

Taking a closer look at vocabulary and academic literacy levels of undergraduate students

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Abstract

This paper reports on a study conducted in 2011 with undergraduate students at the University of Namibia (UNAM). One of the aims of the study was to assess the vocabulary and academic literacy levels of the students, as well as to examine the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and academic literacy. The multi componential aspect of vocabulary knowledge coupled with the fact that university students need a large vocabulary (relevant to their academic context and purposes for reading) in order to fully understand their texts which are written in a language which for the majority is an additional language (AL), has led to a re-evaluation of current practices. Two research instruments were used to obtain data: the receptive vocabulary levels test (VLT) and the test of academic literacy levels (TALL). Findings paint a bleak picture of English mid frequency word knowledge of first year students at UNAM. Data also showed that not all students who enter university have adequate vocabulary knowledge to participate in the academic discourse prevalent at university. This dispels the assumption that students entering university have adequate vocabulary knowledge. The TALL results showed that the students' academic literacy skills were not very strong, revealing inadequate academic literacy skills to cope with the academic demands of university. This result shows the relevance of introducing academic literacy tests at UNAM, to provide scientific and not just anecdotal evidence to prompt management to spend the necessary resources (financial and human) on the design and implementation of standardized tests assessing academic literacy levels, which in turn allows for monitoring of the efficacy of support programs.

Key Words: vocabulary knowledge, word frequency levels, vocabulary size, academic literacy

Introduction

Vocabulary has always been synonymous with education in general and with literacy in particular. A broad definition of literacy, namely the ability to read and write, encompasses the importance of vocabulary. Vocabulary, broadly speaking, refers to the words of a language or the words known to a person. We read words in order to make meaning of a text, and we use words when we write to express our ideas and thoughts. Similarly, we listen to words to make sense of spoken communication and we communicate verbally using vocabulary. Despite the axiomatic role of vocabulary in communication, this area in language teaching and learning is surprisingly more often than not a neglected area.

In essence, vocabulary knowledge plays a critical role in language proficiency, in all four language skills of listening, reading, speaking or writing. Consequently, it is important to have an adequate vocabulary in order to take part in communication. Furthermore, research seems to confirm that knowledge of vocabulary is fundamental in the additional language (AL) classroom, at all levels of education (Cooper, 1999; Stæhr, 2008).

Throughout research in AL acquisition, much attention has been paid to grammar and discourse related aspects of language proficiency. A focus on the role that vocabulary plays in using the AL was, until the late 1980s and early 1990s, a largely neglected area (Schmitt, 2002; Zimmerman, 1997). Since then, current research in the field of AL acquisition indicates that vocabulary should play a more prominent role in English AL curricula, especially in formal education (Paribakht & Wesche, 1993; Schmitt, 2008; Zimmerman, 1997). A review of the literature shows that the initial focus on vocabulary was primarily on the word as a single unit, i.e. the single lexical item. During the 1920s and 1930s frequency counts were done to determine the frequency of a word's occurrence in a sample of texts, resulting in the compilation of basic word lists. However, vocabulary only gained status in vocabulary teaching and learning during the late 1980s and early 1990s due to computer-aided research. Focus shifted from the single word to lexical phrases, i.e. multi-word units. In addition, idioms, i.e. combinations of words that have figurative meanings, also became an area of focus (Amiryousefi & Dasterdi, 2010).

As Nation (2006) has argued, having an adequate vocabulary is a criterion for reading comprehension. Halliday (1994, as cited in Eggins, 2004) argued that language is structured and that our linguistic choices are determined by the context in which we find ourselves. University students thus have different vocabulary demands than people who use language for everyday transaction or for business, for example. Moreover, the language used at university is different from that of spoken discourse. The register and style differ from everyday

language. For example, the words are different. In addition to high frequency words that occur in both spoken and written language, academic language includes academic and technical words. High frequency words are those that usually occur in all types of texts and make up a large proportion (95%) of the running words (Nation & Anthony, 2013). The latter refer to the total number of words a text contains. Academic words occur frequently over a wide range of academic texts across disciplines and technical words refer to words pertaining to a specific discipline. The more diverse the range of topics and subjects, the larger the vocabulary required (Sutarsyah, Nation & Kennedy, 1994). Furthermore, the way we use language in the formal education context is different from that of spoken language. The former is more referential and informative than the latter. In other words, academic language refers to academic content pertaining to specific disciplines and provides factual information, as well as arguments, ideas and theories.

