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Modern Techniques for Memorizing Foreign Words

The article describes a comparative experiment studying the efficiency of five popular techniques which improve people's ability to memorize foreign words. The best results were achieved using two techniques: watching English movies with subtitles and writing letters in English.

Key words: memorizing words; learning English; learning techniques; experimental study; abilities.

Introduction

Currently, speaking a foreign language is one of the most necessary skills due to the internationalization processes in the world: in science and researching, music, cinema, etc. [2, p. 7; 3, p. 4]. Thus, people want to learn languages, but they face one problem: how to memorize foreign words? Most people who failed to master a language complain of their inability to memorize a necessary amount of vocabulary [1, p.12]. In the Internet there are a plenty of techniques for memorizing foreign words [5, p. 1]. However, which one to choose? How to find out, which one is better or more suitable for us? Some of them look doubtful. The problem is to choose an efficient technique which will not waste our time. So, in this article we try to answer these questions. Nothing is better than a practical confirmation. We conducted an experiment to identify the impact of the most popular methods on the ability to memorize words.

Materials and methods

In our study we used the experimental method. The experiment consisted of several steps. Firstly, we collected a series of techniques for learning a foreign language (English). They were chosen among the most popular methods suggested in the Internet and considered efficient:

Watching films in English
 Correspondence in English
 Listening to English speech in the sleeping period
 Using the mobile app for learning English
 Translating sentences with the dictionary

The aim of the experiment was to find out to what extent these methods can increase the people's ability to memorize words.

Then the team of participants was formed. In total, 18 people of various ages (from 15 to 55 years old) were involved in the experiment. The approximate level of English in all the tested people was «beginner» (A1) or «starter» (A0). This level was considered the best for our experiment, because at this stage of learning people have the biggest problem with new words memorizing.

Next, the participants did the initial test (Fig.1), where they had to memorize 20 words during 10 min.

| Слово | Транскрипция | Перевод |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. An elated | [ɪ'leɪtɪd] | В приподнятом настроении, радостный |
| 2. A surgeon | ['sɜ:dʒən] | Хирург |
| 3. To maintain | [meɪn'teɪn] | Поддерживать |
| 4. Famine | ['fæmɪn] | Голод |
| 5. Vain | [veɪn] | Тщеславный |
| 6. Courage | ['kʌrɪdʒ] | Храбрость |
| 7. Premises | ['premɪsəz] | Помещение |
| 8. To deteriorate | [dɪ'tɪəriəˌreɪt] | Ухудшать, разрушать |
| 9. Childhood | ['tʃɪldˌhʊd] | Детство |
| 10. To abolish | [ə'bɒlɪʃ] | Отменять |
| 11. A bank | [bæŋk] | Берег реки |
| 12. A lawn | [lɔ:n] | Газон, лужайка |
| 13. Nevertheless | [ˌnevərðə'les] | Тем не менее |
| 14. Consequently | ['kɒnsəkwentli] | Следовательно |
| 15. An addiction | [ə'dɪkʃn] | Зависимость, склонность |
| 16. Confidence | ['kɒnfɪdəns] | Уверенность |
| 17. A district | ['dɪstrɪkt] | Район, округ |
| 18. To investigate | [m'vestɪgeɪt] | Исследовать, изучать |
| 19. To boast | [bəʊst] | Хвастаться |
| 20. An arrogant | ['ærəgənt] | Высокомерный, заносчивый |

Fig.1. The initial word-list

The results were recorded. Then, at the main step of the experiment, they used the suggested techniques during 1 month: starting from September, 2 and finishing on October, 2.

The first group «Films» consisted of 3 people: one sixty-year-old men and two girls of 18. All of them watched the serial «Monsters at work» (1 season of ten 30-minute episodes). The speech and subtitles were only in English. The participants watched about 2-3 episodes a week and after each episode they retold the plot shortly. 1 participant retold in English, the other two – in Russian.

The second group «Correspondence» included 4 people: one 48-year-old woman, one 15-year-old girl and 2 girls of 18. Their task was to write 3 letters a week. They were divided into pairs to write to each other under 3 obligatory conditions: Writing the correspondence only manually (not to copy-paste the text). The volume of letters – 120-200 words. The letters should be sent to What`s App chat for control.

| Слово | Транскрипция | Перевод |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| 1) estate | [is'teit] | поместье, имущество, сословие |
| 2) saucepan | ['sɔ:spən] | кастрюля |
| 3) cabbage | ['kæbidʒ] | капуста |
| 4) truck | [trʌk] | грузовик |
| 5) butcher | ['bʊtʃə] | мясник |
| 6) indifference | [in'difrəns] | безразличие |
| 7) ceiling | ['si:liŋ] | потолок |
| 8) clay | [klei] | глина, земля |
| 9) reed | [ri:d] | тростник, камыш (не cane) |
| 10) whale | [weil] | кит |
| 11) aim | [eim] | целиться, цель |
| 12) sweat | [swet] | пот, потеть |
| 13) measure | ['meʒə] | мера |
| 14) deceptive | [di'septiv] | обманчивый |
| 15) essential | [i'senʃ(ə)l] | обязательный, существенный, важный |
| 16) offence | [ə'fens] | обида |
| 17) abide | [ə'baid] | ждать, терпеть |
| 18) concede | [kən'si:d] | уступать, допускать |
| 19) firmly | [fə:mli] | твёрдо, решительно |
| 20) eventually | [i'ventʃəli] | в конечном счете, в конце концов |

