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Postgraduate Students' Submissions Edition: December 2021 Edition

Contents

His Excellency the Dean of the Faculty of Languages and Translation, Dean Abdullah Al-Melhi (right), receiving an award for his contribution to academic excellence in Saudi Arabia from His Excellency the President of King Khalid University, Prof. Fallah Al-Solamy.

Foreword by the Honorable Dean, Dr. Abdullah Al-Melhi

In The Name of Allah
The Compassionate,
The Merciful

Dearest students, colleagues and readers, it is with a great sigh of relief that I can once again communicate with you through our treasured Mountain Top publication. I am sure that, like me, you too are very pleased to be back on campus. We are so fortunate to, once again, enjoy the benefits of face-to-face interaction with each other. Let us use this opportunity to make up for some of the losses we may have incurred during the long closure of on-campus classes.

As you all know, the Coronavirus Pandemic has led to major setbacks for people all over the world. In our case, many of our projects and plans had to be temporarily postponed. We consider these unavoidable hiccups as being small learning curves before we get back on track. We are still enthusiastically working on achieving the goals which we have set for our college.

Currently there are some major changes appearing on our immediate horizon. Firstly, we are on the verge of transitioning to a new, trimester system. Various committees and teams are in the process of developing new time frames and suitable academic materials to facilitate this crucial move. Secondly, as you may have heard by now, we will be moving to the new campus in the very near future. Although we do not have an exact date at this moment in time, it is important for all of us to be fully prepared for this inevitable move. I strongly encourage all affected persons to visit the new campus before we officially begin our classes and activities there. In this way you can ensure that you have familiarized yourself with such factors as: possible alternative accommodation, location, distance, travel time and routes.

Finally, as we enter this new era of change and innovation, I urge students to make full use of the opportunities which being an English scholar affords them. Always set your goals high and strive to constantly remain on track. At present, our country has ambitious plans for dramatic economic changes. The English Language skills you are now acquiring and developing are vital assets for our country to successfully achieve these goals.

Last but not least, many thanks to the students who contributed to this publication.

May Allah continue to bless us all, Inshallah

An Overview of Learners' Autonomy in EFL Learning and How it Has Been Investigated in the Saudi EFL Context

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Abstract

Teaching does not cause learning; learners should be responsible for creating their own paths (Larsen-Freeman, 2006). Thus, it is essential to promote this concept in the language learning process. In order to achieve the desired aims of language learning and teaching, the importance of a learner's autonomy in language education should be recognized. This research essay manifests some important points related to learner's autonomy in language learning and teaching. A general overview of learner's autonomy in language learning is presented. Besides, suggested definitions for learner's autonomy are illustrated. In addition, the evident role of teachers to motivate their students to take charge of their own learning is fully explained. Moreover, previous research regarding teachers' perspectives towards the autonomy of learners is displayed. Furthermore, the introduction of this crucial topic in the Saudi EFL context in different studies is uncovered. Indeed, this paper highlights the significance of learner's autonomy as an educational goal to be successfully accomplished.

Keywords: autonomy, mobile applications, perspectives, Saudi EFL context

Language learning is an interesting field of study. People naturally enjoy knowing how to speak a different language and the distinguished way of communicating that comes with it. Additionally, it can be considered a privileged feature to have the capacity to integrate with people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Haque (2019) has described people as they are uniquely attributed to learn and use language and even called them a language-specific species. Indeed, the process of language learning cannot be separated from the way of teaching this language. According to recent research and new developments in language learning and teaching, it has been suggested that the best way of teaching a language is to engage language learners in this challenging process and to maintain the concept of learner's autonomy. A majority of the studies in the English language learning field has focused largely on teaching or course effectiveness, but little has been done to look at what makes learners become self-motivated enough to take control of their own learning. However, this aspect needs to be investigated as a crucial quality of effective teaching. Teachers should consider learner's autonomy as an educational aim and create an appropriate environment to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning (Little, 2000).

To define the concept of learner's autonomy, it first has to be stated that this term was originated by Holec, in 1981, who is considered the father of learner's autonomy (Shangarffam & Ghazisaeedi, 2013). He has defined this term as the ability to take charge of one's own learning (Holec, 1981). Learner's autonomy is considered one of the significant topics in education in the twenty-first century. It has become an inevitable requirement for any pedagogical institution in order to create a knowledgeable generation of youth by enabling them to be responsible for their own learning in and out of educational institutions. Moreover, many researchers (Thornbury, 2006; Najeeb, 2013; Little, 1991)

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have described learner's autonomy as the independence the student has to pursue their own interests in language in their own time, outside of the classroom. Therefore, they can be able to enhance their own learning according to their own set of objectives and goals. Despite the fact that there is little consensus on its definition, learner's autonomy as a term is mostly associated with motivating self-esteem of students. Some researchers have declared it important for autonomous learners to have self-confidence and a high level of independence (Asiri & Shukri, 2020). Besides, Sella (2014) has emphasized that there is no single conclusive definition of autonomy. Indeed, Benson's definition can be accounted for as the most comprehensive definition of autonomy as he has described this concept as a multidimensional capacity that will take different forms for different individuals, and even for the same individual in different contexts or at different times (Benson, 2001). However, Littlewood (1999) has considered responsibility as a major dimension of this capacity. In fact, it can be assumed that autonomy is currently viewed as a prerequisite for success in language learning. Little (2000) has assured the essentiality of autonomy as he has declared that achievers have always been autonomous.

Needless to say, language teachers have a radical role in developing learner's autonomy. To be an autonomous learner is not an innate talent that learners are born with, it is indeed a skill that need to be nourished and mastered. Thus, the guidance of language teachers for their students in formal education to be more active and independent is extremely substantial. Teachers are not only required to convey information to learners but also to motivate learners to learn and guide them how to learn in an appropriate way (Rinantanti, 2015). To explain, it should be understood that the teacher is a guide, a facilitator, not a detainer of knowledge (Lamb, 2011). Language learners need to be aware of their abilities in creating and contributing in what they are trying to learn. The significance of supporting students to become more autonomous is considered one of the most prominent topics to be investigated in the field of foreign language learning and teaching. Indeed, teachers' help in enhancing learners to be autonomous is indispensable. Teachers who are supportive of autonomy need to raise learners' sense of control over their learning processes and should not undermine the identity of learners, their capacities and possibly their motivation levels (Lamb, 2011). Shahsavari (2014) has claimed that the classroom will be just a place where students attend with only the aim of passing exams if teachers do not realize the methods they can utilize to develop the autonomy of their students.

