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Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Vocabulary

Guest Editors

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Trends in Vocabulary Research

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The Guiding Ideas

This issue is dedicated to vocabulary teaching, learning and assessment. The topic is timely, as vocabulary research is one of the fastest growing areas in applied linguistics and TESOL. Some of its most prominent areas are represented here, including vocabulary knowledge, the processes that lead to vocabulary learning, ways of assessing aspects of vocabulary knowledge as well as lexical errors. Understanding how vocabulary works in language use is one of the prerequisites for its successful instruction and acquisition. Hence, needs analysis focused corpus research is also a major part of the issue's brief. Last but not least, the issue highlights some applications of technology in vocabulary instruction and learning. In the following, we briefly discuss some of the questions the contributors to this issue are trying to address. This is followed by brief summary reviews of the papers themselves.

Key Topics in Vocabulary Research

Since "language ability is to quite a large extent a function of vocabulary size" (Alderson, 2005, p. 88), it is imperative that language educators understand the processes that lead to vocabulary growth. The current issue focuses on many aspects of the acquisition of vocabulary in an additional language. Additional language or L2 can be any language which is not the first language of the learner, while its vocabulary can be acquired incidentally or learned deliberately. Incidental vocabulary learning occurs while learners are focused on something other than learning the vocabulary itself (Paribakht & Wesche, 1996). In addition to repeated encounters with a word (Nation, 2006), such learning requires strategies of determining and consolidating the meaning of new words (Schmitt, 1997), as well as some rehearsal, encoding and activation effort (Gu & Johnson, 1996). Therefore, reading, with or without the use of a dictionary (Gu & Johnson, 1996), may present ample opportunities for incidental learning (Nation, 2006). In particular, reading-based and writing-intensive university courses delivered in English could afford the ideal platform for incidental acquisition of general, technical and subtechnical English vocabulary by students of non-English speaking backgrounds (Coxhead, 2000). While there is evidence of current research interest in intentional learning of English vocabulary in additional language contexts, incidental learning seems to be less represented and is mainly investigated in small-sample qualitative studies (e.g. Song & Fox, 2008). Dodigovic, Ma and Jing (this issue) touch upon incidental vocabulary learning, whereas Colovic-Markovic (this issue), Jeaco (this issue) as well as Jones and Waller (this issue) consider activities directed toward deliberate vocabulary learning.

Although incidental vocabulary learning is an accepted concept, vocabulary is not acquired entirely by chance. On the contrary, its acquisition is facilitated by certain learning strategies. Intake and subsequent integration of new lexical knowledge normally require repeated input processing during multiple experiences with a word (Nation, 2006). Hatch and Brown (1995) see the word-learning process as a "series of sieves"

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through which a new word must pass as it gains entry into the learner's lexicon (p. 373). According to Gu and Johnson (1996), vocabulary learning strategies are classified into four groups: metacognitive, cognitive, memory, and activation strategies. Metacognitive strategies, include selective attention as well as self-initiation strategies, while cognitive strategies include the use of dictionaries, guessing and note taking strategies. Memory strategies consist of rehearsal and encoding strategies. Finally, activation strategies are those that learners utilize in order to use the new words in various contexts. Schmitt (1997) classifies vocabulary learning strategies into two groups. The first group determines the meaning of new vocabulary items which the learners face for the first time, and contains determination and social strategies. The second group, on the other hand, entails strategies which consolidate the meaning of vocabulary items when encountered again by the learners. This group consists of cognitive, metacognitive, memory, and social strategies. However, not much is known about the relative frequency or effectiveness of each of the above strategies. Xu and Hsie (this issue) look into such strategies and their representation.

There are two types of vocabulary knowledge: receptive and productive (Nation, 2006). Receptive vocabulary enables the learner to comprehend readings or listenings. In this volume, Masrai and Milton (this issue) discuss this aspect of vocabulary. Productive vocabulary, on the other hand, facilitates the productive skills of speaking and writing. In addition to vocabulary size, which is expressed in the number of words a learner knows, vocabulary is also measured in terms of depth (Beglar & Nation, 2007). Depth concerns everything a learner knows about a word, including ways of spelling and pronouncing it, the sentence structure it requires, its part of speech, the functions it can have in connected discourse, the contexts in which it can possibly occur, other words that may accompany it, the idiomatic expressions it is known to build and the connotations it can have (Folse, 2004). Brumbaugh and Heift (this issue) build on the concept of vocabulary depth. It is expected that in productive skills, such as speaking and writing, a larger vocabulary size would have the effect of a greater lexical range used, while a greater depth of vocabulary knowledge would result in a more accurate and skillful use of vocabulary.

