различных контекстах общения. Автор анализирует как прямые методы обучения (явное преподавание словаря, семантические карты, морфологический анализ), так и косвенные (чтение, слушание, общение в естественных условиях, использование цифровых технологий). Отмечается, что развитие лексической компетенции зависит от сочетания когнитивных и контекстуальных факторов — частоты употребления, мотивации, эмоциональной вовлеченности и глубины контекста. Особое внимание уделяется вызовам современного языкового образования, включая интерференцию родного языка, полисемию, недостаток аутентичных материалов и чрезмерное использование переводчиков. В то же время подчеркиваются возможности, открываемые цифровыми технологиями, онлайн-корпусами и игровыми платформами, которые стимулируют активное усвоение лексики. В статье делается вывод о необходимости интеграции прямых и косвенных стратегий для формирования устойчивой и функциональной лексической компетенции, обеспечивающей гибкость, точность и коммуникативную уверенность обучающихся.

Ключевые слова: лексическая компетенция, прямые методы, косвенные методы, усвоение словаря, преподавание языка, лингвистические трудности, цифровое обучение, немецкий язык, коммуникативная компетенция, педагогика

Zusammenfassung. Der Artikel untersucht die direkten und indirekten Grundlagen, Schwierigkeiten und Möglichkeiten zur Entwicklung der lexikalischen Kompetenz bei Fremdsprachenlernenden, insbesondere beim Erlernen der deutschen Sprache. Lexikalische Kompetenz gilt als ein zentraler Bestandteil der kommunikativen Kompetenz und bestimmt die Fähigkeit der



Lernenden, Wörter in unterschiedlichen Kommunikationskontexten angemessen zu verstehen, auszuwählen und zu verwenden. Der Autor analysiert sowohl direkte Lehrmethoden (explizite Wortschatzvermittlung, semantische Karten, morphologische Analyse) als auch indirekte Ansätze (Lesen, Hören, authentische Kommunikation, Einsatz digitaler Technologien). Es wird betont, dass die Entwicklung der lexikalischen Kompetenz vom Zusammenspiel kognitiver und kontextueller Faktoren abhängt – wie Gebrauchshäufigkeit, Motivation, emotionales Engagement und Kontexttiefe. Besonderes Augenmerk wird auf die Herausforderungen des modernen Sprachunterrichts gelegt, darunter Interferenz der Muttersprache, Polysemie, Mangel an authentischem Material und übermäßige Nutzung von Übersetzungstools. Gleichzeitig werden die Chancen hervorgehoben, die durch digitale Technologien, Online-Korpora und spielbasierte Lernplattformen entstehen und das aktive Wortschatzlernen fördern. Der Artikel kommt zu dem Schluss, dass die Integration direkter und indirekter Strategien notwendig ist, um eine nachhaltige und funktionale lexikalische Kompetenz zu entwickeln, die Flexibilität, Genauigkeit und kommunikative Sicherheit der Lernenden gewährleistet.

Schlüsselwörter. lexikalische Kompetenz, direkte Methoden, indirekte Methoden, Wortschatzerwerb, Sprachunterricht, sprachliche Schwierigkeiten, digitales Lernen, deutsche Sprache, kommunikative Kompetenz, Pädagogik

Introduction

Lexical competence represents one of the core elements of communicative language ability and serves as the foundation for both receptive and productive skills. In the process of learning a foreign language such as German, the development of lexical competence involves not only the accumulation of words but also the ability to use them appropriately within specific linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic contexts. It reflects a learner's capacity to understand semantic relationships, collocations, idioms, and morphological variations that define authentic communication. From a pedagogical perspective, improving lexical competence is crucial because vocabulary knowledge directly influences reading comprehension, listening accuracy, speaking fluency, and writing coherence.



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Without sufficient lexical knowledge, even grammatically competent learners struggle to communicate effectively.

