

## 7EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FIRST-YEAR EFL VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT AND READING COMPREHENSION AT TLEMCEN UNIVERSITY

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**Abstract:** This paper is a theoretical attempt, in a cohesive essay, which tries first to deal with the nature of the research problem in addition to its objectives and significance. Then, gradually exposing a literature review where the main key concept and notions are defined and discussed. Thus, it delves into the main aspects of the reading process and explores the relationship between reading skill and vocabulary knowledge in terms of pedagogical implications. Moreover, the next sections outline the general debate among different language scholars and educationalists concerning the influence of vocabulary learning and comprehending a written text. Finally, the last part includes personal comments and discussions on both views, addressed for both teachers and learners, as a remedial conception to support vocabulary development for a better reading comprehension in an ELT setting.

**Keywords:** EFL; University Students; Vocabulary Difficulties; Reading Comprehension; proficiency tests.

### EXPLORATION DE LA RELATION ENTRE LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DU VOCABULAIRE DES ÉTUDIANTS DE PREMIÈRE ANNÉE EN ANGLAIS LANGUE ÉTRANGÈRE ET LA COMPRÉHENSION DE LECTURE À L'UNIVERSITÉ DE TLEMCEN

**Résumé :** Cet article propose une tentative théorique, sous la forme d'un essai cohérent, visant à traiter d'abord la nature du problème de recherche, ainsi que ses objectifs et son importance. Ensuite, il présente progressivement une revue de la littérature où les principaux concepts et notions clés sont définis et discutés. Il examine ainsi les principaux aspects du processus de lecture et explore la relation entre les compétences en lecture et la connaissance du vocabulaire, en termes d'implications pédagogiques. De plus, les sections suivantes décrivent le débat général parmi les différents spécialistes de la langue et éducateurs concernant l'influence de l'apprentissage du vocabulaire sur la compréhension des textes écrits. Enfin, la dernière partie inclut des commentaires et des discussions personnels sur les deux perspectives, destinés à la fois aux enseignants et aux apprenants, en tant que proposition corrective pour soutenir le développement du vocabulaire en vue d'améliorer la compréhension de lecture dans un contexte d'enseignement de l'anglais.

**Mots-clés :** EFL (anglais langue étrangère); étudiants universitaires; difficultés de vocabulaire; compréhension de la lecture; tests de compétence.

## Introduction

Learning English to read a variety of topics is a primary goal for many EFL students pursuing their university studies. However, many educators observe that these students struggle with systematic, autonomous, and comprehensive reading. This challenge is often attributed to insufficient reading habits and limited vocabulary, as research consistently links vocabulary knowledge with reading achievement. This paper presents an exploratory case study that aims to investigate how first-year students at Tlemcen University in Algeria develop their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) vocabulary through reading comprehension activities. The study will examine the effectiveness of various reading comprehension tasks in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among these learners. Key areas of inquiry include the types of reading materials used, the frequency and nature of vocabulary encountered through reading, and the students' ability to comprehend texts as their vocabulary expands. All in all, this research essentially aims at identifying the needs, learning styles, and difficulties of first-year EFL students related to their poor performance in the Reading Comprehension module, particularly those linked to vocabulary recognition and acquisition. It also attempts to develop and test a systematic framework for improving reading vocabulary in EFL classrooms through targeted strategies and tasks. Hence, can direct vocabulary instruction and specific vocabulary recognition strategies positively impact and improve learners' reading comprehension? A set of sub-questions have to be asked in order to have a reliable answer to this general question: Why do students perform poorly in the Reading Comprehension module, and what are the underlying sources of their difficulties? Do learners have effective vocabulary recognition techniques or strategies to enhance their reading abilities? Are learners aware of the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading achievement? Can increasing vocabulary awareness through direct instruction and specific strategies improve both vocabulary and reading comprehension? To obtain dependable responses to these inquiries, four hypotheses are proposed: Reading comprehension issues are primarily caused by inadequate vocabulary knowledge, which impedes understanding due to frequent encounters with unfamiliar words. Learners use ineffective vocabulary strategies, limiting their ability to improve reading comprehension and vocabulary. Learners are not aware of the correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading skills. Direct vocabulary instruction and strategy use are expected to enhance learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary development.

### *0.1. The Pre-Training Phase*

The primary goal of this phase is to assess the language proficiency, particularly in vocabulary and reading, of first-year university students studying English as a foreign language (EFL). This assessment includes identifying their strengths, weaknesses, and needs in these areas to design effective instructional strategies. To achieve this, a questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the academic year 2005-2006 to gather information about the students' language learning background, motivation, needs, preferences, reading methods, perceived difficulties, and beliefs about effective reading. Additionally, university teachers responsible for the Reading Comprehension module were given a separate questionnaire to assess their perspective on teaching and learning reading skills at the university level. This questionnaire included questions about their assessment of students' reading levels, difficulties, teaching methods, and suggestions for improvement. Following the questionnaire, a reading proficiency test assessed students' reading and vocabulary recognition abilities. This test consisted of comprehension questions and vocabulary

recognition activities and aimed to evaluate students' vocabulary background and adoption of vocabulary building techniques. Overall, this phase allowed for an in-depth understanding of students' language proficiency and provided valuable insight into developing effective instructional strategies to improve reading and vocabulary skills.

