



VOCABULARY LEARNING IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN THE FIRST CYCLE

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ABSTRACT

Learning a second language is complex and requires a lot of effort on the part of the learner and patience on the part of the teacher. Our question was as follows: do these techniques used to learn better and faster really work? It is therefore interesting to check whether college students use these strategies to learn new vocabulary related to their fields of study. We suggest that other studies, putting students in a specific learning situation, be conducted to better understand whether the use of strategies has an impact on vocabulary acquisition.

KEYWORDS: *second language, learning strategy, mobilize, communicate, reinvest*

Various definitions of intelligence have been proposed throughout the history of intelligence studies. According to Sternberg (quoted by Gregory, 1998), "looking closely, there seem to be as many definitions of intelligence as there are experts to define them". Scientists and psychologists have often defined intelligence similarly, but using different terms. However, the most general definition is the ability to perceive information, retain it as knowledge, and apply that knowledge appropriately within a contextual environment. According to Gottfredson (1997), psychometric intelligence manifests itself in generic thinking abilities such as effective learning, reasoning, problem solving and abstract thinking.

Intelligence is a useful tool in all areas of life, but particularly when tasks are new, uninstructed, or complex, or when situations are ambiguous, changing, or unpredictable. Other definitions refer to intelligence as an individual capacity combining logic, understanding, self-awareness, learning, emotional awareness, planning ability, creativity and problem solving. In the field of psychological studies on intelligence, various approaches exist, among which the psychometric approach is the most widespread.

Researchers typically use everyday problem-solving evaluations to ensure that experiences with participants can generate solutions. For example, suppose a person has to weigh the cost of a trip in a daily problem-solving task; this activity therefore requires her to demonstrate

the ability to add and subtract. If a problem were to involve the management of finances, the effective solution would be to be able to add the receipts and subtract the expenses. However, an effective solution could also be to be assisted by a person with experience in managing the cost of travel. Ultimately, tasks involving day-to-day problem-solving procedures have the potential to capture other solutions that go beyond the most common strategies for solving the problem at hand. Everyday problem-solving tasks are used by scientists to show how aging-related cognitive decline affects the specific, vital abilities that maintain an individual's autonomy beyond the abilities measured by intelligence tests and by those measuring primary mental abilities (Mienaltowski, 2011).

The school's Junior Primary English as a Second Language program¹ is a unique opportunity for young students to come into contact with the English language and culture through songs, nursery rhymes and stories from the resource directory for English-speaking children. It responds to the student's needs to take action and promotes group participation in a meaningful and welcoming context. This curriculum takes into account the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of young students.

The program focuses on the oral dimension of the language. The teacher speaks to the student exclusively in English, from the first lesson. The program promotes learning through different means: the student listens,



imitates, sings, interprets, communicates, repeats in his own words, etc. There are no expectations in terms of reading and writing.

The child learns his mother tongue by communicating with his parents, his brothers, his sisters, in everyday life; moreover, he becomes familiar with his cultural heritage through songs, rhymes and stories. Similarly, the pupil of the first cycle of primary education learns English by participating in the life of the class alongside his companions, as well as his teacher. He takes part in motivating activities related to the use of authentic texts. The program revolves around two skills, namely *mobilizing* one's understanding of texts heard and *communicating* orally in English. These skills are closely linked, each contributing to the development of the other. The competency *mobilizing* one's understanding of texts is the cornerstone of the program. The action takes place orally and is centred on the use and exploitation of authentic texts.

Published studies show that a young child's brain capacity for language acquisition is such that he or she can learn several languages at the same time. Learning other languages at a young age, between the ages of 3 and 7, stimulates the prefrontal lobe of the brain, that is to say the lobe that is solicited when learning the mother tongue. This allows the brain to create authentic phonemic sounds and establish a distinct syntactic network for each language, simultaneously. Between the ages of 8 and 10, a child's ability to learn to speak a new language fluently begins to decline and the situation continues to deteriorate gradually so that, by age 17, this ability drops to 15%.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, these studies show that it is not so much the number of years during which one uses a language that determines the degree of mastery of it but rather the age at which one begins to learn it.

The introduction to the English language and culture at a young age offered by this program provides the student with significant assets in three main areas. First of all, the student develops his ear for English through contact with authentic audio models⁴, at an optimal age, that is to say when the brain is imbued with the phonemic sounds of the language and when a syntactic network is naturally established. The student learns a range of songs and rhymes well known to English-speaking children, which opens the way to a new cultural experience and the acquisition of meaningful knowledge. The student is immersed in a stimulating

environment where he becomes familiar with the language at a pace that suits him.

The skills *mobilize* understanding of texts heard and *communicate* orally³ in English form a solid foundation for the development of skills *reinvest* understanding of texts read and heard and Interact orally in English programs in the second and third cycles of elementary school.

The lower primary curriculum will have positive impacts and long-term impacts on fluency and fluency in spoken language³.

When striving to understand, the student:

- makes connections between words, visual aids and other resources;
- uses previous knowledge;
- constructs representations of the language;
- gives meaning to messages;
- responds to messages;
- modulates his understanding.

The teacher is an invaluable resource as a role model and student-centred educator. He always speaks in English, adopts a normal flow and helps the student to adapt to this new exclusively English-speaking world.⁴

The English as a second language teacher knows the young student's learning process well. He knows how to bring together the conditions conducive to the establishment of a stimulating environment, where everyone can aspire to success.

The teacher aims for the student to have fun learning English through authentic songs, rhymes and stories. When he speaks, he uses visual cues to help the student understand. The teacher uses authentic texts, authentic audio models and meaningful visual aids. It ensures that the student can become familiar with the prosody of English, develop a global understanding and manage to communicate in English in a personal way.

The teacher regularly reflects on his/her teaching practices and on the progress made by the student, so as to provide the student with the best possible learning experience.

Throughout the cycle, the teacher guides and supports the student in his learning and evaluates the acquisition of skills. He ensures that the student is aware of what is expected of him and he gives him the opportunity to reflect on his progress. At the end of the cycle, the teacher determines the degree of skill development. Guided by questions and feedback from the teacher, students learn to regulate their learning



processes so that they can change their way of learning as needed.

Examples

• To help the student become aware of his use of the directed attention strategy, the teacher can ask questions such as the following³:

How concentrated are you?

Did you listen to the teacher carefully?

Have you looked carefully at the flash cards?

Did you try to understand?

We hope to provide a methodology that would serve learners to develop their language skills more effectively while stimulating their creativity and motivation. In an educational context, these objectives can be taken into account by meeting the needs of all learners. For these reasons, we believe that students would benefit if teachers considered teaching their classes and teaching their subjects based on the theory of multiple intelligences.

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