EXPLORING THE VOCABULARY SIZE OF ALGERIAN EFL ADVANCED LEARNERS: THE CASE OF MASTER AND DOCTORAL EFL STUDENTS AT DJILLALI LIABES UNIVERSITY-SIDI BEL ABBES

دراسة استكشافية لحجم مفردات طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية الجزائريين المتقدمين: حالة طلبة المستر و الدكتوراه بجامعة الجيلالي اليابس, سيدي بلعباس

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ABSTRACT:

There is no doubt that the lexical competence and particularly the size of vocabulary vary from native to non-native speakers of English and their growth positively affects the language proficiency of EFL learners. Yet, developing rich vocabulary is often associated with the amount of exposure to the target language. The current study therefore endeavoured to examine the amount of vocabulary Algerian students succeed to learn by the end of their formal exposure to EFL. Using a questionnaire and the Vocabulary Size Test of Nation and Baglar (2007), the study explored the lexical profile of 58 advanced learners; sampled from the English Department of Djillali Liabes University. The findings revealed that master students knew on average 7,794 word families (w.f.) and Phd students knew about 9,950 w.f., while the mean score of the teachers was 10,012 w.f. With such estimates, it can be concluded that the Algerian EFL context does not allow students to close the gap in their vocabulary knowledge and thus ELT needs to be rethought in the light of recent findings about foreign language teaching and vocabulary instruction.

Keywords:

Vocabulary knowledge, vocabulary depth, vocabulary size, EFL learners, Algerian EFL students

ملخص:

ليس هناك شك في اختلاف الكفاءة المعجمية وخاصة حجم المفردات بين الناطقين و غير الناطقين باللغة الانجليزية وان إثراء المفردات يؤثر بشكل ايجابي على إجادة اللغة وعلى التحصيل الأكاديمي لمتعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. غير أن زيادة حجم المفردات يرتبط غالبا بمدى تعرض المتعلم للغة المستهدفة. لدى سعت هده الدراسة إلى استكشاف مقدار المفردات الذي يتمكن الطلاب الجزائريون من تعلمه من خلال تعرضهم للغة الانجليزية مدة تعليمهم الرسمي و دلك باستخدام استبيان و اختبار لحجم المفردات الذي طوره *Nation* و *Baglar* سنة 2007 و بمشاركة 58 طالبا متقدما من قسم اللغة الانجليزية بجامعة الجيلالي اليابس. و كشفت النتائج انه في نهاية المسار الدراسي تمكن طلاب المستر من تعلم 7872 (*w.f.*) و اكتسب طلاب الدكتوراه حوالي 9700 (*w.f.*) في حين أن متوسط ما يكتسبه المدرسون من مفردات كان 9833 (*w.f.*) . من خلال هده النتائج يمكننا استنتاج أن مسار تعلم اللغة الانجليزية في الجزائر على هذا النحو لا يمكن الطلبة من تعلم القدر الكافي من المفردات الانجليزية و لا من سد الفجوة في كفاءتهم اللغوية مما يستوجب إعادة النظر في طرق تدريس هذه اللغة في كل المستويات على ضوء النتائج العلمية الحديثة حول تدريس اللغات الأجنبية و بناء المفردات.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

تعلم المفردات، عمق المفردات، حجم المفردات، متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية الجزائريون.

1. INTRODUCTION

Considered as the pivot around which the four language skills revolve, vocabulary has recently regained its legitimate position in the context of second/foreign language learning. This

renewed interest in vocabulary is reflected in the wide consensus that exists among different researchers as regards the fundamental role it plays in ELT. For instance, Harmer (1993:153) describes vocabulary as the *"vital organs and the flesh"* of language, Lewis (1993: 89) presents it as the *"core or heart"* of language, Schmitt, N., Schmitt, D. & Clapham (2001:55) define it as the *"building blocks of language"* and Lessard-Clouston (2013:2) considers it as *"central"* to language.

