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EFL Learners' Proficiency Level of Predicting Word Meaning & Reading Comprehension in Relation to Vocabulary Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

Words are the main units of any language, without which no effective communication nor learning process take place. Having Insufficient vocabulary knowledge serves as a barrier that keeps pupils from improving their communicative skills and language competence. The aim of this research is to ascertain the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and the reading comprehension and word meaning prediction skills of EFL learners. It is proposed that there is a positive and significant relationship between students' word knowledge and their capacity to infer word meanings and understand what they read.

To accomplish this study, sixty students of the English Department at Baitaxt Institute in the Kurdistan Region-Erbil, were chosen to form thirty freshmen and thirty seniors divided into two groups. There were two tests created and used: the reading comprehension exam and the affixation test. To examine the pertinent data, an Independent T-test and Pearson correlation were performed. Findings of the study revealed that Pupils with a better grasp of vocabulary were able to predict more word meanings, which led to better reading comprehension. Students with less knowledge about words, on the other hand, had less ability to predict word meanings and less ability to understand texts. The study provides pedagogical implications for English language teachers and curriculum developers.

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1. Introduction

According to previous studies, Vocabulary knowledge and proficiency serve as both a prerequisite for other language skills and the primary cause of variation in the ultimate state of those skills. Students with limited knowledge of words usually experience ineffective usage of the different skills of the language that leads to communication failure (Henry,1990; Schmitt,&Meara,1997).

Pupils who are well-versed in word meanings will have an easier time understanding what they read or hear. It also aids in their ability to write or speak with accurate word choice. Many researches claim that one of the most common tactics employed by EFL throughout the reading and listening comprehension processes is the utilization of prior vocabulary knowledge. By looking at a word's grammatical aspect, which verifies the part of speech that the sentence syntax has previously suggested, students may discern the part of speech of a word. In this manner, morphemes may be recognized and used by pupils to understand phrases and paragraphs. (Kintsch,1988 ;Mochizuki &Aizawa,2000; Mahmood,2013,2017).

Prefixes, suffixes, and roots need attention and work similarly to mnemonics. Being able to identify these word pieces and explain them further should help with vocabulary memory as they are significant units. Understanding roots, suffixes, and prefixes aids pupils in that it makes remembering considerably simpler definitions for new terms. Put otherwise, understanding the meanings of prefixes, suffixes, and roots helps with remembering when learning a language. (Nation,2001).

2. Literature Review

Taft and Forster's (1979) studies marked the beginning of morphological processing research. They argued that polysyllabic words are accessible via their initial syllable and before lexical access, prefixed words are processed into their component morphemes. Furthermore, "words associated with affixation—prefixed and inflected—are stored collectively.'(pp.607-620). Understanding English morphology may help students' vocabulary grow and become more elaborate; in fact, students who are conversant with the language can identify a greater number of terms when reading texts. (Schmitt & Meara ,1997 ;Mochizuki & Aizawa,2000).

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Mahmood (2014: p.121) stated that "The reported frequency of having strategic knowledge appears to be a distinguishing factor between good and poor readers." . Expanding one's understanding of morphology necessitates explicit instruction, as EFL students who are familiar with a word's base form may not necessarily learn its additional forms. Based on observations, the majority of poor readers struggle primarily because they have not developed precise and efficient word recognition abilities.Insufficient decoding abilities can jeopardize comprehension processes because, in part, they cause struggling readers to focus so much on decoding that they run out of cognitive resources for meaning formation. Furthermore, those who fail to develop good word recognition skills tend to detest reading and, as a result, steer clear of it whenever possible. Insufficient practice may impede the acquisition of vocabulary and syntactic understanding that are nurtured by proficient reading, hence impeding reading progress even more. (Juel,1988 ;Näslund, & Samuels,1992; Mahmood,2012).

A crucial cognitive process in EFL/ESL reading comprehension is inference.(Graesser & Bower, 1990; Nassaji, 2003a & 2003b; Mahmood, 2012, 2014; Kintsch, 1998; Monzo & Calvo, 2002). The concept of inferencing is "the connections that people establish when they try to interpret texts". (Henry,1999:p.23).

