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Suha Hameed Obaid

Directorate of Education/ Salah al-Din

* Corresponding author: E-mail :
suha.hameed777@gmail.com

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E-mail t-jtuh@tu.edu.iq

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Developing Vocabulary Fluency for Preparatory School Pupils through Reading Comprehension

ABSTRACT

When looking at the importance of reading vocabulary, one of the most crucial questions to ask is how much vocabulary is necessary for good reading. There is a list of three research questions: Do Iraqi EFL preparatory school pupils have vocabulary fluency? Do Iraqi EFL preparatory school pupils good at reading comprehension and is there any relationship between vocabulary fluency and reading comprehension?

Accordingly, the current study aims at finding out:

1. Iraqi EFL preparatory school pupils' vocabulary fluency level.
2. Iraqi EFL preparatory school pupils' reading comprehension level
3. the relationship between Iraqi EFL preparatory school pupils' vocabulary fluency and reading comprehension.

The sample of the present study consists of (100) pupils from Iraqi preparatory school randomly been selected from Tikrit city. To achieve the aims of the present study, two instruments have been applied by the researcher, The Barton English Vocabulary Test and a reading comprehension test. After ensuring the validity and reliability of the instruments, the instruments have been applied and the data have been collected. Then a number of statistical tools have been used to analyze the obtained data.

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تطوير طلاقة المفردات لدى طلبة المدارس الإعدادية من خلال الاستعاب القرائي

سهى حميد عبيد / مديرية التربية في صلاح الدين

الخلاصة:

ان أحد أهم القضايا في دراسة دور معرفة المفردات في القراءة هو مقدار المفردات اللازمة للقراءة

الناجحة. أسئلة الدراسة تتضمن ثلاثة أسئلة أساسية وهي: هل يتمتع طلبة المدارس الإعدادية العراقية بطلاقة المفردات؟ هل يتمتع طلبة المدارس الإعدادية العراقية بطلاقة في فهم القراءة؟ وهل توجد هناك أي علاقة بين طلاقة المفردات وفهم القراءة؟ وبناءً على ذلك، تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى معرفة :

- 1 مستوى طلاقة المفردات لدى طلبة المدارس الإعدادية العراقية .
- 2 مستوى الاستيعاب القرائي لدى طلبة المدارس الإعدادية العراقية .
- 3 العلاقة بين طلاقة المفردات لدى طلبة المدارس الإعدادية العراقية والاستيعاب القرائي .

تتكون عينة الدراسة الحالية من (100) طالبا من المدارس الإعدادية العراقية تم اختيارهم عشوائياً من مدينة تكريت. ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة الحالية، استخدم الباحث أداتين، اختبار بارتون للمفردات الإنجليزية واختبار الاستيعاب القرائي. وبعد التأكد من صدق وثبات الأدوات تم تطبيقها وجمع البيانات ومن ثم تم استخدام عدد من الأدوات الإحصائية لتحليل البيانات المتحصل عليها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: طلاقة المفردات, طلبة المدارس الإعدادية , الاستيعاب القرائي

1.Introduction

1.1 The Problem of the Study and its Significance

Many consider vocabulary to be an essential tool for second language learners, since insufficient vocabulary makes it harder to communicate effectively in a second language (Iqbal& Komal, 2017).

Schmitt (2000) stresses the need of having a large and varied vocabulary, saying, "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language."

Vocabulary fluency and reading comprehension are characterised by Nation (2001) as having a complimentary relationship: A well-versed vocabulary allows one to understand what one reads, and conversely, being able to understand what one reads causes one's vocabulary to grow.

Words matter, and the value of language is shown every day in and out of the classroom. According to Sedita (2005), pupils who do well in class tend to have a larger vocabulary.

Learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) must prioritise expanding their vocabulary in order to improve their proficiency in all four language domains (Nation, 2011). Additionally, according to Rivers and Nunan (1991), having a large vocabulary is crucial for effective second language usage. This is because, without it, we would not be able to comprehend or understand what others are saying.

Vocabulary fluency is crucial for EFL readers, and research shows that readers have the biggest challenge when trying to overcome their lack of knowledge in this area (Huckin, 1995). In production, having a bank of words from which to choose is essential for expressing any given idea or meaning. According to Krashen, as stated in Lewis (1993, p. 25), "when pupils travel, they don't carry grammar books, they carry dictionaries." Curricula for foreign languages should reflect the widespread belief among scholars that expanding one's vocabulary is crucial to fluency in that language. According to Wilkins (1972), having the ability to generate grammatical sentences is not very useful if one does not have the vocabulary to express themselves. Just as there is no use in using grammar, there is little use in using vocabulary (p. 97). Maximo (2000) cites a number of other academics who argue persuasively for the need to focus on vocabulary, including Richards (1980) and Krashen (1989). The first thing you need to become fluent in a language is, obviously, a big vocabulary. People who are learning a second language are aware of this; they bring dictionaries instead of grammar books and often mention that they struggle with vocabulary.