Additionally, Shahsavari (2014) has described promoting learner's autonomy as a moral duty for teachers, which distinctly confirms the essence of this crucial quality of teaching. Little, (2000) has noted that the pedagogical dialogue between the teacher and students, and the learning strategies used, can be considered effective factors in the promotion of learner's autonomy. There are numerous studies that investigate the necessity of being autonomous for teachers to be able to support their students' feeling of independence. According to Little, 'learner autonomy depends on teacher autonomy in two senses: it is

unreasonable to expect teachers to foster the growth of autonomy in their learners if they themselves do not know what it is to be an autonomous learner. In addition, teachers need to apply to their teaching strategies the same reflective and self-managing processes that have been attained during their learning' (1995, p. 175). In the same vein, other researchers have argued that teachers who themselves are not autonomous language learners may have a negative influence on the development of autonomy in their students.

Exploring the perspectives of teachers towards learner's autonomy has been the main topic of a handful of studies in various contexts. Since teachers are the most prevalent guidance provider and the extreme effective interlocutors in classrooms, their beliefs and perspectives towards learner's autonomy should be investigated and considered. As Alrabai (2017) has emphasized, the teacher plays a central role in learner's autonomy. Some of the studies have revealed that teachers have the belief that learners do not take responsibility for their learning and do not act autonomously because they think of their their teacher as the main figure in classrooms and that the main role in learning should be theirs. (Shahsavari, (2014); Borg & Al-Busaidi, (2012); Yıldırım, (2012)). Moreover, other studies have displayed the reasons that deter teachers from practicing autonomous learning in their classrooms. Shahsavari (2014) has stated in his study that some teachers detected that they were not allowed to be creative in their teaching, and they are following the rules to avoid having any problems with the administration. Thus, as it has been assumed if teacher's autonomy is not provided, there is little room for learner autonomy to be developed.

It is worth mentioning that classroom culture and dynamics in the society are of an essential role in constructing perceptions of both teachers and learners towards learner's autonomy. However, Camilleri in her study (1999), has claimed that teachers are willing to change and to develop practice for learner autonomy, but they are reluctant to involve learners in defining aims and in methodological decisions. Additionally, Chan's study (2003) has demonstrated that teachers are quite positive about supporting autonomous learning, yet they do not provide learners with opportunities to develop decision-making skills because they are restricted by curriculum constraints and time management problems to keep up with the curriculum. In fact, the majority of the studies have proved the significance of the teacher's role in promoting learner autonomy. Dogan and Mirici (2017) have noted that although there have been some disagreements, most instructors believe that learner's autonomy could not be promoted without the help of teachers. However, it has to be highlighted those diversified issues related to EFL teachers' perspectives towards autonomous learning should be intensively debated.

Concerning investigating the topic of learner's autonomy in the Saudi EFL context, it can be declared that few studies have investigated learner's autonomy as a vital issue in the Saudi EFL context. Al-Rabai (2017) has stated in his mixed method research that learner's

autonomy appears to be well beyond the capabilities of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. Thus, recommendations have been offered to the Saudi government and related institutions to lead the charge in this direction and to lay the foundations for teacher autonomy, as it is the core of developing learner's autonomy. Additionally, he suggests that promoting learner's autonomy should be considered a key educational goal of English language teaching in Saudi Arabia. In the same vein, Al Asmari (2013) has conducted a study at Taif University English Language Center and emphasized that it is important to provide students with learner training and to make it an integral part of teaching to develop learner's autonomy. Asiri and Shukri (2020) have shown in their study involving 150 female EFL learners at the English Language Institute at King Abdul-Aziz University that there are low levels of autonomy among Saudi learners. Consequently, they have suggested that further studies are encouraged on promoting and raising awareness of learner's autonomy.

As it has been proven that technology has a radical impact on EFL learning in numerous contexts. Hazaea and Alzubi (2018) have explored the effect of Mobile Assisted Language Learning on learner's autonomy in their qualitative study in Najran University. They have examined the use of WhatsApp and Google's search engine in reading classes. Indeed, they have found that learners' autonomy is improved through the use of selected mobile applications in terms of taking responsibility for and making decisions about reading materials and the time and place of reading. Therefore, investigations into the role of mobile applications, and social media in particular, to foster learner's autonomy are highly needed.

To conclude, it can be assumed that it is impossible to teach learners everything they need to know in class. Thus, the class activity should be driven to the development of learner's autonomy. In fact, educators should be aware that the development of autonomous learning to the students implies better language learning and contributes to creating a promising future in the field of language learning and teaching. Additionally, it has to be acknowledged that being an autonomous learner can raise the awareness of one's responsibility as a member of a society. Therefore, learners need to be prepared for living in their society as independent individuals who can contribute to its advancement.

Lexical Ambiguity

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Vocabulary plays a significant role in learning languages. Yet, learning new vocabulary can be difficult due to factors such as learners' proficiency level, the large number of words that students need to learn, the complexity of words, the differences between the written and spoken forms of words, and ambiguity, which refers to a word that has two or more meanings. Over the past few decades, lexicon has received considerable attention in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), especially lexical ambiguity. Empirical research has addressed issues such as acquisition of ambiguous lexicon, processing lexical ambiguity, effect of lexical ambiguity in word recognition, and lexical ambiguity resolution (e.g., Haro & Ferre, 2018; Petten, 2006).

A word with various denotations is considered ambiguous for language learners. For example, the word 'pupil' in the sentence: 'She looked at her pupils' can refer to either the pupils of the eyes or the pupils in the class. This type of ambiguity is called 'lexical ambiguity'. According to Patten (2006), such ambiguous words with manifold meanings impede language learners' comprehension. Words of this nature are numerous in English; more than 80% of English words have multiple dictionary entries and some have totally different meanings (Rodd et al., 2002).

When encountering such words, for example, in translating texts, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) leaners need to choose an appropriate meaning that suits the context and matches the author's intended meaning. For instance, the word 'saw' in a sentence like 'He saw how the carpenter was sawing the wood with the saw' is confusing, since it has multiple meanings. Due to their lack of knowledge and exposure to the target language, learners are usually aware of the core meaning of a word, but less likely to know its other, alternative meanings. Unless the word 'saw' is used in a specific context, identifying its exact meaning becomes a challenge for EFL learners. Thus, understanding the meaning of such words and determining their correct usage is highly problematic in an EFL context.

Nevertheless, being aware of all the different meanings of one word is a difficult task that even native speakers might be incapable of. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to review current research on the issue of lexical ambiguity, which is a challenge faced by EFL learners in acquiring and using target vocabulary. In addition, this paper reviews literature on the notion of lexical ambiguity and explains how ambiguous words are learned, processed and resolved by language learners.