Vocabulary Size

Cooper's (1999) study investigating the relationship between academic performance and vocabulary size shows that the most significant indicator of academic performance is academic vocabulary size. Stæhr (2008, 140) additionally argues that vocabulary size 'is *the* determinant factor for reading success'. Academic 'work' involves a lot of reading which, in turn, requires many hours of fast, accurate and successful reading. In other words, comprehending academic texts is essential to academic performance on the whole.

Suffice to say, there is a high degree of association between vocabulary size and reading comprehension. But just how much vocabulary knowledge is required to understand most written texts? Answers to this question come from two main sources.

Firstly, research on text coverage, i.e. the percentage of words that one should know in order to understand the text, contributes to estimating how much vocabulary knowledge is needed to achieve reading comprehension (Nation, 2006). A study by Hu and Nation (2000) investigated the relationship between reading comprehension and text coverage. They sought to find out what percentage coverage of a fiction text was needed for unassisted reading comprehension, i.e. without using the dictionary to look up meanings of words, for 63 adults enrolled in a pre-university English course. Some of the low frequency words in the fiction text were replaced with nonsense word, i.e. words that do not exist such as 'emselears, yeard, latments, swanding, crang' and 'rajera' (Hu & Nation, 2000). Findings indicated that a text coverage of 80%, i.e.

when 20 of every 100 words were nonsense words, resulted in inadequate comprehension of the reading text (Hu & Nation, 2000). Furthermore, the study found that with a text coverage of 90%, i.e. when ten of every 100 words were nonsense words, adequate comprehension was achieved, albeit by very few of the adults. A few more of the adults achieved adequate comprehension with a text coverage of 98%, one nonsense word in every 50, resulting in the study concluding that students need 98% text coverage in order to achieve unassisted reading comprehension (Hu & Nation 2000). These findings reaffirm the results from previous studies (Carver, 1994; Kurnia, 2003) regarding the percentage coverage needed for reading comprehension namely, that a text coverage of about 98% is required for reading comprehension to be achieved.

Secondly, due to computer-aided software and the development of corpus linguistics, i.e. research on large electronic collections of texts, empirical evidence exists which shows the approximate number of word families needed to understand certain texts. Nation's (2006) study investigated how many word families (all the lexical items, including derivatives and inflections that belong to the words) are needed for a 98% text coverage of written texts. His study involved the use of word family lists which were developed utilizing data from the British National Corpus (BNC) to determine how much vocabulary is required to understand a novel, a newspaper, a movie and a conversation. Findings indicate that vocabulary knowledge of between 8000 and 9000 word families is required for a 98% text coverage of written texts, such as novels and newspapers. In other words, one needs knowledge of about 8000-9000 word families to achieve unassisted reading comprehension, i.e. without using a dictionary or any other means to determine word meaning.

Texts become more complex as students progress from secondary to tertiary education. The latter requires a vocabulary large enough to enable the effective participation in activities pertaining to the academic context of tertiary education. Furthermore, Corson (1997, p. 676) argues that universities have been shaped by a culture of literacy that 'became institutionalised in formal education, where high value was placed on the daily use of Latin for all spoken purposes and on the rigorous study of Greek'. As a result, the basis for a greatly enlarged English vocabulary from the 15th century onwards was drawn directly from these languages. In addition, Corson (1997) is of the opinion that Graeco-Latin words are usually acquired at school during formal instruction, i.e. through books or reading.

