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## Investigating the Impact of English Language Vocabulary Instruction on Developing School Pupils Reading Comprehension

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**Abstract:** This research concerned with the effect of English vocabulary instruction on developing school pupils comprehending reading.

The study aims at :

1. Investigating the main reasons behind the difficulties facing by the pupils in dealing with familiar and unfamiliar vocabulary
2. Investigating the significant differences between male and female at sixth preparatory school pupils

It is hypothesized that :

1. There are significant statistical differences among pupils in comprehending vocabulary of passages and texts.
2. There are no significant statistical differences among pupils according to their gender.

The procedure that the researcher used to be assumed up as follows:

1. Constructing a test that is designed for research purpose.
2. Identifying and analyzing the main reasons behind the difficulties of pupil's comprehension in understanding vocabulary items in the text.
3. Outlining conclusions and recommendations

Through the analysis of the results of the test the researcher found that there are statistically significant differences among pupils in comprehending vocabulary of English passages and texts and There are no significant statistical differences among pupils according to their gender. In the light of the results of the present study the researcher has developed a number of recommendations and suggestions.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 The Problem:

The vocabulary of any language plays an major role in understanding and comprehending any text because without vocabulary there are no comprehension of any text . Vocabulary considered as a means to communicate and develop the four skills of learning. During May 2018, as I am a teacher in preparatory school, I have seen that pupils of sixth grade

were confused because they were unable to understand the meaning of these vocabularies: “canals-railway banks, seeds-upset and fresh”. As these words affect to understand the whole meaning of the text. This may be certified to the lack of experience in mastering the content and function words and their derivations and inflections.

### **1.2 Aims of the Study:**

This study aims at:

1. Investigating the main reasons behind the difficulties facing by the pupils in dealing with familiar and unfamiliar vocabulary.
2. Investigating the significant differences between male and female at sixth preparatory school pupils.

### **1.3 Hypotheses:**

It is hypothesized that:

1. There are significant statistical differences among pupils in comprehending vocabulary of passages and texts.
2. There are no significant statistical differences among pupils according to their gender.
3. There is a relation between vocabulary instruction and the text comprehension.

### **1.4 Limits of the Study:**

1. The study focuses on the effect of vocabulary on pupils' comprehension of the reading passages and literary texts of 6<sup>th</sup> class preparatory school pupils and third class in Tikrit city on the year (2018-2019).
2. It is limited to the relation between meaning and form of the vocabulary words the reading passages and literary texts, including both male and female at preparatory school pupils' level.

### **1.5 Procedures of the Study:**

The procedure that the researcher used to be assumed up as follows:

1. Constructing a test that is designed for research purpose.
2. Identifying and analyzing the main reasons behind the difficulties of pupils comprehension in understanding vocabulary items in the text.
3. Outlining conclusions and recommendations.

### **1.6 Value of the Study:**

Theoretically, the study will present an adequate analysis and classification of types of vocabulary items usually used in the reading passages and literary texts.

Practically, the study is supposed to be of use to EFL especially with sixth privilege attention.

### **1.7 Basic Definitions**

**Investigation:** “refers to a systematic study in order to discover the facts about how teachers and students feel with regard to inclusion of literary texts” ( Alene , 2012 : 7) .

**Reading Comprehension** : The ability to understand and interpret spoken and written language (crystal ,1991:70 ) .

## **Chapter Two**

### **2. Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary:**

Reading comprehension is considered one of the major goals of modern English language teachers . It is more than mouthing words loudly. It is a complex process which comprises of several levels and skills which work together to produce the ultimate goal which is meaning. Without understanding the meaning of the passages or any text..

Reading is a pivotal skill that provides and information conveyed explicitly or implicitly in a written language. It has lately become a subject of concern to psychologist, scientists and psycholinguists; and every one of them looks at it from his vantage point.

##### **2.1.1 The Relation between Reading and Reading Comprehension:**

Chafe (1970: 40) defines reading as “ getting the meaning of words formed by letters on a printed page and nothing else”. This, of course, clearly refers to the beginning stage of reading.

