

# THE EFFECT OF MULTIPLE TEXTS ON VOCABULARY ACQUISITION

Jeannette Watts

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Abstract

This study investigates the effect of reading multiple texts on incidental acquisition

of vocabulary. Adult learners indicated their degree of knowledge of target words prior to

reading across three tasks: a reading task, a reading task followed by a writing task, then a writing

task. An immediate post-test of the target words was 2-3

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## The On-line Edition of the TESOLANZ Journal

The on-line edition of the Journal is being launched with the publication of an article by Jeannette Watts (see page 82). TESOLANZ Members without access to the Internet may request a printed copy from the editor - Alan O'Neil, School of ESOL, Christchurch Polytechnic, Madras Street Christchurch.

Introduction

The importance of exposure to vocabulary in general as a means to its acquisition is

widely recognised by teachers. This research focuses specifically on a read-to-write task

with particular attention to the relationship between increased vocabulary knowledge

and the lexical overlap between the source text, the use of target vocabulary in a note

taking task and the extent of its use in a subsequent writing task. In doing so, it tests the

assumption that such a task results in well encoded vocabulary which in turn is re-

trieved in accurate retrieval of new word meanings.

Hence in regard to language acquisition this research is concerned with the issues of:

- the incremental nature of gains in word knowledge
- the effect of lexical overlap
- the role of input
- the value of text-responsive prose as output
- the conditions for learning
- the student's experience of the task

It is also concerned with the methodological issue of:

the sensitivity of tests to measure partial knowledge and incremental gains

This article can be found on the TESOLANZ Website

<http://www.tesolanz.org.nz>

On-line article

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**Jeannette Watts**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the effect of reading multiple texts on incidental acquisition of vocabulary. Adult learners indicated their degree knowledge of target words prior to reading across three texts, taking notes in an information transfer task, then writing a paraphrased account of the texts. An immediate post-test of the target words was administered, and a delayed post-test was held one week later. Although considerable incremental gains were initially reported, much of these were not sustained throughout the week. The target vocabulary used in the writing task did not seem to be related to the gains made, but the extent to which the writer used new vocabulary generatively appears to have had an effect on certainty of knowledge.

### **Introduction**

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