

## The Effect of Developing Lexical Meaning on Iraqi EFL Students' Performance in Reading Comprehension

Bilal Ali Burhan

College of Basic Education

[Bilal.ali@gmail.com](mailto:Bilal.ali@gmail.com)

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### Abstract:

Reading comprehension and vocabulary are important academic outcomes. Between students, vocabulary skill is closely related to reading comprehension skill. The current study aims at investigating the effect of developing lexical meaning on Iraq EFL in reading comprehension.

To fulfil the aim of the study, the researcher adopted a null hypothesis which indicates that there is no significant difference between students' performance who used new techniques in developing lexical meaning in reading comprehension of that do not use. To achieve the aim of the current study an eight weeks experiment was conducted on one experimental group with pre and posttest. The experiment was started on 11 October and ended in 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2016. At the end of the experiment, the calculated results have shown that there is a statistically significance difference between the performance of the students on the pre and that of the posttest. Finally, the researcher has put down some conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

## أثر استخدام المعنى القاموسي في تطوير أداء الطلاب العراقيين متعلمو اللغة الانكليزية كغنة اجنبية في الاستيعاب القرائي

الباحث: بلال علي برهان

الجامعة المستنصرية / كلية التربية الأساسية

[Bilal.ali@gmail.com](mailto:Bilal.ali@gmail.com)

### المخلص:

إن العلاقة بين الاستيعاب القرائي المفردات مهمة جداً؛ وذلك لأن مهارة الكلمة مرتبطة بمهارة الاستيعاب القرائي، حيث تهدف هذه الدراسة الى استخدام تقنيات حديثة في تطوير المعنى القاموسي لمتعلمي اللغة الانكليزية في مهارة الاستيعاب القرائي، ولتحقيق هذا الهدف تم افتراض فرضية صفرية كما موضح ادناه: لا يوجد فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية بين معدل درجات الطلاب الذين تعلموا بطريقة استخدام تقنيات حديثة في تطوير المعنى القاموسي في مهارة الاستيعاب عن الطلاب الذين تعلموا باستخدام الطريقة التقليدية وتتألف عينة هذه الدراسة من ٣٥ طالباً وطالبة من المرحلة الثالثة / قسم اللغة الانكليزية. حيث تم اجراء هذه التجربة على العينة لمدة ثمانية اسابيع. بدأت التجربة في ١١ من اكتوبر وانتهت في ١٦ من كانون الثاني. قام الباحث ببناء الاختبار (القبلي والبعدي) والتأكد من صحة وصدق الاختبار من خلال عرضهما على مجموعة من الخبراء وقد تم حساب ثبات الاختبار . حيث تم تحليل هذه النتائج باستخدام الاختبار التائي للعينة واجدة وتم التوصل الى ان استخدام تقنيات حديثة في تطوير المعنى القاموسي في مهارة الاستيعاب القرائي افضل من الذين تعلموا بالطريقة التقليدية. واخيرا وضع الباحث بغض من الاستنتاجات التوصيات وكذلك بعض المقترحات لبحث آخر.

## **Section One: Introduction**

### **1.1 The Statement of Problem and its Significance**

Reading Comprehension is a central element in any language teaching programme whether native or foreign language. In the foreign language learning situation, practice and exposure to the Foreign Language is not usually adequate. Hence, reading can compensate for that inadequacy since through reading the learner deals with most aspects of language. Accordingly, the necessity for a careful planning and competent teaching method comes (Chastain, 1988: 320)..

Vocabulary is a central component of language teaching and is of great significance to language learners. Words are the building blocks of a language since they label objects, actions, and ideas without which people cannot convey the intended meaning (Thornbury, 2002:34). Although grammar remains an important part of language acquisition, the lexical memory load, even for an intermediate learner, is enormous (Schdmit, 2000:55). It is now recognized that the principal difference between intermediate and advanced learners is not the complexity of their grammatical knowledge, but the greatly expanded mental lexicon available to advanced learners (Lewis, 1997: Online).

Vocabulary plays a great role in communication, more than the other components of language. The lack of needed vocabulary is the most common cause of students' inability to say what they want to say during communication activities. Therefore, language teachers should plan to introduce relevant vocabulary prior to undertaking any communication activity and to encourage their students to look words up in a dictionary or other resources or even ask the teachers about the pronunciations and meaning (Chastain, 1988: 327).

Due to the educational findings which clearly show that there are some weaknesses in understanding the lexical meaning of words in reading comprehension. The present study aims empirically at investigating the effect of developing lexical meaning on the performance of Iraq as foreign language learners in reading comprehension. The researcher has used new techniques to enhance the students` abilities in reading comprehension skill.

### **1.2 The Aim**

The present study aims at investigating the effect of developing lexical meaning on Iraqi EFL students' performance in reading comprehension.

### **1.3 The Hypotheses**

To fulfil the aim of the study, the following hypothesis is posed:

1. There is no statistically significant difference between the performance of Iraqi EFL students in reading comprehension on pretest and that of the posttest.

## Section Two: Review Literature

### 2.0 Introduction

This section presents an overview of vocabulary in general, and the definitions, importance of vocabulary; it attempts to provide the types as well as meaning of vocabulary.

