



## **ASSESSING LEARNERS' KNOWLEDGE WITH VOCABULARY TESTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The overarching aim of this paper is to discuss some fundamental issues in second language assessment to provide classroom practitioners with knowledge to improve their test development skills. This research is to discuss some fundamental issues in language assessment to provide classroom practitioners with knowledge to improve their test development skills.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

An important perspective is the use of vocabulary within particular contexts of use or registers, and recent corpus research is extending our understanding of the lexical features of academic registers. This provides a basis for assessing learners' ability to deploy their vocabulary knowledge effectively for functional communication in specific academic contexts. It is concluded that, while current tests of vocabulary knowledge are valuable for certain purposes, they need to be complemented by more contextualized measures of vocabulary use. More specifically, the following research questions will be addressed :

- What is assessment itself and how is it used in language assessment?
- How to assess the knowledge of A2 level learners?
- What types of vocabulary tests can be used to assess language learners' knowledge?

### **II BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE**

For classroom assessment, Scientists categorized it according to intention, purpose, interpretation, and administration. In regard to intention, an assessment can be informal when it is a spontaneous comment, or it can be formal when it is carried out in a systematic manner? In terms of purpose, an assessment can be formative if it focuses on the process of learning or it can be summative when it is used to measure student learning outcomes at the end of an education cycle. An assessment may be used to compare students' performance with their peers' performance (norm-referenced) or it may be employed to compare students' performance with the course content (criterion-referenced). Mihai (ibid) clarified that "whereas norm-referenced tests evaluate students in terms of their ranking to another, criterion referenced tests evaluate students in terms of their mastery of course content". The last category of assessment is administration which refers to the way an assessment is

administered or delivered; an assessment may be classroom-based (small scale) when it is only used in the classroom or it can be delivered statewide or nationwide (large scale)<sup>1</sup>.

**Evaluation.** In discussing about language program evaluation, presented three types of evaluation:

- Formative
- Illuminative
- summative evaluation.

Formative evaluation, as Richards pointed out, is utilized to find out the aspects of a program that are working well, not working well, and issues that need to be addressed.

Illuminative evaluation, according to Richards, is employed to find out how different aspects of a program are implemented and this type of evaluation is one way to seek to have “a deeper understanding of the process of teaching and learning that occur in the program, without necessarily seeking to change the course in any way as a result”<sup>2</sup>.

Summative evaluation, the kind of evaluation most teachers and administrators are familiar with, is concerned with determining the effectiveness, efficiency, and to some extent the acceptability of a language program.

Assessment, moreover, can be conducted by either speaking or writing. Therefore, one more category of assessment may be added to those provided: mode (oral or written). Table 1 provides a summary of types of assessment built <sup>3</sup>

Category of Assessment	Type of Assessment
<b>Mode</b>	<b>Oral</b>
	<b>Written</b>
<b>Intention</b>	<b>Informal</b>
	<b>Formal</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Formative</b>
	<b>Summative</b>
<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>Norm-referenced</b>
	<b>Criterion-referenced</b>

<sup>1</sup> Laufer, B. & Goldstein, Z. (2004), ‘Testing Vocabulary Knowledge: Size, Strength, and Computer Adaptiveness’, *Language Learning*, vol. 54, n°3, pp. 339-436.

<sup>2</sup> Schoonen, R., & Verhallen, M. (in press). The assessment of deep word knowledge in young first and second language learners. To appear in *Language Testing*.

<sup>3</sup> Read, J. (2000). *Assessing vocabulary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read, J. (2004). Plumbing the depths: How should the construct of vocabulary knowledge be defined? In P. Bogaards & B. Laufer (Eds.), *Vocabulary in a second language: Selection, acquisition and testing*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, pp. 209-227.

<b>Administration</b>	<b>Classroom-based</b>
	<b>Large scale</b>

*Table 1. The categories and types of assessment*

### **III METHODOLOGY**

#### **A. Research Design**

The research design applied in this research was Quasi-experimental which applied the non-equivalent Control Group Design with Pre-test and Post-test. In order to determine the results of scientific work, experimental tests are conducted on a regular basis for a pre-selected group, as well as entrance and exit tests at the beginning and end of the quarter, as well as for other groups, which did not conduct experiments at all. "Input" and "output" tests are performed and the results are compared.

