Remembering New Language Strategies That Work – And Strategies That Don’t

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While without grammar little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.

(David Wilkins)
the brain - a container?
The chemicals of emotion, such as adrenalin, serotonin, and dopamine, act by modification of synapses; and modification of synapses is the very root of learning.

James Zull
Multi-sensory-processing of information: v a k
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hands-on learning
What influence if any does content have on making language memorable?
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What relationship if any do you see between memorability and authenticity? Do authentic texts make new language easier to remember? If so, why (not)?
If you yourself were to start learning another language, what strategies would you use to remember new language better?

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If you yourself were to start learning another language, what strategies would you use to remember new language better?

What do you think are the most common strategies used by your students to remember new language? Which of them would you (not) rate as efficient?

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If you yourself were to start learning another language, what strategies would you use to remember new language better?

What do you think are the most common strategies used by your students to remember new language?
I would [...] argue against using authentic language in the classroom, on the fairly reasonable grounds that it is actually impossible to do so. The language cannot be authentic because the classroom cannot provide the contextual conditions for it to be authenticated by the learners.

(Henry Widdowson)
The patent application claims any influenza VLPs produced by its cell culture methods as well as specific VLPs. VLPs claimed include those made with: the HA and NA genes of A/Indonesia/5/05, the HA gene from A/Anhui/1/2005, and the NA gene from A/Bar-Headed Goose/Qinghai/1A/2005, as well as VLPs made from sequences 90% (or more) homologous to those.
I always do it under water!
This objection is so obvious that it seems odd that the authenticity argument should ever be taken seriously.

(Henry Widdowson)
What’s more important?

RELEVANCE

AUTHENTICITY
Improving Students’ Learning With Effective Learning Techniques: Promising Directions from Cognitive and Educational Psychology.

John Dunlosky et al 2013
1. Elaborative interrogation
2. Self-explanation
3. Summarization
4. Highlighting / Underlining
5. Keyword mnemonic
6. Imagery for text
7. Rereading
8. Practice testing
9. Distributed practice
10. Interleaved practice
Dunlosky et al: Four categories of variables checked to see whether a strategy was of *high*, *moderate* or *low* utility to students

1. Learning conditions (e.g. whether studying alone or in groups)
2. Student characteristics (e.g. age, prior knowledge)
3. Materials (subject, study genre)
4. Criterion tasks (outcome measures relevant to students’ achievements, e.g. comprehension, problem solving etc.)
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Utility:

2 low, 2 moderate, 2 high

Any guesses ????
Low utility:

Rereading
Low utility:

Rereading

“[I]n head-to-head comparisons of learning techniques, rereading has not fared well against some of the more effective techniques discussed here.”  
(Dunlosky et al 2013 / p 29)
Low utility:
Highlighting / Underlining
Perhaps most concerning are results from a study that suggested that underlining can be detrimental to later ability to make inferences [...] it may be problematic to the extent that it prevents students from other, more productive strategies.  (Dunlosky et al 2013 / p 20 / 21)
Moderate utility: Keyword mnemonic

“and perhaps most disconcerting, the keyword mnemonic may not produce durable retention”.

(Dunlosky 2013 / p 22)
Moderate utility: 
Interleaved practice

“...it does not appear that interleaved practice of vocabulary boosts retention.”

(Dunlosky 2013 / p 43).
High utility: Practice- / Self testing

“...performance on a final test was substantially greater after continued testing (80%) than after continued study (36%)”

(Dunlosky et al 2013 / p 30)
High utility: Practice- / Self testing

“Concerning dosage, the simplest conclusion is that more is better.”

(Dunlosky et al 2013 / p 31)
High utility: Practice- / Self testing

“...observed significantly greater final-test performance when students engaged in cued-recall practice until target items were recalled four to five times versus only once.”

(Dunlosky et al 2013 / p 31)
High utility:

Practice- / Self testing

“the available evidence suggests that practice tests that require more generative responses (e.g. recall, or a short answer in the student’s own words) are more effective than practice tests that require less generative responses (e.g. recognition).”

(Dunlosky et al 2013 / p 31)
The Generation Effect refers to the finding that learners are more likely to remember the items that they have generated in one way or another, either totally or partially, than the items they have just read and memorized. (Sharifian 2002, p2)
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Optimal learner engagement:

- hands-on learning
- minds-on learning
High utility:

Distributed practice
High utility: Distributed practice

“Criterion performance was best when the lag between sessions was approximately 10–20% of the desired retention interval [...] For example, to remember something for 1 week, learning episodes should be spaced 12–24 hours apart, to remember something for 5 years, the learning episodes should be spaced 6–12 months apart.” (Dunlosky et al 2013 / p 37)
A few suggestions:

• The most effective study strategies are relatively easy to learn and not very time-consuming.

• Teachers should ‘sell’ these strategies as efficient and important to students’ learning progress.

• Teachers should consistently train students in the use of more effective ‘minds-on’ study techniques.
We’ve been looking at:

1. Memory - a growing system of neuronal networks: perception of progress is key
2. Self- or practice testing and distributed practice most efficient
3. Self testing should include reconstructive and productive tasks: generation effect
4. Suggestions for implementation
Thank you!

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