Vocabulary in 10th Grade

The receptive vocabulary size of 10th graders in Iceland

B.A. Essay

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the average receptive vocabulary size of students in 10th grade Iceland and compare the results to the outcome of the standardized reading comprehension from the test groups' National Exam as well as their written essay from the same test. My motivation for the research was to find out how well students are prepared for further studies, since high proficiency English is becoming essential for students that wish to succeed at university level in Iceland. In order to achieve my goals I used a vocabulary size test designed by Paul Nation and tested 66 students in a suburban primary school in the Reykjavik area. I compared the results to the test groups' reading comprehension results from the National Exam and to the grades of their written essay. My results revealed that too many students do not have the language competence necessary to deal with complex texts and authentic materials used in secondary school. When analyzing students' results individually it was interesting to see how accurate the results from the vocabulary size test were. Students that tested with a large vocabulary did much better on the receptive part of the National Exam. This indicates how important it is for language teachers to focus more on explicit vocabulary teaching. However, students’ productive skills on the National Exam were not as predictable. There were nonetheless some anomalies concerning the grading of the written essay on the national exam which make the scoring of the essays not as reliable as the results of the reading comprehension.
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Introduction

English is ubiquitous in Iceland. In fact it would almost be impossible to find someone from Iceland that has no knowledge of the language. On the contrary most Icelanders are quite confident with their English and use it regularly in colloquial situations. For instance it would not be unusual to hear Icelandic children and teenagers communicating with each other while playing in English. Some even before formal English instruction has begun. This is due to the constant exposure to the language through the media, computer games and the internet (Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2011; Þórunna Hrönn Þórsdóttir, 2012). This ample amount of exposure of English in Iceland makes the learning of English as a foreign language rather unique. Alma Ágústsdóttir winner of an international speaking competition in London 2015 expresses this well in her speech on European Language Day on the 26th of September 2015; when asked, she could not really say why her English is so superior. She does not even remember when she started to learn English, it just came as naturally as learning Icelandic. Alma’s statement coincides with Ásrún Jóhannsdóttir’s (2010) study; Ásrún claims that many students’ level of proficiency has surpassed the guidelines that are set out in the curriculum of primary schools for the initial year of English instruction. A large number of students have therefore started to learn English before their formal education begins. However, it may vary between primary schools in Iceland when the initial year of English instructions begins. Some students start learning English in 1st grade while most students start their English education in 4th or 5th grade. The majority of students will therefore study English for 6-7 years in primary school.

Having taught English for 13 years in primary school I have encountered a wide range of students whose proficiency varies considerably. Some students have far exceeded the expectations of the curriculum for their age level while others seem to have very little competence in the language. This does create problems that I did not experience while teaching another foreign language, where most students in the class were at a similar proficiency level. The English teacher in an Icelandic primary school is therefore torn between fulfilling the needs of the high proficiency students, who seem to have adopted the language at a young age, and helping the low proficiency students reach a minimum level of competence. This is a challenging job made more difficult by many and large classes assigned to each teacher, where lessons are usually designed to accommodate the mid-level students. It is thus difficult to challenge all students equally. Occasionally students with both advanced and lower level skills may follow their own syllabus depending on their ability to work independently.
It is important that both educators and students keep in mind that students are not only studying English to be able to watch movies, search the internet or speak to tourists. Many workplaces today require their employees to have a certain level of competence in the language and students who wish to study at the University of Iceland will have to be prepared to encounter academic English in their textbooks (Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir & Hafdis Ingvarsdóttir, 2010). It is therefore imperative for most Icelandic students to reach a high level of proficiency in English.

According to Anna Jeeves (2013) a high level of proficiency is not always achieved, students that have finished their formal education in secondary school have complained that even though they enjoyed their English classes they did not feel that their studies added much to their English skills. Studies have also shown that despite the fact that Icelandic students’ receptive skills (listening and reading) are quite high, students seem to overestimate their abilities and cannot produce (speak and write) the language adequately once at University or in the workplace (Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir & Hafdis Ingvarsdóttir, 2010; María Pétursdóttir, 2013). According to these findings it is clear that students of English are not being challenged enough in secondary school. Students are therefore not being prepared sufficiently for the demand of the job market or for further studies; as 90% of the books taught at the University of Iceland are in English (Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir & Hafdis Ingvarsdóttir, 2010). Consequently it is not surprising that more than ⅓ of students in Icelandic universities claim that they are having problems with their studies as their reading material is in English. This is an issue that cannot be overlooked.

As an English teacher I was intrigued by these studies. What can English teachers at primary school level do to contribute in preparing students for the language proficiency needed for higher education? One of the key factors associated with reading competence is vocabulary size (Nation, 2001). By using vocabulary size tests to measure a student’s vocabulary both the teacher and the student will know where the student is in his or her English education and what the next goal should be. For instance if a student wishes to study at university level, his or her goal should be to acquire the knowledge of at least 10,000 word families (Schmitt, 2000). For these reasons I decided to research the vocabulary size of Icelandic students in 10th grade. The study’s main goal is to find out how large a vocabulary the average student has in 10th grade and consequently compare the results with the test groups' reading comprehension and writing skills in the 2015 National Exams.

In chapter two, I will present an overview of research on vocabulary knowledge followed by a description of the different types of vocabulary. This chapter will also contain a
description of how vocabulary is acquired and a review on why and how students’ knowledge of vocabulary should be tested. In chapter three, I will describe my study and how it was conducted. In the following chapter I will present the results of the study and compare it to the participants’ reading comprehension and writing skills. In the final chapter I will discuss the relevance of my findings and what they signify for English teachers and students in primary schools.
2. Literature Review

In this chapter I will explore current knowledge on vocabulary learning. First, I will review the importance of vocabulary knowledge and the role of the teacher in the language classroom. Next, I will explore the four groups of vocabulary and their relevance to learning a foreign language. Furthermore, I will describe how language is acquired. Finally, I will discuss the significance of testing students’ vocabulary and the means to do so.

2.1 Vocabulary Knowledge and The Teacher’s Role

Teaching vocabulary in the language classroom was often considered a waste of time. According to Nation (2008) teaching vocabulary is usually ranked as one of the least important of a teacher’s job (p.5). Of course it would be too time consuming to review every word that is new to an L2 learner’s lexicon. Yet, it is clear that to gain communicative competence in a second language, lexical knowledge is essential. It can therefore be argued that it is crucial that language teachers put more emphasis on their students’ vocabulary knowledge and give them as many opportunities as possible to learn and take notice of new vocabulary. Nation (2008) declares that the teacher’s most important jobs are planning, strategy training, testing and teaching vocabulary (p.1). The language teacher has to consider two questions: What vocabulary is significant for students to learn? How much vocabulary should students learn?

When choosing what type of words learners should acquire Nation (2008) recommends that teachers consider four groups of vocabulary; high frequency words, academic words, low frequency words and technical words. I will describe each group later in this chapter. Another issue a teacher must consider is how much vocabulary students should learn. Should all students in a class be required to attain the same amount of vocabulary or should each student have a goal of his own? To put this into some perspective it is enough to learn around 120 words if you just want to get by in a foreign country where the language is spoken. Of course that should not be the goal after six years of English in primary school. The minimum objective should be closer to 7000-8000 word families which should give students the ability to read most authentic general materials in the L2 (Nation, I.S.P. & Beglar, D., 2007). Furthermore students who have higher aspirations, such as studying at a university, must attain sufficient knowledge of around 10,000 - 15,000 word
families. In comparison, studies have shown that an English native-speaking university student will have a vocabulary size of around 20,000 word families (Schmitt, 2000). It is necessary to keep in mind that acquiring new vocabulary happens gradually and incrementally. It is a lifelong process where L1 and L2 learners are constantly adding to their vocabulary. For instance an educated native speaker will add up to 1000 words a year to his lexicon. Moreover it is also important that the language teacher does not only focus on the amount of words the L2 learner is acquiring receptively but also consider ways to encourage students to use the target vocabulary productively (Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir & Hafdis Ingvarsdóttir, 2010; Nation, 2008).