When it comes to English language instruction, reading comprehension has long taken precedence over the other three skills. Pupils read books and other materials that they find easily understandable, so they read at a speed that is comfortable for them linguistically and grammatically (Bramford, 1998).

The question of how much vocabulary is necessary for good reading is central to any analysis of the function of reading vocabulary. Knowing whether you're reading for the gist, particular specifics, etc., will determine how well you

comprehend what you're reading. Assume that readers have the necessary vocabulary size for grade-appropriate reading in the L1 context. The problem of reading vocabulary size takes on further significance in the context of second language acquisition, however, since this assumption cannot be made for L2 readers (Nation, 2019).

However, further, more recent research demonstrates that there isn't a distinct cutoff, but rather a continuous development from broader coverage to improved understanding.

1.2 The Aims of the Study

Accordingly, the current study aims at finding out:

1. Iraqi EFL preparatory school pupils' Vocabulary Fluency level.
2. The relationship between Iraqi EFL preparatory school pupils`

Vocabulary Fluency and reading comprehension

1.3 Limits of the Study

This study is limited to:

Iraqi EFL fifth preparatory school pupils in Tikrit city during the academic year 2023/2024

1.4 Value of the Study

The study is hopefully valuable to:

help EFL teachers how to become more skillful in their teaching vocabulary techniques and how to use new methods of teaching vocabulary. The study targets:

1. Iraqi EFL preparatory school teachers who have an interest in developing their pupils vocabulary fluency .
2. Educators, academics, researchers, and experts in special interest in vocabulary fluency through reading comprehension.

2.Literature Review

Reading comprehension is the most common area where English language learners (ELLs) are struggling, and this problem is becoming worse with time. Many people have difficulty understanding English texts when reading them, understanding just fragments that do not form a whole (Masrai, 2019).

In addition to being a fun and informative pastime, reading is an excellent tool for developing and enhancing a pupil's command of the English language. Source: Akbar and Farid (2012). Still, reading's end objective is understanding. Typically, pupils strive to fully grasp the writer's intended message in written form. Pressley (2000) explains that in order for a reader to develop an internally coherent mental picture of text, comprehension must integrate textual information with prior knowledge. Most educators find that improving their pupils' reading comprehension abilities is an arduous and time-consuming process. Pupils without or with learning difficulties may have challenges when it comes to comprehending what they read. According to research by Crabbree, Alber-Morgan, and Konrad (2010), reading comprehension is a challenge for almost 90% of pupils with learning challenges. Middle and high school pupils face these difficulties head-on as they face ever-increasing reading expectations (Crabtree et al., 2010).

Texts written in English might be difficult for many pupils to grasp. Considering that the Iraqi education system mandates reading English for pupils, and that pupils may struggle with understanding in this language. Reading aloud and memorisation of new and challenging words are common classroom activities in Iraqi schools. Reading comprehension is not a priority for both teachers and pupils. Reading comprehension is a common challenge for Iraqi schoolchildren because of the teaching and learning methods used for the English language (Ma and Lin, 2015).

2.1 The Importance of Learning Vocabulary

Many consider vocabulary to be an essential tool for second language learners, since insufficient vocabulary makes it harder to communicate effectively in a second language. That "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language" is something that Schmitt(2000)

stresses, highlighting the significance of learning new words. Additionally, according to Nation (2001), the connection between vocabulary and language usage is mutually beneficial: having a large vocabulary makes it easier to utilize language, and conversely, speaking many languages helps one to learn new words.

Every day, both within and outside of the classroom, pupils see the value of words. Pupils that do well academically tend to have a larger vocabulary.

Every aspect of language acquisition—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—in ESL and FSL contexts relies on expanding pupils' vocabulary (Nation, 2011). In addition, For successful second language use, Rivers and Nunan (1991) state that we need a wide vocabulary to apply the structures and functions we've mastered for intelligible communication.

Foreign learners struggle most with vocabulary, according to Meera (1980). This statement shows that vocabulary systems' "open-endedness" may cause problems for learners.

