

Frequently asked questions (WPLT)

1. Why is word part knowledge important?

Word part knowledge helps you learn many words. If you know the word *happy* and the word part *un-*, it is easy to learn the word *unhappy*. Research has shown that word part knowledge relates to vocabulary size (how many words you know) (e.g., Mochizuki & Aizawa, 2000). It also relates to reading and spelling abilities (e.g., Nagy, Berninger, & Abbott, 2006).

2. What does the WPLT measure?

The word part levels test (WPLT) is designed to measure written receptive knowledge of English word parts. In order to comprehensively measure word part knowledge, it has three sections. The first section measures knowledge of word part forms. The second section measures knowledge of word part meanings. The last section measures knowledge of word part use (grammatical function). These three aspects are included in previous studies (Bauer & Nation, 1993; Nation, 2001; Tyler & Nagy, 1989). The WPLT has three different forms with three different levels (easy, middle, and hard). This allows teachers to quickly examine whether their learners need to work on easy or difficult word parts and which aspects of word part knowledge need to be learned. Here “difficulty” refers to Rasch item difficulty derived by the validation studies (see Question 4).

3. What word parts does the WPLT measure?

This test has a total of 118 word parts. These word parts appear in more than one word in the most frequent 10,000 words in the British National Corpus (a 100 million word collection of English texts in written and spoken form). The easy form measures knowledge of the least difficult 40 word parts, the hard form measures knowledge of the most difficult 39 word parts, and the middle form measures knowledge of the 39 word parts of middle difficulty.

4. How was the WPLT validated?

The WPLT was validated with 440 Japanese learners of English through Rasch analysis. Items that did not fit the Rasch model were written. The revised WPLT was validated with 1,348 people with more than 30 different native languages from more than 100 different countries. These studies generally indicate that the WPLT is a valid and reliable measure of word part knowledge.

5. I know other meanings for some word parts.

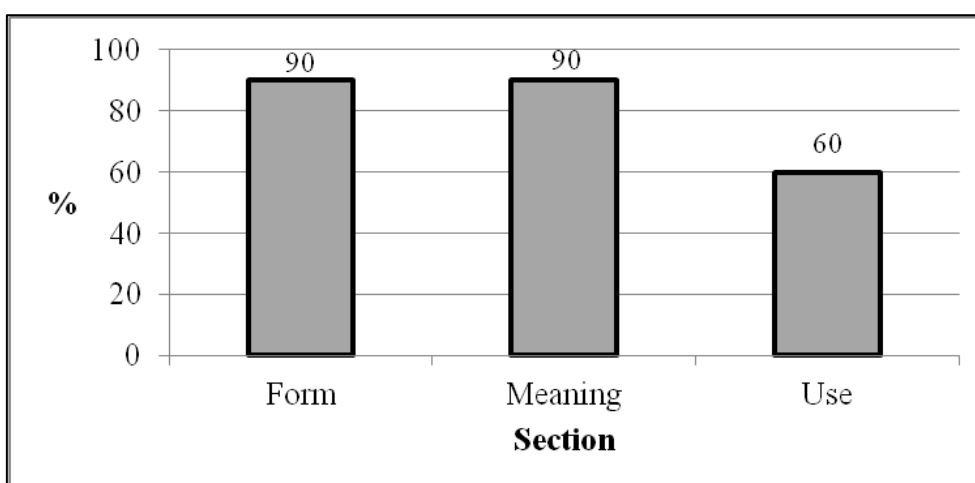
As the WPLT measures the typical meanings of word parts, some word parts may have other meanings. Knowing multiple meanings of a word part means you have deep knowledge of the word part. This test aims to measure how many word parts you know, and not how deep knowledge you have about particular word parts.

6. How can the scores be interpreted?

The WPLT provides three different scores from the three sections in order to diagnose learners' weaknesses. For example, a low score on the last section (word part use) may indicate that this learner's weakness lies in knowledge of grammatical functions of word parts. The scores may be interpreted based on the percentage of correct answers. This provides learners with diagnostic information about how many word parts they need to know to move on to the next level.

7. How can the scores be reported to learners?

For practical use of the WPLT, diagnostic feedback needs to be easy for learners to understand so that their weaknesses in word part knowledge may be clearly indicated. To meet this need, a bar graph may be useful because the information is visually presented and intuitively interpretable. Suppose Learner A took the easy form and got 90% of the items correct for Sections 1 (form) and 2 (meaning) and 60% correct for Section 3 (use). This learner's scores may effectively be reported in the bar graph as shown in the figure below.



The horizontal axis indicates the WPLT sections, and the vertical axis indicates the percentage of correct answers. The bar graph shows that this learner demonstrated good knowledge of word part forms and meanings but his or her use knowledge is not

sufficient. Thus, this learner may need to focus on the learning of word part use to move on to the next level.

References:

- Bauer, L., & Nation, I. S. P. (1993). Word families. *International Journal of Lexicography*, 6(4), 253-279.
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