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## **READING AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT**

### ***COMPARING AND CONTRASTING THE EFFECT OF VARIOUS TECHNIQUES ON VOCABULARY MEMORISATION IN ADULT AND ADOLESCENT CLASSES***

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*Prohlášení o původnosti práce*

Prohlašuji, že jsem rigorózní práci vypracovala samostatně a že jsem uvedla veškerou použitou literaturu.

I hereby confirm that I wrote this rigorose thesis on my own and that I listed all the used materials in the bibliography.

*Prague, November 2008*

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I would like to thank my supervisor PaedDr. Marie Hofmannová for her expert advice and constant support throughout the preparation of my thesis.

The aim of this thesis is to present the results of research summarizing relevant literature and other resources dealing with the problem of vocabulary presentation, memorization and practice in an English language classroom using a reading text, taking into account the role of age in this process. The outcome of this research is reflected through the classroom-based research, i.e. the execution of practical experimental lessons which are aimed at two different age groups and compare the rate of success of vocabulary memorization using identical classroom procedure for both target groups. The results are then evaluated and justified in the final summary.

Cílem této práce je shrnutí výsledků studia literatury a jiných relevantních zdrojů, které se zabývají problémem prezentace, zapamatování a procvičování slovní zásoby za použití textu jako výchozího bodu, přičemž je zdůrazněna role věku v tomto procesu. Výsledky tohoto průzkumu se odrázejí v provedení praktických učebních hodin zaměřených na dvě rozdílné věkové skupiny a srovnávají míru úspěšnosti zapamatování dané slovní zásoby za použití identického postupu pro obě cílové skupiny. Výsledky jsou posléze zhodnoceny a zdůvodněny v závěrečném shrnutí.

*Key words:*

Vocabulary – reading – memorization – age – context – input – acquisition – learning – inferring - schemata

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In my thesis I deal with the problem of vocabulary memorization and learning taking into account two different age groups. I have been interested in this problem for most of my teaching career. Although a great deal of various presentation techniques is suggested by different course book authors, from my point of view as a teacher there have always been aspects that I find irrelevant and which have proved to be ineffective. This observation is based on both my students' results of vocabulary development and their comments on how effective and useful they find the particular techniques and approaches.

I have also noticed the difference between the way vocabulary is learned by young (adolescent) and adult learners. Therefore in this thesis I'll try to analyze various aspects of vocabulary acquisition taking into consideration the age difference.

This thesis is an extension of my diploma thesis dealing with vocabulary acquisition, learning and teaching in general. I made a selection and critical review of various literature and internet resources which refer to the contents of the experiments described in Part 3 with emphasis on relevant SLA theories and two cognitive models – developmental and information processing

Part 1 is a theoretical overview of the aspects of vocabulary teaching and learning that I find relevant to the topic of my thesis. However, many of the available theories dealing with the theme are rather antagonistic; therefore I concentrate on the ones that can be applied to the language classroom situations.

In Chapter 1 I outline the overlap of linguistics and other fields of science and the tendencies in vocabulary teaching in the past.

Chapter 2 is a brief summary of the role of age in SLA. Because this is a rather extensive area, I have selected some relevant general issues necessary to get the whole picture of the problem and focused mainly on the two age groups in question.

Chapter 3 deals with the aspects of the knowledge of lexis that are essential for the L2 speakers to be able to use the word correctly and efficiently. Being aware of the possible linguistic problems that the students might encounter in the process of vocabulary study enables the teacher to design activities that would anticipate and deal with the most frequent students' problems.

As I strongly believe in the essential role of meaningful context for vocabulary presentation and memorization, in Chapter 4 I outline some basic psycholinguistic processes which support this idea. These are above all the principles of Krashen's acquisition theory and organization of our mental lexicon based on the network of associations which support my assumption that one of the most effective ways of presenting and memorizing vocabulary is in the context of a reading text.

Therefore in the following Chapter 5 I concentrate on reading skills with particular emphasis on vocabulary development. I outline various features of reading texts with regards to lexis, which should be reflected in the classroom practice.

Part 2 is focused on practical classroom implications of the theories mentioned above and serves as a step to better understanding of the overlap between theory and practice.

After a discussion of some relevant classroom procedures in theory, I will present the results of my practical classroom-based research in Part 3, which is based on identical lessons focused on vocabulary presentation and practice delivered to two different groups of adult and teenage learners.

The results are then compared and their analysis presented in the Summary reflects the theories dealt with in Part 1.

## PART ONE: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 1. Overview

#### 1.1. Vocabulary Development – Multiple Perspectives

The issue of vocabulary and language development can be viewed from perspectives of various scientific disciplines, even those whose main subject of interest is not language itself.

Linguistics, which can be defined as a discipline dealing with the language description, covers a wide range of topics and its boundaries are difficult to define. Together with the obvious categories such as phonology and phonetics, syntax and morphology, pragmatics, semantics etc., we should also take into consideration some of the following areas which generated from the mutual interference between linguistics and other social sciences such as psychology, sociology, medicine, philosophy etc.

- Psycholinguistics is often defined as the study of language and the mind, which explores what goes on in human mind as an individual acquires, comprehends, produces and stores language. It deals with e.g. organization of the mental lexicon of an individual and organization of the mental semantic network. As I assume that understanding the processes occurring in the learners mind while dealing with vocabulary plays a crucial role for a teacher to be able to provide the students with meaningful presentation and practice tasks and activities, in this thesis I dedicate a great deal to this problem in the theoretical part.

Another aspect of psychological research is the Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. The fact that there are seven different types of human intelligence (linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal) should be reflected in the variety of procedures and techniques in the language classroom environment so that the personality of a student was fully respected and developed according to its needs and presuppositions. (Folprechtová in Nečasová, Podhajská 2006, p.38)

- Medicine and the study of human brain in particular tries to describe in which of its parts the cognitive processes and operations take place and how the neurons function. With the help of modern diagnostic methods we get a picture of the changes that occur in the brain during the language performance. The results of research into e.g. brain lateralization can be applied in some classroom techniques and procedures (TPR, using music, arts and crafts etc.)
- Molecular biology and genetics attempt to answer the question to what extent the language abilities are hereditary. It has been discovered that a mutation of the FOXP2 gene placed on the seventh chromosome is responsible for significant speech disorders connected with frequent production of grammar mistakes. However, the scientists suppose that in future a whole gene matrix influencing the language abilities will be discovered which will lead to clarification of the nature of various language disorders etc. (Syka 2007, p.46)

## **1. 2. The Historical Perspective of Vocabulary Learning and Teaching**

Although the status of vocabulary in language teaching has changed several times according to which particular method has gained popularity, preference has been, and still is, given to grammar. Many English teachers like to stress grammar over vocabulary because grammar is a finite system, whereas vocabulary is not.

Another reason for general superior attention paid to learning grammatical structures over lexis is the legacy of previous language-teaching methods. The fact that some of them were used in Czech schools exclusively for a relatively long period of time still affects not only students' learning habits and strategies but also some students' expectations regarding efficiency of English teaching methods, especially in the case of adult learners.

### **1.2.1. The Grammar Translation Method**

Although the role of vocabulary was emphasized (the students are asked to do exercises dealing with synonyms, antonyms, defining a set of words based on their understanding a reading passage etc.), the only way of working out the meaning of the unknown lexical items was asking the teacher who then supplied relevant translation. The reading passages in the students' textbooks were accompanied with relatively long lists of words with their translations which were supposed to be memorized by the learners. (Larsen-Freeman 1986, p. 12)

What I find rather positive is the fact that vocabulary was presented in a context of a reading passage. However, the way vocabulary was presented causes the students' over reliance on the teacher and doesn't provide the students with techniques and strategies for dealing with new lexis and thus does not contribute to development of the learner's autonomy while dealing with a reading text. In other words, vocabulary recognition was viewed as product rather than process.

The Grammar-Translation Method prevailed in Czech language classrooms until early 1990s mainly due to the lack of access to the latest ELT<sup>1</sup> materials and the inferior position of EFL<sup>2</sup> teaching in general. Despite some positive aspects of this method over reliance of some adult students on certain features of this method can prove quite counterproductive. For example, many students still require long vocabulary lists with the translations or insist on literal translation of reading texts whose primary function is to provide the students with reading comprehension practice. If the teacher refuses to fulfill such students' requirements, they feel cheated. Therefore it takes a great deal of effort on the part of the teacher to clarify the basic principles of the methods that the learners are not familiar with, to demonstrate their effectiveness and to train the students accordingly.

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<sup>1</sup> English Language Teaching

<sup>2</sup> English as a Foreign Language

### **1.2.2. The Direct Method**

The Direct Method emphasized one very basic rule which distinguished it from the Grammar Translation Method: no translation was allowed. As translation was not desirable, the meaning of new vocabulary was presented using demonstration, pictures or objects in the immediate classroom context. Abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas. The basic assumption was that vocabulary is acquired more naturally if students use it in full sentences, rather than memorizing word lists. Vocabulary was generally emphasized over grammar.

(Larsen-Freeman 1986, p. 25)

In comparison with the previously mentioned Grammar-Translation Method there was a significant move towards more meaningful approach to vocabulary presentation and practice as well as taking into account various students' learning styles. However, it is apparent that complete denial of using the students' native tongue required a great deal of proficiency on the part of the teacher who often had to go to great lengths to avoid using the mother tongue, when sometimes a simple brief explanation in the students' L1 would have been a more efficient route to comprehension.

### **1.2.3. The Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching**

The basic approach to this methodology developed by a group of British applied linguists criticizing the Direct Method mainly for a lack of structure, involved systematic principles of *selection* (the procedures by which lexical content was chosen), *gradation* (principles by which the organization and sequencing of content were determined) and *presentation* (techniques used for presentation and practice of items in the course) (Richards and Rodgers 1986, p. 33)

The role of vocabulary was emphasized for two basic reasons. Firstly, there was an apparent influence of several large-scale investigations of foreign language vocabulary which was undertaken in the 1920's and 1930's which caused a general consensus among language teaching specialists that vocabulary was one of the most important aspects of foreign language learning. A second influence was the increased emphasis on the reading skills as the learning goal. Vocabulary was seen as an essential component of reading proficiency. (Richards and Rodgers 1986, p. 32)

#### **1.2.4. The Audio-Lingual Method**

The primary goal of both the Audio-Lingual and the Direct Method, which is communication in the target language, remained the same. However, the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) reflects some new ideas about language learning emanating from the disciplines of descriptive linguistics and behavioral psychology. (Larsen-Freeman 1986, p. 31)

As the ALM emphasizes repetitive drills of the whole structures, vocabulary, although it is learned in context, is strictly limited. (Brown in Sheehan 2004, p. 3)

#### **1.2.5. The Silent Way**

Although the Audio-Lingual Method proved rather successful as a great deal of learners actually managed to learn a language through it, the principles it is based upon were seriously challenged in the early 1960s. Cognitive psychologists and transformational-generative linguists argued that language learning does not take place through habit formation. They based their assumptions on the fact that people are able to form utterances they have never heard before; they therefore cannot learn a language by simple repetition. These psychologists and linguists argued that speakers form rules which allow them to understand and create new utterances. Accordingly, language acquisition must be a cognitive process enabling the learners to discover the rules of the language. Students are also seen to be much more actively responsible for their own learning. Although the Silent Way Method did not emerge directly from this approach, it shares some basic principles with it. (Larsen-Freeman 1986, p. 51)

As the main focus is placed mainly on structures, vocabulary is somewhat restricted, at least at first. Students work with word charts containing about 500 functional words. Other vocabulary work is facilitated with Silent Way wall pictures and books. Novelty of this method is using Cuisenaire Rods for demonstrating meaning of various words and structures. (Larsen-Freeman 1986, p. 67)

### **1.2.6. Suggestopedia**

The originator of this method Georgi Lozanov believes that the reason for our language inefficiency is that we set up psychological barriers to learning, we feel that we will be unable to perform, that we will be limited in our ability to learn, that we will fail. The result is that we do not use the full mental powers we have, in fact we may be using only five to ten per cent of our mental capacity. (Larsen-Freeman 1986, p. 72)

In order to overcome the barriers, this method introduces sessions in which relaxation techniques play an important part. Learners sit comfortably in chairs with soft music playing in the background while the words are read aloud and the students are supposed to memorize them. (McCarthy 1990, p. 116)

The emphasis on memorization of vocabulary pairs (a target language item and its native language translation) suggests a view of language in which lexis is central and in which lexical translation rather than contextualization is stressed. (Richards and Rodgers 1986, p.144)

### **1.2.7. The Total Physical Response (TPR)**

This method is an example of a new general approach to foreign language instruction which has been named 'the comprehension approach' as it emphasizes listening comprehension. Unlike the methods previously mentioned, in which the learner is asked to speak from the very first day, TPR begins with the listening skills. This procedure is based on the observation that a child while acquiring the mother tongue listens first and responds verbally only when it is ready. (Larsen-Freeman 1986, p. 109)

This method is also based around the 'trace theory' of memory in psychology which claims that the more often or more intensively a memory connection is traced, the stronger the memory association will be and the more likely it will be recalled. The process can be done either verbally or/and in association with motor activity. The probability of successful recall is increased by combining tracing activities, such as verbal rehearsal accompanied by motor activity. (Richards and Rodgers 1986, p. 87)

New vocabulary is demonstrated using pictures and other types of visuals, and then it is imbedded within imperatives. The target language should be presented in chunks, not just word by word. (Larsen-Freeman 1986, p. 118)

#### **1.2.8. The Communicative Approach**

The main goal of this approach is preparation of the students for a real-life communication. However, unlike in the Direct Method or ALM, not only acquisition of the vocabulary and structures is considered important. Adherents of this approach claim that although the students may know the rules of language usage, they will be in fact unable to use the language, if they are not aware of the function of the target language in particular social context. Furthermore, since communication is a process, it is insufficient for the students to have knowledge of the target language forms, meanings and functions. The students must be able to apply this knowledge to negotiate meaning. (Larsen-Freeman 1986, p. 123)

#### **1.2.9. The Lexical Approach**

The basic principles of this approach are outlined in Michael Lewis' *Lexical Approach* (1993) where the standard division of language into grammar (structure) and vocabulary (words) is challenged. Lewis argues that language consists of chunks which, when combined, produce continuous coherent text. The chunks are of different kinds and four basic types can be identified:

- Words
- Collocations (*make a mistake, catch the bus*)
- Fixed expressions:
  - a. social greetings (*Good morning, Happy New Year*)
  - b. politeness phrases (*No, thank you*)
  - c. 'phrase book' language (*Can you tell me the way to ..... please?*)
  - d. idioms (*Hang on, you are putting the cart before the horse here.*)
- Semi-fixed expressions

(Lewis 1997, p.7)

Although the role of lexis is stressed dramatically in comparison with the other approaches implemented so far, it would be a gross misunderstanding to assume that the role of grammar should be pedagogically completely denied. 'Grammatical knowledge permits the creative recombination of lexis in novel and imaginative ways, but it can not begin to be useful in that role until the learner has a sufficiently large mental lexicon to which grammatical knowledge can be applied.' (Lewis 1997, p. 15)

Implementing this approach into classroom of students whose L1 structure is fundamentally different from English as it is in case of the Czech language can have an extremely positive effect on the students target language performance as they will not only memorize the individual lexical items but will also be aware of the idiomacity of English and correct lexical usage.

## **2. The Role of Age**

Age, together with aptitude, cognitive style, motivation and personality, represents one of the individual factors that considerably influence the SLA processes. However, when referring to the way of a language abilities development, we distinguish between learning in the case of an adult and acquisition when we describe a language development of a child. Therefore the problem of age represents a key issue in this thesis as I worked with two different age groups.

Although the role of age in second language acquisition has been one of the most frequently discussed issues of individual differences in SLA the conclusions presented by various authors seem to lack agreement. While some claim that children are better language learners than adults, others state the opposite. This might be a result of the complexity of this issue.

Ellis made an attempt to highlight the key issues and thus deal with this problem from different angles. He examines the effects of age and then looks at various explanations of these effects. (Ellis 1985, p.104). This point of view is rather useful for the purposes of this thesis because it provides an explanation of what is actually going on (Chapter 2.1) and how (Chapter 2.2).

