

## **The Correlation Between Iraqi EFL Preparatory School Students' Vocabulary Size, Depth and Performance in Reading Comprehension**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the correlation between Iraqi EFL preparatory school students' vocabulary size, depth, and performance in reading comprehension. The objectives are to determine the students' vocabulary size and depth of knowledge, assess their level of reading comprehension performance, and explore the relationship between vocabulary knowledge ( size and depth) and reading comprehension. The study is limited to 5th preparatory school students in Al-Rusafa III, Baghdad, for the academic year 2023/2024. Instruments used include a vocabulary size test, vocabulary knowledge scale, word association format test, and reading comprehension test. Findings indicate a varied range of vocabulary sizes and reading comprehension skills among the students. While vocabulary size alone does not directly correlate with comprehension, a deeper understanding of vocabulary (depth) shows a significant relationship with reading comprehension. The study suggests that effective EFL instruction should emphasize both vocabulary breadth and depth, in addition to other reading strategies, to enhance students' comprehension skills.

**Keywords: vocabulary size, depth of knowledge, reading comprehension performance**

العلاقة بين حجم المفردات وعمقها وأدائهم في الاستيعاب القرائي لدى طلبة المدارس الإعدادية  
العراقيين دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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### وزارة التربية/ المديرية العامة لتربية الرصافة الثالثة

هذه الدراسة تستكشف العلاقة بين حجم وعمق معرفة المفردات لدى طلبة المدارس الاعدادية العراقيين دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وأدائهم في الاستيعاب القرائي. ان اهداف الدراسة هي لتحديد حجم وعمق معرفة المفردات، وتقييم مستوى أدائهم في الاستيعاب القرائي ، واستكشاف العلاقة بين معرفة المفردات حجم المفردات وعمق معرفتها) مع الاستيعاب القرائي. تقتصر الدراسة على طلبة المدارس الاعدادية العراقيين دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الرصافة الثالثة في بغداد، للعام الدراسي ٢٠٢٣/٢٠٢٤. تتضمن الأدوات المستخدمة اختبار حجم المفردات، مقياس معرفة المفردات، اختبار تتساقط الكلمات المرتبطة، واختبار الاستيعاب القرائي. تشير النتائج إلى مجموعة متنوعة من أحجام المفردات ومهارات الاستيعاب القرائي بين الطلاب. بينما لا يترتب عن حجم المفردات وحده علاقة مباشرة مع الاستيعاب القرائي ، إلا أن فهماً أعمق للمفردات يظهر علاقة مهمة مع الاستيعاب القرائي. توجي الدراسة بأن التعليم الفعال للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يجب أن يركز على كل من حجم وعمق المفردات، بالإضافة إلى استراتيجيات القراءة الأخرى، لتعزيز مهارات الاستيعاب القرائي الطلاب.

**الكلمات المفتاحية: حجم المفردات، عمق المعرفة، أداء الاستيعاب القرائي**

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The Problem and Its Significance

Reading is a complex process, and reading in a foreign language adds an extra layer of complexity. Reading comprehension is influenced by several variables, such as background knowledge, reading strategies, and vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary knowledge, in particular, plays a vital role in determining an individual's ability to comprehend written text effectively. It has been widely studied in numerous research endeavors, as it is recognized for its significance in academic achievement and overall language proficiency.

Vocabulary knowledge can be reflected in two aspects, size Vocabulary knowledge and depth Vocabulary knowledge (Schmitt, 2014). Vocabulary depth refers to the caliber of lexical knowledge related to word connections, while vocabulary size refers to the amount of vocabulary that language learners are familiar with (Nation, 2001).