## ***0.2. The Training Phase***

After assessing the reading and vocabulary levels of the learners, the next step is to enhance their skills by increasing their awareness of vocabulary recognition and employing effective vocabulary-building techniques to support their reading development. To achieve this, the study includes instruction in specific vocabulary-building techniques known as word-attack skills. This instruction serves as the treatment for the group and aims to address learners' reading difficulties related to vocabulary knowledge. Additionally, the study tests the effectiveness of vocabulary recognition in reading comprehension through direct vocabulary instruction in four key strategies: using word lists, inferring vocabulary words from context using context clues, analysing word structure (morphological processes), and utilizing dictionaries. The goal is to improve learners' understanding of these techniques so they can effectively apply them. It's important to note that this approach draws on second language (L2) research conducted in the USA from the late 1960s to the 1980s (Chall, 1967; Perfetti, 1985) confirmed that: "...an early and explicit emphasis on the medium (on word recognition and decoding) was more effective for reading achievement, not only on tests of word recognition and oral reading but on silent reading comprehension as well". (Chall, 1987: 10). Incorporating direct vocabulary instruction into programs has been proven to be more effective for vocabulary development than relying exclusively on indirect methods (Folse, 2004; Johnson and Pearson, 1984; Petty, Herold, and Stoll, 1968; Zimmerman, 1997). Learners may need more awareness of word-attack skills and vocabulary-building strategies, which can significantly impact their success. While learners may excel in reading, there may still be a deficiency in essential awareness and consciousness crucial for learning (Brumfit and Widdowson, 1984; Spolsky, 1984, as cited in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). The overall sequence of this process includes the pre-training phase as described above. This involves identifying learners' needs for reading comprehension, assessing their reading and vocabulary challenges, and evaluating their usage of vocabulary-building strategies.

The second stage involves developing learners' general awareness of the reading process and their vocabulary knowledge in particular. The third stage is the presentation phase, where vocabulary-building strategies are introduced and labelled. The researcher, who also conducted the training, elucidates how each strategy is utilized and when it should be employed concerning the four vocabulary-building techniques. Word-attack skills were demonstrated using a reading proficiency test, text, and questions. Consequently, the four word-attack skills have been presented, each with its definition, as mentioned previously. These vocabulary-building techniques have been presented, labelled, defined, explained, and simplified for the learners. As a result, this significant phase has led to the subsequent step in data collection, which involves testing the learners' comprehension and applying the strategies following this direct instruction.

## ***0.3. The Post Training Phase***

In this phase, the subjects took a final test to gauge their progress in reading overall and their use of four vocabulary-building strategies after receiving instruction on these strategies. Each technique was tested through various vocabulary activities. The learners

first read a passage and completed tasks in turns. Their answers were collected each time, followed by a group review of the answers. Additionally, the instruction was reinforced, and word-attack skills were explained and demonstrated again. The post-training test was designed to measure the learners' progress in recognizing and using vocabulary-building techniques. It is important to review the different employed stages to summarize the data collection phases. Diagram 1 below illustrates these stages.

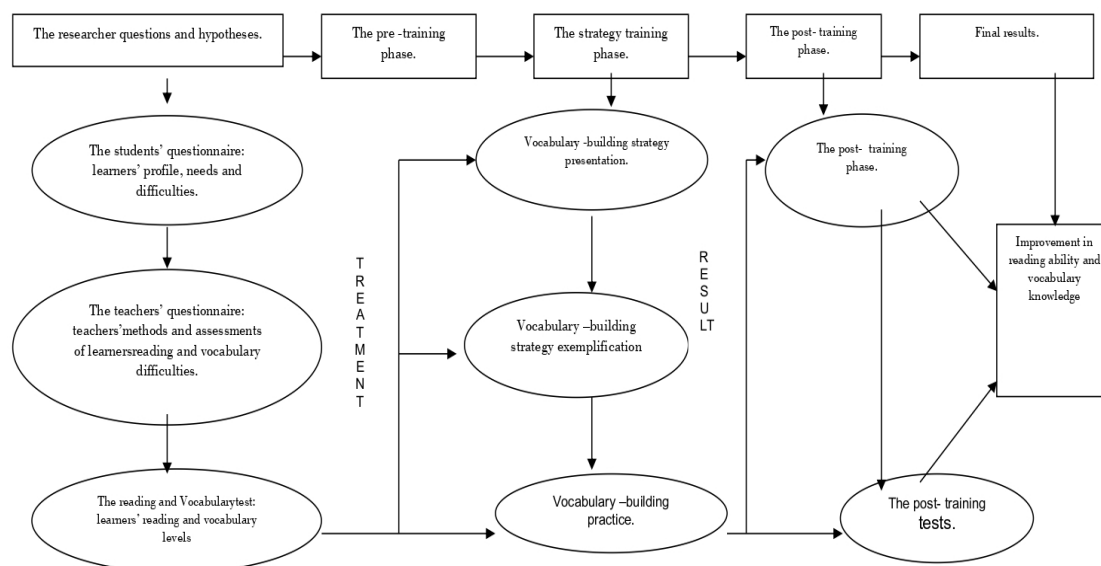


Diagram 1: The Different Steps of Data Collection Procedure

## 1. Analysis of Results

This section will present and analyse the results of each step taken. Using the previously described instruments and procedures, the data collection process has focused on the following areas: identifying learners' reading difficulties about vocabulary knowledge; observing learners' awareness of word-attack skills and vocabulary-building strategies before and after the instruction; tracking learners' progress in reading following direct vocabulary instruction; these points will be thoroughly discussed while analysing the results of the pre-training phase.

### 1.1. The Pre-Training Phase Results

The data collected during this phase includes the results of two diagnostic tests: questionnaires addressed to first-year EFL university students and teachers and the pre-training proficiency test.

