

Education and Society in the Middle East and North Africa

Education and Society in the Middle East and North Africa

*English, Citizenship
and Peace Education*

Edited by

Sergio Saleem Scatolini
and Milton A. George

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



Education and Society in the Middle East and North Africa:
English, Citizenship and Peace Education

Edited by Sergio Saleem Scatolini and Milton A. George

This book first published 2020

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2020 by Sergio Saleem Scatolini, Milton A. George
and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without
the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-4361-7

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-4361-4

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Hearken!	viii
by Sergio Saleem Scatolini	
Introduction	1
Milton A. George	
Part 1: English Language and English Language Teaching (ELT)	
Chapter 1	6
A Review of the Literature on Vocabulary Acquisition and Vocabulary Size Testing in Second Language Learning	
Ahmed Al Qasmi	
Chapter 2	22
Common Spelling Errors of Omani College Students	
Annie B. Domede	
Chapter 3	36
Investigating the Perceptions of EAP Teachers about Curriculum Challenges in Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman	
Nadiya Al Issaei	
Chapter 4	59
Developing Competency for Intercultural Language Teaching in EFL Classrooms	
Qasim Salim Al Washahi	
Chapter 5	79
Omani Student Perspectives of Characteristics of their Grade 12 EFL Teachers	
Rahma Al-Mahrooqi & Christopher Denman	

Chapter 6	97
Implementing Edmodo as a VLE with English Writing Classes in Oman – A Practice Case Study Richard Stacey	
Chapter 7	117
Perceptions of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Oman Sergio Saleem Scatolini	
Chapter 8	139
Skills and Attributes Required in Omani EMI Engineering Classes and Future Career: An Emic View Holi Ibrahim Holi Ali	
Chapter 9	161
Functional and Non-Functional Recurrence in Translating Qur'anic Texts into English Yasmin H. Hannouna	
Chapter 10	192
A Review of Professionally Trained English Teachers' Feedback on Training under the ELTR Project in Pakistan Zafar Iqbal Khattak & Saiqa Imtiaz Asif	
Chapter 11	208
Limitations and Solutions of the Academic Word List Zein Galal	
Part 2: Education, diversity, citizenship, and peace	
Chapter 12	234
طاولات السلام، نموذج ثقافي- تعليمي تشاركي في خدمة الأقليات العربية والإسلامية في أوروبا AbdurRahman Al-Mawwas and Muhamad Omar Nahas	
Chapter 13	246
English and the Promotion of Omani and World Citizenship in Cycle 2 and Post-basic Education Christopher Denman & Rahma Al-Mahrooqi	

Chapter 14	262
Complexity Theory: Main Principles and Pedagogical Implications Faisal Al Saidi	
Chapter 15	274
An Exploration of Research Obstacles in Higher Education Institutions in Oman Muneer Karasheh, Christopher J. Denman, Rahma Al-Mahrooqi & Hanin Alqam	
Chapter 16	303
الإعلام الاجتماعي والإنترنت بين المعاصرة والتفاعلية Social Media and the Internet - Contemporary & Interactive Salim Hamood Salim Al Amri	
Chapter 17	323
Justice and Accountability: Towards a Comprehensive Narrative for Future Stability in South Sudan Tajeldin Abdalla Adam	

HEARKEN!

BY SERGIO SALEEM SCATOLINI

Echoes...
Can you hear them?
~Babies drowning
In a sea of hopes.

Sounds...
Can you stop them?
~Women soaring
Past the clouds.

Hearts...
~Can you numb them?
The elderly dreaming
Of new starts.

Voices...
Can you ignore them?
~A region demanding
Futures and choices.

Moans...
Can you muffle them?
~Youths doubting
In a night of souls.

Whispers...
Can you shush them?
~The impatient daring
On WhatsApp or Twitter.

Minds...
~Can you drug them?
Peoples awaking
Out of the slumber of time.

Stories...
Won't you listen?
~Heroes arising
Blacksmiths of new
memories.

INTRODUCTION

BY MILTON A. GEORGE

The constant dynamism which characterises all societies calls for changes in their different social strata. This need to adapt and adopt new practices is felt particularly intensely in the public arena, especially in education. It is there that multitudes of questions arise as the knowledge economy imposes its demands on all corners of the global village. Sustainable development rests on the shoulders of innovation and the kinds of education that promote and nurture it. These new priorities belong within multi-layered discourses, each of which proposes a journey which both tickles and challenges our usual ways of thinking.

The global educational trends reach the regions of our planet and help create different blends of good practices. Moreover, in contemporary knowledge societies, any perspective or vision, however local it may originally be, could suddenly start trending thanks to social networking sites. However, as universal as these trends may seem, they may also be extremely fleeting. Come and gone in the blink of an eye. Consequently, educational practitioners and quality education engineers are challenged to make education both relevant and sustainable in a world where relevancy is short-lived, and sustainability is still a dream.