The noteworthy contribution of vocabulary size to language proficiency is confirmed by the work of a number of outstanding scholars and is even supported by the common sense of language practitioners. Yopp, Yopp and Bishop (2009) explain that: *"For many years* [researchers] *have known that vocabulary knowledge is a good predictor of academic success"* (p. 5). Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) acknowledge the strong correlation that exists between vocabulary knowledge and the overall achievement of language learners and they even consider that: *"a large vocabulary repertoire facilitates becoming an educated person to the extent that vocabulary knowledge is strongly related to reading proficiency in particular and school achievement in general"* (p.2). In the same vein, researchers such as Laufer (1997), Folse (2004), Hatami & Tavakoli (2012), and many others highlight the significance of quality vocabulary instruction in EFL learning and stress the need to support language learners to develop their vocabulary knowledge.

However, building a large vocabulary is not that easy task. While repeated exposure is considered a key factor to vocabulary learning (Nation, 2014), it appears to be limited in the EFL context (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Accordingly, EFL learners who choose to pursue university studies, usually face the double challenge of learning the academic content relevant to meet the requirements of their higher education degree and closing the gap in their English vocabulary knowledge engendered by lack of exposure and lack of practice that typically characterize the foreign language context.

In Algeria, for instance, English is taught starting from the first year of Middle School, hence by the time students reach the university; they would have studied this language on average seven academic years; four at middle school and three at secondary school. Then, by joining the university English course and under the LMD system, the EFL students study English for three years at the Bachelor level, and if they decide to pursue advanced studies, they would study this language for two other years at the Master level and at least three years at the Doctoral level.

A simple calculation of this linguistic academic journey would result in fifteen years of exposure to the English language, but by converting this seemingly long period of time into hours of effective EFL instruction; it would result into a very limited time of real exposure. For example the seven academic years of pre-university education would result approximately into 700 hours; with 350 hours in middle school and 350 hours also in secondary school and the same thing applies to the tertiary level. The rational questions that may generate from this situation are:

1. How much vocabulary do Algerian advanced students succeed to learn by the end of this exposure? (What is the vocabulary size of Algerian advanced learners?)
2. Is it possible to close the gap in the vocabulary knowledge of Algerian EFL students?

By trying to answer these two questions, the current study, attempts to address a gap in the literature about Algerian EFL learners' vocabulary size as the data available about this matter are very sparse.

2. EFL Vocabulary Learning

Learning vocabulary, especially in a foreign language context, is revealed to be difficult as it implies the assimilation of a relatively great amount of words which is complicated by the circumstances surrounding the vocabulary learning process itself. Siyanova-Chanturia and Webb (2016) explain that learning vocabulary in the foreign language context takes more time than in the

L1 context because of various interconnected factors including:

> insufficient input, lack of opportunities to use the language outside the classroom (insufficient output), teaching methods used (communicative language teaching vs. grammar-translation method), amount of time dedicated to the English language in general, amount of time dedicated to vocabulary learning in particular, and so on". (Siyanova-Chanturia and Webb, 2016, p. 229)

So, all these factors influence negatively the EFL Learners' proficiency and actually restrict the breadth and depth of their English vocabulary. Hence, when describing the vocabulary knowledge of any language learner, these two dimensions are usually taken into consideration.

2.1. Vocabulary Depth

Depth of vocabulary refers to the qualitative knowledge of a given word. It is about how much learners actually know about the different meanings and different aspects of the words that belong to their repertoire. Researchers such as Richards (1976), Chappelle (1998) and Nation (2005) tried to explain what knowing a word means and to discern the different aspects that may constitute word knowledge. Nation's inquiry (2005) resulted in a list of various aspects that he grouped into three basic elements including meaning, form and use. So, based on Nation, 1) knowing the form of a word includes spelling, sound, and word parts, 2) knowing the meaning of a word involves linking its form and meaning, knowing a concept for a word and what it can refer to, and knowing what other words of related meaning it can be associated with and 3) knowing the use concerns the grammar of the word, including to what part of speech it belongs and sentence patterns it fits into, collocates of the word as well as the word's style; whether it is formal or informal, polite or offensive, etc.