### 2.1 What is Vocabulary?

Graves (2000, as cited in Taylor, 1990) states that vocabulary as the entire stock of words belonging to a branch of knowledge or known by an individual. He also mentions that the lexicon of a language is vocabulary, which includes words and expressions.

On the other hand, Gardener (2009) asserts that vocabulary is not only confined to the meaning of words but also includes how vocabulary in a language is structured: how people use and store words and how they learn words and the relationship between words, phrases, categories of words and phrases (cited in Adger, 2002:201).

Moreover, Cummins (1999, as cited in Herrel, 2004:34) states that there are different types of vocabulary:

- Reading vocabulary: It refers to all the words an individual can recognize when reading a text.
- Listening vocabulary: It refers to all the words an individual can recognize when listening to speech.
- Writing vocabulary: It includes all the words an individual can employ in writing.
- Speaking vocabulary: It refers to all the words an individual can use in speech.

Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman (1999:112) define lexicon as a mental inventory of words and a productive word derivational process. They also state that lexicon does not only comprise of single words but also of word compounds and multi-word phrase.

On the other hand, (ibid: 112), they classify vocabulary into three categories: high frequency words, general academic words and technical or specialized words. Academic comprehension improves when students know the meaning of words.

Words are the building blocks of communication. When students have a great vocabulary, they can improve all skills of language, namely (speaking, listening, reading and writing). Current models of reading in the English for academic purposes ESL class room consider vocabulary knowledge an important source of variation in reading comprehension, because it affects higher level language processes such as grammatical processing, construction of schemata and text models (Adams and Collins, 1977 as cited in Zimmerman, 2007:102).

If the students have a high level of academic vocabulary development, they can tolerate a small proportion of unknown words in a text without disruption of comprehension and can even infer the meaning of those words from rich contexts. English language learners who experience slow vocabulary development are less able to comprehend text at grade level.

## **2.2 The Importance of Vocabulary**

Vocabulary is the most important area of foreign language learning. It is important because students use their personal vocabularies to help them understand the words they see in a text (Armbruster et al, 2001:29).

In this regard, Wilkins (1972:111-112) state that without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary *nothing* can be conveyed. This point reflects our experience with different languages; even without grammar, with some useful words and expressions, we can often manage to communicate.

Lewis (1993: 89) agrees with Wilkins (1972:111), by arguing that lexis is the core or heart of language. Particularly as students develop greater fluency and expression in English; it is significant for them to acquire more productive vocabulary knowledge and to develop their own personal vocabulary learning strategies. Students often instinctively recognize the importance of vocabulary to their language learning.

### **2.2.1 Kinds of Vocabulary**

Some experts divided vocabulary into two types: active and passive vocabulary. The first type of vocabulary refers to the one that the students have been taught and that they are expected to be able to use. Meanwhile, the second one refers to the words which the students will recognize when they meet them, but which they will probably not be able to pronounce.

Hatch and Brown (1995:99) indicate that there are two types of vocabulary, namely receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary.

#### **a. Receptive Vocabulary**

Receptive vocabulary is words that learners can recognize and understand when they are used in context, but which they cannot produce. It is vocabulary that learners recognize when they see or meet in reading text but do not use it in speaking and writing (Stuart, 2008:79).

#### **b. Productive Vocabulary**

Productive vocabulary is the words that the learners can understand and pronounce correctly and use constructively in speaking and writing. It involves what is needed for receptive vocabulary plus the ability to speak or write at the appropriate time. Therefore, productive vocabulary can be

addressed as an active process, because the learners can produce the words to express their thoughts to others (Stuart, 2005:33-34).

### **2.3 Learning Vocabulary**

Learning vocabulary is not easy but it is difficult process. In this stage, the students aim is primary to recall the word, to recognize it in its spoken and written forms, and to exercise it appropriately. Generally, knowing a word involves knowing its form and its meaning at the basic level. In deeper aspects, it means the abilities to know its:

1. Meaning, i.e., relate the word to an appropriate object or context.
2. Usage, i.e. Understanding of its collections, metaphors and idioms, as well as way and register (the appropriate level of formality), to be aware of any connotations and associations the word might have.
3. Word form, i.e., the ability of learners to spell and pronounce the word correctly, to know any derivations (acceptable prefixes and suffixes).
4. Grammar, i.e., to use it in the appropriate grammatical form (Scarry and Scarry, 2015:106).

Furthermore, McDonough and Shaw (2005:112) mention the ways of teaching and learning vocabulary which motivate the students in learning English especially regarding the meaning of words. The ways are:

- a) Learning vocabulary through creativity: it means that the students can learn the English vocabulary by using the pictures, real objects
- b) Learning vocabulary through context clues: the students may find out the English vocabulary based on clues in the surrounding context.
- c) Learning vocabulary through guessing: it may be speculated that the students may learn the meaning of word in context and it needs a special approach.
- d) Learning vocabulary through definition: it is useful in guiding the students to be able to define the meaning of words and to arrange word into the correct sentence.
- e) Learning vocabulary through derivation: it means that the students must be able to derive words correctly. It comes only with practice or by studying the rules of how to form noun, adjective, adverb, etc.

