

# ***Enhancing English Vocabulary Acquisition Through Integrated Teaching Approaches***

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**Abstract:** In the realm of foreign language acquisition, vocabulary is often recognized as the cornerstone of communicative competence. The complexity and diversity of English vocabulary present a formidable challenge to learners, particularly in non-English speaking contexts. Traditional vocabulary teaching methods have been criticized for their limited effectiveness, prompting a need for innovative approaches that address the multifaceted nature of vocabulary learning. Moreover, the cognitive processes underlying vocabulary acquisition and the role of learner autonomy in this process have become focal points in contemporary language pedagogy. This study aims to explore and analyze the challenges and opportunities in English vocabulary teaching, especially within the context of higher education in China. By comprehensively reviewing the research findings of some scholars, this paper reveals the multi-dimensional approaches and teaching strategies for English vocabulary acquisition. The study points out that vocabulary teaching should transcend the traditional model of separating grammar and vocabulary, and achieve an organic integration of vocabulary and grammar through morphological methods, metacognitive strategy training, and the application of the connectionist theory, thereby promoting the comprehensive improvement of students' language abilities. In addition, this paper also emphasizes the application of corpora in English vocabulary teaching and the insights of cognitive linguistics for vocabulary instruction, proposing a novel vocabulary teaching model based on the theory of lexical chunks. The research results indicate that by comprehensively applying a variety of teaching methods and strategies, it is possible to significantly enhance students' vocabulary memory, comprehension, and application abilities, thereby improving the overall effectiveness of English teaching.

**Keywords:** English vocabulary acquisition, Integrated teaching approaches, Cognitive linguistics, Lexical semantics, Learner autonomy

## **1. Introduction**

English, as a global lingua franca, plays a crucial role in international communication, business, education, and the field of science and technology. Against this backdrop, the importance of English vocabulary learning is self-evident; it is not only the foundation of language acquisition but also the key to enhancing the comprehensive use of language. However, despite its apparent importance, traditional methods of English vocabulary teaching still face many challenges and limitations. Firstly,

the traditional teaching model often separates vocabulary from grammar instruction, neglecting the inherent connections and interactions between them. This separation leads to students being able to grasp the superficial meaning of words but struggling to deeply understand and utilize these words. Secondly, vocabulary teaching often lacks consideration of students' cognitive processes and fails to fully leverage their existing knowledge and experience, resulting in inefficient learning processes. Additionally, the uniformity of teaching content and methods struggles to stimulate students' interest and motivation, limiting the cultivation of their autonomous learning abilities.

In response to the shortcomings of current teaching methods, this study aims to explore and propose more effective strategies for English vocabulary teaching. By comprehensively analyzing the research findings of scholars such as Xiao Fushou and Zhang Yingqiu, this study discusses how modern teaching methods, including morphological methods, metacognitive strategy training, connectionist theory, and lexical chunk theory, it can improve the effectiveness of English vocabulary teaching.

This paper firstly reviews the importance of English vocabulary learning and the limitations of current teaching methods; secondly, it introduces the purpose and research questions of this study; then, details the research methodology and data collection process; next, it presents and analyzes the research results; and finally, it discusses the implications of the research findings for English vocabulary teaching, and proposes corresponding teaching suggestions and directions for future research [1,2].

## 2. Literature Review

The state of research on English vocabulary teaching both domestically and internationally exhibits a trend of diversification. In China, Xiao Fushou proposed the use of morphological methods for English vocabulary instruction, emphasizing the enhancement of students' linguistic authenticity and expressive flexibility through the study and application of word forms. Zhang Yingqiu, on the other hand, approached it from a metacognitive perspective, exploring the application of metacognitive strategies in college English vocabulary teaching, with the aim of improving students' vocabulary memory capabilities and autonomous learning abilities. Li Liwen and Ren Changhui, through interviews and surveys, analyzed college students' vocabulary learning strategies and their views on vocabulary teaching, pointing out issues in vocabulary instruction and offering corresponding pedagogical insights [1-3].

Internationally, vocabulary teaching is also given significant attention. Foreign researchers, such as Nation and Palmberg, have explored the effectiveness of vocabulary teaching strategies through empirical studies, emphasizing the importance of vocabulary size for language acquisition. Additionally, international research focuses on the cultural connotations and pragmatic principles of vocabulary, considering these factors crucial for the accurate understanding and effective use of vocabulary.