### **2.1. The Effects of Age**

In the first place it is necessary to separate out two effects of age on *the route of SLA* from the effects of age on *the rate and success of SLA*. (Ellis 1985, p. 105)

*The route of SLA* was examined in various studies dealing with the comparative use of morphemes comparing results from second language learners of different ages. These results show a considerable correlation between the morpheme order obtained for adults and that obtained for children. (Singleton 1989, p. 125) This evidence suggests that the age does not alter the route of acquisition; learners appear to process linguistic data in the same way, irrespective of how old they are. (Ellis 1989, p. 105)

On the other hand, *rate and success of SLA* appear to be strongly influenced by the age of the learner. As far as rate is concerned, there is evidence to suggest that older learners are better which means that if learners at different ages are matched according to the amount of time they have been exposed to the L2, it is the older learners who reach higher levels of proficiency. (Ellis 1989, p. 105)

There are, however, other aspects that need to be taken into consideration. For example, according to Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle, the learners who progress most rapidly may be adolescents. In their study of Dutch L2 learners they found that although the adults (15 years and older) outperformed the children (6 to 10 years), teenagers (12 to 15 years) learned most rapidly. It would suggest that although the age improves learning capacity, it reaches the peak in teens after which it starts to decline. (Ellis 1989, p. 105)

Where the success of SLA is concerned, the findings dealing with the relation between success and exposure to the L2 were not surprising, that is, the longer the exposure to the L2, the more native-like the L2 proficiency becomes. However, with the passage of time, the influence of the age of the learner begins to outweigh the length of the learning period, especially in productive rather than receptive skills. (Ellis 1989, p. 106) This fact is apparent if we for example compare the levels of L2 proficiency of Czech children born after 1989. By the time they reached the pre-school age there were already opportunities for them to attend language courses for pre-schoolers in some private language schools. They continued in young learner courses and they also got more L2 input during the regular state school tuition. However, by the age of approximately 12 or 13 they reached a standard pre-intermediate level which is a level reached by an adult student after a two-year study in a standard adult language course.

As a result of what has just been stated, Ellis proposes the following general pattern:

1. Starting age does not affect *the route* of SLA. Therefore possible differences in acquisition order cannot be attributed to effect of the age.
2. Starting age affects *the rate* of learning. Where the length of exposure is held constant, adolescent learners do better than children and adults as far as grammar and vocabulary are concerned.

3. *The level of success* is affected by both *number of years of exposure* and *starting age*.

While the number of years of exposure contributes greatly to overall communicative fluency of the learners, the starting age determines the levels of accuracy achieved.  
(Ellis 1989, p. 106)

## 2.2. Explaining the Effects of Age

### 2.2.1. The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH)

One of the most influential theories about the effects of the age on SLA is the theory of the existence of critical period in language learning. It is consistent with the existence of LAD<sup>3</sup> (Chomsky 1965), implying that humans are innately equipped for language. (Skehan 1998, p. 222)

The theory of LAD, which is a component of the Nativist theory of language acquisition, states that there is a period when language acquisition occurs naturally and effortlessly. The optimum age for L2 acquisition falls within the first ten years of life when the brain retains plasticity, but with the onset of puberty this plasticity begins to disappear. Therefore the increased difficulties that older learners supposedly experience are seen as a direct result of these changes. (Ellis 1989, p. 107)

Provided the existence of CPH is generally accepted, there are some practical implications to be taken into account. Firstly, the knowledge of existence of the critical period should result in a certain realism concerning what is achievable in foreign language study. If the critical period is essential for attainment of native-like competence, then later learning should be judged by more limited objectives. Secondly, the critical period hypothesis supports the argument for the introduction of language study early in the curriculum to take advantage of the special language learning talent that might exist at this stage. Thirdly, the theory implies using various instructional methodologies according to the phase of the critical period the learner happens to be in. It seems that at the end of the critical period more general cognitive abilities are drawn

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<sup>3</sup> Language Acquisition Device

on during the course of language learning and so instructions should be adapted accordingly.  
(Skehan 1998, p. 222)

### **2.2.2. Cognitive Explanations**

One significant difference between the adult or adolescent and the child is the way they comprehend language. While adults and adolescents are capable of perceiving the language as a formal system, studying the rules and applying them consciously, children are not so prone to respond to language as form. For them the language serves as a tool for expressing meaning. It is possible to explain the differences in SLA in terms of the different orientation to language of children and older learners. An interesting point remains here to be mentioned – the explanation why adolescents learn more quickly than children. Not only they are able to 'pick up' the language like a child, they are also able to supplement this process by conscious study. (Ellis 1985, p. 109)

### 3. Words and their Meaning

This chapter deals with what we understand as input. There are several aspects to be taken into account if we want to define what 'knowing a word' actually involves and what the ideal amount of lexical items necessary for successful communication is. Evidence suggests that language learners need to learn as many words as possible as soon as possible (initial 2000 word target, with 10,000 words as an ideal longer-term target). (Sheehan 2004, p. 4)

Several definitions have been proposed concerning what it means to know a word. The following Ellis and Sinclair's list of criteria for knowing a word have been adapted by Sheehan:

- To understand a word when it is written or spoken
- To recall it when you need it
- To use it with the correct meaning
- To use it in a grammatically correct way
- To pronounce it correctly
- To know which other words you can (and can not) use with it
- To spell it correctly
- To use it in the right situation
- To know if it has positive or negative connotations
- To know when (and when not) to use it

(Sheehan 2004, p. 4)

This list states in a nutshell what we as teachers want our students to be aware of while studying new lexis. It appears obvious then, that studying words as isolated items deprives the learner of a chance to discover a great deal of these aspects such as their syntactic behavior, connotations, their collocations etc.

Psycholinguists work with the notion of *cognitive domains*. A useful distinction is that between *basic domains* and *abstract domains*. Basic domains are universal qualities such as dimensions (time, pitch, temperature), whereas abstract domains are schematic representations

of particular entities. To say everything we need to say to understand how the word may occur in use requires specifications from different cognitive domains. The basic domains may well be universal, but abstract domains may differ from culture to culture. For example, the word *wedding* will evoke different settings and events in every culture. Therefore in language teaching and learning activating the cognitive processes that lead to comprehension is crucial, different words will create different types of difficulty when it comes to matching and integrating them with stored knowledge. (McCarthy 1990, p. 48)

By observation of common mistakes students generally make, each of the following categories represents a problematic area in second language vocabulary acquisition:

- **Conceptual meaning:** this aspect deals with the way different languages divide up the world and the precise entities that a word refers to. For example, the word *cup* is relatively indeterminate in meaning and for many learners that would mean attaching this word to an object that in fact means *glass* or *mug*. This shows that understanding the word fully means not only knowing what it refers to but also where the boundaries are that separate it from words related by meaning.
- **Polysemy:** this term describes a single word with several different but closely related meanings. A problem will arise when students automatically apply the L1 system of polysemy to the second language because the fact that one word denotes a particular group of meanings in one language does not guarantee that this group is identical in the target language. For example, for the expressions *bunch of keys*, *bunch of flowers* and *bunch of children* three different expressions are used in Czech which might cause a great deal of misunderstanding on the part of the students.
- **Homonymy:** we use this term when a single word has several meanings which are not closely related. For example, the word *file* can be either an object for keeping papers in or an object used for smoothing rough surfaces. Because the meaning is so distant, in a context where the meaning is clearly illustrated misunderstanding is less likely to happen.

- **Synonymy:** words that share a general sense and therefore can be easily interchangeable. Some of them, however, occur only in a certain context (*think / believe; I think/believe you are right* × *I believe you*) or have different references (*referee* × *umpire*). Once again, this fact advocates for presentation of these items in a context that will provide the students with sufficient linguistic information.
- **Antonymy:** words with opposite meaning might be problematic if the students are not aware of the appropriate collocations (e.g. *young* × *old man* but *new* × *old car*).
- **Connotations:** words do not carry only their denotational meaning; there is also emotional, positive or negative meaning. (e.g. *the famous/notorious murderer*). There also exist socio – cultural associations which are shared by a group of native speakers as a reaction to certain social phenomena (e.g. the concept of *Friday the 13th* might be unknown in some cultures)
- **Register:** it refers to expressions evoking certain *fields* (e.g. sports, financial news etc.), in characterizing relationships between participants, that is *tenor* (e.g. formal/informal, power/equality) and characterizing the *mode* (e.g. spoken/written, love letter/lecture). Teachers should be aware of the dangers of violating register constraints by the misuse of vocabulary and make sure the learners are aware of the appropriate contexts of words. (McCarthy 1990, p. 102)
- **Dialect:** it is defined both geographically (American, British, Australian English) and socially. The consequences of making a mistake in one of these areas may range from finding oneself in humorous or even embarrassing situation to causing an offence. (e.g. the word *fag* in British English is an informal expression for *a cigarette* × in American English a slang word for *a homosexual*)
- **False cognates:** these are words that sound similar both in L1 and the target language but their meaning is completely different. (*actually, sympathetic*)

- **Multi-word verbs:** we use this term to describe verbs consisting of two or three parts:

- a 'base' verb + preposition (*look into, get over*)
- a 'base' verb + adverbial particle = phrasal verb (*break down, call off*)
- a 'base' verb + adverbial particle + preposition (*put up with*)

(Gairns and Redman 1986, p. 33)

These verbs could be divided into two categories according to the meaning they carry. In some cases the meaning is retained by understanding their individual parts (*sit down*); then we speak about the ***literal meaning*** of the multi-word verb. But frequently the meaning can not be deduced from an understanding of the constituent parts (*take off*). This ***non-literal meaning*** is a source of students' problems regarding memorization and acquisition of these verbs.

What is more, a great deal of such verbs also carries multiple meaning, which once again contributes to the overall unpopularity of these lexical items among EFL learners.

Grammatically, students need to know whether a transitive multi-word verb is phrasal or prepositional, because phrasal verbs are separable (*take off your hat, take it off, take your hat off* but not *\*take off it*), while prepositional are not (*look after children, look after them* but not *\*look the children after, \*look them after*) (Gairns and Redman 1986, p. 34)

The students also need to be aware of the fact that multi-word verbs are generally regarded as informal and therefore using their one-word equivalents is more appropriate in formal context.

- **Collocations:** combination of lexis in collocations represents a binding force which is fundamental in the study of vocabulary as an organizing principle of words. The relationship between words can be described as ***weak*** (*brown hair*) when the words can collocate with a number of other words. On the other hand collocations such as ***blond hair*** are described as ***strong*** as *blond* can hardly collocate with anything else but *hair*. (McCarthy 1990, p.12)

As there are no 'rules' of collocation, this lexical area represents a problem for the students often caused by L1 interference. Once again the problematic issue of collocations supports the view that vocabulary study should not only concern single words but lexical chunks as they occur naturally.

- **Idioms:** a sequence of words which operates as a single semantic unit is referred to as an idiom. Like many multi-word verbs the meaning of the whole cannot be deduced from the meaning of its components. Another feature of idioms is that they are often syntactically restricted – e.g. someone can have *a chip on their shoulder* but not *\*a shoulder with a chip*. (Gairns and Redman 1986, p. 36)

While students are aware that phrases like e.g. *seeing red* are idiomatic, the problem occurs when they encounter phrases like *he was besides himself*, *I can't go through with it*, *they solved it once and for all*. These idioms consist of items that the students are familiar with and they may not even realize they do not understand the meaning of the sentence unless they are asked a comprehension question they are not able to answer. (Nuttall 1982, p. 76)

- **Transfer of meaning:** metaphor, metonymy and similar kinds of transferred meaning always represent a potential problem. Not only their meaning is completely different to what the literal translation of their parts implies but they also occur rather frequently in various contexts (e.g. a student of accountancy will have to deal with expressions such as *galloping inflation*, *profits wiped out* or *fringe benefits*) (Nuttall 1982, p. 77).

However, metaphors enable us to talk about one thing in terms of another, they make it possible to conceptualize and talk about entities with vague and indeterminate boundaries or which are abstract. Therefore helping the students comprehend the concept of metaphors is an essential part of vocabulary teaching. (McCarthy 1990, p.28)

- **Word building:** there are three main forms of word building, which are characteristic of English:
  - a) affixation is the process of adding prefixes and suffixes to the root of the word which either modifies its meaning (*write* × *rewrite*) or changes its part of speech (*help* × *helpful*). Sometimes the process of affixation produces changes in stress and sounds of an item and may also cause spelling problems (*photograph* × *pho'tographer*). (Gairns and Redman 1986, p.47)
  - b) compounding is the formation of words from more than one root but which have a single identity in that they name a single thing or concept such as *time-consuming*, *make-believe* etc. (McCarthy 1990, p. 4)
  - c) conversion, which is also known as zero affixation is the process by which an item may be used in different parts of speech, yet does not change its form. There are again some problematic features for the students such as the change of stress in some words ('*export*' = noun × *ex 'port* = verb) or spelling changes (*advise* = verb × *advice* = noun) (Gairns and Redman 1986, p. 48)

Recognizing the composition of words is important; the learner can go a long way towards deciphering new words if he or she can see familiar morphemes within them. (McCarthy 1990, p. 4)

- **Pronunciation:** unfamiliarity with correct pronunciation caused not only some students' inability to make themselves intelligible when they speak but it can also result in the learner failing to understand words in connected speech that he would normally understand in their written form. Therefore careful attention to pronunciation is an essential part of vocabulary teaching. (Gairns and Redman 1986, p. 50) For Czech students such problematic words are e.g. *event* in which they tend to stress the first syllable and pronounce it like *even*, or the vowel pronunciation in *sweater*, *pear* where ea is often pronounced /i:/

However, pronunciation of individual sound does not represent a serious problem for Czech students, in this respect they are generally regarded as intelligible speakers who, despite having particular problems with pronouncing sounds that do not have their equivalents in Czech, are usually well understood.

The fact that Czech words have fixed stress on the first syllable whereas in English different syllables may be stressed, can cause serious problems to students not only in the target language production but also in listening comprehension.

Another problem that affects the students' ability to understand connected speech is the fact that English belongs among ***stress-timed*** languages, where syllables may last a different amount of time but there is a constant amount of time between two consecutive stressed syllables. For students whose mother tongue is ***syllable-timed***, i.e. every syllable is thought to take up roughly the same amount of time; this difference represents a significant difficulty regarding the students' listening comprehension abilities.

## **4. Psycholinguistic Processes in Language Learning**

To be able to provide the students with most effective tools for their language development one should be familiar with the basic functioning of human memory and processes that take place during language acquisition and learning. Only then is the teacher capable of designing tasks and activities that fully cater for the students' needs and help them overcome some of the common problems they have with vocabulary memorization, retrieval, correct understanding and usage.

### **4.1. The Role of Input and Some of its Classroom Implications**

There are basically two main types of input that a second language learner is exposed to in a traditional language classroom and that is a written text or listening. Both types of input can serve as a means of vocabulary presentation in a meaningful context. However, vocabulary happens to be frequently presented isolated without context during the lesson or even as homework. In this chapter I will examine some findings concerning the role of the quality of input the students are provided with and possible implications for dealing with lexis in the classroom.

When input is received, the major constraint on how the excess of the input is handled is the limitation of the capacity of the memory system available. The traditional model of memory suggests two basic stages of memory functioning: the *short-term* and *long term memory* functioning (Atkinson and Schiffrin in Skehan, 1998, p.44).

According to this theory *short-term memory* is limited in capacity and requires conscious effort and control. It is also likely to be serial in operation. This refers to processing of information for periods of time up to a few seconds – the memory process that occurs while e.g. remembering a phone number. (Cook 1991, p. 50). Therefore the role of the teacher is vitally important in this phase as s/he should provide the students with immediate practice in order to prevent the information from getting lost.

However, the interpretation of short-term memory has been replaced by the concept of *working memory* which can not only be described as a system of both phonological and visual

rehearsal ‘loops’, but also ‘a central executive component which is concerned with the allocation of a limited amount of attention.’ What is more, working memory also contains activated ‘records’ from long-term memory which may interact with new data that have just been encountered. (Skehan 1998, p. 44)

*Long-term memory*, in contrast, has a vast capacity, can operate in a parallel way and even unconsciously. The relation between these two types of memories was seen as a one way transfer of data from short-term to long-term memory by frequent rehearsal. (Skehan 1998, p.44)

The role of working memory is to extract from language input and other input (e.g. visual, contextual etc.) the one which is relevant for ongoing comprehension. However, at the same time the interaction of working and long-term memory occurs and relevant material from the long-term memory (the propositions to be expressed, linguistic means such as knowledge of syntax, lexical elements, and lexical chunks) has to be activated, accessed and assembled. (Skehan 1998, p. 45)

The actual quality of input represents an issue that should be taken into consideration in the second language classroom. It is often said that in order to achieve proficiency in a second language one has to live in a foreign country and that the informal real world environment is always superior to the classroom teaching. An attempt to solve this dilemma was made by Krashen in his hypothesis of *comprehensible input*. For SLA to take place, the learner needs input that contains exemplars of the language forms which according to the natural order are due to be acquired next. Input must consist of ‘*i + 1*’. He claims that if we fill our second language classroom with optimal input we can actually receive better results than in the informal environment, at least up to the intermediate level and especially with older second language students. As a reflection of the fact that the adult world is more complex than the world of a child and that our expectations for adult comprehension are much higher, input to the adult is more grammatically complicated, contains a wider range of vocabulary, deals with more complex topics and is generally more intellectually demanding. (Krashen 1987, p. 58)

This is a fact that can be easily verified by comparing the amount of language and the complexity of structures of an e.g. adult beginner, whose language performance after one year of study is comparable to a young learner studying the language for several years.