Bailey's (2007) study documented the English demands of learners of English at school. According to Bailey (2007, pp. 10-11), 'academic English can be distinguished from English in other settings at the lexical, grammatical as well as at the discourse levels including organizational structures of the texts as well as

a wide range of functions served in the language in school settings such as explaining, describing and comparing'. Bailey (2007) further suggests that academic vocabulary includes general academic words as well as content-related words (technical vocabulary). In a study investigating the vocabulary of secondary school textbooks, Lindberg and Kokkinas (2008, as cited in Lindberg, 2009) compiled a corpus of one million words. These words were taken from texts in eight subjects taught at school, namely mathematics, chemistry, biology, physics, history, religion, geography and social studies (Lindberg, 2009). Word frequency analyses were conducted and the vocabulary of the corpus was representative of the written language to which secondary school students could be exposed. The study identified four categories of vocabulary: two categories covered words across school subjects, namely general high frequency and non-specialized vocabulary; and two covered content area categories, i.e. everyday vocabulary related to specific subjects and technical terms that are unique to a specific subject (Lindberg & Kokkinas, 2008, cited in Lindberg 2009). Furthermore, Lindberg (2009) argues that 'textbooks and other written sources play an increasingly important role for learning in higher grades and knowledge of the vocabulary encountered in schoolbook texts is consequently of great relevance to school success'. In the same vein, students are expected to produce work which illustrates and entails efficient mastery of the language. Students need more than knowledge of only high and mid frequency words, and should be exposed to a range of texts covering different topics as they need knowledge of academic as well as technical words. Some students in Namibia, however, do not even have this knowledge, even after eight years of English as LoLT at school.

Nation (2006) suggests that knowledge of 8000 – 9000 word families seems to be adequate for ESL academic coursework. Waring and Nation (2004) support the hypothesis that ESL students for whom English is also the LoLT need quite a substantial amount of vocabulary knowledge due to the heavy cognitive demands of academic texts. In addition, studies conducted have determined that for students to comprehend a text they need to understand between 95% (Hirsh & Nation, 1992; Laufer, 1989; Nation & Hwang, 1995) and 98% (Nation, 2006) of the words in the text. Despite the difference in estimates ranging from 95% to 98%, it is generally believed that a substantial amount of vocabulary knowledge is required for reading success, and inevitably academic performance.

Literacy

A broad definition of literacy refers to the ability to read and write at a basic level, i.e. 'to read and understand simple printed paragraphs, write simple letters and

count and recognise figures 1 to 1000' (ACCU & UNESCO 2001, p. 13). According to statistics (Index Mundi, 2013), the literacy rate in Namibia in 2013 was at 89% (female literacy at 88.5% and male literacy at 89%). This rate is defined by the number of people in the country aged 15 and older who are able to read and write at a basic level. Being able to read and write at a rudimentary level is, however, not adequate for a nation having to cope with the knowledge and information economy of the 21st century.

Namibia has made great strides in promoting literacy. The country has a national literacy programme which was launched in 1992 and established family literacy centres at rural schools across the country to help parents and guardians of Grade 1 learners. These centres assist illiterate parents and caregivers of Grade 1 learners to read and write. As a result of the national literacy programme, Namibia was awarded the United Nation's Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Internal Literacy Prize in 2013, attesting to the government's continuous efforts since 1992 to promote and maintain literacy. The African Economist Magazine (2013) ranked the country fifth in literacy rankings in Africa.

However, the general literacy development promoted in the country is aimed more at adult learners and is a different type of specialised knowledge from the literacy required for formal education at school. The latter type of literacy entails the ability to read and write beyond the basic level. That is, to have the reading skills to 'read to learn', to understand the content of academic genre, as presented in textbooks, prescribed novels and poems, and other prescribed books. In addition, writing in formal education entails more than just writing simple letters. It entails writing sentences beyond the basic level that eventually become coherent paragraphs. Higher up the educational ladder, writing demands the ability to describe, argue and discuss issues in extended discourse relating to different content subjects and coping with the type of texts explained earlier. These literacy skills are more advanced than merely being able to read and write at a basic level. Despite the country's high adult literacy rate, there is evidence that the literacy rates within the formal education sector do not meet the required standard. According to the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), which provides information about the levels of reading and mathematics achievement of Grade 6 learners across 14 African countries, Namibia is below the overall SACMEQ average in reading and mathematics (SACMEQ, 2011). Statistics from 2011 also show that of the 17 255 fulltime students who wrote the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSC) examinations, only 3 640 (i.e. 21%) qualified to study at tertiary institutions. Furthermore, results of the NSSC in 2012 show that 7 500 of a total of 19 027 students (39.4%) who wrote the examinations met minimum university admission

requirements (Ikela, 2013). In other words, only a small percentage of learners who finished school qualified for entry to tertiary institutions. Even though the number has increased since 2011, 39% is still worrisome as it means that about 61% of these students cannot continue with tertiary education and need to find employment or apply to a vocational training centre. It is estimated that 42% of Namibia's youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are unemployed, and these young people face a bleak future.