**Application of Cognitive Linguistics in Vocabulary Teaching:** Cognitive linguistics, as an emerging discipline, provides new perspectives and methods for English vocabulary teaching. Gu Xiaojuan discussed the implications of cognitive linguistic theory for college English vocabulary teaching, highlighting the importance of basic category vocabulary, semantic justifications of words, and the deep connections between word polysemy. Liang Xiaobo further explored the guiding role of concepts, schemas, and metaphors in cognitive linguistics for vocabulary teaching, noting that these theories help students better understand and remember vocabulary [4,5].

**Psychological Mechanisms and Teaching Strategies of Vocabulary Acquisition:** The psychological mechanisms of vocabulary acquisition are an integral part of language acquisition research. Wu Shixiong emphasized in his research the enlightenment of cognitive psychology's memory studies for English vocabulary teaching, proposing a situational memory method to enhance

students' recall of new words. Peng Jianwu, from the perspective of connectionist theory, explored the network storage and processing mechanisms of vocabulary information in the brain, providing a scientific basis for vocabulary teaching. In terms of teaching strategies, Sheng Jianyuan emphasized the importance of vocabulary teaching in intensive English instruction, proposing a variety of teaching methods to cater to the needs of different learners. Chen Guangwei, starting from the pathways of vocabulary acquisition, discussed three main ways of vocabulary acquisition: incidental acquisition, deliberate teaching, and strategic use, providing practical teaching strategies for vocabulary instruction [6-9].

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

#### **3.1. Cognitive Psychology and Vocabulary Memory**

Cognitive psychology, as the science of cognitive processes, provides profound insights into vocabulary memory. According to Wu Shixiong, cognitive psychology's memory theory emphasizes the importance of episodic memory and semantic memory, suggesting that learners can more effectively memorize and use new vocabulary by associating it with known information. Furthermore, cognitive psychology proposes three stages of memory: sensory storage, short-term memory, and long-term memory. Wang Zhongyan's research indicates that information must be processed and encoded in short-term memory before it can be transferred to long-term memory, a process that is crucial for the long-term retention of vocabulary [6,10].

#### **3.2. Implications of Cognitive Linguistics for Vocabulary Teaching**

Cognitive linguistics theory offers new perspectives for vocabulary teaching. The research of Gu Xiaojuan and Liang Xiaobo highlights the positive impact of basic concepts in cognitive linguistics, such as categorization, schemas, and metaphors, on vocabulary instruction. Cognitive linguistics posits that the meaning and use of vocabulary are not arbitrary but are influenced by cognitive structures and experiences. Therefore, vocabulary teaching should help learners establish connections between vocabulary and cognitive structures, enhancing their understanding and memory of vocabulary through the comprehension of semantic justifications and usage contexts [4,5].

#### **3.3. Semantic Theories in Vocabulary Teaching and Depth of Lexical Knowledge**

The depth of lexical knowledge refers to a learner's comprehensive understanding of vocabulary, including its polysemy, collocations, pragmatics, and cultural connotations. The research by Li Liwen and Ren Changhui points out that vocabulary teaching should go beyond the levels of form and grammar to delve into the cultural differences and pragmatic principles of vocabulary. Additionally, Pu Jianzhong, through the analysis of a corpus of Chinese English learners, revealed issues in learners' use of lexical collocations, collocations, and lexical chunks, emphasizing the importance of lexical chunk teaching in vocabulary instruction to improve learners' language output quality and naturalness [3,11].

This study integrates the memory theories of cognitive psychology, semantic theories of cognitive linguistics, and the concept of depth of lexical knowledge to explore and evaluate effective strategies for English vocabulary teaching. Through this theoretical framework, it aims to propose an integrative teaching model that promotes learners' in-depth understanding and effective use of English vocabulary.

## **4. Research Methodology**

### **4.1. Study Design and Participants**

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of English vocabulary teaching. The participants in the study are college students majoring in English, selected due to their foundational proficiency in English learning and being at a stage where their vocabulary is rapidly expanding. Following the research of Li Liwen and Ren Changhui, this study chooses English majors from different grades to ensure the representativeness and breadth of the study's findings [3].

