

# What do we know about the relationship between reading and vocabulary?



Diane Schmitt

Nottingham Trent University



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Why focus on reading and vocabulary?



# MAMAG Assessed Essay

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## Essay Question:

How has the media influenced the immigration debate in the UK?

Answer this question using the readings from our class and your own analysis of newspaper stories. You may provide comparative data from other countries.

Essay length: 1750 words (You can be over the limit up to a maximum of 175 words (10%), but your essay must not be shorter than 1700 words.)

**Deadlines:**      **12 January – 1<sup>st</sup> draft – 9:00am sharp!**  
                         **6 February – final draft – 12:00 noon sharp!**



# The MAMAG Reading & Writing Teaching and Assessment Programme

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- [MAMAG Assessed Essay.doc](#)
- [MAMAG Programme of Work.doc](#)
- [Primary Materials.doc](#)

# A Sample University Text

Allan, S. (1999). *News Culture*. Open University Press.

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Frequency List	Families	Types	Tokens	Percent	
1-1000	489	758	4551	69.38%	
1001-2000	127	167	281	4.28%	
Sub-total				73.66%	
AWL	262	400	834	12.71%	
Off-List	?	574	894	13.63%	
Total	878+	1890	6560	100%	

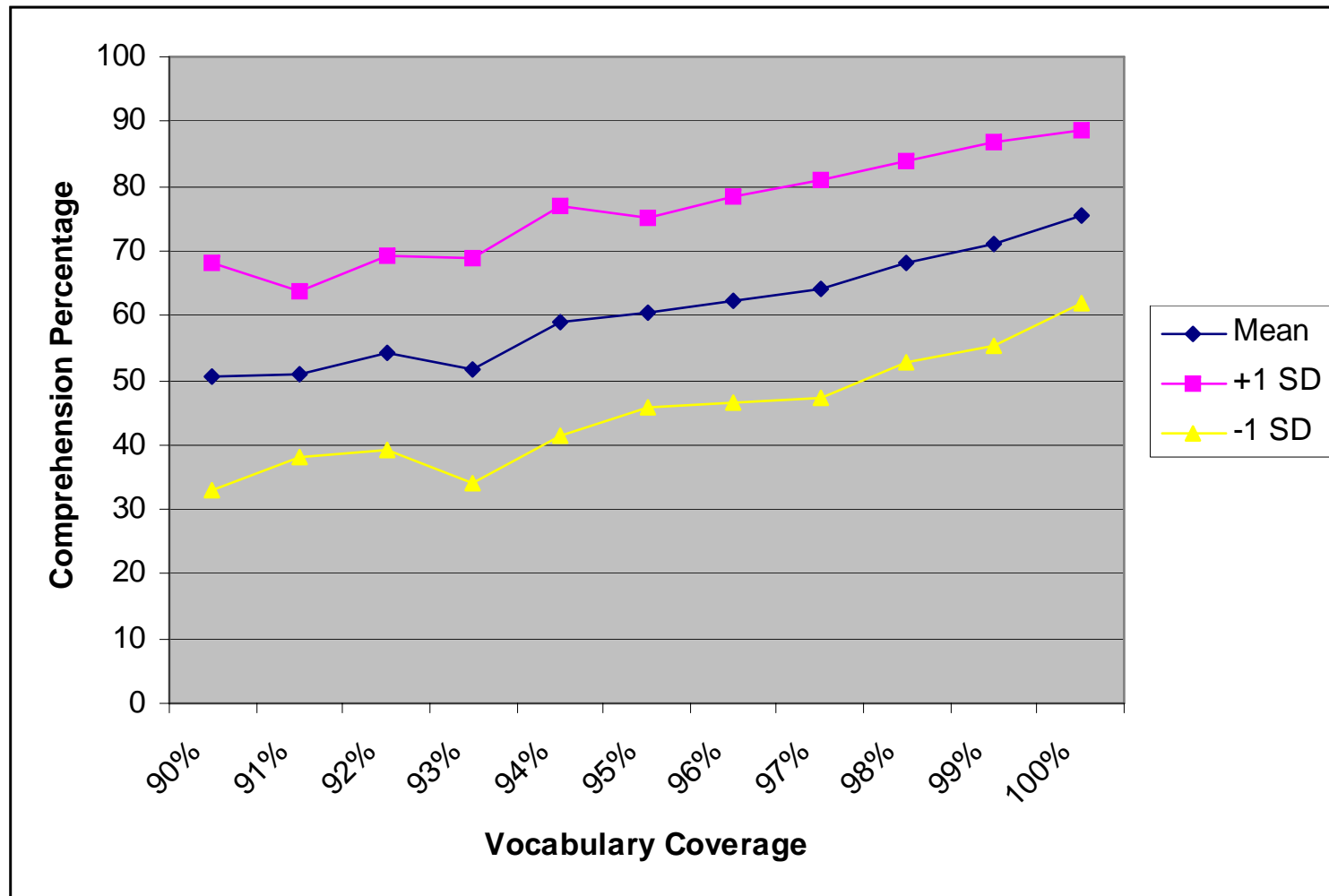


# What effect does vocabulary size have on reading comprehension?

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- Is there a threshold at which point reading will become easier?
  
- What is that threshold?
  - 90%
  - 95%
  - 98%
  - 100%

# Vocabulary influence on Reading Comprehension (Schmitt, Jiang, and Grabe, under review)





## Some Vocabulary Requirements for Using English

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- Daily conversation requires 6,000-7000 word families (Nation, 2006)
- Reading graded readers requires 200-400 words at lowest levels
- Reading authentic texts independently requires 8,000-9,000 word families (Nation, 2006)



# Text Coverage in Several Novels

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Word List	<i>Lord Jim</i> %	<i>Lady Ch</i> %	<i>Screw</i> %	<i>Gatsby</i> %	<i>Tono-Bungay</i> %
2000	87.29	88.09	91.71	87.71	86.95
4000+ proper nouns	94.24	95.06	96.08	95.02	94.36
9000+ proper nouns	98.06	98.22	98.52	98.47	98.00
Proper nouns	1.04	2.05	0.50	2.12	1.55



# Vocabulary for Academic Purposes

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- An introductory economics textbook requires at least 9,000 for independent study. So studying at an English medium university really may require as many as 10,000 word families overall (Hazenbergh & Hulstijn, 1996; Nation, 2006)