Lado (1964: 32) defines reading foreign language as “grasping language pattern from their written representation. Grellet (1981: 52) defines it as “perceiving communication, it is a discriminative response to graphic symbols; it is decoding graphic symbols to speech and it is getting meaning from the printed page”.

Smith and Wilson (1979: 82) view reading as “an act of communication in which information is transferred from a transmitter to a receiver”, while Harris considers it as “the meaningful interpretation of written or printed verbal (Harris: 1969: 5).

Generally speaking, all definitions of reading fall into two categories. First, there are those who restrict it to the mere mouthing the words and this is certainly so at the beginning level. Second, there are those who concentrate on meaning as the central goal of reading. This research proves that if students do not understand the meaning of every word in any passage or text, they will certainly be unable to do well during the exams whether final or not. The researcher means that even with items relate to grammar especially joining two pairs of a sentence to make one.

##### **2.1.2 Problems in Testing Reading Comprehension:**

Since the word reading may have different connotations to different people and the phrase “the teaching of reading” may mean different things to different teachers. To some teachers it means reading aloud, to other it means silent reading.

To some teachers it means extensive, to others it means intensive. All these different kinds of reading involve seeing symbols, whether printed or written, which represent meaningful utterances .

Al-Hamash (1984: 25) states that reading is not a simple mechanical skill nor is it a narrow scholastic tool. Properly cultivated; it is essentially thoughtful process, it should be developed as a complex organization of patterns of higher mental processes.

### **2.2.1 Types of Vocabulary:**

As vocabulary is very important to reading comprehension. Readers cannot understand what they are reading without knowing what most of the words mean . On the basis of this criterion, the classification of vocabulary can be divided into:

1. Listening vocabulary: The words we need to know to understand what we hear.
2. Speaking vocabulary: The words we use when we speak.
3. Reading vocabulary: The words we need to know to understand what we read.
4. Writing vocabulary: The words we use in writing. (Zepeda, 1996: 4)

Pupils are directly, or implicitly, taught both individual words and word learning strategies. This method of vocabulary aids reading comprehension. So teachers generated vocabulary list during guided reading lesson (Panozzo, 1991: 6).

### **2.4 Types of Lexical Relations:**

In everyday talk, we frequently give the meanings of words in terms of their relationships. If you were asked to give the meaning of the word developed, for example, you might simply reply it is the same as grown or give the meaning of profit as the opposite of loss or the meaning of panther as it is a kind of an animal . There are many types of lexical relations (Crystal, 1987: 402):

#### **1. Synonymy:**

Yule (1996: 118) “defines synonyms as two or more forms with very closely related meanings which are often not always intersubstitutable in sentences”. Examples of synonyms are the pairs broad-wide, hide-conceal, almost-nearly, cab-taxi, liberty-freedom, answer-reply.

**2. Antonymy:** Two forms with opposite meanings are called antonyms, (Palmer, 1981: 93-94).

**3. Hyponymy:** When the meaning of one form is included in the meaning of another, the relationship is described as hyponymy, hyponym us relations are essentially looking at the meaning of words in some type of hierarchical relationship (Yule, 1996: 119).

**4. Homophony (Homonymy):** When two or more different (written) forms have the same pronunciation they are described as homophones . (Lyons, 1981: 24-25).

- 5. Polysemy:** Can be defined as one form (written or spoken) having multiple meaning which are all related by extension". (Yule, 1996: 120).

#### **2.5.1 Teaching Vocabulary:**

Zepeda (2000: 6) explains three points for selecting words to teach:

1. A teacher should identify the words in selection that are likely to be known or difficult by making a list of these words on the board.
2. Determine the words which pupils are not know by doing a quick informal assessment.
3. Analyze the word knowledge data .

In other words, vocabulary development depends on the teacher's audience and their level of spoken, written and hearing vocabulary.

#### **2.6.1 The Role of Vocabulary Items:**

"Learning a language means learning thousands of vocabulary items during your kick start phase of language learning you might aim to learn your first thousand vocabulary items". Vocabulary plays an important part in learning to read. Remember, you will start out as a poor speaker and gradually improve .

(Gulio, 1972:50).

