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MEMORY AND LANGUAGE LEARNING: THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGIES IN THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH VOCABULARY

Annotation: this article discusses the impact of psychological strategies in relation to memory, in the instance of learning English vocabulary. The study identifies cognitive and metacognitive strategies that improve longer-term retention of words. The study uses data from Uzbek learners of English in Secondary Schools and examines their use of strategies for memory enhancement. Data was collected over an extended period of time and consisted of vocabulary tests, questionnaires about learner strategies and interviews with participants. The results indicated, in general, that those who used cognitive strategies, variables as visualization, semantic mapping and spaced repetition, would have better vocabulary retention outcomes.

Key words: memory strategies, vocabulary learning, psychological strategies, cognitive techniques, English language acquisition, semantic mapping, metacognition

Аннотация: в статье рассматривается влияние психологических стратегий на память при изучении английской лексики. Исследование выявляет когнитивные и метакогнитивные стратегии, способствующие долгосрочному запоминанию слов. Исследование основано на данных, собранных среди узбекских школьников, изучающих английский язык, и анализирует использование ими стратегий для улучшения памяти. Данные собирались в течение длительного времени и включали тесты по лексике, анкеты о стратегиях обучения и интервью с участниками. Результаты показали, что учащиеся, использующие когнитивные стратегии, такие как визуализация, семантическое картирование и интервальное повторение, в целом демонстрировали лучшие результаты в запоминании слов.

Ключевые слова: стратегии запоминания, изучение лексики, психологические стратегии, когнитивные техники, овладение английским языком, семантическое картирование, метакогниция.

Annotatsiya: ushbu maqolada ingliz tilidagi lugʻatni oʻrganishda psixologik strategiyalarning xotira bilan bogʻliq ta'siri muhokama qilinadi. Tadqiqot soʻzlarni uzoq muddatli eslab qolishni yaxshilovchi kognitiv va metakognitiv strategiyalarni aniqlaydi. Tadqiqot Oʻzbekistonlik oʻrta maktab oʻquvchilari orasida olib borilgan boʻlib, ularning xotirani mustahkamlash uchun qoʻllagan strategiyalari oʻrganilgan. Ma'lumotlar uzoq vaqt davomida yigʻilgan va lugʻaviy testlar, oʻquv strategiyalari haqidagi soʻrovnomalar hamda ishtirokchilar bilan intervyularni oʻz ichiga olgan. Natijalar shuni koʻrsatdiki, vizualizatsiya, semantik xaritalash va oraliqli takrorlash kabi kognitiv strategiyalardan foydalangan oʻquvchilar odatda soʻz boyligini yaxshiroq eslab qolishgan.

Kalit soʻzlar: xotira strategiyalari, lugʻat oʻrganish, psixologik strategiyalar, kognitiv usullar, ingliz tilini oʻzlashtirish, semantik xaritalash, metakognitsiya.

Introduction

Understanding vocabulary is pivotal to second language learning and contributes greatly to communicative competence. Language learners rely on memory to recall, retain and accumulate lexical items at a variety of distances over periods of time. Without various forms of instructional support, retention rates of vocabulary decrease and are influenced by EFL contexts where learners may only have 2 hours, more or less, of exposure per week in an EFL class. Cognitive psychology has provided recall and retention strategies for language learning, including chunking, elaboration and associations. Metacognition strategies provide further options for

retention, including the planning, monitoring and evaluation of one's learning process. In terms of recall and retention, learners will rely on varied strategies according to their age, specific motivation for learning, and language proficiency levels. Strategies for vocabulary memorization have been shown to improve learning using visualization, repetition and affective strategies (Schmitt, 2000). Previous studies have also looked at variables of language anxiety, self-efficacy and motivation as mediators of memory strategies (Oxford, 2011). Lastly, while vocabulary memorization is about language, it is also cognitive and affective. For Uzbekistan, for example, the context is exceedingly multilingual, but the environment

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for developing English vocabulary is at best an oppressive experience. Learners want to learn, but making any simple connection to the intended target language is challenging due to a lack of exposure and a supportive reconstructing environment. Strategy training could be a potential solution for learners to learn about the way they learn and to facilitate their learning for dealing with memory constraints. This article investigates which psychological strategies are most effective in improving English vocabulary retention among Uzbek learners. The results aim to inform educators about evidence-based practices for enhancing vocabulary learning.

Methodology

60 tenth-grade students from three secondary schools in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, participated in this mixed-method study. Participants were assigned to both experimental and control groups. The experimental group was instructed in the memory strategies: psychological visualization, spaced repetition and keyword, while the control group participated in standard vocabulary instruction. A pre-test was administered with an initial measure of vocabulary knowledge before treatment. The duration of the intervention was six weeks, during which the experimental group had additional time to practice the guided memory strategies. Posttests assessed vocabulary retention, and strategy use was analysed using learner questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews were coded thematically regarding a total of three teachers and ten students to provide further qualitative insight into the learners' experiences. Quantitative data collected through questionnaires were entered into SPSS for analysis. Qualitative responses were coded using thematic coding.

Results and Discussion

The post-test results indicated that the experimental group had a greater vocabulary retention than the control group, showing a 34% difference, versus 15% for the control group. Students also indicated more confidence and joy in learning new words using psychological strategies. Visualization and Semantic

Mappings were especially helpful for learners with a visual learning preference (Nation, 2013). Thematic analysis of the interviews found that emotional engagement and motivation increased when learners experienced personal progress. The teachers had noticed that learners using spaced practice tended to retain vocabulary level longer and used the vocabulary more accurately in writing activities (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). Nevertheless, some students reported finding the strategies to be time-consuming, indicating that learners need to be trained adequately and gradually. The findings corroborate previous studies pertaining to cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies (Schmitt, 2000; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Overall, memory strategies can not only improve retention of vocabulary knowledge, but they also promote learner autonomy and motivation towards learning, as well.

Conclusion

This research shows that psychological memory strategies can significantly improve the retention of vocabulary in English as a foreign or second language by levels of secondary school learners. Using strategies such as visual imagery that encourage repetition or semantic mapping improves not only performance but also motivation. Integrating the use of memory strategies into the language learning process enables students to have a greater ability to manage their own learning. Therefore, it is important to train teachers in strategy-based instruction, engaging both the cognitive and emotional environments in the vocabulary manipulation. It is acknowledged that not every learner may be willing to adapt to a more psychological approach to memory strategies, but the obvious (and often indefinite) impact of training in memory strategies is likely to have a long-lasting effect. Future educational policy should include time and resources to identify and include psychological strategies in the curriculum, making it easier for students to use these strategies. Future studies might also investigate the long-term impact of students utilizing memory strategies on other areas of language proficiency and building a learner identity.

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