In addition to the types of literacy mentioned above, academic literacy, prevalent at higher institutions of learning in general, refers to the skills of critical thinking, reading, speaking and writing within academia. The foundation of these skills should, however, already be laid in primary and secondary school. During a colloquium on the state of academic literacy in South Africa, Weideman (2012) argued that language competence, i.e. how proficiently we use language, involves more than just the four language skills namely, reading, writing, listening and speaking. He stated that academic language is 'imbued with cognitive as well as analytical processing' (Weideman, 2012, p. 4). In other words, we have to use language and perform tasks or activities, for example, explain, define, compare, agree or disagree with, or conclude something. According to Henderson and Hirst (2007), academic literacy is traditionally seen as a set of skills that has to be mastered by students so that they can successfully do the tasks expected of scholars. However, they argue that the social, cognitive and linguistic dimensions should be taken into consideration when we talk about academic literacy, as it entails more than having a set of skills. Academic literacy encompasses the skills to read and listen to academic language, as well as to write and speak using academic language. By so doing, students interact with the academic environment and process information pertaining to the world of academia.

Despite the multi-faceted nature of academic literacy, the study reported on focused specifically on one of the components of academic literacy, viz, vocabulary, and explores, inter alia, the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and academic literacy.

Methodology

This study was conducted in 2011 among first-year students at the University of Namibia. The aim of the study was to assess the vocabulary and academic levels of these students as well as to examine the relationship between vocabulary size and academic literacy.

Two research instruments were used to obtain data: a receptive vocabulary levels tests (VLT) and a test of academic literacy levels (TALL).

1. **The vocabulary levels tests:** This receptive test was devised by Schmitt, Schmitt and Clapham (2001). The reason for using this test as a pre- and post-test was to assess the vocabulary levels of the participants before and after the intervention programme. The test contains a sample of 36 words for each of the five frequency levels: 2000, 3000, 5000, 10 000 and academic word levels, yielding a total score of 180.
2. **The test of academic literacy levels (TALL):** The TALL, designed by the Inter-Institutional Centre for Language Development and Assessment (ICELDA), measures the academic literacy level of students at tertiary level in order to determine the level of risk a student poses in terms of academic literacy. The test consists of items distributed over 7 subtests.

Research study

The multi componential aspect of vocabulary knowledge coupled with the fact that university students need a large vocabulary, relevant to their academic context and purposes for reading to properly comprehend their texts, has led to an investigation into first-year students' vocabulary and academic literacy levels. The relationship between vocabulary size and academic literacy was also examined.

The following research questions and hypothesis were formulated:

- What are the vocabulary and academic literacy levels of the first-year students who participated in the study?
- What is the relationship between students' vocabulary size and their academic literacy?
 - **H1:** *There is a significant relationship between mean scores of the VLT and the mean scores of the TALL.*

Sample

The participants in the study consisted of 86 students (33% male and 67% female) and were registered for the English for General Communication (ULEG 2410) module. These students obtained a D-symbol for English at the end of secondary education. In addition, students who were admitted to the university through the Mature Age Entry Programme, irrespective of the English symbol obtained previously, also registered for ULEG. The participants were not randomly selected but were already in intact classes. For purposes beyond the scope of this paper, one of the classes was designated as the explicit group (EG), and the other as the implicit group (IG).

Data collection

To ascertain the participants' receptive vocabulary size, the improved version of Nation's (1990) receptive vocabulary levels Tests (VLT), devised by Schmitt, Schmitt and Clapham (2001), was used in the study. The test contains a sample of 36 words and 30 definitions for each of the five frequency levels (Schmitt, Schmitt & Clapham, 2001). Participants were required to match half of the words (3) to the short definitions of their meanings. Appendix A provides the questions from the range of levels in the VLT used in the study.

Since there are no standardised tests for assessing academic literacy at the Language Centre, the Test of Academic Literacy Levels (TALL) was used to determine participants' academic literacy levels. The test also assesses the extent to which the student is at risk of academic failure.