Additionally, it has been discovered that lexical inferencing and incidental vocabulary learning—that is, learning vocabulary from reading naturally occurring texts—are strongly related. (Nagy,1997;Huckin & Coady, 1999).

Therefore, many linguists argue that learning to comprehend new words in context in both L1 and L2 languages accounts for most, if not all, of lexical development that occurs in learners. Success with lexical inferencing has been demonstrated to depend on a number of variables, including the kind of word and its context.The amount of cognitive and mental effort required for the task, the learner's attention to the text's details, their ability to use extratextual cues, the amount of textual information available in the surrounding context, the term's significance for understanding the text, and any potential preconceptions they may have are a few examples of these variables. (Parry,1993; Paribakht & Wesche,1999; Frantzen, 2003).

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Nagy (1997:pp.64–83) discusses the elements that go into lexical inferring and views the function of prior knowledge as "a basic factor which influence the learners' strategy use and success." .It has been demonstrated that having a vast sight vocabulary improves context-based guessing. This data unequivocally supports vocabulary instruction that is active. Even if using direct vocabulary instruction has been less popular recently there seems to be a a good cause to reconsider the reasons against it and search for practical strategies to combine direct instruction with incidental exposure to teach vocabulary. (Laufer,1996;Huckin& Goady,1999;Mahmood, 2011,2014).

3. Aims of the Study

The purpose of the study is to find out how EFL word knowledge affects participants' abilities to anticipate word meaning and read comprehension.

4. Hypothesis

Theoretically, reading comprehension performance and students' command of word knowledge and word meaning prediction are positively correlated in a linear fashion.

5. Procedures

5.1 Participants

In this study, sixty students from the Beitaxt Institute's English Department took part. There were two distinct groupings among the participants. Thirty freshman students made up the first group; aside from their own experiences, they were assumed to know very little to nothing about morphology and affixes. In the second group were thirty seniors. They had studied affixation and morphology in their courses on word production or study skills.

5.2 Instruments

Two measures were employed in this study to evaluate the participants' word knowledge (affix knowledge), word prediction skills, and reading comprehension

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ability. Since two instruments were to be employed, the data collection process was split into two phases. After the fixation test was finished, the reading test was administered the next day. They were all delivered in a university classroom. There were forty minutes allotted for each exam.

***1.Affixation Exam*:** This exam was used to assess the participants' ability to anticipate words as well as their word knowledge about affixes. It is worth mentioning that this test was created and revised by Nation (1998) and its reliability was reported ranging from .92 to .96 by many researchers. The academic module consists of four sections as shown below:

1. Based on the terms in sample sentences containing certain prefixes, students were asked to deduce the meaning of those prefixes. Ten multiple-choice questions with correct answers earned a total of ten points. One point was awarded for each question.
2. Ten multiple-choice questions with the objective of determining the suffix meanings based on the words in the sample sentences that include those suffixes (The total score for this section was 10 points, with one point assigned to each item.)
3. A total of 10 points were awarded for correctly answering ten multiple-choice questions on roots based on the words in the sample sentences that include those roots. Each question was worth one point, and the section's score was ten points.
4. The remaining thirty items on the exam required the applicants to Sort the words into prefixes, suffixes, and roots; use example sentences to help you comprehend the terminology. (This section had a total score of thirty, with one point awarded for each item).

The sum of the test scores from sections 1, 2, and 3 was used to determine the students' total word knowledge score (30 points). Additionally, the students' word prediction was based on their part 4 score (30 points). in order to gauge the test's dependability. Using Cronbach's Alph, the test's internal consistency and reliability were evaluated. Refer to Table (1).

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Table (1): The Cronbach's Alpha for Word Knowledge & Word Prediction

Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability of Affixation Test Inter-Item Correlation	
.689	.560	Word knowledge
.570	.507	Word production

Table (1) demonstrates that the word knowledge test's Cronbach's Alpha is.68, whereas the word prediction test's is.57.Given that they fall between 0 and 1, it may be said that the tests have a moderate level of dependability.

