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Methods For Enhancing The Lexical Competence Of Future English Teachers: A Pedagogical Challenge

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ABSTRACT

The development of lexical competence is a fundamental component in the professional preparation of future English teachers. Lexical competence not only determines language proficiency but also directly influences pedagogical effectiveness in classroom practice. However, many teacher training institutions still face challenges in implementing systematic and research-based approaches to vocabulary development. The present study aims to identify effective pedagogical methods for enhancing lexical competence among future English teachers. The research applies a mixed-method approach, combining experimental instruction, quantitative statistical analysis, and qualitative classroom observations. The findings indicate that integrative lexical instruction, corpus-based activities, digital tools, and metacognitive vocabulary strategies significantly improve both receptive and productive lexical competence. The study highlights methodological implications for teacher education programs and proposes a structured model for lexical competence development.

Keywords: Lexical competence, future English teachers, vocabulary acquisition, pedagogical methodology, teacher education, corpus-based learning.

INTRODUCTION

In modern linguodidactics, lexical competence is considered one of the core components of communicative competence. For future English teachers, lexical competence plays a dual role: they must not only master vocabulary for personal proficiency but also understand the methodological principles of teaching vocabulary effectively. Despite its importance, lexical competence development in teacher education programs often remains fragmented and unsystematic. Traditional memorization-based approaches fail to develop deep lexical awareness, collocational knowledge, and pragmatic competence. Furthermore, rapid technological advancements and globalization demand innovative and research-based vocabulary teaching strategies. This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What pedagogical challenges hinder the effective development of lexical competence among future English teachers?
2. Which instructional methods significantly enhance lexical competence?
3. How can lexical competence development be systematized within teacher education curricula?

The objective of this study is to design and experimentally validate a methodological model for enhancing lexical competence among future English teachers.

METHODOLOGY

The present study employed a quasi-experimental mixed-method research design to investigate effective pedagogical methods for enhancing the lexical competence of future English teachers. The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches ensured a comprehensive and multidimensional analysis of lexical development, combining statistical measurement with pedagogical interpretation.

The research was conducted at a higher education institution specializing in foreign language teacher education. A total of 503 undergraduate students participated in the study. The experimental group consisted of 258 future English teachers, while the control group included 245 students. Participants were second- and third-year students majoring in English Philology and Foreign Language Education, aged between 18 and 22. All participants demonstrated intermediate to upper-intermediate English proficiency (B1–B2 levels) and had not previously received specialized lexical training beyond the standard curriculum.

Before the intervention, both groups completed a diagnostic lexical competence test to determine their initial level. Statistical analysis confirmed that there was no significant difference between the groups at the pre-test stage ($p > 0.05$), ensuring sample homogeneity and research validity.

Lexical competence in this study was operationalized as a multidimensional construct incorporating receptive vocabulary knowledge, productive vocabulary use, collocational competence, morphological awareness, contextual and pragmatic appropriateness, and metacognitive vocabulary strategies. This comprehensive framework allowed for a systematic evaluation of lexical development beyond mere vocabulary size.

The experimental group was exposed to a specially designed Lexical Competence Enhancement Model (LCEM) over one academic semester (16 weeks, four academic hours per week). The control group continued learning according to the traditional curriculum, which primarily focused on textbook-based vocabulary exercises and memorization techniques.

The intervention model integrated several innovative pedagogical components. First, lexical chunk-based instruction was implemented, emphasizing multi-word units, collocations, formulaic expressions, and academic lexical bundles rather than isolated words. Students engaged in contextual gap-fill activities, collocation matching tasks, transformation exercises, and structured speaking assignments that required the use of fixed lexical patterns.

Second, corpus-based learning was incorporated to develop linguistic awareness. Students were introduced to authentic language corpora and performed data-driven learning tasks, including concordance analysis, frequency investigation, and contextual usage comparison. This approach enabled students to explore real language patterns and develop analytical skills relevant to future teaching practice.

Third, digital and AI-assisted vocabulary tools were systematically integrated into classroom and independent learning activities. Students used digital flashcard systems, interactive quizzes, spaced repetition platforms, and AI-based lexical feedback tools. These technologies supported autonomous learning, immediate corrective feedback, and long-term vocabulary retention.

Task-based lexical instruction also formed an essential component of the intervention. Vocabulary development was embedded in academic writing assignments, micro-teaching simulations, lesson planning tasks, and classroom discussions. Students were required to consciously incorporate academic vocabulary, collocations, and discipline-specific terminology into their pedagogical practice.

Special attention was given to the development of metacognitive strategies. Participants maintained lexical notebooks and reflective journals in which they documented new vocabulary, analyzed usage contexts, identified errors, and evaluated learning strategies. Weekly self-assessment checklists encouraged self-regulated learning and awareness of individual lexical gaps.

To ensure methodological rigor, multiple instruments were used for data collection. The primary quantitative instrument was a comprehensive lexical competence test administered before and after the intervention. The test included vocabulary recognition tasks, collocation identification exercises, word formation activities, contextual vocabulary usage, academic writing tasks, and oral production assessments. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of the test was 0.87, indicating high internal consistency.