2.2. The Categorization of Vocabulary

One way of categorizing vocabulary is by frequency of use. Vocabulary may be categorized into four groups depending on how often and how widely it occurs in the language i.e. its frequency and its range. Each vocabulary group contains numerous word families which simply means that in one family there is the base of the word, all of its inflections, and its most common derivatives (Schmitt, 2000). Table 1 demonstrates three different word families. According to Schmitt (2000) a research of Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (1963) found that there are around 54,000 word families in English (p.3). On the other hand there doesn’t seem to be an agreement on how many words there are in the English lexicon, where numbers range from 400,000 to over 2 million words (Schmitt, 2000).

Table 1. Addition to a word family at different levels of inflection and affixation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Families</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>develop</td>
<td>develop</td>
<td>developable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>develops</td>
<td>developed</td>
<td>undevelopable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>developed</td>
<td>developing</td>
<td>developer(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wood</td>
<td>wood</td>
<td>woody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woods</td>
<td>woods</td>
<td>woodiest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wooded</td>
<td>wooded</td>
<td>woodier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bright</td>
<td>bright</td>
<td>brightly</td>
</tr>
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<td>brighter</td>
<td>brightish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brightest</td>
<td>brightest</td>
<td>brightness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2.1 High frequency words

High frequency words are the most important group of words for L2 students to learn. Most linguists agree that the group consists of 2000 word families. They are common words that are the foundation of English, and they are most likely the first words learned among both L1 and L2 learners. According to Nation (2008) in most texts you will find that 80% or more of the words are from this group. Additionally 90% of words used in a friendly conversation are also high frequency words of English. Most of the words on the high frequency word list are rather short for instance 169 word families are function words (a, at, five, you), the rest of the words are content words such as nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives (p.7-8).

2.2.2 Academic words

Academic writing is the most researched specialized area of vocabulary. This includes words from academic textbooks, academic articles and laboratory manuals. They appear in various kinds of academic subjects e.g. Politics and Botany (Nation, 2008). The Academic Word List consists of 570 word families which are divided into 10 groups. When reading an academic text you will find that around one out of ten words comes from the AWL or approximately 8,5-10%. However academic words appear less in conversation or around 2% and only 4% of words in a newspaper are from the AWL (Nation, 2008). Furthermore this group of words is scarcely found in fictional texts, or around 1,4% (Coxhead, 2000). Students that read a lot of fictional novels, such as Harry Potter, and newspaper articles may not be as
well prepared for studying at academic level as they might think. Therefore, students that aim to learn English for academic purposes should focus on the AWL. It is the most useful vocabulary to learn after the first 2000 word families on the high frequency word list. These two lists combined cover roughly 90% of all words in academic texts.

2.2.3 Technical words

There is little research available on technical words. The group is formed by words that have a special purpose and are typical in a specialized field such as physics. A student studying anatomy might find that roughly 30% of the words in the text are technical words (Chung and Nation, 2003). Therefore it is important for anyone who is specializing in a particular area to learn the necessary technical words. According to Nation (2008) technical words are thought to range in size from approximately 1000 to 5000 words based on the subject area. Nation (2008) also claims that it is imperative that technical words are learned as part of the subject matter (p.137).

2.2.4 Low frequency words

Low frequency words are part of the largest and most diverse group of words. The list consists mostly of words that aren’t frequent or wide range enough to fit in the group of high frequency words and of words that rarely appear. There are thought to be over 100,000 word families in this group, which is quite extraordinary considering that most native speakers are likely to have a vocabulary of only 20,000 word families. Low frequency words are more common than the name of the group indicates, whereas around 10% of the words in both academic texts and newspapers are from this group. However, the percentage of low frequency words in friendly conversation is a bit lower, or about 5% (Nation, 2008).

The following table from Nation (2008) shows the frequency of the different word groups in an academic text. The description underneath the table describes from which category the words come.
It is useful to distinguish between two different but related meanings of ‘interaction’. First, interaction can be viewed as the social behaviour that occurs when one person communicates with another. Interaction in this sense is interpersonal. In can occur face-to-face, in which case it usually takes place through the oral medium, or it can occur as displaced activity, in which case it generally involves the written medium. In some sense, oral interpersonal interaction is basic to human communication, as all communities, whether literate or not, engage in it. Also, it constitutes the primary purpose for our species-specific language capacity and the means by which it has developed both phylogenetically and ontogenetically. This book will concern itself mainly with oral interaction of the interpersonal kind. Second, interaction can occur inside our minds, both when we engage in the kind of ‘private speech’ discussed by Vygotsky (1978), and, more covertly when different modules of the mind interact to construct an understanding of or a response to some phenomenon. In reading, for example, we draw interactively on our ability to decode print, our stored knowledge of the language we are reading and the content schemata through which our knowledge of the world is organized. Interaction of this kind, then, is intrapersonal. This book will also consider intrapersonal interaction and its relation to second-language (L2) learning.

(Nation, 2008 p. 9)

The words from Table 2 are categorized as following. The unmarked words are from the most frequent word list. The bold words are from the Academic Word List. The technical words are underlined and the words in italics are from the low frequency list.

### 2.3 Explicit and Incidental Learning of Vocabulary

It is important to know how vocabulary is acquired when teaching and learning an L2 language. Vocabulary acquisition is often divided into; explicit learning and incidental learning. Explicit learning refers to the focused study of words, as a result of deliberate teaching of vocabulary, while incidental learning happens when students are exposed to vocabulary and their attention is focused on the language rather than the learning process, as
when reading a novel. According to Schmitt (2000) L2 learners benefit highly from a combination of the two learning approaches, though he recommends that teachers should consider explicit teaching for the most frequent words of any L2 language since they are the foundation for language use and should not be left to chance (p. 137). María Pétursdóttir (2013), in her thesis on explicit teaching of academic vocabulary in EFL, discusses the results of a study done in a school which piloted the program Word Generation Program. The study showed that after only twelve weeks of explicit learning of academic vocabulary students learned more than the control group did in two years of incidental learning. María’s own research on explicit learning of academic vocabulary in a secondary school in Iceland had similar results, where the group that learned the tested vocabulary explicitly did better than the group that learned the vocabulary incidentally. Both groups did better than the control group that received no introduction of the attended vocabulary (2013). It is clear that due to the vast amount of vocabulary in English it is not possible to learn all of it. Only a fraction of words should be learned explicitly, other words should be learned incidentally by exposure and words which are not relevant for the L2 learner should not be learned at all (Schmitt, 2000).

2.4 Vocabulary Acquisition

Language learning revolves around the learner’s ability to memorize words and grammatical aspects (Schmitt, 2000). Research has shown that one of the best predictors to both vocabulary and grammar achievements is the subject’s short-term memory capacity (Ellis, 1996). Teachers and learners must keep in mind that it is natural to forget new vocabulary. In fact learners will learn and forget new vocabulary until it is mastered (Schmitt, 2000). When a new word is being learned it will initially be processed and stored for a short period of time in the short-term memory. If the word is not mastered it will be forgotten. Hence the main goal of language learning is to move the new lexical information from the short-term memory to the more permanent long-term memory (Schmitt, 2000).