In Iraqi context, Iraqi EFL preparatory school students face various obstacles when it comes to reading comprehension performance. These include limited vocabulary (Academic terminology and unfamiliar words can be difficult for students to grasp, hindering their understanding of the text.), a lack of background knowledge (unfamiliar concepts or cultural contexts in the text can be missed by students, resulting in a fragmented understanding of the material), passive reading strategies ( Merely reading through the text without actively engaging with it makes it harder to comprehend and retain information), as well as motivation and engagement issues (students lack interest in the reading material or they do not perceive the importance of reading comprehension). This study is conducted to address the challenge concerning vocabulary knowledge through understanding the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension performance. The problem of this study can be reflected in answering the following questions:

- 1– What size and depth of vocabulary knowledge do Iraqi EFL preparatory school student have?
- 2– What is Iraqi EFL preparatory school students’ level in reading comprehension performance?
- 3– Is there a relationship between Iraqi EFL preparatory school students’ vocabulary knowledge ( size & depth) and reading comprehension performance?

## **1.2 Aims**

The study aims at:

- 1– Finding out Iraqi EFL preparatory school students’ size and depth of vocabulary knowledge.
- 2– Finding out Iraqi EFL preparatory school students’ level in reading comprehension performance.

3– Identifying the relationship between Iraqi EFL preparatory school students' size and depth of vocabulary knowledge with their reading comprehension performance.

### **1.۳ Value**

The study aims to provide valuable insights to different stakeholders in education:

1. Curriculum developers can benefit by incorporating evidence-based strategies to improve vocabulary instruction within the curriculum, aligning it with reading comprehension goals.
2. Teacher trainers can enhance professional development programs for educators using the study findings, equipping them with effective strategies for vocabulary development and reading comprehension support.
3. Language teachers make use of study findings in their classroom instruction by designing targeted interventions and activities that support students in developing both vocabulary and reading skills.
4. Iraqi EFL preparatory school students can gain valuable insights into the importance of vocabulary knowledge in enhancing reading comprehension abilities, empowering them to take proactive steps towards improving language skills and academic success.

### **1.4 Limits**

This study is limited to Iraqi EFL 5<sup>th</sup> preparatory school students in Al-Rusafa III, Baghdad. For the academic year 2023/2024.

### **1.5 Definitions of Basic Terms**

#### **1.5.1 Vocabulary Size**

The quantity of words that a person knows at a certain level of language skill is referred to as their vocabulary size, also known as their breadth of vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 2001).

#### **1.5.2 Vocabulary Depth**

Depth of vocabulary knowledge is considered to be the understanding level of various aspects of a given word (Teng, 2014).

### **1.5.3 Reading Comprehension Performance**

According to Ahmadi et al. (2013), reading comprehension refers to the act of understanding and interpreting text by effectively combining several intricate processes that include language, reading words, understanding word meanings, and reading fluently.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### **۲.۱. The Nature of Vocabulary Knowledge**

It is known that L2 vocabulary cannot be learned quickly or simultaneously, even though the mechanics of vocabulary learning are still not fully understood. This is because learning a word involves mastering several different word knowledge components, and even learning a single word is incremental in nature, changing gradually over time (Schmitt, 2000).

Sometimes, vocabulary knowledge is thought to be limited to separated memory of specific word meanings (Nagy, 2005); this is not the case, however. The primary factors influencing the process of learning a new word are not only the "learning burden," which is defined as "the amount of effort required to learn a word including its knowledge and patterns" (Nation, 2001, p. 7) but also the features of knowing a word (Nation, 1990). Students need to be aware of the right term to use, when to use it, and how. Meaning, form, and usage are the three components of vocabulary knowledge that are constructed by this information (Nation, 2001).

Moreover, vocabulary knowledge is multifaceted and built on a continuum. Henriksen (1999), for example, offered three aspects of lexical competence: (a) partial to precise knowledge, (b) depth of knowledge, and (c) receptive to productive application ability. According to Schmitt (1998), p. 118, "ranges on a continuum rather than being

known versus unknown" describes partial to exact knowledge. Depth of knowledge and size, or breadth of knowledge, are two more crucial differences between the two dimensions (Henriksen 1999). Although lexical information quality, or how well a learner knows a word, is related to depth of vocabulary knowledge, the quantity, or the number of words, that learners know at a given level of language competence is related to breadth of vocabulary knowledge. (Nation, 2001).

