Kismetova G.N., Serikova N.B.

M.Utemisov West Kazakhstan University, Uralsk, Kazakhstan

E-mail: galiya-1969@mail.ru, serikovanazira44@gmail.com

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR INTRODUCING THE FREE ASSOCIATION METHOD IN TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Annotation. This article explores the theoretical underpinnings of integrating the free association method into foreign language teaching. Drawing upon established theories in linguistics, psychology, and pedagogy, the paper elucidates the rationale behind incorporating this innovative approach into language instruction. The free association method, derived from psychoanalytic principles, encourages learners to make spontaneous, subconscious connections between words and concepts, thereby enhancing vocabulary retention and fluency. By examining relevant literature and empirical studies, this article provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how the free association method aligns with key theories such as constructivism, cognitive psychology, and socio-cultural theory. Additionally, practical implications and considerations for implementing this method in the language classroom are discussed, including adaptation to diverse learner populations and proficiency levels. Ultimately, this theoretical exploration serves to inform language educators and researchers about the potential benefits and challenges of integrating the free association method into foreign language pedagogy.

Keywords: Free association method; Foreign language teaching; Theoretical foundations; Linguistic theories; Psychoanalytic principles; Vocabulary retention; Fluency development; Constructivism; Cognitive psychology; Socio-cultural theory.

Introduction

In the realm of foreign language pedagogy, educators continually seek innovative methods to enhance learning outcomes and foster linguistic proficiency among learners. One such method that has garnered increasing attention is the free association method, rooted in principles of psychoanalysis and cognitive psychology. This method capitalizes on the subconscious connections individuals make between words and concepts, offering a promising avenue for vocabulary acquisition and language fluency development. However, despite its potential benefits, the theoretical foundations underpinning the integration of the free association method into language teaching have yet to be comprehensively explored.

This article aims to address this gap by delving into the theoretical underpinnings of incorporating the free association method in foreign language instruction. Our objectives are threefold: first, to elucidate the theoretical frameworks that support the integration of this method into language teaching practices; second, to explore the practical implications of adopting the free association method in diverse language learning contexts; and third, to provide insights into potential challenges and considerations associated with its implementation.

The significance of this research area lies in its potential to revolutionize traditional language teaching approaches by harnessing insights from fields such as linguistics, psychology, and pedagogy. By grounding our exploration in established theories, we seek to offer a solid theoretical foundation for language educators and researchers interested in exploring the efficacy of the free association method. Moreover, understanding the theoretical underpinnings of this method can inform instructional design, curriculum development, and teacher training initiatives, thereby contributing to more effective and engaging language learning experiences.

The relevance of this problem is underscored by the increasing demand for communicative competence in a globalized world, where proficiency in multiple languages is increasingly valued. By investigating the theoretical foundations of the free association method, we aim to provide educators with evidence-based insights that can inform their pedagogical practices and ultimately enhance language learning outcomes for learners of all proficiency levels.

In addressing these objectives, this article seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on innovative approaches to foreign language teaching, ultimately advancing our understanding of effective pedagogical strategies in language education. Through a synthesis of theoretical perspectives and practical considerations, we endeavor to lay the groundwork for future research and implementation of the free association method in language classrooms.

Materials and types of research

The article discusses the theoretical foundations and practical implications of integrating the free association method into foreign language teaching. The research conducted in the article can be categorized as follows:

Literature Review: The research begins with a thorough review of relevant literature in linguistics, psychology, and education to establish the theoretical underpinnings of the free association method. This literature review helps in identifying key theoretical frameworks supporting the integration of the method into language teaching practices.

Empirical Studies: The article references several empirical studies to support the theoretical foundations of the free association method. These studies include research on imagination-based meditation, creative thinking teaching methods, and linguistic analysis of zoophrases. These studies provide evidence of the method's effectiveness in enhancing cognitive processes, emotional responses, learning motivation, and linguistic analysis.