#### - Results of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was carefully selected as the primary research tool due to its efficiency and ability to gather data from a large sample of informants in a relatively short time and anonymously, as Wallace (1998) emphasizes. The current study utilized two questionnaires: the first was administered to 40 first-year EFL university students, and the second was distributed to two teachers responsible for the Reading Comprehension module. Notably, both questionnaires included a combination of close-ended, open-ended, and combined questions. The insightful analysis of these questionnaires provided valuable

information about the participants involved in the study. Particularly, the students' questionnaire helped in profiling their needs and expectations, shedding light on their views regarding reading comprehension difficulties and their current level in the English language and reading skills.

#### *-Results of Students' Questionnaire*

The students' questionnaire consists of fourteen questions divided into five sections. The first section, which focuses on general information about the students, comprises four open-ended questions. The initial question concerns the participants' age and nationality, revealing that they are all Algerian students aged between eighteen and twenty-two. Furthermore, the student's responses to questions two and three indicate that the majority come from the "Literary Stream", with only three students originating from the "Scientific Stream". Additionally, the duration of the students' English as a Foreign Language (EFL) studies varies, with most reporting 5 to 6 years, while others have studied English for ten years.

#### *a/ Learner Profiles, Level, Needs, and Expectations*

The questionnaire's answers to sections one, two, and three have enabled the researchers to draw the learners' profiles, determine their level of English proficiency, and identify their needs and expectations. Concurrently, these questions have provided a description of the students' reading strategies, which may facilitate their learning and progress in reading and vocabulary levels.

#### *b/ Learners' Difficulties*

Regarding the data obtained from the fourth section, the majority of the participants have reported encountering difficulties with vocabulary and ambiguity in meaning, specifically an inability to make inferences and guesses, as well as issues with the organization of the text, such as complex sentences or the inability to recognize the relationship between sentences. Additionally, some students have expressed difficulties with pronunciation, leading them to resort to a bilingual English-Arabic dictionary as a self-support guide, particularly when a word or an idea is unclear to them. Moreover, almost all informants have attributed their reading difficulties to a perceived "bad" learning experience at the secondary education level. Others have explained the difficulties by a lack of interest in reading and a lack of extra reading outside the classroom, known as extensive reading. However, twelve students have reported that the reason is the lack of reading materials.

#### *c/ Learners' Beliefs About Effective Reading*

Concerning the informants' beliefs about effective reading, in light of the answers obtained from question thirteen, the students have mentioned that effective reading could be achieved through the following steps: reading several times, understanding the meaning of every single word, getting the overall meaning of the text, and looking up words in a bilingual (Arabic-French) dictionary.

#### *d/ Learners' Proposed Solutions*

The informants have also proposed several solutions to improve one's reading performance in English. These suggestions, provided in response to the final question (question fourteen), indirectly sought to unveil their reading and vocabulary strategies. The

proposed solutions include using a dictionary, reading extensively, teaching vocabulary to learn new words, asking for teachers' help, making students listen to news on radio and English channels, asking students to communicate in English, translating into L1, and explaining word-by-word. These suggested solutions display learners' simplistic view of what reading entails. Therefore, learners are either equipped with a limited range and number of strategies, or their reading and vocabulary strategies must be developed. It is worth noting, however, that some learners have not answered that question, indicating that they have a priori no strategies to use in front of complex vocabulary and are easily discouraged when reading. This inevitably leads to an ineffective and unsystematic reading. Making use of the obtained results, the following assertions and conclusions may be made: learners display a certain linguistic competence; they show a limited degree of motivation and interest in reading; they view their difficulties as being caused by a lack of grammar and a consistent vocabulary stock; and they view their needs as being what they call "a good method for reading well". Hence, the questionnaire has shed light on the identification of learners' difficulties and the actual use of some vocabulary and reading strategies. The second step deals with a university-teachers questionnaire that is used to pinpoint their view about their assessment of the reading skill teaching/learning at the university level for first-year EFL students.

#### *-Results of the Teachers' Questionnaire*

The teachers' questionnaire has provided the researcher with fundamental information regarding the instructors' perspectives on supporting learners in overcoming their reading weaknesses and fostering autonomous learning. Additionally, the questionnaire offered insights into the teachers' instructional methodologies. The initial three questions focused on gathering background information about the teachers, including their years of teaching experience, which ranged from 10 to 23 years, as well as the specific modules they have taught. The remaining questions primarily addressed the teaching of the Reading Comprehension module. The first question aimed to uncover the primary objectives that teachers intend to achieve in delivering this course. Instructor (1) aspires to facilitate effective reading with a level of text comprehension, while Instructor (2) believes that the principal goal is to develop the learners' vocabulary knowledge, i.e., vocabulary building. The subsequent question sought to determine the skill in which students demonstrate the greatest involvement. Instructor (1) mentioned reading, whereas the other instructor believes that his students exhibit a stronger interest in the speaking skill. Question five was designed to collect information about the teachers' assessment and evaluation of their learners' progress in reading. Both instructors noted that students exhibit weak and slow progress. Regarding question six, it primarily addressed students' assignments. Both teachers reported that they occasionally assign homework related to the reading skill when deemed necessary. Questions seven and eight focused on the students' primary challenges with the reading skill. The responses to question seven varied. Both teachers believe that the principal reading difficulties are related to vocabulary problems, such as ambiguous words. Instructor (1) also reported that students face a significant problem related to the pronunciation of individual words. The other instructor thinks that his students encounter difficulties with grammatical structures and text organization. When asked about the primary reasons behind the students' reading weaknesses, both teachers agreed that this may be due to the inherent complexity of the reading skill, the lack of appropriate teaching materials, including suitable course books, and the absence of a reading culture, also known as extensive reading.