However, he also admits that there are some limitations concerning classroom environment. First, it is clear that the outside world can supply more input which obviously depends on the intensity of the contact of the person in question with the second language. Second, also the range of discourse the student can be exposed to in the second language classroom is quite limited, no matter how 'natural' the teacher will try to make it. Although the classroom will probably never be able to overcome its limitations, we should realize that its basic function does not lie in substituting for the outside world but in bringing the students to the point where they can begin to use the outside world for further acquisition. (Krashen 1987, p. 59)

Krashen also introduces a set of **optimal input** characteristics that should be present in all teaching materials or activities in order to fully encourage the students' second language acquisition.

**Comprehensibility** clearly represents the most important input characteristic. When the acquirer does not understand the message, no acquisition will take place. An example of a foreign language teaching project that failed due to the lack of comprehension is TV educational programs which provided the learner with insufficient comprehensibility input and therefore the results of language acquisition were rather disputable. (Krashen 1987, p.63)

The key issue here for a foreign language teacher is to make input comprehensible. There are basically two ways how to create comprehensible input – *linguistic* and *non-linguistic*. (Krashen 1987, p. 64)

The *linguistic aspects* of simplified input which appear to promote comprehension are:

- 1) slower rate, clearer articulation, which help the learner to identify word boundaries more easily and provide him with longer processing time
- 2) more use of high frequency words, less slang, fewer idioms
- 3) shorter sentences, syntactic simplification. (Hatch in Krashen 1987, p.64)

The *non-linguistic means* to encourage comprehension are of comparable importance to the linguistic aids. Using pictures, realia or other visual means for beginning classes represent a very important tool in encouraging SLA. And of course taking advantage of the students' knowledge of the world is one of the key principles of making the acquirer understand the input. (Krashen 1987 p. 66)

By *interesting and/or relevant input* is meant such an activity that focuses the acquirer on the message and not on the form. To go a step further, it should also be interesting and relevant to the students' needs and expectations. (Krashen 1987, p.66). Although this condition seems obvious, it is not always easy for the teacher to fulfill. From my own experience finding materials that would raise interest in all students represents a fairly difficult task. A group of adults attending standard language school general English courses is always formed haphazardly; there are learners of various professions, educational background and even ages. Therefore finding an interesting topic to discuss or a reading article that would resemble the type of reading that they encounter in their first language is not easy. Unfortunately many course book materials do not help solve the problem, the teachers feel obliged to cover its contents although it is obvious that they will fail to meet the students' areas of interest.

Despite the lack of data referring to this area, Krashen attributes great importance to the sufficient *quantity of input*. He states that only very little can be gained just from a five-minute talk or short reading passage. To sum up, the more language the learner encounters the greater chances of acquiring new language structures he has. (Krashen 1987, p.71)

#### 4.2. Noticing

According to theories dealing with memory functioning, noticing ('consciousness raising'/'conscious awareness') represents a crucial step in transferring data to both working and long-term memory because, as Schmidt states, not all input has equal value and only input that is noticed becomes available for further processing to take place. (Schmidt in Skehan 1998, p.48).

The noticing stage in acquisition of new structures also plays an important role in Lexical Approach where meaning and message are primary but activities and exercises that follow are

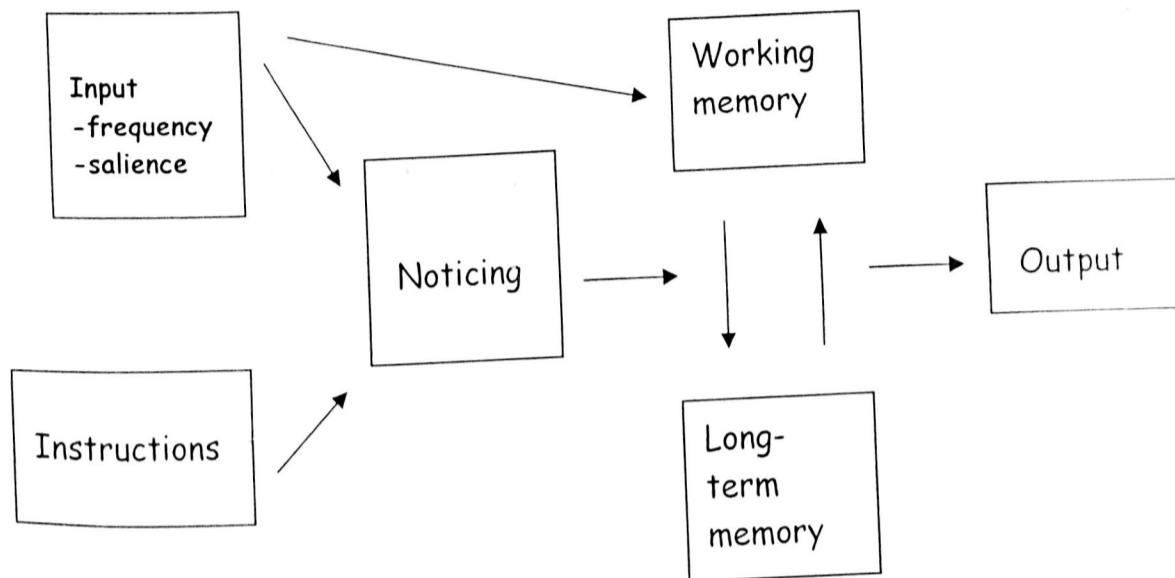
supposed to help the learner observe or notice L2 more accurately and acquire it using elaboration strategies (i.e. strategies where the students use elements of what is to be learned and expand them by relating other information). This approach is in contrast with Krashen's Natural Approach which claims that conscious learning has no effect on acquisition and therefore noticing has only little value. (Lewis 1997, p.52)

Schmidt attempts to define six basic influences that operate upon noticing:

- 1) ***The frequency of form***: the more frequent the form the more likely the learners are to notice it and integrate it into their interlanguage<sup>4</sup> system. Therefore repeated presentations of the same form provide the learners with more opportunity to notice the form at some time or another.
- 2) ***Perpetual salience***: the prominence of the form in input – the more prominent the form stands out in the input the more likely is to be noticed and vice versa.
- 3) ***The role of instructions***: there are many alternative features for processing included in input and it is the learner's task to extract the relevant parts which can then be effectively focused on. So it is the learner who does the extraction and focusing, but under the influence of how he or she has been prepared and instructed. By instructions are meant ways of channeling attention and bringing into awareness what would otherwise remain unnoticed rather than clear explanations. Nevertheless, noticing provoked by instructions does not necessarily cause learning to occur, it only fulfills one of its conditions. How these influences are interrelated within memory is shown in the following diagram:

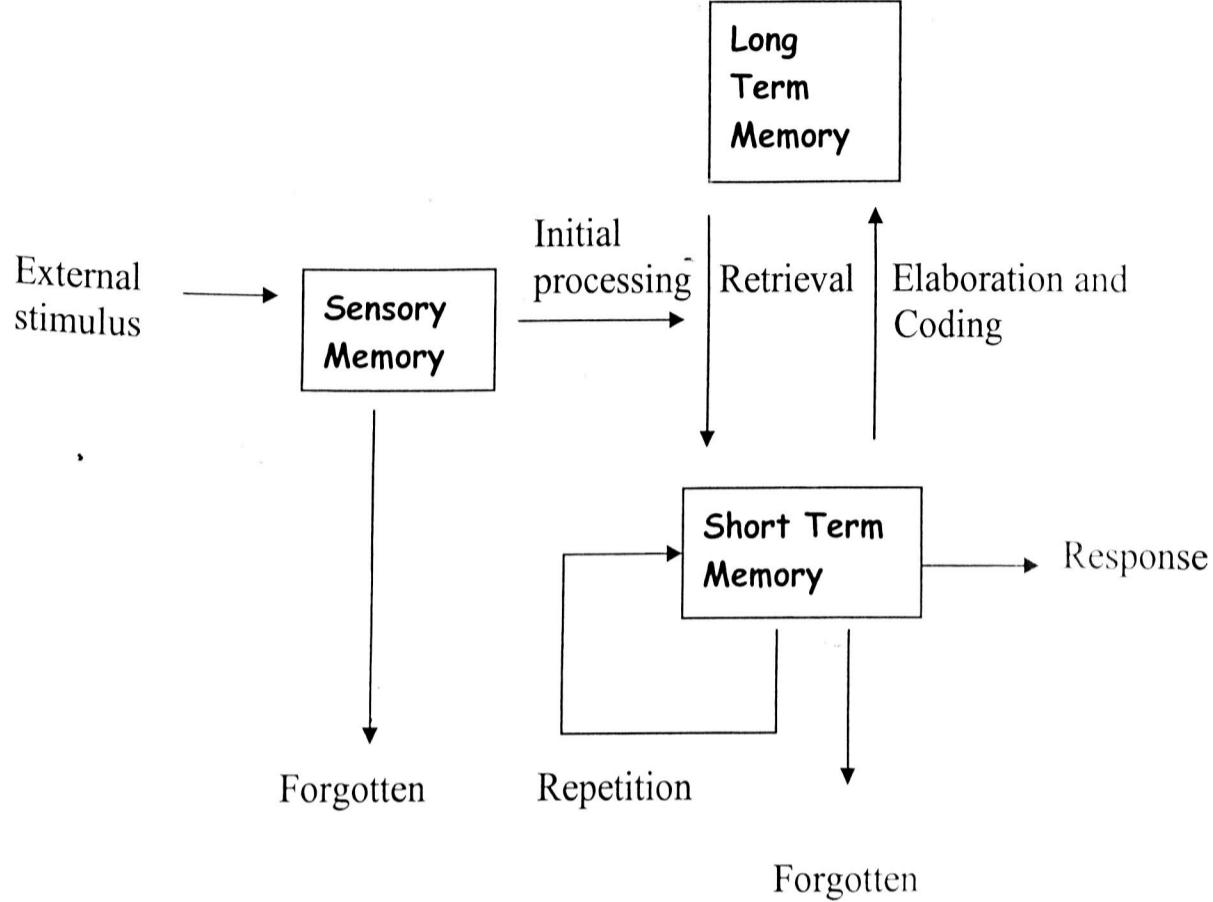
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<sup>4</sup> "The language of the L2 learner considered as a system of language in its own right rather than as a defective version of the target language." (Cook 1991, p. 5)



(Schmidt in Skehan 1998, p.49)

For comparison purposes we can have a look at the Stage Model of Information Processing which is based on the work of Atkinson and Shrifin (1968) in which information is processed and stored in three stages:



(Huitt, 2007)

The most prominent feature in which the Schmidt's and Atkinson and Shriffin's approaches differ is the concept of **sensory memory** in the latter one. Sensory memory (STSS = short-term sensory storage) is affiliated with the transduction of energy (change of one energy form into another). The environment makes available a variety of sources of information (light, sound, smell, heat) but the brain only understands electrical energy. In the process of transduction, a memory is created. There are two features crucial for transferring information into STM:

- Individuals are more likely to pay attention to a stimulus if it has an interesting feature
- Individuals are more likely to pay attention if the stimulus activates a known pattern (Huitt, 2007)

Bearing in mind these facts, there are some principles for a teacher to be followed to allow the transfer of information:

- Gain the students' attention (use clues to signal when you are ready to begin, move around the room, use voice inflections)
- Bring to mind relevant information prior to learning (review previous day's lesson)
- Point out important information (use handouts, transparencies, write on the board)
- Present information in an organized manner
- Show the students how to categorize (chunk) information
- Provide opportunities for students to elaborate on new information (connect new information to something already known, look for similarities and differences among concepts)
- Show the students how to use coding when memorizing a list (using mental imagery techniques e.g. keyword method)
- Provide for repetition of learning (state important principles several times in different ways during presentation of information – STM, have items on each day's lesson from previous lessons – LTM, schedule periodic reviews of previously learned concepts and skills – LTM)

4) ***Processing ability:*** this influence is based on the individual differences in capacity to

deal with the range of forms in input. Some people will be more effective input processors than others and more able to notice new forms which may be integrated into their language development. This might be caused by different speed the analytic processes in the working memory are carried out or/and by the attention capacity of their working memory. (Schmidt in Skehan 1998, p. 50)

5) ***Readiness to notice:*** the current state of the interlanguage system. This implies that a

prediction can be made about what the learner can notice in the sense that the product of such noticing stands a chance of being incorporated into the interlanguage system because it represents for the learner the 'next' thing to be required. (Schmidt in Skehan 1998, p. 51)

- 6) ***Task demands:*** what is expected of the learner as a result of the activity he is currently involved in. Schmidt argues that in terms of overloading the limited capacity system the implications can be that noticing is in fact less likely. There are tasks that will probably have low task demand, for example, a pair of students giving each other instructions to get to their respective homes while a task requiring imagination and abstraction will probably have much higher ones. (Schmidt in Skehan 1998, p. 51)

In conclusion, ***processing ability*** as well as ***readiness to notice*** represent internal factors and reflect the influence of long-term memory on what is likely to be noticed which basically means that noticing is not simply a function of input but is also influenced by learner factors that affect the way input is processed.

#### **4.3. Perception and Action**

The learner's interaction with the environment is a major factor in language acquisition because this relationship provides the associations and it requires the mental activity necessary for language learning. Therefore perception of the learner and action carried out by the learner based on relevant teacher's instructions are the basic processes that affect language acquisition as they forge interactional associations among the words and are likely to increase the potential of their acquisition. (Nuttinger in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 67)

Based on these findings several procedures that make use of such an interaction have been suggested. Some of them represent examples of experiments, others developed into methods widely used in the classroom.

- a) ***Asher's Total Physical Response*** represents a method in which the foreign language is introduced as a series of imperatives which link the language with various kinds of overt action that a student can perform in the classroom. This way vocabulary is associated with physical actions which has a dramatic effect on the memory as the students commit themselves to the learning task by performing a series of appropriate actions. This commitment on the part of the learners results in remembering much more than when they are simply passive. (Stevick 1996, p. 37)

From my own experience this method can be successfully applied both in young learner and adult classes and the effect on memory is rather significant. Especially with low-level students using e.g. TPR stories results in students' production of whole sentences which normally occurs much later in their language development. However, although adult students while using this method show excellent results, they are often not willing to perform physical actions as they do not regard it as 'proper studying'.

- b) **Craik's cognitive depth** is a theory based on Craik and Loghart's experiment focused on the influence of the degree of cognitive depth and the ability to retain and recall new vocabulary. They gave students a list of words and for each word they asked one of the following questions, each requiring different degrees of cognitive depth to process. The first requires none while the last requires a great deal:

- 1) 'Is there a word present?'
- 2) 'Is the word printed in capitals or in lower-case letters?'
- 3) 'Does it rhyme with....?'
- 4) 'Is it a member of...category?'
- 5) 'Does it fit into the following sentence?'

The conclusion they made was that the deeper the decision the task forces upon the learner the superior retention and recall. (Nattinger in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 67)

In a language-learning situation this finding helps to explain why vocabulary is easier to learn in a meaningful context which permits and even requires complex processing. Therefore with my students it has proved successful to dedicate time to activities such as inferring the meaning of the words from a written text. Training students to be able to use contextual clues to guess the meaning of the unknown vocabulary does not only fulfill conditions 4 and 5 of the Craik and Loghart's experiment but also trains the students to be successful readers outside the classroom.

