

# **Word Cards and the Development of Productive Recall Vocabulary Acquisition in an EFL Context**

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# Background

## Learners

- South Korean university-level EFL learners taking an oral communications course
- Learners had studied English for about 6 years before taking the course. They had focused on grammar, vocabulary and listening. Speaking was not a priority.

**Conundrum:** Why did students exhibit so little of the vocabulary they claimed to know when speaking?

**Theory:** Perhaps they knew the vocabulary receptively, but not productively. If so, how could they be assisted in the acquisition of productive vocabulary knowledge?

# Receptive Versus Productive Vocabulary Knowledge

## Receptive knowledge

- Used in listening and reading
- Moving from L2 to L1 knowledge (e.g., chair → 의자)\*

## Productive knowledge

- Used in speaking and writing
- Moving from L1 to L2 knowledge (e.g., 의자 → chair)\*

\*Assumption: Learners at this level are still translating.

# Recall and Recognition Vocabulary Knowledge

## Recognition Knowledge

The possible answers/words are supplied as in a multiple choice test.

## Recall Knowledge

The words/answers must be recalled from memory.

Learners use productive recall vocabulary knowledge when speaking English during conversations.

# Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

- ? The direct teaching of vocabulary fell out of favor with Krashen's claim (comprehensible input hypothesis) that vocabulary could be learned by guessing from context.
- ? Also, because there are so many words to learn to approximate a native speaker-like lexicon, the direct teaching of them would be impractical.

Recently, the direct teaching of vocabulary has been shown to be fast and to have good rates of retention (Nation, 2001).

# Word Cards and Vocabulary Acquisition

- ? L1 word on one side; L2 word on the other
- ? Can learn words productively or receptively by choosing the side of the card to use as a prompt and the side to recall.
- ? Good for practicing the recall of knowledge, which is more difficult than recognizing knowledge
- ? Can add extra word information (phonemic transcription, part-of-speech, sentences, collocations, etc.)
- ? Can use a progressive rehearsal strategy by moving known words to the back of the word card pack

# Example Word Card

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
ス   己	thread /θrɛd/ (noun) 1. I bought some blue thread at the store. 2. The ball of thread is under the table. 3. Sorry, the thread broke when I pulled it.

# Research Questions

1. Do the learners in this study have more receptive recall vocabulary knowledge than productive recall vocabulary knowledge?
2. Does using word cards to develop the productive recall of L2 words increase the amount of productive recall vocabulary knowledge learned as compared to not using word words?
3. Does the addition of a sentence to the word card increase the amount of productive recall vocabulary learning as compared to the non-sentence condition?



## Research Questions (continued)

4. How much productive recall knowledge is retained after three weeks?
5. Do the learners regard word card use as a helpful vocabulary acquisition strategy?

# Procedures and Results

## Context and Participants

- South Korean university students in their early twenties
- Dept. of English Language and Literature students taking an A2-level oral communication course (Common European Framework speaking scales)
- 3 pre-set classes: 2 treatment groups & 1 control group
- group size ranges from 19 to 32

# Research Question 1: Productive & Receptive Recall Vocabulary Size

## Procedure 1

- ? 74 students tested receptively; 76 students productively
- ? Receptive test: comfortable A.  $\pi$  \_\_\_\_\_ B. \_\_\_\_\_  
Productive test: 편안 $\bar{h}$ 한 co \_\_\_\_\_ (Laufer & Goldstein, 2004)
- ? 30 words from each of the 2000 & 3000 word-frequency levels

# Research Question 1 (continued): Productive & Receptive Recall Vocabulary Size

## Results 1

### Mean Scores (60 items)

Receptive 33.6

Productive 36.1

? Significant difference ( $t = 4.69, df = 72, p < .001$ )

BUT: Why was the productive score higher given the generally accepted belief that productive knowledge is harder to acquire than receptive?