The TALL consist of items distributed over seven sub-tests:

- Section 1: Scrambled text
- Section 2: Knowledge of academic vocabulary
- Section 3: Interpreting graphs and visual information
- Section 4: Text types
- Section 5: Understanding texts
- Section 6: Text editing
- Section 7: Writing (Weideman & Van der Slik, 2008).

Findings

The first research question investigated the vocabulary and academic literacy levels of the participants. The receptive vocabulary levels test (VLT) was used to determine the vocabulary levels of the participants. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the participants' scores (explicit and implicit) on the 5 word levels tested. Each level was scored out of 30 and the standard deviation is reported on in brackets next to the mean. The last two rows indicate the total mean scores for the entire vocabulary test. The performance of the students at the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles is also given. Mastery of a level is taken to be performance of 25 out of 30 (83,3%).

Table 1 Vocabulary levels of the two groups

	N	Min	Max	Mean	25th	50th	75th
Explicit 2000	49	24	30	27.9 (1.6)	27	28	29
Implicit 2000	43	21	30	28.7 (1.7)	28	29	30
Explicit 3000	49	19	29	25.2 (2.5)	24	23	25
Implicit 3000	43	19	29	25.9 (2.1)	25	26	27
Explicit 5000	49	13	29	22.2 (4.1)	20	23	25
Implicit 5000	43	5	27	20.8 (3.9)	19	21	24

Explicit 10 000	49	2	23	9 (4.1)	6	8	11.5
Implicit 10 000	43	2	15	8.4 (3.3)	6	8	11
Explicit Academic	49	17	30	24.5 (3.2)	23	24	27
Implicit Academic	43	16	28	24.3 (2.8)	22	25	26
Explicit							
Total mean score pretest	49	16	28	21.8 (2.4)	20	22	24
Implicit							
Total mean score pretest	43	17	25	21.6 (1.8)	20	22	23

In Table 1, it can be seen that mastery was accomplished at the 2000 and 3000 word levels of the majority of the participants in both groups. Even though the mean score of the participants in the explicit group at the 3000 word level is 25.2, 75% of the participants scored less than 25. In other words, only 25% of the participants scored 25 or more in this level and had mastery of this group of words. Furthermore, the majority of participants in the explicit (mean = 22.2) and the implicit (mean = 20.8) groups did not achieve mastery at the 5000 word level. Not unexpectedly for L2 students, mastery was also not obtained by the majority of the participants (explicit and implicit) in the 10 000 word level. The percentile scores at the academic word level, in particular, indicated that 50% of the participants in the groups scored less than 25 (implicit) and 24 (explicit). The results of the receptive VLT were somewhat surprising, as the students did better than what was expected.

The research question also investigated the academic literacy levels of the students who participated in the study. The tests of academic literacy levels (TALL) was used.

According to the TALL scoring there are five categories of performance, namely Levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. These levels are determined based on the cut-off point for the TALL which is about 10% below the average score and also sets the high risk level at approximately 30% of the sample tested (Van der Slik & Weideman, 2008). Level 1 categorises the 'Extremely High Risk' group. Participants on this level obtain between 0% and 33% and it is recommended that they receive intensive academic literacy training and language development, as well as regular visits to the reading and/or writing laboratory. Level 2 refers to the 'High Risk' group and students on this level obtain between 34% and 58% and require intensive academic literacy training and regular visits to the reading and/or writing laboratory to reduce the risk of not completing their studies in the required time. Level 3 is classified as the 'At Risk' group and participants in this group obtain more than 59%. Level 4 refers to the 'Low Risk' group and Level 5 refers to the 'Low to No Risk' group. That is, students on these levels are not at a high risk of not completing their studies in the prescribed time frame of their qualification. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the TALL categories assigned to the participants in the explicit and implicit groups and the participants' scores on the TALL.