- c) **Formal groupings** represent an effective way of vocabulary presentation and practice as it makes use of the fact that we usually try to remember new vocabulary by its form, therefore vocabulary exercises can be centered on these forms to enhance storage and recall.(Nattinger in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 68)

However, although words could be decomposed into the parts that make up their meaning, there are doubts if these semantic markers have any strong psychological reality: linguists do not seem to agree anyway what the set of the primitive markers would be, and experiments suggest that words are processed instantaneously for meaning and not first broken down into components. (McCarthy 1990, p. 39)

For learning vocabulary the study of morphological features is not a desirable end in itself but knowledge of various affixes and their meanings helps the learner to decode words and therefore has been long a part of vocabulary teaching texts. There are several ways of making the learners aware of the meaning of these features, most frequently by giving them a list of affixes and their general meaning. (Nattinger in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 68)

*d) Presenting vocabulary in **word families*** is the extension of the above. Words are gathered around a common root which aids the students to remember them by the associations among the presented vocabulary items. Although the meanings of these words might be slightly different, clustering them will help students in remembering their general meaning. A useful way of doing this would be to ask the students to trace words related by their family in a reading passage to demonstrate their various functions and their changes in the text. (Nattinger in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 69)

*e) Collocations* are words that co-occur naturally with greater than random frequency. It is important to point out that these occurrences are purely about words, not ideas or concepts. For example, tall and high are synonyms but we say *tall boy*, not *\*high boy*. This means that we should store the words in the form we meet them, in chunks. Such storing does not only provide learner with sufficient associations but permits him to predict what kind of words to expect to find together. (Lewis 1997, p. 25)

*f) Presentation of vocabulary using **topic*** as a framework is very common in materials and represents an effective approach from the point of activating the students' schemata about the world.

However, as McCarthy points out, topic might be a problematic framework for several reasons. Firstly, it is difficult to actually define a 'topic'. It might derive from

particular schemata but it is complicated to set its limits. Secondly, it is difficult to assess the chosen topic in terms of the students' needs and interests as well as to predict exactly what words are the most frequent or useful within the given topic. (McCarthy 1990, p. 91)

There is evidence pointing towards strong link between words related by meaning. Some moment-by-moment problems in speech data offer clues to types of meaning relations. For example, people sometimes produce blends in their L1, where half of one word crowds in one half of another:

'It was absolutely tinate'. (*tiny/minute*)

'It's on the dressing-board.' (*dressing-table/sideboard*) (McCarthy 1990, p. 39)

It is common practice in many current language course books to introduce words in ***semantic groups***. For example, learners are asked to learn 'parts of body', 'clothes' etc. These are often presented as a set of words (semantic clusters) and share a common superordinate (headword). There seems to be a belief among course book writers that doing so will aid vocabulary building and lexical associations in particular. Nevertheless, this belief appears to be founded in methodology rather than on research. In a first language study by McGeoch and McDonald (1931) it was found that if words to be learned were too similar, it interfered with learning. The poorest performance occurred with synonyms, which were the subject of this experiment. This finding among others led to the formation of 'Interference Theory'. This theory states that when words are learned at the same time, but are too 'similar' or share too many common elements, then these words will interfere with each other thus impairing retention of them. The degree of interference increases with the degree to which the interfering material becomes more similar to the material already learned. Evidence for this can be found in many classrooms when, for example, the students confuse the days of the week or months as well as words like *brother* and *sister*, *twelve* and *twenty* etc. Extensive research into interference theory has shown that memory traces compete with each other. Therefore the suggestion is that if new words are to be presented to learners, they should not be presented in groups that share a common headword or superordinate concept. It may be obviously impractical to ask our students to learn words from closed semantic sets such as days of the week, numerals etc. one at a time as learners probably expect to learn them as a set. However, it may be advisable to organize words to be

presented into thematic rather than semantic arrangement. For example, *sweater*, *changing room*, *try on*, *cash register*, *wool*, *navy blue*, *striped*, and so on may not show the same interference effects as *scarf*, *tie*, *coat*, *pants* and *skirt*. The teacher could present the words so that they were met in several different contexts over several lessons. The list of words in the course book could then be used as a revision list rather than a starting point. (Waring 2007, p. 1-8)

#### **4.4. Acquisition and Learning**

Encoding of the target information represents the core of the teachers' and students' effort in the process of learning. There is a great deal of theories dealing with this issue. Although the Krashen's acquisition theory is not one of the most recent ones, I find it most relevant to the classroom situation in terms of its practical implications.

In the 1980's the acquisition theory was vastly influenced by Krashen's Monitor Model in which the **five basic hypotheses** about second language acquisition were formulated.

##### *i) The Acquisition – Learning Distinction*

This distinction states that adults have two distinct and independent ways of developing competence in language learning. The first way is *acquisition* which can be described as a subconscious process similar to the way children develop ability in their first language. Instead of being consciously aware of the rules of the language that we acquired we have a 'feel' for correctness, errors simply feel wrong even if we consciously do not know what rule was violated. In other terms, acquisition can be described as implicit, natural or informal learning. On the contrary, we use the term *learning* to refer to conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them and being able to talk about them. Other ways of describing learning include formal knowledge of the language, explicit learning. (Krashen 1987, p. 10)

##### *ii) The Natural Order Hypothesis*

This hypothesis based on research findings claiming that acquisition of grammatical structures proceeds in a predictable order. Although the order of

acquisition of the second language is not the same as the order of acquisition of the first language, there are some similarities. (Krashen 1987, p. 13)

*iii) The Monitor Hypothesis*

According to this hypothesis acquisition initiates our utterances in a second language and is responsible for fluency while learning has only one function and that is as a monitor, or editor. Learning comes into play only to make changes in the form of our utterance after it has been produced by the acquired language. But the second language performer is able to use conscious rule only if three conditions are met. It is the *time* (the learner needs sufficient time to think about the rules), *focus on form* (thinking about correctness) and *knowing the rule*. (Krashen 1987 p. 16)

Some of the individual differences in adult second language acquisition and performance can be attributed to different use of the conscious monitor. According to this criterion three basic types of performer can be distinguished:

- a) *Monitor over-users* (people who attempt to monitor all the time, constantly checking their output with their conscious knowledge of the second language which results in over-corrected, hesitant, non-fluent speech)
- b) *Monitor under-users* (performers who have not learned or prefer not to use their conscious knowledge and rely entirely on the acquired system)
- c) *The optimal monitor user* (performers who use the monitor when it is appropriate and when it does not interfere with communication) (Krashen 1987, p. 19)

*iv) The Input Hypothesis*

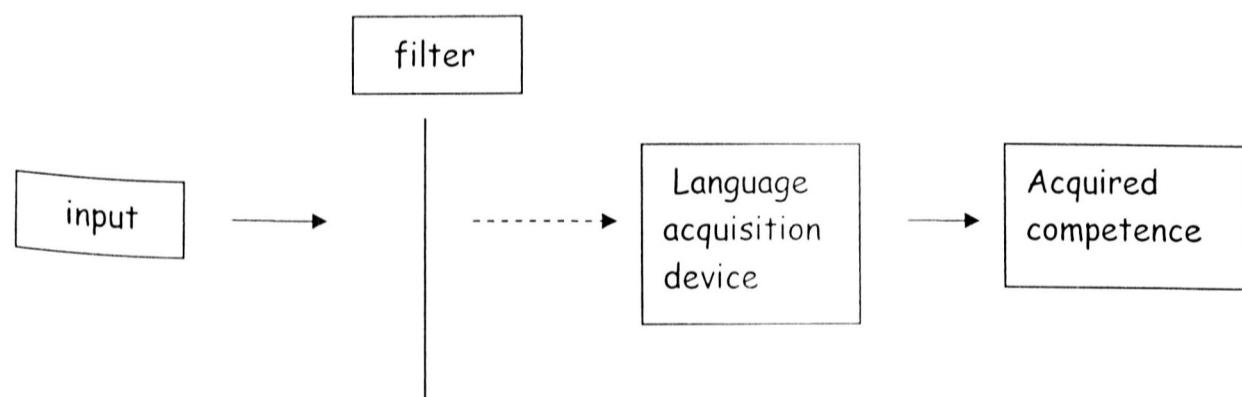
According to this hypothesis we first acquire by ‘going for meaning’ first and as a result we acquire structure. We acquire by understanding language that contains structure a bit beyond our current level of competence with the help of extra-linguistic information ( $i + 1$ ). (Krashen 1987, p. 21)

*v) The Affective Filter Hypothesis*

This hypothesis deals with the affective factors and how they relate to the second language acquisition process. Most of the studied factors can be placed into one of these three categories:

- a. *motivation*: highly motivated performers generally do better in second language acquisition
- b. *self-confidence*: performers with self-confidence and a good self-image tend to do better in second language acquisition
- c. *anxiety*: both personal and classroom anxiety appears to be conductive to second language acquisition (Krashen 1987, p. 31).

The following Dulay and Burt diagram illustrates the operation of the affective filter and suggests that learners with ‘low’ affective filter are the ones with optimal attitudes. For a teacher it also implies that his pedagogical goal is not only to provide optimal input but also create a low anxiety situation that encourages a low filter. (Krashen 1987, p.32)



#### **4.5. Storage and Memory**

Now when we have looked at the theories dealing with the way data enter our memory the next step will be to explore how the informational items are stored in our brain and what conclusions could be drawn regarding practical teaching implications in teaching vocabulary.

As Stevick points out, our mind works with images that are formed through all our senses. Words are remembered and stored by the learner in a network of associations. There are many types of associations and they can be linked in number of ways. Words in our mental lexicon are tied together in many different ways, not only by meaning, form and sound, but also by sight (we link similar shapes in our mind's eye) and also by the context students encounter them in. Therefore for a teacher to present a word effectively means to present it in a network of associations. (Stevick 1992, p. 55)

McCarthy suggests that the total model of how the information is attached to words in the mental store will have to be three-dimensional, with phonological nets crossing orthographic ones and criss-crossing semantic and encyclopedic nets. Additionally, word-class and other syntactic features are also a part of the mental lexicon. The language learner has the formidable task of transferring the complexities of his L1 storage into L2 which obviously cause stress and constraints while retrieving items from the mental lexicon in L2, compared with the ease with which the lexicon of L1 can be consulted. (McCarthy 1990, p. 42)

In a classroom context one of the ways of presenting new vocabulary that fulfills these conditions is presentation in the context of a reading text. A reading text provides the student with the network of associations as well as semantic, orthographic and other contextual features necessary for transition of the new lexis into the student's mental lexicon. It is the teacher's task then to provide the learner with the phonological information and relevant follow-up practice allowing the learner to transfer the new information into their active L2 vocabulary.

As far as memory and vocabulary storage are concerned, the most effective distinction among vocabulary items is probably not between function and content words but may lie among the different types of content words. For a student there should be no problem in storing function words as there are not many of them and they occur frequently just as there should be

little problem in storing concrete nouns because they carry a definite image. Most students' problems occur with those content words that are abstract and therefore not easy to picture i.e. those nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs that stand for abstract concepts. However, these words cannot be ignored although they do not occur very frequently as they carry sufficient content for the text to be properly understood. (Nattinger in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p.64)

Another fact about memory and vocabulary that is of a great importance for presenting new words is the fact that form may be more important than meaning in remembering a vocabulary item. Learners rely on the form of the word that leads them to its meaning because they see or hear a particular 'shape' that reminds them of what they already know and they try to remember what that shape means. Therefore in teaching comprehension the teacher should make the students familiar with strategies that take the form as the principal path to meaning. (Nattinger in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 64)

For native-speakers, the general shape of the incoming word is important. This phenomenon is sometimes known as the 'bathtub' effect, that is, that the front and rear ends of words are prominent but the middle 'dips' a bit, so to speak. Speakers recognize the first and the last syllables of words and take note of how many syllables they contain, the general rhythmic structure and where the stress falls. When people have a word 'on the tip of the tongue' they can often say quite a lot about the word, including these features of its general shape, yet still unable to recall the exact word. (McCarthy 1990, p. 35)

Research has also shown that mental activity has a powerful effect on memory and that there is a tight relation between 'cognitive depth' and retention. This basically means that the more effort students make to work out a solution of a problem (the more commitment they make to the task of learning) the more likely they are of storing this information permanently in their memory. (Nattinger in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 65)

On the question on how many repetitions are necessary before a word is memorized, it is apparent that there are learners who remember a word after its first encounter. Seven repetitions seem to be enough for most people to be able to memorize a word. Research seems to show that most forgetting occurs immediately after initial learning. This would suggest that repetition is most effective if it occurs very soon after the first encounter. (McCarthy 1990, p. 117)

There are a number of strategies that reflect the above mentioned facts and make use of them to help the learners enhance storage in memory.

- **Mnemonic devices**

This technique is used not only for memorizing new vocabulary but a large number of people use it in their everyday life as a tool for remembering e.g. words of foreign origin that they find difficult to memorize. For example, many people find it difficult to remember the difference between the meaning of *vertical* and *horizontal*. But if they imagine a *horizon*, then it is no problem to identify the correct position. For a language learner as well as for native speakers there are words which are difficult to spell and using mnemonic devices can prove rather useful and effective. For example, the word *tomorrow* = *Tom + or + row*, or we can try to create and remember a sentence from the initial letters of the word *necessary* = *Never Eat Crisps, Eat Salad Sandwiches And Remain Young*. Another example used by one of my students is making a connection between a word or a phrase to be memorized and an entity the student is already familiar with, i.e. for memorizing the phrase *to tell a story* the student tried to remember it in a connection with the phrase *the story of Vilem Tell*. Therefore there is no reason why this strategy should not be introduced as a regular classroom procedure. In the classroom practice there some mnemonic technique in particular that can be used by the students both in class and during self-study.

- **Loci**

Loci are the best world-known memory device described in every self help book on improving memory. They are based on the fact that we operate by 'cognitive maps' which are sequences of visual images that can be easily recalled. These images are usually situated around the familiar sequences of images which can be a well-traveled path, objects in a room, or events in a well-known story etc. To memorize an item one forms a visual image around the item and puts it somewhere in the imagined scene. By bringing the scene back to mind these items are easily retrieved. (Nattinger in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 65) For example, adjectives to be memorized can be associated with a garden or park within the town: words such as green, smelly, bright, small, cold etc. can be easily related to objects in a park. Perhaps there is a pond there, or a small wood, or perhaps people with different characteristics are walking around.

- **Peg method**

This method works by memorizing a rhyme and creating an image which is linked to the *peg* word. The image is recalled when the rhyme is repeated. (Mercer 2005, p. 32) At the beginning the students learn a list of peg words that rhyme with each number from 1-10, e.g.:

*One=bun two=shoe three=tree four=door five=hive six=sticks seven=heaven  
eight=gate nine=wine ten=hen*

Then they are given a list of words numbered 1-10 and they must create an image or a scene connecting the word from the list and the peg word. E.g., if number eight is a cat then the image might contain a scene in which a cat is walking across the top of a field gate. Later the students should be able to recall the list in the same order using the peg words only.

- **Rote learning**

This technique has a long history in foreign language learning and is the one that is still frequently used by many students. It is based on memorizing words by constant repetition, either silently or aloud. It might prove useful for some types of vocabulary sets such as forms of irregular verbs or days of the week. (Gairns and Redman 1990, p. 93) An advanced version of rote learning (cumulative rehearsal) can be used to make this strategy more challenging is to drop one word and add another one and rehears again.

- **Create and learn a sentence**

Students learn the target word in a sentence they create themselves, which results in memorizing the word in a context together with the relevant features. This procedure can be extended into creating the whole story using a set of words to be learned.

- **Link to personal experience**

Students use the target vocabulary to speak about themselves. This way a personal link is created and motivation to memorize the target vocabulary is significantly increased. It can be extended into a communication activity e.g. making class surveys using the target words.

- **Create an association with a mental image or a picture**

After they have encountered a new vocabulary item, the students can be asked to draw a picture depicting the word. This is a simple technique which provides the student with a visual stimulus that contributes to better memorization. It also helps students to cope with

abstract words that are generally more difficult to memorize. By creating a visual image of such an item the word becomes more 'concrete' and therefore easier to deal with. Those learners whose learning style has a strong visual element may well also benefit from remembering vocabulary using coloured mind maps, labeled diagrams or picture dictionaries.

- ***Create an association with another word***

In order to memorize new lexis the students often try to find parallel between the new vocabulary and a word either in their native or in the target language. Such associations may take a form of a link within a collocation in the target language (e.g. *stale bread, fish and chips*), an association with a synonym or opposite, or an association with another word in the same lexical set (science/ scientific/ scientist). Students may be also able to find analogies with words in their mother language, especially if there is a phonological link of some kind. For example the Czech word *sestra / sister* or *matka / mother*. However, the teacher shouldn't forget to make the students aware of false cognates (e.g. *aktuální*=current × *actual*=existing in fact), which cause a great deal of misunderstanding and problems for both students and teachers.