Similar efforts were later made by Schmitt, D. (2010), always driven by the general need to provide a better understanding of what knowing a word means. Schmitt's efforts resulted in the identification of nine aspects of word knowledge that are quite similar to Nation's classification and which are illustrated in figure 1.
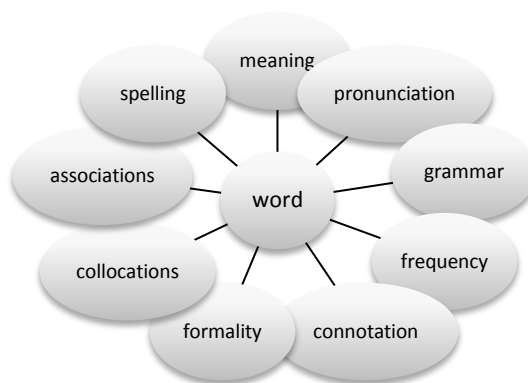
Figure 1: Word Aspects (Schmitt, D., 2010:1)

To sum up the previously mentioned studies, knowing a word goes beyond merely understanding its meaning and mastering its spelling and pronunciation to being acquainted with its collocations, associations, formality, connotation, frequency as well as its grammar. When a language learner knows the different aspects of a specific word, this means that he/she has assimilated completely that word and that at this stage the learner can recognize the vocabulary item when he/she hears and reads it and can use it appropriately in speech and writing.

To this regards, Schmitt, D. (2010: 79-89) argues that words are not immediately acquired

from the first encounter. Learners acquire words first receptively, and then they develop knowledge about words progressively, through repeated exposure to these words. Schmitt (ibid) also claims that this gradual shift from the receptive to the productive knowledge occurs in different stages as the number of exposures to the vocabulary item increases and subsequently learners learn more about this lexical item. These stages of vocabulary acquisition are referred to as degrees of word knowledge. In this respect, Wesche and Paribakht (1996:25) identify a scale consisting of five degrees, levels or stages of vocabulary knowledge, which are illustrated in figure 2.

> 1. *I don't remember having seen this word before*
>
> 2. *I have seen this word before but I don't know what it means*
>
> 3. *I have seen this word before and I think it means……… (Synonym or translation)*
>
> 4. *I know this word. It means…………….. (Synonym or translation)*
>
> 5. *I can use this word in a sentence. E.g…………..*

Figure 2: Degrees of Vocabulary Knowledge (Adopted from: Wesche & Paribakht, 1996:25)

According to these researchers, in stage one; learners have no idea about the word at the extent that they do not remember having seen it before. The second stage starts when learners recognize that they have seen or heard the word i.e. they have met the word before, but they ignore its meaning. In fact, word knowledge starts with this stage. In the subsequent stage, learners' understanding of the word is ambiguous; learners cannot identify firmly its meaning. After that, they move to a level of partial knowledge where they have only a general meaning of the vocabulary item. In the final stage, learners do know the word completely. This means they have gained a deep understanding of that word and can use it appropriately in different contexts. At this level, one can argue that the word has shifted from the receptive use to the productive use, i.e. the learner has eventually learned the word and this learning naturally co-occur with the assimilation of the different aspects of word knowledge mentioned previously.

This cumulative evolution of learners' vocabulary knowledge over different stages to reach the final stage which is the complete assimilation of the word by the learner is described by Zhou (2010): "*as a continuum on which a word grows from receptive to productive status*" (p. 15) and it also accounts for the large size of learners' receptive vocabulary compared to the size of their productive vocabulary (ibid).

