

**Beyond academic ESL:
Rethinking the vocabulary
needs of language minority
students in transition**

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Vocabulary use in community college textbooks

The transfer of material from short- to long-term memory proceeds largely on the basis of rehearsal, the repetition of information that has entered short-term memory. Rehearsal accomplishes two things. First, as long as the information is repeated, it is kept alive in short-time memory. More important, however, rehearsal allows us to transfer the material into long-term memory.

Source: Essentials of understanding psychology. Feldman (1999)

Three studies on the academic vocabulary knowledge of U.S. language-minority community college students

- ① Variation in academic vocabulary knowledge among language-minority community college students
- ② “Sometimes works, sometimes doesn’t”: Lexical inferencing skills of language-minority community college students
- ③ Breadth and depth of academic vocabulary knowledge among language-minority community college students

About the sample of community college students (n=110)

- Language minority in Advanced ESL (n=40)
- Language minority in Intro Psych (n=22)
- Native English speaker in Intro Psych (n=48)

- Enrolled at an urban New England community college
- 55% female
- Average age: 22
- 12% were married; 16% had children
- 73% held jobs while enrolled in school
- 61% aspired to at least an associate's degree
- 50% first generation college students

More on the sample of community college students (n=110)

Variation in educational background:

- ❑ 67% possessed a HS diploma (completed in the U.S. or in home country)
- ❑ 14% possessed GED credentials
- ❑ Within the ESL group, 17% had completed some post-secondary work

Variation in parents' education

- ❑ 50% first-generation college students
- ❑ Greater variability within the language-minority sample: 25% had not completed high school; 27% high school graduates; 48% some post-secondary training

Sample items from the University Word Levels Test (Beglar & Hunt, 1999; Nation, 1990)

- | | | | | |
|-----|-------|------------------------------|----|----------|
| 16. | _____ | depend on | a. | transfer |
| 17. | _____ | judge the worth of | b. | evaluate |
| 18. | _____ | succeed in gaining something | c. | sustain |
| | | | d. | rely |
| | | | e. | attain |
| | | | f. | ignore |

University Word Levels Test (UWLT) results

Group	M (sd)	Min	Max
Language minority students in ESL (n = 40)	35.18 (9.48)	17	49
Language minority students in Intro Psych (n = 22)	44.95 (5.92)	31	53
NS students in Intro Psych) (n = 48)	48.31 (4.27)	36	54
<i>All students</i> (n = 110)	42.86 (9.08)	17	54