## Our Students' Vocabulary Size

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According to the Basic Requirements in the College English Syllabus (1999), students at CE 4 should be able to recognise 4,200 words, of which they are required to know the correct spelling and the usage of 2,500 words.

(Du Hui, (2004). Reflections on Vocabulary Size of Chinese University Students. *International Education Journal Vol. 5, No 4, 571-579.*)

[English vocabulary size of foreign learnersa.doc](#)



## Is fiction enough (Gardner, 2004)

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- ❑ Gardner found that the lexis of expository text (i.e., the language used in academic and professional settings) differs from the lexis of fiction in substantial ways
- ❑ Expository text comprises more words, different words, and more difficult words, in addition to unfamiliar discourse patterns that are not simple mirrors of real-life time sequences.
- ❑ Gardner questions the suitability of using fiction texts as preparation for reading expository texts, as is common practice



## Cobb (2007)

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- It is extremely unlikely that learners will develop an adequate L2 reading lexicon through reading alone
- Learners need to meet words 6+ times for acquisition to occur
- In natural reading settings, this is unlikely to occur for words above the 2000 word frequency level



## An example from Cobb, 2007

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- A 300,000 word corpus of the full collection of London adventure stories was compiled (7 novels in total),
- The corpus contains 817 word families from the 3000 frequency level,
- 469 of these are met six times or more
- 348 are met five times or less (181 of them twice or less).
- Fewer than half of these 3000 level words will be met enough times for reliable learning to occur.

# Common frequency benchmarks

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Occurrences per million words	Speech – occurs once every:	Writing – occurs once every:
1000	8.5 minutes	2.5 pages
200	42.5 minutes	12 pages
100	85 minutes	25 pages
40 – e.g. border	200 minutes	60 pages
20	400 minutes	125 pages
10	800 minutes	250 pages



## MAMAG Reading Task

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- How does vocabulary affect a reading task?
- [Words and Images Vocabulary Exercises Teacher's Version.doc](#)
- Vocabulary appears to be inescapable in this discipline
- [Words and Images Reading Exercises - Teacher's Version.doc](#)





## MAMAG Vocabulary Load

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- How does the vocabulary load grow as the course progresses?
- [TEXT LEX COMPARE output.htm](#)
- What is the difficulty level of the vocabulary?
- [VOCABPROFILE ENGLISH OUTPUT.htm](#)