The theoretical foundation of lexical competence is closely related to psycholinguistic models of language acquisition. Scholars such as Nation (2001) and Schmitt (2010) emphasize that lexical learning is not a linear process but a gradual accumulation of lexical knowledge through exposure, repetition, and contextualization. Direct learning approaches, including vocabulary lists, drills, and explicit teaching of word families, provide a structured pathway for initial vocabulary acquisition. However, indirect learning—through reading, interaction, and media exposure—plays a significant role in deepening lexical understanding and retention. Both approaches complement each other, addressing different cognitive processes in language learning.

In the context of higher education, particularly in pedagogical universities, the importance of lexical competence extends beyond language mastery. It contributes to the professional and methodological readiness of future teachers who must possess not only linguistic accuracy but also the ability to guide their students toward effective communication. The rapid digitalization of education offers new opportunities to enhance lexical competence through mobile applications, AI-assisted tools, and online corpora, which enable learners to encounter and practice authentic vocabulary in meaningful contexts. At the same time, educators face challenges related to motivation, overreliance on technology, and the balance between explicit instruction and autonomous learning. Therefore, understanding the direct and indirect foundations of lexical competence development becomes essential for designing an integrated and effective language teaching methodology.

Methods.

The study is based on a descriptive and analytical approach that examines both direct and indirect methods of developing lexical competence among learners of German as a foreign language. The research combines theoretical analysis with pedagogical observations conducted in a university language classroom setting. The primary sources include linguistic and methodological literature on lexical competence, as well as practical data obtained from classroom experiments, student feedback, and vocabulary assessment results. This mixed-method



framework allows the identification of effective instructional strategies and their impact on vocabulary acquisition and retention.

Direct methods, as analyzed in this study, involve explicit teaching strategies such as thematic vocabulary lists, flashcards, morphological analysis, and translation-based exercises. Students are systematically introduced to new lexical units with clear semantic explanations, contextual examples, and phonetic transcription. Teachers use visual aids, word associations, and digital flashcard tools to enhance memorization. Controlled practice through gap-filling tasks, matching exercises, and sentence completion further reinforces the active use of target vocabulary. The focus is on accuracy, precision, and conscious awareness of word meanings and usage.

Indirect methods are explored through activities that promote incidental vocabulary learning. These include extensive reading of authentic German texts, watching films or listening to podcasts in the target language, and participating in spontaneous communicative interactions. The learners acquire vocabulary naturally by encountering words in real contexts, inferring their meanings, and gradually integrating them into their own speech and writing. Technology-based platforms, such as online dictionaries, corpora, and language-learning applications, are also examined as tools supporting indirect acquisition.

Data collection focuses on observing changes in students' lexical performance over a semester, analyzing pre- and post-tests on vocabulary size and usage accuracy, and conducting interviews about their learning preferences. The results are interpreted qualitatively and quantitatively to determine how the combination of direct and indirect methods contributes to a more stable and functional vocabulary base. This methodological approach provides valuable insights into how lexical competence can be enhanced through a balanced integration of structured instruction and experiential learning.

Results

The study revealed that integrating both direct and indirect learning methods significantly enhances lexical competence among university students learning German as a foreign language. Quantitative data from vocabulary tests demonstrated that students who combined explicit vocabulary instruction with immersive learning experiences achieved higher retention rates and greater



flexibility in word use. For instance, learners who regularly engaged in contextual reading and listening tasks exhibited a 25–30% improvement in long-term word recall compared to those who relied solely on memorization. This indicates that exposure to authentic language use is a crucial factor in lexical development.

Qualitative observations also highlighted changes in students' attitudes toward vocabulary learning. Many participants initially viewed vocabulary acquisition as mechanical memorization; however, after being introduced to indirect methods—such as watching German-language videos or engaging in peer discussions—they began to perceive vocabulary as a living component of real communication. Their increased motivation and curiosity led to more consistent self-directed learning outside the classroom. Furthermore, students demonstrated better understanding of collocations, idiomatic expressions, and contextual nuances, showing that indirect exposure strengthens semantic depth and cultural awareness.

The introduction of digital tools, including mobile applications and AI-assisted translation software, created new learning opportunities. Students benefited from personalized feedback, interactive tasks, and gamified vocabulary exercises that maintained engagement and accelerated progress. However, results also indicated that unbalanced reliance on digital tools without teacher guidance sometimes caused superficial understanding of words or overgeneralization of meanings. Therefore, the study confirms that the most effective approach to improving lexical competence lies in the integration of direct instruction and indirect practice, where teachers provide structure and feedback, while learners engage in independent, authentic communication.