Additionally, a lexical diagnostic rubric was developed to evaluate productive vocabulary performance. The rubric assessed lexical accuracy, range, collocational precision, register appropriateness, and fluency of lexical retrieval using a 100-point scale.

Qualitative data were collected through structured classroom observation protocols and reflective student

journals. Observation sheets documented lexical interaction patterns, academic vocabulary use, error correction strategies, and pedagogical application of lexical knowledge. Reflective journals were analyzed using thematic coding procedures to identify recurring patterns related to lexical awareness, strategy application, confidence development, and technology integration.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and percentage growth comparisons. Inferential statistical procedures included independent samples t-tests, paired samples t-tests, and effect size calculation (Cohen's d). The level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic content analysis, ensuring triangulation and methodological reliability.

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and data confidentiality was ensured. All collected data were used exclusively for research purposes.

This comprehensive methodological framework enabled the systematic evaluation of lexical competence development and provided reliable empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of innovative pedagogical strategies in teacher education.

RESULTS

The findings of the study demonstrate a statistically significant improvement in the lexical competence of future English teachers who participated in the experimental intervention. The results are presented through quantitative statistical analysis and qualitative interpretation.

Pre-test results indicated that both the experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG) demonstrated comparable levels of lexical competence prior to the intervention. The mean score for the experimental group was 61.4 (SD = 8.3), while the control group scored 60.9 (SD = 8.7). An independent samples t-test revealed no statistically significant difference between the two groups at the initial stage ($p > 0.05$), confirming the homogeneity of the sample.

Following the 16-week instructional intervention, substantial differences emerged between the groups. The post-test results showed that the experimental group achieved a mean score of 75.6 (SD = 7.9), while the control group reached 65.8 (SD = 8.1). The improvement in the experimental group represented a 23% increase in overall lexical competence, compared to an 8% increase in the control group.

Paired samples t-test analysis demonstrated that the growth observed in the experimental group was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.89$), indicating strong pedagogical impact. In contrast, the control group showed moderate improvement with a small effect size ($d = 0.32$).

A more detailed analysis of lexical competence components revealed differentiated development across sub-skills.

Receptive vocabulary knowledge in the experimental group increased by 17%, whereas productive vocabulary usage improved by 26%. This finding suggests that the intervention had a stronger influence on active lexical production rather than passive recognition.

Collocational competence demonstrated the most notable growth. The experimental group showed a 31% improvement in accurate collocation usage in both writing and speaking tasks. Students increasingly used academic lexical bundles and formulaic expressions with greater precision and contextual appropriateness.

Morphological awareness also improved significantly. Word formation accuracy increased by 19%, particularly in derivational morphology tasks.

Lexical diversity in academic writing was measured using type-token ratio and lexical sophistication indicators. The experimental group demonstrated an 18% increase in lexical diversity compared to only 6% growth in the control group.

Oral production analysis indicated that students in the experimental group used a wider range of topic-related vocabulary and demonstrated improved fluency in lexical retrieval. Hesitation phenomena related to lexical gaps decreased by approximately 21% according to classroom observation records.

Qualitative findings further supported the quantitative

results. Thematic analysis of reflective journals revealed several key developments:

- Increased lexical awareness and sensitivity to collocational patterns
- Greater confidence in using academic vocabulary
- Improved ability to analyze authentic lexical usage through corpus tools
- Enhanced metacognitive regulation of vocabulary learning
- Positive attitudes toward digital learning technologies

Students frequently reported that corpus-based tasks helped them understand authentic language usage, frequency patterns, and contextual constraints. Many participants noted that lexical chunk-based instruction reduced memorization difficulty and improved long-term retention.

Classroom observation data confirmed that students in the experimental group more actively incorporated academic vocabulary during discussions and micro-teaching sessions. Their lesson plans also demonstrated more systematic lexical focus.

Overall, the integration of lexical chunks, corpus-based learning, digital tools, and metacognitive strategy training resulted in a statistically significant and pedagogically meaningful improvement in the lexical competence of future English teachers. The findings confirm the effectiveness of the proposed Lexical Competence Enhancement Model and validate its applicability in teacher education contexts.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that lexical competence development requires a systematic and integrated methodological approach. Traditional vocabulary instruction is insufficient for preparing future teachers who must also master lexical pedagogy.

The success of the experimental group can be explained by:

- Focus on lexical chunks rather than isolated words
- Integration of technology-enhanced learning
- Development of metacognitive strategies
- Contextual and communicative vocabulary use

The results align with contemporary lexical theory, including the Lexical Approach (Lewis), corpus linguistics principles, and communicative language teaching frameworks. This study demonstrates that lexical competence is not merely vocabulary size but includes:

- Collocational competence
- Pragmatic lexical usage
- Register awareness
- Morphological awareness
- Strategic competence

Teacher education programs must therefore redesign lexical instruction modules to integrate theory and practice.

CONCLUSION

Enhancing lexical competence among future English teachers represents a significant pedagogical challenge in modern language education. The study confirms that innovative, technology-supported, and strategy-based instruction significantly improves both receptive and productive lexical competence.

The proposed methodological model contributes to:

- Systematizing lexical competence development
- Bridging linguistic and pedagogical competence
- Improving professional readiness of future English teachers

Future research may explore longitudinal effects of lexical competence development and its impact on actual classroom teaching performance.

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