Tests such as Vocabulary Size Test (VST) are often used to measure the size of the learners' vocabulary (Beglar & Nation, 2007). This test has been specifically developed to "provide a reliable, accurate, and comprehensive measure" (Beglar, 2010, p. 103) of L2 English learners' receptive vocabulary in its written form, including the 14,000 most frequent word families in English. Other such tests are described in this issue. However, it is more difficult to measure vocabulary depth in relation to productive vocabulary size. This is further discussed by Roghani and Milton (this issue).

Instances of language use lacking in accuracy, otherwise known as language errors, are significant in three respects: they inform the teacher about what should be taught; they inform the researcher about the course of learning; they are outcomes of the learner's target language hypothesis testing (James, 1998). The sources of error are deemed to be the redundancy of code (intralingual), various sources of interference (interlingual) and unsuitable presentation (George, 1972). Similarly, James (1998) distinguished between a slip, an odd mistake or a systemic error. A slip is expected to result in self-correction, a mistake calls for feedback, while error requires full correction of the erroneous utterance. In this volume, Augustin-Llach (this issue) examines a range of lexical errors.

According to Cook and Singleton (2014), second language acquisition (SLA) is primarily concerned with the interplay between a learner's first (L1) and an additional language (L2). Thus Li (2014) identifies such an interplay in the interlanguage of Chinese learners of English. According to Wang (2014), this is characterized by the structural and lexical patterns of Chinese in the learner's grammatical and lexical choices in English, which are not necessarily transparent to other speakers of English, thus potentially obscuring comprehension. In particular, lexis in L2 often adopts the L1 semantic features (Cook & Singleton, 2014). An example of this is a Chinese student asking at the end of a presentation: "Do you have a problem?" The Chinese equivalent "问题 (wen ti)" means both a question and a problem. Collocations or multi-word units present another challenge for L2 learners (Yamashita & Jiang, 2010). An example of the influence of L1 on collocations in English as L2 is "eat medicine" (rather than "take medicine"), based on Chinese "吃药 (chi yao)". These examples represent evidence of subordinate bilingualism, which according to Cook and Singleton (2014) has its roots in translation as a

teaching/learning method. Dodigovic (2014) found that learners with limited vocabulary use bilingual dictionaries with only one English translation equivalent, which also restricts the depth of their English vocabulary (Schmitt, 2010). In line with this, Dodigovic, Ma and Jing (this issue) pursue such patterns in the writing of Chinese learners of English.

Vocabulary is ideally suited to corpus linguistic approaches in research and teaching. The term corpus commonly “refers to an electronic text” (Holmes, 1999, p. 241) and is often in fact a compilation of text samples that one wants to examine for vocabulary use or other features. Special software is applied to find out, for example, which words or expressions are most frequently used by an author or a group of authors. Having a corpus of authentic language data gives one the opportunity to either postulate very specific hypotheses or identify patterns through corpus data analysis (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). As a method, corpus linguistics allows for a quantitative approach, in that it counts the occurrences of the examined linguistic phenomena.

When applied to language learning, this method can be very helpful. It can be used to gain a better understanding of how the target student population uses language and what misconceptions the students might have about the additional language they are learning. While some researchers prefer to profile the vocabulary (Cobb, 2004) of either the learners or their learning resources, others use learner corpora to gain a better understanding of learner errors (Granger, 2003). The latter include Dodigovic, Ma and Jing (this issue). Furthermore, many have used target language corpora to teach language, a technology enhanced approach that is sometimes called data-driven (Allan, 1999; Levy, 1997). This topic is also pursued by Jeaco (this issue).