6. Results and Discussion

The results are shown in the following manner:

a) The students' word knowledge score totaled thirty points, consisting of the prefix, suffix, and root scores (the first three portions of the affixation exam). In the fourth phase of the affixation test, students had to parse words and estimate their meanings in order to calculate their word prediction score, or total score of thirty. See Table- 3-

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics of the Students' Scores on Word Knowledge, Word Prediction and Reading Comprehension

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Freshmen' Scores on Word Prediction	30	11	26	18.8333	4.29180

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Freshmen' Scores on Reading Comprehension	30	12	26	20.8000	3.56612
Freshmen' Scores on Word Knowledge	30	13	25	21.4333	3.09263
Seniors' Scores on Word Prediction	30	15	30	25.7667	3.49071
Seniors' Scores on Reading Comprehension	30	19	30	26.9667	2.48420
Seniors' Scores on Word Knowledge	30	20	30	27.9667	2.15732
Valid N(list wise)	30				

The lowest word prediction score for freshmen is 11, while the lowest score for seniors is 15. On the same test, the upper maximum for freshmen is 26, while the

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upper limit for seniors is 30. For the freshman and senior classes, the average score is 18.83 and 25.76, respectively. Seniors score the lowest in reading comprehension (19), while freshmen score the lowest (12). The maximum score for a freshmen is 26, while the highest score for a senior is 30. The typical score for the freshmen and senior classes is 20.80 and 26.96, respectively. Furthermore, in the word knowledge exam, the freshmen had a mean score of 21.43, a minimum score of 13, and a maximum score of 25. In contrast, the seniors have a lowest score of 20, a maximum score of 30, and a mean score of 27.96.Refer to Table -4-

Table 4.
Correlation between students' total scores.
Pearson Correlation

Students' total Scores on Word_ Knowledge and Students' Total Scores on Word Prediction	.89,0
Students' total Scores on Word_ Knowledge and Students' Total Scores on Reading Comprehension	.9,81
Students' total Scores on Word_ Prediction and Students' Total Scores on reading comprehension	.899

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Both the reading comprehension and word prediction of students, as well as their word knowledge (Affixation) and reading comprehension, show a statistically significant positive linear correlation (Table 4). The Pearson correlations are almost +1, at.890,.981, and.899. The Independent T-tests were used as follows as there were two distinct participant groups: freshmen and seniors.

a) The word knowledge results of seniors and freshman pupils were compared using an independent T-test. Refer to Table -5-

Table 5.

Independent T. Test between Students' Total Scores on Word Knowledge

Domain	N	Mean	Mean Difference	Std.Deviation	t	Sig
Freshmen	30	21.4667	6.50000	3.13746	-9.350	.044
Seniors	30	27.9667		2.15732		

% of the freshmen's, indicating that the former fared better than the latter on this test. An independent T-test was used to compare the word knowledge scores of the freshmen and seniors due to the observed mean difference. The pupils' word knowledge test scores differed significantly, as seen by the t-test findings, which had a Sig. value of.044 and a t-value of -9.350, both less than 0.05.

An independent T-test was used to compare the word prediction results of first-year and senior students. The results are displayed in Table 6.

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Table 6.

Independent T.Test between students' total scores on word prediction

Domain	N	Mean	Mean Difference	Std.Deviation	t	Sig
Freshmen	30	18.8333	6.93333	4.29180	-6.865	.044
Seniors	30	25.7667		3.49071		

b) Table 6 demonstrates that seniors receive a mean score of 25.76 on word prediction, whereas freshmen receive a mean score of 18.83. This shows that on this test, seniors did better than freshmen. The 6.93 mean difference prompted an independent T-test, and the findings revealed a t-value of -6.865 and a sig. value of.044, which is less than 0.05. This shows a significant difference in the students' word prediction test results.

c) An independent T-test was used to compare the freshman and senior reading comprehension exam results. Please see Table -7-

Table 7.