## **2.2 The Process of Vocabulary Learning**

Vocabulary learning is a well-established prerequisite for language learning (Harley, 1996). In order to promote adequate vocabulary acquisition, four partners in the vocabulary-learning process—students, instructors, material authors, and researchers—must participate in the learning process (Schmitt, 2008). However since it depends on so many different variables, the optimal way to achieve effective vocabulary growth is still relatively unknown (de Groot, 2006). For instance, one crucial element influencing how efficient a task is in helping students acquire vocabulary is the quantity of word-related activity it requires (Hill & Laufer, 2003).

Incidental and purposeful vocabulary learning are two main approaches to vocabulary acquisition. Incidental vocabulary learning involves activities aimed at committing lexical information to memory, while purposeful vocabulary learning involves learning vocabulary as a by-product of non-specific activities. Intentional vocabulary learning involves using word cards, mnemonic devices, notebooks, vocabulary exercises, and consulting dictionaries. Focusing on learning form during L2 vocabulary acquisition can help learners acquire new vocabulary in varied contexts, as L1 learners are already familiar with the target vocabulary. (Ellis, 2006).

## **۲.۳ The Size of Vocabulary Knowledge**

The first stage in vocabulary learning is to have a sufficient vocabulary size to understand and utilize language. More crucially, language learners must update their vocabulary size because "vocabulary is a continually changing entity with new words and new uses of old words being added and old words falling into disuse" (Nation & Waring, 1997, p. 6). In terms of vocabulary size, an essential point to consider is the amount of vocabulary a language student should know. one must first understand what "knowing a word" entails. Nation (1990) defined word knowledge in a complete framework and distinguished between receptive and productive knowledge in an effort to provide a measurable definition of "word knowledge."

When acquiring a new vocabulary, it is also critical to keep in mind that not every word in a language is equally beneficial, and word frequency is one way to gauge this. It is commonly recognized that most running words in conversation are composed of a tiny subset of word types called high frequency words (the most frequent 2,000 words). These words appear quite frequently. On the other hand, a vast array of categories, which are extremely uncommon, include low frequency words (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2012).

## **2.4 The Depth of Vocabulary Knowledge**

Depth of vocabulary knowledge refers to the comprehensive understanding of various aspects of a given word. Put simply, it measures how well a learner is acquainted with a word (Qian, 1999). The concept can be traced back to Richards (1976), who defined word knowledge as encompassing factors such as relative frequency, collocation, usage limitations, syntactic behavior, basic forms, derivations, associations with other words, semantic value, and the multiple meanings associated with a word. Nation (1990) later expanded on this by introducing the notions of receptive and productive knowledge, and identifying form, position, function, and meaning as the

key components of lexical knowledge. Building upon these foundations, Qian (1999) further refined the theoretical frameworks by incorporating pronunciation, spelling, morphological properties, syntactic properties, meaning, register, and frequency into the depth of vocabulary knowledge.

While the depth of vocabulary knowledge has been a focal point in both first language (L1) studies (Anderson & Freebody, 1981; Mezynski, 1983) and second language (L2) studies (Qian, 1999), further research is warranted given its intricate nature. One key question that remains unanswered is determining the sufficient level of lexical knowledge required for basic comprehension. Read (1993) introduced a word associates test to assess depth of vocabulary knowledge, significantly impacting the evaluation of how vocabulary depth influences reading comprehension. Additionally, Wesche and Paribakht (1996) devised a five-level elicitation test known as the vocabulary knowledge scale (VKS) to measure ESL learners' vocabulary growth and proficiency. The VKS outlines levels of vocabulary depth, ranging from complete unfamiliarity with a word to recognizing it, having a partial understanding, to confidently using it accurately. While these assessments have shed light on estimating the depth of lexical knowledge, further research is essential to ascertain the predictive capacity of vocabulary depth in enhancing listening comprehension skills.

