Knowledge of academic vocabulary in relation to social and personal variables

A quantitative sociolexicological study

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RU Quantitative Lexicology and Variational Linguistics

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regulations are   . However, it is   that all
departments involved   any potential
complaints, so they can react   if necessary.

!

The advantages of a **simultaneous implementation** of both new regulations are **countless.** However, it is **crucial** that all departments involved **anticipate** any potential complaints, so they can react **adequately** if necessary.

Moeilijke woorden nekken leerlingen

vrijdag 23 mei 2014, 21:07 (Update: 23-05-14, 22:55)

Moeilijke woorden

Het LAKS vindt het vooral opmerkelijk dat veel scholieren op alle niveaus klaagden over het gebruik van moeilijke woorden. Zo struikelden zo'n 400 vmbo-leerlingen over het woord kanttekening. De vmbo-ers die het probeerden op te zoeken in het woordenboek, zochten op kan-tekening.

Ook intermediair, melancholisch en beurskrach leverden veel boze telefoontjes op. Het LAKS weet niet of er meer moeilijke woorden zijn gebruikt dan in andere jaren of dat de woordenschat van scholieren afneemt.

Niet alleen vmbo-scholieren klaagden over moeilijke woorden, ook in vwo-examens kwamen ze voor. "Waarom gebruiken ze in plaats van partieel niet gewoon gedeeltelijk", verzuchtte een scholier.

e II, Leiden 04.06.2014

This study

- Observation: many students have an **inadequate knowledge of academic vocabulary** at the start of higher education
    - **Which words** are causing problems?
    - **Who** are the students struggling with academic lexis?

- Potential to support students with a 'risk profile'

- Written questionnaire

- Dutch

Overview

1. Academic vocabulary?
2. Individual characteristics?
3. Social background?
4. Survey
5. Research questions
6. Data analysis: method
7. Results
8. Conclusion

Academic vocabulary?

- Selection words:

  random from *Wijze Woorden* (Giezenaar, Schouten & Korebits 2002)
  +
  supplemented with
    - *University Word List* (Xue & Nation 1984)
    - *Academic Word List* (Coxhead 2000)
    - *Van Dale Groot Woordenboek van de Nederlandse taal* (2005)

- Questionnaire with 75 items:
    - 24 French, Latin or Greek loans
    - 30 English loans
    - 21 words of Dutch origin (not loan words)

Individual characteristics?

- Gender

- Talent
  - Field of study
  - Grade retention (year of birth)

- Language subjects
  - Number of years of Greek/Latin
  - Hours of language training per week

- Motivation and ambition (level of intended study in higher education)

Social background?

- Social background:

  – Student

    Region / Nationality / Country of origin / Native language / Language spoken at home

  – Parents

    Nationality / Country of origin / Native language / Highest qualification / Profession / Importance of language in profession

Survey: types of questions

1. Choosing the right **synonym**

abominabel =   o afschuwelijk
                 o de buik betreffend
                 o onheilspellend
                 o voortreffelijk
                 o ik weet het niet

*abominable =   o appalling
                 o with respect to the stomach
                 o unsafe
                 o excellent
                 o I don't know*

Survey: types of questions

2. Choosing the right **paraphrase**

> Door <u>manipulatie</u> van de gegevens slaagde de wetenschapper erin zijn stelling te bewijzen.
>
>   o het met de hand tellen van de gegevens
>   o het opnieuw berekenen van de gegevens
>   o het sturen van de gegevens in een bepaalde richting
>   o het uit elkaar halen van de gegevens
>   o ik weet het niet

Survey: types of questions

2. Choosing the right **paraphrase**

> *By <u>manipulating</u> the data, the researcher managed to prove his claim.*
>
> *o manually counting the data*
> *o recalculating the data*
> *o causing the data to develop in a certain way*
> *o keeping the data apart*
> *o I don't know*

Survey: types of questions

3. Correct **use in context**

Editie

o De <u>editie</u> van het parlement op een officiële feestdag
lokte heel wat reacties uit onder het Egyptische volk.

o Dit valt gedeeltelijk te verklaren door het feit dat een
integrale en kritische <u>editie</u> van Lipsius' poëzie ontbreekt.

o Om te mogen meedoen in dat toneelstuk moet je eerst
verschillende <u>edities</u> doorlopen.

o Ondanks de heersende trend zien verschillende
dagbladen de <u>editie</u> stijgen.

o Ik weet het niet.