- ***Create an association with a feeling***

There are words that promote strong feelings and associations, either positive or negative. Especially adjectives can be divided between positive, negative and neutral and thus provide the students with initial point for memorization. Students can be also asked to justify their own personal feelings they have about particular words irrespective of their meanings. They may dislike words because they don't sound pleasant, are difficult to spell, find them difficult to remember and vice versa. Some words create a positive feeling by the way they sound or look and are memorable themselves, e.g. *jeopardize, hanky-panky etc.*

- ***Making use of multisensory perception***

Taking into account the complexity of network of association the student needs to be able to memorize a word effectively, various perceptory channels should be activated. Making use of music and rhythm while dealing with new lexis assists to use the auditory channels to the full. Activating other senses that are normally not considered of great importance for acquiring new information, such as smell, touch contributes to the overall success in remembering lexical items.

These strategies have been rather popular among students although some of them ignore the linguistic aspects crucial for effective vocabulary acquisition and therefore do not assist the learners be aware of the whole complexity of the target language. They may serve as a tool for memorization but presentation and practice in a meaningful context remains the core of successful acquisition.

#### 4.6. Memory Types and Learner Strategies

As I already mentioned in Chapter 4.1., frequent rehearsal is crucial for information transfer into the long-term memory. The rehearsal itself can occur in different forms. Stevick for example differentiates between two types of learning regarding the transfer of data from short-term/working to the long-term memory. **Concentrated learning**, which involves memorization of lists and drilling, helps to transfer the new material into the long-term memory. Nevertheless, material met in this way tends to be lost unless it gets used in diffused learning. **Diffused learning**, on the other hand, is based on creating a rich imagery including e.g. using and understanding interesting texts in which the new information is present. (Stevick 1996, p. 108)

In my opinion, for a classroom practice this implies not to resort exclusively to diffused learning, but to use a combination of both. For example, after reading a text involving new vocabulary the teacher can get the students to use a concentrated activity, in which the drill would help them to make the new lexis enter their working memory. The process of anchoring the new information in their long-term memory can be assisted by a follow-up diffused learning activity, such as writing their own story using the new words etc.

Another reason for using a combination of various techniques is the individual differences between students' learning strategies. The following types of language learners' strategies are adapted from Hedge (Hedge 2000, p.77)

- **Cognitive strategies:** repetition (imitating a model), writing things down, inferencing (making guesses about the form or meaning of a new language item)
- **Metacognitive strategies:** planning for learning, thinking about learning and how to make it effective, self-monitoring during learning, self-evaluation

- **Communication strategies:** students using different ways to make themselves understood (gestures, mime, synonyms, paraphrasing, cognate words from their own language)
- **Socio-affective strategies:** collaboration on tasks, making use of opportunities for practice, using other people as informants about the language, listening to radio or TV in their free time

Which and to what extent these strategies are used by individual students depends not only on their previous learning experience, the quality and quantity of the learner training they have obtained, but also on the type of students' personality. A teacher cannot expect e.g. a student whose personality is rather introverted to spontaneously join a conversation with a native speaker. Such a student can benefit more from cognitive strategies such as inferencing etc.

## **5. Reading and Vocabulary Development**

As I have already mentioned, a meaningful context plays a crucial role in memorization processes as well as in language acquisition. The same obviously applies to vocabulary learning. Reading texts are doubtlessly one of the main sources of such a context for various reasons. The fact that reading is a cognitive process and therefore aids to transfer information into long-term memory can be used to provide the students with meaningful tasks focused on lexis and this way not only help them to acquire new words but also learn all important aspects of their meaning using the context as a source of linguistic information.

Taking into consideration some of the facts mentioned in the previous chapters, there is strong evidence against presenting vocabulary as isolated items. Isolated words do not hold any psychological reality because they do not carry a message. For this reason they cannot evoke emotions or involvement of the learner and therefore contribute to the network of associations essential for successful memorization and retrieval of vocabulary. Texts, in contrast, present a linguistic and psychological reality and therefore presenting words in the context of a text will provide support and reduce the possible interference between words and their meanings.

The sources of new lexis for a student to familiarize with can be categorized into words that are presented in the classroom and lexical items that the students encounter outside the classroom context in either written or spoken form. As the latter applies more to the situation when the target language is studied in the L2 environment, reading texts represent not only a source of a new language for the learner but also provide him with a context that aids acquisition.

Therefore while dealing with reading in the classroom special attention should be paid to the development of reading skills with a special focus on vocabulary development for various reasons. Firstly, students who want to improve their language skills outside the classroom are strongly advised to read extensively.

As Nuttal states, a moderate reader can recognize about 50,000 different words in L1 reading while graded reader series designed for L2 learners seldom go higher than 3,500 word level. The problem is how we can train the learner to cope with a learning problem of this size. The L1 reader did not obviously learn his 50,000 words by being taught them, most of them were learned by being encountered in context and assimilating the meaning. (Nuttall 1982, p. 65) Therefore training learners to deal with unknown lexis should be a part of a reading lesson.

Reading in a second language calls for fast, automatic word decoding and access to the mental lexicon. This means working on building speed and fluency and on learning to recognize at least 10,000 words in the new language. Students can build speed and fluency by learning vocabulary systematically and by doing a great deal of extensive reading. (Walter 2007, p. 1)

Taking into account all the previously mentioned features of a reading process we as teachers must deal with the problem of how to access this skill and what to actually make our students focused on. Although working with a reading passage in order to present and practice vocabulary items represents a traditional approach to a reading text, the teacher should be aware of the fact that in a real life situation the reading itself will be the students' primary aim, vocabulary knowledge and ability to decode unknown lexis from a text will serve only as a means to achieve it. Therefore texts in the classroom should be used to practice reading skills in the first place with a follow-up focused on the lexical items included to provide the students with strategies they will be able to make use of outside the classroom. These strategies are obviously relevant to the features of the text question.

### 5.1. Context and Co-text

By speaking about context within a text we can distinguish between the actual situation in which the discourse is produced – *context*, and the actual text surrounding any given lexical item – *co-text*. (McCarthy 1991, p. 64)

In order to increase the comprehension level of a reading passage which is a crucial aspect of successful inferring meaning of the unknown lexis from the text, the reader

should be able to make use of his background knowledge of the subject matter, to 'activate schemata' concerning the given context. (Cook 1991, p. 54) This way the reader is capable of making predictions about the kind of vocabulary that will occur.

As McCarthy points out, new knowledge is most efficiently absorbed when it is assimilated to the already known and when the appropriate conceptual framework or **schemata** are activated in the mind of the learner. Schemata are structured frameworks of knowledge, about the world and about the language, in relation to which new information may or may not be perceived to make efficient reading, but it is equally important in the classroom setting when the teacher is trying to make the encounter with the new words more meaningful. (McCarthy 1990, p. 108)

Schema theorists make a distinction between *formal schemata* (knowledge about the structure of a text) and *content schemata* (knowledge about the subject matter of a text) (Carrell in de Debat 2006, p.10)

Using both these types of knowledge helps the student to make relevant predictions about the vocabulary that s/he is going to encounter in the reading passage. For example being familiar with the structural organization of texts of various genres allows the student to guess the type of lexis to come and therefore not only to comprehend the text but also to be capable of guessing the meaning of the unknown lexis.

Also a reader who can think along with the writer will find the text relatively easy: clearly s/he shares many of the writer's presuppositions. This procedure is not only a matter of reading in a foreign language; we unconsciously use this technique while reading in L1. As we read we make hypotheses about what the writer intends to say. These are immediately modified by what s/he actually does say and are replaced by new hypotheses about what will follow. If we encounter words that do not fit the pattern we create about the text, we are forced to re-read the passage and readjust our thoughts. (Nuttall 1982, p. 12)

## **5.2. Learning Vocabulary through Reading**

The successful EFL reader employs a psycholinguistic guessing approach, that is, the reader samples the clues in the text and reconstructs a mental representation of what he thinks the text says. This type of analysis by synthesis approach to reading has also been described as a *top-down* model of reading. This model of reading was popular from the 1970's, the most frequently cited example of this approach being Goodman (1967): 'Reading: A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game'. (Walter 2007, p. 2)

In contrast to this approach, the more traditional view of reading as decoding of letters into sounds and ultimately meaning, is described as a *bottom-up* model. (Nation and Coady in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 101) In other words, language is perceived as a code and the reader is a passive decoder whose main task is to identify graphemes and convert them into morphemes.

Although ESL learners are typically poor decoders since their vocabulary knowledge is weak, they are at the same time already literate in their mother tongue and are familiar with top-down processing. Therefore the question is to what extent we should emphasize top-down or bottom-up processing as well as an appropriate use of context. (Nation and Coady in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p.101)

Exclusively top-down models have been definitively falsified by empirical studies showing that skilled readers do not sample portions of the text but rather process the entire text, rapidly and automatically. In currently accepted evidence-based models of reading, bottom-up processes (like word recognition and lexical access) and top-down processes (like integrating background knowledge) proceed in parallel. Both processes are vital to reading. (Walter 2007, p. 2)

## **5.3. Learning from Context**

In the research and literature on inferring meaning of words from context a distinction is often made between getting the meaning of a word using the context clues and its memorization, learning and retention of its meaning. There are several aspects that are

taken into consideration such as types of clues available in context, learner's success or failure in using available clues and the effect of training on using clues. Studies on learning words from context sometimes consider the presence of clues, but are most interested in what has been remembered of a word from meeting it in a context. Failure to remember information from context can be caused by failure to get the meaning or from failure to retain the meaning. (Nation and Coady in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 103)

#### **5.4. Inferring Meaning of Unknown Lexis**

For all types of reading the reader needs automaticity both of word recognition and of lexical access (recognizing the word so as to find its meaning in memory and silently activating its pronunciation). When a word is recognized, it enters the phonological loop of working memory, becoming available for consultation and integration into a mental representation of the text. The faster the reader's speed of retrieval from the mental lexicon, which is linked to their level of vocabulary knowledge, the more proficient their reading comprehension will be. (Walter 2007, p. 2)

Inferring involves creating a schema for the unknown word based on the world knowledge and the previous experience, both of the world and texts. It means drawing conclusions as to word meaning by following certain rational steps in the face of the evidence available. (McCarthy 1990, p. 125)

Provided that the lexical density of the text is not too high, there are studies indicating that readers are capable of guessing between 60 – 80 per cent of the unknown words. But density is not the only variable determining the rate of success in guessing. Other variables include the number of times the same unknown word occurs in the text and the variety of contexts in which it occurs in the text as well as the importance of the unknown word to understanding the context in which it is imbedded, the closeness of the contextual information to the unknown word. (Nation and Coady in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 104)

## 5.5. Discourse

Discourse analysis is concerned with features that connect language with the context in which it is used. In the field of written texts, discourse analysts are interested in how bits of text fit together coherently and form patterns, which, in turn, create whole, complex discourses. Vocabulary in discourse plays an important role in areas of *lexical cohesion, topic, lexical signals, expressive vocabulary and modality*. (McCarthy 1990, p. 52)

*Lexical cohesion* represents a type of patterning found in stretches of spoken or written language, in which it re-occurs in different forms across boundaries (clause- and sentence-boundaries in writing, additionally, turn boundaries in speech). In discourses we regularly find exact repetition alternating with the feature of reiteration or relexicalization which basically means in casual conversation we do not simply repeat one another's words, but recast them, offering our own equivalents, or using superordinates to refer in a more general way to specific items. All this is a part of what is often referred to as the negotiation of meaning, namely that meanings become fixed in context by the lexical environment created around them by the different speakers or varying lexical choice by writer in written text. These discourse features obviously create implications for how vocabulary is taught and practiced with emphasis on relations between lexical items in context. (McCarthy 1990, p.54)

While lexical cohesion deals with lexis merely in terms of pairs of words linked by some sort of semantic relation and performing some localized function, when we trace the lexical relationships further we can see quite complex chains in discourses. Such chains enable us to see how topics begin, shift, expand, and close or perhaps arise and peter out very quickly. Therefore we are able to talk about the 'vocabulary of a topic', a concept which is often at the forefront of the organization of vocabulary for language teaching purposes. Topics are a part of our schemata and as such represent an important psycholinguistic concept. In the case of topics, repetitions and relexicalization chains can be used to illustrate dominant topics, minor ones and so on, and to fix vocabulary that is realizing them. (McCarthy 1990, p. 55)

Another feature of vocabulary in discourse is the way that some words play a crucial role in organizing the discourse. If we look at nature of certain words, they can be described as

'empty'. Such words do not seem to be realizing any topic, but simply referring to a topic and labeling the components of the topic in some way. These ***lexical signals*** can be lexicalized by making reference to other part of the discourse or to our knowledge of the situation. Lexical signals often occur in what we might call problem-solution discourses. Words like *problem, issue, approaches* and *solution* and their many synonyms (*difficulty, drawback, matters, questions, response, answer* etc.) are typical signals of the problem solution pattern in discourse, a pattern found in innumerable texts. Signal words tell us about the relationship between the different segments of the discourse and alert us to the presence of a predictable pattern in the text. Therefore these patterns are often used by students who have to write an essay on 'problem' topics (pollution, TV violence, famine etc.). Sometimes their translation to the students' L1 is relatively straightforward, but problems might occur in collocations of some signal words which are often strong (*raise/present a problem, come up with a solution* etc.) (McCarthy 1990, p. 58)

When we look at discourse-signaling words in the text, we can often observe that they are accompanied by modifiers that express the author's attitudes and evaluation of the content of the text. Words like *awful, scandalous, humorous* etc. frequently in connection with a lexical signal can be labeled as ***expressive vocabulary***. For the vocabulary teacher or learner, the points in discourse where signaling words and their modifiers occur will become important nodes for perceiving the speaker's/writer's evaluation of the topic and decisions concerning textual organization. (McCarthy 1990, p. 59)

Every discourse does not only inform us about something, but also represents the sender's stance or attitude to the message in terms of its truth, its certainty or otherwise, the sender's commitment or detachment from the message and so on, e.g. ***modality***. The kinds of meaning addressing the sender's interpersonal stance expressing the truth, possibility etc. are referred to under the heading of ***epistemic*** modality, as opposed to meanings addressing such things as obligation and permission, normally termed ***deontic*** modality. Grammarians have long recognized a closed class of verbs in English which express modality (modal verbs), but recent studies of large corpora of texts have shown that the modal meanings realized by modal verbs can be also realized by a large number of lexical words in all the major word-classes. For example, interpersonal meaning of probability and possibility can be expressed by terms such as *likely, likelihood, definite(lly), chance, potential(lly)* or *bound*

*to*. Therefore the vocabulary of modality is part of the fabric of discourse and represents an important subdivision of the lexicon. (McCarthy 1990, p. 60)

### **5.6. Lexical Density and Variation**

The last part is devoted to the lexical density and variation as these two features largely determine the comprehensibility of the text. The *lexical density* of a text can be measured by counting the total words in the text and then counting the lexical words, that is the content words excluding the grammar or function words, the higher the percentage the higher the lexical density. Lexical density is a statistical measure, it does not tell us how 'difficult' or obscure the words in the text are. It is determined by the text type and is largely independent of the text length. (McCarthy 1990, p. 73)

*Lexical variation* takes as its starting point the distinction between *token* and *type*, where the actual number of words in the text represents the number of tokens. A number of tokens can be repeated within the text and this may give us a considerably lower number of tokens. The lower the ratio between the types and tokens, the higher vocabulary load of the text. Therefore lexical variation counts give us a rough measure of how many new items are introduced into the text as it unfolds. This may not be the same as new words (in the sense of words never encountered before) for a language learner, but it can be a useful measure in predicting the degree of difficulty a text might present. (McCarthy 1990, p. 73)

## PART TWO: PRACTICAL CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS

### 1. Active, Receptive and Throw-away Vocabulary

The students' ability to deal with a reading text obviously depends on the density of the unknown vocabulary. L1 and L2 studies of optimal ratios of known words to unknown words in reading texts do not greatly differ. L1 research certainly shows that comprehension is impeded if one new word occurs in every three words, but the difficulties are relatively slight with one new word in every twelve. One L2 experiment suggests that learners can handle up to one new word in every fifteen words of a 750-word text, so the L1 and L2 difference is not enormous. Other criteria that play role in text comprehension are the length and reading purpose of the passage. (McCarthy 1990, p. 38).