Table 2 Academic literacy levels and categories of the groups

	Explicit TALL		Implicit TALL	Total TALL	score
N	53		37	90	
Min	13		8	8	
Max	52		57	57	
Mean	31		35.9	33	
STD	8.7		10.8	11.2	
Extremely High Risk	37/53	69.8%	14/37 32.3%	51/90 56.7%	
High Risk	16/53	30.2%	23/37 62.2%	39/90 43.3%	
At Risk	-		-	-	

Results indicated that all the students were categorized in either the 'extremely high risk' (Level 1) or 'high risk' (Level 2) groups. In other words, the participants' academic literacy skills were not very strong. Moreover, the poor academic literacy levels of the students in four of the six sections of the TALL were worrisome as students are expected to be academically literate so that they can perform academic tasks effectively and accurately. Participants' inadequate academic literacy levels were a cause for concern as these levels are regarded as an important contributing factor to students' lack of success and performance at university. This could have a negative effect on the estimated time in which

students complete their qualifications, i.e. students could take longer than the prescribed time in which to complete their qualifications.

The second research question sought to inquire whether there was a relationship between the participants' knowledge of vocabulary, specifically academic vocabulary, and their academic literacy levels. The hypothesis (H1) formulated from the research question was: *There is a significant relationship between mean scores of the word levels of the VLT and mean scores of the TALL.*

In order to examine the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and academic literacy a Pearson's Product-Moment correlation was applied to data from the academic word level of the VLT and TALL. Table 3 presents the correlation statistics.

Table 3 Correlation statistics for academic vocabulary

Correlation	Explicit Group (n=32)		Implicit Group (n=31)	
VLT and TALL	r = 0.216	p = 0.270	r = 0.246	p = 0.215

The results indicated that there were no significant correlations between the vocabulary scores and the TALL scores within the groups. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted, i.e. there is no significant relationship between academic word knowledge and academic literacy. This is surprising since vocabulary knowledge, specifically of mid frequency words and academic words, assists reading comprehension, i.e. performance on these words should correlate in different tests, which was not the case in the study. The participants scored relatively well in the word levels of the VLT, especially at the academic word level, but did not perform well on the academic literacy test, i.e. there was a discrepancy in the performance in the two instruments. In other words, there was a weak relationship between word knowledge and academic literacy.

There were no significant correlation between receptive academic word knowledge and academic literacy, as well as between the other word levels and academic literacy. This is a surprising finding and contrary to other findings in the field. This result may have been an artefact of the research instruments used. The receptive VLT may not be a vigorous enough tool to use in this context. This gives reason to supplement the receptive VLT with the productive VLT to get a better measurement to compare academic literacy with. Further research in this area is called for, especially in relation to uses of the receptive and productive VLT in the context of developing countries.

Conclusion

Even though no conclusive relationship was established between academic word knowledge and academic literacy, these concepts remain important in the local context. First year students, particularly those who obtained a D symbol for ESL (NSSC) and those who were admitted to UNAM through the Mature Age Entry Programme, need intensive academic literacy training and regular visits to the Writing Excellence Unit. This has direct implications on the Language Centre and should be addressed in the very near future. Moreover, academic literacy tests should be introduced at the University of Namibia. In this way, we can produce scientific and not anecdotal evidence which in turn will speak to management and lecturers. Academic literacy tests are also important for monitoring the efficacy of support programmes. This may prompt management to spend the necessary resources (financial and human) on the design and implementation of standardized tests to assess academic literacy levels.

In addition to improving academic literacy, vocabulary development must become a priority in the classroom. Consistent low levels of vocabulary knowledge are an unnecessary hindrance in effective language use in the local situation. The role of academic vocabulary in the discourse of the university is highly significant and time spent on enhancing not only receptive knowledge of these words but also productive knowledge of academic words is worthwhile and meaningful.

Time, effort and money should be invested in determining the word levels of students, not only at university, but at junior secondary level already. Word level tests are freely available on the Internet to download or complete. Consequently, appropriate measures can be taken to address any limitations and can help students attain full mastery of a specific level, be it in the form of extensive reading or vocabulary instruction.

Language use (receptive & productive) is reliant on word knowledge and vocabulary can no longer be neglected from English language teaching and learning contexts in Namibia. Vocabulary teaching and learning should rightfully take its place in English classrooms throughout the country; an area that if promoted, will positively affect the education sector in Namibia.

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Appendix A

Student number:

Vocabulary levels tests (VLT)

(Schmitt, Schmitt, & Clapham 2001)

This is a vocabulary test. You must choose the right word to go with each meaning. Write the number of that word next to its meaning.