Educational discourses—produced, shared, and critiqued by local contributors both in the concrete and virtual worlds—call for data that can speak to others as much as it speaks about oneself, i.e. “glocal” data. This applies to many of our quests concerning education, human capital, and co-citizenship. However, for people from the outer circles, it is not always easy to find audiences willing to demystify the bankers of all truths and to accept their truths as equally respectable. At the end of the day, too many researchers do not wish to lessen their impact by publishing in any language other than English—not even their own. It comes, therefore, as no surprise that academics and researchers face obstacles in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), both inside and outside their more immediate contexts. They can neither publish with ease nor find publications that throw light on their own lived realities. These obstacles can be academic, societal, administrative, socio-economic, or personal.

The English teaching sector in MENA embodies much of this tension between the need to listen to the world and the desire to say something to the world, between one's global homes and one's home turf, between globalization and imperialism, and between openness and self-alienation. The ELT sector in MENA is one of the most vibrant in the world and, in the Gulf, also one of the best funded. Despite this, there is not a lot of data available produced in and focused on the region itself. Moreover, data and theoretical frameworks from elsewhere are not always helpful for understanding local situations and problems. Some of the articles in this book, therefore, seek to contribute to the emerging pool of data relevant to English language teaching (ELT) in the region. The voices from the field can help others to understand what is happening in this fascinating part of the world. For example, the challenges faced by students elsewhere are often lightyears away from those faced by Qatari or Emirati students. Even within the Gulf, there are unimaginable differences and distances.

The differences and distances between people and their approaches to reality can differ in such a way that educators need to tap into totally different sources if they want to empower their students to partake in the affairs of the global village. This book's papers are attempts at bridging the gap; they are voices seeking to join the global conversation.

In part 1 on English language and English language teaching, the review of the literature on vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary size testing in second-language (L2) learning aims to give an overview of the subject whilst identifying the exploration and the discoveries of researchers in Oman from 1965 up to now. Another voice investigates what the common spelling errors of Omani college students are in terms of omission, substitution, insertion, and transposition. The study of the differences in the frequency of spelling errors per gender, and their possible causes, works towards the creation of a corpus of information that can be used to strengthen language teaching and learning.

Since English is the chosen medium of instruction in most colleges in the affluent Arabian Gulf, it is useful to investigate how Omani students perceive this constraint placed on them. On the other hand, there is a need to understand how the challenges caused by the use of English in instruction are perceived both by teachers and students in Oman. On top of that, another article looks into how Omani students' think of grade 12 EFL teachers in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, general knowledge about oneself, affective knowledge about oneself, professional development, knowledge about students, and knowledge about classroom management.

The book also includes articles related to education beyond ELT, citizen and peace education, and the modern world. Although the region has

had its share of sectarian troubles and armed conflict, peace and citizenship are not always explicit dimensions of the curricula. In fact, the contrary is often the case as governments have preferred not to speak of issues which can lead to heated disagreement. Nevertheless, if this region wishes not to become a singularity—plagued with exceptionalist and mutually exclusive discourses—the education of the mindset of future generations cannot be left to chance and to satellite social agents who at times, somewhat undetected, orbit the public conversation on nation building.

As the MENA region enters a second new stage (the first stage was ushered in by the discovery of crude oil and gas), this collection of papers seeks to encourage practitioners of English, citizenship, and peace education (cf. Part 2) in the Middle East and North Africa or closely related to it and its people to open up their conversation to others. This is particularly necessary as theories and research findings which were conceived elsewhere are being universalized across cultures and demographics without always duly ascertaining or critiquing their representativeness or generalizability. In this book, the angle of the practitioners has been privileged since educational praxis calls for and engenders theoretical attempts as much as practical and aesthetic ones.

The authors examine concepts of citizenship education at the local, national and global levels, the link between citizenship and language learning, and the ways in which English instruction in Oman can be employed to simultaneously promote Omani socio-cultural identities and increase learner engagement in a globalized world. In order to accept the global challenges to be able to be part of the changing trend in education and society, the Internet, social networking sites and other networks give voice to this edition. There is hoping that global education systems and curricula will contribute to the establishment of fairer and more accountable structures and to investments in human capital so that not only the face of Sudan be changed by the educational awakening of the youth but also that of the whole MENA region.

In short, this publication gives a microphone to seemingly disparate interlocutors because it aims to show that the MENA region wishes to take its place at the global roundtable in and through education.

PART 1:

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND ENGLISH
LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT)**

CHAPTER 1

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON VOCABULARY ACQUISITION AND VOCABULARY SIZE TESTING IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

BY AHMED AL QASMI

Abstract: This paper presents an overview of the literature from 1956 onwards about the learning aims of second language (L2) vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary size testing, focusing especially on explorative research and discoveries in the field. Section 1 discusses the issue of words, particularly vocabulary knowledge frameworks, and highlights the work of Nation (2000, 2006). Section 2 explores research data about the types and uses of vocabulary size tests, particularly passive vs active L2 learning outcomes. Section 3 addresses research on the effect of vocabulary size in relation to the acquisition of L2 reading, listening, writing and listening skills. Section 4 briefly explores five vocabulary size tests (e.g. Meara 2003) and concludes that an analysis of the validity and reliability of the latest test, XK-LEX (Milton, forthcoming), is a significant expansion of studies on L2 vocabulary size testing.