One additional probable explanation is that, in contrast to phonology and syntax, vocabulary does not provide pupils with any guidelines for how to learn and improve their vocabulary. To rephrase, while acquiring a second language's vocabulary, it is not always obvious which terms to study first or what guidelines to follow. Words and their meanings are "by far the most sizeable and unmanageable component in the learning of any language, whether a foreign or one's mother tongue," according to Oxford (1990). Because "vocabulary has traditionally been one of the language components measured in language tests," pupils of foreign languages will inevitably encounter questions on L2 vocabulary on their exams, no matter how much they try to avoid them. As already stated by Schmitt (1999). Additionally, a lot of pupils think that learning a second language (SLA) is all about expanding one's vocabulary. As a result, they put a lot of effort into memorizing lists of L2 terms and depend on their bilingual dictionary for basic communication. Consequently, applied linguists and language instructors are increasingly looking for methods to make vocabulary acquisition more engaging and impactful. Our primary interest is in the literature that delves into the methods that pupils use to acquire new words (VLS) (Ma & Lin, 2015).

2.2 Vocabulary Fluency Contributes to Reading Comprehension

Developing readers who are able to go from decoding to reading relevant content and concentrate on comprehension need a strong vocabulary (Bashir & Hook, 2009). Previous studies have shown a correlation between fluency and understanding, as the former allows for more mental bandwidth to be available for comprehension-intensive tasks, such as word recognition. Reading comprehension is challenging since it requires making inferences, integrating information, and creating meaning (Bellinger and DiPerna, 2011).

According to Bellinger and DiPerna (2011), reading comprehension is no longer seen as an antiquated passive discipline but as an active and intentional one. In order for reading instruction to be considered active, pupils must actively seek meaning in what they read using strategies such as making inferences, anticipating, and drawing connections. Perception calls on a wide range of capabilities, including semantic fluency, phonological accuracy, memory processing, inferential reasoning, grammar, previous knowledge, and language proficiency (Cain and Oakhill, 2006).

Pupils need strong reading comprehension skills to excel academically, maintains the National Reading Panel (2000). For youngsters, reading is not a skill that will help them succeed in school. Acquiring basic reading skills is essential for achieving a thorough comprehension. The influence of reading comprehension on overall learning is not unexpected, and Cain and Oakhill (2006) found that pupils with poor comprehension abilities made less progress than those with strong comprehension abilities. Nothing less than a firm command of the written word may lead to the achievement of the lofty goal of reading comprehension.

2.3 Improving Reading comprehension through Extensive Reading

In his 1917 book *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages*, Harold Palmer introduced the word "extensive reading" to describe language study. In his distinction between the two types of reading, Palmer (1917) said that intense reading involves looking at the text "carefully," while extensive reading involves reading "book after book" to understand the story without paying close attention to each word. The term "independent reading" has been used by many sources;

among them are the National Education Association (2009), the Modern Language Association of America (1901), and the New York City Board of Education (1931). The purpose of extensive reading, according to these several definitions, is to foster an appreciation for reading and to introduce pupils to a variety of reading resources.

There are a number of ways in which reading widely could aid in language acquisition. Among the many benefits is the fact that it helps pupils improve their second language reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. Vocabulary development is the starting point for all three of these interconnected aspects. One cannot exaggerate the significance of a person's vocabulary while learning a new language. Insufficient vocabulary is "the biggest single hindrance to fluent reading" (Grabe, 1988, p.63). Day and Bramford (1998) state that in order to gain fluency, extensive reading is necessary as it aids in the acquisition of sight vocabulary, general vocabulary, and other aspects of the target language. Day and Bramford define sight vocabulary as a collection of words that are "overlearned" and can be recognized at a glance. As pupils get exposure to more languages via reading extensively, their sight vocabulary expands. What this means is that a pupil's level of fluency increases as their visual vocabulary grows. Reading widely not only improves one's sight vocabulary but also one's general vocabulary. As they read, pupils may encounter unfamiliar words and phrases; they may either use context clues or look them up in a dictionary to figure out what they mean. Incidental learning is the most efficient way to increase your vocabulary quickly. The expansion of our vocabulary, which in turn improves our fluency, is the second advantage of reading extensively.

3.Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design. The aim was to (1) assess the level of vocabulary fluency among preparatory school pupils, (2) evaluate their level of reading comprehension, and (3) explore the correlation between vocabulary fluency and reading comprehension.

The descriptive correlational design was chosen because it is appropriate for describing phenomena as they naturally occur and for investigating relationships between variables without manipulation.