#### **2.8 The Importance of Vocabulary Learning:**

Al-Ham mash (1961: 7) mentions that vocabulary cuts across all aspects of a language it is related to pronunciation, sentence-structure, spelling and syntax . If pupils are unable to understand the meaning of more than two words, they will fail in their responses.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **3. The Test**

An Achievement test is constructed by the researcher to fulfill the major aims of the research which include:

##### **3.1 Procedures of the Test:**

The procedures followed are:

- a. Describing the population and choosing the sample of the research.
- b. It also followed in carrying out the test building, the analysis of its items statistically; difficulty level, discrimination power, the attractiveness of wrong options, validity, reliability and static methods which fulfill the objectives of the research .

##### **3.2 The Purpose of the Test:**

As far as this study is concerned with the vocabulary instruction on developing the pupils abilities to understand and comprehend the whole items submitted by the Ministry of Education during the final Baccalaureate Sitting Examination for 3<sup>rd</sup> intermediate and 6<sup>th</sup> preparatory stages .

**3.3 Limits of the Test:**

1. The Population: It consists of (150) pupils from 3<sup>rd</sup> intermediate schools, males and females, and (100) pupils from 6<sup>th</sup> preparatory schools, (50) male and (50) females. The schools are taken from Saladin Governorate.

**Table (1): The Number of Population**

School	Gender		280 Total	Kind of Study				Total
		Femal e		Literary		Scientific		
Intermediat e	930	550		Male	Female	Male	Femal e	1480
Preparatory	170	110		140	30	150	130	450
Total				Intermediate				1480
				Preparatory				450

2. The sample of the research, the researcher has chosen (120) pupils randomly from both stages (30) male and (30) females from intermediate and (60) from preparatory (60) male, (30) of them from literary branch and (30) of them from scientific .

**Table (2): The Sample of the Research**

School	Gender		Kind of Study				Total
	Male	Female	Literary		Scientific		
Intermediate	30	30					60
Preparatory	30	30	20	10	15	15	60
Total	60	60	20	10	15	15	120

**3.4 Building Up the Test:**

The researcher has built up the test according to:

1. Dependent experiences of the researcher as she had nineteenth years in teaching 3<sup>rd</sup> intermediate and 6<sup>th</sup> preparatory stage in Secondary Schools.
2. After the researcher has gathered the items, she displayed them to many experts at Tikrit University as well as to many specialists and well-efficient teachers in English language .

**3.5 Test Administration:**

- a. In order to know if there is any difficulty in the items of the test, the researcher displays them to ( 42) pupils at both intermediate and preparatory schools, after being certain that there are no difficulties encountered by the students and the time that has covered all the items

of the test was (95) minutes. On that basis, the test becomes ready for application .

### **3.6 Items of the Test:**

The test consists of (22) items for 3<sup>rd</sup> intermediate and (23) items for 6<sup>th</sup> preparatory stage, each answer of each item consists of either four options one of them is correct answer or can use information which is found in the passage . Some of the answers test the testees passive and active vocabularies. The correct answer is given two marks and the incorrect zero on the base of this norm, the researcher carries out statistical treatments of test items, difficulties, discrimination and incorrect answers attraction .

### **3.7 Criteria for the Evaluation of the Test:**

#### **3.7.1 Test Validity:**

Heaton (1975: 153) indicates that validity of a test is the extent to which it measures what is supposed to measure and nothing else in this study the researcher used both face validity and content validity .

#### **3.7.2 Test Reliability:**

Reliability refers to the consistency of scores obtained by the same persons when re-examined with the same test on different occasions . (Anastasi, 1976: 103).

#### **3.7.3 Estimating Item Difficulty:**

Abbot et al. (1985: 723) “define difficulty as the quality, fact or condition of being difficult the character of an action that be accomplished the opposite of ease or facility”.