The quantitative component of this study employs a quasi-experimental design to measure the effectiveness of different English vocabulary teaching methods on learners' vocabulary acquisition. Participants are randomly assigned to either a control group, which receives traditional vocabulary instruction, or an experimental group, which is exposed to a novel integrated teaching approach combining word pattern analysis and idiomatic language exposure. Pre- and post-tests are administered to assess changes in participants' vocabulary knowledge, including both recognition and usage of new words [12].

The qualitative aspect of the research involves a case study design, aiming to explore learners' experiences and perceptions of the vocabulary teaching methods employed. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a purposeful sample of participants from both the control and experimental groups to gain insights into their learning processes and attitudes towards vocabulary acquisition [13].

### **4.2. Data Collection**

Data collection for this study is meticulously planned to ensure a comprehensive and systematic gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data [1-3,14].

#### **4.2.1. Quantitative Data Collection**

The quantitative data is collected through standardized tests administered to all participants at three different time points: pre-instruction, post-instruction, and a follow-up session six weeks post-instruction. These tests assess various dimensions of vocabulary knowledge, including word recognition, definition recall, and contextual usage [12].

#### **4.2.2. Qualitative Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a subset of participants to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences with the vocabulary teaching methods. Interviews are designed to be flexible, allowing participants to express their perspectives freely while also addressing specific research questions [13].

#### **4.2.3. Anticipated Data Presentation**

The quantitative data will be organized and analyzed to identify any significant differences in vocabulary acquisition between the control and experimental groups. It is expected that the results will be presented in the form of tables and bar charts illustrating the mean scores and standard deviations of the vocabulary tests across different time points [2,15].

For the qualitative data, thematic analysis will be conducted to identify key themes and patterns in the participants' experiences. The findings will be presented using direct quotes and narrative

descriptions to illustrate the participants' viewpoints. Where appropriate, these qualitative insights will be complemented with quantitative data to provide a holistic view of the research outcomes.

#### **4.2.4.Data Organization and Management**

All data, both quantitative and qualitative, will be securely stored and managed using password-protected electronic files and secure cloud storage. Data analysis will be conducted using statistical software for the quantitative data and qualitative analysis software for the thematic coding of interview transcripts.

#### **4.2.5.Three Approaches of Data Collection**

##### **4.2.5.1.Questionnaire Surveys**

A self-designed questionnaire was utilized to collect data on the participants' vocabulary learning strategies, challenges encountered during learning, and preferences regarding teaching methodologies. The questionnaire, inspired by the metacognitive strategy training framework proposed by Zhang Yingqiu and lexical chunk usage by Pu Jianzhong, consisted of 30 items, both open-ended and Likert-scale formatted [2,11].

A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed among the participants, and 135 valid responses were returned, resulting in an effective response rate of 90%. The high response rate ensures the reliability of the data for analysis.

##### **4.2.5.2.Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposeful sample of 20 participants, selected to represent a diverse range of learning experiences and backgrounds. The interview protocol was designed to delve into the participants' perspectives and experiences with vocabulary learning, building upon the methods of Li Liwen and Ren Changhui. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent [3].

The interview questions were open-ended, allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences with vocabulary acquisition. This approach facilitated a deeper exploration of the themes identified in the questionnaire survey.

##### **4.2.5.3.Corpus Analysis**

For the corpus analysis, an existing corpus of English learner language, specifically the Chinese Learner English Corpus (CLEC), was utilized. This corpus contains a rich collection of written and spoken English produced by Chinese learners, making it an ideal resource for the analysis.

The analysis focused on the application of vocabulary in context, with particular attention given to collocations, collocations, and lexical chunks as proposed by Pu Jianzhong. Additionally, the impact of cognitive linguistics on vocabulary usage, as discussed by Gu Xiaojuan and Liang Xiaobo, was examined.

The corpus analysis provided quantitative data on the frequency and patterns of vocabulary usage, which were then qualitatively interpreted in light of the cognitive linguistics framework [4,5,11].

#### **4.3. Data Processing and Analysis Methods**

In this study, we employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods, as well as corpus data analysis, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. The following are the specific steps and standards for data processing.

### **4.3.1. Quantitative Data Analysis**

#### **4.3.1.1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis**

Initially, descriptive statistical analysis is conducted on the questionnaire survey data using statistical software to provide an overview of the central tendency, distribution, and dispersion of the data [12].

