



THE BEST METHOD FOR NEW VOCABULARY

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Abstract: This article explores multifaceted approaches to enhancing vocabulary acquisition in second language learning. Traditional rote memorization often leads to rapid cognitive decay; therefore, this study advocates for a transition toward more cognitive-heavy and engaging methodologies. The paper analyzes four key pedagogical strategies: contextualized learning, mnemonic visualization, semantic clustering and cognitive expansion, natural acquisition, and the integration of personal interests into the learning material.

Keywords: contextual learning, vocabulary acquisition, mnemotechnics

Currently, there are numerous branches of English language acquisition. One of the most critical aspects is vocabulary instruction, which continuously evolves in response to contemporary societal needs and educational advancements. While there are many techniques to enhance vocabulary retention and development, it is essential to identify and select the most effective ones.

Learning Through Context

This method is a long-standing, indispensable strategy that remains highly relevant. Rote memorization of words directly from a dictionary is often counterproductive if those words are not actively applied. A superior approach involves encountering words within a text; when an unfamiliar term arises,



researching its definition and seeing it in its natural environment significantly enhances memory recall. Furthermore, the more an individual engages with various texts or articles and encounters a word repeatedly, the better that word is internalized. In his 2017 research, "How Vocabulary is Learned,"¹ Paul Nation emphasizes that as the frequency of repetitions increases, the probability of successful acquisition rises accordingly. This suggests that rather than memorizing isolated words, it is far more effective to integrate them into sentences or connect them to daily experiences. For instance, instead of merely learning the word "apple," one should practice by constructing sentences such as "I eat a green apple," or other varied contexts to ensure long-term retention.

Memorizing words through Mnemonics.

In this method, words are visualized and manifested within the imagination as if they were occurring right before one's eyes. Generally, what an individual perceives visually is retained much more effectively than what is merely read or heard. In their article titled "How to decide if a mnemonic method is helpful,"² Michael Pressley and Joel Levin state that the mnemonic method facilitates vocabulary learning by first gathering similar words and then forming illustrative associations with them. This process helps to encode the words into the subconscious mind, thereby enhancing long-term memory retention.

Semantic Clustering and Cognitive Expansion

Furthermore finding antonyms and categorizing them is an efficient strategy for vocabulary acquisition. Thomas Tinkham, in his article "The effects of Semantic Clustering on vocabulary learning" (1997)³, asserts that grouping words into clusters

¹ nation, p. (2017). how vocabulary is learned. indonesian journal of english language teaching, 12(1), 1–14.

² Pressley, M., & Mullally, J. How to decide if a mnemonic method is helpful: Evaluating a letter mnemonic alternative to the keyword method. Unpublished manuscript, 1981.

³ Tinkham, T. (1997).

The effects of semantic and thematic clustering on the learning of second language vocabulary.



of synonyms and antonyms significantly improves recall and aids cognitive processing. Undoubtedly, this approach does not merely expand one's mental dictionary; it strengthens critical thinking skills. This is because when a person analyzes a word and explores its various connotations and meanings, their intellectual perspective and cognitive breadth are significantly enhanced.

Academic Translation: Natural Acquisition and the Power of Interest

For many learners, the traditional memorization of vocabulary presents a significant challenge. Without consistent spaced repetition, newly acquired words tend to fade rapidly from memory. However, research suggests that engaging with captivating literature and multimedia content is far more efficient than rote memorization, particularly for young learners. "This aligns with the principles established by Hu et al. in their research on the 'Action Research'⁴ method. They emphasize that vocabulary acquisition is most profound when learners align their study materials with their personal interests—such as choosing specific books or films they genuinely enjoy. Young children, in particular, often find mechanical memorization tedious, leading to rapid forgetting. Conversely, when they immerse themselves in topics they find interesting, they subconsciously repeat and retain words without the boredom of traditional drills. This method is not exclusive to children; adults can also derive immense benefits from this approach. Expanding one's lexicon through natural acquisition not only enhances linguistic proficiency but also boosts the learner's emotional well-being. When individuals engage in activities they find pleasurable, their motivation increases and the "affective filter" is lowered, creating an ideal psychological state for long-term learning.

Second Language Research, 13(2), 138–163.

⁴ Hu, N., et al. (2021). The educational function of children's movies from the perspective of child development. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 759094.



The process of expanding one's vocabulary is not merely an act of memorization, but a sophisticated cognitive exercise that requires strategic engagement. As analyzed throughout this article, relying on isolated word lists is an ineffective approach that ignores the natural mechanics of the human brain. Conversely, alternative methodologies yield significantly better results in vocabulary retention." Furthermore, the implementation of mnemotechnics and active recall transforms passive vocabulary into functional language tools. When these scientific methods are coupled with the learner's personal interests, the "affective filter" is lowered, turning a potentially tedious task into an enjoyable and sustainable habit. Ultimately, the synergy of these five strategies provides a holistic framework for language mastery. For any learner aiming for true linguistic proficiency, the shift from "learning about a word" to "living with the word" through active application remains the gold standard of success.

References:

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