HOW TO ENJOY THE JOURNEY: FOREIGN LANGUAGE VOCABULARY LEARNING AND TEACHING

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doi: 10.18355/PG.2019.8.2.2

Abstract

Foreign language vocabulary can be considered as a collection of items, while grammar as a system of rules. Quite often the emphasis has been put mostly on grammar – since it is easier to reapply a rule-based system, once it has been learned. On the other hand, vocabulary items can sparsely be reapplied, they can only be accumulated. Therefore, it is essential to consider the “*hows*” of the accumulation, or rather, the “*hows*” of FL teaching and learning. A vast number of researchers tried to define what helps to learn FL vocabulary effectively. We propose several strategies and techniques – which can prevent FL teachers and learners from “wasting of their fuel”, and memory aids – which will enable them to enjoy the journey towards the successful FL acquisition.

Key words

foreign language learning, foreign language teaching, enjoyment, strategies, techniques

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Introduction

Regarding FL vocabulary teaching and learning, for many years, the “column system” has been used. Every FL learner can remember the never-ending lists of words they used, where there was a foreign word in one column and its translation in the second one. However, this system is not very effective and popular, esp. among learners. Therefore, we discuss the importance of vocabulary in FL acquisition, and propose several pieces of advice how to teach and learn it, and make the whole process more engaging and enjoyable – with the aim to increase learners’ attention, add meaningfulness to their learning, organise vocabulary items in memorable way, add comprehensible contexts, create mental images, and trigger emotional responses.

1 Foreign Language Vocabulary

Everyone knows that when building a house, a builder needs bricks. Actually, the bricks give the shape to the house. Every single wall consists of several layers of bricks. Similarly, as a brick is a basic building unit of every building, vocabulary (or lexis) is a basic unit of every language.¹ It can be

¹ The term *vocabulary* usually refers to single words (e.g. *cat*, *rose*, *cup*, etc.) and sometimes to two or three word combinations, which are tightly linked
Slavonic Pedagogical Studies Journal, eISSN 1339-9055, ISSN 1339-8660, Volume 8 Issue 2, 2019

considered the building block, or the brick, which the communication would be impossible without – in fact, it is a very powerful carrier of meaning. Grammar, on the other hand, can be considered as mortar, which sticks the bricks together and keeps them in the right place.

As Fauziati (2005) emphasizes, it is impossible to convey a message effectively if one's vocabulary is insufficient. Similarly, according to Schmitt (2000), the center of communication and learning is vocabulary. Therefore, for purpose of communication, or rather, 'survival' in foreign language environment, one can make do with bricks only. The example of a discourse using accumulative effect of individual words can be as follows:

"Hungry. Dinner. Chicken. Coke. Happy."

By adding 'mortar', the discourse could go like this:

*"I am very hungry. For dinner, I will have chicken and coke, please.
I am happy with that, thank you."*

Or:

*"I was hungry. It was already dinner time. So I ordered chicken.
After that I had coke. I was so happy."*

The ability to 'survive' with vocabulary only proves its power. Wilkins (1972, p. 111) emphasizes that "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". He also continues and explains that if we dedicate most of our time to study of grammar, our English will not improve significantly. However, most improvement will be seen if we learn words and expressions – because very little can be said with grammar, but almost everything can be said with words (Wilkins in Thornbury, 2002, p. 13).

It is obvious that the largest and most important task, which a language learner has to face, is vocabulary acquisition (Swan and Walter in Thornbury, 2002, p. 14). This importance is not only recognized by researchers but also by learners themselves. They realize that improving their English means enlarging their vocabulary (Thornbury, 2002, p. 13).

To add, Thornbury (2002, p. 14) explains that vocabulary is a collection of items, while grammar is a system of rules. Once you learn a rule-based system, you can reapply it over and over. However, you can sparsely reapply items – you can only accumulate them. That is why it is more difficult to acquire them than rules. As he (Thornbury, 2002, p. 23) emphasizes, "learning is remembering".