Keywords: vocabulary size, passive, active, receptive, productive, vocabulary knowledge frameworks, L2 development, Eurocentres Vocabulary Size Test, Vocabulary Level Test, XK-Lex

Introduction

This paper presents an overview of the literature from 1956 onwards relevant to the discussion about the learning aims of second language (L2) vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary size testing. It starts by dealing with the definition of “word”, the types and number of words to be learned by L2 learners, and vocabulary knowledge frameworks. The work of Nation (2000) will receive special attention at this initial point. In the second section, the paper explores research on the types and uses of vocabulary size

tests zooming in on passive vs active outcomes. The following section explores the research data on the effect of vocabulary size on the acquisition of L2 reading, listening, writing and listening skills. Finally, the paper examines five vocabulary size tests and concludes that an analysis of the validity and reliability of LX-LEX can be a helpful next step both for L2 teaching and learning research and practice.

Words

What is a word?

Under “word”, generically speaking, Goulden et al. (1990) include derived, inflected, polysemous, and abbreviated forms, as well as proper nouns and names. According to Nation (2000), the question of what a word is or what we mean by a word must be addressed, for instance, to be able to count the number of words in a language, the number of words native speakers of a language know, and the number of words needed to learn or use an L2. Goulden et al. (1990) suggest that it must be decided whether or not letters, abbreviations, numbers, names of persons or places, compound words, homographs, derived and inflected words (prefixes and suffixes) are counted as separate words. In this regard, it is important to note that linguists count words in different ways for different purposes.

Nation (2001) states that they use the *token technique* to count every word in spoken and written texts, regardless of whether one token is similar to another and one of the uses of this method is to count words on a page or in a line. He also mentions that researchers use the *type technique* to count dissimilar words in a text, for example, to calculate the knowledge of words needed to read a book. Daller et al. (2007) explain that the token and type techniques are used to find the number of dissimilar words occurring in a given text and give the following example of how the words in the sentence “The cat sat on the mat” are calculated using these techniques.

This sentence contains six tokens (the total number of words in the text), but only five types, because “the’ is repeated and the type technique is used to count different words.

Another way to count words is to consider *lemmas* or *headwords* and not to count separately any inflected forms of the word (Francis & Kucera 1982). This method is used to count the vocabulary size of an L2 according to word families, where each family is made up of a headword and its inflected and derived forms (Nation 2001). This technique is also used to count the vocabulary size of a first language (L1). However, what to count as a word is disputed. For instance, Nation (2001) found 54,000 words in the 3rd edition of Webster’s dictionary, whereas Schmitt (2000) found

114,000 in the same volume. The *lemma technique* of vocabulary testing is derived from lemmatised word lists (Daller et al., 2007).

Types of words to be learned in L2 acquisition

The words which L2 learners must learn can be categorised into four groups, the first being *high-frequency* words. According to Nation (2001), these are remarkably frequent and are commonly encountered in the most basic instances of written and spoken discourse. In a later article, Nation (2006) states that it is fundamental for the learners to know high-frequency words and fully understand the contexts in which they are used since they provide 85% coverage of written texts and 90% coverage of spoken discourse. Thus, learners might encounter difficulties in comprehending the majority of written or oral sources if they are unfamiliar with the 2,000 most frequently occurring words (Nation 2006). West's (1953) General Service List (GSL) inventories the 2,000 highest-frequency words in use among English speakers in general contexts.

Then we come to *academic* words, which are usually found in academic discourse. They are vital for academic purposes, as they help learners to fill the knowledge gap between the vocabulary which can convey an idea verbally and that which can convey it in writing (Coxhead, 2000). Coxhead claims that these words give 10% additional coverage to academic text (2000). Coxhead's Academic Word List (AWL) includes words such as *scheme*, *mature* and *maximum*. It seems that one reason for the emergence of academic lists such as this is that the GSL does not afford learners adequate L2 understanding for their academic studies.

Specialist words comprise a third category which can be essential vocabulary for certain L2 learners. Specialist words are generally used in specific, professional contexts and often relate to a given subject or field (Nation 2001). Knowledge of these words helps L2 learners to handle the language of domains such as engineering, medicine and business. The Business Word List created by Konstantakis (2007) is an example of a specialist list which includes words like *processor*, *printer* and *taxation*, all of which are intended for communication in business.

The final category is that of *low-frequency* words. These are words which may occasionally be used by the majority of a population, but which others might classify as specialist words (Nation 2001). Any word which is not included in any of the three "higher" word categories would fall into this category, e.g. *pastoral*, *plummet* and *zoned* (Nation 2001).