2.2. Vocabulary Breadth/Size

The breadth of word knowledge is basically the number of words a person knows or with which this person is quite familiar (Shen, 2008; Akbarian, 2010). It is thus the quantitative knowledge of vocabulary that is usually referred to as vocabulary size. It is often noted that learners' vocabulary size correlates with their language proficiency. To this regards, *Transparent Language* (2018) points out that: "*of all the factors contributing to language proficiency, vocabulary size is by far the single most significant factor, accounting for anywhere from 50% to 70% of proficiency gains depending on the language and the skill being studied*". This may explain researchers' concerns about investigating the size of learners' vocabulary and their continuous endeavours to design, develop and update tests that gauge particularly the vocabulary size of language learners (Nation, 1983, Nation & Baglar, 2007, Schmitt, N., Schmitt, D., & Clapham, 2001; Milton, 2010; McLean & Kramer, 2015; Webb, Sasao, & Ballance, 2017).

However, the design of such tests has not been an easy task. To measure the vocabulary size of learners, researchers needed as a first step, to determine the overall size of the English vocabulary and to achieve this objective, Goulden, Nation, and Read (1990) decided to count the number of word families in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1963) as a reference. They found that it contained about 54,000 word families. However, when referring to native speakers, the researchers discovered that the vocabulary size of the latter was much smaller than the vocabulary size of the studied dictionary. Their study revealed that the vocabulary size of a 20 year-old average educated English native speaker was about17,000 word families (ibid) which is approximately a third of the size of the famous *Webster's Third New International Dictionary.*

As such, Nation and Waring (1997) argue that trying to learn the 54,000 word families is a very difficult objective for second language learners and even most native speakers. A more realistic objective is to focus on learning useful words that are frequently used in native speakers' daily communication. Fortunately, "*the good news for non native speakers*", as announced by these researchers is that the number of these high frequency words is small (ibid: 9) and consequently if the EFL learners acquire this type of vocabulary, they will be able to understand a great deal of the 'words' in a written or spoken discourse. Therefore, they estimated that an EFL learner needs to know 2,000 word families for basic conversation; 2,000-3,000 for productive speaking and writing; 3,000-5,000 for reading authentic texts; 10,000 for challenging university textbooks; and 15,000 to 20,000 to equal an educated native speaker of English (ibid).

3. Vocabulary Size of EFL Learners

It is important to know how much vocabulary EFL learners actually know and how much they need to rely on for effective listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the target language. This is believed to guide language teachers to keep track of their students' achievement, to better manage their class time by teaching the most useful words, to look for techniques and methods to help their learners acquire the needed set of vocabulary and thus to set realistic teaching objectives (Nation, 1990).

Evidently, a foreign language context differs from an L1 and even a second language context. Such divergence makes it natural that the vocabulary size of the English learners also differs from one context to another. Hence, interest in studying the actual vocabulary size of EFL learners also arose and resulted in estimates that were revealed to be much smaller than the estimates of their native English-speaking counterparts. Siyanova-Chanturia and Webb (2016) argue that this is because: "*L2 vocabulary learning progress is often slow and uneven*" (p. 229). Alonso (2013) summarized some of the existing studies that investigated the vocabulary size of EFL learners in a number of countries. His findings, as illustrated in table 1, confirm the previous belief and show the clear-cut difference between the vocabulary acquired by native speakers and the vocabulary learned by non-native speakers due to the different variables that are usually involved in each learning environment.

Table1. Average receptive vocabulary size of EFL learners (adapted from Alonso, 2013)

Study	Receptive vocabulary size	Hours of instruction	L1	Participants' learning context
Qian (2002)	7,224 words	\	Korea	Secondary school (intermediate level and beyond)
Qian (2002)	6,663 words	\	Chinese	Secondary school (intermediate level and beyond)

Milton and Meara (1998)	1,680 words	660	Greek	Secondary school
Takala (1984, 1985)	1,500 words	450	Finnish	Secondary school, grade 9
Milton and Meara (1998)	1,200 words	400	German	Secondary school
Arnauld *et al*. (1985)	1,000 words	400	French	Secondary school
López-Mezkita (2005)	941words	1049	Spanish	Secondary school (4th ESO/10th form)

It is worth mentioning that studies in table 1 focused on secondary school students as the target population. These findings showed that the vocabulary size of EFL secondary school students ranged from 941 to 7,224 word families. In another investigation led by Nation and Baglar (2007) on undergraduate and doctoral students, the researchers discovered that these students were able to cope with study at an English speaking university with a vocabulary size of about 5,000 to 6,000 word families for the former and about 9,000 word families for the latter (p.12).

