The Bilingual Vocabulary Size Test for Vietnamese Learners: Reliability and Use in Placement Testing

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To be useful, placement tests need to be both reliable and practical. Placement tests must be reliable in order to have confidence in the results. They must be practical in terms of expense, in the time required to administer and mark the test, and in the ease with which the results are interpreted (Nation & Macalister, 2010, p. 120). This article reports on the use of a freely available test, the Bilingual Vocabulary Size Test for Vietnamese Learners (BVSTV), and its use and modification as a reliable and practical placement test. The study involved 147 Vietnamese university graduates of various academic backgrounds. The participants sat the BVSTV as part of placement testing prior to participating in an intensive four-week, 100-hour English program. The results of the study indicate that a shortened version of the BVSTV containing the words from the first eight frequency levels could be used for vocabulary assessment in placement testing. It is reliable and the first eight levels are sufficient for use of partial knowledge at high-frequency word levels while avoiding random guessing at low-frequency word levels.

Introduction

Vocabulary knowledge is important for language and literacy development (Gersten et al., 2007; Hunt & Beglar, 2005; Nam, 2010; Pulido, 2007). As a result, it is useful to measure the size of an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student’s English vocabulary for program