The number of words required for L2 communication

There are varying views on the number of words that L2 learners are required to learn in order to read authentic texts or for successful verbal communication. To count them, we first need to know the number of words academically accepted to exist within the language in question. Goulden et al. (1990) state that 114,000 word families are present in English (based upon a study of one English dictionary). However, such a figure is often incompatible with L2 studies as many words are unknown to L1 speakers of English, and only a small proportion of them are used in daily life. Consequently, it is unlikely that an L2 learner will wish to learn the entire L2 lexicon (Nation 2006). Other linguists have claimed that if an L2 learner aims to be proficient or to sound like a native speaker, they must know 17,000 words, with an acquisition rate of around two to three words per day being a realistic target (Goulden et al., 1990). The number of words required in an L2 might vary according to whether they are for spoken or written communication. Further, the size of a competent receptive L2 vocabulary (see Section 2.1) is considered to be between 8,000-9,000 word families (Nation 2006). This number may vary in accordance with a learner's reading and listening skills. Nation suggests that, to read a novel or newspaper in an L2, learners must know 8,000 to 9,000 word families (however, it is not easy to learn this number of word families in addition to their inflected and derived forms) in order to comprehend 98% of the texts so that one can speak of a sufficient level of comprehension (Nation 2006). However, Laufer's study (1989) implies that L2 learners need 95% coverage in order to read authentic texts and achieve a sufficient understanding of them. Other studies have stated that approximately 5,000 words are needed to read unsimplified texts for pleasure (Hirsh & Nation 1992) or that only around 3,000 words are required to read simplified texts (Nation 2006). With regard to aural skills, Nation (2006) states that learners should require 5,000 to 7,000 words to watch movies or to take part in dialogues with more satisfactory intelligibility.

Schmitt (2008) points out that L2 learners of English may need just 5,000 words to undertake the Cambridge (CPE) listening exam. He adds that they would probably need to know at least 2,000 of the words most frequently used in the language to achieve basic independent communication (Schmitt 2008). For learners who need to use the language in an academic context, whether at university or college, 2,000 frequently used words will not be enough to fully understand an academic text. Consequently, Coxhead (2000) proposed an additional list of 570 academic words (the AWL), designed to aid the L2 learner in dealing with English in general academic contexts.

Although Stahr (2008) argues that learners are capable of undertaking reading, writing and listening exams without knowing all of the 2,000 words in the GSL, it may be accepted that more words are required for written than for oral communication (Larson & Schmitt, under review in Schmitt, 2008).

Vocabulary knowledge frameworks

Vocabulary knowledge includes various dimensions of knowledge, and this makes it difficult to define what it means to know a word. Therefore, L2 researchers have over the years proposed numerous frameworks designed to classify vocabulary knowledge (Table 1).

Table 1. A range of vocabulary knowledge frameworks

Author	Date	Dimensions/features
Richards	1976	form derivations syntactic behaviour different meanings associations semantic value
Chapelle	1998	vocabulary size knowledge of word characteristics lexicon organization process of lexical access
Henrikson	1999	partial-precise knowledge depth of knowledge receptive-productive knowledge
Nation	2001	form meaning use
Qian	2002	vocabulary size depth of knowledge lexical organisation automaticity of receptive-productive knowledge

Receptive & productive knowledge will be explained in Section 2.1.

Nation

Nation’s vocabulary knowledge framework is deemed the most comprehensive (Daller et al., 2007). Table 2 identifies and details the knowledge features of receptive and productive skills, and this is expanded upon in Section 2.1.

Table 2. What is involved in knowing a word?

Form	Spoken	R	What does the word sound like?
		P	How is the word pronounced?
	Written	R	What does the word look like?
		P	How is the word written and spelled?
	word parts	R	What parts are recognisable in this word?
		P	What words parts are needed to express meaning?
Meaning	form and meaning	R	What meaning does this word form signal?
		P	What word form can be used to express this meaning?
	concepts and referents	R	What is included in the concept?
		P	What items can the concept refer to?
	Associations	R	What other words does this word make us think of?
		P	What other words could we use instead of this one?
Use	grammatical functions	R	In what patterns does the word occur?
		P	In what patterns must we use this word?
	Collocations	R	What words or types of word occur with this one?
		P	What words or types of words must we use with this one?
	constraints on use	R	Where, when and how often would we meet this word?
		P	Where, when and how often can we use this word?

(R = receptive, P = productive) (Source: Nation 2001: 27, cited by Daller et al. 2007:5)

The value of the numerous elements of these dimensions might vary depending on the personal aims of different L2 learners (Daller et al. 2007)

Types of vocabulary knowledge and uses of vocabulary size tests

Receptive vs productive knowledge

According to Anderson & Freebody (1981) vocabulary knowledge consists of two main types:

1. Breadth (receptive) knowledge: the number of words learners can recognize when they hear or read them
2. Depth (productive) knowledge: what learners can call to mind about these words and use in speech or writing.

Nation (2001) concurs with this distinction, using the terms “passive knowledge’ and “active knowledge’ respectively. Furthermore, Nation & Waring (1997) state that breadth knowledge answers the pertinent question: “How much vocabulary does a second language learner need?” (p. 6). And, indeed, most vocabulary size tests measure breadth rather than depth knowledge – that is to say receptive versus productive language knowledge.

Use of vocabulary size tests

Vocabulary size tests are used for multiple purposes in L2 teaching and learning; for instance, they can be used as:

- a) *level* tests, to show if a learner is at a suitable level to sit a particular exam
- b) *placement* tests, to place students in the right class (Laufer & Nation 1999)
- c) *diagnostic* tests, to indicate the weaknesses and strengths of learners’ vocabulary profiles
- d) *progress* tests, to evaluate students’ improvement towards precise targets (Meara & Milton 2003a).

