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# *Abstract Book*

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# I-CReST 2025: 127-091 – Academic Word List (AWL) Knowledge of Malaysian Pre-University Undergraduates

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## ABSTRACT

The Malaysian Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows a persistent decline in Malaysian students' reading performance. This raises concerns about the students' readiness for tertiary education. The concerning trend suggests that Malaysian students may face substantial challenges in higher education, particularly in understanding academic texts. Research indicates that effective comprehension requires knowledge of at least 98% of the words in a text. This includes academic vocabulary that is often underrepresented in secondary education materials. Despite the exposure of English vocabulary in school, Malaysian undergraduates have consistently demonstrated limited academic vocabulary proficiency, with few mastering essential academic word lists. Therefore, this study aims to explore the academic vocabulary knowledge of Malaysian pre-university students using Coxhead's Academic Word List (AWL). A quantitative approach is employed to investigate the academic vocabulary knowledge of pre-university students who are at a crucial transitional stage between school and university. The vocabulary test is adapted from Flavell and Nation's word recognition format and based on Coxhead's Academic Word List (AWL). A purposive sample of 400 Semester 1 public university students in Malaysia responded to the test via Google Form. The findings revealed that Malaysian pre-university students generally possess a moderate level of academic vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, statistical analysis indicates a significant difference in vocabulary profiles between students from the Social Science group and those from the Science and Technology group, indicating varying levels of academic readiness across disciplines. Conclusively, exploring Academic Word List (AWL) Knowledge of Malaysian Pre-University Undergraduates has prominent implications for academic institutions to review and improve the current curriculum to ensure there is an equitable tertiary education readiness among students from different academic streams.

**Keywords:** Academic Word List; Academic vocabulary; Vocabulary assessment; Academic text; Tertiary education readiness