Therefore, firstly, we would like to emphasize the importance and communicative power of often forgotten or undermined role of foreign

(e.g. *compact disc, rose red, turn on*, etc.). However, lexis covers bigger field. It refers to fixed combinations of words, which can be used even without using our knowledge of grammar, such as single-word vocabulary items, collocations (e.g. *blonde hair, traffic jam*), and multiword items (e.g. *someone you can talk to, on-the-spot decision*, etc.). (Scrivener, 2011, p. 186)

language vocabulary. Why is that so? As we explained, it is easier to reapply rules – even for foreign language teachers. However, even without these rules, it is possible to convey and understand the meaning. That is why we consider vocabulary the most important building block of foreign languages. Secondly, if learning vocabulary is mostly about accumulating, i.e. remembering items, it is essential both for FL learners and/or teachers to aid their memory and to make the vocabulary items more memorable.

2 Teaching and Learning Vocabulary

2.1 Knowledge

Both FL teachers and learners might ask what it means to know a word. As vocabulary acquisition is about an accumulation of items, knowing its dictionary meaning is insufficient. Thornburry (2002, p. 15) emphasizes that it is important to know also which other items is the mentioned one often associated with (its collocations), its connotations, its register, and its cultural accretions.

Next, there is a question of receptive and productive knowledge. Does that mean that when a learner knows the word, but cannot use it actively, that they actually do not know it? In fact, receptive knowledge is usually the first step of acquiring new vocabulary, as it exceeds and generally (but not always) precedes the productive one (Thornburry, 2002, p. 15).

2.2 Principles of Teaching and Learning

As FL learners learn the language in order to use it in communication, we cannot understand it as a unidirectional process. We need to consider it as an interactive process between learners themselves, and between learners and their teachers. Therefore, one might ask what strategies help to promote student learning – or rather, what principles underlie good teaching. According to Merrill, Barclay, and van Schaak (2008), the following principles help to promote student learning:

1. Learning tasks ought to be **meaningful** for students. In other words, students can see the value of learning new things because the tasks are **authentic**, and what is learned can be used in their lives.
2. Students should connect what they already know with new things to be learned. **Prior knowledge and skills** should be activated.
3. Students benefit by watching and listening to demonstrations of what is to be learned. They need to see a **variety of examples** of what they are learning.
4. Students need ample **opportunity to try these tasks** for themselves. They also need to get **feedback** on how well they are doing.
5. Students should be able to **integrate** what they have learned into their own lives. They **can show and tell others** what they have learned.

Therefore, when teaching and learning an FL vocabulary, it is essential to be aware of the importance of its authenticity, context, and most of all, its usefulness.

2.3 Strategies

In fact, learning means remembering. Therefore, learning a foreign language means remembering its items and rules. However, what can a learner do to remember them? How can a learner, or the teacher aid memory to hold and recall the items even after a longer period of time? In FL vocabulary learning exist several strategies, how to do so:

PPP Approach

In general, when teaching and/or learning new vocabulary, it is advisable to follow the often discussed “Presentation-Practice-Production” pattern, also known as “PPP” approach. This approach was originally used for grammar lessons – which were based on the ideas of “giving (presenting) small items of language to students, providing them with opportunities to use it in controlled ways (practice) and finally integrating it with other known language in order to communicate (production)” (Scrivener, 2011, p. 402). However, this approach works with vocabulary, too (Scrivener, 2011, p. 189). Regarding PPP, Harmer (1994, p. 83) emphasizes the importance of introducing “a situation which contextualizes the language to be taught”. After the presentation of context, the language is presented, too. Similar to PPP, Harmer (2001, p. 27) recognises “ESA” procedure, where E = Engage → S = Study → A = Activate.

We can conclude these into three steps which can be advantageous to follow when teaching and learning vocabulary:

1. Engage learners with an interesting presentation of vocabulary and its context.
2. Give learners space to study by providing them with opportunities for practice.
3. Activate learners’ knowledge and use it in production tasks.

Presentation: According to Thornbury (2002, p. 77), new vocabulary can be presented through translation, real things, pictures (or visual aids), actions and gestures, definitions, exemplary situations, etc.

The teacher can help the learners to ‘transfer’ the vocabulary from their receptive knowledge to the productive one by eliciting, scaffolding techniques, and various drills. In fact, the aim of language learning is to move words and rules into long-term memory (Davoudi and Yousefi, 2016, p. 107). Nonetheless, simply repeating newly learned words will not guarantee its ‘place’ in the long-term memory. It is important to integrate it into the learners’ mental lexicon, which can be described as a network of word associations, or contexts (Thornbury, 2002, p. 93).