### *i. Teaching Vocabulary and Reading Strategies*

Question nine of the questionnaire reveals the instructional approaches used in teaching the reading skill. Both teachers incorporate vocabulary instruction intermittently during the Reading Comprehension course, employing a range of techniques to develop students' strategies. These techniques include morphological processes to foster learners' vocabulary knowledge. When queried about their students' vocabulary background, both instructors reported that their students exhibit significant weaknesses in this area of learning. Question twelve aimed to identify the types of reading strategies explicitly taught to students to help them overcome their reading problems and cultivate independence and autonomy in reading and learning in general. Both teachers employ explicit strategy instruction: one instructor raises students' awareness about the importance of dictionaries, especially monolingual ones, which are primarily used to build and elaborate learners' vocabulary knowledge. The other instructor endeavours to provide his learners with extensive reading as a beneficial strategy that will assist them in practicing all the reading strategies, strengthening their reading abilities, and ultimately helping them become autonomous learners.

### *i. Suggestions for Improving Reading Performance*

The final section of the teachers' questionnaire includes suggestions addressed to the learners to enhance their reading performance in English and develop their vocabulary knowledge. The recommendations include encouraging learners to engage in extensive reading, which is a source of improvement for the reading process and other skills; adapting and utilizing simplified text versions; practicing a variety of vocabulary strategies in the classroom; raising learners' awareness about the process of reading with comprehension. The researcher hypothesized that the learners' reading difficulties primarily stem from linguistic factors, which requires empirical validation through the pre-training proficiency test.

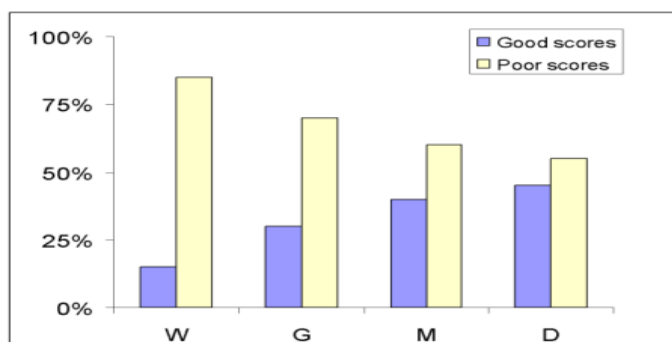
### *-The Pre-Training Proficiency Test Results*

Prior to the implementation of the training program, the researcher administered a reading proficiency test to establish a baseline assessment of the learners' overall reading level and their specific vocabulary knowledge, particularly in relation to the four vocabulary-building techniques selected for this research. The purpose of this pre-training assessment was to gather empirical evidence to support the hypothesis that the learners' reading difficulties were primarily rooted in linguistic factors, as suggested by the findings from the students' and teachers' questionnaires. The reading proficiency test responses were analysed to evaluate the learners' linguistic abilities, as well as their capacity to utilize the four vocabulary-building strategies. For each vocabulary technique, the researcher counted the number of informants who answered correctly. This allowed the determination of the number of participants who performed successfully and the number who performed poorly, failing to reach the required answer, out of the total of forty informants tested. The obtained numbers for each vocabulary strategy were then counted and translated into percentages. The data from the pre-training proficiency test provided the researcher with valuable insights into the learners' current reading and vocabulary knowledge levels. The results indicate that a significant proportion of the learners exhibited poor performance on the vocabulary-building strategies, suggesting that their reading difficulties were indeed primarily linguistic in nature:

| Vocabulary building techniques learners' performance | (W) |     | (G) |     | (M) |     | (D) |     |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Good scores                                          | 6   | 15% | 12  | 30% | 16  | 40% | 18  | 45% |
| Bad scores                                           | 34  | 85% | 28  | 70% | 24  | 60% | 22  | 55% |

*Table.1: Learners' Reading and Vocabulary Performance before Strategy Instruction*

In other words, the next bar-graph is believed to statistically better clarify the obtained findings.



Bar-graph.1 percentages of learners' reading and vocabulary performance before strategy instruction

The pre-training proficiency test results, as illustrated in table 1 and Bar-graph 1, reveal that most of the forty informants needed to be more successful in utilizing the four vocabulary-building strategies. A detailed analysis was conducted for each of these strategies to gain a comprehensive understanding of the learners' performance. For the wordlist strategy, only 6 learners of the 40 informants, representing 15%, demonstrated effective use of this technique. The remaining 34 learners, constituting 85%, failed to utilize the wordlist strategy effectively. The guessing from context strategy, assessed through task 6, was successfully employed by 12 out of the 40 informants, accounting for 30% of the sample. Some subjects guessed correctly in certain questions but failed in others. The remaining 70% provided random answers.

Concerning the morphological processes strategy which involve analysing word structure, 24 learners have encountered difficulties breaking down words into smaller elements and needed to be made aware of the usefulness of this technique. Only 16 out of the 40 informants, representing 40%, could effectively utilize this strategy, while the others needed more appropriate strategies for systematic application. The results for the dictionary use strategy, as shown in Table 1, indicate that only 45% of the informants could use the dictionary appropriately. However, this was not evident for the remaining 55%, who failed to use the dictionary effectively. In summary, among the forty informants, only a small number demonstrated the ability to use the four vocabulary-building strategies. The majority struggled with these techniques, suggesting a need for targeted instruction and practice to improve their vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. The detailed analysis of the pre-training proficiency test results highlights the learners' weaknesses in utilizing the four vocabulary-building strategies. These findings support the hypothesis that the learners' reading difficulties are primarily rooted in linguistic factors, particularly in the area of vocabulary knowledge. The results provide a foundation for the subsequent training

intervention, which aims to address these challenges and enhance the learners' reading proficiency through explicit instruction in vocabulary-building strategies.