Quasi-Experimental Study: To test the hypotheses formulated based on the theoretical insights, a quasi-experimental study was designed and implemented. Participants were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups, with the

experimental group receiving instruction using the free association method. Pre-test and post-test assessments were conducted to measure vocabulary knowledge and speaking proficiency.

Data Analysis: The data collected from the quasi-experimental study were analyzed to determine the impact of the free association method on vocabulary retention and speaking proficiency. Statistical analysis was used to compare the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups, revealing significant improvements in the experimental group.

Qualitative Observations: In addition to quantitative data analysis, qualitative observations were made to assess learners' confidence, spontaneity, and language production while engaging in the free association method. These observations provided insights into the deeper understanding and internalization of vocabulary items among learners.

Conclusion and Future Research: The research concludes by highlighting the effectiveness of the free association method in enhancing language learning outcomes. It emphasizes the method's potential to transform language instruction and suggests avenues for future research to explore cognitive mechanisms, applicability across diverse contexts, and pedagogical implications.

Overall, the research in the article combines theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, experimental design, data analysis, and qualitative observations to provide a comprehensive understanding of the free association method in foreign language teaching.

Research questions

1. How does the free association method, derived from psychoanalytic principles, impact vocabulary retention and fluency development in foreign language learners?

2. What are the theoretical frameworks, including constructivism, cognitive psychology, and socio-cultural theory, that support the integration of the free association method into language teaching practices?

3. What are the practical implications and considerations for implementing the free association method in diverse language learning contexts and proficiency levels?

4. How do innovative teaching strategies, such as the free association method, enhance students' learning motivation, creativity, and engagement in foreign language education?

5. What are the theoretical underpinnings of the free association method in uncovering subconscious thoughts and feelings, as highlighted by seminal works in psychoanalysis?

6. How can the free association method be adapted to explore complex linguistic phenomena and cultural variances in language processing among multilingual and multicultural learners?

7. In what ways does the free association method facilitate vocabulary acquisition, speaking proficiency, and cognitive and emotional engagement in language learning processes?

8. What are the cognitive mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of the free association method in promoting vocabulary retention and language fluency among ESL learners?

9. How do the observed improvements in vocabulary retention and speaking

proficiency in learners engaged in the free association method align with established principles in linguistics and psychology?

10. What are the implications of the study's findings for the development of instructional materials, teacher training, and the advancement of innovative approaches in foreign language teaching?

Research results

In the dynamic landscape of Kazakhstan's socio-economic milieu, considerable attention is directed towards the burgeoning role of its youth, who are progressively assuming active roles across economic, political, and cultural domains. Empowered by a burgeoning sense of initiative, young individuals are fervently engaged in cultivating and advancing their ideas, often commencing this journey during their formative years of professional training. Against this backdrop, the socio-cultural potential of the youth emerges as a synthesis of their inherent qualities and capabilities, shaped under the influence of various factors within a professionally-oriented educational milieu.

In light of contemporary realities and the perspectives of the youth themselves, it becomes imperative to discern the factors contributing to the development of youth's socio-cultural potential within the realm of professional education. To this end, our research endeavors to elucidate the structural framework of significant indicators through the application of the free-associative method. This method involves gauging the responses of diverse cohorts to stimulus words and phrases such as "youth," "youth's socio-cultural potential," "socio-cultural environment," and "cross-cultural interaction."

Through the interpretation of the garnered results, we aim to categorize associations based on keywords and their respective frequencies, thereby delineating distinct clusters that form the semantic core for each defined construct. Consequently, our study identifies twenty cognitive paradigmatic markers imbued with positive connotations. The scientific significance and novelty of this endeavor lie in demonstrating the efficacy of the free-associative method in elucidating the logical components of concepts in accordance with the perceptions of specific social groups.

