

THE ROLE CURRICULUM AND COGNITIVE EMOTIONAL PROCESSES PLAY IN VOCABULARY ACQUISITION FOR STUDENTS IN KINDERGARTEN THROUGH SIXTH GRADES

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INTRODUCTION: A newborn baby begins to communicate at the moment of birth. Using sounds and physical indications to express its basic needs its survival is ensured as each exigency is met accordingly. As a child grows, and prepares to enter kindergarten, the key question for parents and educators alike becomes, "How to transform the expression of existential necessities into verbal observational and conversational skills?" This thesis aims to elucidate general educational methods that can promote the acquisition and use of vocabulary from the beginning of a student's education starting at kindergarten, through its conclusion of primary school, in the sixth grade.

Furthermore, multiple studies indicate that pedagogical strategies alone cannot guarantee successful outcomes in the long-term retention of vocabulary and successful use of language in school aged children. Both the cognitive processes that take place at each grade level, and the emotional development of a student as it progresses into the upper primary grades, play a significant role in a child's ability to learn, expand and remember vocabulary from one grade to the next.

CURRICULUM AND LEARNING STRATEGIES: Referring back to the newborn child, its first contact with other humans is naturally with its "mother" and "father." Although at the time of birth the baby does not know the words "mother" and "father", it does know that it sees these two figures on a constant basis, and thus, it associates these figures with the continuous fulfilment of its needs. Therefore, in order to solidify this type of long-term recall in an academic setting, visual aids such as songs, pictures, and stories must be implemented so that the student can infer the meaning from the information that is given (Torres, De Leon, 2013, p. 25). Furthermore, in order to develop language - all 5 senses must be engaged and associated with both words and feelings. Parents should also read books to their children as often as they can (Fillinger, 2011, p. 2). According to Terhi Vesaniemi, educators can use certain memorization strategies so that students can move vocabulary from their working - or short-term- memory to their long-term memory. These

methods include, comparing new words with your language, pictures and pronunciation exercises, repeating and using the words to make sentences. Furthermore, Versaniemi's theory stipulates that every textbook should include these types of exercises to teach vocabulary (Versaniemi, 2019, p.6). A study done in Korea shows that Korean students prefer using English language digital media to consolidate vocabulary (Laffey, 2020, p.96). The most common forms of media include online dictionaries, educational apps, English language films and television series. In addition, Korean students, in particular, found that verbal repetition, (was the) most helpful method to learn vocabulary (Laffey, 2020, p. 94).

COGNITIVE AND PSYCHOEMONTIONAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT VOCABULARY AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION:

Taking into account that all the above-cited methods, exercises and resources have been proven to be successful by numerous international studies and surveys, how is it possible, then, that educators in various scholastic settings report that students still continue to experience difficulties both in vocabulary retention as well as in the correct usage of new vocabulary at more advanced levels? First of all, according to Krashen (1982,1985, como se citó en Verdú y Coyle, 2002, p.13), a student can only learn vocabulary, and consequently, retain and use it, if that student has a low affective filter. (An "affective filter" is, "a theoretical construct in second language acquisition that attempts to explain the emotional variables associated with the success or failure of acquiring a second language. (www.collaborativeclassroom.org)." In other words, the level of motivation and stimulation of the student itself is a determining factor in its ability to acquire a second language (Kostov, 2024, p.13). In addition to the role that motivation plays in learning second language content, such as vocabulary, Jorge Ríos asserts that a student may be unsuccessful in making progress in vocabulary acquisition and use due to psychological factors such as a lack of confidence in him/herself, anxiety when dealing with a second language or the impulse to act defensively at the prompting of a teacher to give an answer (Ríos, 2021, p. 47). Lambert sustains that another factor to the successful acquisition of a second language, in general, is "instrumental integration". This concept means the attitude a student has towards its classroom and/or towards its teacher is also important to understand. This is because a positive attitude toward the classroom and teachers may be an expression of self-confidence or motivation for integration (into a communication cantered environment), and for this reason may also be related to learning a second language (Lambert, 1974, p. 98; Kim, 2024, p.39). Finally, a study conducted at a public middle/high school in Germany concluded that children stop learning when they feel as if their abilities are not yet ready to meet the expectations. These abilities are not only academic, but social in nature, as well. As learning a language involves a large number of

communicative activities, a student may not be psychologically prepared to speak with other students who are less well known. Likewise, students in a class setting who are seen as intellectually superior may make a student who has shown inadequate language acquisition capabilities lose confidence. Therefore, the resulting feeling is one of being unprepared for a more advanced stage of language learning. (Greene, 2019, p.435).

CONCLUSION:

Regardless of the wealth of learning materials and strategies an educator may have at hand to facilitate the continuous progress of vocabulary acquisition in a classroom (in a native or foreign language), if the cognitive and psycho-emotional capacities a student are not taken into account, then these measures will fall short, and successful vocabulary acquisition will backslide accordingly with each academic level to the end of primary school. Precisely because our first exposure to the world at birth is both via visual and auditory stimulation, it is only logical that kindergarten aged schoolchildren acquire vocabulary through the use of vivid images, interactive videos and songs that present vocabulary through the reiteration of rhythm and kinaesthetic activities. During the first years of school education, students have a low emotional affective level and approach school with excitement and the desire to communicate their emotions to the adults and other children with whom they come into contact. However, as children approach the upper primary levels, and English lessons, instead of utilizing endless images, songs and movements, focus more on pages of text unaccompanied by pictures, as well as on words formed by multiple syllables, their vocabulary acquisition and overall learning process becomes more challenging. Educators might get frustrated with the results of their students as they proceed through primary school without taking into account the cognitive preparedness of the student for the progressively more challenging material. In addition, as students grow, so changes their psycho-emotional state. Thus, motivation levels, as well as their willingness to participate in a group setting and react positively to a teacher may show drastic shifts from previous years. Educators, therefore, must consider the acquisition of vocabulary and a language in general, from a multi-faceted perspective. The effective use of methods and learning materials, will not bring positive results if the educator is unable to respond to the cognitive and psycho-emotional challenges that each grade level presents.

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