### 5.2. The Training Phase Results

To test the researcher's hypothesis, which claims that purposeful strategy instruction through the use of some vocabulary-building strategies could be a significant factor contributing to improve the learners' reading behaviour, depth of lexical knowledge (which is said to be a necessary component of reading comprehension, as stated by Anderson and Nagy, 1992; Qian, 1999), and ultimately the learning process in general, a reading and vocabulary strategy instruction has been conducted. This instruction focused on four key vocabulary techniques: the use of wordlists, guessing from context using context clues, word formation through affixation, and the use of different types of dictionaries. These strategies are essential if EFL learners are to become highly proficient readers. In other words, if these four types of vocabulary knowledge are developed for the high-frequency and general academic words of English, learners will be in a better position to deal successfully with English texts from a wide variety of topics. The direct strategy instruction approach is very important, as clearly stated by Doughty and Williams (1998), who claim that when knowledge is represented explicitly and directly, it can contribute to the process of language learning. Therefore, the primary lexical objectives of this strategy instruction are increasing vocabulary stock, elaborating vocabulary knowledge, and developing fluency with familiar vocabulary. The following figure illustrates the different procedures of this phase:

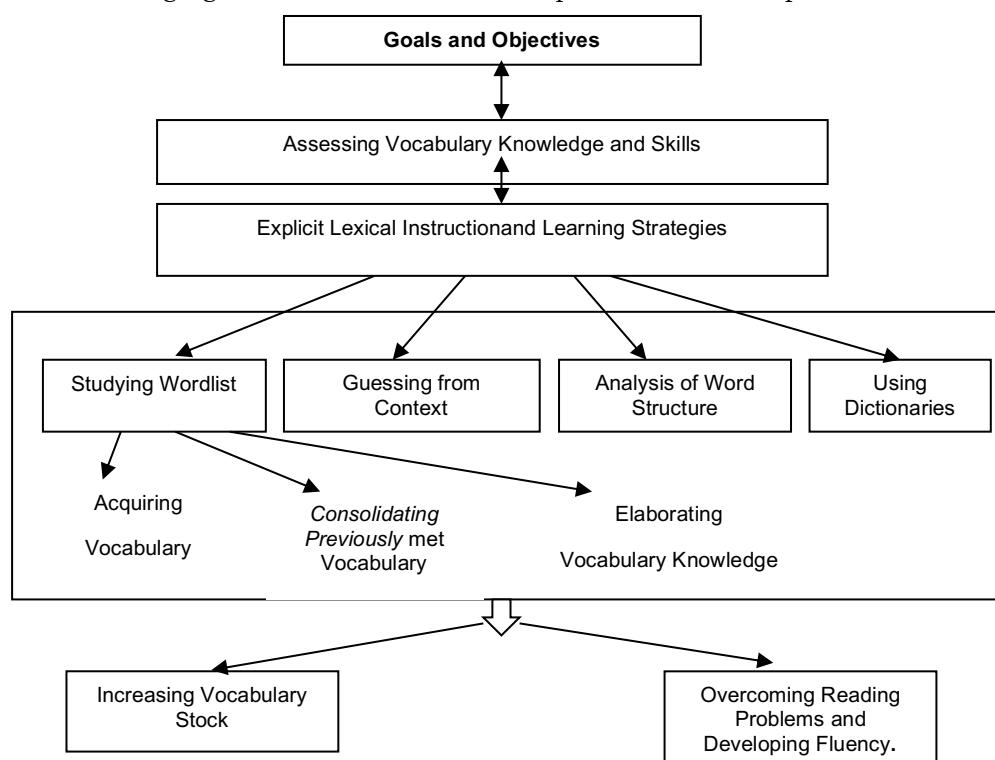


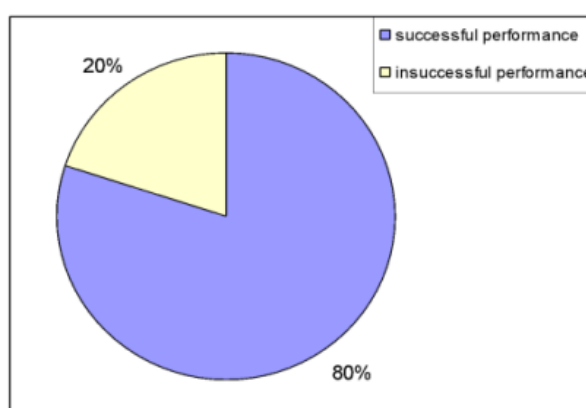
Figure 1. A Framework for Developing EFL Reading Vocabulary

The primary means of achieving the lexical objectives, which include increasing vocabulary knowledge, elaborating on word meanings, and developing fluency with familiar vocabulary, are skill-based. These involve training learners to effectively utilize vocabulary-building strategies and engage in extensive reading. It is noteworthy that during this phase,

all forty participants received the same reading strategy instruction. A reading passage accompanied by vocabulary exercises was selected and used as the basis for training in various vocabulary-building strategies. To optimize the effectiveness of the instruction, it was delivered during the first term of the 2005-2006 academic year, with each session lasting one and a half hours and occurring once a week for twelve weeks, totalling eighteen hours of instruction. The researcher acknowledges that this type of instruction can be highly motivating, particularly for learners who hold positive attitudes towards reading English materials (Yamashita, 2004). Moreover, it can provide learners with a sense of satisfaction in autonomous reading, potentially leading to the development of a reading habit (Day and Bamford, 1998). Therefore, the success of strategy instruction hinges on factors such as learners' motivation, attention, attitudes, and linguistic competence. These variables were taken into account in the EFL students' questionnaire, as they significantly contribute to the effectiveness of this instructional phase. During the training, the researcher distinguished between unstructured and structured learners (Sanaoui, 1995). Unstructured learners tend to take less initiative, rely more on their peers, and require more time and explanation to grasp the presented strategies. In contrast, structured learners are better organized, systematically engage in independent learning, self-initiate activities, regularly record and review new words in notebooks, and demonstrate faster learning and a deeper understanding of the instruction. This instruction encourages learners to be more reflective about their own learning process. While the instruction has been beneficial to some extent, it has provided the most effective means for promoting lexical knowledge and, consequently, enhancing reading ability. After the instruction of useful vocabulary strategies was completed, learners underwent post-instruction assessments to evaluate the impact of the training.

