

PECULIARITIES OF SPACED LEARNING METHOD IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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Knowledge of foreign languages has been valued since ancient time. No wonder in ancient Carthage members of a special caste of “professional translators” had a special legal status and were exempt from all duties [1].

Currently being a polyglot is no less appreciated. It is difficult to get a job in a prestigious company without knowing foreign languages, because the translation of specialized literature is delayed only for a year or two [2]. It is inconvenient to go to a country with a “foreign” language for you. In addition, knowledge of languages expands the boundaries of possibilities: reading fiction in the original form, watching movies in the target language without losing meaning, for example, because of phonetic ambiguity, expanding the circle of communication.

Language learning begins with the formation of vocabulary. Its replenishment must be a continuous process. There are different approaches to memorizing foreign words: the traditional method of Yartsev, the method of cards, the method of writing the words out for visual learners or listening to words repeatedly for auditory learners. However all these methods require some accessories in the form of, for instance, pens, paper and list of studied words, cards, audio recordings, that might not always be at hand when you have free minute to repeat words.

This article introduces a tool that was appeared by integrating traditional methods of memorizing the words, taking from them only positive features. It is characterized by the absence of necessity to carry writing materials, cards, audio recordings; its availability and continuity during the language study. The article will focus on applications for smartphones based on the method of spaced repetition with the involvement of other different techniques of memorization. These applications are recommended to use not only to replenish the vocabulary of a foreign language, but also to memorize historical events, capitals of the world, etc.

So, what is the spaced repetition method?

People have been asking questions about effective information storage for a long time. In 1885, German scientist, psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus published an article in which he described a curve of forgetting the information in the form of a meaningless series of syllables (figure 1) [3]. Looking at it, you can see that after 20 minutes, 40% of the information is forgotten, an hour later – more than 50%, a day later – about 70%. Then the forgetting curve becomes almost horizontal.

In 1967, the American linguist Paul Pimsleur proposed an effective approach, which is to repeat the studied material just before it is completely erased from your memory, and then, the time after which you will start to forget it again, will increase exponentially. This method was called spaced repetition [4].

Based on the experimental data, it was concluded that it is necessary to repeat the memorized material according to the scheme for effective long-time memorization:

- 1st repetition – immediately after reading;
 - 2nd repetition – 20-30 minutes after the 1st repetition;
 - 3rd repetition – 1 day after 2nd;
 - 4th repetition – 2-3 weeks after 3rd;
 - 5th repetition – 2-3 months after the 4th repetition.
- The mode should be selected individually, by trial.

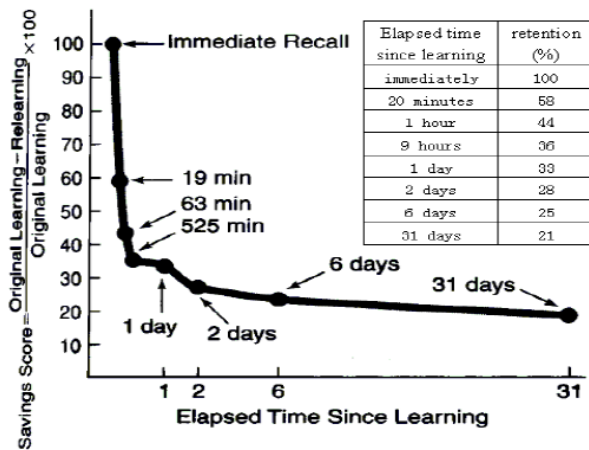


Figure 1. Forgetting curve of Ebbinghaus

The following line graph (figure 2) illustrates how spaced repetition changes the shape of the forgetting curve. With each repetition at the right time, the knowledge is stored in memory for a long period of time, and the person will need more time to forget what he have learned.

In 1972, the scientist Sebastian Leitner explained the method of spaced repetition of the learnt information presented in the form of cards in his article, in which successfully memorized information (card) was put into a special box designed for repeating over a longer interval. This method was called the Leitner system. For now, more effective method of memorization than Leitner's system, which would be justified psychologically and confirmed by years of experiments on large audiences, does not yet exist [3, 4].

