

Strategies on Dealing with New Words in English Reading Comprehension

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How to cite this paper: Kang, Y. (2026). Strategies on Dealing with New Words in English Reading Comprehension. Literature, Language and Cultural Studies, 6(2), 1–5. ISSN Print: 3079-5095, ISSN Online: 3079-5109.

<https://doi.org/10.63313/LLCS.9192>

Published: 2026-08-07

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Abstract

Vocabulary is the flesh and blood of English learning. Furthermore vocabulary learning is a crucial element in cultivating English core competence. The learning and accumulation of vocabulary is also the prerequisite of improving reading capacity, while the new words lay much difficulties on the way to successful reading comprehension. Therefore it is an inescapable part for teachers to solve students' problems on new words by offering them some strategies on how to cope with them in reading comprehension, guiding learners to deal with new words in a faster and more firm way. So this passage will start from word prediction, word recognition and word formation to foster learners' learning ability on new words, which helps students get an actual development in dealing with new words, further enhancing reading comprehension ability and increasing reading proficiency. By virtue of these strategies, learners can raise confidence in dealing with new words in the future reading and eventually develop their own unique learning habits on meeting unknown vocabulary.

Keywords

Strategies; New Words; Reading Comprehension; Reading Capacity; Reading Proficiency

1. Introduction

The vocabulary learning goes throughout the whole learning process and learners will meet various new vocabulary in the every aspect of learning, so some skills are requested when meeting new vocabulary. Besides, vocabulary is the foundation for language skills, working as an important part in enhancing reading ability. However it is unavoidable that many learners will meet certain difficulties on new words in reading comprehension, which lead to reading obstacles. This brings negative effects to their reading ability and can be divided into two aspects simply.

Firstly, leading to learners' afraid to reading. Reading is a necessary way for extending vocabulary in that learners can obtain abundant words from various reading comprehension materials and the number of vocabulary one student has got will influence the speed and appropriateness of reading (Zhou, 2008). Learners are

usually prone to pay much attention on some words they do not know and constraint their mind in these new words, leading to their afraid to reading the next paragraphs consciously. And this will put them into an atmosphere filled with anxiety, hopeless. Or they will spend too much time on looking for each new word in the dictionary to remember relevant meanings and other forms mechanically, it brings a few help for students' understanding on learning new words, especially in the examination with limited time, they cannot get the new words with extra help and spend much time on new words which result in they do not have enough time for other parts.

Secondly, losing confidence in learning. Confidence is closely connected with students' motivation in English learning while the success they have achieved promote the learning of English. But some difficult new words are the important factor to influence learners' confidence in learning, when asked their bad performance in some reading exercise or test, students would give a main reason on new words (Hu & Liu, 2011). Unknown words will make students feel puzzled about the reading material or they just simply guess the meaning without correct methods. Therefore learners' reading ability will be trapped at a point and does not get effective improvement which maybe work as a hint in learners' mind that they can not study well in English. All these unhappy results probably force students to deepen their misunderstanding about English learning and lose their spirit in learning gradually.

2. Strategies to improve learners' ability in dealing with new words in reading comprehension

New words is the main barrier in reading comprehension for learners, it is teachers' major task that how to make full of reading strategies to assist learners in receiving new words.

2.1. Word prediction

Each word in the reading material has something to do with phrases and sentences before or after it, and there are some close relationship among paragraphs. Both of them provide a natural environment for us to predict the meaning from context (Hu & Liu, 2011). Learners are supposed to focus on the paragraph where new word appears, especially the two sentences around it. Sometimes it will arrange a few words to explain the meaning of new words like mean, refer to or use a simple sentence to paraphrase it. There is a point that logical relationship among sentences also suggest the meaning of new words in which we can see it clearly from conjunction, adversative or causal relationship between sentences. What's more, the author will take advantage of various punctuation to indicate meaning of unknown words, for example, taking dash, colon, bracket and quotation mark as an indicator for students get more detailed explanations from the perspective of context. And parallel sentences connected by semicolon should attract students' attention as

well. Given that the new words in the text are not easy to use above skills, learners can try their best to relate the background information supported by teacher with their common sense to make a guess, which is a potential approach to get the new words known. To certain extent, all of these skills can supplement the weakness in recognizing new words and minimize the difficulties in reading comprehension. Encouraging students to make prediction on new words drives learners to develop their imagination and thinking ability. Therefore when new words appearing, it is better for teachers to help students infer meaning with appropriate clues.