One of the most important factors when mastering new vocabulary is the amount of exposure to the words. Nation (1990) claims that an L2 learner needs to encounter a word as often as five to sixteen times for it to be learned (p. 44). It is therefore obvious that L2 learners must often come across the words they are intended to learn or it is likely they will
The use of word cards has proven to be an effective technique to increase repetition and exposure to vocabulary (Nation, 2008; María Pétursdóttir, 2013). Schmitt (2000) claims that a study he conducted on advanced L2 university students found that the subjects were less prone to forgetting words learned productively than words only learned receptively (p. 129). It is therefore beneficial for learners not only to be increasingly exposed to the target words but also encouraged to use the words productively in a controlled environment. Learners can also increase their success in learning difficult vocabulary by linking the new lexical item to elements stored in the long-term memory’s mental lexicon i.e. connecting the new word to words already known. A technique called the keyword technique utilizes this knowledge by connecting form and meaning to the L2 learner’s native language. This method has proven to increase the acquisition of words by around 20% (Pressley, Levin and Delaney, 1982).

As previously stated before giving the amount of vocabulary that L2 learners need to learn it is too time consuming to explicitly teach more than a fraction of them. Teachers should instead consider teaching students to use vocabulary learning strategies such as word cards and the keyword technique. By doing so valuable class time can be saved and learners will have learned skills to help them learn new vocabulary independently (Nation, 2008).

2.5 Testing

It is important for teachers to test their students’ vocabulary knowledge to make sure they are acquiring the target vocabulary. Testing students also encourages them to learn the vocabulary that is required of them as well as creating awareness that learning the L2 vocabulary is an important part of learning a second language. However, teachers must consider why they are testing certain words and what the learning objectives are. The most common way of testing is by using achievement tests, where the goal is to determine if the student has learned the words he or she was expected to. Diagnostic tests focus on where the student’s vocabulary has gaps so more attention can be given to that area. Another reason for testing could be to know what class level a student should be in, this is called placement testing. When testing a student’s vocabulary it is necessary to keep in mind that vocabulary tests capture a small amount of the L2 learner’s knowledge. Most tests only register the receptive knowledge the L2 learner has of each word and therefore do not demonstrate if he or she can use the word productively. Teachers need to keep in mind that if their main goal is
limited to testing a student’s vocabulary they should avoid using exams that rely greatly on other language skills such as reading, writing and speaking (Schmitt, 2000). Another key factor in designing a valid and reliable test is to have as many items tested as possible, making longer, carefully constructed tests a better option. Schmitt (2000) points out that this is especially important if a test is a high-stake test that can influence the examinee’s life, such as if he or she will gain entrance to a certain school (p.167).

To understand better different ways and reasons to assess vocabulary knowledge I found Henrickson’s (1999) three dimensions of vocabulary development useful:

1. the degree of mastery that the test attempts to measure (partial-precise)
2. the degree to which various word-knowledge aspects are captured
3. a focus on receptive or productive knowledge

(Schmitt, 2000 p.167)

Below are four examples of commonly used vocabulary size tests. Each test focuses on one aspect of word knowledge and will therefore not give a precise indication of what a learner knows about the target word. All of the below examples capture the learner’s partial knowledge of the target word. We will not know if the learner can use the vocabulary in different circumstances or if he or she knows the other meanings of the words, for instance that firm can also mean law firm (Schmitt, 2000).

1. firm
   a. deep
   b. hard
   c. warm
   d. clean

2. The writing on the page was illegible
   a. handwritten in ink
   b. written in large letters
   c. difficult to read
   d. written in many colors

3. Serious ________________ (Give L1 translation)

4. A ________________ is a large cat with stripes that lives in the jungle.

   (Schmitt, 2000)
Teachers who wish to know how well a word is learned will have to use different test formats from the ones above. The example below illustrates one way of capturing the learner’s knowledge of a word more accurately:

5. Rate your knowledge of the target word. If you choose (d), please compose a sentence using that word.

*expand*

a. I don’t know this word.
b. I have seen this word before but am not sure of the meaning.
c. I understand the word when I see or hear it in a sentence, but I don’t know how to use it in my own speaking or writing.
d. I can use the word in a sentence.

(Schmitt, 2000)

The above testing format clearly demonstrates that knowing a word isn’t as simple as the former correct/non correct formats. Of course students that choose the (b) or (c) alternative might be overestimating their abilities, but nonetheless this type of testing should give a clearer image of a learner’s lexical knowledge (Schmitt, 2000).

According to Schmitt (2000) all vocabulary tests give an incomplete picture of how well a word is known. Test results need to be interpreted carefully, keeping in mind the various aspects that might interfere with the true lexical knowledge of the learner (p.178). Finally, tests are an invaluable tool for teachers to motivate students to study as well as to register their progress.

### 3. The Study

This chapter will focus on the methodology of my study. First, I will describe the participants in the test group and how long they have been studying English. Next I will give a detailed account of the test I used and how to interpret the results. Finally, I will explain how the test was administered.
3.1 The Participants

The participants in this study are all students in a suburban primary school in the Reykjavik area in Iceland. The students that took part in the research are in the 10th grade. The research was conducted in October when students had just started their final year in primary school. The participants come from three different classes that consist of mixed abilities students. I know all of the students fairly well as I have taught English in all three classes at one point or another. The number of students in the study was 66, 39 boys and 27 girls. Students were asked to answer a survey with a few background questions (Appendix A). A brief summary of their background follows as this is not the main focus of the study. According to their answers 89% of the students had been studying English for 5 - 7 years prior to the study or since 3rd, 4th or 5th grade. A small percentage said that they started their formal education in 1st grade and a similar sized group claimed to have started to learn English during their last year in kindergarten. Only two students had lived in an English speaking country for a short period of time as young children. One student mentioned having a close relative that lives in an English speaking country and visits the country regularly.

3.2 The vocabulary size test

The test that I used to research the participants’ vocabulary size was created by Nation (2012) (Appendix B). The test was chosen for its established reliability. The test consists of 140 multiple choice questions with 10 words from each of the fourteen 1000 word family levels. The students’ results are multiplied by 100 to find their total receptive vocabulary size i.e. if a student answered 80 questions correctly he or she has the total score of 8000 word families. This only applies to the knowledge the student has of words he reads, the same student will undoubtedly have a much lower score when he or she is tested for the same vocabulary productively (Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir & Hafðís Ingvarsdóttir, 2012). The test can therefore only be used for research purposes to measure the total receptive written vocabulary size for both L1 and L2 learners (Nation, I.S.P. & Beglar, 2007). The level of the vocabulary in the test should go beyond the test-takers’ vocabulary size. Only a small number of items are tested from each level. It is therefore expected that students’ score will decrease for the lower frequency levels. All of the tested words are based on the frequency levels found in the British National Corpus word family list.
Each question consists of the tested word in a non-definable stem and a 4 choice multiple-choice format. The test includes distractors, which are from the same part of speech as the correct answer and are often meanings of words that are from the same 1000 word frequency level as the correct answer.

Below you can see an example of a question from the 11th 1000 word frequency level:

59. emir: We saw the emir
   a. bird with two curved long tail feathers
   b. woman who cares for other people’s children in eastern counties
   c. middle eastern chief with power in his own land
   d. house made from blocks of ice

   (Nation, I.S.P. & Beglar, 2007)

To make sure that students understand both the stem and the multiple-choice answers they are written in easier language than the tested word. Students are encouraged to sit the whole test and to try to make informed guesses when answering questions of words they are not sure about. There is no correction for guessing and it is therefore important to keep in mind that students’ results can be slightly overestimated (Nation, I.S.P. & Beglar, 2007).