There are various forms of ambiguity; however, lexical and structural ambiguity are dominant in the literature. Lexical ambiguity is different from structural ambiguity, which refers to sentences with more than one phrase structure that can be understood in more than one way (Oaks, 2010). The sentence 'Put the block in the box on the table' can have two structures based on whether 'in the box' modifies 'the block' or not. In the 1970s, psycholinguists started to investigate lexical ambiguity to understand how it is processed in the first language (L1). Since then, most of the research has aimed at exploring the meaning of a word that has multiple meanings and developing an understanding of its process in the mind when a learner faces a sentence with an ambiguous word (Beretta et al., 2005; Hino & Lupker, 1996; Klepousnitou, 2002; Klein & Murphy, 2002).

Studies on lexical ambiguity in L1 have explored the effect of three variables: the context (Kellas & Vu, 1999; Martin et al., 1999; Simpson, 1981), meaning frequency (Dopkins et al., 1992; Duffy et al., 1988), and the type of lexical ambiguity (Bretta et al., 2005; Rodd et al., 2002). Then the focus of research shifted to non-native speakers to understand how retrieving these words from second language lexicon is influenced by EFL learners' proficiency level, frequency of meaning and semantic similarity. A few studies have investigated lexical ambiguity in the second language (L2), and most of them focused on ambiguity that results from homonymy (Elston-Guttler & Friederici, 2005; Frenck-Master & Prince, 1997; Love, Mass, & Swinney, 2003). However, Rodd et al. (2002) do not consider lexical ambiguity a fixed phenomenon, since EFL learners will not stop gaining new meanings of familiar words, such as the meanings that are associated with the development of mass media (e.g., post and tweet). Similarly, lexical ambiguity can have varied levels of difficulty in different languages (Bates, Devescovi, & Wulfeck, 2001), which can also affect the learners' progress of acquiring L2 vocabulary. On the issue of learning ambiguous words, there has been a focus on studying ambiguous words where learners are already familiar with one meaning, however, they must learn other new meanings, such as new jargon (Rodd et al., 2016). Based on this approach, research shows that young children do not easily add new meanings to words they are familiar with (Casenhiser, 2005; Doherty, 2004). Other studies have shown contradictory results in which children face no difficulty in assigning new meanings to familiar words in comparison to completely new words (e.g., Storkel, Maekawa, & Aschenbrenner, 2013; Storkel & Maekawa, 2005).

There are two types of lexical ambiguity: syntactic and semantic. Syntactic lexical ambiguity refers to the ambiguity of a grammatical category. For example, 'present' can be either the verb that indicates the action of giving someone a gift or the noun that can be the target of this activity. On the other hand, semantic ambiguity indicates that the ambiguity lies in the meaning of a word and is not related to its grammatical aspects (Vitello & Rodd, 2015). In addition, semantic lexical ambiguity has two types: polysemy, which distinguishes between ambiguous words with related meanings and homonymy, which refers to words with unrelated meanings but similar spellings. Literature has highlighted the significance of these

concepts in relation to the listeners' and readers' ability to recognize these words (Rodd et al., 2002; Klein & Murphy, 2001).

Polysemy refers to a word that has many related meanings in relation to the context in which it is employed (Makni, 2013). For example, the two meanings of the word 'head' are similar in the following sentences: 'My head hurts' and 'He is the head of the department'. Many studies have examined the acquisition of polysemous words by EFL learners from different linguistic backgrounds (Maby, 2005; Kim & Cho, 2015; Wei & Lou, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2015). Although acquiring polysemous words by Arabic EFL learners has received little attention, several studies have investigated the teaching of English polysemous words (Makni, 2013). Other studies have explored the problems that Arabic EFL learners encounter in translating polysemous words (Hamlaoui, 2010; Salem, 2014). In addition, the role of Arabic EFL learners' proficiency level and the ability to differentiate among the various meanings of polysemous words has also been studied, and results indicate that such learners have "little awareness of polysemy in English" (Abdul, 2017, p.112).

Homonymy, on the other hand, refers to different unrelated meanings that have the same form of a word (Cruse, 1986). For instance, the two uses of the word 'ball' in 'She was dancing at the ball' and 'The boy was playing with the ball'. The former means a kind of party while the latter refers to a piece of equipment used in sport or games. Although research in the field of psycholinguistic shows that words with multiple and unrelated meanings influence lexical choices, studies have also found that homonyms are not always ambiguous, and they can facilitate the process of word recognition in SLA. Thus, ambiguous words may have an advantage of being processed faster than unambiguous or single-meaning words (Rodd, Gaskell, & Marselen-Wilson,2002). These contrasting findings may be due to the use of unfamiliar words or confusing variables, or "the approach employed to select ambiguous words across studies" (Haro & Ferre, 2018, p. 679). Moreover, this advantage of ambiguous words is based on the type of the task (Kawamoto, Farrar, and Kello, 1994), however, Klepousniotou and Baum (2007) found that it depends on how related the meanings are to each other (this was the case in polysemous words and not homonymous words). Therefore, in learning ambiguous words, polysemy is easier to learn than homonymy (Barak et al., 2019). The two types are mentally represented in different ways; words with related meanings act as a facilitator while words with unrelated meanings hinder lexicon learning (Rodd et al., 2002). Some studies have indicated that accessing homonymous words is not directed by the information of the context (Love et al., 2003; Elston-Guttler & Friederici, 2005). However, this finding cannot be generalized since the L2 learners in these studies were speaking European languages which have similar orthography.

In an EFL context, most learners can give at least one appropriate interpretation of a polysemous or homonymous word depending on their semantic knowledge. The meaning

of a polysemous or homonymous word must be determined by its context, since the surface form of the word is not enough to understand its intended meaning (Dash, 2008). Since both types have the same surface form (i.e., the spelling), it is possible to confuse one type with the other. However, homonyms are more confusing than polysemous words, which facilitate communication by adding more richness to learners' vocabulary. Learners who face lexical ambiguity usually lack the required knowledge of polysemous and homonymous words. Consequently, ignoring lexical ambiguity may cause various complications for EFL learners: it restricts recalling the meanings of ambiguous words, negatively affects their lexical choices and leads to incomplete interaction (Kidd & Holler, 2009). Hence, this problem can be solved by investigating the multiple meanings of these words and understanding the practice of distinguishing between the two types in EFL classrooms. Furthermore, lexical ambiguity can be resolved by using several models which have been introduced in the literature. For instance, "the ordered model, the exhaustive access model, the multiple access model and the contextual model" (Petten, 2006).