### ***5.3. The Post-Training Phase Results***

After the strategy instruction, a post-training test was administered to evaluate the learners' improvement in applying the four selected vocabulary-building strategies. The participants were asked to read a passage and then complete various tasks related to the vocabulary-building strategies. These tasks constituted the post-training test, which aimed to assess the learners' reading comprehension progress and vocabulary recognition strategies' application. The post-training test results indicate that most learners benefited from the explicit instruction on using wordlists to enhance their vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. However, a significant minority still struggled with this strategy, suggesting the need for further practice and reinforcement. The difference in percentages is illustrated in the following pie chart:

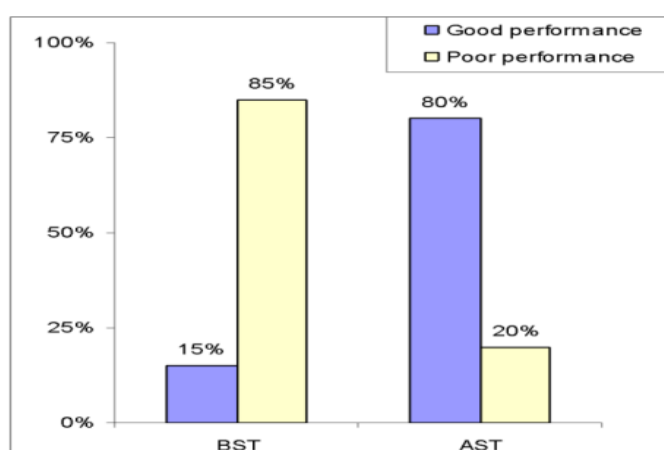
*Pie-Chat.1:*

*Learners' Percentages of their Performance in 'wordlist' after Strategy Instruction*

Regarding the use of wordlists, it was observed that the vast majority, more than half of the informants, could utilize this strategy effectively. Specifically, thirty-five students out of forty, representing 80% of the informants, valued the explicit study of vocabulary and vocabulary cards as a potentially self-initiating activity that can promote autonomy and learning in general. The remaining 20% displayed an unsuccessful performance of the strategy. This could be attributed to the fact that these students did not regularly review the material outside the classroom and needed clarification on the numerous target words with their different definitions.

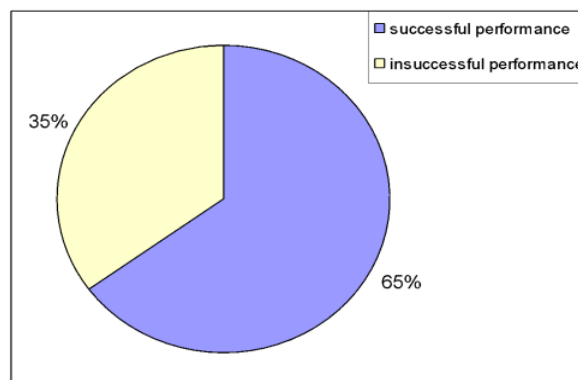
| wordlist      | Before training  |                  | After training   |                  |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|               | Good performance | Poor performance | Good performance | Poor performance |
| Percentage %. | 15%              | 85%              | 80%              | 20%              |

*Table.2: Learners' Performance in 'Wordlist' before and after Strategy Instruction*



*Bar-Graph.2: Good and Poor Performance in Wordlist before and after Strategy Training.*

For wordlists, 80% effectively utilized this strategy, valuing it as self-initiating and promoting autonomy. However, 20% struggled due to insufficient review and word-definition confusion. For guessing from context, 65% made correct guesses, while others failed, citing on-going confusion and unclear clues. The percentages are shown in a pie chart.



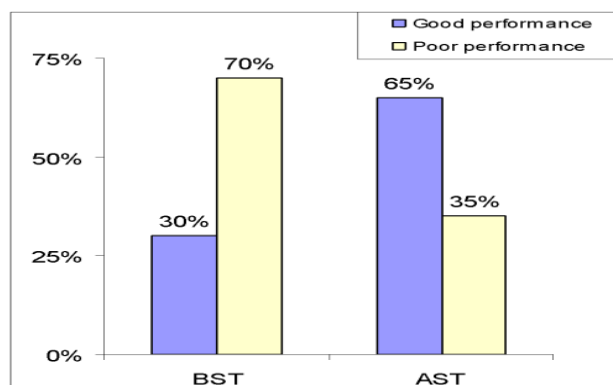
*Pie-Chart.2: Learners' Percentages of their Performance in 'Guessing from Context' after Strategy Instruction*