To understand what the results mean in terms of the use of language, Table 3 shows the vocabulary size needed to comprehend 98% of various kinds of texts or spoken language.

Table 3. Vocabulary size needed to comprehend 98% of various kinds of texts or spoken language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>98% coverage</th>
<th>Proper nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novels</td>
<td>9,000 word families</td>
<td>1-2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>8,000 word families</td>
<td>5-6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s movies</td>
<td>6,000 word families</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken English</td>
<td>7,000 word families</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   (Nation, 2006)
According to Nation if an L2 learner wishes to understand complex spoken language and achieve moderate writing proficiency his or her goal should be comprehension of around 8,000 word families (2006).

3.3. The Administration of the Test

Students were informed of the purpose of the study and that their results would be anonymous in the research. Since the participants were only 14 and 15 years old I asked their parents for permission by sending a letter home explaining the research and asking their permission to use information from the tests in my research (Appendix C). However, I did ask students to write their names on their test so that I could inform them of their estimated receptive vocabulary size. I hoped that this would minimize the chance of students not taking the test seriously. Most of the students were extremely positive towards the test and were very eager to get their results. The testing took longer than I anticipated; originally I planned to use only one lesson for each class or around 40 minutes. After testing the first group I realized that around half of the students would need more time. The time it took students to finish the test ranged from 30 minutes to 80 minutes. If students needed more than one lesson they had to hand in the test at the end of the first lesson and then continue with it the following day or when they attended their next English lesson.

4. The Results

In this chapter I will present the results of the vocabulary size test. I will start by examining the percentage of correct answers from each 1000 word frequency level followed by the highest and lowest scoring words. Next I will use histograms to show the number of word families the participants knew, one for all students and another showing the differences between boys and girls. Finally, I will compare these results to the participants’ National Exam results.
4.1 The Percentage of Correct Answers from Each Level

The percentage of correct answers from each level was calculated by dividing the sum of correct words from all students in each level with the total sum of questions, or 660 (66 students multiplied with 10 questions).

Table 4. The percentage of correct answers from each level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1000 Word Family Level</th>
<th>Correct Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 7</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 8</td>
<td>58%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 9</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 10</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 11</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 12</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 13</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 14</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As expected the percentage of correct answers decreased considerably in the lower frequency levels. Unexpectedly there was one anomaly in level 8, where the students’ knowledge increased. This will be discussed further in section 5.1.
4.2 The Highest and Lowest Scoring Words

While examining individual words it was apparent that students’ answers varied more in the lower frequency levels. There were, however words up to the 11th 1000 word family level that were among the highest scoring words. It was also interesting to see words from more frequent levels scoring as the least known words, such as from the 4th – 7th 1000 word family level. Table 5 and Table 6 describe the highest and lowest scoring words. The tables are divided into the target word, its 1000 frequency level and the percentage of students that knew the meaning of the word.

Table 5. The highest scoring words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>1000 word family level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>1000 word family level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Scrubbing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Dinosaurs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jump</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Crabs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Haunted</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>Olives</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>Pub</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>Yoghurt</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nun</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>Puma</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saw</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>Lonesome</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the words from the highest scoring list are words that are common, and can be found in assorted texts and often heard in the media. Other words are similar to those in the participant's native language.
Table 6. The lowest scoring words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>1000 word family level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>1000 word family level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excreted</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Communiqué</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quilt</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10,6%</td>
<td>Canonical</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compost</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Marsupial</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13,6%</td>
<td>Veered</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutch</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13,6%</td>
<td>Bristles</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpid</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13,6%</td>
<td>Refectory</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hessian</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Shuddered</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ubiquitous</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Ruck</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upbeat</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16,7%</td>
<td>Skylark</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aperitif</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16,7%</td>
<td>Cordillera</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didactic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>Bloc</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candid</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19,6%</td>
<td>Emir</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranny</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19,6%</td>
<td>Atoll</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the words that students least understood are words belonging to specific areas such as politics, science and social studies. The results described in Tables 5 and 6 will be discussed further in section 5.1.

4.3 The Results of the Vocabulary Size Test

The following figures show the approximate distribution of the number of word families the test group knew receptively. Figure 1 shows the result of all students combined. Figure 2 shows the difference between boys and girls.
Most of the participants’ receptive vocabulary size consists of 7100-8000 word families or around 30% of the students. According to the test, 29% of the participants have a vocabulary size of more than 8100 word families. This means that 59% of the participants are close to or have reached a sufficient vocabulary size to understand non simplified spoken language and
written texts. There seems to be some difference between the boys and the girls where 56% of the boys have reached the receptive knowledge of 7100 word families or more versus 63% of the girls. There was a large difference between the boys and girls when considering students with the receptive vocabulary size of 6100 -7000 word families and 9100 - 10,000 word families. In both results the boys were considerably higher in number than the girls. It is important to consider that 59% of the participants in the test group were boys which could partially explain differences between the boys and girls in Figure 2. These results will be discussed further in section 5.1.

4.4 The National Exams in Iceland

The results of the vocabulary size test were compared to the results of the test groups’ National Exam results. Every autumn primary schools in Iceland are required to test their students’ English proficiency using a national exam designed by the Educational Testing Institute in Iceland. The test is divided into two sections; reading comprehension (60%) and language use (40%). The students' reading comprehension is evaluated by asking students to read five texts that vary considerable both in language level and type and then answer 50 multiple-choice questions from the texts combined. Students are additionally asked to answer 20 questions that test their language use. The final task on the exam tests students writing skills, by requiring students to write a short essay about an unseen topic (Samræmd könnunarpróf 2015: Framkvæmd og uppbygging, 2015).

The comparison was done to determine the influence of a student’s receptive vocabulary size on his or her reading comprehension and writing skills.

4.5 The results of the National Exams

Figure 3 shows the test groups' results from the 2015 National Exam minus the 20 questions which evaluate students’ language use. It describes the results of the reading comprehension section and compares it to the grades students received for their written essay. The grading scale is from 1,0 to 10,0. Since no student scored below 3,3, the grading scale in Figure 3 starts at 3,0 -4,0.
According to these results there does not seem to be a great difference between the students' written skills and their reading comprehension. The students' average grade for reading comprehension was 6.62 and their average grade for writing skills was 6.59. When looking at individual students' results, I could see that there was a clear correlation between students scoring high on the reading comprehension section of the exam and having a vocabulary size of more than 8100 word families. On the other hand this was not as clear regarding students' writing skills. This will be shown in section 5.2.

5. Discussion

5.1 Concerning the Vocabulary Size Test

The result of the vocabulary size test was as expected, the percentage of correct answers decreased in the lower frequency levels as Nation (2000) predicted they would. There was one anomaly, where students' correct answers increased by almost 10% from the 7th 1000 word family level to the 8th 1000 word family level but then it dropped again nearly 20% in the 9th 1000 word family level. I do not have a clear explanation of why students seemed to know more of the words in the 8th 1000 word family level than in the 7th 1000 word family level, but I did notice that one of the words was similar to Icelandic, null, another word was
used in a title of a recent popular movie, *eclipse* and other words are not uncommon in texts used as study material such as *mumble, kindergarten* and *authentic*.

Most of the highest scoring words were from the more frequent 1000 word family levels; though there were a few irregularities. Words like *yoghurt, yoga, puma* and *olives* are words from the 7th and 11th 1000 word family level but were among the highest scoring words. Three of the words are very similar to Icelandic and were therefore understood by more than 90% of the students, the fourth word is the name of a famous sports brand with a descriptive logo and consequently well known to students. Seeing that words from up to the 11th 1000 word family level were among the highest scoring words indicates to me that students were taking the exam seriously and were not just randomly choosing answers when the levels became too difficult for them. I did encourage students to try to make informed guesses if they did not understand a word. When viewing the lowest scoring words I am sure that some of them were answered correctly by luck. Some students’ results might therefore be a bit overestimated.