Level of difficulty for each item in the test:

$$DL = \frac{HG + LG}{\text{Total number of the Sample}}$$

Whereas:

DL = Difficulty Level

HG = High Incorrect

LG = Low Incorrect

(Valette, 1977: 38 and Madsons, 1963: 180)

**Table (3): The Number of the Items with Discrimination Power with Difficulty Level of 3<sup>rd</sup> Intermediate Stage.**

Number of Items	The Upper Group 27	The Lower Group 27	Difficulty Level	Discrimination Power
1	20	16	0.4	6.3
2	4	2	0.8	0.07
3	13	22	0.8	0.4
4	15	2	0.7	0.5
5	12	2	0.7	0.4
6	17	5	0.8	0.5
7	18	5	0.8	0.5

8	15	3	0.7	0.5
9	16	9	0.5	0.2
10	13	2	0.6	0.4
11	18	4	0.6	0.5
12	15	2	0.5	0.7
13	6	3	0.8	0.1
14	17	14	0.4	0.1
15	11	9	0.6	0.07
16	10	1	0.8	0.4
17	18	2	0.7	0.6
18	24	6	0.4	0.7
19	23	1	0.6	0.8
20	18	2	0.6	0.7
21	19	6	0.6	0.5
22	12	5	0.7	0.5

**Table (4): The Number of the Items with Discrimination Power with Difficulty Level of 6<sup>th</sup> Preparatory Stage.**

Number of Items	The Upper Group 27	The Lower Group 27	Difficulty Level	Discrimination Power
1	19	3	0.07	0.06
2	25	23	0.6	0.7
3	18	X	0.6	0.7
4	21	3	0.7	0.8
5	16	2	0.5	0.6
6	23	13	0.6	0.5
7	15	9	0.7	0.3
8	10	4	0.6	0.2
9	17	5	0.8	0.6
10	3	2	0.7	0.4
11	18	9	0.8	0.5
12	4	X	0.9	0.06
13	8	3	0.7	0.4
14	5	X	0.9	0.3
15	4	2	0.8	0.08
16	22	7	0.5	0.5
17	12	6	0.7	0.2
18	6	1	0.6	0.1
19	10	4	0.9	0.4
20	8	5	0.9	0.08
21	13	7	0.8	0.3
22	18	2	0.5	0.5



23	22	7	0.6	0.7
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From the number of pupils in the upper group who get the item (Ru) and dividing by one half of the total number of pupils included in item analysis ( $\frac{1}{2} T$ ). This is summarized as formula form:

$$DP = \frac{Ru - RL}{\frac{1}{2}T}$$

Whereas:

DP = Discriminating Power

Ru = The number of pupils in the upper group who gets the item right.

RL = The number of pupils in the lower group who gets the item right.

T = The Total number of pupils included in item analysis

(Gronland, 1976: 211)

### **3.7.4 Estimating the Discriminatory Power of the Test:**

The discriminatory power of an achievement test item refers to the degree to which it discriminate between pupils with high and low achievement to give the discrimination of each item, the researcher has taken the 27 percent as an upper group and also 27 percent as lower group . As estimate of item discriminating power can be obtained by subtracting the number of pupils in the lower group who gets the right item . The discriminatory power can have any value between 30% to 70%. If all members of the (U) group and none of the (L) group passes an item (D) equals + 70. Conversely if all the members of the (L) group and none of the (u) group passes it (D) equal – 70. If the percentage of both groups passing an item are equal, (D) will be zero (Anastasi, 1976: 212)

### **3.8 Final Administration of the Test:**

**Making sure that the “test is valid, reliable, clear, discriminative and the distracters are sufficiently effective, the test is administrated to (120) pupils for intermediate (60) males and (60) females and to (120) pupils for the 6<sup>th</sup> preparatory, (60) males and (60) females, the whole population of the test is (240) pupils in both stage”.**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4. Discussion of the Results**

One major finding of this study is the fact that:

- Vocabulary instruction plays an important role in language learning.
- All items in any language depend on vocabulary learning.
- Pupils are incapable of responding to the whole items submitted during the final Baccalaureate examination is probably due to their dealing with vocabulary as any item that they use to pass over.
- Vocabulary instruction affects the pupils' comprehension if they are unable to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words within the unseen

passages or a paragraph or even a sentence. This is due to their limited number of vocabularies .

An additional finding of the present study concerns whether there are any significant differences in vocabulary knowledge between male and female pupils.