#### **B. Participants**

The main subject of the research was identified as students who are studying in the educational process and have B2 level of English proficiency and their participation in the educational process. The researcher selected group students to cover the content of this research paper and conduct experimental work. The reason for their selection was that the students were enthusiastic, hardworking, and open-minded, so they were rated as suitable subjects to conduct this experiment.

#### **C. Instruments**

In order to develop the assessment with vocabulary tasks for students selected as an experiment, lessons were conducted using vocabulary activities to check learners' knowledge on the process. Materials of this study encourage teachers to use different test techniques such as vocabulary tests in order to enhance vocabulary knowledge of learners through assessment. The present study also can help teachers to decide upon which of this method is more useful.

#### **D. Methods**

Descriptive-analytical (observational) method in the process of highlighting the essence and significance of scientific work, comparative method in order to compare the results of experimental work and find a clear solution; prognostic (expert assessment, generalization of independent assessments), pedagogical experimental and mathematical methods (statistical data processing) were used to provide evidence based on exact figures in the future application of the results and analysis of its initial results as well as illuminating parts of the discovery and the result.

#### **E. Data Collection and Analysis**

The researcher's qualitative approach is used in observation sheets. It is designed to observe the entire lessons in detail. In addition, needs assessment is structured to consider the needs, desires and attitudes of learners towards the teaching of group work. Pre and post-tests consist of lessons in reading skills. At the start of the teaching process, the pre-test is taken and the post-test is taken at the end of the learning process. Experimental courses were used to perform the present research. First, before beginning to work with them and having pre and post-tests, the researcher wanted to observe some lessons from experimental courses in order to compare the findings at the end of the study. And the analysis of the obtained results is shown in this diagram. Many students' needs in developing vocabulary are related to shaping their skills. The greatest need for vocabulary is the need to understand

communication and text content.

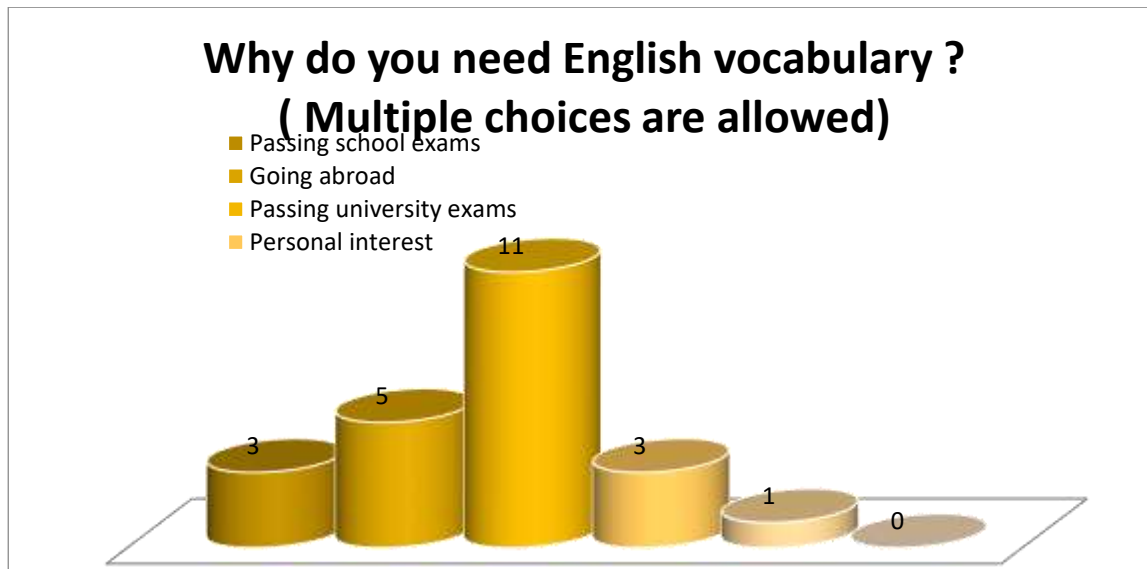


Figure 1.