In general, according to Scrivener (2011, p. 189), it is advantageous, when the presented lexical items are somehow connected, for instance:

- words connected with the same location or event (e.g. words connected to shopping, bedroom, wedding),
- words with similar grammar and/or use (e.g. adjectives to describe people, movement verbs),
- words that can be used to achieve a specific task (e.g. persuading, arguing, etc.).

Practice: However, presentation itself is insufficient, and according to “PPP” pattern, it should be followed by practice, or integration activities (Thornburry, 2002, p. 93-99), for instance: decision-making tasks (identifying, selecting, matching, sorting, ranking, and sequencing), identifying (finding words hidden in the text, e.g. number of phrasal words, comparative adjectives, etc.; listening out for particular words in a spoken on recorded text and follow-up writing of items mentioned; selecting letters in row and columns to form new words; odd one out activities), matching (words, visual representations, synonyms, antonyms, collocations, etc.), sorting (categories), ranking and sequencing (adverbs of frequency, preference for pieces of furniture or activities, etc.)

To add, there are numbers of memory aids known, for instance: repetition, retrieval, spacing, pacing, regular use, cognitive depth, personal organising, imaging, mnemonics, motivation, attention/arousal, affective depth, etc. (Thornburry, 2002, p. 24-26).

Production: In order to successfully integrate new vocabulary into an existing vocabulary network of a learner, production tasks should not be forgotten. Thornburry (2002, p. 100-104) offers several examples: completion tasks (gap-fill – closed or open, multiple choice), creation of context for given words (creating sentences, creating questionnaires for classmates), and games (Word clap, Categories – or finding words which start with the same letter, Noughts and crosses, Coffeepot, Back to board – based on yes/no questions and creating definitions, Pictionary – based on drawing, Word snap, Word race, Spelling race, etc.).

To sum this up, although the PPP approach was originally used for grammar lessons, with its deductive aspects, we believe it is especially suitable for teaching and learning FL vocabulary – as it presents not only vocabulary but also its context. Therefore, by following these “PPP” steps – i.e. presentation first, practice second, and production third – the process of vocabulary learning will become understandable and meaningful.

Burton’s Technique

Another technique, which was used by a famous 19th-century explorer, Sir Richard Burton, who had mastered around 30 languages, deals with foreign language acquisition just from the beginner level. Therefore, is very valuable both for teachers and learners. He described his technique as follows:

“I got a simple grammar and vocabulary, marked out the forms and words which I knew were absolutely necessary (1), and learnt them by heart (2) by

carrying them in my pocket and looking over them at spare moments during the day (3). I never worked for more than a quarter of an hour at a time, for after that the brain lost its freshness (4). After learning some three hundred words (5), easily done in a week, I stumbled through some easy book-work (one of the Gospels in the most come-at-able (6)), and underlined every word that I wished to recollect (7), in order to read over my pencillings at least once a day (8) ... If I came across a new sound like the Arabic Ghayn, I trained my tongue to it by repeating it so many thousand times a day (9). When I read, I invariably read out loud, so that the ear might aid memory (10) ... whenever I conversed with anybody in a language I was learning, I took the trouble to repeat their words inaudibly after them, and so to learn the trick of pronunciation and emphasis (11)" (Thornburry, 2002, p. 160-161).

Therefore, following Burton's technique, both FL teachers and learners should follow these strategies:

1. At the beginning, concentrate on vocabulary and grammar which is most important – in order to be able to communicate, although by using simple structures only.
2. At early stages, do not learn rules, but rather memorize items.
3. Review a lot. Distribute your practice over longer periods of times.
4. Split your review into smaller sections – remember the attention curve.
5. When you acquire a few hundred words, start with the reading of texts.
6. Due to the fact, that your vocabulary is still limited, choose texts which you are already familiar with in your mother language. Therefore, the language input will be still comprehensible for you.
7. Decide which words you want to learn and highlight them in the text.
8. Review the target words.
9. Drill unfamiliar sounds of the target language.
10. Read out loud and use the sound of words to help your memory to store them.
11. Repeat the correct pronunciation after FL speakers to help your memory.