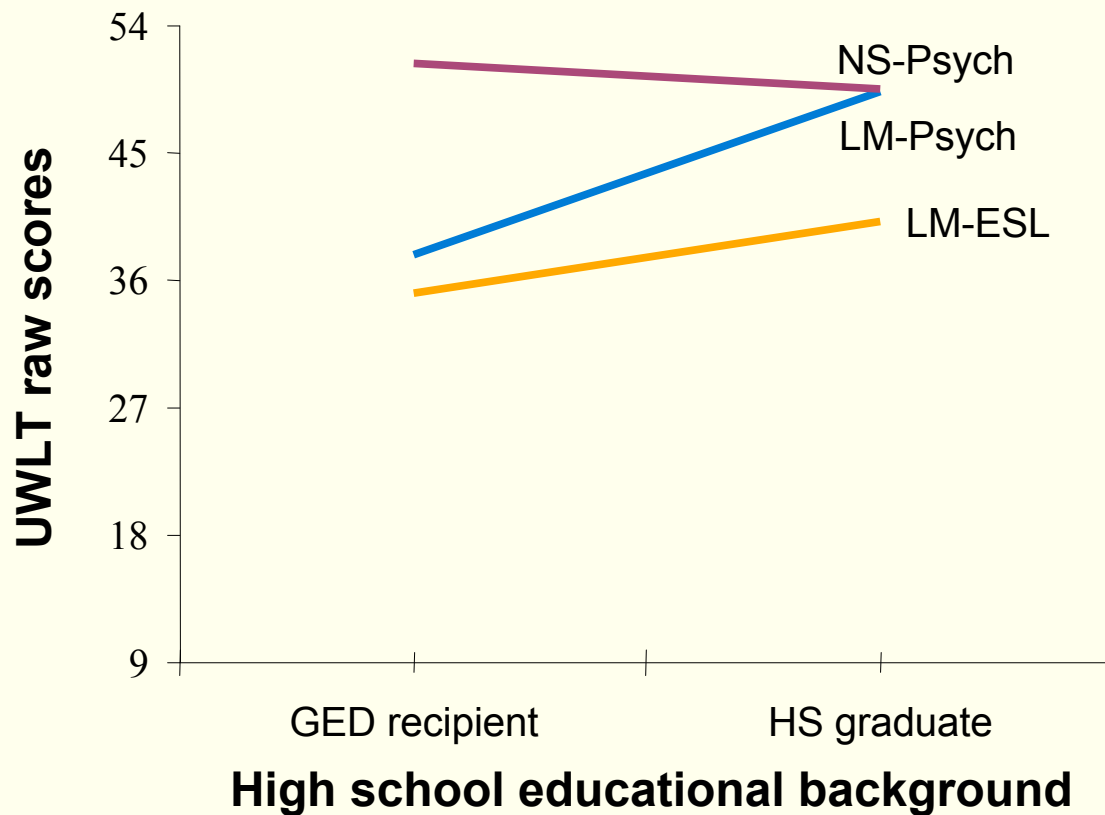








Figure 1. Regression lines displaying effect of high school educational background on academic vocabulary test scores for language minority students and native English speaking students, controlling for academic integration level and sociodemographic characteristics (n=110)

Assessment of academic integration (based on NCES, 1996)

How often do you...

-  meet with your professors to talk about your classes?
-  meet with your counselors to talk about your academic plans?
-  meet with other students to study?
-  use the Learning Center?
-  use the library?
-  go to Career Planning Workshops and Job Fairs?

