

VOCABULARY AS AN INDICATOR OF LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

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Abstract

This study examines vocabulary as a key indicator of language competence within the framework of Russian Lexicology. Vocabulary is considered one of the most important components of communicative ability, as it directly influences learners' capacity to understand, produce, and interpret language effectively. A rich lexical repertoire enables learners to express ideas more precisely, while limited vocabulary often leads to communication difficulties and reduced fluency.

The study analyzes how vocabulary size and quality reflect overall language proficiency in both receptive and productive skills. It also explores the relationship between lexical knowledge and communicative performance, emphasizing that vocabulary development is closely linked to reading comprehension, speaking fluency, and writing accuracy. In addition, the paper highlights the importance of active and passive vocabulary in assessing learners' linguistic competence.

Key words

vocabulary, language competence, Russian Lexicology, lexical knowledge, communicative ability, language proficiency, active vocabulary, passive vocabulary

Vocabulary plays a fundamental role in language learning and is widely regarded as one of the most important indicators of overall language competence. Within the field of Russian Lexicology, lexical knowledge is not only the collection of words a learner knows, but also the ability to use them appropriately in different communicative situations. Without sufficient vocabulary, even learners with strong grammatical knowledge may struggle to express their ideas clearly and effectively.

In modern linguistics and language pedagogy, language competence is understood as a combination of several skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these components, vocabulary serves as a central element that connects all language skills. It enables learners to comprehend texts, participate in conversations, and produce meaningful written and spoken discourse. Therefore, vocabulary size and depth are often used as reliable indicators of a learner's overall proficiency level.

Furthermore, vocabulary knowledge is divided into active and passive forms. Active vocabulary refers to words that learners can use in speaking and writing, while passive vocabulary includes words that are recognized and understood but not frequently used in production. The balance between these two types of vocabulary significantly influences communicative performance and fluency.

The importance of vocabulary development becomes even more evident in academic and professional contexts, where precise and effective communication is essential. Learners with a rich lexical repertoire are more capable of expressing complex ideas, understanding nuanced meanings, and adapting their language use to different situations.



Therefore, this study aims to explore vocabulary as a key indicator of language competence, emphasizing its role in communication, comprehension, and overall linguistic development.

Vocabulary development is considered a central component of language competence in the field of Russian Lexicology. Russian linguistic studies emphasize that lexical knowledge is not only about knowing word meanings but also about understanding usage, collocation, and communicative function.

One important contribution is found in D. N. Shmelev's work *Modern Russian Lexicology*. Shmelev highlights that vocabulary is a dynamic system where words are interconnected through semantic relations such as synonymy, antonymy, and polysemy. He argues that lexical competence reflects a speaker's ability to navigate these relationships in real communication. According to his analysis, learners with a broad vocabulary are better able to choose appropriate words depending on context, style, and communicative purpose[1]. This shows that vocabulary is not a static list of words but a functional system that directly influences language competence.

Another significant study is presented in V. V. Vinogradov's *The Russian Language: A Grammatical and Lexical System*. Vinogradov focuses on the structural and stylistic aspects of vocabulary in Russian. He emphasizes that lexical units carry not only denotative meaning but also stylistic and emotional shades. According to Vinogradov, mastering vocabulary means understanding both literal and contextual meanings, including expressive and stylistic usage[2]. His work demonstrates that lexical competence is closely linked to communicative effectiveness, as speakers must select words that fit both meaning and stylistic context. Both Shmelev and Vinogradov underline that vocabulary is a complex and structured system. Their studies show that lexical competence involves not only the quantity of known words but also the ability to use them appropriately in different communicative situations, making vocabulary a key indicator of overall language proficiency.

Vocabulary as an indicator of language competence in the field of Russian Lexicology is closely connected with learners' ability to understand, interpret, and produce meaningful communication. The analysis shows that lexical competence is not limited to knowing word meanings, but also includes correct usage, contextual awareness, and stylistic appropriateness.

One of the most important findings is that vocabulary is a structured semantic system, where words are interconnected through meaning relations such as synonymy, antonymy, and polysemy. As explained by D. N. Shmelev in *Modern Russian Lexicology*, lexical competence involves the ability to choose the most appropriate word depending on context[3]. For example, the words:

- красивый (beautiful)
- прекрасный (splendid)
- симпатичный (nice/pleasant)

all express positive meaning but differ in intensity and usage. A learner with strong vocabulary knowledge can distinguish between these nuances and use them correctly in sentences such as:

- Он красивый человек.
- Это прекрасный день.
- Она очень симпатичная девушка.

This shows that vocabulary directly affects communicative precision.

Another key result is that vocabulary carries stylistic and emotional meaning, not only dictionary definitions. According to V. V. Vinogradov in *The Russian Language: A Grammatical and Lexical System*, lexical units often include expressive and stylistic shades. For example:



- умереть (neutral: to die)
- скончаться (formal/polite: to pass away)
- загнуться (slang: to kick the bucket)

Although these words have similar meanings, their usage depends on context and communicative situation. This demonstrates that vocabulary competence includes the ability to choose words appropriately based on tone and formality.

The analysis also shows that vocabulary is divided into active and passive knowledge. Active vocabulary is used in speaking and writing, while passive vocabulary is understood during listening and reading. For example, a student may understand the word “infrastructure” in a text (passive), but not be able to use it in speaking (active). High-level language competence requires a balance between both types.

Furthermore, learners with a rich vocabulary demonstrate better performance in all language skills. In reading tasks, they understand texts faster; in writing, they produce more accurate and varied sentences; in speaking, they express ideas more fluently and confidently[4]. For instance:

- Limited vocabulary: *I good student.*
- Rich vocabulary: *I consider myself a hardworking and dedicated student.*

This clearly shows how vocabulary size influences communicative quality.

Finally, vocabulary development is strongly influenced by exposure, practice, and contextual learning. Learners who engage in reading, speaking activities, and real-life communication tend to develop stronger lexical competence compared to those who rely only on memorization.

In conclusion, vocabulary is a key indicator of language competence in Russian Lexicology. It reflects not only the number of words a learner knows but also the ability to use them correctly, appropriately, and effectively in communication.

Firstly, vocabulary functions as a structured system of meaning relations, which helps learners express precise ideas. Secondly, it carries stylistic and emotional meanings that are essential for natural communication. Thirdly, the balance between active and passive vocabulary determines overall fluency and comprehension. Finally, strong vocabulary knowledge significantly improves all language skills: speaking, writing, reading, and listening. Therefore, systematic vocabulary teaching and continuous exposure to language use are essential for developing high-level language competence.

References:

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