Again, when we look at Burton's technique, the importance of accumulating of vocabulary items is obvious – because that is what allows the FL learner to reach higher levels of FL. However, the most important aspect of Burton's success was his determination to learn foreign languages – which was driven by his fascination and love for other cultures. In other words, he was strongly motivated to do so. Therefore, we would like to emphasize that motivation drives learning.

2.4 Aiding Memory

Regarding remembering and learning of FL vocabulary, unfortunately, for many years, the not very popular “column system” of learning vocabulary has been used – i.e. the never-ending lists of words, where there is a foreign word in one column and its translation in the second one. However, a vast number of researchers tried to define what helps to learn effectively – i.e. remember most of the vocabulary input in a relatively short time. In other words, they were trying to find what works best with human memory and how to help it both with remembering and retention. According to research findings, it seems that the following are the most effective:

Mnemonics

Mnemonics, also known as memory strategies, are believed to be very powerful mental tools, which help FL learners to deal with difficulties connected to vocabulary acquisition. FL learners can benefit from them mostly because they make learning more effective – by making it faster and easier, and at the same time, more enjoyable, self-directed and transferable to new situations (Oxford, 1990; Henson and Eller, 1999).

A mnemonic is actually a technique, which aim is to improve the memory of a learner – basically conditioned by the use of some formula (Oaks, 1995). The formula can be a simple rhyme, a new word, an acronym, a set of pictures, etc. The aim of mnemonics is to teach its user to pay attention and to organize the material to be learned in some memorable way – e.g. by linking it to some previously learned scheme (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 1989). Moreover, mnemonics break the information into smaller pieces, or rather, simple parts. The aim is to use imaginative, concrete, and visual images, in order to bring some meaning to the user (Siwolop, 1983; Norman, 1976). Or, the user can create a story based on the items to be remembered (Oaks, 1995).

The origins of mnemonics date back to ancient Greece and a poet named Simonides. However, one of the first modern studies was conducted by Bower (1973), in which students were asked to remember five lists of twenty unrelated items. In the end, they were asked to recall all 100 items. The results of his research showed the effectiveness of mnemonics, when the subjects using them remembered an average of 72 items, while the control group, which was using simple rehearsal, remembered an average of 28 items. Similarly, Atkinson (1975) introduced mnemonics to general education settings and conducted research on college undergraduate students, who were trying to learn FL vocabulary. Similarly, his study confirmed that mnemonics helped to promote learning and memory capacity. Moreover, they helped to connect newly learned vocabulary items with the knowledge, which was stored through visual and acoustic cues.

Concerning FL vocabulary learning, a mnemonic device known as keyword method was implemented in various cultural contexts. Wyrąb, Lawson and Hungi (2007) used this method to compare the performance and retention of Spanish vocabulary and their English definitions of two groups. Similarly, Chen (in Davoudi and Yousefi, 2016) studied the effect of keyword method in Taiwan in a quasi-experiment. Soleimani, Saeedi and

Mohajernia (2012) conducted research using the keyword method on an experimental group. In the studies mentioned, the experimental groups, which used the keyword method, recalled more target vocabulary than control groups, which did not use it. To add, studies conducted by Marzban and Amoli (2012), and Davoudi and Yousefi (2016), confirmed that mnemonic techniques significantly improved both immediate and delayed recall and retention of FL vocabulary.

Apparently, not only the use of keyword mnemonics but also story maps help learners to retrieve information. Cortazzi and Jin (2007) tracked the progress of young EFL learners, who were using keywords and story maps to tell and retell simple stories. The progress was apparent both in their mother language and English. Moreover, the authors of this study concluded that EFL learners benefit especially from telling their own personal stories.

A study conducted by Oaks (1995) proved that storytelling can be considered as a natural mnemonic – as it by its nature contains the same characteristics as mnemonics (i.e. aids attention, organizes, links, breaks into simple parts, aids imagination, creates visual images, and conveys meanings) and positively influences learners' recall of information.