The 2,000 word level

1 copy

2 event _____ end or highest point

3 motor _____ this moves a car

4 pity _____ thing made to be like

5 profit another

6 tip

1 accident

2 debt _____ loud deep sound

3 fortune _____ something you must pay

4 pride _____ having a high opinion of

5 roar yourself

6 thread

1 coffee

2 disease _____ money for work

3 justice _____ a piece of clothing

4 skirt _____ using the law in the right

5 stage way

6 wage

1 clerk

2 frame _____ a drink

3 noise _____ office worker

4 respect _____ unwanted sound

5 theatre

6 wine

1 dozen

2 empire _____ chance

3 gift _____ twelve

4 opportunity _____ money paid to the

5 relief government

6 tax

1 admire

2 complain _____ make wider or longer

3 fix _____ bring in for the first time

4 hire _____ have a high opinion of

5 introduce someone

6 stretch

1 arrange

2 develop _____ grow

- 3 lean _____ put in order
- 4 owe _____ like more than something
- 5 prefer else
- 6 seize

- 1 blame
- 2 elect _____ make
- 3 jump _____ choose by voting
- 4 manufacture _____ become like water
- 5 melt
- 6 threaten

- 1 ancient
- 2 curious _____ not easy
- 3 difficult _____ very old
- 4 entire _____ related to God
- 5 holy
- 6 social

- 1 bitter
- 2 independent _____ beautiful
- 3 lovely _____ small
- 4 merry _____ liked by many people
- 5 popular
- 6 slight

The 3,000 word level

- 1 bull
- 2 champion _____ formal and serious manner
- 3 dignity _____ winner of a sporting event
- 4 hell _____ building where valuable
- 5 museum _____ objects are shown
- 6 solution

- 1 blanket
- 2 contest _____ holiday
- 3 generation _____ good quality
- 4 merit _____ wool covering used on
- 5 plot _____ beds
- 6 vacation

- 1 comment
- 2 gown _____ long formal dress
- 3 import _____ goods from a foreign
- 4 nerve _____ country
- 5 pasture _____ part of the body which
- 6 tradition _____ carries feeling

- 1 administration
- 2 angel _____ group of animals
- 3 frost _____ spirit who serves God

4 herd _____ managing business and

5 fort _____ affairs

6 pond

1 atmosphere

2 counsel _____ advice

3 factor _____ a place covered with grass

4 hen _____ female chicken

5 lawn

6 muscle

1 abandon

2 dwell _____ live in a place

3 oblige _____ follow in order to catch

4 pursue _____ leave something

5 quote _____ permanently

6 resolve

1 assemble

2 attach _____ look closely

3 peer _____ stop doing something

4 quit _____ cry out loudly in fear

5 scream

6 toss

1 drift

- 2 endure _____ suffer patiently
3 grasp _____ join wool threads together
4 knit _____ hold firmly with your hands
5 register
6 tumble

- 1 brilliant
2 distinct _____ thin
3 magic _____ steady
4 naked _____ without clothes
5 slender
6 stable

- 1 aware
2 blank _____ usual
3 desperate _____ best or most important
4 normal _____ knowing what is happening
5 striking
6 supreme

The 5,000 word level

- 1 analysis
2 curb _____ eagerness
3 gravel _____ loan to buy a house

4 mortgage _____ small stones mixed with

5 scar _____ sand

6 zeal

1 cavalry

2 eve _____ small hill

3 ham _____ day or night before a

4 mound _____ holiday

5 steak _____ soldiers who fight from

6 switch _____ horses

1 circus

2 jungle _____ musical instrument

3 nomination _____ seat without a back or

4 sermon _____ arms

5 stool _____ speech given by a priest in

6 trumpet _____ a church

1 artillery

2 creed _____ a kind of tree

3 hydrogen _____ system of belief

4 maple _____ large gun on wheels

5 pork

6 streak

1 chart

- 2 forge _____ map
- 3 mansion _____ large beautiful house
- 4 outfit _____ place where metals are
- 5 sample made and shaped
- 6 volunteer

- 1 contemplate
- 2 extract _____ think about deeply
- 3 gamble _____ bring back to health
- 4 launch _____ make someone angry
- 5 provoke
- 6 revive