In the early 80s of the twentieth century, Peter Wozniak began to develop the first computer program to memorize the words based on the described approaches, called "Supermemo", the first version of which appeared in 1982. It showed very impressive results: about 95-97% of the information remains in memory after 1 year from the moment of initial memorization [3].

Over time, there appeared many similar applications: "Anki", "Memrise", "Mnemosyne Project", etc. for various operating systems: Windows, Linux, Mac OS, Android, etc. It must be noted that the applications presented above can serve to memorize not only the new vocabulary, but also the location of countries on the world map, medical terminology, mathematical formulas, traffic rules, practicing guitar chords, etc. If we consider the use of these applications solely with the purpose of learning a foreign language, such as English, as it is in the first place among foreign languages and has long been reached the international level. To the applications listed above following ones can be added: "ABBYY Lingvo Tutor", "LinguaLeo", "WordSteps", etc.

All these programs have one task in common: to calculate the "ideal moment of time" for repetition of the learned information, because if you do it earlier than it should be, you simply waste your time, and if it is too late, you have more time to forget the material, consequently, you learn it all over again [5].

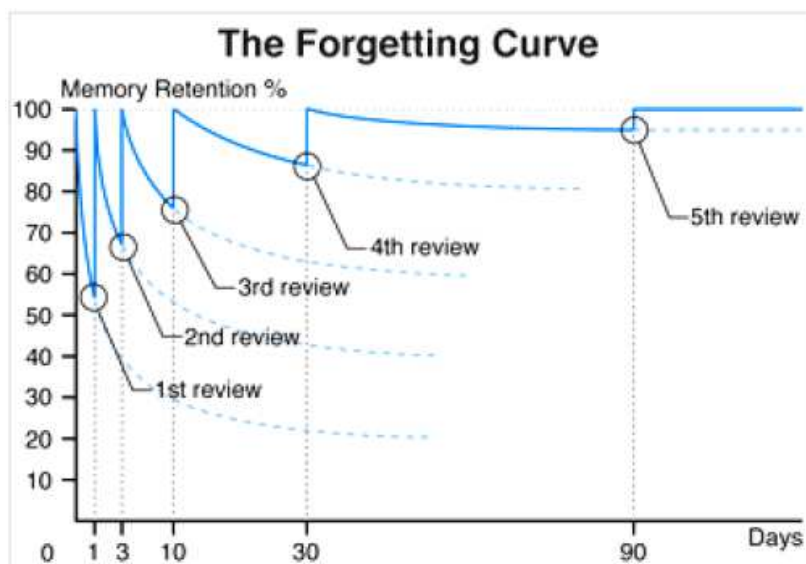


Figure 2. Graph of the forgetting curve under the influence of spaced repetition

However, it is necessary not only to repeat effectively, but also to learn new words. For this purpose, applications use additional methods, such as visualization, you can insert a bright picture, or write out the words, or associative, or consonant mnemonics, etc.

To learn new words you need a deck of cards. It can be created by yourself, or you can download an existing one, created by the same users as you. Most applications have versions for both computers and mobile devices, hence, there is a possibility of synchronization. This means that you can repeat the study material anywhere at any time from any device. Moreover, most applications provide statistics in the form of numbers and graphs, which clearly shows your progress.

This article presents a cursory review of programs for the study of new information, in particular foreign words. In the future, an experiment is planned, which consists in comparing applications for efficiency: the amount of time spent on one learned word, as well as the percentage of learned words.

It should be noted that learning a new language is not limited by memorizing words, and it is necessary to devote time for grammar, communication with a native speaker and reading foreign literature. Nevertheless, the smartphone apps can help you to take the first step in achieving a high level of English. Most of the applications presented in the article are free and are mentioned not for advertising purposes, but for reference.

Literature

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