*Students' needs for Learning and developing English vocabulary knowledge.*

As it is clear from the figure №1, school learners needed English vocabulary in different purposes. For instance, 3 pupils were learning the language for passing their school exams while 5 of them wanted to go abroad. The most 11 pupils wanted to pass university exams and became a student whereas English was only personal interest for 3 of them. Moreover, only one pupil wanted to understand the meaning of English videos and movies. But no one had other intentions from learning the language.

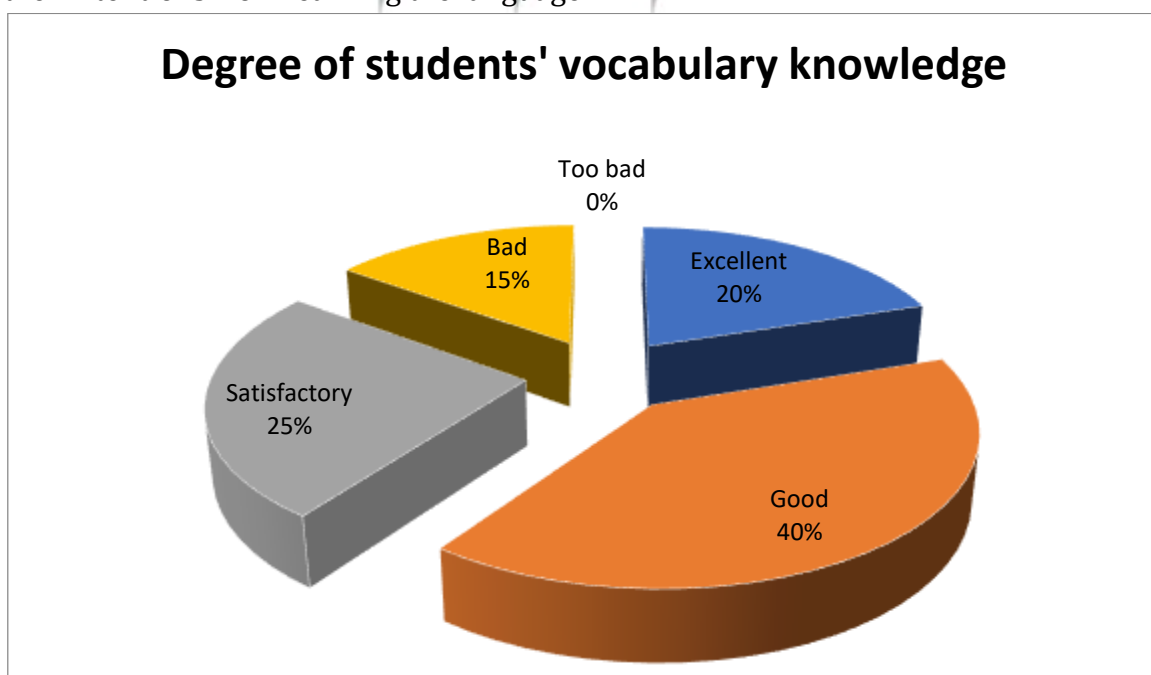


Figure 13. Students vocabulary knowledge after assessment

The data shows about learners' knowledge on vocabulary and 4 pupils had excellent reading base while the most 8 of them had good knowledge. However, 5 pupils had satisfactory qualification on reading whereas 3 pupils had bad degree of reading skills. But no one had too bad degree on that. The analysis was conducted on quantitative questions to understand students' perceptions of vocabulary use in English language classes and in an English context language classroom in a defined level. To this end, the questionnaires were

