

Excerpt from my guide on

The Spaced Repetition System (SRS): How to learn vocabulary and grammar quickly and flexibly using index cards

The Flashcard Method

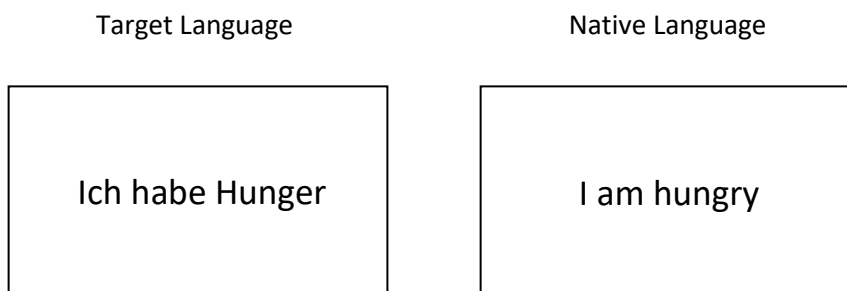
This method is used to efficiently anchor new vocabulary in your long-term memory.

While there are online courses and software that offer this method for language learning, you can also apply it using simple means at home.

You need:

- cards on which you can write words / short phrases on both sides
- a box that can be divided into compartments for the cards.

I write the words I want to learn on index cards (or similar) - a word or a short phrase per card, mother tongue on one side, target language on the other. For example:



Learning without Native Language Translation

Even better is to learn vocabulary and phrases **WITHOUT** using one's native language. I will briefly explain how to do this below.

At first, however, we will remain with the conventional approach.

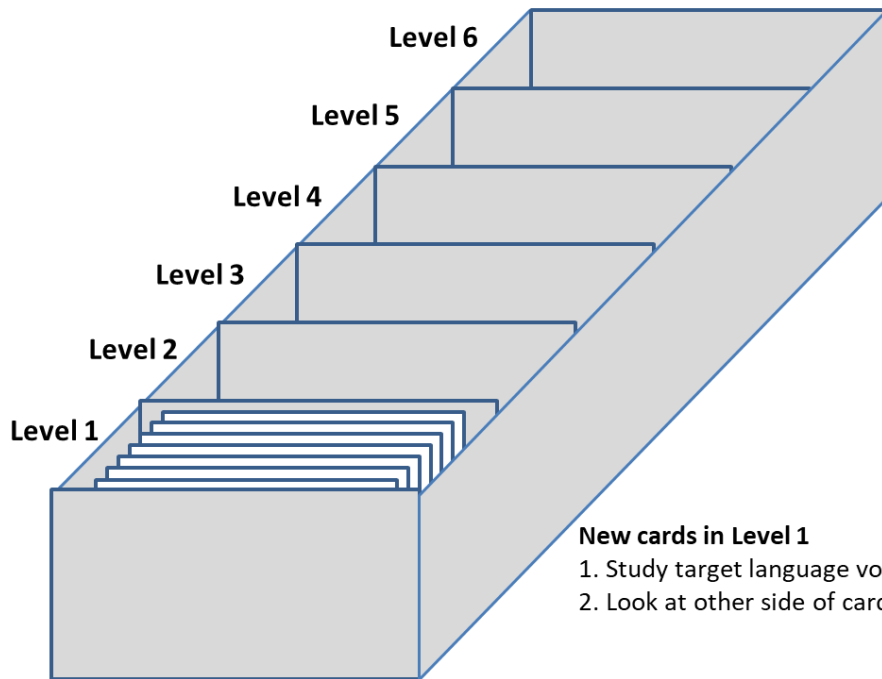
Seven Levels

Each card eventually goes through seven levels. Once it has left level 7, it is anchored in long-term memory. To make the organization much easier for me, I get - or construct - a container with **seven compartments** – one for each level – where I can keep the cards.

First Day

The first cards are stored in **Level 1** (front compartment). On this (first) day I will study these cards.

Day 1



I can also take cards with me wherever I go. Whenever I have a few minutes, I can review them.

Comprehension

First, I look at the word/phrase of the target language and try to remember the translation. This is how I learn to comprehend (read and hear) the language.

"Do I understand the words when I see / hear them?"

If I guess a card correctly, I'll put it aside.

If I have not understood a card correctly, I place it behind the other cards in **Level 1**. I then study such a few times. As soon as I understand one, I set it aside.

Expression - Reproduction

Now I look at the side of the card with the translation (mother tongue) and try to guess the word/phrase of the target language.

This is how I learn to express myself in the target language (speaking and writing).

This second procedure is helpful because, if you want to express yourself in the target language, you will (at first) tend to think of the word/phrase in your native language, and then translate it before you say it out loud.

I review the cards as I do for **Comprehension**.

As soon as I understand one, that card finally goes into **Level 2**.

**** If, however, you use the "learning without a mother tongue" approach, you often only need to study one side of a card (instead of two).***

I repeat this entire process with each card, no matter what compartment it is in.