Hence, such tests are very helpful for learners, teachers and school managers.

Vocabulary size tests are useful to *learners* because assessing the number of words they know helps to provide goals for them to achieve. It also helps learners to monitor their own development and to gauge whether they have attained knowledge *level* needed for basic oral communication, for reading authentic texts, for academic purposes or for adequate listening comprehension, for example.

Breadth vocabulary tests are of great value to *teachers*, as they can be used to monitor learners’ *progress* precisely for *diagnostic* purposes in order to recognise and cure insufficiency in their vocabulary (Schmitt 1994). These tests can help teachers to signify learners’ weaknesses and strengths

in order to work on increasing their vocabulary size.

In terms of usefulness for *school managers*, vocabulary size tests can be used for *placement* purposes in order to assist in admissions (Laufer 2002) and to distinguish between clusters of learners (Meara 1992). Moreover, these tests aid in placing learners into suitable institutional placement levels within a programme (Laufer & Nation 1999; Schmitt 1994).

The effect of vocabulary size in L2 development

Vocabulary size is a good predictor of language proficiency in a foreign language (Stahr 2008) and there is a correlation between vocabulary size and language proficiency in general, as Hever (1995) asserts. The vocabulary size test might be a suitable placement tool when the correlation between language skills and vocabulary size is high (Meara 1992; Schmitt 1994). Various studies show the relationship between vocabulary size and different language skills. However, the importance of vocabulary size can vary from one skill to another and may be absent in some cases (Stahr 2008); for instance, there is no empirical research proving that there is a correlation between vocabulary size and speaking skill (Zimmerman 2004). In addition, no studies have proved that there is a correlation between vocabulary size and grammar ability, despite evidence of a weak correlation between grammar and language skills (Zimmerman 2004). The studies discussed in Section 3.1 indicate that vocabulary size may correlate with reading, writing and listening skills.

Vocabulary size tests and reading skills

Various empirical studies have found significant correlations between reading and breadth (receptive) vocabulary size tests. For instance, studies by Laufer (1992) and Qian (1999) demonstrated a positive correlation between vocabulary size and reading comprehension. In Laufer's study (1992), the Eurocentres Vocabulary Test (ECVT) and Vocabulary (VLT) were administered to 92 first-year university students. Laufer found that students' scores in these tests correlated with reading comprehension at .75 and .50, respectively. In Qian's study (1999), version A of VLT was administered to 77 students of English as a second language (ESL) test (33 Chinese speakers and 44 Korean) and compared with other ESL students' scores in the reading comprehension subsection of the TOFEL test. Qian found a better correlation in his study as the correlation between the tests was almost .8. Some studies also showed that for adequate reading comprehension, learners may need 95% (Laufer 1989) or 98% lexical

coverage of the text (Hu & Nation 2000). Since learners need around 5,000 (Laufer 1992) or 8,000 to 9,000 word families in order to read authentic texts with adequate comprehension (Nation, 2006) (see Section 1.3), vocabulary size is important for developing reading comprehension.

Vocabulary size tests and listening skills

Various empirical studies have proved a strong relationship between L2 vocabulary size and reading skills, whereas a few other studies have focused on the role of vocabulary in developing listening skills. Some showed that vocabulary size was moderately associated with listening, for instance, in Stahr (2008). In Milton, Wade & Hopkins's study (forthcoming), two breadth vocabulary size measures, X-Lex and A-Lex, and the IELTS test were administered to 29 English foreign language learners in order to investigate the relationship between these tests. They found a modest correlation between vocabulary size (X-Lex) and the listening components of IELTS (0.52). Also, the correlation between vocabulary size and listening ability was found to be lower in listening than in reading and writing (Beglar & Hunt 1999). However, other studies indicated a strong relationship and proposed that vocabulary size can play an essential role in L2 listening comprehension (Stahr, 2007). As previously mentioned, some linguists (e.g. Nation, 2006) have proposed that language learners need knowledge of around 5,000-7,000 word families in order to sufficiently understand spoken discourse and to attain 98% coverage to comprehend a text properly. It, therefore, seems that there is a significant relationship between receptive vocabulary size and listening ability.

Vocabulary size tests and writing skills

Several studies have used different methods to explore the correlation between vocabulary size and writing ability (e.g. Astika 1993; Laufer & Nation 1995; Laufer 1998) and found a strong correlation between the two. For example, Laufer & Nation (1995) reported a strong correlation between learners' productive vocabulary and their Lexical Frequency Profile. Another study conducted by Albrechtesen, Haastrup & Henriksen (2008) established a strong correlation between receptive vocabulary size tests and the strength of written compositions.

It may, hence, be concluded that as learners' knowledge of vocabulary increases, so too does their ability to handle language skills (Stahr 2008); as a result, they gain more fluency (Hilton 2007). In addition, vocabulary size tests are an important tool to check the vocabulary size that is needed for adequate reading and listening comprehension as well as written composition.

Vocabulary size tests

Several vocabulary size tests have been designed to be used as part of a *placement* test and to estimate the extent of students' lexical knowledge. They are deemed *diagnostic* tests because there is a relationship between students' vocabulary size and their performance in language skills (Anderson & Freebody 1981). This means that L2 learners who have a large vocabulary perform better than those with a limited vocabulary.