Initially, a thorough review of relevant literature was conducted to establish the theoretical underpinnings of the free association method within the broader context of language acquisition and pedagogy. Drawing upon seminal works in linguistics, psychology, and education, the review identified key theoretical frameworks, including constructivism, cognitive psychology, and socio-cultural theory, which provided theoretical support for the integration of the free association method into language teaching practices.

For example, based on Hao et al.'s study, which investigates the effects of imagination-based loving-kindness meditation (ibLKM) and focused attention meditation (FAM) on responses to pain, it can be inferred that innovative methods, such as ibLKM, hold promise for influencing cognitive processes and emotional responses. By examining the modulation of event-related potentials (ERPs) in response to painful stimuli, the study sheds light on the theoretical foundations for incorporating meditation techniques into various domains, including foreign language teaching, to enhance cognitive and emotional engagement in learning processes [1]. Also, based on Li et al.'s study, which explores the cultivation of sustainable development ability among higher vocational students through a creative thinking teaching method, it is evident that

innovative teaching strategies, such as brainstorming and free association, can significantly enhance students' learning motivation and creativity. The findings underscore the importance of integrating such methods into foreign language teaching to foster a dynamic and engaging learning environment conducive to effective language acquisition [2]. In addition, based on Schweisfurth and Elliott and Shi et al., introducing the free association method in foreign language teaching can be grounded in the principles of pedagogical recontextualization and fostering creative inclinations. By integrating this method, educators can promote dynamic learning environments that encourage linguistic creativity and resilience among learners, aligning with contemporary educational paradigms [3, 4].

The free association method, widely recognized within psychoanalytic circles thanks to the seminal works of Sigmund Freud, has recently seen innovative applications in fields as diverse as marketing and linguistics, suggesting its potential utility in foreign language teaching. In his 2018 article in Psychoanalytic Inquiry, Henry Zvi Lothane revisits the psychoanalytic roots of free association, highlighting its crucial role in uncovering subconscious thoughts and feelings. According to Lothane, Freud not only developed free association as a therapeutic tool but also framed it as a methodological cornerstone of psychoanalysis viewed as a historical science. This depth of introspection and exploration into the human psyche lays a strong theoretical foundation for adapting free association to educational contexts, particularly in the nuanced and emotionally resonant domain of language learning [5].

Further extending the application of free association to contemporary issues, Christine Gonzalez, Michael Korchia, and Caroline Urbain's 2009 study, as published in Recherche et Applications en Marketing (English Edition), explores how consumers' subconscious perceptions influence their behaviors towards socially responsible consumption. Their research demonstrates how the free association method can elicit deep-seated attitudes and beliefs, providing valuable insights into consumer behavior. This approach underscores the method's versatility and its capacity to reveal underlying cognitive and emotional processes, a feature that can be effectively translated into the language education sphere to enhance learners' engagement with new linguistic structures and vocabularies [6].

Moreover, the work of Polyuzhin, I. M., & Venzhinovych, N. F. (2022), which investigates the linguistics of zoophrases in English and Ukrainian, further illustrates how free association can serve as a powerful analytical tool in understanding language structures and semantics. Their research into the phraseological units of zoophrases highlights the method's effectiveness in distinguishing complex linguistic patterns that are not readily apparent, suggesting a similar approach could be applied to teaching foreign languages to uncover subtle linguistic nuances [7].

These varied applications of the free association method across different fields demonstrate its broad theoretical and practical utility, making a compelling case for its incorporation into foreign language teaching. By leveraging this method, educators could potentially foster a deeper, more intuitive connection between students and the target language, enhancing both the learning experience and outcomes. The method's ability to tap into the subconscious could help learners uncover inherent linguistic associations and accelerate the acquisition of new languages in an engaging and

emotionally resonant manner. Thus, the theoretical foundations laid by Freud and expanded by subsequent scholars across disciplines provide a robust framework for rethinking traditional approaches to language education.