Taking into consideration that the vocabulary of native English speakers grows with approximately 1,000 word families per year in childhood (Nation 2006; Milton 2010), so a 16 year old secondary school native speaker is expected to know about 16,000 word families. Comparing these figures with the estimates of Alonso (2013) in the table above and Nation and Baglar (2007), we can realize the importance of the vocabulary gap that exists between native and non-native speakers.

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4. EXPERIMENTAL

4.1. Setting and Participants

The current investigation was conducted at the English Department of Djillali Liabes University (DLED), in the province (willaya) of Sidi Bel-Abbes situated in the northwest of Algeria. As the leading objective of this study was to examine the vocabulary size of Algerian EFL advanced learners, the participants engaged were master students as well as the EFL teachers of DLED. The latter were chosen for two basic reasons; the first reason was due to the fact that the majority of these teachers were working either as assistant teachers or part-time teachers and were still working on their Phd projects which gave them the status of advanced EFL learners. The second reason derives from the belief that EFL teachers who are non-native speakers of English are actually considered as advanced learners of the language (Medgyes, 1983).

The study took place during the academic year 2018-2019 and the questionnaire was distributed via email to twenty (20) teachers and fifty (50) master students, but only sixteen (16) teachers and forty two (42) master students responded. The latter included twenty two (22) students from first year (M1) and twenty (20) from second year (M2), while the former included eleven (11) assistant teachers (Ass.T) and one (01) part-time teacher (Part.T); all still doctoral students, and four (04) lecturer teachers (Lect.T) i.e.: holding a PhD degree; two (02) of them at the rank of Professors (Prof.). The total number of the participants was as such fifty eight (58).

4.2. Research Tools

The current research is an exploratory study that intends to help better understand the lexical profile of Algerian EFL advanced learners through the measurement of their vocabulary size. To

achieve this objective the study made use of two research tools a questionnaire and an online vocabulary test.

4.2.1. *The questionnaire*

The study employed a very short structured questionnaire which consisted of four sections with the first section devoted to the participants' general information including gender, age and qualification. The second and the third sections were meant to examine the length of participants' exposure to the English language through the evaluation of their EFL learning and teaching experiences. The participants were required to provide the number of years they spent in studying EFL as well as the number of years they spent in teaching EFL at the different levels of the Algerian education system.

In the last part of the questionnaire, the participants were required to mention the size of their vocabulary knowledge. To have an estimate of their vocabulary size, participants were provided with a hyperlink which directed them to Nation and Baglar's online VST (2007). The questionnaire was emailed to the participants with clarifications about the test including an explanatory instruction as well as the time it takes.

This experimental section can be divided into subsections, the contents of which vary according to the subject matter of the article. It must contain all the information about the experimental procedure and materials used to carry out experiments.

4.2.2. *The vocabulary test*

Testing vocabulary has as objective to follow learners' achievement in vocabulary learning in terms of size/quantity and depth/quality. In view of that, different tests have been designed to measure learners' vocabulary receptively or productively, including the Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) developed by Nation (1983) and the Vocabulary Size Test (VST) developed by Nation & Beglar (2007) and employed in the current study. The VST measures the written receptive vocabulary size of the test-taker and is based on the fourteen-1000-frequency word lists developed by Nation (2006). Nation (2006) classified the English vocabulary into a list containing 14,000 word families based on the occurrence frequency of each vocabulary item in the British National Corpus (BNC) and he divided further the list into fourteen levels; each level containing 1000 words, ranking from the most frequent words to the least frequent ones.