3.2 Participants

The sample consisted of 100 preparatory school pupils selected randomly from several schools in (City, Country) during the academic year 2024–2025. The participants' ages ranged between 15 and 17 years and included both male and female students representing various achievement levels

3.3 Instruments

The following instruments were utilized:

3.3.1 Vocabulary Fluency Test

A researcher-made test including 30 items measuring the pupils' ability to use vocabulary correctly and fluently through tasks like word definition, synonym/antonym selection, and sentence completion.

3.3.2 Reading Comprehension Test

A standardized test containing five reading passages, each accompanied by five questions aimed at assessing literal comprehension, inferencing, and vocabulary-in-context understanding.

Both instruments were validated by a jury of TEFL specialists and were piloted on a separate group of 20 students. The reliability coefficients were 0.87 for the vocabulary fluency test and 0.85 for the reading comprehension test.

3.4 Procedures

1. The Vocabulary Fluency Test was administered first.
2. After two days, the Reading Comprehension Test was given.
3. Each test was completed within 45 minutes.
4. Responses were collected, scored, and statistically analyzed.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using:

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) to determine the levels of vocabulary fluency and reading comprehension.

Pearson correlation coefficient to identify the relationship between vocabulary fluency and reading comprehension..

4.Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The obtained results are presented according to the aforementioned aims of the present study and as shown below:

4.1.1 Vocabulary Fluency Level

The descriptive statistics for vocabulary fluency are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Descriptive Statistics of Vocabulary Fluency

Variable	N	Mean	Standards Deviation
Vocabulary fluency score	100	48.6	10.4

The mean score for vocabulary fluency was 48.6 out of 100, with a standard deviation of 10.4, indicating a low level of vocabulary fluency among the participants.

4.1.2 Reading Comprehension Level

The results for reading comprehension are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Descriptive Statistics of Reading Comprehension

Variable	N	Mean	Standards Deviation
Reading comprehension score	100	50.3	9.8

The mean score for reading comprehension was 50.3 out of 100, with a standard deviation of 9.8, suggesting a low level of reading comprehension among the pupils.

4.1.3 Correlation between Vocabulary Fluency and Reading Comprehension

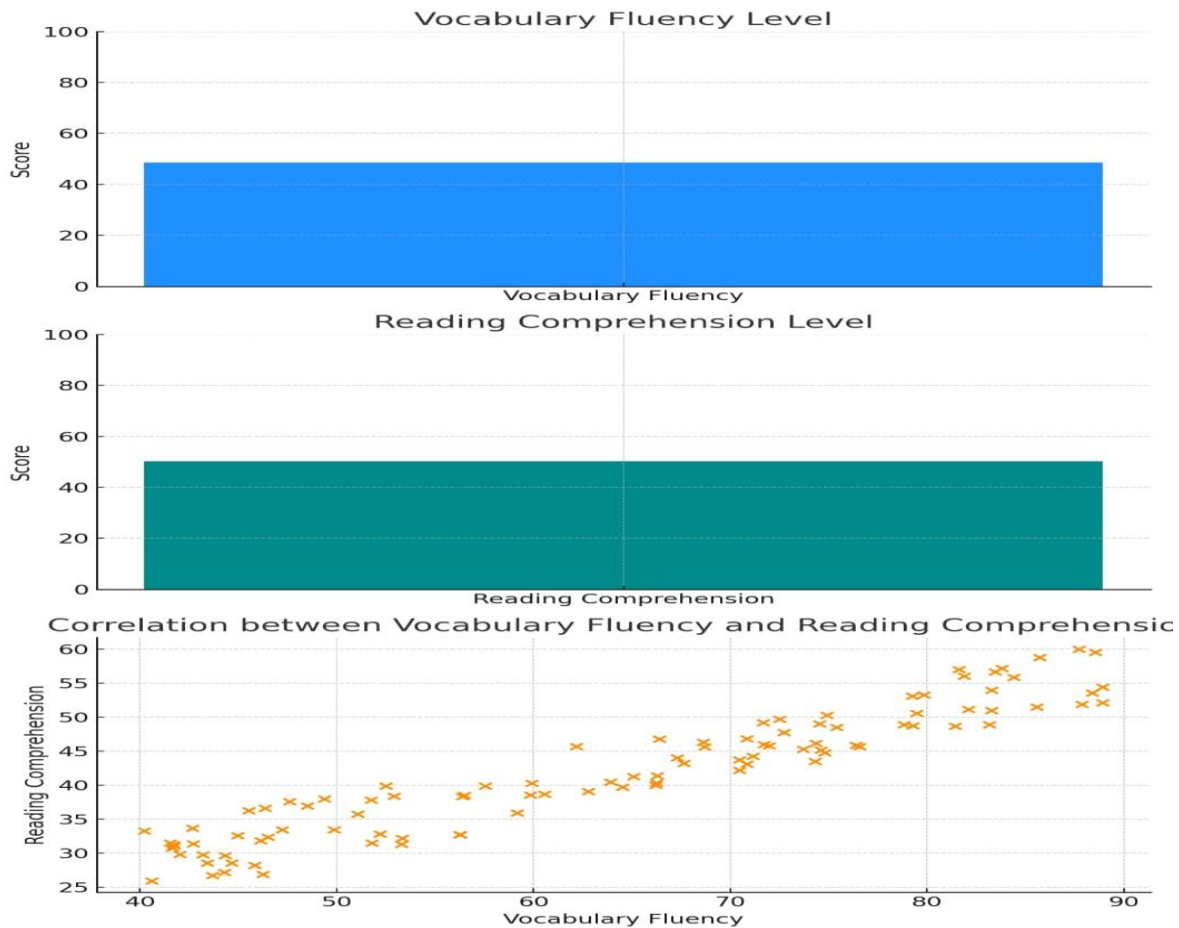
The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between vocabulary fluency and reading comprehension. The results are displayed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Correlation between Vocabulary Fluency and Reading Comprehension