Stine Mosekjær's 2016 doctoral dissertation at Copenhagen Business School examines how Japanese and Chinese speakers of English comprehend and utilize emotion words like "guilty," "ashamed," and "proud," compared to native British speakers. Her study of 65 participants reveals significant cultural variances in language processing, demonstrating the free association method's effectiveness in uncovering these differences in a multilingual and multicultural context. Mosekjær's innovative framework adapts free association to explore complex linguistic phenomena, showing its potential for language teaching [8].

Additionally, the 1972 study by Klaus F. Riegel and Irina W. M. Zivian investigates bilingual individuals' associative responses in English and German, providing early insights into how bilinguals link words across languages. This research underscores the free association method's utility in enhancing understanding of associative processes in language learning [9].

Together, these studies provide a comprehensive rationale for using free association in foreign language teaching. They suggest that this method can make language learning more dynamic and culturally responsive, engaging students deeply by tapping into cognitive and emotional dimensions of language acquisition. This approach not only enriches students' learning experiences but also aligns with contemporary educational goals that emphasize personalized and context-aware education.

Subsequently, hypotheses were formulated based on the theoretical insights gleaned from the literature review. These hypotheses posited that the free association method would facilitate vocabulary acquisition and language fluency development by leveraging subconscious word associations and semantic networks. Moreover, it was hypothesized that learners engaged in the free association method would demonstrate greater retention of vocabulary items and improved speaking proficiency compared to those receiving traditional vocabulary instruction.

To test these hypotheses, a quasi-experimental study was designed and implemented, involving the random assignment of participants to experimental and control groups. The experimental group received instruction utilizing the free association method, while the control group received conventional vocabulary instruction. Pre-test and post-test assessments were administered to measure participants' vocabulary knowledge and speaking proficiency before and after the instructional intervention.

Analysis of the data revealed significant findings that supported the hypotheses formulated at the outset of the study. Participants in the experimental group demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in vocabulary retention and speaking proficiency compared to those in the control group. Moreover, qualitative observations indicated that learners engaged in the free association method exhibited greater confidence and spontaneity in their language production, suggesting a deeper understanding and internalization of vocabulary items.

Through critical analysis and empirical investigation, this research confirmed the theoretical foundations underpinning the free association method in teaching a foreign

language. The findings underscored the potential of this innovative approach to enhance language learning outcomes and inform pedagogical practices in diverse educational contexts. Further research is warranted to explore the long-term effects and applicability of the free association method across different languages and learner populations.

Results and discussions

The study was conducted at West Kazakhstan University named after M. Utemisov, city of Uralsk, Kazakhstan. A total of 60 undergraduate students participated in the study, all of whom were enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. Table 1 presents the pre-test and post-test scores of participants in the experimental and control groups on vocabulary quizzes and speaking tasks (**Table 1** – Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Experimental and Control Groups).

The pre-test results indicated no significant differences between the experimental and control groups in terms of vocabulary knowledge and speaking proficiency. However, following the instructional intervention, participants in the experimental group demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in both vocabulary retention and speaking proficiency compared to the control group.

The mean post-test vocabulary score for the experimental group was significantly higher (89.3, SD = 9.8) compared to the control group (79.6, SD = 10.2), indicating that learners engaged in the free association method exhibited greater mastery of vocabulary items. This finding supports the hypothesis that the free association method enhances vocabulary acquisition by facilitating subconscious word associations and semantic connections.

Table 1 **–** Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Pre-test	Vocabulary Score	Post-test Vocabulary Score	Pre-test Speaking Score	Post-test Speaking Score
Experimental	75.6 (12.4)	89.3 (9.8)	67.8 (8.9)	82.4 (10.5)	
Control	76.2 (11.8)	79.6 (10.2)	68.5 (9.3)	73.9 (11.1)	

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Similarly, the mean post-test speaking score for the experimental group was significantly higher (82.4, SD = 10.5) than that of the control group (73.9, SD = 11.1), suggesting that learners in the experimental group demonstrated improved speaking proficiency as a result of engaging in the free association method. This finding aligns with the hypothesis that the free association method fosters fluency development by

encouraging learners to make spontaneous language connections and express themselves more confidently.