# Intentional vs Incidental Learning

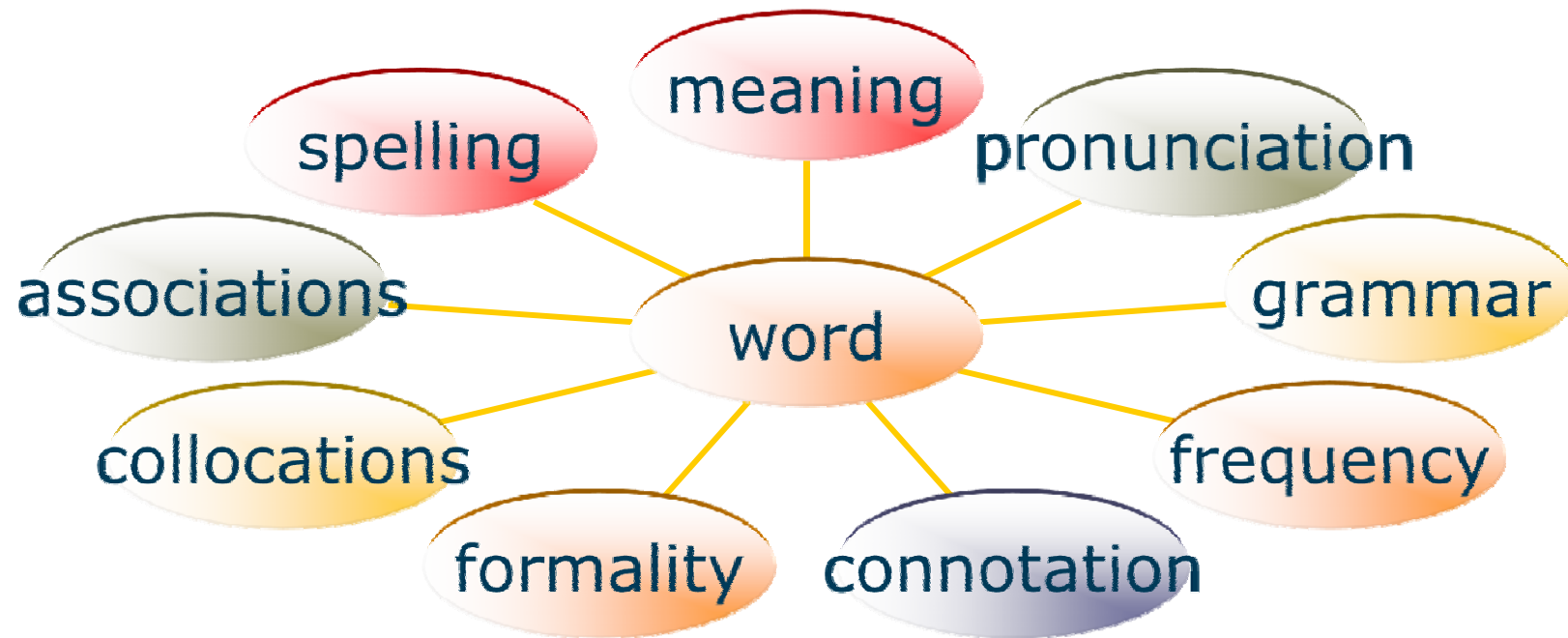
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## Intentional learning

- Intentional leads to more robust and faster learning
- Generally involves deeper engagement leading to better retention
- Traditionally it focuses on important vocabulary (high frequency, technical, targeted)
- It is required to move receptive vocabulary to a productive state

# More to Word Knowledge than Just Meaning

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# Intentional vs Incidental Learning

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## Incidental learning

- ❑ Incidental learning potentially addresses words which can't be explicitly taught for time reasons
- ❑ It fills out the kinds of word knowledge which can't easily be explicitly taught
- ❑ Vocabulary learning can occur while improving other language skill areas, e.g. reading
- ❑ For incidental learning to be effective, 95-98% of the words in the text need to be known words



## The Challenge – A Bridging Vocabulary

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- 2000 most frequent words
- 570 Academic words
- Technical vocabulary
  
- Graded readers series
  - top level 3000 words
  - mainly fiction
- Bridging Vocabulary
  - 5000 words
  - Extensive reading of expository texts



## A graded approach to vocabulary

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- Can we take such an approach?
- Can we afford not to?
- How can we provide more help to students in tackling this mountain of vocabulary?