The test is available for free use at: https://www.lextutor.ca/tests/vst/ . It has a multiple choice format and is divided into fourteen sections and each section consists of ten questions sampled from each of the fourteen thousand-levels list. In each question, test-takers are presented with the target word written in capital letters; first in isolation, followed by a non-defining context sentence, with four suggested meanings, and the test-taker has to choose the right meaning that corresponds to the word in capital letters by clicking in the small circle besides the selected meaning. A sample of this test has been captured in figure 3.

First 1000 [Go 2]
1. SEE: They **saw** it.
  a. ◯ cut
  b. ◯ waited for
  c. ◉ looked at
  d. ◯ started

6. DRIVE: He **drives** fast.
  a. ◯ swims
  b. ◯ learns
  c. ◯ throws balls
  d. ◉ uses a car

Figure 3: Sample of the VST from the first 1,000 word level (Nation & Beglar, 2007)

As stated previously, a link directing the participants to this test was included in the last part

of the questionnaire, and participants were invited to avoid using the dictionary while taking the test to allow a reliable measurement of their actual vocabulary size.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As stated previously, 58 participants from DLED were engaged in this study considered all as advanced EFL learners; including 04 Phd holders working as lecturers and 12 doctoral students working either as assistant or part-time teachers, in addition to 42 master students with 22 M1 and 20 M2. The questionnaires were emailed to the participants via and the link to the online test was included in the last part of the questionnaire. The collection of the data lasted about one month. The data were recorded in two tables; one devoted to teachers and a second one to students. It is worth mentioning that the results of the doctoral students appear in the two tables as they have the status of both students and teachers

Question one: What is the vocabulary size of Algerian advanced EFL learners?

The first aim of this research work is to examine how much vocabulary Algerian advanced EFL students succeed to learn by the end of their formal exposure to the English language. The data collected from the students' questionnaire are illustrated in table2.

Table 2. Receptive vocabulary Size of DLED Master and Phd Students

№ of students	Vocabulary size of M1	Vocabulary size of M2	Vocabulary size of Phd students
1.	6,900 w.f.	7,700 w.f.	9,700 w.f.
2.	8,300 w.f.	**10,900 w.f.**	9,400 w.f.
3.	8,100 w.f.	7,400 w.f.	8,800 w.f.
4.	7,400 w.f.	7,100 w.f.	9,700 w.f.
5.	7,100 w.f.	**6,500 w.f.**	9,800 w.f.
6.	**10,400 w.f.**	8,100 w.f.	10,000 w.f.
7.	6 ,800 w.f.	7,900 w.f.	12,300 w.f.
8.	6,900 w.f.	8,600 w.f.	10,200 w.f.
9.	8,300 w.f.	7,600 w.f.	10,600 w.f.
10.	8,700 w.f.	9,200 w.f.	**7,900 w.f.**
11.	7,900 w.f.	8,000 w.f.	8,300 w.f.
12.	7,400 w.f.	7,200 w.f.	**12,700 w.f.**
13.	6 ,800 w.f.	7,400 w.f.	
14.	8,800 w.f.	8,600 w.f.	
15.	6,900 w.f.	7,600 w.f.	
16.	6,600 w.f.	7,100 w.f.	
17.	8,600 w.f.	9,300 w.f.	
18.	7,300 w.f.	7,100 w.f.	
19.	6,500 w.f.	8,200 w.f.	
20.	7,400 w.f.	6,900 w.f.	
21.	10,000 w.f.		
22.	**6,200 w.f.**		
Mean score	7,695.45 w.f.	7,920 w.f.	
Mean score	7,794.73 w.f.		9,950 w.f.

