

**THE ROLE OF COGNITIVE STRATEGIES IN DEVELOPING
LEXICAL COMPETENCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN
FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

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For effective communication in a foreign language, having a vocabulary, that is, lexical competence, is of particular importance. Lexical competence is determined by the level of knowledge of the vocabulary of a language learner, their ability to use it correctly and actively use it in the speech process. The role of cognitive strategies in this process is invaluable. Because cognitive strategies allow the student to consciously form their knowledge, remember, process information and appropriately apply it in communicative situations. This thesis will extensively cover the role of cognitive strategies in the development of foreign language vocabulary competence of secondary school students.

The term “cognitive strategies” refers to the conscious, active and goal-oriented mental activity of students in the process of acquiring knowledge. They are learning methods that allow them to perceive, process, consolidate and remember information at the right time¹. For example, classifying new words, creating associations, creating semantic maps, using words in context, and learning through synonyms and antonyms are examples of cognitive strategies. These strategies help not only to passively memorize vocabulary, but also to apply it in active speech activity. Lexical competence is one of the main components in learning a foreign language. No matter how important it is to know grammatical rules, if lexical wealth is not sufficient, communication cannot be effective. Therefore, the formation of

¹ Oxford, Rebecca L. *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers. 1990. pp. 37–58.

students' vocabulary competence is at the heart of foreign language education. Although school-age students have the ability to quickly remember vocabulary, it is necessary to rely on cognitive strategies to consolidate it in long-term memory and use it in speech. For example, when memorizing the word “environment” in English, associating it with the Uzbek word “atrof-muhit” encountering it in various texts, and reinforcing it with a picture or table will help the student remember it consciously.

The use of cognitive strategies provides the following positive results for students: conscious memorization of vocabulary; retention of words in long-term memory; formation of independent learning skills; free use of words in speech activity; increased motivation for a foreign language.

School-age students tend to learn a language more through practical activities. Therefore, cognitive strategies are suitable for their needs. For example, if during the lesson the teacher encourages students to use new words not only in translation, but also in role-playing games, text analysis, and in constructing sentences based on pictures, students will master vocabulary more effectively.

In modern education, the development of students' independent learning skills plays an important role. Cognitive strategies serve as the main tool in this process. For example, if a student writes down new words in a dictionary notebook for homework and adds them to their synonyms and antonyms, he will independently master these words. Also, the use of visualization and contextual application strategies using mobile applications, electronic dictionaries and Internet resources will also give effective results.

The teacher's approach is important in the effective use of cognitive strategies². The teacher must explain various strategies to students, teach them how to use them correctly, and reinforce them through practical exercises. For example, if in an English lesson the teacher requires students to create a semantic map within the framework of the topic “travel” then use these words in sentences, and finally

² Nation, I. S. P. Learning Vocabulary in Another Language. 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 112–134.

organize a role-playing conversation, students will thoroughly form lexical competence through cognitive strategies.

Secondary school students are at a stage of psychological development, a period when their memory, attention, and thinking are actively formed. During this period, they widely use various associations, games, and visual images to memorize new words. Therefore, cognitive strategies are appropriate for the age characteristics of students. For example, memorizing words using flashcards, learning vocabulary from song lyrics, or using English words in computer games can engage students in the language and increase their motivation.

Motivation is also a key factor in developing students' vocabulary competence. Cognitive strategies serve as an important tool for increasing motivation. Because through them, students can see their success faster. For example, if a student can master dozens of new words in one lesson through a semantic map, he will have the confidence that "I am also capable of learning a language." As a result, the student becomes more active and strives to work independently.

The Uzbek education system pays great attention to learning foreign languages. English textbooks also often contain tasks based on cognitive strategies. For example, tasks such as vocabulary tables on a new topic, giving words with synonyms and antonyms, and isolating key words from texts are practical manifestations of the cognitive approach. Teachers also create opportunities for students to memorize words through games and reinforce them with interactive exercises. Therefore, cognitive strategies are gradually finding their place in our schools.

Foreign and domestic studies show that the vocabulary competence of students who regularly use cognitive strategies increases significantly. For example, the effectiveness of cognitive strategies is scientifically substantiated in the studies of E. Oxford. Uzbek scientists also noted that in experiments conducted with schoolchildren, teaching words using semantic maps was twice as effective as traditional memorization methods. This demonstrates the scientifically and

practically proven effectiveness of these strategies.

For example, in an English lesson, when studying the topic “Animals”, the teacher can use the following cognitive strategies: students are given picture cards and they classify animals (wild animals, domestic animals, marine animals); then the students make a semantic map and place words related to each group; each student composes 2-3 sentences about his favorite animal; at the end of the lesson, the students describe a trip to the zoo through a role-playing game. Such an activity ensures not only memorization of words, but also their use in context. As a result, students effectively master vocabulary.

The wider introduction of cognitive strategies into teaching methods is one of the important tasks facing the education system of Uzbekistan. In the future, textbooks and teaching aids should include more instructions on the use of cognitive strategies, and teacher training courses should focus on these methods. Also, creating special mobile applications for students will make their independent learning more convenient³.

From the above considerations, it is clear that cognitive strategies are a decisive factor in the development of foreign language vocabulary competence of schoolchildren. They provide an opportunity not only to memorize words, but also to deeply assimilate them, store them in long-term memory and actively use them in speech. In addition, cognitive strategies increase students' motivation, form independent learning skills, and when combined with modern technologies, they give more effective results. Therefore, teachers and the education system should pay more attention to these methods and regularly use them in the classroom.

It is worth noting that cognitive strategies are not only useful in teaching a foreign language, but also develop students' general thinking, logical thinking, and creative approach. Strategies aimed at memorizing and using words in the process of language learning actually help students think independently, manage their knowledge, and form effective reading habits. This will help them not only during

³ Ellis, Rod. The Study of Second Language Acquisition. 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 278–299.

school, but also at later stages of education. Since lexical competence is the basis of language proficiency, the regular use of cognitive strategies will allow the future generation to speak foreign languages fluently and actively participate in the modern knowledge space. Therefore, in-depth study of these strategies and their effective use in the learning process is one of the most urgent tasks of the education sector today.

Although teachers are gradually introducing cognitive strategies into language teaching today, there are wider opportunities for their more advanced use. First of all, in the lessons, students should be encouraged not only to memorize words, but also to use them in real-life situations. For example, if, when studying the topic of “shopping”, students can express the process of shopping in a store in English through small scenes, they will not only remember new words, but also consolidate them in their speech experience. At the same time, with the help of modern interactive technologies, multimedia tools and mobile applications, cognitive strategies can be implemented in a more interesting way. Students learn to work independently with electronic dictionaries, test their knowledge through online tests. Such an approach develops not only lexical competence, but also their independent learning skills.

Thus, cognitive strategies serve as a unique and effective tool in the learning of a foreign language by secondary school students. With their help, students acquire vocabulary more deeply, have the opportunity to use them in active speech, and increase their interest in learning the language.

The list of used literatures

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