Fig.2. The final word-list

Listening to English speech in the sleeping period was used by 4 people of 19, 24, 47 and 53 years old. Before going to bed, the participants should fresh their rooms (open the window and clean) and turn on different English records. Namely, it was music in English or audio-books of fairy tales: H.C.

Andersen - The Ugly Duckling, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Joanne Swan – Little Red Riding Hood and others. 3 participants tested the mobile application «Duolingo» – a special program for learning English. The participants were of different age too: 58, 18 and 19 years old. They memorized words in the game. For instance, guessing the cards with English words or try to write words properly.

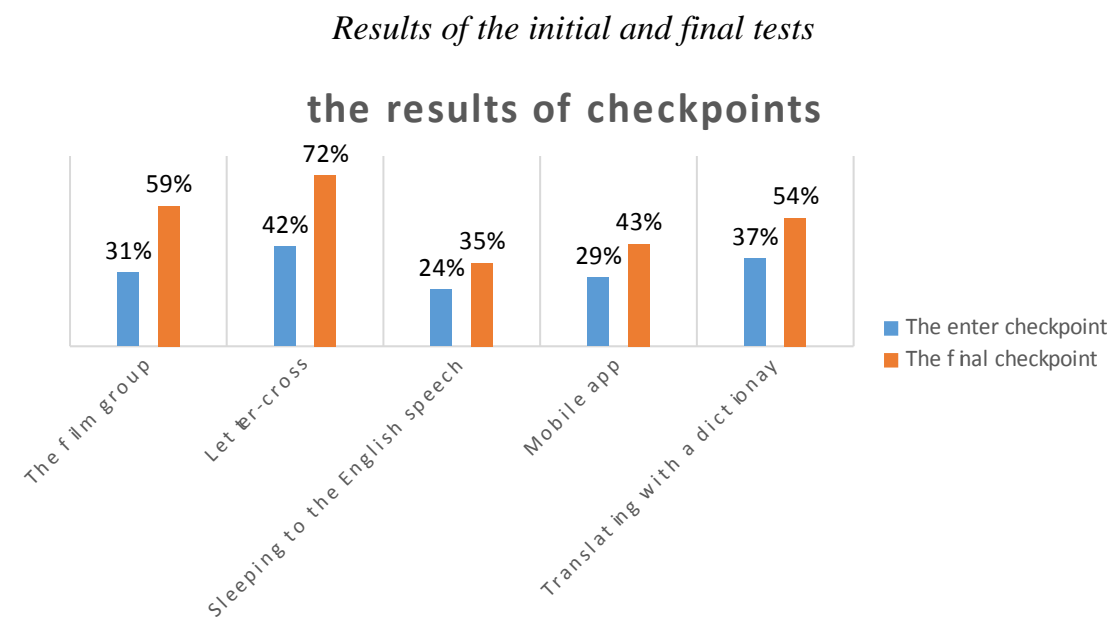
Translating sentences with a dictionary was the last method. A small dictionary of A2 vocabulary was used. There were 4 participants: 78, 57, 52 and 19 years old. They read words and their translations 3 times a day. Starting from the second week, they had to read and additionally made 20 sentences a week.

After a month of the experiment the participants took the final test. They were given another list of 20 English B1-B2 words (Fig.2). They had 10 minutes to remember them. Then, they tried to recall the translation of the words. The results were recorded.

Results and discussion

The initial test showed that the middle level of memorizing foreign words was about 30% (from 24 to 37%). This percentage of correct answers showed a poor ability to memorize words. The final test showed a significant improvement of the results. The comparison of two tests is shown in Table 1.

Table 1



As we can see from the bar chart showing the change in memorizing foreign words, the results improved. The biggest increase was observed in the group watching films (their result increased by 28%) and «correspondence»

(the result improved by 30%). Thus, we can consider these methods really useful in improving the ability to memorize words. Additionally, the group working with dictionaries also showed good results: an increase by 27% was recorded. We can conclude that this old traditional method should never be discarded. The smallest result was recorded in the group using the «sleeping» method, so we can doubt its value in studying languages. Comparing these data, we can suggest that the best results are achieved in techniques which require more personal efforts and an active participation in the learning process, while the «passive method» of sleeping gave the smallest result.

Additionally, we collected the feedback from the participants to know if they feel the efficiency of the experiment themselves. It was also made to highlight the importance of participation: as we learnt from the experiment, the best results are achieved when we are aware of our personal participation and efforts.

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