In the Saudi EFL context, no studies have been found that explore lexical ambiguity of EFL learners except a few related to polysemy that were mentioned earlier. However, there are studies in other contexts that mainly discuss ambiguity in the Arabic language. For example, in the Jordanian context, a study has identified structural ambiguity in relation to translation and the negative affect of ambiguity aspects in the Arabic language (Rabadi & Althawbih, 2015). Similarly, in the Kuwaiti context, a study assessed the translation strategies in translating polysemous words in Quran (alQinai, 2012). Another study tried to solve the ambiguity of Arabic words by using Arabic Word Sense Disambiguation (WSD) (Elayeb, 2019). The most recent study in the Saudi context in the field of Arabic language ambiguity investigated the causes of lexical ambiguity in information retrieval applications in Arabic (Omar & Aldawsari, 2020).

In this paper, literature on the phenomenon of lexical ambiguity, its types and how it is processed and resolved in native and non-native learners has been discussed. Furthermore, how ambiguous words are learned and their effect on EFL learners has been highlighted. Finally, examples of the few studies that have been conducted in the Saudi context and other studies that examine the effect of lexical ambiguity on the Arabic language are presented briefly. Research on lexical ambiguity is significant for non-native speakers in general and EFL learners in particular since it would contribute to our awareness of the process of retrieving multiple meanings from L2 vocabulary. Such knowledge would have implications for educators and teachers in designing curricula, modifying teaching procedures and assessing learners' use of vocabulary. Since lexical ambiguity can hinder communication, resolving such ambiguity should be the concern of linguists and SLA scholars.

Enhancing the Effectiveness of Vocabulary Retention Through Repetition for EFL Students at Abha College of Technology

Mohammed A. Abuzaifah, Ph.D. Student

Introduction

As an EFL teacher working for about 15 years in Saudi Arabia, I have continually noticed that many students have difficulties learning and maintaining English vocabulary items over time, and therefore, their English proficiency is remarkably low. Among the many reasons that may lay behind this phenomenon, one is the simple fact that many students find learning and memorizing a huge number of English words a challenging task. As a result, negative consequences are twofold: students may score badly on the course, or, most crucially, their English communicative competence may remain poor. To avoid such outcomes, I have designed a technique that I assume will yield positive results in helping students learn and retain new vocabulary items more easily.

In this action research, I will examine a new learning technique that is believed to help EFL students gain more knowledge of English lexis. The application of this technique will include frequent repetition of a list of course vocabulary items by both the teacher and the students, over a long period. No additional instructions will be given to students, e.g., students will not be asked to memorize this list of vocabulary or advised that this list of vocabulary is going to feature in tests, etc. The purpose of this experiment is to discover whether such a technique will effectively help students acquire vocabulary items with ease and without any undue stress.

Background

Both groups, 53 non-English major undergraduate students, maintain almost the same entry-level of English proficiency (based on their performance in class and their scores throughout the course, as well as their GPAs when they were granted college admission (majoring in office management). That said, it can be noted that they also share the same or similar motivation and attitude towards learning English. It is notable that most students in these two groups are demotivated low achievers, and thus they lack proper L2 learning strategies. The number of high-achieving students in these two groups range between three to four students in each group.

Generally, English courses for students in this major are supplementary courses. Students study three courses of English during the diploma level. These are the only three courses in which the medium of instruction is English (sometimes the L1 is used, due to the low L2 proficiency level of students). The other subjects in the diploma program are Arabic, and the medium of instruction is Arabic, too. Upon completing the degree, English competence is not a required skill for many jobs available for the graduates, although it is a preference. This is one of the reasons that some students are not highly motivated to learn English.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is a lack of retention of vocabulary items by EFL students at Abha College Technology. This has resulted in an unsatisfactory vocabulary size for Saudi EFL learners. Al-Masri and Milton (2012) argue that it is "on average, some way short of the kind of level associated with complete fluency in EFL."

Specifically, this action research will answer the following:

- What is the effectiveness of reading vocabulary lists repeatedly to the EFL students at Abha College of Technology (reading to the students and by the students reading to themselves)?
- What is the effectiveness of reading advanced vocabulary lists repeatedly to the EFL students at Abha College of Technology (reading to the students and by the students reading to themselves)?
- What is the effectiveness of reading basic vocabulary lists repeatedly to the EFL students at Abha College of Technology (reading to the students and by the students reading to themselves)?

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested through teachers' observation and evaluation before experimenting:

- There is no significant difference between the post-test mean score of the experimental and control group at 0.05.
- There is no significant difference between the post-test mean score of the advanced vocabulary of the experimental and control group at 0.05.
- There is no significant difference between the post-test mean score of the basic vocabulary of the experimental and control group at 0.05.

Literature review

Learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is for Saudi learners "both a promising endeavor and a challenging undertaking" (Al-Seghayer, 2019). One of the important skills of learning EFL is to increase one's vocabulary size. Effective communicative skills require considerable knowledge of L2 vocabulary. It is worth noting that communication in any language can take place if the user of the target language maintains sufficient vocabulary, enabling them to receive and produce linguistic messages. This can occur in the absence of complex or advanced grammar, or advanced rhetorical skills. Nation (2001) asserts that "Vocabulary learning is not a goal in itself, it is done to help learners listen, speak, read or write more effectively".

Learning vocabulary is a substantial language skill, one that is responsible for the overall development of language skills. Zhan-Xiang (2004) compares the process of learning vocabulary to building a building, little by little, brick by brick. It is a continuous process, even for advanced learners. It is indeed a prolonged learning experience that plays a crucial role for L2 learners.

Numerous studies support the fact that learning vocabulary is prioritized over learning grammar or other language skills. This is consistent with Thornbury's (2002) study, while Aldreson (2005) argues that "the scope of a person's vocabulary has an immense bearing on their language skills". In the same study, Alderson (2005) found that there is a strong correlation between vocabulary and language skills.

Frequent contact with a particular vocabulary item or items, incidental or intentional, ensures the development of vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 2001; Oxford and Scarecella, 1994). In the same vein, teachers and language experts note that there are certain vocabulary items learned easily by low-achieving students, without being directly taught to them and that are not part of the targeted vocabulary items in the course. For example, redundant words like

exam, *test*, *final test*, *homework*, *assignment*, *quiz*, etc. The knowledge of these words is assumed to have been acquired by students through frequent encounters with them.

Methodology

The present study uses a quantitative research method. It will also implement a quasi-experimental design. The subject of this study consists of 53 non-English major students in their first year at Abha College of Technology. The researcher selected a purposive sample of participants, distributed into two groups: 27 students in the control group and 28 students in the experimental group. The experimental group received extra training on reading the same list of vocabulary (50 vocabulary items) twice every week, in addition to the normal lessons of the week. The control group was taught in a normal way with no extra training.

Participants in both groups were aged between 19-22 years old. They are all males. Both groups are homogenous. They maintain a very low level of English proficiency.