Starting with master students, results from this table show that the highest vocabulary size of M1 students is 10,400 w.f. and the lowest is 6,200 w.f. while the mean score is about 7,695 w.f. As for M2 students, their highest vocabulary size is 10,900 w.f. and their lowest size is 6,500 w.f. while the mean score is 7,920 w.f. Clearly, the vocabulary size of M1 is very close to M2 with a difference of only 255 w.f.

As regards the Phd students, their mean score is 9,950 w.f. with 12,700 w.f. as the highest size and 7,900 w.f. as the lowest size. As expected, Phd students' vocabulary size exceeds the vocabulary size of both M1 and M2 with about 2,254.55 w.f. and 2,030 w.f. respectively, since they were more exposed to the English language through their longer learning experience as well as their teaching experience. Still, the difference between the vocabulary size of the two levels; master vs. PhD students, is not significant, and not constant. While some M1 students scored 10,400 and 10,000 w.f., and some M2 students scored 10,900 and 9,300 w.f., some Phd students scored only 7,900 and 8,300 w.f. Evidently, there is a need for further research to clarify the factors that may affect the quality of exposure and make some students perform better than others and sometimes within a shorter period of time.

Based on Nation and Baglar (2007), it seems that the participants in this study possess enough vocabulary to deal with authentic English texts, but does this mean that with such size of receptive vocabulary, these participants are competent with the language and are able to use it for effective communication since learners' productive vocabulary is usually smaller than their receptive vocabulary? This is one of the limitations of this study as it focused mainly on the evaluation of the participants' receptive vocabulary size hence the need for further research to address this issue.

Question two: Is it possible to close the gap in the vocabulary knowledge of Algerian EFL students?

To answer the second research question, findings about students' vocabulary size (table 1) were compared with findings about teachers' vocabulary size illustrated in Table 3

Table 3: DLED Teachers' Receptive Vocabulary Size

Participants Teachers	Age	Rank	Learning experience (in academic years)	Teaching experience (in academic years)	Vocabulary Size (in word families)
1	60	**Prof.**	04+03+5=12	09+06+25=**40**	10,000 w.f.
2	28	Ass.T.	02+03+05=10	0+0+06=06	9,700 w.f.
3	49	Ass.T.	03+03+06=12	0+10+03=13	9,400 w.f.
4	28	Ass.T.	03+03+6=12	0+0+07=07	8,800 w.f.
5	50	Ass.T.	04+03+05=12	24+0+02=26	9,700 w.f.
6	40	**Lect.T.**	03+03+05=11	0+0+17= 17	**7,300 w.f.**
7	42	Ass.T.	02+03+05=10	10+00+02+04=16	9,800 w.f.
8	64	**Prof.**	02+03+05=10	00+17+19=36	11,400 w.f.
9	31	Ass.T.	03+03+06=12	05+01+05=11	10,000 w.f.
10	50	Ass.T.	04+03+05=12	00+20+04=24	12,300 w.f.
11	44	Ass.T.	04+03+05=12	00+10+19=29	10,200 w.f.
12	47	Ass.T.	04+03+05=12	00+01+20=21	10,600 w.f.
13	56	Ass.T.	04+03+05=12	30+0+02+03=35	7,900 w.f.
14	46	Ass.T.	03+03+05=11	00+21+03=24	8,300 w.f.
15	58	**Lect. T.**	04+03+05=12	00+06+10+18= 24	12,100 w.f.
16	28	**Part-T.**	02+03+05=10	00+00+03=**03**	**12,700 w.f.**
				Mean score	**10,012.5 w.f**

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As shown in the second column of the table above, teachers' age ranges from 28 to 64 years old with an average of 48 years old. The third column was devoted to the participants' rank while the fourth and the fifth columns were devoted to their learning and teaching experiences respectively. So, based on these data, the participants spent on average about 12 years studying EFL, generally with four years in middle school, three years in secondary school and five years at the university.