- 1 demonstrate
- 2 embarrass _____ have a rest
- 3 heave _____ break suddenly into small
- 4 obscure pieces
- 5 relax _____ make someone feel shy or
- 6 shatter nervous

- 1 correspond
- 2 embroider _____ exchange letters
- 3 lurk _____ hide and wait for someone
- 4 penetrate _____ feel angry about something
- 5 prescribe
- 6 resent

1 decent

2 frail _____ weak

3 harsh _____ concerning a city

4 incredible _____ difficult to believe

5 municipal

6 specific

1 adequate

2 internal _____ enough

3 mature _____ fully grown

4 profound _____ alone away from other

5 solitary things

6 tragic

The 10,000 word level

1 alabaster

2 chandelier _____ small barrel

3 dogma _____ soft white stone

4 keg _____ tool for shaping wood

5 rasp

6 tentacle

1 benevolence

2 convoy _____ kindness

3 lien _____ set of musical notes

4 octave _____ speed control for an
5 stint _____ engine

6 throttle

1 bourgeois

2 brocade _____ middle class people

3 consonant _____ row or level of something

4 prelude _____ cloth with a pattern or gold

5 stupor _____ or silver threads

6 tier

1 alcove

2 impetus _____ priest

3 maggot _____ release from prison early

4 parole _____ medicine to put on wounds

5 salve

6 vicar

1 alkali

2 banter _____ light joking talk

3 coop _____ a rank of British nobility

4 mosaic _____ picture made of small pieces

5 stealth _____ of glass or stone

6 viscount

1 dissipate

2 flaunt _____ steal

3 impede _____ scatter or vanish
4 loot _____ twist the body about
5 squirm _____ uncomfortably
6 vie

1 contaminate

2 cringe _____ write carelessly
3 immerse _____ move back because of fear
4 peek _____ put something under water
5 relay
6 scrawl

1 blurt

2 dabble _____ walk in a proud way
3 dent _____ kill by squeezing someone's
4 pacify _____ throat
5 strangle _____ say suddenly without
6 swagger _____ thinking

1 illicit

2 lewd _____ immense
3 mammoth _____ against the law
4 slick _____ wanting revenge
5 temporal
6 vindictive

- 1 indolent
- 2 nocturnal _____ lazy
- 3 obsolete _____ no longer used
- 4 torrid _____ clever and tricky
- 5 translucent
- 6 wily

Academic Vocabulary

- 1 area
- 2 contract _____ written agreement
- 3 definition _____ way of doing something
- 4 evidence _____ reason for believing
- 5 method something is or is not true
- 6 role

- 1 debate
- 2 exposure _____ plan
- 3 integration _____ choice
- 4 option _____ joining something into a
- 5 scheme whole
- 6 stability

- 1 access
- 2 gender _____ male or female
- 3 implementation _____ study of the mind

4 license _____ entrance or way in

5 orientation

6 psychology

1 accumulation

2 edition _____ collecting things over time

3 guarantee _____ promise to repair a broken

4 media _____ product

5 motivation _____ feeling a strong reason or

6 phenomenon _____ need to do something

1 adult

2 exploitation _____ end

3 infrastructure _____ machine used to move

4 schedule _____ people or goods

5 termination _____ list of things to do at

6 vehicle _____ certain times

1 alter

2 coincide _____ change

3 deny _____ say something is not true

4 devote _____ describe clearly and exactly

5 release

6 specify

1 correspond

- 2 diminish _____ keep
- 3 emerge _____ match or be in agreement
- 4 highlight _____ with
- 5 invoke _____ give special attention
- 6 retain _____ to something

- 1 bond
- 2 channel _____ make smaller
- 3 estimate _____ guess the number or size
- 4 identify _____ of something
- 5 mediate _____ recognizing and naming
- 6 minimize _____ a person or thing

- 1 explicit
- 2 final _____ last
- 3 negative _____ stiff
- 4 professional _____ meaning `no' or `not'
- 5 rigid
- 6 sole

- 1 abstract
- 2 adjacent _____ next to
- 3 controversial _____ added to
- 4 global _____ concerning the whole world
- 5 neutral
- 6 supplementary