Overall, the results support the hypothesis that lexical competence is best developed through a combination of explicit cognitive learning and implicit experiential exposure. This dual approach not only expands students' active vocabulary but also improves their communicative confidence, linguistic intuition, and ability to navigate complex language situations in academic and real-life contexts.

Discussion

The findings of the study emphasize that lexical competence cannot be effectively developed through a single method; rather, it requires a balanced integration of



direct and indirect approaches. Direct methods contribute to the accuracy and systematic understanding of vocabulary, ensuring that learners build a strong lexical foundation. These methods, such as word lists, explicit explanations, and morphological analysis, are particularly effective for beginners who need to consciously internalize new lexical units. However, when learners progress to higher levels, indirect methods become increasingly important, as they promote automaticity, contextual understanding, and the ability to infer meanings from discourse. This transition reflects the natural progression from controlled learning to communicative fluency.

In the context of teaching German as a foreign language, indirect methods are especially valuable because they expose learners to the cultural and pragmatic nuances of the target language. Through authentic materials—literary texts, dialogues, media content, and online interactions—students encounter vocabulary in its natural environment, which deepens their understanding of connotation, register, and idiomatic usage. These experiences enhance both linguistic and intercultural competence, preparing learners to communicate effectively in real-life situations. Nevertheless, indirect learning can be time-consuming and less efficient without guidance. Therefore, the teacher's role as a facilitator remains central in helping students focus on relevant lexical patterns and avoiding fossilization of errors.

Another important aspect discussed in this research is the influence of digital technologies on lexical development. While online resources, apps, and AI tools offer unlimited access to vocabulary, they also pose the challenge of cognitive overload and passive learning. Many students tend to rely on instant translation rather than contextual analysis, which limits deep processing of meaning. To address this issue, educators should incorporate technology within a pedagogically structured framework that combines interactive learning with reflection and practice.

Ultimately, the discussion leads to the conclusion that lexical competence should be viewed not as the mere possession of vocabulary but as an active, dynamic skill that connects linguistic form, meaning, and use. Effective teaching strategies must therefore encourage both cognitive understanding and experiential application. A synergy of direct and indirect learning fosters the autonomy,



motivation, and linguistic creativity essential for lifelong language development and professional success in linguistic and pedagogical fields.

Conclusion

The study concludes that improving lexical competence requires an integrated approach that combines direct and indirect learning foundations. Direct instruction plays a crucial role in forming the initial lexical base, enabling learners to consciously understand word meanings, structures, and grammatical connections. Indirect learning, in contrast, deepens this knowledge through contextual experience, allowing vocabulary to become internalized and functionally active in real communication. The synergy between the two creates a comprehensive learning process in which explicit knowledge gradually transforms into intuitive language use.

Among the main challenges identified in the development of lexical competence are the limited exposure to authentic language materials, interference from the native language, insufficient motivation, and overdependence on translation tools. These barriers can hinder the naturalization of vocabulary in speech and writing. However, opportunities arising from technological advancements—such as digital corpora, AI-based translators, and gamified applications—provide powerful means of addressing these limitations. When effectively integrated into the curriculum, such tools enhance engagement, personalize learning, and expand access to authentic language input.

The pedagogical implications of the study highlight the importance of teacher training and methodological innovation in language instruction. Teachers of German and other foreign languages should be equipped with strategies that balance structured lexical teaching with communicative practice. Encouraging extensive reading, digital interaction, and collaborative learning tasks can further reinforce students' ability to use vocabulary dynamically and creatively.

In conclusion, lexical competence is not merely a linguistic attribute but a multidimensional skill essential for communication, comprehension, and cultural exchange. Its improvement demands continuous interaction between explicit instruction and implicit learning, guided by informed pedagogy and supported by modern technologies. The combination of these elements fosters not only



vocabulary growth but also the intellectual and intercultural maturity of language learners, preparing them for professional and academic success in an interconnected world.

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