#### **4.1 A Problem in Vocabulary Learning:**

With regards to the second aim of this study, which is classifying and specifying the difficulties that pupils face in learning English vocabulary the split-half formula for correlation samples has been used to find out the differences between pupils in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> stages responses to some items in the test .

Many teachers of English as foreign language today claim that teaching ‘comprehension’ to post intermediate pupils should mainly consists of teaching sentence structure, discourse analysis, and rhetorical features of different texts or speeches . (Wrenn, 1960: 85) .

Fisher (1956: 113) states that word study can be a challenging and enjoyable experience for both teachers and pupils..

#### **4.2 Types of Synophones:**

“Some synophones differ in one phoneme only such words can be confused because the distinguishing phoneme does not exist in the mother tongue and is therefore not heard by the learner (live/leave) or they can be confused in context in spite of the fact that the distinguishing phoneme is recognized when the pair of words is pronounced in isolation (typical/topical) or they become troublesome when this phoneme is presented in one of the words and absent in its counterpart (temple, attempt) ”.

#### **4.3 Types of Lexical Errors:**

In the light of the preceding results and discussion, a list of possible reasons behind pupils difficulties in English vocabulary learning has been prepared by the researcher through consulting:

1. Frequency of lexical errors results naturally from the lack of emphasis most syllabuses place on vocabulary.
2. Difficulties in learning English vocabulary can be ascribed to intralingual errors. The first type of errors is due to the interference between the two languages (English and Arabic).
3. The second type of errors which the researcher has observed is due to irregularities of English spelling and pronunciation rules.
4. A pupil, whether in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade, should provide a description of the language he is learning. This would be done by acquiring, in some sense, selection of words and their meaning .

“Learning vocabulary is an important aspect of the speaking, reading and writing skills. In development requires constant practice on the part of the

learner and continuous assessment on the part of the teacher” (Darwesh, 1994: 42).

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5. Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestions**

This chapter draws a number of conclusions and findings of the research. Later, a set of recommendations and suggestions have been made for pedagogical purposes and for possible extension of the present research.

#### **5.1 Conclusions:**

According to the results obtained from the research, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. The achievement test which has been constructed for the purpose of this research can be used as a invariable technique at least three times within a teaching period during the terms of learning for both 3<sup>rd</sup> intermediate and 6<sup>th</sup> preparatory in secondary schools .
2. A pupil is considered weak if he gets a mean score less than theoretical average with significant differences. The results also make known that the pupils in normal school need special teaching techniques to achieve the required learning in normal time or standard effort.
3. It has been found out that the achievement of pupils in ordinary secondary schools is significantly lower than developmental and distinguished secondary schools.  
3<sup>rd</sup> intermediate and 6<sup>th</sup> preparatory stages guide pupils towards intensive and analytical reading through the textbooks reading comprehension and listening comprehension.
4. The researcher found out that the pupils in ordinary secondary schools require special teaching techniques to overcome the difficulties in learning English as a foreign language .

#### **5.2 Recommendations:**

On the basis of the results of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Language learners need various kinds of strategies for interpreting what they hear and read.
2. Special attention should be given to teachers who newly graduated from colleges by increasing the training period.
3. Teachers of English language should be encouraged to use more techniques to clarify familiar and unfamiliar vocabulary.
4. Spelling should be given special attention in form of memorizing the meaning of vocabulary. By this, pupils acquire large selections of synonyms, antonyms and synophones .

### **5.3 Suggestions:**

According to the conclusions and recommendations of this research, the researcher has suggested the following:

1. Reading aloud with its emphasis on uncomprehending oratory and its slowing-down of the reading process and these pupils should read widely-newspapers in simplified English language where these exist, easy vocational material, catalogues which are brought by teachers inside the classroom.
2. A good technique of vocabulary instruction helps students to remember the subject matter.
3. The stipulation of laboratories in secondary schools plays an active role for the purpose of training pupils in the four skills, namely reading , speaking , writing and understanding .
4. The researcher's stress is on vocabulary rather than grammar but what little grammar is taught should be inductive in approach and integrated with the reading material .

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