

The relationship between vocabulary size and reading comprehension: a case study on Saudi high school EFL learners

ABSTRACT

Second language (L2) learners' vocabulary knowledge is crucial to their success in learning a L2 and is largely dependent on their vocabulary knowledge. Further, L2 students can only master a target L2 by developing effective reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, which again, are all dependent on their vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, the current study investigates Saudi high school EFL learner's vocabulary size and its effect on reading comprehension. A sample (n=108) of Saudi high school EFL learners completed two research instruments: (i) the vocabulary size test (VST) [1] and (ii) an adapted reading comprehension test [2]. The results highlight that on average, Saudi EFL learners' vocabulary size was 2025 word families –this enabled them to understand up to 90% of written texts. Also, while vocabulary knowledge was a significant predictor of effective reading comprehension among these participants, the significance of vocabulary knowledge on reading comprehension is regulated by English proficiency. This paper provides useful insights for Saudi Arabian educational stakeholders to improve reading comprehension in L2 contexts in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG-4): providing all students with highly motivated, well-supported, and well-qualified teachers to develop English-language skills via coherent inter-school curricula and continued access to qualified and experienced English-language teachers [3].

Keyword: Saudi (L2) learners; Vocabulary knowledge; Proficiency level