The observed differences in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups highlight the effectiveness of the free association method in promoting vocabulary retention and language fluency. These results underscore the theoretical foundations of the free association method within the constructs of constructivism, cognitive psychology, and socio-cultural theory, which emphasize the importance of meaningful, experiential learning experiences in language acquisition.

The findings of this study contribute to the ongoing discourse on innovative approaches to foreign language teaching, providing empirical evidence to support the integration of the free association method into language instruction. Future research should further explore the cognitive mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of the free association method and investigate its applicability across different languages and learner demographics. Additionally, pedagogical implications and instructional strategies for implementing the free association method in diverse educational settings warrant further investigation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the effectiveness of the free association method in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and language fluency among ESL learners, underscoring its potential to transform language instruction. The observed improvements in the experimental group's post-test scores signify the method's ability to stimulate subconscious word associations and align with established principles in linguistics and psychology. Beyond the classroom, these findings inform the development of instructional materials and teacher training, fostering dynamic learning environments. Moreover, the study contributes to innovative approaches in foreign language teaching, addressing the global demand for multilingual proficiency. Future research should further explore the method's cognitive mechanisms and applicability across diverse linguistic contexts, advancing language education's frontiers.

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Кисметова Г.Н., Серикова Н.Б.

ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВЫ ВНЕДРЕНИЯ МЕТОДА СВОБОДНЫХ АССОЦИАЦИЙ В ПРЕПОДАВАНИЕ ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются теоретические основы интеграции метода свободных ассоциаций в преподавание иностранного языка. Опираясь на устоявшиеся теории в лингвистике, психологии и педагогике, в статье излагается обоснование использования этого инновационного подхода в обучении иностранному языку. Метод свободных ассоциаций, основанный на принципах психоанализа, поощряет учащихся устанавливать спонтанные, подсознательные связи между словами и понятиями, тем самым способствуя сохранению словарного запаса и беглости речи. Изучив соответствующую литературу и эмпирические исследования, эта статья дает исчерпывающую информацию о том, как метод свободных ассоциаций согласуется с ключевыми теориями, такими как конструктивизм, когнитивная психология и социокультурная теория.

Ключевые слова: Метод свободных ассоциаций; преподавание иностранного языка; теоретические основы; лингвистические теории; принципы психоанализа; сохранение словарного запаса; развитие беглости.

Кисметова Г.Н., Серикова Н.Б.

ШЕТ ТІЛІН ОҚЫТУДА ЕРКІН АССОЦИАЦИЯ ӘДІСІН ЕНГІЗУДІҢ ТЕОРИЯЛЫҚ НЕГІЗДЕРІ

Аннотация. Бұл мақалада еркін ассоциация әдісін шет тілін оқытуға біріктірудің теориялық негіздері қарастырылады. Лингвистика, психология және

педагогикадағы қалыптасқан теорияларға сүйене отырып, мақалада шет тілін оқытуда осы инновациялық тәсілді қолданудың негіздемесі көрсетілген. Психоанализ принциптеріне негізделген еркін ассоциация әдісі оқушыларды сөздер мен ұғымдар арасында стихиялық, бейсаналық байланыстар орнатуға шақырады, осылайша сөздік қорын сақтауға және еркін сөйлеуге ықпал етеді. Тиісті әдебиеттер мен эмпирикалық зерттеулерді зерттей отырып, бұл мақалада еркін ассоциация әдісі конструктивизм, когнитивті психология және әлеуметтік-мәдени теория сияқты негізгі теорияларға қалай сәйкес келетіні туралы толық ақпарат берілген.

Кілт сөздер: еркін ассоциация әдісі; шет тілін оқыту; теориялық негіздер; лингвистикалық теориялар; психоанализ принциптері; сөздік қорын сақтау; еркін сөйлеуді дамыту.