When presenting students with the results of their tests I showed the classes the tables with the highest and lowest scoring words. I assumed that the two students that had the lowest scoring word, *excreted*, correct were lucky guessers. I was surprised to be proven wrong by one of those students who claimed to know the word and was able to use it in a sentence correctly. Furthermore, I have considered if students might have had a slightly higher score if the words had been chosen from an American word family list instead of the British National Corpus. Students are much more exposed to American English through the media and film industry and in my experience use American English more often than British English. This could be the reason why students were having problems with words like *nil* (level 1), *regent* (level 9), *cranny* (level 10) and *ruck* (level 10).

According to my results only 59% of the students have or are close to reaching a sufficient receptive vocabulary size to understand non simplified spoken language and written texts. Overall, I was not that surprised by the results since there are many students in each class that have learning difficulties. Another possible contributing factor was that the class with the cumulative lowest score is the only class that I didn’t personally introduce the purpose of the vocabulary test to or supervise their exam. This was done by their English teacher and they may have been somewhat less motivated than the other two classes. I was interested in seeing if there was a difference between the overall scores of the boys versus the girls. The results show that there is a slight distinction between the vocabulary size of the boys and the girls. There were though some clear deviations in Figure 2 that give reasons to
examine the matter further in future studies. It was interesting to discover that some students’ results were much higher than the proficiency they have shown in class. This indicates that their language competence has been underestimated and more should be demanded of them in the future. Conversely, other results confirmed how low their English proficiency truly is and that there should be more emphasis on increasing their vocabulary size with appropriate material and techniques.

It was interesting to see how well the students responded to the test. A high proficiency student said that she realized that only reading fiction like Harry Potter isn’t sufficient to acquire a broad range vocabulary. I also felt that students were more positive towards learning new vocabulary after taking the vocabulary size test.

5.2 The Correlation between the National Exam and Students' Vocabulary Size

There was a clear correlation when comparing the students’ results from the vocabulary size test to their results from the National Exam. Students with the receptive knowledge of more than 7100 word families did much better in the reading comprehension part of the exam than students with fewer word families. I wanted to see just how accurate the vocabulary size test was in predicting students reading comprehension as well as comparing it to their writing skills. Table 7 compares the average grades of the test group’s National Exam to their receptive vocabulary size.

Table 7. The National Exam compared to students' vocabulary size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students' receptive vocabulary size</th>
<th>Average grade: Reading comprehension</th>
<th>Average grade: Writing skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4000-5000 word families</td>
<td>5,3</td>
<td>4,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5100-6000 word families</td>
<td>4,7</td>
<td>5,97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6100-7000 word families</td>
<td>5,95</td>
<td>6,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7100-8000 word families</td>
<td>7,11</td>
<td>7,16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8100-9000 word families</td>
<td>8,08</td>
<td>6,63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9100-10,000 word families</td>
<td>8,08</td>
<td>7,74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,100-11,000 word families</td>
<td>8,5</td>
<td>7,9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 demonstrates that there is a clear connection between students' vocabulary size and their reading comprehension. However, even though the overall average of the test groups’ reading comprehension and writing skills is quite similar it is clear that the students' receptive vocabulary size does not necessarily indicate the proficiency of the students’ productive skills. The students with receptive knowledge of 7100 -8000 word families received better grades for their essays on the National Exam than the students who have 8100 - 9000 word families. It is, however important to keep in mind that the written part of the National Exam is not as consistent as that for reading comprehension. Four primary school teachers have approximately 7 weeks to grade the essays for every 10th grader in Iceland. The grading can therefore vary depending on who judged the essay. Students are graded by their vocabulary use, language use including grammar, spelling and their fluency, the structure of the essay and its content. When I reviewed the essays there were some anomalies. Some of the essays with the same grades differed immensely in proficiency. One of those essays was from one of the highest scoring students on the vocabulary size test as well as from the reading comprehension section in the National Exam. I do believe that there was some mistake when grading the student's essay and therefore the average for students with the receptive vocabulary of 10,100-11,000 word families should be higher. I therefore think that the results of the written task on the National Exam 2015 is not sufficiently reliable. Finally, I think that it is important to mention that the test group average was very close to the country average for the National Exam 2015. This would support the view that the test group's results can be described as typical for 10th graders in Iceland.
6. Conclusion

The study’s goal was to find out how much vocabulary the average 10th grade student has and compare the results to the test groups’ standardized reading comprehension and writing skills. Even though the majority of students have acquired an adequate vocabulary size, the percentage of students who have not reached a vocabulary size to sufficiently understand non simplified spoken language and written texts is far too high, or 41%. This means that these students are very likely to have problems with reading English textbooks in secondary school as well as novels and newspapers. My results clearly show that there is a strong connection between a students' vocabulary size and his or her reading comprehension. It is therefore important that teachers in primary school put greater emphasis on teaching students new vocabulary and the various techniques students can use to help them add the target words to their lexicon. My research has also shown that a student with a large vocabulary does not automatically have the same proficiency when writing an English essay. Students must get ample opportunities to practice their language skills both receptively and productively if they are to acquire complete language competence.

English is much more than just a linking language in Iceland, as the number of English textbooks at the University of Iceland has elevated the importance of the language to the level of being one of the main foundations for academic studies in Iceland (Bírna Arnbjörnsdóttir & Hafdis Ingvarsdóttir, 2010). It cannot be overlooked that too many students regard English as an entertaining and non-challenging subject (Anna Jeeves, 2013). There needs to be a change in the language-teaching environment starting at the beginning of formal instruction. Students need to be challenged more. It is also important that certified English teachers be a requirement for teaching English at all school levels. In my experience it is especially common that homeroom teachers of students in 4th-7th grade teach their students English. Some of these teachers have expressed to me their dislike of this responsibility as they have little proficiency in the language and feel insecure with English instruction.

It is also important that a critical subject like English receives the same support as other significant subjects such as Mathematics and Icelandic. In my experience there is often a lack of support in the language classroom in primary schools, where help is rarely provided for the large number of students with behavioral problems or learning disabilities, as is often provided in other important subjects. This difficult environment for both teachers and students does keep many L2 learners from being able to study English at an appropriate level.
This results in insufficient preparation of students for the demands of their future education or employment.

It is important that English is recognized as a major instrument for benefitting students in their education. Education is the foundation for a nation’s future and high proficiency in English is essential to ensure that Icelandic University students succeed in their studies (Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir & Hafdís Ingvarsdóttir, 2010). According to my study, 41% of students in 10th grade do not have the vocabulary size necessary to understand authentic spoken and written language as used in secondary school. The question is whether we accept this or should changes be made all the way down to the initial year of English instruction? We need more research on how English is taught in primary schools and what kind of materials are available for English teachers at this school level. One of the main guidelines primary school teachers have is the National Curriculum. It might be interesting to see how useful the curriculum is to English teachers and the relevance of the curriculum in the everyday classroom. Are the curriculum’s guidelines descriptive enough to be of real use to language teachers? The first years in the language learning process are extremely important and deserve more attention; we need to focus on building a strong foundation to help students succeed in their future studies.
References


Appendix A

Bakgrunnnspurningar
Svarið eftir bestu getu.