The tools used in this study are a set of vocabulary items, frequent teaching of these particular words, and a vocabulary test. The list of vocabulary items contains 50 words, read out twice a week by the teacher as well as the students. No additional instructions were given to students, e.g., they were not required to memorize this list of words, nor were they asked to study it as part of test preparation. The study was conducted online, via blackboard sessions.

The possible effect of this experiment was measured through a vocabulary test administered after 53 days (7 weeks). The application of this experiment started on 10 February 2021 and concluded with a vocabulary test on 3 April 2021. The final measurement test (the vocabulary test, which consisted of 30 questions) was administered via Blackboard (online).

Procedure

The procedure followed in this experimental study begins with collecting some vocabulary items from every lesson delivered in the class (currently through online blackboard sessions). The selected vocabulary items are mostly key or new words from the lesson. This list of words is given to students in the experimental group, along with the translation in the Arabic language. The role of the teacher is only to read out the words to students and to elicit the meaning of some words, as necessary. Towards the end of the session, all students in the class were asked to read the words out loud. This process was repeated during every class, two classes every week, except the classes in which the midterm tests were given.

The experiment was not introduced to the control group. Both groups, the experimental group and the control group, were taught all lessons as normal, except the fact that the experimental group was given extra time (about 15 minutes) towards the end of every class to review and read the list of words. The same lesson content, teaching approach, exercises, quizzes, and midterm tests were given to both groups. No group was given more or less than the other, to ensure the validity of the experiment introduced in this research. The list of words included in the study included words from the textbook, *Business Goals 1* (Cambridge University Press, first published 2004, fifth printing 2009).

After conducting the experiment for 7 weeks, a vocabulary test was designed to measure the performance of students at this stage. The test consisted of 30 vocabulary questions; each question asked about one vocabulary item. The items were taken from the weekly vocabulary list (50 words) used in the experiment. It is important to note that the group of words selected for the test was divided into two categories: category 1 included *advanced vocabulary* items (relatively advanced compared to the low English level of the participants); category 2 included *basic vocabulary* items (relatively simple but new vocabulary). Test items were given to students in English, along with four different responses, in Arabic, for each item. Giving the choices in Arabic was due to the nature of the training itself, which incorporated the use of L1 in giving the definitions of words, to facilitate and accelerate learning. Besides, the L2 level of participants was remarkably low, and therefore the measurements may not yield accurate and precise results if the choices were provided in English. This test was administered on the 3rd of April 2021, 7 weeks since this experiment commenced.

Findings

To answer the first sub-question (1.1.), which concerns the retention of the advanced vocabulary items (relatively advanced, compared to the overall level of the students in the study, through frequent reading of a set of vocabulary items), T-Test was used to explore the differences between the students' scores in each of the experimental and control groups, in the post-application, to define the extent of their retention of the English language *advanced* vocabulary, as shown in Table (1):

Table 1: Differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the post-application of the English language advanced vocabulary retention test

Skills	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Advanced vocabulary	Control	27	8.6	4.309	5.113	53	0.000
	Experimenta	28	13.1	1.873			

(T) value at 53 df and 0.05 level = 1.671

Table (1) indicates the following:

There are statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 between the mean scores of the students of the control and experimental groups, in favor of the experimental group, in the post-application of the advanced vocabulary test in the English language, where the average score of the control group students was 8.6 out of 15, while the average score of students in the experimental group was 13.1 out of 15.

There are statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 between the mean scores of the students of the control and experimental groups, in favor of the experimental group, in the post-application of the advanced vocabulary test in the English language, where the value of calculated (t) is 5.113, which is greater than its tabular value (1.671). Also, the level of its significance reached 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that there are statistically significant differences in the post-application of the advanced vocabulary test in the English language in favor of the experimental group.

It is evident from Table 1 that the value of the standard deviation is high with respect to the control group scores (4.309), which indicates the great variation in the answers of the students of this group, while the standard deviation of the experimental group is noted to be low (1.873), which means that the dispersion or variation of the answers of students in this group is low.

To answer the second sub-question (1.2.), T-Test was used to explore the differences between the students' scores in each of the experimental and control groups, in the post-application, to define the extent of their retention of the English language *basic* vocabulary, as shown in Table (2):

Table 2: Differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the post-application of the English language basic vocabulary retention test

Skills	Group	No	Mean	SD	T	df	Sig.
Basic vocabulary	Control	27	8.7	5.035	4.280	53	0.000
	Experimental	28	13.2	2.144			

(T) value at 53 df and 0.05 level = 1.671

Table (2) indicates the following:

There are statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 between the mean scores of the students of the control and experimental groups, in favor of the experimental group, in the post-application of the basic vocabulary test in the English language, where the average score of the control group students was 8.7 out of 15, while the average score of students in the experimental group was 13.2 out of 15.

There are statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 between the mean scores of the students of the control and experimental groups, in favor of the experimental group, in the post-application of the basic vocabulary test in the English language, where the value of calculated (t) is 4.280, which is greater than its tabular value (1.671). Also, the level of its significance reached 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that there are statistically significant differences in the post-application of the basic vocabulary test in the English language in favor of the experimental group.

It is evident from Table 2 that the value of the standard deviation is high with respect to the control group scores (5.035), which indicates the great variation in the answers of the students in this group, while the standard deviation of the experimental group is noted to be low (2.144), which means that the dispersion or variation of the answers of students in this group is low.

To answer the main question of the research (1.), T-Test was used to explore the differences between overall students' scores in both the experimental and control groups, in the post-application, to define the extent of their acquisition of the English language vocabulary, as shown in Table (3):

Table 3: Differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the post-application of the English language vocabulary retention test

Skills	Group	No	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Total vocabulary	Control	27	17.30	8.783	5.014	53	0.000
	Experimental	28	26.29	3.526			

(T) value at 53 df and 0.05 level = 1.671

Table (2) indicates the following:

There are statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 between the mean scores of the students of the control and experimental groups, in favor of the experimental group, in the post-application of the English vocabulary acquisition test, where the average score of the control group students was 17.30 out of 30, while the average score of students in the experimental group was 26.29 out of 30.

There are statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 between the mean scores of the students of the control and experimental groups, in favor of the experimental group, in the post-application of the English vocabulary acquisition test, where the value of calculated (t) is 5.014, which is greater than its tabular value (1.671). Also, the level of its significance reached (0.000) is less than (0.05). This indicates that there are statistically significant differences in the post-application of the overall vocabulary test in the English language in favor of the experimental group.

