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DIDACTIC FUNDAMENTALS OF IMPROVING LEXICAL COMPETENCE (B2 LEVEL)

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Annotation:

This article explores the didactic principles and techniques for improving lexical competence at the B2 level. Lexical competence refers to a learner's ability to understand and use words effectively in a language. The article provides an overview of vocabulary acquisition, emphasizes the importance of context, retention, and active use of vocabulary in real-life situations. Moreover, it introduces key strategies that can be employed by educators to facilitate the development of lexical competence, including contextual learning, focused vocabulary exercises, and the integration of modern teaching aids such as digital tools.

Keywords: Lexical competence, vocabulary acquisition, B2 level, language learning, didactics, teaching strategies, context, retention, usage, fluency.

Introduction:

Lexical competence is a basis of language proficiency, reflecting a learner's ability to understand, produce, and manipulate words and their meanings. It plays a vital role in effective communication, fluency, and comprehension. At the B2 level, learners are expected to have a solid grasp of vocabulary that enables them to engage in conversations, read texts of moderate complexity, and express themselves coherently in both written and spoken forms. However, improving lexical competence at this stage requires more than rote memorization of words. It involves a deep understanding of word usage, context, collocations, and nuances in meaning. This article aims to explore the didactic fundamentals of enhancing lexical competence for learners at the B2 level, providing educators with practical strategies for fostering vocabulary development.



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Main Part:

1. Understanding Lexical Competence at B2 Level: At the B2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), learners should be able to handle a range of texts and communicative situations. Their lexical competence should cover:

- **General vocabulary:** Words used in everyday conversations, typical social interactions, and most common topics.
- **Specialized vocabulary:** Words related to specific topics or fields, such as education, travel, technology, or culture.
- **Collocations and word combinations:** How words frequently co-occur in natural speech or writing.
- **Contextual meaning:** Understanding how word meanings shift depending on the context.
- **Word formation:** Understanding prefixes, suffixes, and how they alter a word's meaning.

At this stage, learners should be familiar with approximately 3,000-4,000 words and their variations. However, developing lexical competence is not just about increasing the number of words known, but also improving the ability to use them accurately and appropriately in different contexts.

2. Key Didactic Principles for Vocabulary Acquisition: The process of improving lexical competence involves several key principles that can guide both learners and teachers. These principles are rooted in effective didactics, which emphasizes active learning and meaningful language use. Some of the core principles include:

- **Contextual Learning:** Context is crucial for understanding vocabulary. Teaching vocabulary in isolation, divorced from real-life context, makes it difficult for learners to understand how words are used. Instead, words should be introduced through authentic contexts—whether in dialogues, reading texts, or real-life situations. For instance, a word like "settle" can be explored through a conversation about moving into a new house, or a text about international migration. This approach helps learners associate words with real-world meanings and enhances retention.



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- **Meaningful Practice:** Simply knowing the definition of a word is not enough. Learners need to actively practice using the word in different forms and contexts. This can be achieved through exercises such as gap-fills, sentence completion, role-plays, or story creation. The key is to ensure that learners encounter and use words in diverse ways, thus reinforcing their knowledge.

- **Use of Polysemous Techniques:** Different people learn in different ways, so it is crucial to engage multiple senses in the learning process. For example, visual learners can benefit from flashcards, pictures, and infographics, while auditory learners may prefer listening exercises, recordings, or discussions. Kinesthetic learners, who learn best through movement, can benefit from activities that require physical engagement, such as acting out words or moving around the classroom to match words with their meanings.

3. Effective Teaching Strategies:

Several teaching strategies can be used to enhance lexical competence at the B2 level. These strategies should focus not only on increasing vocabulary but also on improving the learner's ability to use these words accurately in various contexts.

- **Contextualized Vocabulary Teaching:** Teachers can introduce vocabulary in context, helping students understand how words fit within real-life situations. For example, presenting a set of words related to a particular theme, such as the environment, and using them in a conversation or reading passage, helps students see the words' relevance and use.

- **Task-based Learning:** Task-based language learning encourages students to focus on real-world tasks that require them to use vocabulary in context. Tasks could include creating a presentation, writing an essay, or participating in a debate. This method helps learners develop fluency and confidence as they use vocabulary in meaningful ways.

- **Vocabulary Notebooks:** Encouraging learners to keep a vocabulary notebook is an excellent strategy for reinforcing new words. In these notebooks, students can record not only the word but also its meaning, example sentences, synonyms, and antonyms. This method promotes deeper engagement with the language, allowing students to review and revise words regularly.



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○ **Word Maps and Collocations:** Teaching students to understand word families, collocations, and common phrases related to specific words can significantly improve their vocabulary range. For example, rather than focusing on the word "happy," learners can explore its related forms (happiness, happily, etc.) and common collocations (happy with, happy about, etc.).

4. **Integrating Digital Tools in Vocabulary Learning:** Modern technology offers a wide range of tools that can significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition. Some examples include:

○ **Language Learning Apps:** Apps such as Duolingo, Memrise, or Anki use spaced repetition algorithms to help learners remember vocabulary more effectively. These apps offer interactive exercises that test vocabulary in different contexts, reinforcing learning through repetition.

○ **Online Dictionaries and Thesauruses:** These resources provide learners with synonyms, antonyms, example sentences, and more. Websites like Word Reference and Thesaurus.com are invaluable for learners who need to explore words in depth.

○ **Interactive Games and Videos:** Platforms like Quizlet allow teachers to create flashcards and vocabulary quizzes. Watching videos in the target language can also expose learners to how vocabulary is used naturally.

5. **Challenges and Solutions:** Despite the various strategies available, there are challenges that learners and teachers often face in improving lexical competence. These challenges include:

○ **Overload of New Words:** Learners may feel overwhelmed by the large number of words they are expected to learn. Teachers can address this by focusing on high-frequency words and ensuring learners practice them in varied contexts.

○ **Retention Difficulties:** It is common for learners to forget words over time. To combat this, teachers should encourage regular revision and use spaced repetition techniques to ensure long-term retention.

○ **Incorrect Usage:** Students may struggle with the correct usage of words in different contexts. Providing explicit examples, practice exercises, and feedback can help learners understand nuances in word meaning and usage.



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Conclusion:

Improving lexical competence at the B2 level is a multifaceted process that requires thoughtful didactic strategies. Teachers must not only focus on vocabulary acquisition but also encourage learners to use words in context, understand their meanings deeply, and practice them regularly. By integrating contextual learning, meaningful practice, and modern teaching tools, learners can significantly enhance their lexical competence, making them more fluent and confident in their language use. Additionally, a focus on word families, collocations, and authentic contexts will ensure that learners are prepared to use their vocabulary effectively across various communication situations. Through dedicated practice and the application of these didactic principles, B2-level learners can refine their lexical competence and continue to progress in their language learning journey.

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