### **2.3 Meaning and its Types**

In general, Meaning has been taken a variety of roles in theories of linguistics. In fact, the study of linguistic meaning and other types of meaning is generally divided into two main fields: semantic and pragmatics. Semantics studies the literal meaning of words and the meaning of the way they are combined, which took together, from the core of meaning, or the starting point from which the whole meaning of a particular sentence is constructed. However, pragmatics tackles all the ways in which literal meaning must be refined, enriched or extended to

arrive at an understanding of what a speaker meant in uttering a particular expressions (Al-Sulaimaan,2010:63).

### 2.3.1 The Notion of Meaning

Meaning is a message to the addressee by addresser via a code, and this code can be linguistic (a stretch of language) or nonlinguistic (facial expressions, gestures, bowing, wink, smile, hand movement. i.e., sign language). Meaning, however, it can be defined as a set of mental acts or an operation that speaker intends to create in his listener by using a sentence. Utterance communicate only in so far as they cause the listener to carry out mental acts similar to those used by the speaker in creating a given meaning, but whether or not it communicates efficiently, an utterance still means what is speaker intended it to mean (ibid:63).

### 1.3.2 Types of Meaning

Meaning is a very complex phenomenon. It has been viewed differently by different semanticists, pragmatists, and different schools of linguistics. This is because of the multiplicity of factors that affect nature. The basic types of meaning will briefly presented and explained by Leech (1971: Int)

\* **Conceptual meaning:** It refers to the dictionary meaning which indicates the concepts. In reading we can find many different words have the same conceptual meanings (ibid).

\* **Connotative meaning:** It refers to the associations that are connected to a certain word or the emotional suggestions related to that word. The connotative meanings of a word exist together with the denotative meanings (ibid).

\* **Social meaning:** It refers to the usage of language in and by society which has big proportions in determining the meaning that certain speaker has to use and wants to convey, those factors include social class of the speaker and hearer and the degree of formality (ibid).

\* **Affective meaning:** It refers to the speaker's feeling / attitude towards the content or the ongoing context. It is important to remember that each individual will have a different affective meaning for a word. As such, only the person using a word will be aware of the particular affective meaning that they hold with the word (ibid).

\* **Reflected meaning:** It refers to terms which have more than one meaning surfaces at the same time, so there is a kind of ambiguity. It is as if one or more unintended meanings were inevitably thrown back rather like light or sound reflected on a surface (ibid).

\* **Collocative meaning:** It refers to the associations a word acquires on account of the meanings of words which tend to occur in its

environment. In other words, it is that part of the word-meaning suggested (ibid).

\* **Thematic meaning:** it refers to the way in which the message is organized in terms of order and emphasis (ibid).

## 2. 4 Word Knowledge

Word knowledge is viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited word in a second language impedes successful communication. Underscoring the importance of vocabulary acquisition, Schmitt (2000:55) emphasizes that lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language.

Furthermore, Nation (2001:45) describes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use as complementary: knowledge of vocabulary enables language use and, conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge.

Knowing a word is not all or nothing situation; it is a complex concept. The extent of knowledge a person has about individual words can range from a little to a lot and it also includes qualitative connotations about words. Dale (1989, as cited in Taylor, 1990) provides a description of the extent of word knowledge in terms of five stages:

1. The student has no knowledge about the word
2. The student has a general sense of the word.
3. The student has a narrow, context-bound knowledge about the word.
4. The student has a basic knowledge of the word and is able to use it in many appropriate situations
5. The student has a rich, de-contextualized knowledge of the word and can use it in various appropriate situations.

Knowing a word implies knowing many things about the word: its literal meaning, its various connotations, its spelling, derivations, collocations, frequency, pronunciation, the sort of syntactic constructions into which it enters, the morphological options it offers and a rich variety of semantic associates such as synonyms, antonyms, homonyms (Nation (2001:49)

### 2.4.1 Aspects of Vocabulary Knowledge

The concept of vocabulary can be defined in various ways, but there are three significant aspects that teachers need to be aware of and focus on the form, meaning, and use. Nation (2001: 68), the form of a word involves its pronunciation (spoken form), spelling (written form), and any word parts that make up this particular item (such as a prefix, root, and suffix). An example of word parts can be seen with the word *uncommunicative*, where the prefix un- means negative or opposite, communicate is the root

word, and -ive is a suffix denoting that someone or something is able to do something. Here, they all go together to refer to someone or something that is not able to communicate, hence uncommunicative. Nation (ibid:17) states that meaning encompasses the way that form and meaning work together.

## 2.5 Teaching Vocabulary

Generally speaking, the goals of vocabulary teaching must be more than simply to cover a certain number of word lists. The teacher must look to how teaching techniques can help realize their concept of what it means to know a word. Many teachers assume that vocabulary can be developed in teaching learning process. Teaching vocabulary is guiding students to define the meaning of words and arrange words in correct sentence. However, the students often encounter the problems to find the meaning of words. So, there are two factors which make the students fail in understanding the meaning

1. They do not have any skill in comprehending the meaning of words.
2. They do not have enough basic competencies to translate both word and sentence in a text.