Vocabulary is also important in educational needs analysis. Needs analysis refers to a procedure in language planning (Nunan, 1988). This procedure serves three main purposes (Richards, 1984, cited in Nunan, 1988). Firstly, it can be used to obtain wider input into content, design and implementation of a language programme. Secondly, it can be used to develop goals, objectives and content for a language programme. Finally, it can provide data for programme evaluation. It can on the one hand be based on soft data and opinions or on hard data, such as linguistic facts (Johns, 1997).

With its force of hard data evidence, the corpus approach is particularly useful in raising the teacher’s awareness of their students’ learning needs, but it can also be used to demonstrate to the students and the respective institution how their use of language differs from the targeted standard. Indeed, the level of institutional language awareness can be raised to the point at which the institution becomes able to anticipate learning problems and better facilitate teaching, learning and assessment. In particular, corpus analysis can help institutions decide whether the teaching materials and methods used are conducive to learning success. Technology plays a key role in making that hard evidence readily available. In this volume, Quero (this issue) as well as McGarrell and Nguen (this issue) take this approach. Other uses of technology with respect to vocabulary are described by Jeaco (this issue) as well as Brumbaugh and Heift (this issue).

Papers in This Issue

As can be seen from the discussion above, the contributions to this issue are interlinked through a multiplicity of topics, so it was not easy to group them or decide in which order to present them. The current order follows to some extent the topical development from the previous section of this paper, from learning strategies via deliberate and incidental learning, lexical errors, receptive and productive vocabulary size and depth to corpus based needs analysis and technology.

Xu and Hsu develop a new Inventory of Strategies for Vocabulary Learning (SIVL), which appears to be more appropriate to the Chinese context. To validate their instrument their paper reports on confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses, and their findings demonstrate the reliability and validity of SIVL as a research instrument for assessing the strategy use of English language learners in this context at university level. Moreover, they point to ways in which the SIVL could become a resource for raising the awareness of both language learners and teachers of strategy use and strategy training, thereby strengthening vocabulary teaching and learning.

Colovic-Markovic discusses the explicit instruction of formulaic language. The research on formulaic language in L2 writing emphasizes the essential role of topic-induced word combinations (Erman, 2009). Her

study compares the improvements in productive use of target structures for a treatment group, who received explicit instruction, and a contrast group. The results demonstrate the gains of explicit instruction for the production of topic-induced phrases and the paper explores some of the attitudes of the language learners through analysis of interviews.

Jones and Waller present a quasi-experimental study examining textual and aural input enhancement for vocabulary teaching at an elementary level in a higher education context. The enhancements provided for the treatment group consisted of the bolding of target words in a menu and three repetitions of the modeling of the words by the teacher. Their results demonstrate some clear benefits of both kinds of enhancement when teaching lexis.

Augustin-Llach takes the evidence of lexical errors for a theoretical exploration of EFL vocabulary teaching, reviewing previous research and suggesting new ways to engage pedagogically with lexical errors. By drawing on a solid research base, the fusion of analyses from different studies in this important area leads directly into some practical implications and calls for broader appreciation of the need for explicit vocabulary instruction through a range of approaches.

Dodigovic, Ma and Jing reveal insights into first language (L1) lexical transfer within the context of L1 Chinese learners of English through analysis of individual words, collocations and multi-word units. In a cross-sectional study of written work from university students, they demonstrate that the most frequent cause of errors is the L1 polysemy of individual words, with multi-word units (MWU) and collocation errors following after. They also find a slight but not statistically significant drop in the frequency of lexical transfer errors in the more advanced learner group in all three of these areas.

Jeaco discusses the use of corpora in vocabulary learning and reports on an evaluation of a concordancing tool which was designed for English language learners and teachers. The software tool, called *The Prime Machine* (Jeaco, 2015), includes support features for conducting searches on vocabulary and language patterns, encouraging language discovery processes for the comparison of specific words and collocations. This paper introduces some of the pedagogical perspectives on the software design, and reports on the positive reception of the software from students with little or no prior experience in concordancing work.

Brumbaugh and Heift present an empirical investigation into the use of a Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) tool for the assessment of the depth of vocabulary knowledge of intermediate L2 English learners. The study introduces the design and use of *Bricklayer* and the findings provide evidence of the validity of this assessment tool, and the paper explains how such an approach strengthens models of both knowledge and behavior for CALL adaptive systems.

