

SYNTHESIS OF LITERATURE ON THE ASSESSMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE VOCABULARY

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The aim of this study is to synthesize the findings in the assessment of foreign language vocabulary (FLV) research. In the past 20 years, numerous studies have been published in this field. In our literature review we intended to reveal (1) the type of word knowledge measured, (2) what kind of FLV assessment tools are used, (3) whether FLV is tested online, (4) what kind of criteria researchers take into consideration when selecting vocabulary to be assessed, with a special view to beginning learners, (5) word knowledge tested using visual stimulus. In the research of foreign language acquisition, vocabulary has been emphatic since the seminal article of Richards (1976). Studies have focused on test development (*Nation*, 1990; *Schmitt* et al., 2001), FLV learning strategies (*Tseng* et al., 2006), word retention (*Hulstijn* and *Laufer*, 2001), correlations with reading (*Chujo* and *Utiyama*, 2005), and on learning from context (*Nassaji*, 2003). We overviewed studies of FLV conducted since 1990. We examined empirical data published in over 20 journals. Our findings are as follows: (1) Passive or active word knowledge is assessed through the following types of tasks: passive recognition, active recognition, passive recall, active recall. (2) Numerous validated vocabulary tests exist. Four of them are of relevance in this research field: Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) (*Nation*, 1990), Productive Levels Test (PLT) (*Laufer* and *Nation*, 1999), Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) (*Paribakht* and *Wechse*, 1999) and Word Associates Test (WAT) (*Read*, 1998). The PLT measures active word knowledge whereas the other three assess passive word knowledge except the fifth scale of the VKS where learners must produce a sentence with the given word. (3) As for online tests, we found three oft-cited instruments: CATSS (*Laufer* et al., 2004), Lex30 (*Meara*, 2008) and the online version of the PLT. (4) In terms of selection of vocabulary, researchers (*Laufer* et al., 2004; *Qian* and *Schedl*, 2004; *Pigada* and *Schmitt*, 2006) tend to use different types of corpora (BNC, CANCODE, COCA), frequency lists (*Laufer* and *Nation*, 1995) and school curricula (*Fukkink* et al., 2005) to choose words to be assessed. A generally used scaffolding technique is to select more words from the first 2000 band of frequency than from the upper bands especially for students in the initial stage of learning. (5) As for vocabulary tested through visual stimulus, studies (*Altarriba* and *Bauer*, 2004; *Ter Doest* and *Semin*, 2005; *Lotto* and *De Groot*, 1998; *Farley* et al., 2012) reported use of pictures to assess lexis. All of these stipulate that words can efficiently be assessed with the use of pictures. By creating the construct of FLV, the proper data collecting instrument can be developed. Knowledge of measurement tools and empirical findings in the field of FLV can further enrich research ideas in the assessment of 6th graders' FLV.

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