Wallace (1982: 27), to produce the language in teaching vocabulary, the English teachers must have ability to

1. Recognize it in its spoken or written form.
2. Recall it at will,
3. Relate it to an appropriate object or concept,
4. Use it in the appropriate grammatical form,\
5. In speech, pronounce it in a recognizable way,
6. In writing, spell it correctly,
7. Use it at the appropriate level

### 2.5.1 Techniques For Teaching the Meaning of Vocabulary

There are several techniques in teaching vocabulary. Maria (1990:3) states that are three main types of these techniques:

**1. Verbal techniques** : these techniques are consisted of :

- a) Definition and illustration sentence: this technique is used by the teachers to introduce a word in English through the use of other word in the same language.
- b) Synonyms and antonyms: this technique is most important and it is used to build a new vocabulary. Synonyms are words that have the same meaning as the unknown in a given sentence. Meanwhile, antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of the unknown word in a given sentence.



In this technique the students are given one set of words and are asked to find antonyms in the reading passage. A similar exercise could be done by asking students to find synonyms for a particular set of words (Larsen-Freeman, 2000:21).

c) **Scale:** this technique is the presentation of related words in scales that include the combination of both verbal and visual techniques.

d) **Explanation:** in this technique, the teacher explains the meaning and the use of a foreign word in the foreign language itself.

Mehta (2009: Int) states another techniques that are helping the students to understand the meaning of unknown words. These techniques are:

- **Definitions:** Definitions in the target language may be very handy if they are expressed in terms that are better known or more easily guessed than the word that is defined. In this direction teachers and students can refer to authentic and reliable dictionaries (ibid).

- **Self-defining context:** The context makes the situation clear, and this in turn illuminates the meaning of the new word. This practice saves time and develops an intensive reading habit and better understanding (ibid).

- **Dramatization:** This technique can be practiced at ease. It can win the favour of the students as learners like dramatizations and can easily learn through them. Many situations can be dramatized or demonstrated (ibid).

- **Pictures and drawings:** Pictures of many types and colours can be used successfully to show the meaning of words and sentence. Handmade pictures can also be used as there is no need to be very artistic.

Drawings can be used to explain the meaning of things, actions, qualities, and relations. A line drawing of a head, for example, provides many useful nouns and verbs (ibid).

- **Real objects:** Real objects or models of real objects are very effective and meaningful in showing meanings but in handling of real objects, a teacher must be practical and should not be superfluous (ibid).

- **Series, Scales, Systems:** The meaning of words such as the months of the year, the days of the week, the parts of the day, seasons of the year, ordinal numbers, cardinal numbers, etc. that form part of well-known series can be made clear by placing them in their natural order in the series (ibid).

- **Parts of words:** The parts of complex and compound words may be more common than the words themselves. Separating such words into their component parts generally elaborates the meaning (ibid).

- **Illustrative sentences:** Most words have a variety of restrictions on their use. Systematic descriptions of these restrictions and idiomatic uses would be laborious and not very effective in teaching. It is better to give appropriate examples that elucidate the range and variation of usage (ibid).

- **Practice from meaning to expression:** This is controlled practice in which the class does not create new uses or new contexts but simply recalls the ones presented. There are many types of practices for this purpose. Pictures, realia, context, and dramatization can be used. Series and systems can also be used (ibid).
- **Reading the word:** Reading the words aloud is also very beneficial. It makes a learner familiar with the word and also improves pronunciations of the learners (ibid).
- **Writing the word:** It will enable the class to write the new word while the auditory memory is fresh, even if the objective is only to read. Writing or copying the word from the blackboard will give the student a chance to understand the grammatical aspect of the word such as noun, verb, adverb, adjective etc (ibid).
- **Shift of attention:** Under this practice, the teacher provides a context by description or through reading which elicits the use of the word. The learners should be asked to pay attention to and develop an attitude or a point of view which he defends or attacks (ibid).

**2. Visual and Audio techniques:** in this technique, the teacher uses pictures, real objects, simulation, charts. Tape, Speech, CD.

It is generally accepted that the best learning takes place when the greatest number of senses are stimulated. The use of devices or audio-visual materials will stimulate the greatest number of senses. For this reason, good teachers have always used devices or audio-visual materials in teaching the meaning of the words. A device is any means, other than the subject-matter to the learner.

Mondal (2017: Int) mentions the advantages of using visual and audio-visual techniques in the class and maybe given as follows:

**a) To challenge the attention of the students:** The teacher who uses devices can usually maintain the full attention of the class. This is generally true in the lower grades. Devices should never be used by the teacher as mere attractions. Exposure to visual or audio-visual material and nothing more is not educative.

**b) To stimulate the imagination and develop the mental imagery of the students:** Visual and audio visual can stimulate the imagination, of the students. Mental imagery can be used as a vehicle of thought and as a means of clarifying ideas.