Masrai and Milton's paper explores predictors of academic achievement, building on work on general and academic vocabulary knowledge (Townsend et al., 2012) and general intelligence (Laidra et al., 2007). Their examination of these and additional factors adds to a predictive model, drawing on L1 vocabulary knowledge, L2 general and academic vocabulary knowledge, and intelligence (IQ). They demonstrate the way in which each element in the model makes unique contributions, and how the four elements explain different aspects of variance in the academic achievement data.

Roghani and Milton investigate the usefulness and effectiveness of a category generation task for productive vocabulary size assessment. For the assessment, learners would be asked to make a list of words within a specific category and be asked to list words. The resulting list of words can then be compared with receptive vocabulary size estimates. Through analysis of results from learners at different levels of performance, and comparison with two standardised tests, they demonstrate that the category generation tasks are reliable and effective.

McGarrell and Nguyen tackle the question of optimal language input for institutional contexts where textbooks form the basis for instruction. They present an analysis of lexical bundles in a popular textbook of General English, comparing these with frequently occurring lexical bundles in corpora. The analysis looks at the functions of the lexical bundles covered and their usefulness. Their findings demonstrate limitations in the usefulness of the lexical bundles in the textbook, and the authors argue for more attention to be paid to lexical bundles in language teaching and materials development.

Last but not least, Quero reports on a subject-specific study into the vocabulary load of English medical handbooks, considering the lexical demands in terms of the number of words needed for comprehension of medical texts. The study used a corpus approach, drawing on existing word lists and making comparisons between the medical text corpus and a corpus built from seven general English corpora. The results provide insights into the vocabulary needs of medical students and health professionals, with a long list of subject-specific (medical) words having been generated through this approach.

Conclusion

This issue covers a range of topics related to teaching, researching, learning and assessing vocabulary in an additional language. Each of the papers furthers our understanding of issues such as incidental and deliberate vocabulary learning in terms of vocabulary depth or size, and each considers their roles in areas such as academic success, teaching of lexical phrases and their representation in textbooks as well as the vocabulary required to succeed in certain academic disciplines. The editors are confident that each reader will be able to identify at least some points of relevance in relation to their own research or practice.

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A new inventory of vocabulary learning strategy for Chinese tertiary EFL learners

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Abstract

The past three decades have witnessed a boost of interest in vocabulary learning in EFL contexts since Meara (1980) identified it as 'a neglected aspect of language learning' (p. 221). A mushrooming amount of literature has emerged in various aspects of vocabulary and its acquisition (e.g., Carter, 1998; Coady & Huckin, 1997; Manyak, 2010; Meara, 1995, 2005; Nation, 1990, 2006; Read, 2000; Schmitt, 2000; Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997). With a movement from teaching-orientedness to learner-centeredness and learner autonomy, vocabulary learning strategies seem to have gained its legitimacy as one auxiliary approach to vocabulary learning. Despite this, there appears no satisfactory instrument particularly for assessing vocabulary learning strategy use in an EFL context, although a few researchers have tried to do so (e.g., Gu & Johnson, 1996; Schmitt, 1997). To this aim, a new inventory for vocabulary learning, the Strategies Inventory for Vocabulary Learning (SIVL) was proposed for Chinese EFL university learners. To validate the instrument, confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses were employed to assess its psychometric properties. Results showed that the hypothesized theoretical model proved to be a good representation of the sample data, and that the SIVL exhibited satisfactory psychometric features. This positive evidence indicates that the SIVL can serve as a reliable and valid research instrument for assessing Chinese EFL university learners' vocabulary learning strategy use. It is suggested that the SIVL can be a valuable resource for EFL learners and practitioners in that it can raise their awareness of strategy use and strategy training by employing this instrument, leading to more successful vocabulary teaching and learning.