It is evident from Table 3 that the value of the standard deviation is high with respect to the control group scores (8.783), which indicates the great variation in the answers of the students in this group, while the standard deviation of the experimental group is noted to be low (3.526), which means that the dispersion or variation of the answers of students in this group is low.

Discussion

On all counts, and based on the results of the experiment conducted in this study, it can be observed that the null hypothesis (hypothesis 1) is rejected, which assumed that there is no significant difference between the post-test mean score of the experimental and control group at 0.05. The findings clearly show that there is a significant difference between the students' performance in the experimental group and the control group, in favor of the

experimental group. As a result, the researcher must accept that the experiment, in general, has contributed substantially to the effectiveness of vocabulary retention at both levels (short-term and long-term retention). Also, the second and third sub-hypotheses follow the same pattern, which consequently show that there is a significant difference between the two groups with regards to the effectiveness of vocabulary retention at both levels (short-term and long-term retention).

The null hypotheses in 1.1. and 1.2. can also be rejected for the same reason mentioned in the discussion of the main hypothesis (1) above, which showed a significant difference between the performance of the experimental group and the control group, in favor of the experimental group, with regards to the retention of advanced vocabulary items as well as the basic vocabulary items.

Conclusion

It is evident that the vocabulary size for Saudi EFL learners is "on average, some way short of the kind of level associated with complete fluency in EFL" (Al-Masri and Milton, 2012). Therefore, this action research attempted to solve the problem that many low-achieving students suffer from in relation to vocabulary retention strategies utilized by learners. This has, consequently, and I am afraid negatively, too, affected the vocabulary size they have acquired.

This experimental study examined a technique proposed by the researcher, an EFL teacher, which he claimed would foster vocabulary retention for Saudi EFL students. Specifically, this technique entails that student will be given a set of vocabulary items, derived from the textbook being taught to them, and they only need to read the words. It is important to note that the researcher did not require students in the experimental group to memorize this list of words or pay any particular importance to it. Towards the end of the training period, 7 weeks, a vocabulary test was administered to the experimental group as well as to the control group. According to the findings of this measurement, merely reading the set of words, repeatedly and over a considerably long time, yielded positive results, and showed a significant improvement in the effectiveness of vocabulary retention strategies used by the students.

Implications

Based on the experiment conducted in this study, the technique involved has several implications, for 1) EFL teachers, 2) EFL students and 3) EFL textbook designers. Others like language experts, linguists, CALL experts, may find the applications of the technique

introduced in this study of use and relevant to the projects they are working on, which are within the area of EFL/ESL vocabulary acquisition and retention.

To help students improve their vocabulary knowledge, as well as to help them use effective retention strategies, EFL teachers are recommended to introduce this technique to their students, i.e., using the same method, but expanding list of words. Students may not be required to memorize these words (rote learning). Through the repetition of the vocabulary items, students will, intentionally or unintentionally, gain more vocabulary items without being compelled to do so. EFL teachers can modify this technique in the way that best suits their classes.

Besides, EFL teachers can train their students to make a list of new and important words and keep reading them 2 to 3 times a week, depending on the situation and their interest in learning.

Students can also use this technique independently. If they want to improve their knowledge of vocabulary, they are recommended to collect new or important words in a file, notebook, phone app, etc., and constantly read them, 2 to 3 times a week, depending on the situation and their interest in learning. This is assumed to help them retain vocabulary items more easily, and for a longer time.

To conclude, textbook designers can effectively implement such a strategy when designing EFL textbooks. At times, a particular unit in the textbook may introduce a set of targeted vocabulary to be acquired by the students. Once students complete this unit, the targeted words therein may not appear in the following parts of the textbook. As a result, the retention of these words may not be effective, as they only appeared once or in a relatively limited number of classes. Thus, students may only recall these words before the midterm or final tests. To avoid this issue, EFL textbook designers can create a list of targeted vocabulary items based on the textbook. This list of vocabulary items can be emphasized and incorporated into different parts of the syllabus. For example, the targeted vocabulary items can be re-introduced in several units throughout the textbook, either directly, by setting them out towards the end of every unit, or indirectly, through different exercises or sections of the syllabus. The frequent appearance of the targeted vocabulary items throughout the textbook is assumed to enhance students' effective retention of the targeted vocabulary items.

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The Impact of Anxiety on the Speaking Skill of English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners in the Saudi Context

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The Impact of Anxiety on the Speaking Skill of English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners in the Saudi Context

The notion of anxiety has been widely studied by psychologists for many years. Krashen (1982) identified anxiety as part of an individual's affective filter and stated that lower anxiety was "conductive to second language acquisition" (p.31). Similarly, Spielberger (1983 cited in Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1991) considers anxiety to be a "subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an aroused of automatic nervous system" (p. 27). Pekrun's(1992) expectancy-value theory of anxiety (EVTA) relates anxiety to a person's determination as to whether he or she can control a given threatening social situation.

Anxiety manifests through a feeling of fear towards uncertainties in relation to what will happen in the future. In a language learning context, this may include learners' beliefs about learning a foreign language and the expected outcomes. Various factors are associated with an individual's anxiety. For example, being in situations of heightened uncertainly such as the first day in a new environment or a job interview (Feiler & Powell, 2016; Bhujade, 2017). In a language learning context, an individual's anxiety is mainly related to classroom teaching and learning. In Saudi Arabia, most students learn English as their second language since Arabic is the primary language of the country. Notably, learning a second language comes with the challenges of learners' anxiety and fear, which can adversely affect learning outcomes. Specifically, students who learn English as a second language normally experience anxiety that adversely affects their speaking skills (Al-Hnifat et al, 2020).

In the Saudi context, a study by Alqahtani (2019) investigated a connection between anxiety experienced while speaking English and the outcome of students' English proficiency studying English as a second language at the university level. The study sampled a total of 197 students, in which 96 were males and 101 females. The results showed that a total of 31% of the learners had high anxiety while communicating in English. This was mainly attributed to a lack of self-confidence, which is a major cause of anxiety, and adversely affects the performance of language learners in Saudi Arabia. The findings further indicated that students who experienced anxiety tended to avoid expressing themselves in areas where they faced challenges, such as pronunciation or oral presentations. Therefore, frequent interaction with students is the key approach used by teachers to understand the problems faced by language learners. Notably, Saudi students who experience anxiety in an English language class may fail to reveal their weaknesses due to fear. Such students may continue to suffer and demonstrate poor performance in the English language.

Elkhafaifi (2005) reports that students who develop anxiety while speaking in English tend not to participate in classroom activities voluntarily and avoid making mistakes when using English language. This hinders the productivity of students as they cannot gauge their language learning progress. Moreover, they do not provide teachers with an opportunity to assess their knowledge and assist them with their identified weaknesses and learning needs (Elkhafaifi, 2005). The findings of this study by Elkhafaifi (2005) also suggest that students with speaking anxiety tend to avoid classroom activities, due to which they cannot practice their skills with other students in class. Without adequate speaking practice, a student cannot acquire proficiency in speaking English.