Texts with a high lexical density are obviously difficult to deal with. However, students have to face them if they need a foreign language for academic purposes and therefore it is necessary to prepare them accordingly. They should be made aware of the fact that the same principles of vocabulary knowledge valid for their L1 apply also for the target foreign language. While examining their L1 vocabulary they observe that there are words belonging to *active* vocabulary (words we know well enough to use ourselves) and words we understand approximately when we meet them but cannot use – *receptive* vocabulary. (Nuttall 1982, p. 74)

In order to read comfortably, skilled readers need to have receptive mastery of 95% or more of the words of the text, recognizing them rapidly. Receptive mastery does not require that learners be able to use all these words productively in their speaking and writing. (Walter 2007, p. 3)

However, the active/passive distinction has been under attack for some time. It is rejected on the grounds that it takes a simplistic view of the way in which the lexicon is stored in the mind as it supposes it is a static entity kept in two separate compartments. Instead, it would be more precise to speak about *receptive* and *productive retrieval*, which reflect the nature

of mental lexicon that happens to be in a constant flux where the particular items interact with each other. (McCarthy 1990, p. 44)

As Nuttal points out, students should not feel under pressure when asked to attempt to transform the words they encounter in the reading text into their active vocabulary by for example writing a sentence using the words. Apart from the fact that they are very likely to come up with sentences that will be either trivial or wrong, this process will not contribute to further vocabulary acquisition, which only occurs during repeated exposure to the target language. (Nuttall 1982, p. 74)

This assumption can serve as evidence of what has been mentioned about the nature of the mental lexicon and the constant interaction between its items that occurs during the student's exposure to L2. If a student creates a trivial or wrong sentence, it basically means, that his mental lexicon is not equipped with sufficient amount of links concerning the word in question. During repeated exposure preferably in different context this knowledge will be enhanced and productive retrieval will occur.

Not all words the reader meets are worth learning, not even at receptive level. The choice which words from the text we label as *throw-away* vocabulary depends on context, the students' level, areas of interest and reasons for reading. Therefore the teacher must remember to provide the students with relevant strategies for dealing with various types of texts taking into account these criteria. (Nuttall 1982, p.75)

## **2. The Effect of Pre-teaching Vocabulary**

Pre-teaching vocabulary is beneficial for several reasons. Firstly, by making the students familiar with low frequency words that occur in a text the general comprehension of the reading passage is significantly increased. This procedure applies to words that are crucial for understanding and a lack of contextual clues does not enable the readers to guess their meaning.

Secondly, if we pre-teach words carrying essential information about the contents of the text, the students will be able to make predictions about what they are going to read using their general background knowledge. The new lexis will be incorporated into the student's mental lexicon and its retrieval will involve the images related to the contents of the reading passage.

Another positive effect of pre-teaching vocabulary is the increased number of occurrences when the student encounters the target vocabulary. First he meets the word during the pre-reading task and encountering the word in the reading passage will be in fact second or even third exposure to the word which will positively affect its memorization.

However, not all material is geared to pre-teaching. Some opinions state that when the learner should actively engage in working out the meaning of new words encountered, the teacher should keep pre-teaching to a minimum, only asking a few brief questions related to the topic. Any direct pre-teaching of words should only serve as help to the students to understand the text, the target words for which the text is presented should not be pre-taught. (McCarthy 1990, p. 109)

### **3. A Strategy for Guessing from Context**

Inferring meaning of the unknown words is a skill we use to some degree in our L1. Experienced L1 readers are able to make use of the available context to guess the rough meaning of the word when it is encountered for the first time. After a series of subsequent encounters the meaning becomes more precise. Nevertheless, students are usually totally unaware of this fact, so it is important to demonstrate to them that once they are capable of inferring in their L1, they can also acquire this technique in the L2. (Nuttall 1982, p. 70)

It has been proved by a series of experiments that after students are trained to guess from context, the rate of guessing is increased. (Nation and Coady in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 104) As a result, not only the comprehension improves but the ability to guess from context will also speed up their reading. (Nuttall 1982, p.70)

The following strategy suggested by Nation and Clarke (1980) represents a procedure the students can use to make sure they are making a good use of the available context clues.

The strategy consists of five steps:

1. Finding the part of the speech of the unknown word.
2. Looking at the immediate context of the unknown word and simplifying this context if necessary.
3. Looking at the wider context of the unknown word. This means looking at the relationship between the clause containing the unknown word and surrounding clauses and sentences.
4. Guessing the meaning of the unknown word.
5. Checking that the guess is correct.

(Nation and Coady in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 105)

#### **4. Using a Dictionary**

Using a dictionary represents a valuable backup to contextual guesswork. It is not only a tool for checking correctness of the guess. It is not uncommon for an item to appear ambiguous in a particular context and in such cases the dictionary is an important resource to clarify the uncertainty. (Gairns and Redman 1990, p.80)

Historically, dictionaries have had a rather varied status according to the current prevailing methodology trends. Bilingual dictionaries were frowned upon, particularly in the 1960s and early 1970s, when methodology ceased to emphasize translation as an approach to language learning, needless to say that many bilingual dictionaries (and to some extent, EFL dictionaries) tended to be unreliable and at times inaccurate. Further, in the late 1970s, many teachers were suspicious of the use of dictionaries, feeling that it was synonymous with laziness on the part of the student who was unwilling to use his own resources and guess the meaning for himself. (Gairns and Redman 1990, p. 79)

Currently the role of dictionaries has been stressed by some coursebook authors by providing the students with monolingual 'mini-dictionaries' accompanying the course which trains the learners to acquire basic dictionary skills. For a teacher this trend represents an alternative solution to the problematic and disputable use of pocket bilingual dictionaries, which are extremely popular among students. Unfortunately, they provide the students with a one-to-one correlation between the L1 and English and do not help over the collocations, typical contexts and grammatical possibilities of the word which can result in a student making an error while producing language learned with a help of this type of a dictionary.

What is more, the information provided in these dictionaries is frequently incorrect which might result in learning a 'mistake' which in my experience unfortunately occurs quite often.

Dictionaries have been largely ignored for the fact that there is a strong insistence that words should not be thought of individually, or in isolation, and dictionaries are seen as reinforcing the students' tendency to learn individual words when acquiring a second language. (Summers in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 111)

Although this is a widely agreed pedagogic principle, it cannot always be reconciled with what is possible for an EFL student. In reality, unknown words within texts – whether in the form of a repetition, an encapsulation, a superordinate or subordinate term – are very often not deducible from contextual clues. (Summers in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 112)

Students of a foreign language are often confronted with words they need to clarify before they can continue with the text they are working on. How important the meaning of the word is in the passage, the number of unknown words in the passage, the reason why the student is working on it – to write an essay, for a comprehension test, as a background reading – all these may have an effect whether the student turns to a dictionary for help. (Summers in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 112)

As some authors argue, too much attention to vocabulary can have a harmful effect on the students' reading habits. If he keeps stopping to look up every word, it may actually make him a less effective reader. (Nuttall 1982, p. 69) There is no doubt that overusing a dictionary while reading does not only lead to ineffective reading but is also demotivating for students who decide to read extensively outside the classroom to improve their language. Such students often complain that they find reading English books boring and even frustrating, because they devote more time to looking up words in their dictionaries than to the actual reading. Therefore it is essential to train the students on ways of dealing with new vocabulary and appropriate and effective use of dictionaries.

There is also a suspicion that the use of a dictionary interrupts the flow of concentration when the student is reading a passage. This fear is based on the notion that the dictionary is too easy a solution – it is always better to work out the meaning of unfamiliar word using the contextual clues. In fact, the student must have done some useful linguistic processing of the word to look it up at all (e.g. tracing an inflected verb form back to its base form, distinguishing the noun entry from the verb entry etc.). (Summers in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 113)

Dictionaries help students to learn new words not only by providing them with relevant information about the lexical item, but also by exposing them to the word in a new context which increases the chances of memorization and retrieval.

Johnson-Lard has argued that the mental activity involved in unpacking the definition would help to implant the word and its concept into the students' memory, especially when it is backed up by explanatory examples. Differentiation from other similar words can be necessary for accurate comprehension. This is done in some dictionaries by means of Usage Notes and by contrasting with words carrying a similar meaning that can be often incorrectly interchanged. Another way of helping the students to fix new vocabulary in the memory is drawing the user's attention to the opposites of words with close meaning. (Summers in Carter and McCarthy 1988, p. 117)

To sum up, despite all the criticism that using a dictionary has received, a learners who are able to make effective use of a dictionary will be capable of continuing learning outside the classroom and this will give them considerable autonomy about the decisions they make and about their own learning.

## **PART 3: CLASSROOM-BASED RESEARCH – THE EXPERIMENTAL LESSONS**

### **1. Description of the Student Groups**

For the experiment I chose two target groups of private language school students of different ages. The adult students were between 35 – 45 years old; a vast majority of them had a university degree, which was a fact that determined their study techniques and approaches. However, they were open to experiments and trying out new methods.

The adolescent group were secondary school students approximately 15 years old, whose motivation was significantly high, which was reflected in their excellent command of English for this level.

Although both groups had been studying English for the same period of time (about 4 years), the adolescent group had been obviously exposed to the L2 more intensively as they got a tuition in the state school as well as in the language school courses.

The aim of the experimental lessons was to compare the students' success of vocabulary memorization of the two groups in question. The lesson procedure was identical for both groups in order to compare/identify to what extent the students' age influences the ability to encode the target vocabulary in their memory.

## **2. General Description of the Experimental Lesson Procedure**

### *a) Introduction of the reading extract topic*

At the first stage of the lesson I intended to bring the students focus on the topic of the lesson for several reasons. My main aim was to activate the content schemata and activate the students' existing knowledge of the lexical fields to follow later on in the lesson. The students were given a topic to discuss, often their personal experience was required, by which I hoped to increase the motivation level and their personal engagement in the theme.

### *b) The reading procedure with a focus on the target lexis*

This stage was focused on bringing the students' attention to the vocabulary in question and creating a mental link between the new lexis and the context of the reading passage. The students were either pre-taught the target vocabulary and their following encounter in the text helped its better understanding as well as seeing the words in a natural context which provided the students with relevant linguistic information necessary to fully grasp the various aspects of the words' meaning and usage. Or the students were asked to infer the meaning of the target vocabulary from the text which gave them a chance to use their cognitive skills to not only apply their existing knowledge but also to aid memorization of the target vocabulary.

### *c) Memory anchoring activities*

Activities at this stage were focused on memorization of the previously presented words. The aim was to create various associations of the target vocabulary in the students' mental lexicon and thus enhance its memorization. In many cases the students were actually asked to use the words in sentences which provided them with a relevant feedback of the results of the previous activities. This stage followed directly after the presentation phase to prevent the students from forgetting the given words which occurs within a short time period after the initial encounter.

*d) General language practice*

The aim of this stage was to focus the students' attention on a different subject (e.g. a grammar point revision). The significance of this stage in the experiment is that the student were given time to digest the new information by a shift of attention and therefore the results of the vocabulary test done at the very end of the lesson were in my opinion more objective as far as long term memory is concerned.

*e) Vocabulary test*

The students were given a test of the vocabulary presented and practiced during the lesson, which was supposed to show to what extent the students managed to remember the target lexis. Each test followed an identical pattern, i.e. the students were asked to write the words described by their definitions. I fully realize that a longer time distance between the presentation and the testing would display more objective results concerning the transfer of the target lexis to the long term memory. On the other hand, there are many factors that influence the students outside the classroom (e.g. individual home preparation etc.) that might have had an effect on the overall results. Therefore to guarantee equal conditions for each student I decided to test them in approximately 25 minutes after their last encounter of the lexis in question.

### 3) The Lessons

#### **LESSON 1**

**Target vocabulary:** *conscious (adj.), estimate (v), strength (n), attach (v), harm (v), lifeguard (n), park ranger (n), kiss of life*

**Procedure:**

<b>Observations</b>	<b>Principles</b>
1. The students are asked to discuss questions related to the topic of the reading text. (see <b>Materials 1</b> )	By bringing the students' focus to the topic of the reading passage their content schemata are activated which is supposed to help them with the latter vocabulary work. During this stage they are given an opportunity to predict and ask questions about the relevant lexical field which increases the reading comprehension of the article necessary for the latter vocabulary focus.
2. The class is divided in two groups; each group is given four words of the target vocabulary. Within each group the students work in pairs and are asked to look up the unknown lexis in a dictionary. Then they work with a new partner from the other group and their task is to teach each other the new vocabulary items.	At this stage the vocabulary is pre-taught, but the role of the teacher is only to select the relevant target vocabulary and to assist the students during the dictionary work. This stage is supposed to have an initial effect on memorization for several reasons. As the students encounter the lexis in example sentences in the dictionary they are exposed to them in a relevant linguistic context providing them with sufficient information

	<p>about the meaning, usage etc. Because they are aware that the following task will be to explain the lexis to another student, they are motivated to understand and remember the precise meanings, which will occur during the students' mutual cooperation as well as the assistance of the monitoring teacher. A great deal of cognitive effort is required throughout the whole stage which has a dramatic effect not only on memorization but also on the latter correct usage of the target lexis.</p>
3. The students are given the headline of the article; their task is to predict the content of the story and to try to explain what significance they think the target lexis from the previous stage has in the story.	<p>The aim of this stage is not only to let the students use their already existing knowledge of the topic to predict the content of the article but also to give them an opportunity to create a mental link between the target vocabulary and the topic and try to use the vocabulary in sentences.</p>
4. The students read the text, check their predictions and work with true/false sentences about the article to check reading comprehension. (see <b>Materials 2</b> )	<p>At this stage the students encounter the target vocabulary in the reading passage which from the lexical perspective serves as another source of linguistic information as well as confirmation of the students' vocabulary predictions during the previous stages.</p>
5. The students make sentences about the story using the target vocabulary.	<p>By making their own sentences the students create another link assisting the transition of the lexis to their mental lexicon.</p>

6. General language practice	
7. The students complete a vocabulary test. (see <b>Materials 3</b> )	

**Materials:**

*1. Discussion questions:*

- ❖ When did you last go to the beach? Where was it? What did you do there?
- ❖ Do you have a favourite beach? If so, where is it?
- ❖ What kind of problems can people have at the beach?

**2. The article:**

## Saving Jesse's Arm

**Lucy Atkins describes the battle to save the life of a young boy.**

At about 8 p.m. on July 6<sup>th</sup>, eight-year-old Jesse Arbogast was playing in the sea in a National Park near Pensacola, Florida. It was the end of a perfect day at the beach with his uncle and aunt. Then disaster struck. Jesse was attacked by a two-metre-long male shark, which bit off his right arm from the shoulder and also took a bite out of his leg. By the time his uncle and aunt pulled Jesse out of the water, he was unconscious and had already lost a lot of blood.

While Jesse's aunt was giving the boy the kiss of life, his uncle, Vance Flosenzier, ran into the sea and disappeared under the water. Amazingly, he managed to catch the 90-kilo shark and pull it out of the water onto the beach. Although this might sound impossible, never underestimate a man's strength when a family member's life is in danger. At that moment two park rangers arrived to help the family and one of them shot the shark four times in the head. Then he held open the shark's mouth while a volunteer firefighter reached down its throat and pulled out Jesse's arm.

A few minutes later, a helicopter took the boy and his arm to nearby Baptist Hospital, Pensacola, where Dr Ian Rogers and his team managed to reattach Jesse's arm in an eleven-hour operation. The doctors knew the operation had been a success when Jesse's fingers went pink. After such a terrible accident nobody wants to be over-optimistic, but the medical team are hopeful that Jesse will have full use of his arm in the future.

Although Jesse's story is terrifying, it would be incorrect to think that sharks are always so dangerous. Apparently this type of attack was very unusual and sharks are usually harmless to humans. "Shark attacks are uncommon," agrees JR Tomasovic, chief ranger at the Pensacola park. "You could go ten years without seeing another." However, he says that people shouldn't be irresponsible and should only swim on beaches where there are lifeguards.

Adapted from the *Guardian* 12/7/01

5 Read the article again. Tick the true sentences. Correct the false ones.

- 1 The shark bit off part of Jesse's arm.
- 2 Jesse's uncle shot the shark.
- 3 A park ranger got Jesse's arm from inside the shark.
- 4 Jesse's operation took a long time.
- 5 Jesse might be able to use his arm normally in the future.

(adapted from *Face2face intermediate* by Chris Redston and Gillie Cunningham, CUP)

**3. Vocabulary test:**

- 1) Awake and knowing what's happening.....
- 2) To work out size, amount, value without measuring.....
- 3) Being strong, power.....
- 4) To fix one thing to another.....
- 5) To hurt, damage.....
- 6) An expert swimmer at the beach or pool who protects bathers from accidents and dangers.....
- 7) A person protecting parklands, forests.....
- 8) Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.....

