

# Productive and receptive lexical development in L2 learners

Annabelle David  
*Newcastle University*

Vocabulary is one of the building blocks of language, one of the basics of communication and a necessary component to learners' development. Second language learners, however, often see it as the greatest source of problems: "When students travel, they don't carry grammar books, they carry dictionaries." (Krashen, cited in Lewis, 1993: iii). Therefore, it is vital for researchers to understand its acquisition and development.

This paper will report on the productive and receptive lexical development by the same group of instructed British learners of French in years 12 and 13 of the British Educational system (respectively in their 6th and 7th year of learning). This paper will answer in particular the following questions:

- What is the size of the receptive lexicon of a learner taking 'A' levels?
- Is there a link between exam grades and receptive vocabulary size?
- What is the nature of their developing productive lexicon?
- Are different parts-of-speech developing at the same rate?

Overall results indicate that receptive lexicon increases significantly between years 12 and 13. A trend is observed for a possible link between exam grades at this stage and vocabulary size but this is not statistically significant.

As far as productive vocabulary is concerned, lexical diversity significantly improves. More noun types are observed than verb types. And other measures indicate that learners vary their use of nouns to a much larger extent than verbs.

Lewis, M. (1993). *The Lexical Approach*. Language Teaching Publications.