## **2.5 Vocabulary and Reading**

Numerous scholars and academics have highlighted the significance of merging vocabulary acquisition with the enhancement of reading abilities. Zimmerman (1997) noted that engaging vocabulary instruction coupled with a mix of self-selected and curriculum-related reading material resulted in notable improvements in vocabulary proficiency. Similarly, Hill and Laufer (2003) discovered that after-reading activities that specifically targeted key vocabulary terms yielded more substantial

gains in vocabulary acquisition compared to comprehension exercises that necessitated understanding the meanings of those target words.

Laufer (1992) and Schmitt et al. (2011) have highlighted a direct correlation between vocabulary size and reading comprehension, suggesting that learners may struggle to understand a text if their vocabulary knowledge falls significantly below a certain threshold, as noted by Pringprom (2012). While vocabulary size plays a crucial role in comprehension, it is essential to acknowledge that various other factors can also impact learners' reading comprehension abilities. These factors include the influence of the first language, group dynamics, individual differences, and the complexity of the text (Thomas & Healy, 2012).

## **2.6 Reading Skill**

Reading is a dynamic activity that encompasses more than just word identification within a written passage. The process encompasses linguistic skill, comprehension of textual messages, a degree of reader inference, perception, psychomotor engagement, and emotional response (Rahman, 2007).

Alyousef (2006) asserts that comprehending written text requires a challenging process of reassembling the author's concepts. Readers use their reading skills to comprehend a text while actively interacting with it. The author suggests that reading involves six broad domains of knowledge and abilities. The domains included are automatic recognition abilities, vocabulary and structure knowledge, discourse knowledge, content/world background information, synthesis and evaluation skills, and metacognitive knowledge.

### **2.1.2.3 Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is a fundamental language skill that is considered essential for all students to acquire. It enables learners to effectively assimilate the wide range of information found in written sources (Klingner et al., 2007).

According to Horst et al. (2010), RC is a challenging endeavor that involves several levels of processing. Vocabulary acquisition is a crucial aspect of comprehension, since it enables individuals to effectively understand and interpret new words encountered in a text. RC issues consume substantial cognitive resources that might be allocated to more intricate levels of textual analysis in readers. Relying just on context information is inadequate for predicting the meaning of unfamiliar words.

#### **2.1.2.3.1 Reading Comprehension Models**

The process of reading involves mental activities within the reader's mind, which are explained through three main models: bottom-up, top-down, and interactive models. These models, considered metaphorical by Grabe and Stoller (2011), provide symbolic representations of reading comprehension processes. They play a crucial role in enhancing reading comprehension by assisting readers in understanding texts and addressing challenges encountered during reading. Each model differs in its approach to how meaning is extracted from written material. The bottom-up model focuses on how individual words contribute to comprehension, emphasizing the decoding of words to understand their significance. In contrast, the top-down model highlights the importance of a reader's prior knowledge and experiences in interpreting text content. The interactive model, on the other hand, illustrates how metacognitive reading strategies interact with the text and the reader's background knowledge to facilitate the reading process (Eskey, 2005).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Research design describes the methodical process a researcher uses to collect, examine, and understand data. A study design known as a descriptive-correlational design aims to find and analyze correlations between two or more variables to determine their significance

concerning causality (Fraenkel et al., 2012). A descriptive–correlational design is employed in this study.

### 3.2 Population and Sample

According to Kumar (2018), the population is the group of people from which the researcher gathers the data needed to address the study questions. The population of this study comprises (5833) Iraqi EFL 5th preparatory school students in Al–Rusafa III, Baghdad.

