

Teaching elementary Hebrew: what can we learn from the research?

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MOFET International Webinar

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In general:

How do we know what procedures are the most effective for teaching Hebrew to beginners?

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- Our own experience and reflection

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- Our own experience and reflection
- What we have learned from other teachers and from our students.
- The literature, courses
- The research

The research

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- No time!

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- Difficult language

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- An enormous amount: selection?

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- Practicality

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Not usually accessible to teachers:

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- Practicality
- Relevance

Need for mediators

People with teaching experience rather than academics

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- Selection

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- ... and webinars

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A selection of relevant research for practitioners teaching Hebrew to beginners.

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Some criteria for selection:

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A selection of relevant research for practitioners teaching Hebrew to beginners.

Some criteria for selection:

- reliable (often replicated)
- not obvious
- interesting
- clearly relevant and applicable

Agree or disagree?

1. You need to know about 85% of the words of a text in order to understand it and guess words you don't know.
2. It helps you remember if you learn items in lexical sets (e.g. colours, animals).
3. The best way to teach the meaning of a new item is to get students to guess it from context.
4. Translation into mother tongue is a useful strategy in teaching foreign languages.
5. Younger children learn new languages faster than older ones.
6. We should not interrupt students in the middle of fluent speech in order to correct them.
7. The use of digital tools helps students to learn.

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Not enough

Researchers estimate 95%-98%.

Cobb, 2007, Huckin & Coady (1999), Schmitt et al. (2010), Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010. The most recent studies suggest nearer 98% (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2012).

Extract from a news item (simplified): What's it about and can you guess the missing words?

_____ think that women _____ more _____
than men. Michael Hines says, "Women are more aware of
what _____ is than a man." Men do not seem to expect
any _____ and are surprised when the _____
_____.

Bruce was working out at the gym when he said, "I think it's
a big _____, men _____ and _____ at a gym more
than women do. Women are much more _____."

84.5 %

And now? (97.5%)

Dentists think that women can put up with more pain than men. Michael Hines is a dentist and says, "Women are more aware of what pain is than a man." Men do not seem to expect any pain and are surprised when the _____ hurts.

Bruce was working out at the gym when he said, "I think it's a big cover-up, men grunt and groan at a gym more than women do. Women are much more _____."

100%

Dentists think that women can put up with more pain than men. Michael Hines is a dentist and says, "Women are more aware of what pain is than a man." Men do not seem to expect any pain and are surprised when the drilling hurts.

Bruce was working out at the gym when he said, "I think it's a big cover-up, men grunt and groan and scream at a gym more than women do. Women are much more stoic."

Adapted from:

<http://snake78310.blogspot.co.il/2007/09/news-summary-1-cnn-interactiveputting.html>

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Wrong

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... and which all refer to a similar 'kind of thing'

For example: אדום, שחור, לבן, כתום, ירוק, צהוב
ראש, יד, רגל, כתף, בטן, שער...

Why?

Why?

Convenient to teach, illustrate, test.

Why?

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We like to link new items together.

Why?

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BUT

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BUT

Research indicates that it does not help learning.

Research on learning semantic sets

Tinkham (1993)

Does it help learners to master a new set of lexical items if they are all members of a semantic set (same part of speech, same kind of meaning: e.g. clothes, animals)?

Learners were presented with two sets of items from an artificial language, and told their 'meanings'; one set all related to the same domain, the other did not.

shirt = moshee

jacket = umau

sweater = blaikel

rain = achen

car = nalo

frog = kawvas

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But words linked to each other **syntagmatically** are learnt well.

e.g. אָדום + אָר is better learnt than אָדום+ צבוב+ ירוק...

Further implications

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Homonyms, homographs: לספר

Such associations may be useful for:

- a) The teaching of a new item 'hooked' on one already known which is semantically linked to it (e.g. teaching $\int \text{טק}$ when they already know $\int \text{ידג}$)

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- b) The design of practice exercises, e.g. 'odd one out' or 'suggest an opposite'.