Key words : Vocabulary learning, Learning strategies, Vocabulary learning strategies, Strategy classification, Strategy inventory, Factor analysis

"I Used Them Because I Had to . . .": The Effects of Explicit Instruction of Topic-Induced Word Combinations on ESL Writers

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Abstract

This study attempts to determine whether the students who receive explicit instruction make more gains in their abilities to use topic-induced phrases in their writing than those who do not. Additionally, through interviews with a selected group of students from the treatment group, the study attempts to glean insights into the approaches learners use for written production of the target phrases. Data was collected from 54 ESL students in high-intermediate writing classes at an IEP who were assigned to the contrast (N=19) and treatment (N=35) groups based on their class enrollment. Over a period of four days, the treatment group received training on 15 target structures. The contrast group received no vocabulary instruction. Both groups were exposed to the

target phrases through reading the same course materials and discussing them in class. The data included the scores participants received on the production of the target structures in their essays at the beginning and end of term. A repeated-measures ANOVA revealed that while both groups made improvement, it was the treatment group that made more significant gains in their abilities to produce topic-induced phrases than the contrast. The interviews' findings indicated the students' perceptions of the usefulness of the target structures may influence whether or not learners employ them in writing. The study findings suggest that explicit instruction is helpful for the writers' abilities to produce topic-induced phrases. These findings have implications for ESL writing pedagogy.

Key words: explicit instruction, topic-induced phrases, topic-related vocabulary, ESL writing.

The Effect of Input Enhancement on Vocabulary Learning: Is There An Impact upon Receptive And Productive Knowledge?

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Abstract

This article reports on a quasi-experimental study investigating the effectiveness of two different teaching approaches, explicit teaching and explicit teaching combined with textual and aural input enhancement used to teach lexical items to elementary level learners of Turkish in a higher education context. Forty participants were divided into two equal groups and given a pre-test measuring productive and receptive knowledge of nine targeted lexical items naming common types of food and drink. Each group was then given sixty minutes instruction on 'restaurant Turkish', using a direct communicative approach. Group one (contrast group) received explicit teaching only, while group two (treatment group) received the same teaching but also used a menu where the target words were bolded (textual input enhancement) and listened to the target words modeled by the teacher three times (aural input enhancement). Following the treatment, tests measuring productive and receptive knowledge of the target items were administered. This process was repeated with a delay of two weeks following the treatment. Analysis of gain scores for receptive and productive tests made at the pre-, post- and delayed stage reveal larger gains for the treatment group in each test. These were statistically significant when compared with the contrast group's scores for production at the immediate post-test stage. Within group tests showed that each treatment had a significant impact on receptive and productive knowledge of vocabulary targeted, with a larger short term effect on the treatment group. Previous studies in this area have tended to focus on the use of input enhancement in relation to the learning of grammatical forms but these results demonstrate some clear benefits when teaching lexis, which have clear implications for further research and teaching.

Key words: Input enhancement; textual enhancement; aural enhancement; Turkish vocabulary; beginners

Vocabulary Teaching: Insights from Lexical Errors

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Abstract

This paper offers a theoretical approach to vocabulary instruction from the evidence provided by lexical errors as the main sources of difficulty in the EFL acquisition process, it reviews previous research and from it suggests new ways of dealing with lexical errors in the classroom. Some practical implications are concluded which rely on lexical error categories identified in previous studies. Our main starting point is that lexical errors can serve as a guideline for teachers and researchers to improve vocabulary instruction. Identifying the main causes of lexical errors can help teachers understand the difficulties of their learners and assist them in planning and designing lessons and materials for the vocabulary class. Embarking from this premise, we have reviewed the main lexical error sources identified in the literature and provided some suggestions for vocabulary instruction.

Keywords: lexical errors, cross-linguistic influence (CLI) in vocabulary, remedying strategies, vocabulary instruction, explicit teaching