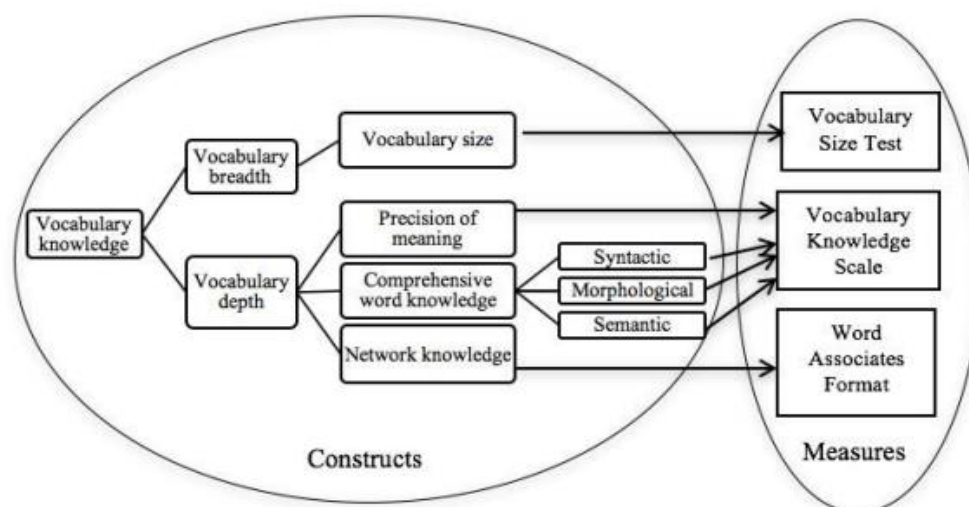
A sample is a collection of items, occasions, or individuals that accurately represent the features of the population as a whole (Mills & Gay, 2019). The sample of this study comprises (360) students selected randomly from the sample. The number of the sample represents the population according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

### 3.3 Instruments

Four instruments have been used to achieve the aims of this study; for the size of vocabulary knowledge, vocabulary size test has been used. For the depth of vocabulary knowledge, vocabulary knowledge scale and word association format test have been used ( see figure 3.1). While for reading comprehension performance, reading comprehension test has been used as follows:

**Figure 3.1**

***Measures of Vocabulary Size and Depth.***



### **3.3.1 Vocabulary Size Test**

Vocabulary size test is adapted from (Nation & Beglar, 2007). This test uses a multiple-choice format, where each target word is presented in a brief context that does not provide a definition. The context is accompanied by three distractors and one correct response. The VST is constructed using fourteen frequency levels consisting of 1,000 lexical families derived from the British National Corpus (BNC). The VST test consists of 140 items that are divided into 14 levels of difficulty. Each level progressively increases in difficulty and consists of ten items. It consists of ten items for each 1,000-word frequency level, with each item representing 100 word families. In total, the test assesses knowledge of up to 14,000 words. The adaptation is at the level of reducing the numbers of levels to suit the level of proficiency of the sample. The students' score on the test must be multiplied by 100 to represent each level of proficiency concerning vocabulary size.

### **3.3.2 Vocabulary Knowledge Scale**

The vocabulary knowledge scale is used to measure the first part of depth of vocabulary knowledge. It is proposed by Wesche and Paribakht (1996) and modified by Folse (2006) and adapted in this study. In this test, learners demonstrate their understanding of a given set of words by completing three parts for each test item. If a student indicates unfamiliarity with a word, they do not need to complete the subsequent parts and assign (zero). If the student knows the word meaning, they provide a definition either in English with a synonym or in their native language with a translation and assign (1 mark). If the student constructs a sentence using the target, they get ( 2 marks). There are (20) items in the scale, each scale has a target word derived from ENGLISH FOR IRAQ student's textbook for 5<sup>th</sup> preparatory classes.

### **3.3.3 Word Association Format Test**

This test, derived from (Read. 1993), assesses three components of vocabulary: synonymy, polysemy, and collocation. The majority of the stimulus words are comprised of standard academic adjectives. The set WAT consists of 20 components. Each element in WAT comprises a single stimulus word, which is an adjective derived from ENGLISH FOR IRAQ student's textbook for 5<sup>th</sup> preparatory classes, along with two boxes, each holding four words. Out of the four words in the left box, one to three words could be of the same meaning as one part or the whole meaning of the stimulus word. Additionally, there can be one to three words that have a strong association with the stimulus word among the four words in the right box. The test taker's instruction guide clarifies that each item always has four valid responses. This configuration significantly decreases the probability of making accurate guesses. Each word that was picked properly received a score of one point in the scoring system. The highest attainable score, therefore, was 80 for the 20 items.