Possible learning effect as the receptive test was administered first

# Research Question 1 (continued): Productive & Receptive Recall Vocabulary Size

## Procedure 2

- ? Students were tested again, but only at the 2000-word level because of time constraints
- ? Productive knowledge first, then receptive
- ? Test results were averaged

## Results 2

### Mean Scores (2000-word band)

Receptive                      20.82 = 69.4%

Productive                     18.66 = 62.2%

11.6% more receptive recall knowledge than productive\*

- ? Significant difference ( $t = 4.482$ ,  $df = 141$ ,  $p < .05$ )

# Research Question 2: Recall Vocabulary Knowledge Acquisition and Word Cards

## Procedure

Group 1: No treatment

Group 2: Make 35 word cards (5 per week); study in class (15 min. per week) and outside of class; Side B-target English word, phonemic transcription and part of speech; Side A-Korean translation of word

Group 3: Same as Group 2, but added 3 sentences to Side B  
(see Slide 7)

? Study productively-Look at Side A, then recall Side B

## Research Question 2: Recall Vocabulary Knowledge Acquisition and Word Cards

### Results

#### Mean Scores

	Receptive			Productive		
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Diff.	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Diff.
Group 1	22	24.2	2.2	16.9	19.2	2.4
Group 2	23	26.7	3.7	16.1	28.7	12.5
Group 3	23.9	27.4	3.5	15.9	26.9	11

- ? All differences were significant
- ? Groups 2 & 3 combined showed a 404% improvement over Group 1 on productive recall knowledge.
- ? Receptive knowledge also increased with word cards.

# Research Question 3: Vocabulary Acquisition and Sentence Use

## Procedure

- ? Group 3 added three sentences containing the target word to their word cards, which they had to try to recall when studying with their cards.

## Results

- ? No significant difference between Groups 2 & 3 on pre-versus post-test mean scores
- ? No advantage for the sentence condition, BUT
  - fewer sentences might improve the scores
  - gains in word knowledge that were not tested for may have occurred



## Research Question 4: Vocabulary Retention

### Procedure

- ? Students were post-tested for productive knowledge at the end of the treatment intervention period and again 3 weeks later.
- ? They did not have access to their word cards during the 3-week period.

### Results

#### Mean Scores

	Post-Test 1	Post-Test 2	Diff.	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Group 1	19.3	20.6	1.31	1.88 (not sig.)	0.08
Group 2	28.7	26.3	-2.33	5.76 (sig.)	0.00
Group 3	26.9	24.1	-2.88	3.62 (sig.)	0.00

## Research Question 4: Vocabulary Retention

- ? Group 1's productive recall vocabulary knowledge remained the same over the 3-week period.
- ? Groups 2 & 3 lost about the same amount of knowledge (ANOVA and Scheffe test:  $F = 12.188 (2, 59), p < .05$ ).
- ? Despite the lost knowledge, the word card groups showed greater gains in productive recall vocabulary over the course of the study as compared to the control group.

Group 1: 12.5%

Group 2: 34%

Group 3: 27.1%

# Research Question 5: Learner Perceptions of Word Card Use

## Procedure

- ? All students completed a survey and 5 students from Group 2 and 6 students from Group 3 were interviewed on their word card experience.

## Results

- ? 81% agreed that making word cards was a positive experience.
- ? 77.3% said studying with word cards was helpful.
- ? 95.7% believed word cards helped them remember new words.

## **Research Question 5 (continued): Learner Perceptions of Word Card Use**

- ? Only 42.1% of Group 3 students said they would continue to use word cards; Group 2-68.8%.
  - Group 3 students were less positive because their word card procedure required more time to make and study with the word cards than Group 2's procedure.
  - Students didn't like having words chosen for them (as required by study constraints).

## Implications for the Classroom

- (1) Use word cards; they are effective.
- (2) Writing sentences on word cards MAY provide students with extra word knowledge, but it requires more time, which can be demotivating. Try asking students to write 1 or perhaps 2 sentences.

# Conclusions

1. Learners; receptive recall vocabulary knowledge was 11.6% larger than their productive recall vocabulary knowledge at the 2000-word level.
2. Using word cards resulted in a 404% greater increase in vocabulary knowledge than not using them.
3. Including sentences on word cards did not result in added vocabulary acquisition.
4. The word card groups lost 8.7% of their productive recall vocabulary knowledge on average over 3 weeks, but acquired 145% more overall than the control group.
5. The participants reported using word cards to be a positive experience with almost all claiming that word cards helped them remember new words.

## References

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