**c) To facilitate the understanding of the students:** The most widely accepted use of devices, whether visual or audio-visual, is its use in aiding understanding. Learning can be sped up by using models, movies,

filmstrips, and pictorial material to supplement textbooks. Material devices give significance and colour to the idea presented by the teacher. Abstract ideas can be made concrete in the minds of the students by the use of devices. Diagrams and graphs, for example, are very useful in developing understanding in social studies and in mathematics. The graph is a good device in representing mathematical facts.

**d) To provide incentive for action:** The use of devices, such as pictures and objects, arouses emotion and incites the individual to action. The teacher must select the right kind of device to excite the students to worthwhile intellectual activity.

**e) To develop the ability to listen:** The ability to listen can be developed best through the use of audio-visual materials. It is also the responsibility of the school, to provide training for our pupils to be good listeners. Training in the art of listening is one of the aims of audio-visual education

**3. Use of Dictionary:** the use of dictionary is another technique in finding out the meaning of unfamiliar words and expressions.

Gerald and Laura (1989:120) state that dictionary supply information about grammar, usage, status, synonymy, discrimination, application of derivative affixes, and distinction between spoken and written English not generally treated in textbooks.

Elliot (1972:178) claims that students should be initiated into use of an English dictionary. It is not easy to use a dictionary until one has certain knowledge of the language. He states that:

1. They should have some practice in finding a word quickly, and
- 2 where more than one definition or synonymy is provided, they need practice in discovering which is relevant to the question.
2. They need some direct instructions in the use and misuse of the dictionary. Its use, as an aid to reading and as instrument for checking words they use in writing; its misuse as a quarry for language and impressive words to be learned by heart.

Li (2014: Int) asserts that dictionary is the most important effective component of understanding a word deeply. The entries can also help students determine the precise meaning of a word. Dictionaries can also provide helpful information about the history of a word and reinforce the interrelationships among words in the same meaning “families.”

As for Nesi (2009: 458), a dictionary may be regarded as a lexicographical product that is characterized by three significant features:

1. It has been prepared for one or more functions.
2. It contains data that have been selected for the purpose of fulfilling those functions.

3. Its lexicographic structures link and establish relationships between the data so that they can meet the needs of users and fulfil the functions of the dictionary.

Li (2014: Int) confirms that dictionary is a very important tool for anyone who is learning a new language. With a good dictionary you can do the following:

- look up the meaning of an English word you see or hear
- find the English translation of a word in your language
- check the spelling of a word
- check the plural of a noun or past tense of a verb
- find out other grammatical information about a word
- find the synonym or antonym of a word
- look up the collocations of a word
- check the part of speech of a word
- find out how to say a word
- find out about the register of a word
- Find examples of the use of a word in natural language.

## **2. 6 Reading**

As a skill, reading is clearly one of the most important; in fact in many instances around the world. Reading is the most important in foreign language skill, particularly in cases where students have to read English materials for their own specialist subject (McDonugh and Shaw, 2005:89).

Reading is a basic and complementary skill in language learning (Chastain, 1988: 216). Second language learners need to read and to read greater and greater quantities of authentic materials for communication. The word “reading” of course has a number of common interpretations by language teachers. It may mean reading aloud, a very complex skill, which involves understanding the printed words first and then the production of the right noises. It may also mean an activity in which students read a passage for comprehension (also called silent reading). Whatever the case, reading involves comprehension and when readers do not comprehend, they are not reading (ibid).

### **2.6.1 Reading Comprehension**

Comprehension is recognized as an acquired skill that is focused on the understanding of input. Brown (2007:379) identifies comprehension as the process of receiving language; listening or reading; input. Comprehension is the ability to take in information, analyze it in its respective segments, and come up with an understanding of the input in a cohesive and accurate manner. Well-developed comprehension abilities

involve interactive strategy use to come up with a meaningful understanding of the input.

### 2.6.2 Types of Comprehension

Day and Park (2005:62) discuss reading comprehension in terms of several different types. In their research, they classify reading comprehension into six different modes of comprehension that can work together in parallel and/or in a linear fashion:

\* **Literal comprehension**: is described as the “understanding of the straightforward meaning of the text” This means that any answers to questions coming from a text would be explicitly outlined in the reading. An example of this would be discovering specific vocabulary items and/or their meanings within a text;

\* **Reorganization** occurs when readers must find various pieces of information from a reading and combine them for additional understanding. In this way, readers still use literal comprehension, but it is applied to several areas of text in order to answer more specific questions related to the text. (ibid:62)

\* **Inference** requires learners to go a step beyond literal understanding and to combine and use their own knowledge in order to come up with answers to implicitly stated information (ibid:62)

\* **Prediction** combines a reader’s prior knowledge with his or her understanding of a passage in order to guess as to what happens next; each answer, however, must be supported by the text in order to be valid (ibid:62)

\* **Evaluation** requires a learner to have a general knowledge of the topic under examination and an understanding of the reading material in order to give judgment or opinion about the text (ibid:62)

\* **Personal response** is an open-ended type of comprehension used by readers in order to provide their feelings about the topic. In order to have a valid answer, they need to have reasoned their feelings in relation to the text (ibid: 62).