It is worth mentioning that these participants, except for the part-time teacher, have pursued their university studies under the classical system, besides the differences in the learning experience were related to the reforms that took place in the Algerian educational system since the 1970s. Thus, the five years of the university consist of four years of the Bachelor's degree and only one year of the Magister, and in the case of the part-time teacher who have studied under the LMD system; it includes the three years of the Bachelor's degree and two years of the Master's degree. This is because students spend the two last years of the Magister studies working on their research project. So, these two practical years with the duration of the Doctoral degree are not included in the learning experience of the participants since they do not receive any instruction in EFL; they spend these periods working on their research projects.

As for the participants' teaching experience, as seen in the fifth column, it varies from 03 years as the shortest experience to 40 years as the longest experience with an average experience of 24 years. It is worth mentioning that many teachers with long teaching experiences have usually worked in middle and/or secondary schools before being recruited at the university. Data about the learning and the teaching experiences of the participants were collected because during these two periods of time the participants were formally exposed to the English language and it is this time of exposure which is taken into account when analyzing the vocabulary size of the participants.

So, the vocabulary size of the participants, as seen in the last column, varies from 7,300 word families (w.f.) as the smallest size to 12,700 w.f. as the highest size. The mean score is 10,012.5 w. f. Keeping in mind that the majority of the teachers participating in this study are doctoral students, we can say that these findings make sense and corroborate the findings of Nation and Baglar (2007) mentioned previously about the vocabulary size of Phd students.

Yet, here again, there is an inconsistency between the vocabulary size of the participants with regards to the amount of their exposure to the English language. Since the learning experience was nearly the same for all participants, it was expected that the teaching experience would make a difference in the size of their vocabulary knowledge. The longer the teaching experience, the longer the exposure and the bigger the vocabulary size was expected to be. However, the findings were a bit controversial; for instance while a 60 years old Professor with 40 years of teaching experience scored 10,000 w.f., a 58 years old lecturer with 24 years of teaching experience scored 12,100 w.f. and a 28 years old part-time teacher (Phd student) with only 03 years of teaching experience scored 12,700 w.f.

Another significant example is the vocabulary size of participants number 06 and 13 (see table 2) where the first is a lecturer of 40 years old with 17 years of teaching experience and the second is an assistant teacher with 35 years of teaching experience. The first scored 7,300 w.f. and the second 7,900 w.f.; these scores were limited compared with the scores of many PhD and master students. So, in spite of their longer exposure, many participants were not able to reach the standard size of vocabulary.

The rational explanation to the discrepancy between the vocabulary size of the participants and the amount of their exposure to the language is the interference of other possible factors that could have influenced the participants' vocabulary knowledge such as the individual differences between the participants including their motives and motivation when learning/teaching the language, their reading habits, their exposure to the language outside the educational settings as well as the quality of their formal exposure. Thus, the answer to the second question is that it is difficult if not impossible to close the gap in the vocabulary knowledge of Algerian EFL advanced learners relying only on formal instruction..

6. CONCLUSION

This paper made use of a questionnaire and the VST of Nation & Beglar (2007) to evaluate the vocabulary size of Algerian EFL advanced learners taking as a sample 58 participants from Djillali Liabes English Department, and the findings showed that master students knew on average 7,794. w.f. and doctoral students knew about 9,950 w.f. Though, these figures fit well with existing estimates in other EFL environments, there is a need for further research to associate these findings with the participants' EFL communicative ability because the point is not to equal native speakers in terms of vocabulary size, but to possess enough vocabulary so as to communicate effectively in the target language.

The study also revealed that to close the gap in the students' vocabulary knowledge; not only the amount of exposure matters in vocabulary learning, but also the quality of exposure influences vocabulary growth. Hence, formal EFL instruction needs to be revisited in light of the new research findings. The amount and quality of exposure could be improved by teaching EFL at primary school to lengthen the exposure and vocabulary teaching could be scaffolded at the tertiary level by incorporating an intensive reading programme that provides students with authentic input and again more exposure to the target language.

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