Narratives

The texts in a narrative format, i.e. stories – told or written, can be considered as generous art. They have ability to stimulate imagination, sense of wonder, and inspire creativity (Oaks, 1995).

Regarding storytelling, Oaks (1995) compared its retention in comparison to traditional lectures. The subjects were tested right after hearing the lecture or story, 3 weeks later, and 5 weeks later. The findings of his research are quite significant, as people, who were in the “story” group remembered twice as much. Similarly, Berkowitz and Taylor (1981) confirmed that children recall more information from narrative passages than from expository texts. In accordance with these findings, George and Schaeer (1986) confirmed that kindergarten children recalled prose content more accurately when it was given by storytelling – in comparison to other means, including television.

The memorability of narrative and expository texts was compared by Graesser, Hoffman, and Clark (1980). Their findings indicate that not only were the narrative texts read about twice as fast as the expository ones, they were also remembered twice as well as the expository ones (i.e. encyclopedic). They found that there was a strong correlation between narrativity and the amount of information recalled (0.92).

As was confirmed by Johnson (in Kelly, 2016), students, who were making nanonarratives to remember abstract concepts, had improved recall over several days. Similarly, Bower and Clark (1969) asked students to memorize and subsequently recall 10 sets of unrelated words. One group was asked to memorize them in any way they found suitable, while the second one was asked to make stories using those words. The “story” group outperformed the other group in recall, which was 6-7 times better. Similarly, Higbee's (1996) study confirmed these findings, with 2-7 times better recall in the “story” group. To conclude this, we would like to emphasize that in the

worst case, the “story” group remembered twice as many information as the control group, i.e. vocabulary retention was increased by 100%. This fact provides FL learners with great retention efficacy – and can be very beneficial in the context of both FL vocabulary learning and teaching.

Furthermore, Brumfit and Johnson (1979) believe that storytelling is the most natural way how to learn a new language. In accordance, Cortazzi (1994) implies that storytelling is of central importance in FL context. Furthermore, Morgan and Rinvoluceri (1984) and Zipes (1995) claim that stories are a fundamental part of FL learning – as they reach the “whole person” of the listener or reader and appeal to their subconscious. Kelly (2016) emphasizes that our brains are built to remember the information when presented in narrative format – even more if the narration arouses emotions.

Martinez (2007) proposes that opening a lesson with a story can be very beneficial for EFL learners, as it may put them at ease and allow them to understand something concrete before going on to the related abstract concept. Consequently, the abstract language becomes teachable. The research conducted by Kalantari and Hashemian (2016) confirmed Gonzalez’s (2010) findings that storytelling promotes more natural, meaningful, and interactive context for FL learning – and at the same time, motivates learners to connect with their learning, boosts their confidence, and encourages their imagination and creativity. The outcomes of their study support Haven’s (2000) findings – that storytelling engages EFL students in meaningful activity and thus motivates them to be active learners.

Apparently, storytelling does enhance FL vocabulary learning of young learners (Mohamed, 2005; Georgopoulou and Griva, 2012) – as it offers both linguistic and personal benefits in a safe and relaxing environment (Shin, 2006), which lowers their stress and anxiety and leads to more successful language acquisition (Mixon and Temu, 2006). Moreover, they provide a motivating environment and thus make learning enjoyable (Ellis and Brewster, 2002). Furthermore, they enable learners to exercise their imagination and creativity (Haliwell, 1992) and can teach about different cultures and customs (Garvie, 1990). To add, subjects of research conducted by Georgopoulou and Griva (2012) were able to understand even unknown words and linguistic patterns thanks to the meaningful context, which stories provide. Likewise, positive effects of stories on FL acquisition were confirmed by studies conducted on young adults, too (e.g. Abrashid, 2012; Soleimani and Akbari, 2013).