In this section, we will concentrate on five vocabulary breadth (receptive) tests: Joint Entrance Test (JET), EVST, X-Lex, the Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) and XK-Lex.

JET

The traditionally styled JET was used by Eurocentres (an international English language teaching and learning organisation) in order to grade students and place them in suitable classes. JET was a comprehensive test comprising grammar, reading and listening comprehension tests and an oral interview (Meara & Jones 1990). For instance, it took a long time to administer (around an hour and a half) and was marked manually (Meara 1990).

EVST

EVST is a computerised vocabulary test. It was developed in response to a commission from Eurocentres which needed a diagnostic test to reduce demands on staff time (Read 2000).

The advantages of EVST which encouraged its adoption included (Meara 1990; Meara & Jones 1990) were the following.

- It could be administered and completed in approximately 10 to 15 minutes.
- The scores were calculated automatically at the end of the test, which was computer based.
- It did not need any effort from teachers to check and calculate the students' score, thus saving teachers' time and simplifying the placement procedure.
- A large number of words could be measured in a short period of time because of the straightforwardness of the task.
- The scores were easy to understand and interpret.

Among the numerous studies which have proven the validity of EVST are those of Laufer (1989; 1992), Meara & Jones (1988) and Read (1988).

Despite the clear advantages of EVST, a large number of teachers and researchers have hesitated to use it (Zimmerman 2004). It is argued that scores of low proficiency L2 learners are likely to be unreliable because they are unable to distinguish between real and fake words, which leads them to respond in unpredictable ways (Read 2000). It is also hard to administer the test to many testees at once because it needs a lot of preparation and many computers (Read 2000). A further technical drawback of EVST is that it is based on DOS, which results in poor visualisation and layout, and neither the results nor the test itself can be printed out.

VLT

The VLT was developed by Paul Nation in the early 1980s and was distributed for free in two publications (Nation 1983, 1990). This test has been used in vocabulary research and language measurement and is commonly used to examine the *passive* vocabulary knowledge of English both as a foreign and second language (Nation 1983). Numerous scholars have reported the virtues of VLT; for example, Paul Meara (1996a:38) calls it “the nearest thing we have to a standard test in vocabulary”.

Among the numerous studies which have investigated the validity and reliability of VLT are those by Read (1998) and Schmitt (2001). Based on these studies, we may conclude that VLT performs reliably and that its reliability coefficient was very high in both studies (above .90); for example, in Read’s study, it was between .91 and .94, and in Schmitt’s between .92 and .96.

The characteristics of VLT are:

- The items used in the test and in the definitions were easier than the words being tested.
- It was paper-and-pencil based; therefore, it was easy and fast to administer (Beglar & Hunt 1999).
- The format of the test, which required the testee to match words with definitions, minimised guesswork (Read 2000).
- It was quick and easy to score, could be readily photocopied, needed no special equipment and gave a more comprehensive picture of a learner’s vocabulary than most other tests (Schmitt et al. 2001, p. 72).

On the other hand, the VLT presented some shortcomings:

- There was a large gap between the levels which the test measured, particularly between levels 5 and 10. It did not measure vocabulary from levels 6, 7, 8, and 9. The meanings or definitions were stated unclearly, which could confuse examinees (Read 1988).
- It tested one common meaning, whereas high-frequency words

often have numerous common meanings and many entries in the dictionary (Beglar & Hunt 1999). Students may have known some of those meanings, but not all.

X-Lex

X-Lex is one of the breadth (receptive) vocabulary tests developed by Meara & Milton (2003a) for use by teachers and school managers who need a fast test to determine the level in the English language of learners of school age. It was designed to be used as a *level* test (to show if a learner is at a suitable level to take, for instance, Cambridge PET exams), a *placement* test (to place students at the right level) and a *progress* test (to evaluate their improvement towards precise targets). It tests learners' passive knowledge of lexical and structural vocabulary in the first five thousand most frequent words (Meara & Milton 2003a).

The format of the X-Lex is a computerised yes/no test where 120 words (100 real and 20 fake) are presented. The following are among the distinguishing characteristics of X-Lex according to Meara & Milton (2003a).

- The test takes a short time to complete (about 10 minutes).
- There are two versions of X-Lex: paper and pencil based, and computer based.
- It illustrates learners' frequency profiles at each of the five vocabulary bands by presenting a diagram at the end of the test.
- It is designed to deliver different items (words) of the test each time that it is run. This property allows learners to do the test again and reduces the probability of cheating affecting the scores when learners do the test in the same room in a single sitting.
- It is computer based and keeps an automatic record of the score for everyone who finishes the test.
- It provides a general guideline to illustrate how scores on X-Lex equate to scores on other tests such as TOEFL, IELTS, and Language National Standards.
- It is the first computer-based vocabulary breadth test in colour because it runs on windows.

This test is aimed at L2 learners whose knowledge is below the first 5,000 word families.

4.5 XK-Lex

In response to the limitations of earlier vocabulary tests, XK-Lex has been developed by Milton (forthcoming) for use as placement and diagnostic test to measure learners' passive knowledge. One of its characteristics is that it

can measure learners with either low or high vocabulary size.