**KEY**

- 1) *conscious*
- 2) *estimate*
- 3) *strength*
- 4) *attach*
- 5) *harm*
- 6) *a lifeguard*
- 7) *a park ranger*
- 8) *a kiss of life*

**Test results:**

WORD	TEST RESULTS (%) *)	
	ADULTS	ADOLESCENTS
conscious	60	50
estimate	80	50
strength	100	100
attach	80	50
harm	60	75
a lifeguard	80	88
a park ranger	80	50
kiss of life	60	63
TOTAL SCORE	75	66

\*) incorrect spelling is taken for a correct answer unless it completely prevents the word comprehension

## **LESSON 2**

**Target vocabulary:** *content (v), fortunate (adj), spot (v), by chance, cope with (v), reveal (v), act (v)*

**Procedure:**

<b>Observations</b>	<b>Principles</b>
1. The students are asked to finish a sentence so that it is true for them ( <i>I'm (not) lucky because.....</i> )	This way the students mentally prepare for the topic of the reading passage, activate some vocabulary connected with the theme in a personalized way and supposedly create a personal reason for the further reading.
2. The students match words likely to be unknown and their definitions (see <b>Materials 1</b> ).	Although some of the selected lexis do not belong among the target vocabulary they are important for the overall comprehension of the text which is in this case essential for the following vocabulary focus.
3. The students read the article and do general comprehension tasks (choosing the correct answer, answering questions about the text) (see <b>Materials 2</b> )	From the lexical point of view this stage represents the students' first encounter with the target vocabulary in a natural context of a reading text. Due to the pre-reading tasks which enable the students to understand the general meaning of the passage this stage represents an opportunity for guessing the

	meaning of the unknown lexis, although this process occurs mostly unconsciously at the moment.
4. The students match selected words from the article with their synonyms (see <b>Materials 2</b> )	By matching the lexis the students are already familiar with their synonyms that are mostly new to them they must apply strategies for inferring the meaning from the context as well as their awareness of relexicalisation. Creating a link between the two synonyms also provides them with an instrument for memorization of the new lexis based on creating a mental link between already existing knowledge and new information, in this case accompanied with linguistic features provided by the text.
5. The students are given a quiz (see <b>Materials 3</b> ) which initially serves as an exercise testing the memorization of the pairs of synonyms. In the next phase the students ask and answer the questions they previously worked on.	This stage represents another students' encounter of the target vocabulary and their synonyms. It also requires its full comprehension in the context of questions the students ask each other. The added aspect enhancing memorization is personalization which occurs during creating answers to the questions.
6. General language practice	
7. Vocabulary test (see <b>Materials 4</b> )	The test uses both definitions of the vocabulary items and synonyms; the number

of words to be filled in is indicated by lines to give the students a clue of the required answers. Sometimes two alternatives are possible, both being regarded as a correct answer

**Materials:**

1) *Match the words and their definitions:*

- |                     |                                                                            |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) vice versa       | a) someone who always believes good things happen                          |
| 2) by chance        | b) a person who offers a service because he decides to                     |
| 3) intuition        | c) ability to understand something without needing to think about it       |
| 4) an optimist      | d) opinion about someone                                                   |
| 5) attitude         | e) to make someone happier                                                 |
| 6) cheer someone up | f) when things happen without any known reason                             |
| 7) a volunteer      | g) to show that what you have just said is also true in the opposite order |

KEY: 1g, 2f, 3c, 4a, 5d, 6e, 7b

## 2) The article:



a) Read the article. Choose the correct answers.

- 1 Richard Wiseman *studies* luck/*is* a very lucky person.
  - 2 He *thinks*/*doesn't think* some people are born lucky.
  - 3 His research shows that people *can*/*can't* learn to be lucky.
- b) Read the article again. Answer these questions.
- 1 Did Maureen Wilcox win the lottery?
  - 2 How long has Dr Wiseman been studying luck?
  - 3 Do lucky people have more new experiences than unlucky people?
  - 4 What was the aim of Dr Wiseman's luck school?
  - 5 How many people were luckier after going to luck school?



In June 1980, Maureen Wilcox became one of the US lottery's biggest losers. She *chose* the winning numbers for both the Rhode Island and Massachusetts lotteries. But unfortunately for her, the numbers she *picked* for the Rhode Island lottery were the correct ones for the Massachusetts lottery, and vice versa. We all know lucky people – they have good relationships, successful careers and are very satisfied with their lives. But what makes them so lucky? Dr Richard Wiseman has spent ten years studying luck and has found that lucky people have a completely different approach to the world.

### FOUR WAYS TO BE LUCKY

The results of his work revealed that people aren't born lucky. Instead, fortunate people *behave* in a way that creates good luck in their lives.

- They *notice* opportunities that happen *by chance* more often than unlucky people. They are also more open to meeting new people and having new experiences.
- They tend to make good decisions by listening to their intuition.
- They're optimists and are *certain* that the future is going to be full of good luck. This positive *attitude* often makes good things happen.
- They're also good at coping with bad luck and often cheer themselves up by imagining things could be worse than they are.



a) Look at the words/phrases in **pink** in the article. Check any words you don't know with your teacher or in a dictionary.

b) Look at the words/phrases in **blue** in the article. Match them to these synonyms. Write the infinitive form of the verbs.

choose	<i>pick</i>	by chance
satisfied		attitude
lucky		sure
behave		deal with
notice		show

c) Match a word/phrase in A to a synonym in B.

A	B
concerned	chat to someone
frightened	glad
make a decision	have a go at doing
try to do	huge
talk to someone	scared
nice	make up your mind
enormous	worried
pleased	brilliant
wonderful	awful
terrible	pleasant

### LUCK SCHOOL

Dr Wiseman tested his ideas by starting a luck school, where he hoped that unlucky people could learn to be lucky. 400 volunteers spent a month doing exercises to help them think and act like a lucky person. These exercises helped the volunteers spot opportunities that happen accidentally, trust their intuition more, feel *sure* they're going to be lucky and become better at dealing with bad luck. The results were dramatic and showed that 80% of the volunteers were now happier and more content with their lives – and most important of all, luckier.

Dr Wiseman's ideas won't help you win the lottery, but they might help you in your day-to-day life – fingers crossed!

(adapted from *Face2face intermediate* by Chris Redston and Gillie Cunningham, CUP)

### 3) The quiz:

a) Work with a student from group A. Write the correct synonym for the words in **bold**.

- 1 Do you expect people you meet to be **nice** and easy to talk to?  
a) yes, always b) sometimes c) no, not usually
  - 2 How **content** do you feel about your life?  
a) very b) quite c) not very
  - 3 How often do you **make a decision** about something based on your intuition?  
a) usually b) sometimes c) hardly ever
  - 4 When did you last **talk to** a stranger, for example in a queue or on a train?  
a) last week b) last month  
c) more than a month ago
  - 5 Do you ever feel **frightened** when you're going to do something new?  
a) yes, usually b) yes, sometimes  
c) no, not usually
  - 6 Do you think you're a **fortunate** person?  
a) yes, definitely b) sometimes c) no, not really
- b) Work with a student from group B. Take turns to ask and answer your questions. Say the three possible answers when you ask your questions.
- c) Give your partner 3 points for every a) answer, 2 points for every b) answer and 1 point for every c) answer. What is his/her score?
- d) Tell your partner his/her score. Then look at p141. Who is luckier, you or your partner?

a) Work with a student from group B. Write the correct synonym for the words in **bold**.

- 1 How **sure** are you that your future will be positive?  
a) very b) quite c) not very
  - 2 When was the last time something good happened to you **accidentally**?  
a) last week b) last month  
c) more than a month ago
  - 3 What kind of **approach** to life do you have?  
a) very positive b) quite positive  
c) generally negative
  - 4 Do you feel **worried** about the future?  
a) no, not usually b) yes, sometimes  
c) yes, most of the time
  - 5 How good are you at **dealing with** problems in your daily life?  
a) very b) quite c) not very
  - 6 When was the last time you **tried to do** something that you've never done before?  
a) in the last four weeks b) in the last three months  
c) more than three months ago
- b) Work with a student from group A. Take turns to ask and answer your questions. Say the three possible answers when you ask your questions.
- c) Give your partner 3 points for every a) answer, 2 points for every b) answer and 1 point for every c) answer. What is his/her score?
- d) Tell your partner his/her score. Then look at p141. Who is luckier, you or your partner?

6C Q p108

#### HOW LUCKY ARE YOU!

##### 16–18 points:

You're very positive about life and probably think that you're already a very lucky person. When things go badly, you don't worry too much because you know something good is going to happen soon. Why don't you do the lottery next weekend – you might win!

##### 13–15 points:

You're quite a lucky person and tend to look on the bright side of life. You know lots of people and have a very busy social life. Try to do something new every month and make sure you have some time to yourself as well.

##### 9–12 points:

You think you're lucky in some parts of your life, but not in others, and maybe you worry about the past and the future too much. Try to enjoy the present a little more and listen to your heart when you make decisions, not just your head.

##### 6–8 points:

You're not very lucky at the moment and probably expect things to get worse, not better. Why not try to meet some new people and take a few more chances in life? What's the worst that could happen?

(adapted from *Face2face intermediate* by Chris Redston and Gillie Cunningham, CUP)

4) *Vocabulary test:*

- 1) pleased with your situation \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) lucky \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) to see something, usually because you are looking hard \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) when things happen without any known reason \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) to deal successfully with a difficult situation \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) to allow something to be seen that, until then, had been hidden \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) to behave in a certain way \_\_\_\_\_

KEY:

- 1) content, satisfied
- 2) fortunate
- 3) spot, notice
- 4) by chance
- 5) cope with
- 6) reveal
- 7) act

**Test results:**

WORD	TEST RESULTS (%)	
	ADULTS	ADOLESCENTS
content, satisfied	57	56
fortunate	100	100
spot, notice	29	0
by chance	71	56
cope with	57	56
reveal	0	33
act	57	67
TOTAL SCORE	53	52

## **LESSON 3**

**Target vocabulary:** *hit (n), record (v), record (n), live (adj), lyrics (n), single (n), tune (n), the top 20, album (n), fan (n)*

### **Procedure:**

<b>Observations</b>	<b>Principles</b>
1. The students ask and answer questions related to the topic of the reading text. (see <b>Materials 1</b> )	By discussing questions dealing with the topic of the reading text their content schemata are activated and their personal interest in the topic is raised which helps them activate lexis connected with the theme and motivates them to do the following tasks.
2. The students do a knowledge quiz. (see <b>Materials 2</b> )	In the quiz there are several examples of the target vocabulary that the students are likely to recognize passively because they are used internationally. By seeing the lexis in the context of the subject knowledge questions they are mostly familiar with they get an opportunity to encounter them in a context of short questions and work out their meaning (or their part of speech) prior to the actual vocabulary focused work (the following step).
3. The students match the target word with their definitions. (see <b>Materials 3</b> )	While matching the definitions with the relevant lexis the students have a chance to refer to the quiz and double check their

	answers. This provides them with more links and associations necessary for encoding the words and their meaning into the students' memory.
4. The students read the text and do the comprehension check tasks. (see <b>Materials 4</b> )	Reading the text provides the students with yet another opportunity to enrich their network of associations of the target vocabulary as well as see the lexis in a natural context and thus get fully familiar with their correct usage.
5. Each student is allotted four of the target words, their task is to create questions for the other students in the group using the words, mingle, ask each other and make a summary of the obtained answers.	This task provides the students with an opportunity to use the words correctly in a sentence as well as produce them orally. As they are supposed to give answers about themselves, a personal link is created.
6. General language practice	
7. The students complete a vocabulary test (see <b>Materials 5</b> )	

**Materials:**

**1. Discussion questions:**

Talk to a partner.  
What kinds of music do you like?  
What kinds of music do you hate?  
Who is your favourite group or singer?  
When and where do you listen to music?  
Do you listen to music when you study? What kind?  
How often do you buy CDs or cassettes?  
What CD or cassette would you take with you to a desert island?

(adapted from *English File Intermediate* by Clive Oxenden and Christina L. Koenig, OUP)

**2. Quiz:** Do the '20th century pop' quiz in pairs.



**1** Where did the pop group Abba come from?  
**2** What kind of music did Bob Marley and the Wailers make famous?  
**3** Which Michael Jackson album sold 38 million copies in 1982?  
**4** Which Irish group couldn't find what they were looking for in the 1980s?  
**5** Which British group do the Gallagher brothers belong to?  
**6** Which British group couldn't 'get no satisfaction' in the 1960s?  
**7** Which hit single made the Spice Girls famous in 1997?  
**8** Which Californian group made surfing famous in the 1960s and 1970s (although only one of them could surf)?  
**9** Which song by Los del Rio did President Clinton dance to in 1995?  
**10** Who wrote the lyrics for the Beatles' songs?

(adapted from *English File Intermediate* by Clive Oxenden and Christina L. Koenig, OUP)

**3. Match the words with their definitions:**

Match the words with their definitions. Look at the phonetics. How do you pronounce the words? What's the difference between *record* as a verb and as a noun?

- |                         |                                            |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1 record /rɪ'kɔ:d/ (v.) | a a person who likes a group or singer     |
| 2 tune /tju:n/ (n.)     | b a collection of songs on CD or tape      |
| 3 lyrics /'lɪriks/ (n.) | c the best-selling singles at the moment   |
| 4 hit /hit/ (n.)        | d the music of a song                      |
| 5 album /'ælbəm/ (n.)   | e a CD with only one song                  |
| 6 record /'rekɔ:d/ (n.) | f the words of a song                      |
| 7 single /'sɪŋgl/ (n.)  | g not recorded                             |
| 8 the top 20            | h a plastic disc with recorded music on it |
| 9 fan /fæn/ (n.)        | i put music onto a tape or CD              |
| 10 live /laɪv/ (adj.)   | j a success                                |

(adapted from *English File Intermediate* by Clive Oxenden and Christina L. Koenig, OUP)

#### 4. The article:

##### 2 READ BETTER

- a Read the introduction to the text and look at the photos showing moments in Paul McCartney's life. Who are the other people?
- b Read some extracts from Paul McCartney's recent biography, *Many Years from Now*. Match the questions to the extracts.

Are any of your lyrics about real people and events?

Are you disappointed that none of your children are musicians?

When did you and John begin to write songs together?

How did you feel about becoming Sir Paul McCartney in 1997?

When did you and John Lennon meet?

Why did you decide to make your wife a member of your group Wings?

McCartney is probably the most popular musician of the 20th century. He began his career with John Lennon he formed the Beatles. Altogether he has written over 1000 songs including Yesterday, the most popular pop song of all time. He has also written a classical piece called 'Linda' which was premiered in 1998. His wife Linda died of cancer in 1998. He has four children.

'When I was 15 and he was 16 and we were still at school. We had a lot in common. We were both mad about music and our mothers when we were young. My mother had died of cancer the year before we'd met. So there was always a special bond between us.'



2

3

35 'Usually the Beatles' songs which were my idea weren't personal, but there were some exceptions, for instance I wrote *Let it be* about my mother, whose name was Mary. One night, when the Beatles were breaking up and I was feeling very depressed, I had a dream where I saw my mum, who had died when I was fourteen. It was great to see her again and in the dream she said, 'Don't worry. Everything'll be all right.' It was such a nice dream I woke up and I felt much better and I started to write *Let it be*. Afterwards, thousands of people wrote to me saying that the song had helped them in difficult times. Later, after the Beatles had broken up, I formed Wings and I wrote a lot of songs to my wife Linda, like *Silly Love songs* and *The Lovely Linda*'

?



5

'It was one of the best days of my life. When I arrived at Buckingham Palace I realized that I'd forgotten my invitation, but luckily it didn't matter. They recognized me. When the Queen touched me on the shoulder with the sword, my daughter Stella who was in the audience started crying. I felt incredibly proud that someone who started life in a poor street in Liverpool had come so far.'

6

'Not at all. On the contrary, I'm incredibly proud of them all, because they're all really creative. Stella, who's now a fashion designer will probably end up being more famous than me.'



4

45 'I persuaded her to do it. I needed her there, we were a partnership and I wanted her with me on the stage. She wasn't very happy about being in the group at all in the beginning, I suppose because she felt she wasn't a musician. But for me, it was really important to have her there. I know a lot of people didn't like it but that's their problem.'

?



(adapted from *English File Intermediate* by Clive Oxenden and Christina L. Koenig, OUP)

**5. Vocabulary test:**

1. a success .....
2. put music onto a tape or CD.....
3. a plastic disc with recorded music on it.....
4. not recorded.....
5. the words of a song.....
6. a CD with only one song.....
7. the music of a song.....
8. the best-selling singles at the moment.....
9. a collection of songs on a CD or a tape.....
10. a person who likes a group or a singer.....