Furthermore, several researchers observed heightened interest (Hamilton, 1991; Nietzsche, 1998; Yang, 2011), heightened engagement, more active participation, and more positive attitudes among learners, who were exposed to storytelling (Cliatt and Shaw, 1988; Leonard, 1990). Egan (1992) emphasized the affective value of storytelling – as it has the power to emotionally engage. Raines and Isbell (1994) believe that storytelling serves as natural agent of repetition, as stories can be told over and over again. Hardy (1968) emphasizes that narrative format is natural to humankind, as we dream, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, plan, revise, criticize,

construct, gossip, learn, hate, and live by narratives. Furthermore, it is natural to communication itself, as it brings in authentic language and conversation (Richards, 2006). In addition, a meta-analysis of eight studies conducted by Mello (2001) showed storytelling enhanced participants' fluency, vocabulary acquisition, writing skills, and recall – as well as served to improve their self-awareness, visual imagery, and cultural knowledge.

To sum the research in this area, which is indeed very broad, we can conclude that storytelling:

1. is superior to traditional listening comprehension,
2. provides EFL learner with a better learning environment, and thus positively affects their achievement,
3. motivates learners to actively participate and interact in classes,
4. brings enjoyment and pleasure to EFL learners, which positively affects their achievement,
5. activates learners' thinking processes, evokes their interest and helps them create vivid mental images and stories,
6. aids understanding and later recall of information – as it makes meaningful connections,
7. brings in authentic language and fosters natural communication – as it allows EFL learners to experience and experiment with the authentic use of language.

Several pieces of advice:

The advantages of using stories in FL education are undeniable. However, in order to maximize their effects, it is essential to follow several principles:

1. **Stories should not be too long.** In order to use maximal attention of learners, the story should not be longer than 5 minutes (Adair-Hauck and Donato, 2002).
2. **A story should be narrated, not read** (Adair-Hauck and Donato, 2002). Its narrator (FL teacher) can hold the attention of learners with the power of body language and eye contact – and at the same time, monitor how well they are following the story (Mixon and Temu, 2006). To add, stories are easier to remember if they are told then read (Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, and Lowrance, 2004).
3. **Use simple language** (Kelly, 2016).
4. **Use repetition, various sounds, and gestures** – as it aids memory (Kelly, 2016; Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, and Lowrance, 2004).
5. **Visuals can be used to help to narrate the story** (Adair-Hauck and Donato, 2002).
6. **Help your listeners to visualize the action of the story by using drama** – by using sensory words, phrasing, long pauses, voice changes (i.e. speed, volume, pitch, and tone), etc. (Kelly, 2016).

7. **Adapt the level to fit the audience** – i.e. if needed, give a short summary in L1 (Kelly, 2016).
8. **After initial telling, let the learners retell it** (Mixon and Temu, 2006).

It is essential to point out, that in order to increase the enjoyment of FL classes, the FL teachers should allow their learners to get totally involved in the content of the story itself. Therefore, stories should not be told for comprehension exercises only – but rather for learners' pleasure (Scrivener, 2011). When telling a story for pleasure, five steps should be followed (Scrivener, 2011):

1. **Mentally prepare the story beforehand** – its mood, smell, looks, colors, events, words, and expressions. Skeleton notes are allowed – but not too much.
2. **Inform the learners that there will be no comprehension questions afterward.** This reduces tension among learners, and usually change their posture and relaxing of facial expressions can be seen.
3. **Tell the story** – do not read it.
4. **Allow free discussion and interpretation of the story** – it should be a genuine reaction to the story, not comprehension task.
5. **Go on to another activity.**

What kind of stories should be used:

In the FL context, there is an unlimited number of stories, which can be possibly used for FL class:

1. Personal stories. Use them as manuals of life and help your learners “grow in areas they intuitively know are crucial” (Kelly, 2016, p. 85). Or you can use small incidents from your own life and slightly dramatize them (Scrivener, 2011).
2. Stories which teach moral values. Teach your learners to understand what is right and what is wrong (Kelly, 2016).
3. Local or national stories. These stories ensure the familiarity with background culture, which can reduce FL anxiety and stress (Mixon and Temu, 2006).
4. Fairy tales and legends, esp. rare ones (Scrivener, 2011). They can be Asian, Arab, or African tales.
5. Ghost and mystery stories (Scrivener, 2011).
6. Single incidents from longer biographies and novels (Scrivener, 2011).
7. Versions of stories from newspapers or magazines (Scrivener, 2011).
8. Versions of stories from soap operas, films, or TV shows (Scrivener, 2011).
9. For teenagers and young learners: stories about love (romantic or platonic), devotion to friends, power, seeing the world differently,

conflicts, stories which reveal internal strengths of their characters, stories about understanding, kindness, and helping (Kelly, 2016).