The format of XK-Lex is a paper and pencil yes/no test which comprises 12 columns, each containing ten words and each of which represents one level of frequency, except that two of the columns include only fake words. The test simply requires learners to tick any word which they already know and leave all unknown words unchecked. The following are some of the properties of XK-Lex.

- It is a paper-and-pencil test, so it needs no equipment or computers.
- It allows learners to come back and check what they have done.
- It tests a wide range of levels, allowing the assessment of learners from small to large vocabulary size.
- It is easy to administer and construct.
- There is no gap between the levels being tested.
- It can test a large number of words and participants in a short time.

Conclusion

We can conclude that vocabulary size is considered a good predictor of language proficiency in a foreign language. Furthermore, there appears to be a correlation between vocabulary size and language proficiency in general, and several research outcomes indicate that there is a link between vocabulary size and an L2 learner's reading, listening and writing skills. Several vocabulary size tests are available, such as EVST, VLT and X-Lex, which are used to measure the breadth of students' (receptive) vocabulary knowledge.

A new vocabulary size test has been developed, called *XK-Lex* test, which seems to have overcome the limitations of the earlier vocabulary size tests. However, I shall dedicate another article to the study of XK-Lex's reliability and validity. Its reliability will be checked by using parallel forms and split-half analyses, while its validity will be explored by focusing on three types of validity, namely concurrent, construct and predictive. Once the XK-Lex test is validated and its reliability has been proved, we shall be able to conclude that the XK-Lex test may be used as a level diagnostic, placement or progress test.

References

- Astika, G. G. (1993). Analytical assessment of foreign students' writing. *RELC Journal*, 24(1), 61-72.
- Beglar, D. & Hunt, A. (1999). Revising and validating the 2,000 word level and university word level vocabulary tests. *Language Testing*, 16, 131-162.

- Chapelle, C. A. (1998). "Construct definition and validity inquiry in SLA research". In Bachman, L. F. and Cohen, A. D. (eds.), *Interfaces between second language acquisition and language testing research* (pp. 32-70). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coxhead, A. (2000). A new academic word list. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(2), 213-238.
- Daller, H., Treffers-Daller, J. & Milton, J. (2007). *Modelling and assessing vocabulary knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Davies, A., Brown, A., Elder, C., Hill, K., Lumley, T. & McNamara, T. (1999). Dictionary of language testing. In M. Milanovic (series ed.), *Studies in language testing* (Vol.7). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goulden, R., Nation, P. & Read, J. (1990). How large can a receptive vocabulary be? *Applied Linguistics*, 11, 341-363.
- Henrichs, L. F. & Schoonen, R. (forthcoming). "Lexical features of parental academic language input. The effect on children's vocabulary growth". In B. J. Richards, H. M. Daller, D. Malvern, P. Meara, J. Milton & J. Treffers-Daller (eds.), *Vocabulary studies in first and second language acquisition: The interface between theory and application* (pp. 1-22). Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hever, B. (1995). Estimating vocabulary size. Retrieved from www.wordsandtools.com/vocdemo/background.htm (on April 2, 2009).
- Hilton, H. (2007). The link between vocabulary knowledge and spoken L2 fluency, *Language Learning Journal*, 36(2), 153-164.
- Hirsh, D. & Nation, P. (1992). What vocabulary size is needed to read unsimplified texts for pleasure? *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 8(2), 689-696.
- Ishikawa, S., Uemura T., Kaneda, M., Shmizu, S., Sugimori, N., Tono, Y., Mochizuki, M. & Murata, M. (2003). *JACET 8000: JACET list of 8000 basic words*. Tokyo: JACET.
- Konstantakis, N. (2007). Creating a Business Word List for teaching business English, *ELIA* [Online], 7, 79-102. Retrieved from <http://www.institucional.us.es/revistas/revistas/elia/pdf/7/7.%20konstantakis.maq.pdf>. (on December 1, 2008).
- Laufer, B. (1989). "What percentage of text lexis is essential for comprehension?" In C. H. Lauren and M. Nordma (eds.), *Special language: From humans thinking to thinking machines* (pp. 316-323). Clevedon, Phl: Multilingual Matters.
- Laufer, B. (1992). "How much lexis is necessary for reading comprehension?" In H. Bejoint and P. Arnaud (eds.), *Vocabulary and applied linguistics* (pp. 126-132). London: Macmillan.
- Laufer, B. (1998). The development of passive and active vocabulary in a second language: Same or different? *Applied Linguistics*, 19, 255-271.
- Laufer, B. & Nation, P. (1995). Vocabulary size and use: Lexical richness in L2 written production. *Applied Linguistics*, 16, 307-322.
- Laufer, B. & Nation, P. (1999). A vocabulary-size test of controlled productive ability. *Language Testing*, 16(1), 33-51.
- Meara, P. (1990). Some notes on the Eurocentres vocabulary tests. *AFinLA Yearbook 1990*, 48, 103-113.
- Meara, P. (1992). *EFL vocabulary tests. Tests/Evaluation instruments*. Swansea: Wales University.