Comparing the post-training results to the pre-training phase, a clear progress can be observed in the students' performance. The pre-training assessment had revealed that only 30% of the students could effectively use the guessing from context strategy. However, the post-training results show a significant increase, with 65% of the learners making correct guesses. This suggests that the explicit instruction on utilizing contextual clues to infer word meanings has been effective in improving the students' vocabulary-building skills. Furthermore, the context itself serves as a source of vocabulary input, from which learners can expand their lexical repertoire, as explained by Nagy "What a word means on many given occasions is mediated by the many contexts in which it is used and such context provide considerable input from which language users clearly pick up huge of vocabulary knowledge".(Nagy, 1998: 64).The obtained results are illustrated in Table 3 and Bar-Graph 3.

| Guessing from Context | Before Training  |                  | After Training   |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Percentage %          | Good performance | Poor performance | Good performance | Poor performance |
|                       | 30%              | 70%              | 65%              | 35%              |

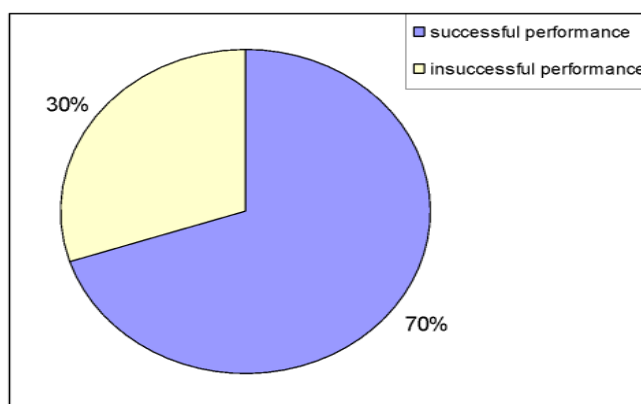
*Table.3: Learners' Performance in 'Guessing from Context' before and after Strategy Instruction*

To put it differently, here is a bar-graph for a better illustration of the target strategy.



*Bar-graph.3: Good and Poor Performance in 'Guessing from Context' before and after Strategy Training.*

From this context, strategy improved significantly, with 65% making correct guesses post-training, up from 30% pre-training. This suggests the explicit instruction on using contextual clues was effective. For word structure analysis, 70% successfully performed this strategy, though 30% still needed help understanding common prefixes, stems, and suffixes. The instructional intervention demonstrated its potential to enhance learners' vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension through targeted strategy training. These findings underscore the importance of providing EFL learners explicit instruction in effective vocabulary-building techniques.



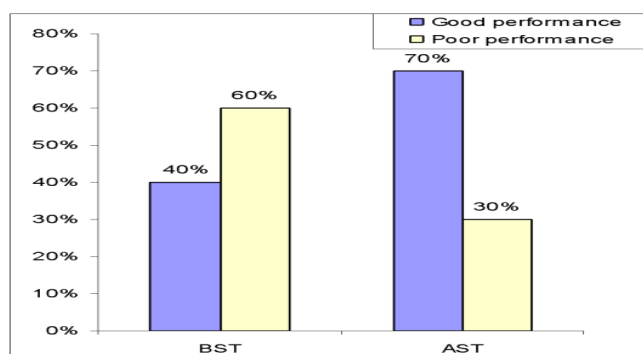
*Pie-Chart.3: Learners' Percentages of their Performance in 'Word-Structure Analysis' after Strategy Instruction*

As a result, statistical results show the progress of learning following strategy instruction compared to the pre-training phase results for this strategy, suggested in Table.4. and Bar-Graph.4.

| Word-Structure Analysis | Before training  |                  | After training   |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Percentage %.           | Good performance | Poor performance | Good performance | Poor performance |
|                         | 40%              | 60%              | 70%              | 30%              |

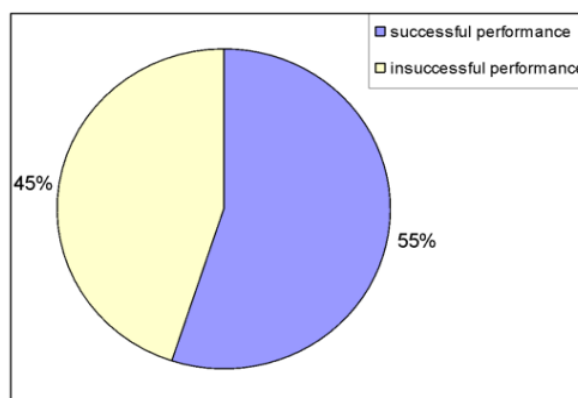
*Table.4: Learners' Performance in 'Word-Structure Analysis' before and after Strategy Instruction*

For a reinforced numerical illustration, the following bar-graph is used.



*Bar-Graph.4: Good and poor performance in 'Word-structure analyses before and after strategy training.*

The fourth point, however, is that clear progress is noted among learners for the remaining vocabulary strategies, i.e., using dictionaries. 50% of the group under investigation used the dictionary adequately (statistically speaking, twenty-two (22) out of forty (40); i.e., 55%).



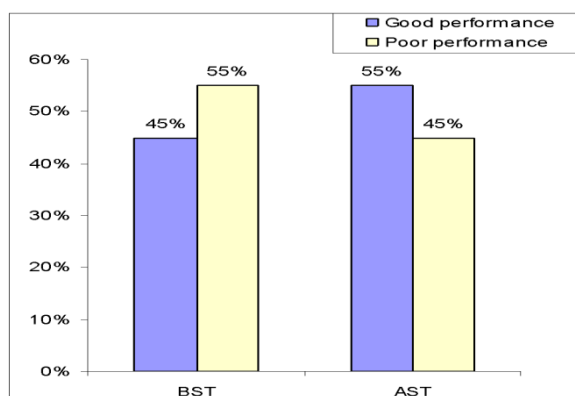
*Pie-Chart.4: Learners' Percentages of their Performance in 'Dictionary Use' after Strategy Instruction*

A remarkable progress in applying this strategy can be observed. This may be explained by the learners' raising awareness to the importance of dictionaries, namely monolingual ones, in vocabulary development in particular, and language learning in general.

| Dictionary Use | Before Training  |                  | After Training   |                  |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                | Good Performance | Poor Performance | Good Performance | Poor Performance |
|                | 45%              | 55%              | 55%              | 45%              |

*Table.5: Learners' performance in 'Dictionary Use' before and after Strategy Instruction*

Again, to better elucidate the result of dictionary use before and after strategy instruction, the bellow bar-graph is proposed.

