Positional frequency and versatility of letters for six-, seven-, and eight-letter English words

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The positional frequency and versatility of letters were tabulated for six-, seven-, and eight-letter English words.

As the interest in language processing has increased, so too has the need for more sensitive statistical descriptions. Gross counts of letter and letter combination frequencies (e.g., Underwood & Schulz, 1960) gave way to letter and letter combination frequencies based on the position each letter occupied in a word (Mayzner & Tresselt, 1965). Another descriptive statistic, versatility, in which letters and letter combinations are evaluated in terms of the number of different words in which they appear, was introduced by Solso and King (1976) and by Topper, Macey, and Solso (1973).

The previously reported frequency and versatility counts by Solso and King (1976) were limited to positional statistics based on four- and five-letter words.

Current research of letter and word identification has demanded accurate positional statistics of longer words. The present paper provides research with positional frequency and versatility of six-, seven-, and eight-letter words.

METHOD

Positional frequency and versatility counts for six-, seven-, and eight-letter words were based on the Kučera and Francis (1967) frequency count of about 1 million English words. In the present analysis, all hyphenated words, words containing apostrophes, and numbers were excluded.

Frequency counts by position were based on the total times a letter appeared in each position; versatility counts were based on the total number of times a letter appeared in a different

Table 1
Letter Frequency and Versatility by Position for Six-Letter Words

	Position												Total	
	1		2		3		4		5		6			
	F	V	F	V	F	V	F	V	F	V	F	V	F	V
A	5869	303	12286	1019	6729	540	4586	377	3755	347	702	183	33927	2769
B	5690	444	300	25	1296	147	1465	142	114	27	50	11	8915	796
C	6726	436	1839	68	4000	212	1654	148	3549	164	800	54	18568	1082
D	3460	287	359	43	1947	186	3002	268	1428	125	14047	760	24243	1669
E	3455	173	15327	839	3954	334	8114	504	25134	1821	13443	694	69427	4365
F	4260	272	915	23	2515	85	449	77	103	38	603	16	8945	411
G	2084	270	232	18	1957	161	2745	209	2500	79	3900	175	13418	912
H	2632	246	4764	240	1353	64	2937	137	1178	89	2656	118	15520	894
I	1764	99	8058	571	4780	383	11384	651	3546	383	112	42	29644	2129
J	636	84	6	2	155	18	6	3	0	0	0	0	803	107
K	350	78	111	17	775	39	2227	203	655	96	270	37	4388	470
L	4259	259	3340	282	5012	438	3944	398	9111	432	2977	209	28643	2018
M	5156	314	581	45	4121	220	2396	205	1382	85	1137	88	14773	957
N	2175	117	3511	213	5042	448	4837	347	8488	444	6228	517	30281	2086
O	1502	109	12068	821	7126	355	6265	302	5753	350	358	92	33072	2029
P	6248	378	1246	94	1572	151	2570	170	878	59	144	28	12658	980
Q	119	22	191	16	94	5	99	9	0	0	0	0	503	52
R	4607	317	5450	463	9920	628	4104	302	6522	348	8837	553	39440	2611
S	12309	708	897	53	5059	342	3161	272	2983	204	12062	1099	36471	2678
T	4309	315	3587	152	7903	325	8258	455	3462	294	7359	370	34878	1911
U	1152	81	5898	496	3076	232	6121	186	1307	165	84	16	17638	1176
V	1198	108	200	20	1711	118	1151	125	390	31	3	3	4653	405
W	2822	189	333	39	1458	82	841	66	127	24	723	47	6304	447
X	1	1	731	34	199	27	26	10	5	2	82	23	1044	97
Y	170	27	737	53	1106	81	428	34	533	31	6373	503	9347	729
Z	26	14	12	5	119	30	209	51	76	13	29	13	471	126
	82979	5651	82979	5651	82979	5651	82979	5651	82979	5651	82979	5651	497974	

Table 2
Letter Frequency and Versatility by Position for Seven-Letter Words

[illegible]

word. For example, the frequency count for the word "junior" has a total frequency of 75 per million words. The frequency totals by position for the letters J, U, N, I, O, and R were incremented by 75; for the versatility count by position, each letter was incremented by 1. The word "attack" has a frequency of 105 million: "A," which appears in the first and fourth positions, was incremented by 105 for the first position and 105 for the fourth position. The letter T was similarly treated for the second and third positions, while C and K were incremented by 105 for their respective positions. The versatility by position of each letter in the word was incremented by 1.

RESULTS

Total frequency and versatility counts for six-, seven-, and eight-letter words are contained in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

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