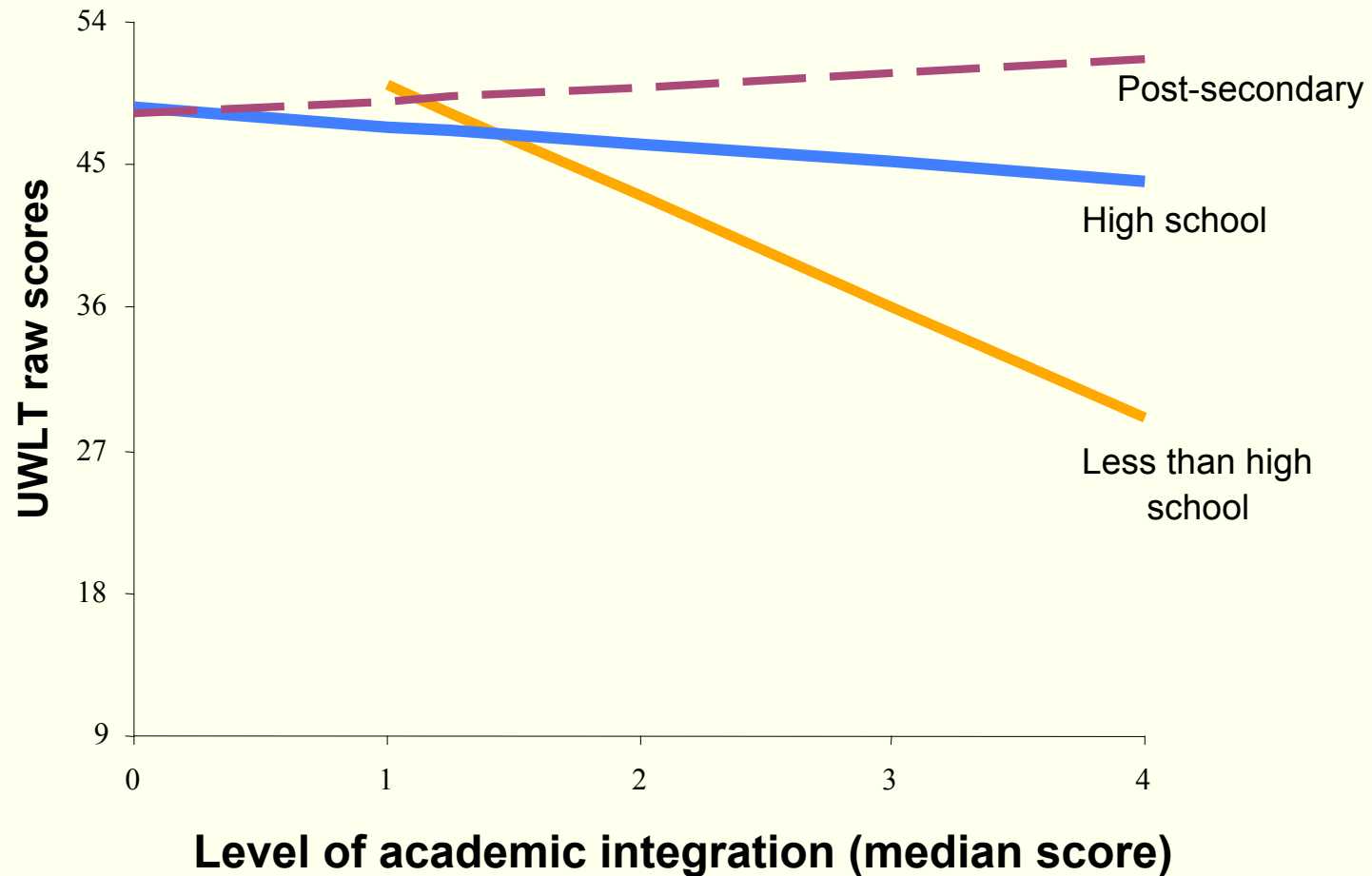
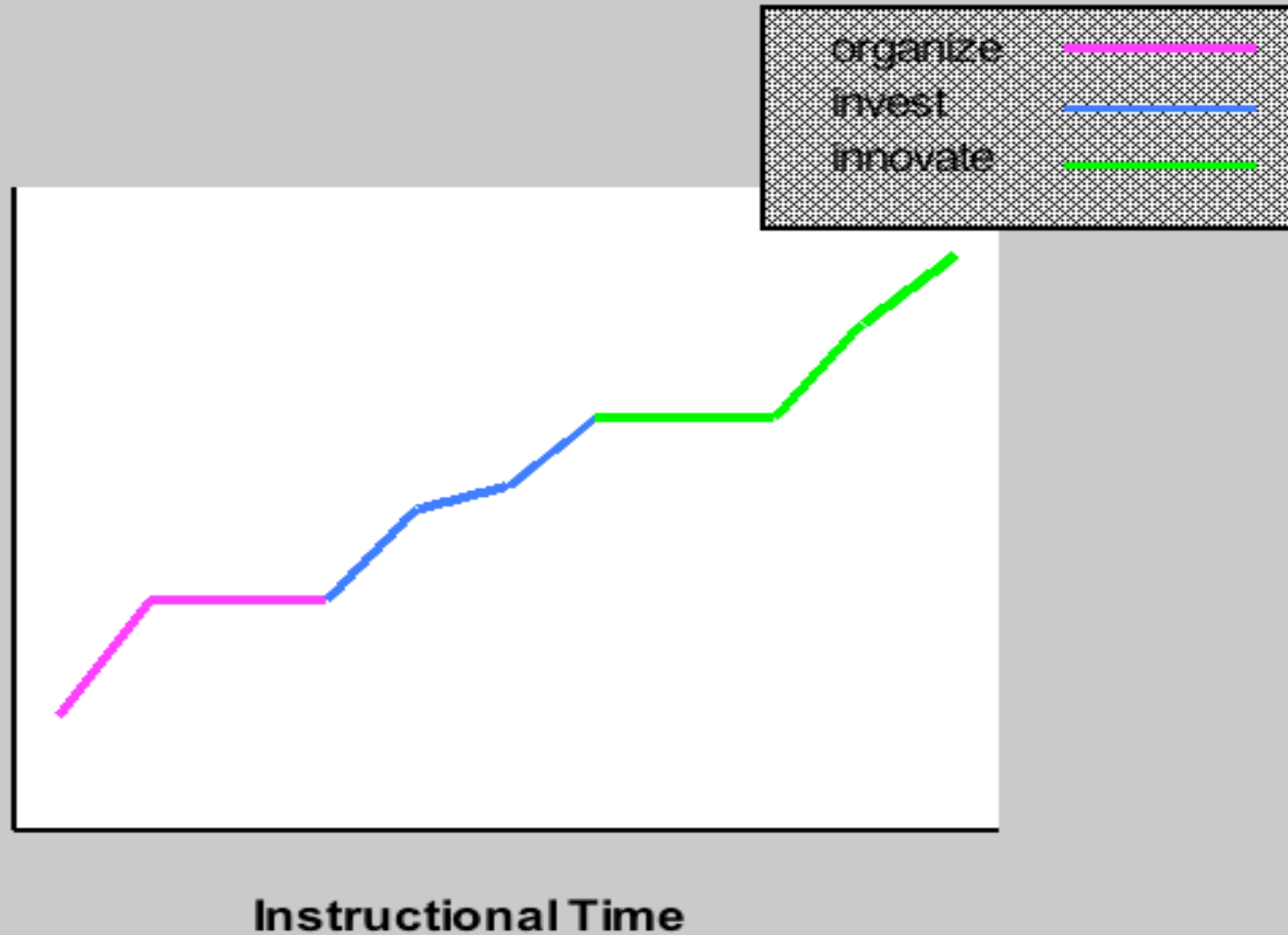


Figure 2. Regression lines displaying relationship between academic integration level, parental education, and academic vocabulary test scores for language minority students and native English speaking students, controlling for students' high school education and sociodemographic characteristics

Some implications

- ❑ More research into the particular instructional needs of various student groups, e.g., GED recipients, first generation students
- ❑ Value to the design of instructional support services focused on academic vocabulary development
- ❑ Value to collaboration between language/literacy educators and content educators

Supporting the transition of language minority students to community college



Thanks for attending today's session.

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