Language learning is one of the areas that is heavily affected by speech anxiety among students. Since speech anxiety negatively affects various aspects of language learning, it leads to the learners' overreliance on teachers to learn English. Therefore, it is important to identify issues that are associated with English speaking anxiety in Saudi Arabian universities. A study by Al-Hnifat et al. (2020) explored factors that appeared to cause anxiety among language students and its effects on learning. A sample of 20 students from a Saudi Arabian university was included in the study, which used semi-structured interviews to collect the data. The study found that student held poor beliefs, having anxious personalities, low confidence, unpreparedness to learn, a negative pre-learning mentality, and lack of prior learning experience with the language are some of the factors associated with anxiety among the students. Notably, some students tend to avoid speaking English in public due to fear of how people will perceive their skills. Since learning requires a lot of practice in speaking to gain more understanding and eventually master the language, anxiety developed by such factors negatively affects students' progress.

Anxious students often tend to overly rely on their teachers to learn new language skills. However, the information given by their teachers may not be enough to ensure language proficiency. Therefore, students must practice speaking skills on their own and gain confidence to speak in English without considering external factors that lead to the feelings of anxiety.

An anxious personality can be a childhood phenomenon that emerges from other psychological factors, such as previous failures. This can lead to a negative mentality that affects a learner's efforts. A negative learning mentality means that a student will develop an attitude that will negatively influence his/her outcomes in speaking English as their second language. A negative mentality and low confidence coupled with anxiousness may hinder a student from producing the language they have learnt, which would act as a starting point to practice speaking and apply the learned concepts. An anxious student may also come unprepared to learn, meaning that they may not take their studies seriously and may fail to see practicing through speech as a helpful approach (Al-Hnifat et al., 2020).

In a bid to reduce the learners' anxiety, ESL teachers should always assess their preparedness to learn. In this sense, they should detect the learning hindrances and address them to improve outcomes. One of the hindrances commonly observed by ESL teachers in the Saudi universities involves the occurrence of anxiety among students. Asif (2017) conducted a study to assess the triggers of language anxiety among ESL students in Saudi Arabia. The study used a 20-item questionnaire structured to collect information from English language teachers. The teachers reported that anxiety adversely affected ESL learning.

Asif (2017) also reported that the first language prowess is a major factor that leads to the development of anxiety. In most circumstances, students have an excellent grasp of their first language and tend to use it in speaking instead of communicating in the second language to improve their fluency. In Saudi Arabia, Arabic is the first language to most of the university students, yet they often compare their first language with English as their second language. As they compare the years they have taken to speak their first language with excellence, it leads to their anxiety and uncertainty about how long they will take to speak the new language with fluency. The anxiousness further affects students' focus on the second language as they consider their first language as the benchmark of their progress. However, ESL students are usually encouraged to focus on the level of new knowledge gained in English, rather than compare their first language with English (Asif, 2017).

Asif (2017) also reported that due to excessive anxiety, Saudi students in ESL classrooms tend to develop a fear of making mistakes. As a result, students may fail to be industrious in searching for new information that can contribute to their speaking proficiency. Some learning activities, such as role plays, are essential in learning a new language; however, anxious students tend to run away from such approaches and when they perform them, they do so with a fear of failing. This significantly affects their critical thinking and speaking skills. Teachers agree that mistakes are part of learning and the way a teacher responds to the students' mistakes in class may have a major influence on the development of anxiety and students' learning (Asif, 2017). Another factor that was cited as a major influence in anxiety development was negative classroom environment. Issues such as disorganized spaces, uncooperative learning environments and poor discussion groups may increase anxiety and affect the learning process. Therefore, teachers in Saudi Arabia have a role to minimize the anxiety by encouraging a cooperative learning environment where students do not worry about making mistakes (Asif, 2017). Failure to effectively address this problem may lead to poor performances among students of English language in the Saudi context.

The negative influence of anxiety on the speaking skill of learners of English as a second language in Saudi universities calls for effective intervention strategies to ensure that the learning progress is not affected. Rafada and Madini (2017) conducted a study that highlighted possible interventions to reduce anxiety in ESL classrooms. The study sampled a total of 10 female students aged 10-20 years from King Abdulaziz University. This

qualitative research used semi-structured interviews to collect data. The results showed that Saudi students feel anxious when speaking English in their ESL classrooms. Nevertheless, students have shown significant willingness to reduce anxiety with the aim of minimizing the negative influence of anxiety on their studies. Some of the approaches used to improve English skills and reduce anxiety included watching movie clips using the English language, interacting and speaking with native English speakers, reading English books and blogs, and practicing speaking English with classmates.

In a nutshell, anxiety has major effects on learning English as a second language in Saudi Arabian universities. These effects appear to result in poor performance of language learners, as it leads them to avoid participating in speaking activities in classroom. They also avoid answering questions, speaking with other students, and joining class discussions. Therefore, teachers should employ strategies that encourage speaking in English to realize improved learning outcomes in an ESL classroom.

English Vocabulary Knowledge of Saudi EFL Students

Najla Abdulrahman AlQahtani, Ph.D. Student

English Vocabulary Knowledge of Saudi EFL Students

EFL students are required to learn sufficient vocabulary as it is highly associated with being a good communicator in the target language (Milton and Alexiou, 2009). Vocabulary knowledge is central for successful English language learning because it allows EFL students to better comprehend and produce the target language in both oral and written modes. The term "vocabulary knowledge" has been described in the literature in different ways. According to Nation (2001), vocabulary is divided into four classes: high frequency, academic, technical and low frequency. Henriksen (1999) illustrated the meaning of lexical knowledge from three different perspectives: partial to precise knowledge, shallow to deep knowledge and receptive to productive knowledge. Various vocabulary issues are still under-researched, especially in an EFL setting. Among the largely unstudied aspects of vocabulary is the receptive/productive vocabulary knowledge. This might be attributed to the broad nature of vocabulary as a multidimensional aspect of language comprised of a several categories and sub-categories (Laufer and Goldstein 2004; Nation 2001; Schmitt et al. 2001). Additionally, many factors might affect the process of learning a language and particular vocabulary such as individual differences, aptitude and motivation.