### 2.6.3 Vocabulary and Comprehension

Nash and Snowling (2006:336) describe vocabulary as “the knowledge of words and their meanings”. While Sheehan (2002:1) states that vocabulary is the ability to understand and use words to acquire and convey meaning. Vocabulary is an essential element of reading.

Clearly, vocabulary and comprehension are closely connected skills. Each skill is imperative to reading achievement, yet one relies heavily on the other. Bromley (2002: 528) confirms that vocabulary development is an outcome of comprehension. Harmon (1988:41) notes that students continue to struggle with comprehension because of limited vocabulary knowledge

and ineffective strategies. Many researchers examined the correlation between vocabulary and comprehension, Manzo, Manzo, and Thomas (2006:615) concluded that word learning can improve the *capacity* to learn and rich vocabulary increases comprehension.

#### **2.6.4 Context and Comprehension**

Contextual vocabulary instruction involves teaching students to use the context, or words appearing directly before and after, of a sentence to determine a word's meaning. Students can use the contextual vocabulary method during independent reading as well as during teacher-led vocabulary lessons. Learning from context is an important avenue of vocabulary growth and it deserves attention and practice in the classroom (Nagy, 1988:7).

Bromley (2007:528) states that teachers need to do a better job in teaching vocabulary to students who find reading difficult. It appears that students can benefit from teachers who include vocabulary instruction in their lessons; instructional methods of *effective* vocabulary instruction remain elusive.

#### **2.6.1 Learning Vocabulary through Reading**

Although the learners have difficulty in reading, it is widely assumed that L2 learners will experience the word learning benefits of reading much as L1 readers do. Willis (1996:8) states that successful learners find reading is an excellent way of extending vocabulary, learning new phrases and consolidating grammar. Like extensive listening, reading provides rich exposure to language in use. Grabe and Stoller (2002:26) confirm that vocabulary is strongly associated with reading comprehension. The relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension is thought to be reciprocal. In other words, a reader who knows more words is likely to have better reading comprehension, while a reader who is successful with comprehension and frequently will have more opportunity to learn more word. Consequently, a reader who struggles with vocabulary will be less likely to comprehend text, and less likely to learn new vocabulary. However, teaching vocabulary can enhance comprehension of text if the kind of instruction provided and helped students to build their meaningful associations knowledge.

### **Section Three: Methodology of the Study**

#### **3.1 The Experimental Design**

Before revealing to the type of the experimental design, it is necessary to define it briefly. Good (1973: 174) defines the experimental design as the plan according to which experimental groups are selected and experimental treatments are administrated and their effect is answered.

The study followed one experimental design of pre- posttest group in which subjects are randomly assigned to experimental and a pretest is administrated before the application of the experiment and posttest at the end of the treatment period. The experimental group has been taught RC by using new techniques to develop lexical meaning of the words in reading comprehension.

**Table (1) the Experimental Design**

The Groups	The Test	Independent Variable	The Test
The experimental group (EG)	Pre-test	Lexical meaning	Post-test

### 3.2 Population and Sample of the Test

This test was conducted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> year students studying at English language Department, College of Basic Education, Al-Mustansiriya University, to investigate "the effect of lexical meaning on Iraqi EFL student' performance in reading comprehension". The choice was primarily based on the fact that students at this level have a fairly good command of English after 3 years of intensive study. Added to this, they have studied and practiced reading comprehension in a number of courses. I have chosen for the test (36) third year students of total (40) students. Table (.2).

**Table (3.2) Population and Sample of The Test**

University College	Department	Section	Total Students	Present	Absent
Mustansyriha College of Basic Education	English Department	A	36	30	6

### 3.3 Description of the Test

This study seeks to investigate. "the effect of developing lexical meaning on Iraqi EFL student' performance in reading comprehension". As a matter of fact, reading comprehension test aims at developing a wide variety of reading comprehension skills and language aspects (e.g. developing students' ability to understand vocabulary items, grammatical structure, new ideas and thoughts, different text structures, new styles of writing, etc.). Therefore, it is important to recognize the kind of questions asked in order to know what kinds of answers are expected.

The researcher has chosen two passages with twenty items distributed among three questions for the pretest and posttest. The passages have deliberately been chosen for the following reasons:

- (a) The students have already been familiarized with the topic by one of the teachers, who have been teaching them for the last three years. Thus, the meanings in this passage most likely fall within their understanding.
- (b) There were an answer papers attached with the text of the test in order to save time and effort in answering.

### 3.4 Scoring Scheme

In order to ensure the reliability of the test, a special scoring scheme was set that depends on the answers of the students. The maximum score of the test is 20 marks. One mark is allotted to each correct answer of the all questions.

The pretest consists of a passage which is followed by three questions: 1. (*true/ false questions*) which is consisted of five items 2-*Explain the meaning of items* which is an objective test consisting of ten items and 3. *Short answer questions* items which is a subjective test consisting of five items, The total mark of the first question is (5) where the correct answer gains one mark, and the incorrect answer gains *zero*. While the second question's total mark is (10) where one mark is allotted to the correct answer, and a zero mark is for the incorrect answer. The third question which is an objective test has a total mark of (5) where the correct answer gains one mark and the incorrect answer gains zero.