Variable	Person correlation	Sig.(p-value)
Vocabulary fluency and Reading comprehension	0.58	0.00

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) indicates a moderate positive correlation between vocabulary fluency and reading comprehension. This means that pupils with better vocabulary fluency tended to achieve higher scores in reading comprehension.



4.2 Discussion

The findings revealed that both the vocabulary fluency and reading comprehension levels among the preparatory school pupils were generally low.

Despite the low achievement levels, a moderate positive relationship was found between vocabulary fluency and reading comprehension, implying that students with relatively higher vocabulary knowledge showed better comprehension abilities.

This supports the notion that vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role in enhancing reading comprehension skills, especially in EFL contexts where language exposure is limited.

Therefore, efforts to improve vocabulary fluency are likely to result in better reading comprehension outcomes among preparatory school pupils.

5. Conclusions

Reading comprehension and accomplishment depend on word fluency, which is often underestimated (Broek et al., 2014). Reading aloud in class won't improve reading fluency. Reading extensively in a Foreign (L2) helps expand vocabulary, improve reading abilities, and foster a good reading attitude. EFL teachers should include considerable reading into their lectures after assessing the advantages. I know planning an ER in Indonesia for the first time is difficult. First, you'll need money to acquire overseas publications like English novels, which are rare and costly. The teacher must persuade the principal to buy additional English books for the school library and emphasize reading. Second, it takes time for people—especially parents—to realize that reading for pleasure is beneficial. On this matter, I remember my parents poorly. I believed I stole a Harry Potter paperback from a classmate in junior high, but my parents forbade me from buying fiction books and threatened to burn it. They complained that I read too much and studied too little. Changing your outlook takes time. The EFL instructor should describe the purpose of an extended reading program before introducing it. Finally, operating the substantial reading program and encouraging students to read independently requires labour. If the Extensive Reading program works, reading fluency will increase somewhat. Once students master reading, SBMPTN will no longer be an issue and they will benefit from it throughout their lives.

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Appendix

Reading Comprehension Test



Life in a Castle

Long ago, kings and nobles lived in big castles. Nobles were the rich and powerful. The castles helped them stay safe. Workers lived inside the castle, too. There were cooks. There were soldiers. There were also animals like horses and pigs.

Sometimes, the castle was built on a hill. The guards inside could see who was coming. They could keep the king's enemies out. Most castles had a moat around them. The moat was filled with water. A drawbridge crossed the water. The guards could lift the drawbridge. Then the enemy could not cross the moat.

Castles had a great hall. The king and his family ate there. They had big parties there, too. There were kitchens, bedrooms, and even a chapel. There were gardens. Sound great?

Well, all the light came from candles or oil lamps. Big stone rooms were very dark at night. All the heat came from a fire. In the winter, the castles were cold and dark. The kitchen had fires for cooking food. It had tubs of water for washing dishes. The stone floors were covered with straw. Sometimes the floors were just dirt. There were rats everywhere.

Answer the following questions

1. The king liked living in the castle. Would you like to live in one?
2. Who lived in big castles.
3. What is a moat?
4. What does a moat do?
5. Would you like to live in a castle? Tell why or why not. Use two details from the story to support your answer.