Lexical transfer in the writing of Chinese learners of English

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Abstract

This study aims to further the understanding of first language (L1) lexical transfer within the context of L1 Chinese learners of English. Previous transfer research has often focused on a small subset of grammar errors, without examining how lexical choices, especially in collocations and multi-word units (MWU), might have been influenced by L1 or L1-based assumptions about vocabulary use. There is therefore a need to look for evidence of L1 transfer or word-for-word translation from the native language in L2 production at each of the three levels: individual words, collocations and MWU. Such errors points to subordinate bilingualism, which is rooted in translation as a teaching/learning method (Cook, 2014), which is common in China (Edmunds, 2013). Therefore this paper addresses the following research questions: 1) To what extent does the transfer of L1 word polysemy, collocations, and MWU impact Chinese learners' English vocabulary use? 2) Are more advanced learners as prone to L1 lexical transfer errors as the less advanced ones? The approach used here is corpus-linguistic. The main research task is to examine an existing corpus of Chinese student writing in English and analyze and classify the identified lexical transfer errors. The findings indicate that the most common of these are errors caused by L1 polysemy in individual words, followed by MWU and collocation errors. More advanced learners appear to be slightly but not significantly less prone to lexical transfer errors. Instruction which

follows the recommendations made in this paper is likely to prevent the onset of such errors.

Keywords: lexical transfer, polysemy, collocation, multi-word unit, subordinate bilingualism

Helping Language Learners Get Started with Concordancing

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Abstract

While studies exploring the overall effectiveness of Data Driven Learning activities have been positive, learner participants often seem to report difficulties in deciding what to look up, and how to formulate appropriate queries for a search (Gabel, 2001; Sun, 2003; Yeh, Liou, & Li, 2007). *The Prime Machine* (Jeaco, 2015) was developed as a concordancing tool to be used specifically for looking up, comparing and exploring vocabulary and language patterns for English language teaching and self-tutoring. The design of this concordancer took a pedagogical perspective on the corpus techniques and methods to be used, focusing on English for Academic Purposes and including important software design principles from Computer Aided Language Learning. The software includes a range of search support and display features which try to make the comparison process for exploring specific words and collocations easier. This paper reports on student use of this concordancer, drawing on log data records from mouse clicks and software features as well as questionnaire responses from the participants. Twenty-three undergraduate students from a Sino-British university in China participated in the evaluation. Results from logs of search support features and general use of the software are compared with questionnaire responses from before and after the session. It is believed that *The Prime Machine* can be a very useful corpus tool which, while simple to operate, provides a wealth of information for language learning.

Key words: Concordancer, Data Driven Learning, Lexical Priming, Corpus linguistics.

Self-assigned Ranking of L2 Vocabulary

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Abstract

This article describes a research study that determined the depth of vocabulary knowledge of 28 intermediate ESL learners. The study was carried out with Bricklayer, a vocabulary assessment tool for L2 English which tested the ESL learners on 72 words. Two post-tests collected evidence for concurrent validity. A semantic distance test captured incremental knowledge for 36 words, but Bricklayer's predictive power for this partial knowledge was weak. A standard multiple-choice test of the remaining 36 words showed that Bricklayer predicted 61% of known words and 69% of unknown words; results were better for words which were *strongly* predicted to be known or unknown. These findings provide promise that Bricklayer's assessment paradigm assists in building up models of students' knowledge and behaviour in CALL environments.

Keywords: Computer Assisted Language Learning, vocabulary assessment, vocabulary depth, meta-cognition, self-assessment

Recognition Vocabulary Knowledge and Intelligence as Predictors of Academic Achievement in EFL Context

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Abstract

Research has shown that general vocabulary knowledge (e.g., Milton & Treffers-Daller, 2013), academic vocabulary knowledge (e.g., Townsend et al., 2012) and general intelligence (e.g., Laidra et al., 2007) are good predictors of academic achievement. While the effect of these factors has mostly been examined separately, Townsend et al. (2012) have tried to model the contribution of general and academic vocabulary to academic achievement and find academic vocabulary knowledge adds only marginally to the predictive ability of general vocabulary knowledge. This study, therefore, examines further factors as part of a more extensive predictive model of academic performance, including L1 vocabulary knowledge, L2 general and academic vocabulary knowledge, and intelligence (IQ) as predictors of overall academic achievement among learners of EFL. Performance on these measures was correlated with Grade Point Average (GPA) as a measure of academic achievement for undergraduate Arabic L1 users ($N = 96$). The results show positive significant correlations between all the measures and academic achievement. However, academic vocabulary knowledge shows the strongest correlation ($r = .72$) suggesting that the pedagogical use of this list remains important. To further explore the data, multiple regression and factor analyses were performed. The results show that academic and general vocabulary knowledge combined can explain about 56% of the variance in students' GPAs. The findings, thus, suggest that, in addition to L1 and L2 vocabulary size, and IQ, knowledge of academic vocabulary is an important factor that explains an additional variance in learners' academic achievement.