### 3.5 Test validity

It is refers to the extent to which test measures what is supposed to measure (Best and Kaha, 2006:295).

Face validity is the degree to which a test appears to measure the knowledge or abilities it claims to measure, based on the subjective judgment of an observer (Richards & Schmidt, 2002: 196-197).

In order to ensure face and content validity, the test items were exposed to a jury of experts in language and linguistics to judge whether the test items are suitable or not for the proposed purpose. Then, the jurors are asked to read the test, add, delete or change the items.

\* the jury members are:

1. Prof. Dr A.J. Darwash (College of Basic education, Al-Mustansiriya University).
2. Asst. Prof. Dr Abbas Jasim (College Basic education, Al-Mustansiriya University).
3. Asst.Prof. Dr Lutfi , Abbas, (College of Education, Al-Mustansiriya University).
4. Asst .Prof Saad, Salal (College of Basic education, Al-Mustansiriya University).
5. Asst.Prof Al- Bakri, Mo'ayed (College of Basic Education, Al-Mustansiriya University).



### **3.6 Pilot Administration of the Test Item Analysis**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2016, a pilot administration of the test was carried out. The test was experimentally tried out on a sample of 30 students were selected randomly from third year students at the same Department, College of Basic Education. The purpose behind this study was to:

1. Estimate the time needed to answer the test;
2. Provide information about the ease of administrating the test;
3. Check the clarity of instruction;
4. Analyze test items in the light of the students' responses to determine their effectiveness in terms of their difficulty level and discrimination power; and
5. Calculate the reliability coefficient of the test.

The pilot study indicated that the instructions are clear, the items of the test are suitable for the intended sample, and that the time needed for the test was about 45-50 minutes. As for the clarity of instructions, they were clear. After adapting the item discrimination formula, it is found out that the discrimination power of the test items ranged between 0.315 to 0.496 , whereas by adapting the item difficulty formula, it was found out that it ranged between, 0.30 to 0.70 and the reliability of the test was achieved by using certain statistical tools.

### **3.7 Test Reliability**

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency of the test measurement (Oller, 1979:4). In the current study, the method used to estimate the test reliability is Kuder-Richardson formulas 20 and 21, which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.94 and 0.96 respectively. Eom and Arbaugh (2011:278) do not consider assessment measures of school performance valid unless their reliability is greater than 0.60. This means that the test has an acceptable and adequate reliability since its reliability is greater than 0.60. Test reliability has been 0.75 which is considered valid.

#### **3.7.1 Pre- Test**

After checking the reliability and validity of the test, the researcher has given his sample a pre-test. This test is given to the subjects before the treatment to measure the sample's level of performance in the dependent variable, i.e., reading comprehension.

The pre-test in its final form is administered to the sample on 11 of December 2016. The study subjects totaling 30 students are seated to take the test in a comfortable room at the lap of the College of Basic Education.

#### **3.7.2 Administration of the Posttest**

The posttest was administrated on the 16 of January, the aim of the posttest is to indicate whether an experimental sample has achieved better in reading comprehension.

## Section Four: Results, Conclusion, Recommendation, and Suggestions

### 4.0 Introductory Note

This section introduces and then interprets the test results by using suitable statistical tools. Conclusions are drawn in the light of the results also recommendations are presented .

### 4.1 Introduction of Results

In this section, results are introduced according to the hypothesis of the study. The aim of the present study is to be investigating the impact of developing lexical meaning on Iraq EFL students; performance in reading comprehension.

### 4.2 Results Related to Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study states that there is no statically significance between the performances of Iraq EFL students in reading comprehension on the Pre-posttest.

To verify the validity of this hypothesis, a comparison has been drawn between the achievement of the sample on the pretest and that of the posttest. The t-test formula for dependent sample has been used to determine whether the difference between the performance of the sample on the pretest and that of the posttest is significant or not.

In table (3). The mean score of the sample on the pretest is 51.20, where as the mean score of it on the posttest is 62.13. the calculated T value is 2.04 , at 0.05 level of significance and a df (29). Therefore, the differences are a statistically significant in the favour of pre-posttest, i.e., the performance of the students on the posttest was higher.

**Table (4) Pre-Posttest Scores of The Subjects**

Test	No. of Subjects	Mean	SD	df	Calculated T-value	Tabulated T-value	Level of Significance
Pre test	30	51.20	9.07	29	2.04	2.045	0.05
Post test	30	62.13	9.22				

### 4.3 Interpretation of the Results

The result of this study reveal that there is a statistically significance between the mean score of the pretest and that of the posttest of the subjects. The achievement of the subjects in the posttest is slightly higher than that of the pretest. \

### 4.4 Conclusions

Based on the explanation in previous sections, the researcher concludes that verbal and audio techniques are important in developing lexical meaning of vocabulary. If a teacher wants to be succeeded in his/her teaching, he/she has to know properly how to motivate the students to communicate through his/her best strategy in teaching. It is not easy to do that because the teacher should know great amount of material to be taught before teaching in the classroom. Besides that, he/ she have to choose one of the most appropriate techniques in teaching. To overcome the problem above, the teacher should consider a good teaching technique. The teacher not only can use one technique. Verbal and audio techniques are very useful in developing lexical meaning in reading comprehension.