... but don't teach them all/both at the same time

3. The best way to teach the meaning of a new item is to get students to guess it from context.

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Wrong.

For two reasons:

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2. Even if they guess right, this doesn't necessarily help them remember better (Mondria, 2003)

Nassaji: Procedure and results

Text at least 95% of which was understood.
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Results

Of the total 199 guesses 51 (25.6%) were successful, 37 (18.6%) were partially successful, and 111 (55.8%) were unsuccessful.

Bottom line:

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In the majority of cases, context does not provide enough clues to guess an unknown word correctly, or may even be misleading (Bensoussan, M., & Laufer, B., 1984; Laufer, 1997)

Conclusion

If our main aim is to help students learn meanings of new words...

Research on inferencing and retention

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The other group was simply provided with L1 translations and given time to memorize.

Results

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But the 'inferencing + verifying' group took much more time.

So time spent on inferencing probably is not cost-effective from the point of view of vocabulary learning.

Conclusion

If our main aim is to help students learn meanings of new words...

It's probably best to tell them ourselves rather than asking them to guess.

4. Translation into mother tongue is a useful strategy in teaching foreign languages.

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Yes, very often.

Jiang, 2002

Evidence that learners 'mediate' new items in the target language through items in their L1...

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... rather than linking them directly to the real-world referent.

Laufer & Girsai, 2002

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Group Two reviewed new items focusing on form in sentence contexts (gap-fills or multiple choice)

Group 3 reviewed new items by translating them to and from L1.

Laufer & Girsai, 2002

Three groups, studying vocabulary from a text.

Group One reviewed new items focusing on meaning (comprehension tasks)

Group Two reviewed new items focusing on form in sentence contexts (gap-fills or multiple choice)

Group 3 reviewed new items by translating them to and from L1.

The translation group retained meanings significantly better.

5. Younger learners learn new languages faster than older ones.

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Not true.

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Not true. They learn much more slowly.

The evidence

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Older learners learn faster (Marinova-Todd et al., 2000; Singleton & Muñoz, 2011)

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If they only learn the new language in school: they don't (Swain, 2000).

Older learners learn faster (Marinova-Todd et al., 2000; Singleton & Muñoz, 2011)

Overview: Muñoz & Singleton, 2011)

Conclusion

In an instructional setting, an early start does not give any long-term advantage.

It's probably best to start learning a new language *in school* after the age of 10.

6. We should not interrupt students in the middle of fluent speech in order to correct them.

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Not necessarily true.

Lyster et al., 2013

An overview.

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Student preferences: on the whole, they want to be corrected as they make the mistake

Lyster et al., 2013

An overview.

Student preferences: on the whole, they want to be corrected as they make the mistake (as long as it's not too often!)

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Student preferences: on the whole, they want to be corrected as they make the mistake (as long as it's not too often!)

But how to correct?

- a quick 'recast'?
- stop and draw attention?

(Lyster & Ranta, 1997)

**Types of
correction:**

Frequency of use: Uptake:

Recast

Elicitation

Clarification
request

Metalinguistic
feedback

Explicit correction

Repetition

Types of correction: **Frequency of use:** **Uptake:**

Recast 55%

Elicitation 14%

Clarification request 11%

Metalinguistic feedback 8%

Explicit correction 7%

Repetition 5%

Types of correction:	Frequency of use:	Uptake:
Recast	55%	18%
Elicitation	14%	46%
Clarification request	11%	28%
Metalinguistic feedback	8%	45%
Explicit correction	7%	36%
Repetition	5%	31%

RESULTS

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The best results are gained from explicit corrective feedback + some active processing.

The correction-during-communication paradox

If we wait and correct later, the damage may have been done (and students prefer to be corrected as the mistake occurs).

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If we correct during communicative work using a quick 'recast' so as not to harm communication – the correction may be ineffective.

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The correction-during-communication paradox

If we wait and correct later, the damage may have been done (and students prefer to be corrected as the mistake occurs).

If we correct during communicative work using a quick 'recast' so as not to harm communication – the correction may be ineffective.