1. Stelpa ( ) Strákur ( )

2. Fæðingarland ______________________

3. Í hvaða bekk byrjaðir þú að læra ensku í skóla? Bekkur:_____

4. Hefurðu búið í enskumælandi landi (Bandaríkin, Bretland, Ástralía, Suður Afrika o.s.frv.)?
   Já ( ) Nei ( )
   a. Hversu lengi __________
   b. Hversu gömul/gamall varstu? __________
Appendix B

Vocabulary Size Test
Circle the letter a-d with the closest meaning to the key word in the question.
1. SEE: They saw it.
   a. cut
   b. waited for
   c. looked at
   d. started

2. TIME: They have a lot of time.
   a. money
   b. food
   c. hours
   d. friends

3. PERIOD: It was a difficult period.
   a. question
   b. time
   c. thing to do
   d. book

4. FIGURE: Is this the right figure?
   a. answer
   b. place
   c. time
   d. number

5. POOR: We are poor.
   a. have no money
   b. feel happy
   c. are very interested
   d. do not like to work hard

6. DRIVE: He drives fast.
   a. swims
   b. learns
   c. throws balls
   d. uses a car

7. JUMP: She tried to jump.
   a. lie on top of the water
   b. get off the ground suddenly
   c. stop the car at the edge of the road
   d. move very fast

8. SHOE: Where is your shoe?
   a. the person who looks after you
   b. the thing you keep your money in
   c. the thing you use for writing
   d. the thing you wear on your foot

9. STANDARD: Her standards are very high.
   a. the bits at the back under her shoes
   b. the marks she gets in school
   c. the money she asks for
   d. the levels she reaches in everything

10. BASIS: This was used as the basis.
    a. answer
    b. place to take a rest
    c. next step
    d. main part

---

1 The test is created by Paul Nation, Victoria University of Wellington, and found at https://www.lextutor.ca/. This test is freely available and can be used by teachers and researchers for a variety of purposes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Third 1000</th>
<th>Fourth 1000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. SOLDIER:</strong> He is a soldier.</td>
<td><strong>1. COMPOUND:</strong> They made a new compound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. person in a business</td>
<td>a. agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. student</td>
<td>b. thing made of two or more parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. person who uses metal</td>
<td>c. group of people forming a business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. person in the army</td>
<td>d. guess based on past experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. RESTORE:</strong> It has been restored.</td>
<td><strong>2. LATTER:</strong> I agree with the latter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. said again</td>
<td>a. man from the church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. given to a different person</td>
<td>b. reason given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. given a lower price</td>
<td>c. last one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. made like new again</td>
<td>d. answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. JUG:</strong> He was holding a jug.</td>
<td><strong>3. CANDID:</strong> Please be candid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. A container for pouring liquids</td>
<td>a. be careful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. an informal discussion</td>
<td>b. show sympathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. A soft cap</td>
<td>c. show fairness to both sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. A weapon that explodes</td>
<td>d. say what you really think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. SCRUB:</strong> He is scrubbing it.</td>
<td><strong>4. TUMMY:</strong> Look at my tummy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. cutting shallow lines into it</td>
<td>a. cloth to cover the head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. repairing it</td>
<td>b. stomach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. rubbing it hard to clean it</td>
<td>c. small furry animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. drawing simple pictures of it</td>
<td>d. thumb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. DINOSAUR:</strong> The children were pretending to be dinosaurs.</td>
<td><strong>5. QUIZ:</strong> We made a quiz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. robbers who work at sea</td>
<td>a. thing to hold arrows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. very small creatures with human form but with wings</td>
<td>b. serious mistake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. large creatures with wings that breathe fire</td>
<td>c. set of questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. animals that lived a long time ago</td>
<td>d. box for birds to make nests in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. STRAP:</strong> He broke the strap.</td>
<td><strong>6. INPUT:</strong> We need more input.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. promise</td>
<td>a. information, power, etc. put into something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. top cover</td>
<td>b. workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. shallow dish for food</td>
<td>c. artificial filling for a hole in wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. strip of material for holding things together</td>
<td>d. money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. PAVE:</strong> It was paved.</td>
<td><strong>7. CRAB:</strong> Do you like crabs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. prevented from going through</td>
<td>a. sea creatures that walk sideways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. divided</td>
<td>b. very thin small cakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. given gold edges</td>
<td>c. tight, hard collars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. covered with a hard surface</td>
<td>d. large black insects that sing at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. DASH:</strong> They dashed over it.</td>
<td><strong>8. VOCABULARY:</strong> You will need more vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. moved quickly</td>
<td>a. words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. moved slowly</td>
<td>b. skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. fought</td>
<td>c. money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. looked quickly</td>
<td>d. guns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. ROVE:</strong> He couldn’t stop roving.</td>
<td><strong>9. REMEDY:</strong> We found a good remedy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. getting drunk</td>
<td>a. way to fix a problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. travelling around</td>
<td>b. place to eat in public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. making a musical sound through closed lips</td>
<td>c. way to prepare food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. working hard</td>
<td>d. rule about numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. LONESOME:</strong> He felt lonesome.</td>
<td><strong>10. ALLEGED:</strong> They alleged it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. ungrateful</td>
<td>a. claimed it without proof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. very tired</td>
<td>b. stole the ideas for it from someone else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. lonely</td>
<td>c. provided facts to prove it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. full of energy</td>
<td>d. argued against the facts that supported it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fifth 1000

1. DEFICIT: The company had a large deficit.
   a. spent a lot more money than it earned
   b. went down a lot in value
   c. had a plan for its spending that used a lot of money
   d. had a lot of money in the bank

2. WEEP: He wept.
   a. finished his course
   b. cried
   c. died
   d. worried

3. NUN: We saw a nun.
   a. long thin creature that lives in the earth
   b. terrible accident
   c. woman following a strict religious life
   d. unexplained bright light in the sky

4. HAUNT: The house is haunted.
   a. full of ornaments
   b. rented
   c. empty
   d. full of ghosts

5. COMPOST: We need some compost.
   a. strong support
   b. help to feel better
   c. hard stuff made of stones and sand stuck together
   d. rotted plant material

6. CUBE: I need one more cube.
   a. sharp thing used for joining things
   b. solid square block
   c. tall cup with no saucer
   d. piece of stiff paper folded in half

7. MINIATURE: It is a miniature.
   a. a very small thing of its kind
   b. an instrument to look at small objects
   c. a very small living creature
   d. a small line to join letters in handwriting

8. PEEL: Shall I peel it?
   a. let it sit in water for a long time
   b. take the skin off it
   c. make it white
   d. cut it into thin pieces

9. FRACTURE: They found a fracture.
   a. break
   b. small piece
   c. short coat
   d. rare jewel

10. BACTERIA: They didn't find a single bacterium.
    a. small living thing causing disease
    b. plant with red or orange flowers
    c. animal that carries water on its back
    d. thing that has been stolen and sold to a shop

Sixth 1000

1. DEVIOUS: Your plans are devious.
   a. tricky
   b. well-developed
   c. not well thought out
   d. more expensive than necessary

2. PREMIER: The premier spoke for an hour.
   a. person who works in a law court
   b. university teacher
   c. adventurer
   d. head of the government

3. BUTLER: They have a butler.
   a. man servant
   b. machine for cutting up trees
   c. private teacher
   d. cool dark room under the house

4. ACCESSORY: They gave us some accessories.
   a. papers allowing us to enter a country
   b. official orders
   c. ideas to choose between
   d. extra pieces

5. THRESHOLD: They raised the threshold.
   a. flag
   b. point or line where something changes
   c. roof inside a building
   d. cost of borrowing money

6. THESIS: She has completed her thesis.
   a. long written report of study carried out for a university degree
   b. talk given by a judge at the end of a trial
   c. first year of employment after becoming a teacher
   d. extended course of hospital treatment

