

Some Observations on Two Small Groups of Words in a Free Association Test

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Abstract

The paper acknowledges the role of word associations in enhancing foreign language learning. Two types of groups of words are examined. The first one comprises four stimulus words representing family relations and the second one consists of four miscellaneous words. A comparison between the two groups is offered in details. The association responses are analyzed in terms of quantity and quality, as responses, although small in number, are offered in percentages and the variety of all reaction words is displayed. As the respondents are given a word stimulus in English and are asked to write the first word that comes to their mind regardless of the language (foreign or native), the results show that in most cases when the first word is in their mother tongue, it is a translation of the stimulus word. Much less often the responses are in Bulgarian as a reaction to an English word. The largest percent of responses present associations in English. Due to cultural factors interference there are cases of associations given in English but typical for the Bulgarian lifestyle and mindset. As the word association test is conducted among adult students who are future primary teachers, mostly false beginners in terms of studying foreign language, by means of the results from the test concerning their mother tongue and the foreign language, it is aimed to draw students' attention to word association test as a way to facilitate and make more successful their future work with children at school while teaching foreign language.

Keywords: foreign language; mother tongue; word association test.