Keywords: academic achievement, academic vocabulary, general vocabulary, intelligence, L1 vocabulary

Using Category Generation Tasks to Estimate Productive Vocabulary Size in a Foreign Language

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Abstract

This paper reports an investigation into whether a test of productive vocabulary size using a category generation task can be useful and effective. A category generation task is a simple task where learners are asked to name as many as words as they can from a

prescribed category such as *animals* or *body parts*. The virtue of this approach is that it potentially allows an estimate of productive vocabulary size, comparable to receptive size estimates, to be made. Four such tasks were trialled on 92 learners ranging from elementary to advanced level. Subjects also took Nation's Productive Vocabulary Levels Test (PVLТ) (2001) and Meara & Milton's X-Lex (2003). The results suggest that category generation tasks can produce vocabulary size estimates and these are comparable in size with PVLТ and about one third of the size of a receptive vocabulary size estimate (X-Lex). The tests appeared very reliable and can distinguish between learners of different levels of performance. There are still issues to be resolved concerning the tasks which can be used and the volumes of vocabulary they can potentially obtain. Factor analysis suggests the receptive and all the productive tasks test a single factor.

Key words: productive vocabulary, vocabulary size, category generation task, vocabulary assessment, frequency vocabulary bands

How General is the Vocabulary in a General English Language Textbook?

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Abstract

This study reports on the analysis of a widely used "General English" textbook to explore the relationship between lexical bundles included in the text and lexical bundles identified in relevant corpora to determine the appropriateness of the text's vocabulary in relation to its stated objective. Appropriateness is examined through the analysis of usefulness and functions, and the relationship between the two, by comparing the usefulness scores of various functions. The results show a relatively low level of usefulness of the lexical bundles in the textbook, meaning low frequency and small range of usage for the analysed items. The function analysis showed that textbook includes all the functions. The most common function was referential, followed by stance, special conversational, and discourse organizing functions. The current study offers an initial step for future research of lexical bundles and their functions, and usefulness in language teaching and teaching materials development; specifically, it suggests a possible methodology to be used in such research. Moreover, the results of this study provide insights into the value of lexical bundles in teaching and the development of teaching materials.

Keywords: multiword constructions, corpus research, English textbooks, textbook design

A Corpus Comparison Approach for Estimating the Vocabulary Load of Medical Textbooks Using The GSL, AWL, and EAP Science Lists

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Abstract

The main goal of this study is to report on the number of words (vocabulary load)

native and non-native readers of medical textbooks written in English need to know in order to be able to meet the lexical demands of this type of subject-specific (medical) texts. For estimating the vocabulary load of medical textbooks, a corpus comparison approach and some existing word lists, popular in ESP and EAP, were used. The present investigation aims to answer the following questions: (1) How many words are needed beyond the General Service List (GSL; West, 1953), the Academic Word List (AWL; Coxhead, 2000), and the EAP Science List (Coxhead and Hirsh, 2007) to achieve a good lexical text coverage and (2) What is the vocabulary load of medical textbooks written in English? The implementation of this corpus comparison approach consisted of: (1) making a written medical corpus of 5.4 million tokens, (2) compiling a general written corpus of the same size (5.4 million tokens), (3) running both corpora (i.e., the medical and general) through some existing word lists (i.e., the GSL, the AWL, and the EAP Science List), and (4) creating new subject-specific (medical) word lists beyond the existing word lists used. The system for identifying medical words was based on Chung and Nation's (2003) criteria for classifying specialised vocabulary. The results of this investigation showed that there is a large number of subject-specific (medical) words in medical textbooks. For both native and non-native speakers of English training to be health professionals, this figure represents an enormous amount of vocabulary learning. This paper concludes by considering the value of creating specialised medical word lists for research, teaching and testing purposes.

Key words: medical word lists, vocabulary load, English for medical purposes, text coverage.