- Meara, P. (1996). 'The dimensions of lexical competence'. In G. Brown, K. Malmkjaer & J. Williams (eds.), *Performance and Competence in Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 35-53). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meara, P. & Jones, G. (1988). 'Vocabulary size as a placement indicator'. In P. Grunwell (ed.) *Applied Linguistics in Society* (pp. 80-87). CILT, London.
- Meara, P. & Jones, G. (1990). *The Eurocentres Vocabulary Size Tests 10KA*. Zurich: Eurocentres.
- Meara, P. M. & Milton, J. L. (2003a). X-Lex: Swansea Vocabulary Levels Test (Version 2.02) (Computer software). Swansea: Longonstics.
- Milton, J. (forthcoming). 'Lexical profiles, learning styles and the construct validity of lexical size tests' In H. Daller, J. Milton & J. Treffers-Daller (eds.), *Modelling and assessing vocabulary knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Milton, J., Wade, J. & Hopkins, N. (forthcoming). 'Aural word recognition and oral competence in a foreign language'. In R. Chacon- Beltran, C. Abello-Contesse, M. Torreblanca-Lopez & M. Lopez-Jimenez (eds.), *Further insight into non-native vocabulary teaching and learning* (pp. 83-98). Clevedon Phl: Multilingual Matters.
- Nation, I. S. P. (1983). Testing and teaching vocabulary. *Guidelines*, 5, 12-25.
- Nation, I. S. P. (1984) *Vocabulary lists*. Wellington: Victory University of Wellington, English Language Institute.
- Nation, I. S. P. (1990) *Teaching and learning vocabulary*. New York: Newbury House.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001) *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2006). How large a vocabulary is needed for reading and listening? *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 63(1), 59-82.
- Nation, P. & Waring, R. (1997). 'Vocabulary size, text coverage and word lists'. In N. Schmitt and M. McCarthy (eds.), *Vocabulary: Description, acquisition and pedagogy* (pp. 6-19). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Qian, D. D. (1999). Assessing the roles of depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 56, 283-307.
- Richards, J. C. (1976). The role of vocabulary teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 10, 77-89.
- Read, J. (1988). Measuring the vocabulary knowledge of second language learners. *RELC Journal*, 19, 12-25.
- Read, J. (2000). *Assessing vocabulary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schmitt, N. (1994). Vocabulary testing: Questions for test development with six examples of tests of vocabulary size and depth. *Thai TESOL Bulletin*, 6, 9-16.
- Schmitt, N. (2000). *Vocabulary in language teaching*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schmitt, N. (2008). Review article: Instructed second language vocabulary learning, *Language Learning Journal*, 12 (3): 329-363.

- Schmitt, N., Schmitt, D. & Clapham, C. (2001). Developing and exploring the behaviour of two new versions of the vocabulary levels test. *Language Testing*, 18, 55-88.
- Schonell, F., Meddleton, I., Shaw, B., Routh, M., Popham, D., Gill, G., Mackrell, G. & Stephens, C. (1956). *A study of the oral vocabulary of adults*. London: University of London Press.
- Stahr, L. S. (2008). Vocabulary size and the skills of listening, reading and writing. *Language Learning Journal*, 36(2), 139-152.
- U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (1993). *Improving assessment: A technical assistance guide*. Washington, DC: JTPA.
- West, M. (1953). *A general service list of English words*. London: Longman.
- Zimmerman, K. J. (2004) *The role of vocabulary size in assessing second language proficiency*. PhD, Brigham Young University.

CHAPTER 2

COMMON SPELLING ERRORS OF OMANI COLLEGE STUDENTS

BY ANNIE B. DOMEDE

Abstract: According to Caravolas, Hulme, & Snowling (2001) and Treiman (1998), one of the most important components of writing at the single-word level is spelling.¹ This means that students should have the basic knowledge of how to correctly write a word before they can construct a correct sentence. When students struggle with spelling, they tend to write less as they find it difficult to express their ideas on paper. As such, it is imperative to analyse the most common spelling mistakes made by students so that adequate corrective measures may be taken to enhance their writing. This study looks into the spelling errors made by post-foundation students of Al Musanna College of Technology (ACT), Sultanate of Oman, and seeks to classify said errors using Cook's four categories, namely omission, substitution, insertion, and transposition. It also examines the difference in the frequency of spelling errors per gender. Further, this paper tries to find out the possible causes of these spelling errors so as to create a corpus of information that can be used in teaching to address the issue. The data analysed for this study are from the written outputs of 53 females and 38 males who are in their advanced diploma level.

The results showed that errors by substitution are the most frequent. Conversely, transposition errors are the least common. The results also showed that females are less prone to commit spelling errors than their male counterparts. The irregularity of English spelling is one of the reasons why students commit spelling errors. As there are often exceptions in English spelling (e.g. in the case of the schwa and silent letters), students found it hard at times to write the target words. It also transpired that the respondents relied on a one-to-one approach or phoneme-grapheme correspondence when they spelt English words (which led to substitution or errors by omission). Moreover, the

¹ T.C. Pollo, R. Treiman, and B. Kessler, Three perspectives on spelling development. US: Washington University in St. Louis, n.d.