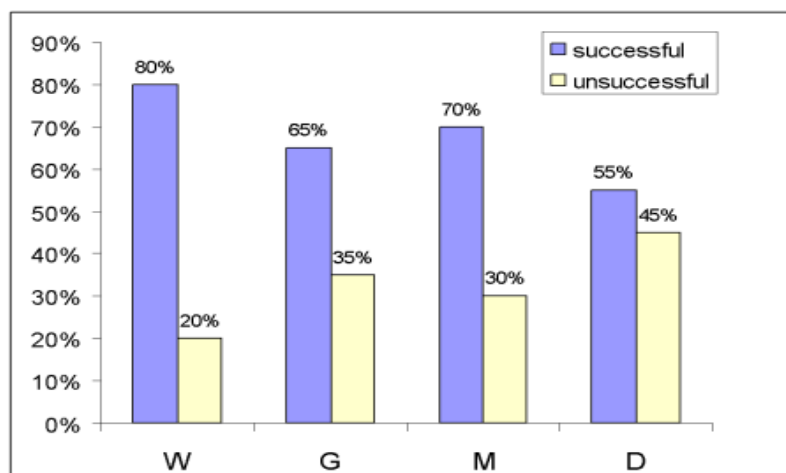


*Bar-Graph.5: Good and Poor Performance in 'Dictionary Use' before and after Strategy Training.*

Based on the learners' performance on each vocabulary-building strategy, it can be concluded that there has been a better understanding and application of the majority of those strategies by the informants. The post-training results highlight the positive impact of the vocabulary-building strategy instruction. The learners' increased motivation, engagement, and development of effective techniques have contributed to their enhanced performance in reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge.

| Vocabulary-building strategies. | Performance |     |              |     |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-----|--------------|-----|
|                                 | Successful  |     | Unsuccessful |     |
|                                 | Number      | %   | Number       | %   |
| Wordlist.                       | 35          | 80% | 5            | 20% |
| Guessing from Context.          | 26          | 65% | 14           | 35% |
| Word-structure Analysis.        | 28          | 70% | 12           | 30% |
| Dictionary Use.                 | 22          | 55% | 18           | 45% |

Table.3: Vocabulary-building strategies scores after strategy instruction

*Bar-Graph.3: Percentages of the Learners' Vocabulary Performance after Strategy Instruction.*

The assessment's overall findings indicate that most learners have realized the efficiency and usefulness of vocabulary-building strategies in approaching reading texts. Furthermore, learners can better perceive the difference in their reading behaviours before and after the strategy instruction. The increased awareness and strategic approach to reading have empowered the learners, positioning them as more autonomous and engaged readers.

### 3. Discussion

The results obtained from the data collection and discussed in the above sections seem to answer the research questions and confirm the stated hypotheses. Indeed, as far as the first question of the present work is concerned, in that whether learners' reading difficulties are of a language or of a reading nature, results suggest the following: learners have difficulties that are more of a language nature, related to their lack of a sound vocabulary base as well as a lack of awareness of the importance of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension since a limited lexical knowledge discourages reading and, simultaneously, a lack of reading restricts vocabulary growth (Coady, 1997). This confirms hypothesis one of the research. Indeed, results yielded by the pre-training phase data collection have answered the second question of the research, which is whether learners are equipped with any vocabulary building strategy or not. As a matter of fact, before learners have received strategy instruction, they display ineffective vocabulary strategies, such as ineffective use of dictionaries, inability to guess from context using context clues, a limited use of wordlist, etc. Therefore, they have poorly performed, in their majority, on the reading proficiency test. Indeed, analyses of the results obtained from the reading proficiency test suggest that learners show a limited awareness of vocabulary-building strategies. A result that may be due to a poor linguistic background, especially in relation to their secondary school instruction, and a poor and limited vocabulary stock. Those results lead us to investigate the last question of the research work. In that, whether awareness-raising, through a direct instruction in some vocabulary-building strategies would contribute to learners' better achievements in both vocabulary and reading. Accordingly, results of the post-training test suggest that the hypothesis may be confirmed (See Table 3.6 and Bar-Graph 3.6). As it can be noticed in the table and bar-graph in question, the percentages of learners' good

performance have increased after strategy instruction as compared to their performance before. Thus, there is much statistical support for the research general questions.

## Conclusion

This chapter focused on learners' use and awareness of vocabulary-building strategies to promote reading comprehension. The data analysis revealed: learners displayed poor reading ability due to unawareness of suitable vocabulary strategies and word-attack skills. Direct vocabulary training aimed to remedy these difficulties. The results suggest learners' reading difficulties are more language-based, related to lack of vocabulary knowledge and awareness of its importance in reading. This confirms the first hypothesis. Pre-training data showed learners lacked effective vocabulary strategies, such as using dictionaries and guessing from context. This led to poor performance on the reading proficiency test. Post-training results indicate the hypothesis was confirmed - awareness-raising through direct strategy instruction contributed to better achievements in vocabulary and reading. These findings underscore the need to provide explicit instruction in vocabulary-building techniques to enhance EFL learners' reading comprehension and linguistic competence

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