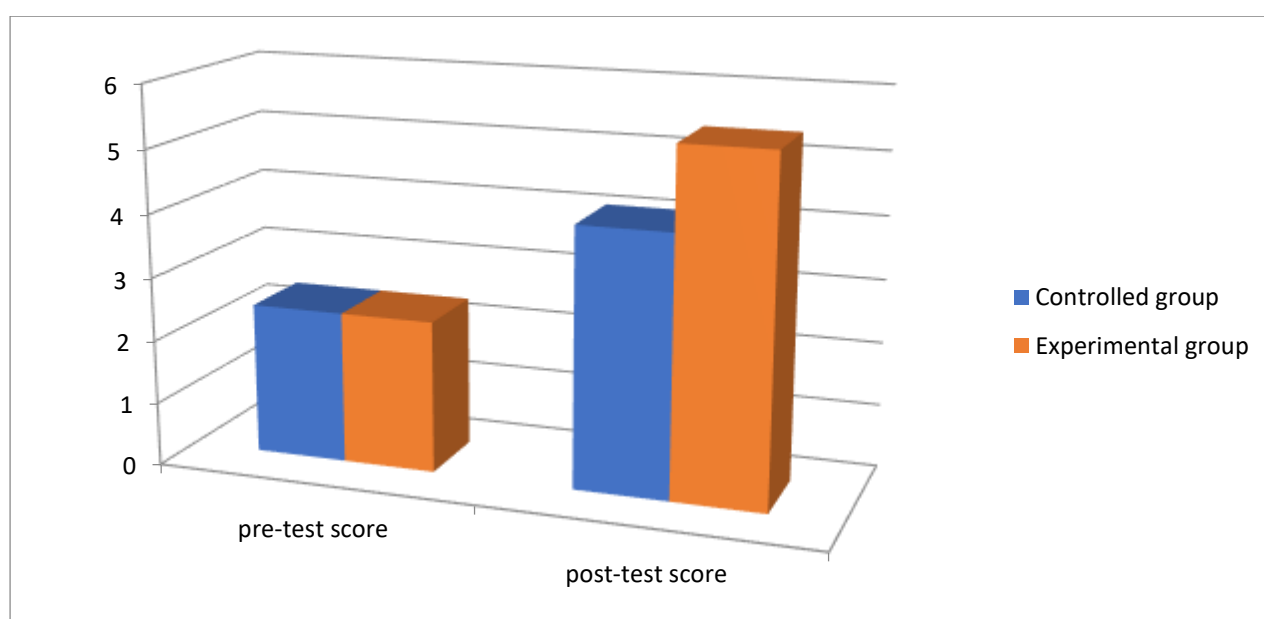
analyzed in detail.

The results show that assessing with vocabulary tests (during the teaching) method, shows that students vocabulary knowledge have increased through vocabulary tests assessment, while the results show surprisingly large changes.

#### **IV. RESULTS**

The test results show that learners showed high results in mastering vocabulary within their topics by organizing training using vocabulary tests in assessment, as well as a variety of vocabulary tasks through different approaches in the assessment process. The application of different types of interactive methods through the consolidation of learners' knowledge was demonstrated in the research process.

After calculating the result of the students score, the mean score and standard deviation of both types learning classes can be presented in the following figure:



*Figure 5. Results of Two classes*

Any situation dictionary serves to make human speech fluent and increase the diversity of speech. Because Vocabulary tasks can be used to show the grammatically correct use of words, blind memorization of words is less effective and is quickly forgotten. Therefore, regular and systematic use of vocabulary tests by learners in the assessment process will always have a positive effect, and by applying it to life, the pronunciation of words will be improved. It is also important to develop students' vocabulary skills.

#### **V. DISCUSSION**

It is clear that Assessment is an integral part of any education system and plays an important role in English as a foreign language context. One of the components of language that is difficult for test writers is a dictionary, without which the reader will not be able to understand or communicate in a foreign language. Vocabulary or vocabulary repertoire is a key component of language knowledge, as well as an important component of communicative competence and serves as an important element for production and comprehension in a second language. Vocabulary task is necessary for students to build a large repertoire of vocabulary when learning a language because people with large concluding remarks, the review of common assessment options discussed above has shown that the knowledge and



skills needed for designing practical, authentic, reliable, and valid tests are likely to be real challenges for most classroom teachers who are seldom fully trained to construct quality tests.

## **VI CONCLUSION**

To sum up, vocabulary test is considered as an apparent example of the indirect method mentioned above, and it refers to the processes and procedures used by the tester to obtain information about the optimal performance of stakeholders or typical performance of individuals. Different kinds of tests, from multiple-choice to gap filling, have been used to assess vocabulary knowledge in different levels of proficiency; however, the current study will mainly focus on selected response or Multiple Choice format and Constructed Response format. The results of the research also show that this type of vocabulary-based tests and assignments used in the process of assessing the knowledge of students that learners, is very relevant and effective, regular assessment of their knowledge skills indicators.

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