



LEARNING HEBREW VOCABULARY

Student's Name

Class Information

Date

The time that is taken to achieve fluency in a second language (L2) varies for different individuals.

[1] Some of the factors that affect the level of knowledge of L2 include age of the learner, cognitive style, intelligence, personality, and aptitude. Some people can learn a new language within a few weeks, whereas others it may take several years. I am a native English speaker, and I am also fluent in Portuguese. When it comes to me, I am a slow learner, and it was not easy to study the Hebrew language. For example, there are twenty-two basic characters in Hebrew, whereas English has twenty-six. Of the 22 characters, five have five alternative forms depending on the word being used. There were other challenges, such as learning to read and write from right to left, which was so different from what I was used to in English and Portuguese.

Since every language consists of two crucial components: vocabulary and grammar, my first step was to learn and memorize Hebrew words. During the first days of studying, I spent a lot of time memorizing the Aleph-Bet. I also had a basic rule that in case I came across some words I did not understand I would look for their meaning or ask native Hebrew speakers for explanations. Most of my fellow students were native Hebrew speakers, and I used this to my own advantage. During my first days, I spent a lot of time listening to them and asking them about new words. I was also committed to setting some time aside every day to study and teach myself Hebrew language. However, I observed that I forgot most of the words that had been explained to me, and therefore, I decided to put down the new vocabulary in a notebook. I wrote down Hebrew words on one side and the English translation of that word on the other one. I also associated words with certain visual objects and made drawings alongside the descriptions. Pictographic scripts were initially used to represent the Hebrew alphabet, after which the pictograms gradually developed into Hebrew script. I used pictograms to capture the meanings of certain words. For example, *Tet* is a Hebrew noun that means a fence or a wall, while *Ayin* means the eye or to see. Both words have pictographs resembling the objects they represent. I reviewed the new vocabulary every day in the evening.

After about three weeks, the vocabulary list became so long that I usually spent more than one hour memorizing new words. I realized that I needed another acquisition strategy that was more effective than the current method. So I adopted a flashcard system called spaced repetition learning. According to contemporary literature on studying foreign languages, a person's memory can retain information for a longer time if the individual reads the learning material once and tries to recall it later in comparison to re-reading the information continuously without taking a break.[2] The spaced repetition model is based on this concept, and the approach involves progressively

lengthening the interval between successive recollection sessions.

I used a mobile-assisted spaced-repetition tool called Anki, and with this new method, I was able to learn the Hebrew vocabulary more efficiently. For example, if I correctly remembered the words I had learned the previous day, I did not try to recall the words until after two days. If, after two days, my recollection was correct, I increased the reflection period to three days. However, if I forgot the meaning of a word, I put it back onto my learning list the information until I got it right several times, after which I made gradual increments on the recall interval.

Spaced repetition was effective in the following ways:

1. Encountering information regularly at spaced intervals increased the likelihood of learning new words in comparison to reviewing the same vocabulary multiple times within one session.
2. The recall intervals are set in a way that the probability of forgetting the learned material when not accessed for a long period of time is reduced.
3. Anki involves active learning with reading the information out loud, thereby activating visual and auditory memory.

Within a few months, I have remembered many Hebrew words and I learned to use them to communicate effectively. However, my grammar is sometimes incorrect and I am currently working on improving my proficiency in Hebrew syntax.

[1] Lai-Mei Leong and Seyedeh Ahmadi, "An Analysis of Factors Influencing Learners' English Speaking Skill," *International Journal of Research in English Education*, (2017): 34.

[2] Richard Bailey and Jesse Davey, "Internet-Based Spaced Repetition Learning In and Out of the Classroom: Implementation and Student Perception," *CELE Journal* 20 (2011): 41.