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Enhancing Lexical Competence through Memory Strategies: A Study of German Language Learners Aged 55+ Working as Older People Caregivers in Germany

Summary

This dissertation investigates the theoretical and empirical aspects of vocabulary learning for German as a Foreign Language (GFL) learners aged 55 and above (U55+). It focuses on the role of lexical memory strategies and strategy training in enhancing lexical competence in a digital environment. The study focuses on senior caregivers working in Germany and examines how such training influences their lexical competence development. Moreover, it aims to deepen the understanding of conditions for strategy training as an integral part of an elementary-level GFL course for U55+ learners, specifically in an *online* setting. The findings from this survey informed the design of an *online* German course for U55+ learners, incorporating strategy training in lexical memory strategies. The second module involved the implementation of this *online* course and an in-depth analysis of the learning process and outcomes for five participants.

The theoretical and analytical part comprises five chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to foreign language vocabulary acquisition and discusses memorization aspects in language learning. The second chapter explores the individual factors involved in this process, encompassing biological, psychological and social aspects. Chapters three and four discuss lexical competence and its development possibilities for U55+ learners, with a particular emphasis on lexical memory strategies. These strategies are further expanded upon within the framework of strategic training, which can also be conducted in a digital environment. The fifth chapter discusses the conditions for the effective delivery of such training.

The empirical part presents a research project consisting of two interconnected research modules. The first module, an introductory survey, was conducted among U55+ senior caregivers in Germany to assess their needs, expectations, and capabilities, particularly in terms of GFL vocabulary learning. It also examined the context of available GFL courses at the elementary level and selected teaching materials offered for this professional group. Based on this preliminary assessment, the second module developed a curriculum for an *online* GFL course using the Moodle platform. This course incorporates strategic training in lexical memory

strategies. The module presents the findings of in-depth research on course implementation, an analysis of the learning process from the perspective of its five participants, and the results of its evaluation.

The insights gained from this project extend beyond its cognitive function and can serve as a foundation for developing targeted methodological and organizational solutions to enhance the effectiveness of lexical competence development for U55+ learners.

Keywords

vocabulary, vocabulary learning strategy, strategy instruction, vocabulary learning strategy instruction, lexical competence, memory strategy, older adults, German as a Foreign Language, learners aged 55 and above, Older People Caregivers in Germany, Moodle, e-learning

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