Survey: types of questions

3. Correct **use in context**

Edition

o The <u>edition</u> of parliament on a bank holiday provoked diverse reactions from the Egyptian people.

o This can be explained by the fact that there is no integral and critical <u>edition</u> of Lipsius' poetry available.

o To participate in that theatre production, he first had to go through several <u>editions</u>.

o Despite the downward trend, many newspapers were able to hire a new <u>edition</u>.

o I don't know.

Survey: administration

- Final-year students *algemeen secundair onderwijs*

  'general secondary education'

  vs.

  'technical secondary education'
  'vocational secondary education'

- 14 fields of study
  e.g. Latin-Mathematics, Economics-Languages

- 9 schools, province of Vlaams-Brabant

- 462 participants

Research questions

A. Relationship between score on questionnaire and student characteristics?

   = **central research question**

B. What type of words prove to be the most difficult?

C. (Are there any individual words for which students obtained very high/low scores?)

D. (For which type of question did the students obtain the highest scores?)
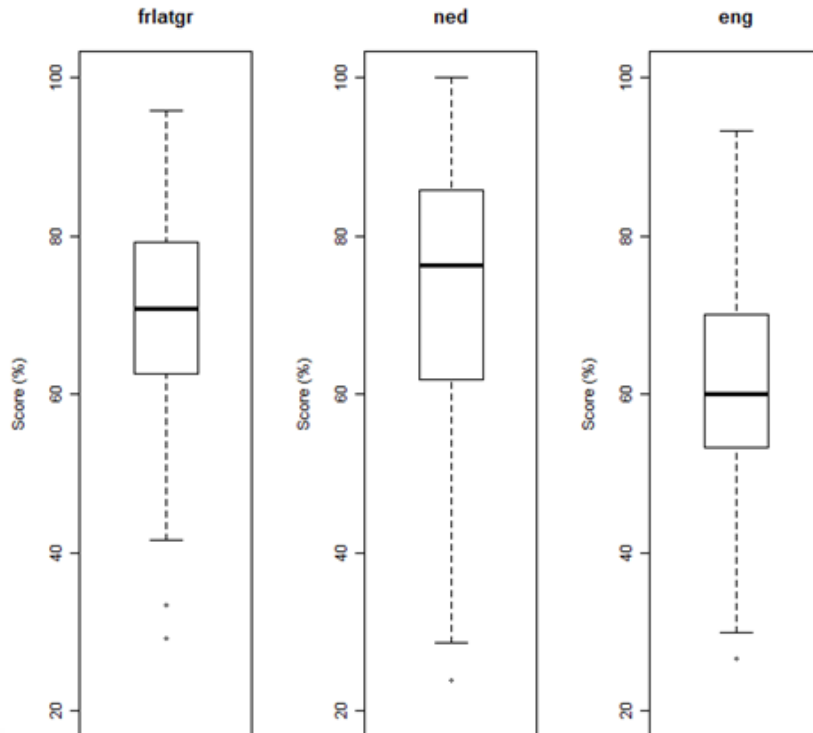
   = **secondary research questions**

Data analysis: method

- Statistical data analysis using
    - Paired t-tests
    - (Multiple) linear regression

- Programme: R

Results

- Score per **type of words**

Dutch > French / Latin / Greek > English

Paired t-tests	Dutch vs. French/ Latin/ Greek	French/ Latin/ Greek vs. English	English vs. Dutch
p-value	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001

Results

- Predictors for the **total score**

  Perceived level of 'field of study'

  Number of years of Greek

  Gender

  Motivation/ambition (intended study higher education)

  Native language

  Country of origin

Results

- Predictors for the **3 types of words**

  Gender

  Motivation/ambition (intended study higher education)

  Country of origin

  Language spoken at home

  Perceived level of 'field of study'

  Hours of language training per week

Conclusion

- Final-year students' knowledge of academic vocabulary determined by a complex interaction of **multiple factors**:

  - **personal** characteristics (gender, motivation, training/talent)

  - **social** factors (native language, language spoken at home, nationality, country of origin)

- ! Factors directly relating to the student's **parents**: <u>no</u> significant influence on mastery of academic vocabulary

References

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Thank you!

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