#### 4.5 Recommendations

In the light of the finding and due to literature, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Information technology should be used in the classroom in various form of activity, task or project. It can benefit language teaching such as films, radios, videos which are available in many EFL settings.
2. The teachers should encourage shy students to practice and participate orally by using different activities.
3. The use of active learning strategies in teaching rather than the traditional methods as they insert in learning process.

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## Appendix A

### Pretest

**Q1 Read the passage carefully and then answer the following questions**

#### Child Work

In many countries children are involved in different kinds of paid work. The issue of whether or not children should be engaged in some paid work has **sparked** a heated debate. While some argue that having some employment experience is **conductive** to a child's learning and development, others contend that it would bring harm to the child's health and learning.

First of all, a workplace designed for adults is normally in shortage of child- friendly facilities. Desks and chairs are too high for a child; the light switches are installed on the walls unreachable by children; also emergency training and facilities such as phones are only provided to adults. Furthermore, **various** hazards such as polluted air and chemical

fumes are still produced in factories and farms. Undoubtedly young people would suffer in such workplace.

Also, children would find it frustrating when they are not properly prepared before starting a job . A child working in a cement factory would feel a setback when he could not get immediate support while struggling with the procedures of recording different raw materials that is required by the job. Further, without sufficient support, a child's misunderstanding or inappropriately communicating with adults would only disappoint him from active learning and interacting with other people.

To conclude, a child's paid employment experience would lead to a negative impact on their health and active learning. However, recognizing the importance of children's learning and their awareness of responsibilities, it is advisable to encourage them to be involved in some volunteering opportunities where they can meaningfully learn and interact with other people with sufficient care and support in place for such jobs.

**Q1/ Write True or False and then correct the false one? (Answer only five)**

1. There are contrasted opinions about the paid work of children.
2. A workplace for adults has facilities for children to work.
3. Emergency training and facilities such as phones are only provided to adults.
4. Yong people would suffer in such workplace designed for adults.
5. A child's paid employment experience would not lead to any negative impact.
6. From the passage, it is understood that children should not be allowed to do any paid work. (5 marks)

**Q2/ Give the meaning of the underlined words?**

Involved, sparked, various, undoubtedly, support, prevents, conclude, negative, sufficient, employment.

(10 marks)

**Q3/ Answer the following questions about the passage?**

1. What are children involved in different kinds of paid work?
2. What is contended to bring harm to the child's health and learning?
3. What would children find frustrating before starting a job?
4. what would prevent a child from active learning and interacting with other people?
5. What is the advisable to encourage children to be involved in some volunteering? (5 marks)

**Posttest****Q1 Read the passage carefully and then answer the questions?**

Most people think of deserts as dry, those areas with little vegetation and little or no rainfall, but this is hardly true. Many deserts have varied geographical formations ranging from soft, rolling hills to stark, jagged cliffs, and most deserts have a permanent **source** of water. Although deserts do not receive a high amount of rainfall- to be classified as a desert, an area must get less than twenty – five centimeters of rainfall per year- there are many plants that **thrive** on only small amounts of water, and deserts are often full of such plant life.

Desert plants have a variety of **mechanisms** for obtaining the water needed for survival. Some plants, such as cactus, are able to store large amounts of water in their leaves or stems, after a rainfall plants absorb a large supply of water to last until the next rainfall. Other plants, such as the **mesquite**, have extraordinarily deep root systems that allow them to obtain water from far below the desert's **arid** surface.

1. What is the main topic of the passage?
  - a. Desserts are dry, flat areas with few plants
  - b. There is a little rainfall in the desert.
  - c. Many kinds of vegetation can survive with little water.
  - d. Desserts are with not really flat areas little plant life.
  
2. The passage implies.....
  - a. The typical conception of a desert is incorrect
  - b. All deserts are dry, fall areas
  - c. Most people are well informed about deserts
  - d. The lack of rainfall in deserts causes the lack of vegetation
  
3. The passage describes the geography of deserts as .....
  - a. flat
  - b. varied
  - c. sandy
  - d. void of vegetation
  
4. According to the passage, what causes an area to be classified as a desert?
  - a. the type of plants
  - b. the geographical formations
  - c. the amount of precipitation
  - d. the source of water
  
5. Which of the following is mentioned in the passage about cacti?
  - a. They have deep root systems
  - b. They retain water from one rainfall to the next
  - c. They survive in the desert because they do not need water

d. They get water from deep below the surface of the desert

**(10 marks)**

**Q2 Explain the meaning of the following?**

(Source, thrive, mechanisms, mesquite, arid, stark)

**(5 marks)**

**Q3 Write True or False and then correct the false one?**

- a. Many deserts have not varied geographical formations ranging from soft, rolling hills to stark.
- b. Desert plants have a variety of mechanisms
- c. There is a lot of rainfall in the desert.
- d. Desserts are often full of such plant life.
- e. Desserts are really flat areas and a more plant life.

**(5 mark)**

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