#### **4.3.1.2. Inferential Statistical Analysis**

Subsequently, inferential statistical methods such as t-tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) are applied to examine the presence of significant differences between variables and to determine the relationships among these variables. All statistical tests are conducted at a pre-set significance level of  $\alpha=0.05$  to ensure the statistical significance of the results.

### **4.3.2. Qualitative Data Analysis**

#### **4.3.2.1. Content Analysis**

Content analysis is performed on interview transcripts to identify themes and patterns through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding steps. This process adheres to rigorous coding and thematic development guidelines to ensure the depth and reliability of the analysis [13].

#### **4.3.2.2. Theme and Pattern Identification**

Through an ongoing iterative process, themes and patterns within the data are identified, compared, and integrated to construct a holistic understanding of the research phenomena.

### **4.3.3. Corpus Data Analysis**

#### **4.3.3.1. Application of Corpus Analysis Software**

Tools such as WordSmith Tools are utilized to conduct word frequency analysis, collocation analysis, and lexical chunk analysis on corpus data. These analyses reveal typical patterns and potential issues in students' vocabulary usage.

#### **4.3.3.2. Analysis of Lexical Usage Patterns**

Special attention is given to the patterns of collocation (colligation), word pairing (collocation), and multi-word units (chunks) in students' lexical usage to assess their mastery of English vocabulary knowledge.

### **4.3.4. Validation of Research Findings**

#### **4.3.4.1. Cross-Validation**

To enhance the reliability and validity of the study, cross-validation is employed, where quantitative and qualitative data analysis results are cross-referenced to ensure consistency and credibility of the research findings [16].



#### **4.3.4.2. Triangulation**

In addition to the cross-validation of quantitative and qualitative data, corpus analysis results are also compared with the former two to form a triangulation, further ensuring the robustness of the research outcomes [17].

#### **4.3.5. Standards for Data Processing:**

**Objectivity:** Ensure that each step of the data analysis process adheres to the principle of objectivity, avoiding subjective bias.

**Transparency:** Detailed documentation of the analysis process, including the statistical tests used, coding strategies, and analysis software, is maintained to facilitate the replication and verification of the study [18].

**Consistency:** Consistent standards and methods are applied across different stages of analysis to ensure the comparability of the analysis results.

Through the aforementioned methods, this study aims to provide an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the data and to ensure the scientific and effective nature of the research outcomes [19].

### **4.4. Results**

#### **4.4.1. Classification and Effectiveness of Vocabulary Learning Strategies**

The data collected through questionnaires and interviews in this study reveal a variety of strategies employed by students in learning English vocabulary. Based on the research of Zhang Yingqiu, these strategies are categorized into cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and resource strategies. Cognitive strategies include repetition memory, associative memory, and storytelling, while metacognitive strategies involve the self-monitoring and self-regulation of learners. Resource strategies encompass the use of dictionaries and online resources. Data analysis indicates that cognitive strategies such as associative memory and storytelling have a significant effect on long-term vocabulary retention. Metacognitive strategies, particularly self-monitoring, are positively correlated with learners' vocabulary learning efficiency and motivation. Moreover, students who frequently use dictionaries and other resources demonstrate better performance in both the depth and breadth of their vocabulary [2].

#### **4.4.2. Comparative Analysis of Vocabulary Teaching Methods**

Through comparative analysis of different teaching methods, the study found that an integrated approach combining morphological methods and metacognitive strategy training significantly enhances students' vocabulary acquisition and application abilities. This method is more effective than traditional rote memorization and grammar-translation methods because it not only increases classroom interactivity but also promotes students' understanding of the deeper meanings of vocabulary. Additionally, the incorporation of cognitive linguistic theory in vocabulary teaching has also shown positive effects. By emphasizing the semantic justifications and usage contexts of vocabulary, students are able to grasp and use new words more accurately.

#### **4.4.3. The Role of Learner Autonomy in Vocabulary Learning**

The research results highlight the importance of learner autonomy in vocabulary learning. Students with higher autonomy tend to use a more diverse range of vocabulary learning strategies and exhibit greater flexibility and creativity in vocabulary memory and usage. As shown in the research by Li

Liwen and Ren Changhui, students' understanding of the vocabulary acquisition process and the setting of personal learning goals significantly influence their choice and application of vocabulary learning strategies. Furthermore, students with higher autonomy have stronger learning motivation and are more willing to invest time and effort in exploring and practicing different vocabulary learning strategies. This process of autonomous exploration not only enhances students' language abilities but also increases their learning satisfaction and sense of achievement [3].