### **3.3.4 Reading Comprehension Performance Test**

Reading comprehension test is adapted from ( Sabah & Kamil, 2023). It is modified at the level of items to be true/ false format. There are 10 items in this test, each of which assign ( zero) for incorrect answer and (1 mark) for correct one.

### **3.4 Face Validity**

Face validity is often regarded as one of the most valid kinds of validity. It is used to assess the visual suitability of the material shown on a measuring instrument. The validity of an instrument is determined by specialists who examine whether or not it accurately assesses what it is intended to measure (McNamara, 2000). The instruments in the present study have been reviewed by a jury of 10 specialists in the disciplines of ELT in order to ensure their face validity. They are asked to assess the

suitableness and appropriateness of the items or components. Their recommendations and remarks have been considered.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 The First Aim Results

To achieve the first aim of this study, the tests and the scale of vocabulary size and depth are conducted to the sample of the study as follows:

#### 4.1.1 The Sample Vocabulary Size

To ascertain the actual vocabulary size of the sample, the initial step involves calculating the total score for each student based on their individual test scores. Subsequently, the percentage of correct answers is determined for each student. Ultimately, the vocabulary size of the sample can be identified by analyzing the mean score of correct answers and the corresponding percentage scores. See Table (4.1)

**Table (4.1)**

*The Results of Sample's Vocabulary Size Test*

Vocabulary size	N	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
	200	6.382	21	56	34.67
		7.97716	%26	%70	%43

Table 4.1 reveals that the standard deviation of 6.382 signifies significant variation in the students' total scores, indicating a broad dispersion in vocabulary size within the sample. The range of total scores spanning from 21 to 56 underscores the varied performance levels among the students. The vocabulary size of the sample is considered average, given the mean score of 34.67. The percentage range of correct answers fluctuates from 26% to 70%, with a mean percentage score of 43%, illustrating the distribution of performance levels in terms of correct answers. Consequently, Iraqi EFL preparatory school students demonstrate diversity in vocabulary size and proficiency levels, with an average vocabulary size represented by the mean score

of 34.67 and a spectrum of performance levels delineated by the percentage scores.

#### 4.1.2 The Sample Vocabulary Depth

The sample arithmetic mean on the test is 64.68, with a standard deviation of 5.372. The theoretical mean is 60. The one-sample t-test is used to determine the statistical significance of the disparity between the sample mean and the Theoretical mean. Statistical analysis reveals a considerable difference. The calculated T-value is determined to be 3.393, which exceeds the crucial T-value of 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 and with 199 degrees of freedom. This indicates that the research sample has a significant degree of vocabulary knowledge. See Table 4.2

**Table 4.2**

*The Result of Sample's Depth of Vocabulary Knowledge*

Depth of vocabulary knowledge	n	M	SD	Theoretical Mean	df	T-value computed	T-value Critical	Sign (0.05)
	200	64.68	5.372	60	199	3.393	1.96	significant

#### 4.2 The Second Aim Results

To achieve the second aim of this study which identifying the level of reading comprehension performance of the sample, arithmetic mean on the test is 6.86, with a standard deviation of 2.249. The theoretical mean is 5. The one-sample t-test is used to determine the statistical significance of the disparity between the sample mean and the Theoretical mean. Statistical analysis reveals a considerable difference. The calculated T-value is determined to be 11.663, which exceeds the crucial T-value of 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 and with 199

degrees of freedom. This indicates that the research sample has a high level of reading comprehension performance. See Table 4.3

**Table 4.3**

*The Result of Sample's Reading Comprehension Performance*

Reading Comprehension Performance	n	M	SD	Theoretical Mean	df	T-Value Comp.	T-Value Crit.	Sign (0.05)
	200	6.86	2.249	5	199	11.663	1.96	significant