10. For adult learners: stories about marital relationships, perseverance, tolerance, social change (Kelly, 2016).
11. For working people: stories about the challenges of business leaders and how they overcame them (Kelly, 2016).

Contextualizing

The above-mentioned memory aids point to the importance of another one – i.e. contextualization. The meaningful context is especially important in both FL vocabulary teaching and learning processes.

Scrivener (2011) emphasizes the importance of presenting new lexical items so that there is a connection between them – or, in similar context. According to him, the connection can be a location or an event (e.g. shopping words, or wedding words), the same grammar and similar use (e.g. adjectives to describe people or movement verbs), or achievement of a specific task (e.g. persuading, or arguing). Scrivener (2011) also emphasizes that teachers should remember not just to teach isolated vocabulary items, but also present them and let their learners use them in realistic sentences. In fact, the language in its realistic context naturally occurs in reading and listening tasks (Scrivener, 2011). Moreover, in order to remember the vocabulary items, it is advantageous to include more categories into word lists with (e.g. collocations, simple sentences, pictures, etc.), or replace them by mind maps, picture labeling, etc. (Scrivener, 2011) – which again, aids their memory by contextualization.

The already mentioned use of stories also helps to contextualize FL vocabulary. Furthermore, it “favors an interdisciplinary and comprehensive methodology” (Martínez, 2007, p. 54). By being interdisciplinary, they thus bring not only language, but also content into FL classes. We can consequently consider them as CLIL tools. As CLIL is “a dual-focused educational approach”, in which content and language are interwoven (Mercer, MacIntyre, Gregersen, and Talbot, 2018, p. 21). Or, we can put it reversely – CLIL provides a real-life context for FL vocabulary items. In addition, by using authentic materials, CLIL can be used to teach not only FL vocabulary, but also competences, which are the heart of positive education – such as hope, gratitude, growth, positivity, kindness, optimism, tolerance, empathy, and meaning (Mercer, MacIntyre, Gregersen, and Talbot, 2018).

As it can in a significant way to assist the contextualization of FL vocabulary, it is essential to discuss also CALL methodology. Originally, it was considered as use of computer-based software for FL vocabulary learning. However, smartphones and other mobile devices have become ubiquitous in today’s world. Stockwell (2010, p. 107) reported that using mobile devices to learn “has reached a stage where it is starting to move out of the classroom and into the real world”. His study revealed that students are willing to spend more time on mobile devices than on computers – thanks to their convenient access. Therefore, as it seems, it is convenient for FL learner to learn FL vocabulary through modern technologies and platforms. As mobile applications, games, and social networks are promoting and enabling

creation of a global community, it has become natural to learn FL items outside the classroom. Since almost everyone today knows *Facebook* and *Youtube*, these two platforms can be both used to learn FL vocabulary in a meaningful context and to merge boundaries between CLIL and CALL – as they became the part of our everyday lives. Moreover, whether their use is from Slovakia, Japan, or Egypt, EFL is always their ubiquitous part. As a result, they make their users accumulate new vocabulary items, but at the same time, they provide us with meaningful context for them.

Using the everyday potential of CLIL and CALL, it is possible to use stories (as a natural mnemonic) in various contexts to aid FL vocabulary learning – by implementing personal stories, inspiring stories of other people, real-life stories, or stories teaching morality and showing important messages to humankind to FL classes. And since moving stories cause dopamine release, they affect memory and deeper learning (Kelly, 2016). Furthermore, contextualizing of FL vocabulary can be used to teach not only language but also about real life, and thus to make the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable for learners, too.

Emotions

When it comes to aiding memory with FL vocabulary learning, it is important to deal with learners' motivation. Motivation can be considered as an engine. Without the engine, there is no movement, no activity. In order to keep it functioning, it needs fuel in form of emotions – positive or negative. Although they keep the engine functioning, negative emotions can damage it. In contrast, positive emotions have the ability to repair it. Therefore, there are two types of motivation:

1. Extrinsic – which is usually caused by outside factors, both positive and negative.
2. Intrinsic – which comes from within the person and it springs from their enjoyment or desire to make themselves feel better.

