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Techniques and Problems of Memorizing New Words in a Foreign Language as a Second Language

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Abstract

This abstract explores the multifaceted landscape of vocabulary acquisition in second language learning. The pursuit of expanding linguistic proficiency involves navigating various strategies and facing inherent challenges. The paper delves into methodologies employed by learners, emphasizing the pitfalls associated with traditional approaches.

Key Words: *vocabulary acquisition, learning strategies, memorization pitfalls, active utilization, language proficiency.*

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Achieving fluency and proficiency in a foreign language necessitates a substantial lexicon. However, encounters often occur where recognition of a word in the target language prompts its immediate translation. This reliance on translated equivalents during conversation hampers the natural use of language. This challenge is prevalent among novice learners and school-age individuals. Investigating the root causes of this issue and exploring viable solutions constitutes the focus of this article.

In the initial phases of acquiring English or other languages as a secondary form of communication, the reliance on dictionaries is a customary practice. Traditionally, learners are instructed to inscribe unfamiliar words in their dictionaries, primarily in English, followed by the process of deciphering and translating into their native tongue. This method persists as a common pedagogical approach employed in instructing new vocabulary to students. However, this technique results in the memorization of words tethered solely to their English translations. The sequential nature of learning, as words are committed in the order of their recording, leads to a rigid association in memory, resembling an entry in a reference book. Consequently, while recognizing these words in written text allows for effortless translation, verbal articulation, particularly for terms like "book," becomes automatic. To enhance word retention, a dual mnemonic strategy encompassing both native and English translations is proposed. By imprinting new words

with associations in both languages, retention is fortified, enabling adequate proficiency for translation and verbal expression, essentially cultivating a personalized bilingual lexicon.

When committing new vocabulary to memory, a prevalent error among students manifests in adhering strictly to the sequential arrangement found in dictionaries. This rote approach leads to a recitation akin to memorizing a poem, hindering the ability to rearrange or employ the words within sentences when prompted. The underlying causes of this limitation and strategies to foster enduring word retention merit exploration. Vocabulary within any language framework can be categorized into "active" and "passive" subsets. The passive lexicon encompasses words comprehended in meaning yet seldom utilized in practical contexts, either infrequently used in speech and writing or entirely neglected. Conversely, the active lexicon comprises words seamlessly integrated into daily discourse, readily employed in both oral and written communication. Regrettably, many learners prioritize enhancing their passive vocabulary, often directed by methodologies primarily geared towards this end. Consequently, despite years invested in language acquisition, a persistent hesitancy lingers in utilizing the learned vocabulary, a common pitfall encountered by a majority, including myself on occasion. The prevalent practice involves translation-based memorization, which carries inherent limitations and drawbacks.

Let's delve into the conventional vocabulary notebook employed for memorization, as previously mentioned.

- Initially, the repetition of words becomes necessary due to reliance solely on their translations for recall. Failure to retrieve the translation indicates a lack of associative information, increasing the likelihood of forgetting these entries over time.

- A second flaw in this approach can be illustrated with an example: Consider the English word "tooth." Recall its translation? Correct. However, when asked to phrase "brush your teeth" in English, confusion arises between "Take a tooth?" or "Get a tooth?" for grammatical accuracy. In truth, "Take a tooth" implies extracting a tooth in English, highlighting the issue of isolating foreign words without contextual usage. Language does not operate with words in isolation; they function within phrases or sentences.

- An effective technique for sustained word retention involves contextualizing new words within sentences. By constructing sentences employing newly acquired vocabulary, these words seamlessly integrate into our active lexicon. This method significantly enhances the practical utilization of learned words in both written and oral expression, surpassing the efficacy of rote memorization techniques.

Strategies for expanding one's vocabulary in a foreign language provoke considerable interest and ongoing debate. Various approaches facilitate the rapid acquisition of numerous words leveraging

foundational knowledge. Consider the following methods:

- Examining the multifaceted nature of words: In English, certain words function as both nouns and verbs with nearly consistent meanings. For instance, "work" denotes an occupation as a noun and signifies action when employed as a verb. Adopting this approach allows for the simultaneous memorization of dual word forms.

- Identifying words ending with the suffix "-tion": These words, prevalent as nouns in English sentences, often exhibit unambiguous meanings and are relatively easy to remember. Examples include "motivation," "dissertation," "profession," among others.

- Noting distinct meanings within a single word: Certain English words possess divergent meanings, such as "fire," signifying dismissal from employment or flames. Diligence in grasping each distinct interpretation while memorizing new words is crucial.

- Recognizing words with near-identical or untranslatable counterparts: Instances arise where words possess close equivalence across languages or require no translation. Mastery involves correct pronunciation in English. Examples include "antidepressant," "caramel," "cocktail," among others, augmenting English vocabulary through native language correlations or previously learned words in another language.

- Sensitivity to contextual nuances: While some words may evoke a sense of familiarity, their usage within sentences can unveil unexpected meanings. For instance, the phrase "I

am all ears" in English contrasts with its equivalent Uzbek phrase, necessitating attention to contextual cues for accurate comprehension. Attentiveness to context enhances comprehension amidst potential divergences in meaning.

In the context of language acquisition, considering the phrase "I

know it" as conclusive represents a significant misconception. An adept language learner comprehends that mere acknowledgment or recognition constitutes merely the initial phase of the learning process. This acknowledgement serves as the foundational step at the base of the learning pyramid.

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