7. STRANGLING: He strangling her.
   a. killed her by pressing her throat
   b. gave her all the things she wanted
   c. took her away by force
   d. admired her greatly

8. CAVALIER: He treated her in a cavalier manner.
   a. without care
   b. politely
   c. awkwardly
   d. as a brother would

9. MALIGN: His malign influence is still felt.
   a. evil
   b. good
   c. very important
   d. secret

10. VEER: The car veered.
    a. went suddenly in another direction
    b. moved shakily
    c. made a very loud noise
    d. slid sideways without the wheels turning
Seventh 1000
1. OLIVE: We bought olives.
   a. oily fruit
   b. scented pink or red flowers
   c. men's clothes for swimming
   d. tools for digging up weeds
2. QUILT: They made a quilt.
   a. statement about who should get their property when they die
   b. firm agreement
   c. thick warm cover for a bed
   d. feather pen
3. STEALTH: They did it by stealth.
   a. spending a large amount of money
   b. hurting someone so much that they agreed to their demands
   c. moving secretly with extreme care and quietness
   d. taking no notice of problems they met
4. SHUDDER: The boy shuddered.
   a. spoke with a low voice
   b. almost fell
   c. shook
   d. called out loudly
5. BRISTLE: The bristles are too hard.
   a. questions
   b. short stiff hairs
   c. folding beds
   d. bottoms of the shoes
6. BLOC: They have joined this bloc.
   a. musical group
   b. band of thieves
   c. small group of soldiers who are sent ahead of others
   d. group of countries sharing a purpose
7. DEMOGRAPHY: This book is about demography.
   a. the study of patterns of land use
   b. the study of the use of pictures to show facts about numbers
   c. the study of the movement of water
   d. the study of population
8. GIMMICK: That's a good gimmick.
   a. thing for standing on to work high above the ground
   b. small thing with pockets to hold money
   c. attention-getting action or thing
   d. clever plan or trick
9. AZALEA: This azalea is very pretty.
   a. small tree with many flowers growing in groups
   b. light material made from natural threads
   c. long piece of material worn by women in India
   d. sea shell shaped like a fan
10. YOGHURT: This yoghurt is disgusting.
    a. grey mud found at the bottom of rivers
    b. unhealthy, open sore
    c. thick, soured milk, often with sugar and flavouring
    d. large purple fruit with soft flesh

Eighth 1000
1. ERRATIC: He was erratic.
   a. without fault
   b. very bad
   c. very polite
   d. unsteady
2. PALETTE: He lost his palette.
   a. basket for carrying fish
   b. wish to eat food
   c. young female companion
   d. artist's board for mixing paints
3. NULL: His influence was null.
   a. had good results
   b. was unhelpful
   c. had no effect
   d. was long-lasting
4. KINDERGARTEN: This is a good kindergarten.
   a. activity that allows you to forget your worries
   b. place of learning for children too young for school
   c. strong, deep bag carried on the back
   d. place where you may borrow books
5. ECLIPSE: There was an eclipse.
   a. a strong wind
   b. a loud noise of something hitting the water
   c. The killing of a large number of people
   d. The sun hidden by a planet
6. MARROW: This is the marrow.
   a. symbol that brings good luck to a team
   b. Soft centre of a bone
   c. control for guiding a plane
   d. increase in salary
7. LOCUST: There were hundreds of locusts.
   a. insects with wings
   b. unpaid helpers
   c. people who do not eat meat
   d. brightly coloured wild flowers
8. AUTHENTIC: It is authentic.
   a. real
   b. very noisy
   c. Old
   d. Like a desert
9. CABARET: We saw the cabaret.
   a. painting covering a whole wall
   b. song and dance performance
   c. small crawling insect
   d. person who is half fish, half woman
10. MUMBLE: He started to mumble.
    a. think deeply
    b. shake uncontrollably
    c. stay further behind the others
    d. speak in an unclear way
Ninth 1000
1. HALLMARK: Does it have a hallmark?
   a. stamp to show when to use it by
   b. stamp to show the quality
   c. mark to show it is approved by the royal family
   d. mark or stain to prevent copying

2. PURITAN: He is a puritan.
   a. person who likes attention
   b. person with strict morals
   c. person with a moving home
   d. person who hates spending money

3. MONOLOGUE: Now he has a monologue.
   a. single piece of glass to hold over his eye to help him to see better
   b. long turn at talking without being interrupted
   c. position with all the power
   d. picture made by joining letters together in interesting ways

4. WEIR: We looked at the weir.
   a. person who behaves strangely
   b. wet, muddy place with water plants
   c. old metal musical instrument played by blowing
   d. thing built across a river to control the water

5. WHIM: He had lots of whims.
   a. old gold coins
   b. female horses
   c. strange ideas with no motive
   d. sore red lumps

6. PERTURB: I was perturbed.
   a. made to agree
   b. Worried
   c. very puzzled
   d. very wet

7. REGENT: They chose a regent.
   a. an irresponsible person
   b. a person to run a meeting for a time
   c. a ruler acting in place of the king
   d. a person to represent them

8. OCTOPUS: They saw an octopus.
   a. a large bird that hunts at night
   b. a ship that can go under water
   c. a machine that flies by means of turning blades
   d. a sea creature with eight legs

9. FEN: The story is set in the fens.
   a. low land partly covered by water
   b. a piece of high land with few trees
   c. a block of poor-quality houses in a city
   d. a time long ago

10. LINTEL: He painted the lintel.
    a. Beam over the top of a door or window
    b. small boat used for getting to land from a big boat
    c. beautiful tree with spreading branches and green fruit
    d. board showing the scene in a theatre

Tenth 1000
1. AWE: They looked at the mountain with awe.
   a. worry
   b. interest
   c. wonder
   d. respect

2. PEASANTRY: He did a lot for the peasantry.
   a. local people
   b. place of worship
   c. businessmen's club
   d. poor farmers

3. EGYPTIAN: This organization is egalitarian.
   a. does not provide much information about itself to the public
   b. dislikes change
   c. frequently asks a court of law for a judgement
   d. treats everyone who works for it as if they are equal

4. MYSTIQUE: He has lost his mystique.
   a. his healthy body
   b. the secret way he makes other people think he has special power or skill
   c. the woman who has been his lover while he is married to someone else
   d. the hair on his top lip

5. UPBEAT: I'm feeling really upbeat about it.
   a. upset
   b. good
   c. hurt
   d. confused

6. CRANNY: We found it in the cranny!
   a. sale of unwanted objects
   b. narrow opening
   c. space for storing things under the roof of a house
   d. large wooden box

7. PIGTAIL: Does she have a pigtail?
   a. a rope of hair made by twisting bits together
   b. a lot of cloth hanging behind a dress
   c. a plant with pale pink flowers that hang down in short bunches
   d. a lover

8. CROWBAR: He used a crowbar.
   a. heavy iron pole with a curved end
   b. false name
   c. sharp tool for making holes in leather
   d. light metal walking stick

9. RUCK: He got hurt in the ruck.
   a. hollow between the stomach and the top of the leg
   b. pushing and shoving
   c. group of players gathered round the ball in some ball games
   d. race across a field of snow