2.2. Word recognition

Word recognition, here, means teachers should have an awareness that new words can be divided into three levels generally. The difficult degree of these words is a key factor to decide how much attention should be paid to them and whether teachers should teach them or not (Yu, 2021). For students, their difficulties in understanding new words will reduce greatly and promote efficiency in reading while enhance their recognition for vocabulary. First level is new words have little influence on students' comprehension of reading. Skimming these words, students also can learn well about the text. For these words, teachers should limit their interventions and encourage learners to guess the meaning from context with using various reading methods, prior knowledge and connecting the theme of this text. And more importantly students can conquer their worry from this type of new words slowly, which lays a good foundation for fluent reading. Second one is that the comprehension of passage is exposed to the influence brought by the new words but they can be guessed from context. The importance of these words depends on their relations with learning objectives, because some words are too unfamiliar or complicated for learners to learn where they only need to know relevant meaning in context (Shi, 2020). The last one is there is close relationship between new words and reading comprehension, furthermore students have problems in inferring meaning from context. These ones require teachers to provide more details in advance. It needs teachers to look through the reading material and prepare supporting evidence based on students' ability before the class to learn them indirectly. Instead our aim is to cultivate students' ability in dealing with new words (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020). Hence teachers can introduce the three type of words into their daily teaching consciously at the beginning stage, meanwhile regular review and practice is necessary for students to enhance their acquisition, then gradually foster learners' sensitivity to different extent of new words and they can decide how much attention is needed for them. Additionally, learners can know their ability in dealing with new words. Once they are familiar with the classification of new words, they would improve reading capacity correspondingly.

2.3. Word formation

Word formation contributes to vocabulary accumulation and offer the basis for English reading comprehension. Inferring meaning of vocabulary through own thought and knowledge from word formation, learners can not only boost reading ability but also drop the reliance on dictionaries for our goal is to cultivate a good learner (Duran & Kääntä, 2023). Moreover equipped with word formation enables learners to deepen their recognition and understanding of new words, conquering reading obstacles.

Learners tend to remember new words one by one when meeting in text where they usually forget what they have studied with a short time, but they can strengthen word guessing ability and achieve an effective result under the guidance of word formation. As mentioned in New Standard, students ought to use word formation to broaden vocabulary, achieving deep learning in vocabulary (Śliwiak & Shah, 2024). For example, when we see some prefixes like ab-, un- or dis-, we can guide learners to learn that these symbolize opposite meaning to the original one so that they can know how to judge the implied emotions behind the reading materials. Based on this, learners can narrow the scope of new words and increase accuracy, leaving more smoothness for reading and raising confidence in learning. At the same time, mind map can be associated with word formation to enlarge learners' memorization and use about related words, helping learners to tease out new words based on topic (Fang, 2010). We can lead students to extend and change the form of new words individually with previous knowledge or teachers can take inductive method to show the features of certain words from its noun to adjective, adverbial, at last teachers can summarize the common rules again to deepen students' impression of word mind map. Moreover, teacher should observe learners' mastery of word formation and facilitate them to apply it in daily teaching or practice in and beyond the class. With examples presented from teachers, students can transfer this mode to future new vocabulary study. We also argue that learners will address the other different aspects of word knowledge, such as collocations, synonyms and usage, both during whole class and peer group interaction (Xu, 2019). As students can be given opportunities to show their new words mind in the front of the whole class, as a result, learners will apply this in their study and become a good learner in new words.

3. Conclusion

In teaching, it is an obvious fact that learners' capacity in dealing with new words needs much more efforts. Both teachers and students ought to think about the relationship between reading and new words carefully, and make our reading carried out with accurate direction and objective while get an ideal result in effective and thoughtful vocabulary learning. Word prediction is a ideal way to improve students' effective learning on new words, meanwhile students can transfer their skills in word learning to other aspects. About word recognition, it is a

beneficial method to assist students understand their current level and promote advantages to supplement their shortcomings in vocabulary learning. For word formation is a necessity for students to learn vocabulary, where learners can know a word as a whole. combining with mind map, students can form their own unique learning style on new vocabulary. These three strategies could be mixed together in class with students' more autonomy and they work positively to increase students' confidence and gain foreign language enjoyment from new words learning. Teachers should bear in mind that only introduce these strategies works inefficiently, learners need more practices in daily reading comprehension with proper clues and withdraw their assistance gradually.

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