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THE SELECTIVITY OF HUMAN MEMORY AND ITS IMPACT ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

In an increasingly globalized world, proficiency in foreign languages is essential for academic, professional, and social integration. However, the effectiveness of language acquisition largely depends on underlying cognitive processes, among which memory plays a central role. Contemporary research conceptualizes memory as an active, selective system that encodes, stores, and retrieves information.

One of the defining characteristics of memory is its selectivity. Individuals do not retain all incoming information equally; instead, memory prioritizes stimuli based on relevance, emotional significance, and prior experience. This selectivity has important implications for foreign language learning, both for professional and daily needs, where learners are exposed to vast amounts of new linguistic input.

The purpose of this work is to examine how the selective nature of human memory influences foreign language acquisition and to identify pedagogical strategies that can enhance learning outcomes by aligning with cognitive principles.

Memory Selectivity as a Cognitive Mechanism. Memory selectivity arises from the limited capacity of working memory, which constrains the amount of information that can be processed simultaneously (Baddeley, 2014). As a result, cognitive systems prioritize information that is novel, meaningful, or connected to existing knowledge structures.

In language learning, this leads to selective retention of vocabulary and grammatical patterns, often resulting in partial or fragmented knowledge. Learners may recall frequently encountered expressions while failing to retain less salient items.

Relevance and Motivation in Learning. The perceived relevance of information significantly enhances retention. Linguistic material that is directly applicable to real-

life communication is more likely to be encoded and retrieved (Nation, 2013). Consequently, communicative language teaching approaches are particularly effective.

Motivation further strengthens this process. Intrinsically motivated learners engage more deeply with input, facilitating stronger memory traces and improved long-term retention.

Emotional Influences on Memory. Emotional states play a crucial role in memory performance. Positive emotions enhance attention and encoding, whereas anxiety and stress may inhibit learning processes. The affective filter hypothesis suggests that heightened anxiety reduces the efficiency of language acquisition (Krashen, 1982).

Thus, a supportive and low-anxiety learning environment is essential for maximizing cognitive engagement.

Contextual Learning and Association. Contextualized input promotes deeper learning by creating associative networks that facilitate retrieval (Ellis, 2008). Authentic materials, such as dialogues and multimedia resources, provide meaningful contexts that enhance memory integration.

Associative learning also enables learners to transfer knowledge across communicative situations, strengthening overall language competence.

Repetition and Active Engagement. Repetition remains a fundamental mechanism for memory consolidation. Spaced repetition, in particular, has been shown to optimize long-term retention by distributing practice over time.

Active engagement—through speaking and writing—further reinforces memory by requiring deeper cognitive processing, whereas passive exposure often leads to superficial learning.

Individual Differences in Memory and Learning. Learners differ in cognitive styles, prior knowledge, and learning strategies, all of which influence memory selectivity. Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic preferences affect how information is processed and retained.

Therefore, effective instruction should incorporate diverse teaching methods to accommodate these differences and enhance learning outcomes.

In conclusion, the selectivity of human memory is a fundamental cognitive characteristic that significantly shapes foreign language learning. It determines which elements of linguistic input are retained and how effectively they are integrated into long-term memory.

Understanding this phenomenon enables educators to design more effective instructional strategies, including meaningful context, emotional engagement, spaced repetition, and learner-centered approaches. Additionally, recognizing individual differences allows for more personalized and adaptive teaching practices.

Future research should focus on developing evidence-based methodologies that align with cognitive principles and leverage the selective nature of memory to improve language acquisition outcomes.

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DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR LEARNING PROFESSIONAL ENGLISH

The rapid digitalisation of education has significantly transformed approaches to foreign language learning, particularly in Professional English (Galloway & Ruegg, 2020). In the context of globalisation and increasing international cooperation, the demand for effective English language skills has grown considerably. As a result, digital