If we correct more effectively using explicit feedback and 'processing' – we may damage the communicative value of the activity.

What's the answer?

Professional teaching judgment, taking into account:

- The overall goals of the course
- How crucial / important the error is
- The frequency of the error
- The level of the student
- The personality of the student
- The motivation of the class overall to learn
- The excitement level of the activity

7. The use of digital tools helps students to learn

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Not particularly.

The problem

General assumption that technology is 'good'

The problem

General assumption that technology is 'good'
Vast investments, worldwide.

The problem

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Because:

The problem

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Because:

- Popular assumptions

The problem

General assumption that technology is 'good'

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Because:

- Popular assumptions
- Political motives

The problem

General assumption that technology is 'good'
Vast investments, worldwide.

Because:

- Popular assumptions
- Political motives
- Financial motives

Digital tools are good for some things...

- access to information

Digital tools are good for some things...

- access to information
- interpersonal communication

Digital tools are good for some things...

- access to information
 - interpersonal communication
 - composing and editing written text
- etc.

Not for others

Not for others

- 'Mediating' input

Not for others

- 'Mediating' input
- Providing student-specific feedback

Not for others

- 'Mediating' input
- Providing student-specific feedback
- Responding to student speech or writing
- Selecting texts / tasks

Not for others

- ‘Mediating’ input
- Providing student-specific feedback
- Responding to student speech or writing
- Selecting texts / tasks
- Face to face interaction

What about e-books?

Woody et al., 2010

What about e-books?

Woody et al., 2010

College students mostly prefer print textbooks.

Macaro et al. (2012) conclusions:

This exhaustive search of the literature on technology in primary and secondary teaching of English as an L2 has not yielded clear or sufficient evidence of its effectiveness. This is of some concern given the very large amounts of funding that are being made available worldwide for the purpose of encouraging its use for whatever reasons, political, economic or pedagogical. ... (p.24)

While some feel that the normalization of technology in education implies that it is no longer necessary to justify the cost-effectiveness of CALL ..., it is clear from this review that it may still be necessary to ask whether CALL – on its own or in combination with traditional approaches – is more effective than traditional approaches alone. To answer this question a much more rigorous methodology is needed. (p.24)

Conclusion

We should not use digital materials or tools for their own sake...

Conclusion

We should not use digital materials or tools for their own sake...

but only if we feel they really help teaching and learning.

End of research section

Teaching Hebrew to Beginners: The Course

Penny Ur

Mofet International Institute

2015

Content

Basic practical guidelines on teaching Hebrew to beginners

Content

Basic practical guidelines on teaching Hebrew to beginners

Mainly based on my own classroom experience and writing...

Content

Basic practical guidelines on teaching Hebrew to beginners

Mainly based on my own classroom experience and writing...

...informed also by the research

Content

Basic practical guidelines on teaching Hebrew to beginners

Mainly based on my own classroom experience and writing...

...informed also by the research

Taught in English, examples from Hebrew.

Topics include:

Topics include:

- Beginning a course: the main priorities

Topics include:

- Beginning a course: the main priorities
- Planning lessons

Topics include:

- Beginning a course: the main priorities
- Planning lessons
- Teaching basic vocabulary and grammar

Topics include:

- Beginning a course: the main priorities
- Planning lessons
- Teaching basic vocabulary and grammar
- Teaching listening, speaking, reading and writing in simple Hebrew

Topics include:

- Beginning a course: the main priorities
- Planning lessons
- Teaching basic vocabulary and grammar
- Teaching listening, speaking, reading and writing in simple Hebrew
- Making lessons interesting

Synchronous and Asynchronous components

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Synchronous: Seven 60-minute webinars

Synchronous and Asynchronous components

Synchronous: Seven 60-minute webinars

Asynchronous: Webinar recordings, and slides, available online

Synchronous and Asynchronous components

Synchronous: Seven 60-minute webinars

Asynchronous: Webinar recordings, and slides, available online

Some background reading

Seven assignments, submitted online

Thank you for your attention!
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