Second Language Vocabulary Attrition Lynne Hansen

Attrition is a gradual process of wearing down, weakening, or destroying something. Vocabulary **retention** has been defined as "the ability to recall or remember things after an. interval of time.

Vocabulary attrition – vocabulary loss
Research investigation started in the Netherland focused on the receptive knowledge of words, which has since been found to be more readily acquired and less prone to have been considerable.
Next future will be in the focus on PRODUCTION of words.
Language attrition investigates:

1. College and high school students
2. Child returness from residence abroad
3. Returned LDS (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) missionaries

Linguistic and extralinguistic influences on lexical attrition

1. L2 cognate translation retained better than non-cognate translations by university students, meaning the more an L2 word resembles the corresponding word in the first language, the better it will be maintained. Study showed that natural context plays an important role, such as high frequency cognates are retained best compared to low-frequency non-cognates.
2. Population : adult and LDS missionaries
3. Dutch learners (L1 related closely to English) maintained their vocabulary vs Chinese (L1 unrelated to English) experienced lexical attrition
4. Word-length influences attrition such as L2 German longer words better than short words by L1 English university
5. L1 influence on L2 lexical retention does appear.
6. L2 word length did link to retention
7. Frequency affect word retention due to high-frequency use by Dutch and German learners who returned study in Spain (picture naming task) as well as language acquisition, as it determines exposure, in L2 vocabulary attrition evidence from the missionary studies suggest that, at lease in an L1 context, a word's vulnerability to loss may be affected to a greater extent by frequency of the corresponding word in the mother tongue than by the frequency of the word in the L2.

8. No study proved that concrete vs abstract nouns affect vocabulary attrition especially in general vs technical terms.
9. Age -- The younger the child, the more rapid the word loss
10. Learner attitudes and motivations have a relatively weaker effect than in lexical acquisition. A study mentioned that language-learning motivation has a relatively strong effect in acquisition, attitude rewards to vocabulary knowledge due to second language and culture.
11. L2 shorter words are easy to remember, and L2 more word frequency is easy to remember as well.
12. Extralinguistic factors in lexical retention include age (older children retain words better) and vocabulary size (learners who learn more words retain a larger proportion of the words known).

Theoretical explanations applied in L2 vocabulary attrition studies
1. L2 vocabulary attrition research is from cognitive psychology, based on a premise that for previously known words that can no longer be recalled or recognized, knowledge remains that can be activated in relearning.
2. The oldest theory in vocabulary attrition is the **regression hypothesis**, which predicts that the path of attrition will be the reverse of the path of acquisition. Regression hypothesis **supposes that language attrition is an inverse process compared to language acquisition**, i.e., first in, last out or vice versa. In other words, the processes of language attrition and acquisition mirror each other (Jakobson, 1941). For example, Russel's (1999) study explored that the Japanese particles by returned missionaries which are acquired most recently tended to be lost first, as predicted by regression theory.

Suggestions:
Dynamic systems theory (DST) might be a promising candidate to be used in accounting for language and language development. However, the complexity of interacting factors in the systems and lack of clarity about the methodology are main issues in this field.
Another suggestion is based on Meara's (2004) study that real strides in theorizing about the L2 lexicon will occur only when vocabulary researchers take on board the radically new ways of looking at vocabulary that are emerging on the edges of computational linguistics.

Reasons for vocabulary attrition:
Revisiting the state of art
Thamer Alharthi (2015)

This study explores why 43 fourth year male in Saudi EFL majors at King Abdulaziz University (KAU) forget vocabulary knowledge. The study showed that learners hardly practiced the vocabulary, the influence of Instructional and environmental context as well as nature of the world.

Statement of the problem

A starting point of language attrition when the University of Pennsylvania hosted the first conference ever on the theme in May 1980.

Intrinsic difficulty of lexical items and attrition:
Intra-lexical traits, i.e. internal features related to the word's form and meaning. that is vocabulary may be difficult due to various factors, such as pronounce ability, grammatical class, similarity to known words, and concreteness or image ability of meaning.

As long as there is a difficulty in learning a given word, it is reasonable to expect that a greater decline in vocabulary of forgetting of that word occurs. The word difficulty includes pronunciation, form, morphology, syntactic patterns, semantic patterns and collocation.

Intra-lexical factors concerns word learning including orthographic patterns, cognates, concreteness, concreteness and abstractness, word length and part of speech.

Literature review

Welten and Grandel (1993) use the term *forgetting* instead of *loss* is based on "retrieval failure theory". According to psychologist forgotten language input is still available and not totally erased from memory. Example Saudi officers in Saudi armed forces forgot more than 40% of the items tested after leaving King Abdul Aziz military academic as a result of having no practice or enough exposure.
It has been argued that when there is a lot to learn, there is a lot of forgetting.

Reasons
1. Some words are easy to forget
2. Using a limited range of words

3. Word length, word frequency, as well as subject-specific words
4. Words' grammatical class (adjective/verb) and length (long words) can make more difficult and less likely to be retained in memory.
5. Language environment i.e., the setting where the target language was acquired, is one of the influential factors which have been previously demonstrated to be relevant in the context of language attrition.

The reasons given to some extent overlap, hence they are grouped under three main categories:
- Factors related to lack of language practice or to less focus on lexical aspects when using the language.
- Factors related to instructional and environmental contexts: (i) type and level of materials used by the study participants in teaching classes; (ii) teaching methodology used to deliver the target language, for example, by using L1; (iii) lack of motivation by public school students to learn the language, possibly due to their parents' poor education, perhaps even illiteracy; and (iv) lack of adequate facilities provided by some institutions.
- Factors related to the linguistic 'nature' of a word, e.g., length, frequency, specialized use, polysemy and part of speech.

Pedagogical implications;
- Teachers and materials writers should guide L2 learners to move on to a level of additional lexical knowledge through extensive exposure in reading materials, because of time investment. In other words, classroom vocabulary input mediated by teachers could be supplemented by having them read extensively, which helps to commit their vocabulary to memory.
- The key to EFL vocabulary enhancement and retention is to integrate extensive reading with explicit enhancement activities. It is of paramount importance that the language teaching policy at KAU maximizes the opportunities for using language in more meaningful communication practice, especially for graduates who are preparing to be EFL teachers.
- EFL graduate teachers can later take steps to foster their language skills in general and their vocabulary knowledge in particular that can be maintained after formal instruction ends, e.g., books related to their areas of interest, authentic texts

(such as magazines and newspapers), watching TV, listening to radio and browsing the Internet

- Add another strand to their language development as a part of in-service training courses. I suggest that such courses could serve not only with regard to instruction in teaching techniques, but also empower EFL teachers with linguistic skills, particularly in vocabulary, speaking and writing, and so encouraging them to participate in group discussions.

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