10. LECTERN: He stood at the lectern.
    a. desk to hold a book at a height for reading
    b. table or block used for church sacrifices
    c. place where you buy drinks
    d. very edge
Eleventh 1000
1. EXCRETE: This was excreted recently.
   a. pushed or sent out
   b. made clear
   c. discovered by a science experiment
   d. put on a list of illegal things
2. MUSSEL: They bought mussels.
   a. small glass balls for playing a game
   b. shellfish
   c. large purple fruits
   d. pieces of soft paper to keep the clothes clean when eating
3. YOGA: She has started yoga.
   a. handwork done by knotting thread
   b. a form of exercise for body and mind
   c. a game where a cork stuck with feathers is hit between two players
   d. a type of dance from eastern countries
4. COUNTERCLAIM: They made a counterclaim.
   a. a demand made by one side in a law case to match the other side’s demand
   b. a request for a shop to take back things with faults
   c. An agreement between two companies to exchange work
   d. a top cover for a bed
5. PUMA: They saw a puma.
   a. small house made of mud bricks
   b. tree from hot, dry countries
   c. very strong wind that sucks up anything in its path
   d. large wild cat
6. PALLOR: His pallor caused them concern.
   a. his unusually high temperature
   b. his lack of interest in anything
   c. his group of friends
   d. the paleness of his skin
7. APERITIF: She had an aperitif.
   a. a long chair for lying on with just one place to rest an arm
   b. a private singing teacher
   c. a large hat with tall feathers
   d. a drink taken before a meal
8. HUTCH: Please clean the hutch.
   a. thing with metal bars to keep dirt out of water pipes
   b. space in the back of a car for bags
   c. metal piece in the middle of a bicycle wheel
   d. cage for small animals
9. EMIR: We saw the emir.
   a. bird with long curved tail feathers
   b. woman who cares for other people’s children in Eastern countries
   c. Middle Eastern chief with power in his land
   d. house made from blocks of ice
10. HESSIAN: She bought some hessian.
    a. oily pinkish fish
    b. stuff producing a happy state of mind
    c. coarse cloth
    d. strong-tasting root for flavouring food

Twelfth 1000
1. HAZE: We looked through the haze.
   a. small round window in a ship
   b. unclear air
   c. strips of wood or plastic to cover a window
   d. list of names
2. SPIELEN: His spleen was damaged.
   a. knee bone
   b. organ found near the stomach
   c. pipe taking waste water from a house
   d. respect for himself
3. SOLILOQUI: That was an excellent soliloquy!
   a. song for six people
   b. short clever saying with a deep meaning
   c. entertainment using lights and music
   d. speech in the theatre by a character who is alone
4. REPTILE: She looked at the reptile.
   a. old hand-written book
   b. animal with cold blood and a hard outside
   c. person who sells things by knocking on doors
   d. picture made by sticking many small pieces of different colours together
5. ALUM: This contains alum.
   a. a poisonous substance from a common plant
   b. a soft material made of artificial threads
   c. a tobacco powder once put in the nose
   d. a chemical compound usually involving aluminium
6. REFECTORY: We met in the refectory.
   a. room for eating
   b. office where legal papers can be signed
   c. room for several people to sleep in
   d. room with glass walls for growing plants
7. CAFFEINE: This contains a lot of caffeine.
   a. a substance that makes you sleepy
   b. threads from very tough leaves
   c. ideas that are not correct
   d. a substance that makes you excited
8. IMPALE: He nearly got impaled.
   a. charged with a serious offence
   b. put in prison
   c. stuck through with a sharp instrument
   d. involved in a dispute
9. COVEN: She is the leader of a coven.
   a. a small singing group
   b. a business that is owned by the workers
   c. a secret society
   d. a group of church women who follow a strict religious life
10. TRILL: He practised the trill.
    a. ornament in a piece of music
    b. type of stringed instrument
    c. Way of throwing a ball
    d. dance step of turning round very fast on the toes
Thirteenth 1000
1. UBQUITOUS: Many weeds are ubiquitous.
   a. are difficult to get rid of
   b. have long, strong roots
   c. are found in most countries
   d. die away in the winter
2. TALON: Just look at those talons!
   a. high points of mountains
   b. sharp hooks on the feet of a hunting bird
   c. heavy metal coats to protect against weapons
   d. people who make fools of themselves without realizing it
3. ROUBLE: He had a lot of roubles.
   a. very precious red stones
   b. distant members of his family
   c. Russian money
   d. moral or other difficulties in the mind
4. JOVIAL: He was very jovial.
   a. low on the social scale
   b. likely to criticize others
   c. full of fun
   d. friendly
5. COMMUNIQUE: I saw their communiqué.
   a. critical report about an organization
   b. garden owned by many members of a community
   c. printed material used for advertising
   d. official announcement
6. PLANKTON: We saw a lot of plankton.
   a. poisonous weeds that spread very quickly
   b. very small plants or animals found in water
   c. trees producing hard wood
   d. grey clay that often causes land to slip
7. SKYLARK: We watched a skylark.
   a. show with aeroplanes flying in patterns
   b. man-made object going round the earth
   c. person who does funny tricks
   d. small bird that flies high as it sings
8. BEAGLE: He owns two beagles.
   a. fast cars with roofs that fold down
   b. large guns that can shoot many people quickly
   c. small dogs with long ears
   d. houses built at holiday places
9. ATOLL: The atoll was beautiful.
   a. low island made of coral round a sea-water lake
   b. work of art created by weaving pictures from fine thread
   c. small crown with many precious jewels worn in the evening by women
   d. place where a river flows through a narrow place full of large rocks
10. DIDACTIC: The story is very didactic.
    a. tries hard to teach something
    b. is very difficult to believe
    c. deals with exciting actions
    d. is written in a way which makes the reader unsure of the meaning

Fourteenth 1000
1. CANONICAL: These are canonical examples.
   a. examples which break the usual rules
   b. examples taken from a religious book
   c. regular and widely accepted examples
   d. examples discovered very recently
2. ATOP: He was atop the hill.
   a. at the bottom of
   b. at the top of
   c. on this side of
   d. on the far side of
3. MARSUPIAL: It is a marsupial.
   a. an animal with hard feet
   b. a plant that grows for several years
   c. a plant with flowers that turn to face the sun
   d. an animal with a pocket for babies
4. AUGUR: It augured well.
   a. promised good things for the future
   b. agreed well with what was expected
   c. had a colour that looked good with something else
   d. rang with a clear, beautiful sound
5. BAWDY: It was very bawdy.
   a. unpredictable
   b. enjoyable
   c. rushed
   d. rude
6. GAUCHE: He was gauche.
   a. talkative
   b. flexible
   c. awkward
   d. determined
7. THESAURUS: She used a thesaurus.
   a. a kind of dictionary
   b. a chemical compound
   c. a special way of speaking
   d. an injection just under the skin
8. ERYTHROCYTE: It is an erythrocyte.
   a. a medicine to reduce pain
   b. a red part of the blood
   c. a reddish white metal
   d. a member of the whale family
9. CORDILLERA: They were stopped by the cordillera.
   a. a special law
   b. an armed ship
   c. a line of mountains
   d. the eldest son of the king
10. LIMPID: He looked into her limpid eyes.
    a. clear
    b. tearful
    c. deep brown
    d. beautiful
Appendix C

Reykjavík, 12. Október 2015

Kæra foreldri/fórráðamaður

Ég undirrituð er enskukennari á unglingastigí og nemi við Háskóla Íslands. Ég er að vinna að rannsókn sem skoðar umfang óðaróða nemanda í 10.bekk í ensku.

Ef þú vilt ekki að þitt barn taki þátt, vinsamlegast ritaðu þá nafn þitt á bakhlið sögunnar og skilaðu bréfinu til kennara eða á skrifstofu skólans.

Nánari upplýsingar um verkefníð er veitir undirrituð laraf@vidistadaskoli.is

Með kveðju
Lára Marta Fleckenstein
Ég vil **ekki** að barn mitt taki þátt í rannsókninni.

Skóli: _____________________________________________________________

Nafn barns: _________________________________________________________

Undirskrift
foreldris/forraðamanns: _____________________________________________