Receptive vocabulary knowledge indicates students' ability to comprehend a word when they listen or read foreign-language texts, whereas productive knowledge is the ability to produce a word when the students write or speak. It is widely believed that words are known receptively first, and only after intentional or incidental learning do they become available for productive use (Coxhead, Nation and Sim, 2015). Most L2 learners can understand a considerable number of vocabularies which they cannot produce in their speaking or writing. Hence, vocabulary knowledge must be perceived as a continuum on which words develop from receptive to productive status (Zhou, 2010). According to Laufer and Goldstein (2004), "Learners of English as a foreign language need a vocabulary size of at least 3,500 high-frequency used English words to be able to cope with university reading tasks" (p.399). In order to measure the vocabulary size of EFL students, a test is used to measure both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. The receptive vocabulary size measure tests the learners' ability to understand the words' meanings, whereas the productive measure tests the ability of learners to produce appropriate words (Zhou, 2010).

The relationship between vocabulary size and the mastery of language skills is closely correlated. For instance, Stæhr (2008) examined the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and the skills of reading, listening and writing for 88 EFL learners who were at lower levels. The study demonstrated a substantial relationship between vocabulary size and reading, writing and listening skills. Similarly, Mehrpour and Rahimi's (2010) study showed vocabulary knowledge had a major role in reading comprehension while there was no significant impact on listening comprehension. Furthermore, writing skill, which is one of the challenging skills for learners, is highly associated with their vocabulary knowledge. This is asserted in a study carried out by Olinghouse and Wilson (2013) who

examined the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and writing in three writing genres (story, persuasive, and informative writing). Results showed that high frequency vocabulary was essential to achieve a high competence in writing. Reading skills, on the other hand, have a strong correlation with vocabulary size as Schmitt et al. (2011) showed by employing a vocabulary test on the vocabulary mostly used in reading as well as a reading comprehension test to examine 661 participants from 8 countries. The researchers concluded that 98% lexical coverage was an adequate percentage to reach the level of reading comprehension. To conclude, 95%-98% lexical coverage is necessary to comprehend the skills of both reading and listening, whereas a high vocabulary frequency level is a must to generate high quality writing.

Various studies have been conducted to gauge undergraduate students' English vocabulary knowledge. For instance, research by Nurweni and Read (1999) was conducted to measure the vocabulary size of freshman Indonesian university students. They found "a mean vocabulary size of 1,226 words and concluded that the students' total vocabulary size was very small, although they had spent six years studying English in junior and senior high school" (p.9). Moreover, Tanyer and Ozturk (2014) concluded that most of the Turkish university students majoring in English language teaching (ELT) had a receptive vocabulary of between 3,000 and 5,000 words whereas Spanish ELT students had a receptive vocabulary of around 5,100 words, as found by Miralpeix and Muñoz (2018). However, Chinese students didn't show similar results regarding their receptive vocabulary knowledge. Liu's (2016) findings revealed that Chinese university students' receptive vocabulary knowledge was only around the 2,000-word level, which suggests a very limited vocabulary knowledge. In addition, a recent study by Heidari (2019) examined the role of one kind of individual difference which is willingness to communicate (WTC) in the receptive/productive vocabulary knowledge of Iranian EFL learners. The results showed that "high and low willingness to communicate learners had almost the same receptive lexical knowledge and learners with high level of willingness to communicate had more productive vocabulary knowledge than those with low level of willingness to communicate" (p.903).

Less has been done with regard to measuring Saudi EFL students' vocabulary knowledge. A recent study by Sonbul et al. (2020) explored factors that might outline Saudi EFL learners' receptive and productive knowledge of 100 polysemous

phrasal verbs. It was revealed throughout this study that participants knew roughly a third of the 100 polysemous phrasal verbs productively but half of these receptively. Furthermore, El-Dakhs (2015) investigated the receptive and productive lexical knowledge of 150 university students from different levels and majors at a Saudi University. Due to their significance for lexical competence in English, she assessed their knowledge of the General Service List (GSL) and the Academic Word List (AWL) using a quantitative methodology. Findings of this study showed that "the lexical competence of EFL Arab university students is below the required level for coping with the demands of studying in an English-medium university" (p.32). El-Dakhs has also highlighted significant implications regarding vocabulary knowledge in Saudi universities:

> First, it is very important to assess the vocabulary knowledge of EFL students at school and university levels in order to improve the educational and support services offered to them. It is clear that exposure to English during school years is not a reliable predictor of language competence. Vocabulary knowledge may serve as a better predictor, and, hence,vocabulary instruction and assessment need careful consideration. Second, high school anduniversity students in Saudi Arabia need extensive language support due to their unsatisfactory vocabulary scores noted in the present and earlier studies. It has been notedthat the students require further language training even towards their graduation. An important part of the training will be to enhance their vocabulary size, and to support themto use the newly acquired lexis in real language production. Third, continuous language exposure seems to enhance lexical competence. Hence, the present study does not recommend the teaching of university courses in the first language. The study, however, highlights that students may need stronger linguistic support with language and content
> courses, a recommendation that university professors need to be aware of and develop effective instructional strategies to address it. Finally, the results of the present study regarding the influence of pushed output on lexical competence are not conclusive.However, they suggest that emphasis on quality output may accelerate vocabulary development at initial years of university education. (pp.45-46)

Clearly, the issue of vocabulary knowledge is of a great significance and the level of Saudi students is still below the expected standard. This claim was supported by Alqarni (2019) who measured 71 Saudi male and female university students' receptive vocabulary knowledge using Nation's Vocabulary Levels Test. He found that Saudi students are "generally still below the level of the desired vocabulary competency as EFL learners, and are in fact, in need of more support and concentration in their undergraduate study with regard to their vocabulary learning" (p.111). Likewise, Altalhab's (2019) study also showed that Saudi EFL tertiary students' achievements were low at the low frequency vocabulary level, and some students couldn't even provide a correct answer at other levels of the test. Although those students are capable of communicating and reading simple English texts, getting them involved in authentic English texts would be challenging. Such conclusions present an example of the level of Saudi university students' English vocabulary.

Unfortunately, "Saudi students who complete secondary school seem to have a poor level of English, despite having spent on average six years studying it, with a limited English vocabulary (500-700 words)" (Al-Nujaidi, 2003, P.5). This suggests how challenging the teaching andlearning of vocabulary in Saudi Arabia is. Moreover, the reasons behind such weakness were addressed in a study by Al-Seghayer (2017), who attributed such weakness to decontextualized vocabulary teaching methods that affected the students negatively. To sum up, despite the limited research in this area, especially in the Saudi EFL context, the available studies demonstrated the limited vocabulary size of Saudi university learners, something that puts into question current methods of English language vocabulary teaching and suggests an urgent need for improvement. Besides, such findings indicate that the vocabulary size of Saudi students needs to be increased in order to reach a high level of comprehension and to deal with the four skills efficientlyand effectively.

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