**KEY:**

1. *a hit*
2. *to record*
3. *a record*
4. *live*
5. *lyrics*
6. *single*
7. *tune*
8. *the top 20*
9. *album*
10. *fan*

**Test results:**

WORD	TEST RESULTS (%)	
	ADULTS	ADOLESCENTS
hit	100	100
to record	100	75
a record	100	75
live	67	88
lyrics	67	100
single	100	100
tune	83	75
the top 20	83	75
album	100	100
fan	83	75
TOTAL SCORE	88	86

## **LESSON 4**

**Target vocabulary:** *overlooking (adj), miracle (n), elevator (n), skyscraper (n), landmark (n), stories (n)*

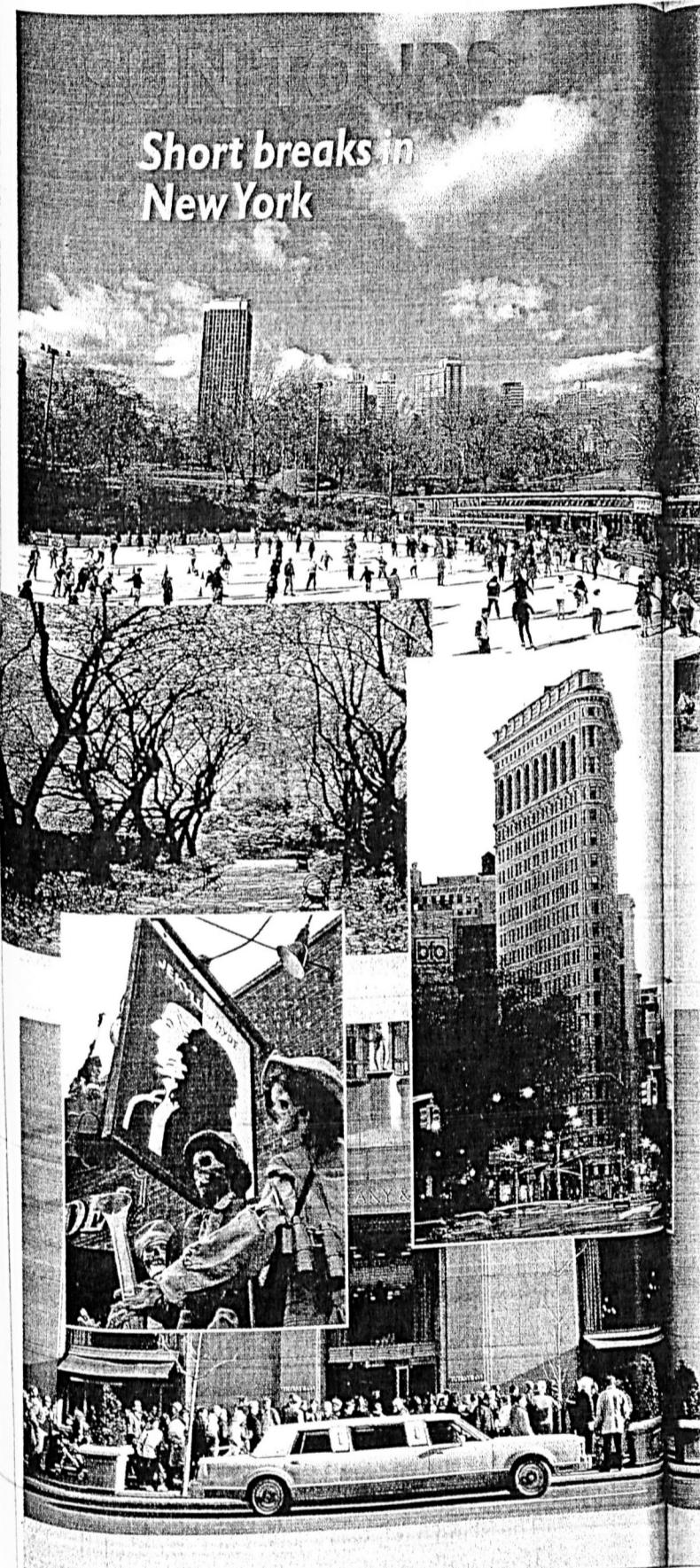
### **Procedure:**

<b>Observations</b>	<b>Principles</b>
1. The students brainstorm their knowledge of New York.	By revising their existing knowledge of the subject of the reading text the students activate the contextual schemata as well as predict some lexis they are likely to encounter in the follow-up reading activity which is supposed to enhance their comprehension of the article.
2. The students read the article (see <b>Materials 1</b> ) and mark true/false sentences about the text. (see <b>Materials 2</b> )	The students scan the text to find relevant pieces of information and encounter the target lexis in a context, although they do not need to know their meaning to complete the given task. At this stage the new vocabulary is being noticed unconsciously.
3. The students read the text again and try to find words matching the given definitions (see <b>Materials 3</b> )	At this stage the students use their ability to infer the meaning of unknown words from the context, they look for particular lexis in the text which can be replaced by the definitions.

<p>4. Each student is allotted one of the target words. They create a sentence using the word, all the students' sentences are then written on the board and the students' task is to memorize them. When the sentences are erased from the board the students in pairs challenge each other to remember the original sentences as precisely as possible.</p>	<p>This stage is focused on encoding the target lexis into the students' memory by creating a new link between the words and a different context given by the students' own sentences. Because they try hard to memorize the whole sentences, they will supposedly use this link later to recall the target lexis.</p>
<p>5.General language practice</p>	
<p>6.The students complete a vocabulary test (see <b>Materials 4</b>)</p>	

**Materials:**

**1. The article:**



(adapted from *English File Intermediate* by Clive Oxenden and Christina L. Koenig, OUP)

**DAY 1: TIMES SQUARE AND THE LINCOLN CENTER**

Welcome to New York – the Big Apple! Here in New York the wonders of the Big Apple exceed all expectations – the fantastic skyline, marvelous restaurants, theaters, museums, shops and attractions. On your first day you will visit the famous Lincoln and Rockefeller Centers, and drive down Fifth Avenue. You will drive through Times Square, the 'Crossroads of the World'. You will then travel to Central Park, a miracle in the center of Manhattan. Lunch is on your own, but this evening you will have dinner at the famous Jekyll and Hyde club, where the waiters are all dressed as vampires, and at some point in the evening Frankenstein comes to life!

**DAY 2: EXPLORING THE CITY**

The entire day is yours for sightseeing and shopping. Explore the captivating city of New York with its skyscrapers, bridges, historic landmarks and Broadway theaters.

**DAY 3: DOWNTOWN AND SOUTH STREET SEAPORT**

Today you will visit Greenwich Village, Wall Street and the Chrysler Building, at 77 stories one of the tallest buildings in New York. You will visit South Street Seaport, a 19th-century seaport with narrow streets, hundreds of shops, an international food pavilion and street entertainment. This afternoon you will visit Chinatown, and finally the Empire State Building Observatory, which towers 1,250 feet above New York City. You will use the high-speed elevators to get to the top, unlike King Kong who climbed up the outside of the building. This evening, you will have dinner at the prestigious Tavern-on-the-Green restaurant overlooking Central Park.

**2. True/false sentences:**

Read the brochure information about New York quickly.  
Write T (true) or F (false) next to 1–7.

- 1 On the first day you will visit the Statue of Liberty.
- 2 Central Park is outside Manhattan.
- 3 On the second day there is nothing organized for you.
- 4 On the third day you will visit a historic part of New York.
- 5 The Chrysler Building has over seventy floors.
- 6 You have to walk up to the top of the Empire State Building.
- 7 From the Tavern-on-the-Green restaurant you can see Central Park.

(adapted from *English File Intermediate* by Clive Oxenden and Christina L. Koenig, OUP)

**3. Definitions:**

Read the text again. Underline words or phrases which mean:

**Day 1**

- 1 a wonderful and extraordinary thing \_\_\_\_\_

**Day 2**

- 2 very tall buildings, typical of New York \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 objects or buildings that can be seen easily from a distance \_\_\_\_\_

**Day 3**

- 4 *floors of a building* in US English \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 *lifts* in US English \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 with a view of \_\_\_\_\_

In the description of Day 1, underline three examples of American spelling.

(adapted from *English File Intermediate* by Clive Oxenden and Christina L. Koenig, OUP)

4. *Vocabulary test:*

1. with a view of.....
2. a wonderful, extraordinary thing.....
3. *lifts* in US English.....
4. very tall buildings typical of New York.....
5. objects or buildings that can be easily seen from a distance.....
6. *floors of a building* in US English.....

*KEY:*

1. *overlooking*
2. *miracle*
3. *elevators*
4. *skyscrapers*
5. *landmarks*
6. *stories*

**Test results:**

WORD	TEST RESULTS (%)	
	ADULTS	ADOLESCENTS
overlooking	75	60
miracle	100	85
elevators	100	100
skyscrapers	75	75
landmarks	75	80
stories	50	60
TOTAL SCORE	79	77

## LESSON 5

**Target vocabulary:** *sweaty (adj), run out (v), to give sb. a lift, best man, hoot (v), go wrong, eventually (adv), wrong turning, tight (adj)*

### Procedure:

Observations	Principles
1. The students are given the headlines of the two articles they are going to read ( <i>The Wedding, The Interview</i> ), they try to predict what went wrong in each story	During the initial activity the students activate some lexis relevant to the topics of the stories; they are also personally involved in the content prediction which raises their motivation for further reading.
2. The two stories are mixed up, the students' task is to sort them out and put the paragraphs in the right order and check their predictions. (see <b>Materials 1</b> )	This activity raises students' awareness of the lexical features that tie the texts together (linking expressions) as well as the lexis thematically connected with the two different topics. Because they need to understand the content of the stories (checking their predictions), they already attempt some guessing strategies of the unknown vocabulary.
3. The students focus on the underlined lexis in the texts, try to infer their meaning and discuss the results in pairs.	At this stage the student are sufficiently prepared to apply their ability to guess the meaning of unknown lexis using contextual clues. By comparing the results they are given an opportunity for peer learning, which contributes to the overall development of this skill.

<p>4. Each student is allotted one of the target lexis, draws a picture representing the meaning. The pictures are compared and the students' task is to guess the meaning of the words represented by their drawings.</p>	<p>This activity is supposed to contribute to a better memorization of the target vocabulary by adding another link to the mental image of the words. This activity in particular uses the learners' visual channels.</p>
<p>5. General language practice</p>	
<p>6. Vocabulary test (see <b>Materials 2</b>)</p>	

## Materials:

### 1) The article:

## Nightmare journeys

We asked our readers to send us their 'nightmare' journeys.  
Here are this week's two best stories called *The Wedding* and *The Interview*.

- A After a few agonizing minutes of indecision I decided to abandon the car and take a taxi. But even the taxi took ages to get there because there was a terrible traffic jam. I eventually arrived, ten minutes late, hot, sweaty and really stressed. When I walked into the manager's office, the first thing she asked me was, 'Did you have a good journey?' 'Oh, yes,' I said. 'It was fine.' But at least the story has a happy ending, because I got the job!
- B Finally, with my car repaired, I reached the village at two o'clock in the afternoon, but the wedding had already finished. My friend was furious because I'd missed one of the most important moments in his life. 'Why don't you buy a *normal* car,' he said, 'which doesn't *always* break down when you really need it?'
- C I started to change the wheel myself, but I was wearing a very tight white skirt and jacket and was afraid of getting dirty. Time was running out, and I knew that being late for the interview would be disastrous. They might not even believe what had really happened.
- D But when I arrived at the first crossroads, I took the wrong turning and I soon found myself completely lost. The engine was beginning to get very hot and suddenly black smoke began coming out. Five minutes later the car broke down. In my elegant suit I began walking towards the nearest village to find a mechanic. Luckily, a passing car stopped and gave me a lift to the garage.
- E The worst journey I've ever had was three years ago when I was going to my friend's wedding at a small village in Scotland. I was the best man so it was very important for me to arrive early.
- F First of all, I saw that I'd almost run out of petrol, and had to stop at a garage. Then, as I was driving towards the centre, another car hooted at me and I realized that I had a puncture. I couldn't believe it!
- G My nightmare journey happened last year. I'd been unemployed for about six months but I had just been called for an interview for a job. The interview was at 4.15 in the centre of town. But as soon as I got into the car, everything started to go wrong.
- H The ceremony was at 1 p.m., but my car, an old sports car which I loved, was eighteen years old and sometimes used to break down. Although it was only an hour's journey from my home in Aberdeen, I'd decided to set off at 11.00 in the morning.



(adapted from *English File Intermediate* by Clive Oxenden and Christina L. Koenig, OUP)

2) *Vocabulary test:*

1. When people are hot, nervous or afraid they produce salty liquid. They or/and their clothes are \_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_.
2. Not to have much time left. The time is \_\_\_\_ n \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_.
3. To drive someone in their car. He \_\_\_\_\_ him \_\_\_\_ l \_\_\_\_.
4. At a wedding this is a male friend or a relative of the bridegroom who stands with him during the ceremony. The \_\_\_\_ m \_\_\_\_.
5. To make a short, loud, high sound (a car). To \_\_\_\_.
6. To become negative. To \_\_\_\_ w \_\_\_\_.
7. Finally. E \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_.
8. To go the wrong way. To take the \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_.
9. The opposite of *loose*. \_\_\_\_ g \_\_\_\_.

*KEY:*

1. *sweaty*
2. *running out*
3. *gave him a lift*
4. *best man*
5. *hoot*
6. *go wrong*
7. *eventually*
8. *wrong turning*
9. *tight*

**Test results:**

WORD	TEST RESULTS (%)	
	ADULTS	ADOLESCENTS
sweaty	75	75
running out	100	90
gave him a lift	75	70
best man	75	90
hoot	75	90
go wrong	25	90
eventually	100	75
wrong turning	75	80
tight	75	80
TOTAL SCORE	75	82

## SUMMARY

The findings gained during the experiment are based around two principles:

- 1) total results of the memorized lexis presented and practised under fairly similar conditions in two classes of the same level (intermediate) where the determining difference was the students' age
- 2) my personal observation of the performance of the students involved in the experiment

Although the difference between the number of words the students were able to recall during the final vocabulary test was not dramatic, in four out of five experiments the adult students group either equaled or slightly outperformed the adolescent student group. I attribute these findings to the following points:

- **Motivation:** as I did not conduct any survey regarding the target students' motivation, I can only draw on my personal monitoring of the control groups during the experiments. I noticed that the adults generally used the time allocated for completion of the given tasks to the full, they showed more concern about the precise meaning of the target vocabulary and they asked relevant questions about the correct usage of the lexis. In other words, they displayed more personal responsibility for their learning. Although the adolescents looked interested, their overall attitude appeared to be quite superficial and they did not seem to make as much effort as the students from the adult group. This fact might have had certain influence on the cognitive depth performed during the activities and thus on the overall memorization of the target lexis.
- **Learning styles/ strategies:** during their lifetime the adults have had more time and opportunities to work on and develop their own learning styles and strategies. During the experiment they benefited especially from their ability to use various cognitive strategies (e.g. inferencing) as well as metacognitive strategies (self-monitoring during learning, thinking about learning etc.) This fact made their learning position advantageous of the adolescents, who are still in the process of development of their own personal learning style. According to studies conducted among children, at the

early stages of their L2 development social and discourse strategies predominate, while studies of adults have emphasized cognitive and metacognitive strategies. (Ellis, p. 555)

The adults of the control group, who all have completed either secondary or tertiary education, are generally more experienced readers in their L1 than the adolescent students. This fact means that they are familiar with various reading strategies including the one of inferring the meaning of unknown words from the context in their L1 which they are able to apply while reading a foreign language text. Therefore their overall orientation in the text is more complex thus allowing them to create richer association networks. This fact significantly contributes to more successful memorization of the target lexis.

- *The issue of learning / acquisition processes of the two different age groups:* according to the Critical Period Hypothesis (CP) adolescents of this age (approximately 15) find themselves at the end of the CP, which means that more cognitive abilities are drawn on. Moreover, they are still capable of 'picking up' the language like children while applying conscious study at the same time. However, adults, who, to a certain extent, lost the ability to acquire new language unconsciously, are capable of perceiving the language as a formal system and conscious application of rules, which seems to play more important role in tasks of the selected type, i.e. using a reading text as a springboard to vocabulary memorization.

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