WAYS TO LEARN NEW WORDS AS A LANGUAGE LEARNER

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Annotation: Ten strategies to help language learners remember and use new words in speech include linking words with meaningful contexts, learning in chunks and scripts, and using interactive videos, games and podcasts. Memorise words in context, use interactive captions, read short texts, use your inner voice, and visualise the meaning of words to help recall the meaning.

Key words: language learner, flashcards, Learn English website, Use spaced repetition, Dive deeper into etymology.

Аннотация: Десять стратегий, помогающих изучающим язык запоминать и использовать новые слова в речи, включают привязку слов к значимому контексту, обучение по частям и сценариям, а также использование интерактивных видео, игр и подкастов. Запоминайте слова в контексте, используйте интерактивные подписи, читайте короткие тексты, используйте свой внутренний голос и визуализируйте значение слов, чтобы помочь вспомнить смысл.

Ключевые слова: изучающий язык, карточки, веб-сайт для изучения английского языка, используйте интервальное повторение, углубляйтесь в этимологию.

As a language learner, you work hard to expand your vocabulary. You plough through new words every day, make long lists of words and practise with flashcards. However, when it comes to speaking, the new words seem to fall out of your head, so you resort to your old friends – words you already know and have used many times – again and again.

Remembering and using new words in speech is often a challenge for language learners. Here are ten strategies to help you make words stick in your mind and use them in conversation.

No random words

We remember what is relevant to us. Making lists or index cards with random words is not usually an effective way to remember and use these words later. Word lists and index cards are great for revisiting vocabulary you have already learned, but to make a new word stick in your mind, try linking it with something meaningful to you. You will be more likely to remember a new word if it is used in a context you find interesting or are passionate about. For example, if you are a football fan, there are more chances you will remember the word 'unstoppable' in a sentence, such as 'Messi is unstoppable', rather than just as a single word or in a generic sentence, e.g. 'Some people are unstoppable'.

Tip: The British Council **LearnEnglish website** features tons of interactive videos, games and podcasts. No matter what topic interests you, you will always find something there. There are also discussion boards under activities, so you can share your ideas with other learners.

Learn in chunks and scripts

We retain words better when we learn them in small 'chunks' (i.e. small phrases that combine several words) and 'scripts' (i.e. typical dialogues). For example, instead of memorising the phrasal verb 'to come up with', memorise it as part of the phrase 'to come up with an idea'. This way, you make sure that you know how to actually use this verb in at least one sentence. Similarly, instead of memorising 33 ways of saying 'hello', learn it in a script, such as: 'Hello, how are you? – I'm fine, thank you'.

Tip: If you are into learning with video, TV and films, try **FluentU**. There are interactive captions, so if you tap on any word, you will see an image, definition and useful examples. You can also find other interesting resources featuring words in context. For example, this **'SpeakSmart' collection on Instagram** has different scenes from popular television series giving examples of particular words and phrases in use. If you love reading, try reading short texts, such as cartoon strips. There are many comics available online, including those for language learners, like **Grammarman**, which you can also listen to while you read.

Use your inner voice

Learning is essentially an internal process. To learn a word, you need to get into the world of your inner voice. Try the following: listen to a word/phrase once, now listen to it inside your head, then say it inside your head, then say it aloud. Record yourself saying it and listen to the recording. Does it sound the way you heard it with your inner ear?

Tip: On **Forvo**, you can listen to native and non-native speakers from different parts of the world pronouncing different words and phrases. Just type in the word, choose the speaker and practise.

Visualise what the word or phrase looks like

Drawing what the word means, either on paper or in your imagination, will help you recall the meaning of the word whenever you hear it. This method works well with idioms, such as 'to keep one's mouth shut' (informal), meaning, 'to not talk about something'.

Tip: In addition to the image of the word, look at word associations in the visual dictionary and thesaurus **Visuwords**.

Create mnemonics

Try to create a funny phrase or story that will strengthen the connection between the word and its meaning (known as a mnemonic). I find this technique especially effective when I need to recall words that are hard to spell.

Here are a few mnemonics created by my students:

'career' – car and beer

'island' – is land

'to lose' – uh-oh, I've lost an 'o'

Tip: There are a lot of mnemonics available online, such as the 'mems' created by users in **Memrise**, but you will have a better chance of remembering the word if you invent your own.

Use spaced repetition

Repetition fixes new words in your memory. However, repeating them a hundred times over the course of one day will not be as effective as repeating them a few times over a period of several days or weeks (i.e., spaced repetition).

Use the new word immediately. Then try to recall it in an hour. Review it shortly before you go to bed. Use it again one day later. Finally, review it in a couple of days after that.

Tip: In addition to 'spaced repetition' platforms and online software (e.g., **Anki**, where you can practise with full sentences), you can schedule revision on your own. Make index cards with your words (use it in a sentence on one side and put the definition/translation/image on the other), then set up a schedule for revising them. Flick through the cards and sort them into three categories: 'green' – words to revisit less frequently in the future, 'yellow' – words to repeat from time to time, and 'red' – words for 'frequent visits'.

Dive deeper into etymology

Before you look up the word in the dictionary, try to guess what it means. Look at its root, suffixes and prefixes. If you know a few languages, you will start recognising new words that share roots. Researching the origin of new words may help you retain new words better.

For example, did you know that the word 'tea' comes from Chinese 't'e' (Amoy dialect), which corresponds to Mandarin 'ch'a'? The English word 'tea' (just as in French, Spanish or German) derives from the Amoy form (through the Dutch East India Company that introduced the leaves to Europe). Meanwhile, Russian chai (just as in Serbian, Persian, Greek, Arabic and Turkish) all came overland from the Mandarin form. Now, whenever you hear 'tea' or 'chai', you will see a lovely cup of steaming tea and know how it got to the country.

Writing down a new word (or, ideally, a sentence using the new word) helps fix both its meaning and spelling in your memory. Make the sentences true about you or someone you know.

Tip: Instead of keeping these sentences to yourself, you can use them in writing games such as the Folding Story. This is an online version of the popular writing game where each player writes one line of a story and passes it on to another player to add to it. In the online version, each player gets just three minutes to write a line and scores points by the number of likes they receive for their lines.

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