

PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING LEXICAL COMPETENCE IN TEACHING INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC ENGLISH VOCABULARY

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Abstract. This article explores the key methodological and pedagogical principles for developing lexical competence in learners of English, with a focus on industry-specific vocabulary related to Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Lexical competence—understood as the ability to effectively recognize, understand, and apply vocabulary—plays a crucial role in the professional development of students, particularly in technical and vocational education. The study emphasizes contextual learning, cognitive scaffolding, corpus-based teaching, and multimodal instruction as effective strategies.

Keywords: lexical competence, ICT terminology, English for Specific Purposes, technical vocabulary, vocabulary acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized digital economy, proficiency in English goes far beyond general communicative skills—it increasingly requires mastery of specialized vocabulary relevant to professional domains. Among these, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) represents one of the most rapidly evolving fields, where English serves not only as a lingua franca but as the primary medium for innovation, instruction, and documentation. For students in technical lyceums, colleges, and universities, especially those in non-English speaking countries, acquiring lexical competence in ICT-related English is both a practical necessity and an academic challenge.

Lexical competence refers to more than just vocabulary memorization. It encompasses the learner's ability to decode, internalize, and flexibly use words in specific professional contexts. Teaching such competence requires careful attention to linguistic nuance, conceptual depth, and intercultural awareness, particularly in areas like ICT where terms often carry both literal and metaphorical meanings (cloud, bug, virus, etc.).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

ICT terminology is characterized by high density, abstraction, and frequent metaphorization. For example, the term firewall has a concrete origin in construction and fire safety but has been metaphorically adapted to mean a security barrier in network architecture. Understanding such terms requires not only linguistic knowledge

but also a grasp of technical systems. Therefore, forming lexical competence in ICT requires interdisciplinary integration—blending language learning with basic technological literacy [1].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the most effective strategies in teaching ICT vocabulary is contextualization—presenting terms in authentic, meaningful contexts. For example, instead of defining cloud computing in isolation, students might be given an excerpt from a company’s IT policy or a user manual. This mirrors real-life usage and improves retention. Classroom techniques may include role-play (e.g., IT help desk scenario), case studies, and simulation tasks involving tech company workflows.

Learners of ICT terminology benefit significantly from structured cognitive support. Teachers can begin with familiar or semi-familiar words (network, data) and gradually move to more abstract terms (algorithm, machine learning). Graphic organizers such as semantic maps or mind maps allow students to visualize the lexical field. Scaffolding also involves comparing synonyms and antonyms (e.g., upload vs. download), collocation practice (install software, run a script), and affix recognition (e.g., cyber-, -ware, auto-).

Digital corpora and keyword frequency lists from real-world ICT documents (manuals, white papers, technical blogs) can be powerful tools in teaching. Students can analyze word frequency, contextual meaning, and syntactic patterns of use. For example, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) or Sketch Engine provides authentic occurrences of terms like database, interface, and encryption. This approach increases awareness of both usage and variation (e.g., data breach vs. data leak) [2].

ICT vocabulary is often associated with visual-spatial understanding (e.g., GUI elements, network topologies). Therefore, using multimodal inputs—videos, infographics, interactive simulations—helps reinforce both semantic and pragmatic understanding. For example, a video tutorial on configuring a server not only explains the steps but visually associates terms like port, gateway, and router with their functional counterparts. Paired with vocabulary logs and reflective journals, such instruction strengthens retention.

One of the most nuanced challenges in forming lexical competence with ICT terminology lies in the inherent semantic ambiguity and polysemy of many English terms. Words like cloud, bug, crash, or cookie not only possess multiple meanings in everyday language but acquire entirely new technical meanings in the ICT domain. For instance, a student who understands the term crash as a vehicular accident might initially struggle to comprehend it as a sudden software failure. Without explicit instruction on domain-specific meaning shifts, learners may misinterpret key concepts, leading to cognitive overload and lexical fossilization.

Thus, teachers must employ contrastive semantic instruction, where terms are introduced alongside their multiple meanings, each exemplified in authentic sentences. A useful exercise is the use of “lexical splitting”—encouraging students to build semantic trees that categorize a term's everyday, metaphorical, and technical uses. This approach not only fosters lexical flexibility but sharpens metalinguistic awareness, which is vital for industry communication where clarity is paramount [3].

Another essential yet often overlooked aspect of teaching ICT terminology is the cultural load that accompanies certain expressions. Terms such as open-source, hacker, or pirate carry pragmatic implications that vary across cultures and professional communities. For example, while hacker may be negatively perceived in the public sphere, within tech communities, it may denote ingenuity and technical prowess.

To foster lexical competence that is not only linguistically accurate but also pragmatically appropriate, instructors must integrate intercultural communication strategies. Case studies, such as legal disputes over software licenses or debates on ethical hacking, can be used to highlight the implications and contextual uses of such loaded terms. Students should be encouraged to compare how certain terms are interpreted in Uzbek, Russian, or other native contexts, versus in English-speaking IT environments [4].

CONCLUSION

The teaching of ICT industry terms within the framework of English language education must go beyond rote learning. By applying principles of contextualization, scaffolding, corpus analysis, and multimodal instruction, educators can foster deeper lexical competence that is transferable to real-world professional environments. This competence empowers learners to participate more actively in the digital economy and positions them to better understand technological discourse. As such, lexical competence in English is not just a linguistic goal but a strategic enabler for future professionals in the ICT domain.

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