### 4.3 The Third Aim Results

To achieve the third aim of this study which identifying the relationship between vocabulary size and depth with reading comprehension performance of the sample which is identifying the correlation between Iraqi EFL preparatory school; students' vocabulary size and reading comprehension performance, the scores of the two test are analyzed using Pearson Correlation Coefficient, and the results are shown in Table (4.4)

**Table (4.4)**

*The Correlation Between Iraqi EFL Preparatory School; Students' Vocabulary Knowledge (Size & Depth) and Reading Comprehension Performance*

Variable	N	The Correlation Coefficient	p-value	Sig. (0.05)
VST	200	0.013	0.851	unsig
DEPTH	200	0.987	0.000	sig

According to the results shown in Table 4.4, the correlation analyses is conducted between vocabulary size and reading comprehension performance reveal non-significant correlations. The correlation coefficient for vocabulary size (0.013) with reading comprehension performance had p-values of 0.851, which exceeded the significance level of 0.05 for a sample with a degree of freedom of 199. Therefore, it

can be concluded that there is no significant correlation between vocabulary size and reading comprehension. In essence, students with a moderate vocabulary size may not perform well in reading comprehension.

On the other hand, a correlation analysis is conducted between the depth of vocabulary and reading comprehension, revealing a significant correlation between them. The correlation coefficient of 0.987 with a p-value of 0.000 indicates a strong and statistically significant relationship between the depth of vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension performance. This significant correlation suggests that the depth of vocabulary knowledge has a positive impact on reading comprehension performance. Therefore, students who possess a deeper understanding of vocabulary are likely to demonstrate better reading comprehension abilities.

#### **4.4 Discussion of results**

The study indicates the following key findings:

##### **1– Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension Performance Levels:**

- The study highlights the diversity in vocabulary size and proficiency levels among the Iraqi EFL preparatory school students. The average vocabulary size and the range of performance levels are illustrated by the percentage scores show variability in students' abilities. The diversity in vocabulary size and proficiency levels can be attributed to various factors such as individual learning styles, exposure to English language materials, and personal interest in language learning.
- Furthermore, the sample demonstrates a significant degree of vocabulary knowledge based on the one-sample t-test results, which indicates a considerable difference between the sample mean and the theoretical mean.
- Similarly, the high level of reading comprehension performance among the research sample is supported by statistical analysis, showing

a significant disparity between the sample mean and the theoretical mean.

## 2– Vocabulary Size and Reading Comprehension:

– The correlation analysis between vocabulary size and reading comprehension performance do not show a significant correlation, suggesting that there is no strong relationship between vocabulary size and reading comprehension in the sample of Iraqi EFL preparatory school students. The lack of a significant correlation between vocabulary size and reading comprehension performance suggests that while having a larger vocabulary may be beneficial, it does not guarantee improved reading comprehension skills. Other factors such as reading strategies, critical thinking abilities, and contextual understanding also play a role in comprehension.

– This implies that students with a moderate vocabulary size may not necessarily perform well in reading comprehension, as indicated by the non-significant correlation between these two variables. The non-significant correlation implies that students with moderate vocabulary sizes may still excel in reading comprehension if they possess strong analytical and inferential skills

## 3– Vocabulary Depth and Reading Comprehension:

– In contrast, the correlation analysis conducted between the depth of vocabulary and reading comprehension revealed a significant correlation.

– This significant correlation suggests that students who have a deeper understanding of vocabulary, including nuances, connotations, and usage in context, are more likely to demonstrate better reading comprehension abilities compared to those with a shallower vocabulary knowledge.

## 4.5 Conclusion

This study of Iraqi EFL preparatory school students revealed a diverse range of vocabulary sizes and reading comprehension skills. While vocabulary size didn't directly correlate with comprehension, a deeper understanding of vocabulary (depth) did. This suggests that effective EFL instruction should focus on both vocabulary breadth and depth, along with other reading strategies, to enhance comprehension skills.

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