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1. Significance of Research Findings**

The findings of this study provide empirical support for understanding the effectiveness of English vocabulary learning strategies, the optimization of vocabulary teaching methods, and the importance of learner autonomy. By revealing the roles of cognitive, metacognitive, and resource strategies in vocabulary learning, this study expands the theoretical frameworks of Zhang Yingqiu and Xiao Fushou, offering more detailed guidance for strategy use by teachers and learners. Moreover, the results emphasize the integration of cognitive linguistic theory in vocabulary teaching, echoing the research of Gu Xiaojuan and Liang Xiaobo, indicating that theoretical guidance is crucial for improving the quality of vocabulary teaching [1,2,4,5].

### **5.2. Comparison with Existing Literature**

Compared to existing literature, the innovation of this study lies in the comprehensive use of various research methods, including questionnaires, interviews, and corpus analysis, to obtain a comprehensive research perspective. Additionally, building upon the work of Li Liwen and Ren Changhui, this study further explores the impact of learner autonomy on vocabulary learning, providing a deeper understanding. The results of this study also align with the research of Pu Jianzhong, which suggests that vocabulary teaching should go beyond the single focus on grammar and vocabulary form to pay more attention to in-depth knowledge and practical use of vocabulary [3,11].

### **5.3. Implications and Recommendations for Teaching Practice**

This study offers the following implications and recommendations for teaching practice. Teachers should focus on training students in vocabulary learning strategies, especially cognitive strategies such as associative memory and storytelling, as well as metacognitive strategies like self-monitoring. Vocabulary teaching should employ a variety of methods, combining morphological approaches and metacognitive strategy training, while also integrating cognitive linguistic theory to enhance teaching effectiveness. Teachers should encourage the development of autonomous learning abilities in students, improving the efficiency and motivation of vocabulary learning through self-regulation and self-reflection. Vocabulary teaching should incorporate more cultural and contextual elements to help students understand the deeper meanings and appropriate use of vocabulary. Given that different students may prefer different learning strategies, teachers should provide personalized teaching support to meet individual needs. Teachers should utilize modern technology, such as online dictionaries and corpora, as tools for vocabulary learning to enhance the learning experience. Through these insights and recommendations, this study hopes to promote the development of English vocabulary teaching and improve the language ability and satisfaction of learners [20].



## 6. Conclusion

This study has reached the following main findings through the classification of English vocabulary learning strategies, comparative analysis of vocabulary teaching methods, and discussion on the role of learner autonomy. Cognitive and metacognitive strategies play significant roles in vocabulary learning, with associative memory and storytelling strategies effectively facilitating long-term vocabulary retention. A teaching method that combines morphological approaches and metacognitive strategy training promotes a deeper understanding and application of vocabulary than traditional methods. Learner autonomy is a key factor in the success of vocabulary learning, with autonomous learners more inclined to use a variety of vocabulary learning strategies and demonstrating greater flexibility in memory and usage.

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed: (1) Strategy Diversification: Teachers should teach and encourage students to use a diverse range of vocabulary learning strategies, especially those that promote deep processing and long-term memory. (2) Innovative Teaching Methods: Vocabulary teaching should adopt innovative methods, such as integrating morphological approaches and metacognitive strategy training, while also incorporating cognitive linguistic theory to enhance the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction. (3) Cultivation of Autonomous Learning Ability: Teachers should focus on fostering students' autonomous learning abilities by providing personalized feedback and guidance to help students select appropriate learning strategies based on their individual circumstances. (4) Integration of Culture and Context: Vocabulary teaching should incorporate more cultural background and contextual information to help students understand the deeper meanings and appropriate usage of vocabulary.

While this study provides new perspectives and methods for English vocabulary teaching, it also has certain limitations. Future research can delve deeper into the differences in vocabulary learning strategies among learners from various cultural backgrounds and the impact of cultural factors on vocabulary teaching. With the advancement of information technology, future research can investigate how to use artificial intelligence, mobile learning, and other technologies to improve the efficiency and quality of vocabulary teaching.

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