RECEPTIVE VERSUS PRODUCTIVE VOCABULARY

by [Name]

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Receptive Versus Productive Vocabulary

Vocabulary and language have always been related to cognitive functions like learning and knowledge. Two of the most often used terms for analysis involve receptive and productive. Such concepts are applied in the application of the first and second language usage. The definition of both receptive and productive vocabulary would be discussed and analyzed in this paper before a distinction of their differences would be made.

Using the concept of being the third dimension in the vocabulary knowledge, the term receptive refers to the ability to be able to provide the first language (L1) translation to the second language (L2) (Zhong 2011). The order of the languages is important as it will define the foundation of the learner. Someone whose natural language is English would have a different receptive vocabulary than that of a person who uses Chinese. Whenever a second language (L2) is used, both people would rely on their knowledge of the first one for translation. When someone thinks of a foreign word that is L2, the idea of receptive vocabulary means that this person would translate it to the initial language or L1. For a person who uses English as the first language, a Chinese word would have to be translated to English. Such recognition can be applied to reading or listening. When someone sees the foreign language or hears it, it would be translated into the mind of the learner using his/her first language. This also involves memorization wherein such word would have to be recalled using its L1 equivalent. For others, the definition of this term may vary. It may involve recognition of a specific word and for someone to find a synonym or antonym for that word as its meaning.

Productive vocabulary would be the exact opposite of the concept discussed above. Using vocabulary knowledge as the third dimension of learning, it would mean that learner would find an equivalent for the first knowledge of the word he/she knows and would directly translate it to

the second language (L2) (Zhong 2011). Similar with the receptive concept, the learner would also be comparing a word with their language counterparts. Similarly, both concepts would rely on the foundational language or the first one (L1). However, for the productive vocabulary, a specific L2 equivalent would have to be recognized. This means that for a Chinese person, he/she would find and English equivalent for a word he/she already knows, which is in his/her first language. The same goes with an American who has English for his/her first language (L1). For a Chinese person, he/she would have to find the Chinese equivalent of the word "apple". This is considering the fact that such learner uses such word for his/her first language (L1). Productive vocabulary can also be defined as a concept that can be used in recognizing the form and meaning of a foreign word.

The main differences of both receptive and productive vocabularies were already presented in the discussions of their definition above. However, their distinctions only start from the concepts mentioned. Aside from meaning and their respective forms, receptive and productive vocabularies have further differences (Pignot-Shahov 2012). One if it is related to their hierarchy of use. Although this could be debated, scholars believe that putting one above the other in terms of priority is an effective way to entice education and application of languages. Learners develop receptive vocabulary first before productive vocabulary (Pignot-Shahov 2012). Such arrangement should be noted in terms of their usage. Others may argue that only one of them can be used for learning. However, some scholars dispute this. Applying only one of them is not as effective as using both (Eonhee and Yousun 2011).

References

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