In order to facilitate FL learning, intrinsic motivation is needed – as it is created through positive emotions. Although in FL learning context the original reasons are often extrinsic if learners start to enjoy and like the learning process, their chances of success will be enhanced in a great deal.

We discussed several strategies, which aid FL vocabulary learning. Their advantages are undeniable. However, apart from being meaningful, authentic, and in the real context, they have all potential to trigger emotions and therefore, motivate learners. In fact, emotions are believed to have a powerful effect on FL learning (MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012). Regarding the effect of positive emotions, they have the power not only to enhance learners' ability to notice things in the classroom environment but also to enhance their awareness of language input (MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012). As a result, this aids to absorb the FL input.

The above-mentioned memory aids have potential to create and give effective value to FL learners – as they all can be in some way considered as

stories – which function as a natural mnemonic to our brains. Egan (1992) emphasizes that the great power of a story is that it has power to engage its listeners effectively, but at the same time, requires cognitive attention. Therefore, the content of the story is learned while being emotionally engaged. As Thornburry (2002, p. 26) emphasizes, “affective (i.e. emotional) information is stored along with cognitive (i.e. intellectual) data, and may play an equally important role on how words are stored and recalled”. He adds that a very high degree of attention, or rather, arousal, correlates with improved recall of vocabulary items. In other words, if a word triggers a strong emotional response, it is recalled more easily. Krashen (1982) argues that every learner has an effective filter, which determines whether the information will be processed or not. To be more specific, if the information is emotionally significant to the learner, the filter will tag it as important and worth remembering. Therefore, adding effective value to FL vocabulary can affect its learning in a very significant way.

Nonetheless, several researchers report that the retrieval of input can be facilitated by trying to create the right mood experienced during encoding (Bower, 1981; Singer and Salovey, 1988). To create the right mood, the material should be presented in such a way that it triggers an emotional response in learners. This leads us to the important role of FL teachers – as they are those, who can strongly affect learners’ perception of a foreign language – positively or negatively. Gardner (2010) implies that learners’ positive attitudes towards teacher and FL course facilitate language learning. Similarly, Arnold (2011) reports, that according to students, teachers affect the FL enjoyment in a great deal. Therefore, in order to be effective, teachers should fuel their learners’ enthusiasm and enjoyment (Dewaele, Witney, Saito, and Dewaele, 2018). So in practice, teachers should strive for their learners to have an emotional experience during the presentation of new vocabulary. Whatever will follow after their emotional experience (even exercises from the textbook, which can be often boring for students) will not be so painful anymore.

As new words are being coined every day, and some of the old ones are assuming new meanings, vocabulary learning never stops. Therefore, Dewaele, Witney, Saito, and Dewaele, (2018) emphasize that FL teachers must arouse interest and excitement in personal development of their students in this area.

Conclusion

To sum this up, when it comes to FL vocabulary remembering, it is not just about keeping and retrieving the vocabulary items from our brain. FL vocabulary remembering is also about *how* we put the items into storage.

As it was discussed, the mentioned strategies and memory aids help FL learners to increase their attention, add meaningfulness, organize vocabulary items in memorable way, associate them with already familiar items or contexts, create mental images, and trigger emotional response. Actually, these are seven factors, which greatly influence retention (Oaks, 1995).

This leads us to the conclusion, that when teaching or/and learning an FL language, the “3 *reals*” principle should be applied: Regarding FL vocabulary acquisition, students should be learning about *real* life, using *real* language in *real* contexts. As every language is like a living organism – constantly growing and changing, it might happen that FL textbooks do not always contain all three of them. That is why it is essential to add the missing “*real*” to our classes – in order to make them meaningful, enjoyable and engaging. Consequently, the cognitive processes of FL learners will be supported by emotional experiences and vice versa. In addition, this can have a long-lasting effect on learners, i.e. on their approach to the foreign language itself, too. Furthermore, by experiencing positive emotional experiences in classes, it is possible to build a positive relationship towards the learning process as such, as well as towards a particular subject, which is in this case EFL.

Acknowledgments

The research was funded by the grant KEGA 006UKF-4/2017 of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.

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