Independent T.Test between students' total scores on reading comprehension

Domain	N	Mean	Mean Difference	Std.Deviation	t	Sig
Freshmen	30	20.8000	6.16667	3.56612	-7.772	.022

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Seniors	30	26.9667		2.48420	

Table 7 demonstrates that the average reading comprehension score for freshmen is 20.80, whereas the average score for seniors is 26.96 on the same exam. 6.16 is the mean difference. A T-test was conducted, and the outcomes demonstrate that the pupils' reading comprehension test scores differed significantly. (Sig. value =.022, less than 0.05).

7.Conclusion

The findings indicate that there is a substantial and linear relationship between students' word knowledge and both their word prediction and reading comprehension. Furthermore, the T-test results demonstrated a strong correlation between students' comprehension of written texts and their word prediction and word knowledge.

Senior students, who possessed a greater command of word meanings, were able to anticipate more word meanings than freshman students, who had a worse command of word meanings. The results also indicated that seniors with greater word knowledge were better able to understand reading comprehension texts, whereas students with lesser word knowledge had poorer comprehension ability. Finally, seniors with better word prediction abilities also showed a better knowledge of reading comprehension books. Conversely, freshmen had worse word prediction skills and, thus, lower understanding of reading comprehension materials.

8. Pedagogical Recommendations

Based on the outcomes obtained, a few pedagogical suggestions may be made. When assigning readings in reading classes, language teachers ought to be more thoughtful about what they select to have their students read, particularly if they are utilizing English language study guides. Reading should be more than merely practice in a school where students are learning English as a second language. Rather, it needs to be viewed as a method of acquiring information and abilities that enable individuals to fully and successfully comprehend what they read. Through

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appropriate textbooks and reading resources, kids may enhance their vocabulary more efficiently.

It is also necessary for teachers to find ways to increase the student's vocabulary knowledge. For example, the teacher can provide or encourage students to do extensive reading beyond the classroom requirements. The development of Students' previous knowledge and terminology will aid them with reading comprehension. The majority of language learners are not exposed to the target language outside of the classroom as frequently as they would be if they were in English-speaking countries, which is another reason in favor of extensive readings in the classroom. As a result, it is even more important for students to read in their spare time in order to both enjoy reading and learn new vocabulary and background knowledge.

Lastly, even though this study showed how vocabulary knowledge may help students understand and improve their reading comprehension, it is not advised that language teachers pre-teach the vocabulary in all reading comprehension assessments. As an alternative, the teacher might give the students extra reading assignments or devote class time to activities that will help them increase their vocabulary through explicit vocabulary instruction.

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ئاستی لێهاتووی فێرخوازانی زمانی ئینگلیزی بۆ پێشبینی کردنی مانای ووشەکان و تێگەیشتن لە خوێندنەوە پەیوەست بە زانیاریان لەسەر وشەکاری

پـوخـتـه:

وشەکان یەکە سەرەکییەکانی هەر زمانێکن، کە بەبێ ئەوان هیچ پرۆسەیەکی خوێندن و فێربوونی کاریگەر ڕوونادات. هەبوونی زانیاری سنووردار لە بواری وشەسازیدا بەربەستێکە کە ڕێگری لە خوێندکاران دەکات توانای پەیوەندیکردن و توانای زمانیان باشتر بکەن. ئەم توێژینەوەیە لێکۆڵینەوە لە کاریگەری زانیاری وشەسازی فێرخوازانی زمانی ئینگلیزی وەک زمانێکی بیانی (EFL) دەکات لەسەر توانای پێشبینیکردنی مانای وشە و ئەدای تێگەیشتن لە خوێندنەوە. گریمانە دەکرێت کە پەیوەندییەکی جەوهەری و ئەرێنی لە نێوان زانینی وشەی خوێندکاران، پێشبینیکردنی مانای وشە و تێگەیشتن لە خوێندنەوەدا هەیە. بۆ بەجێگەیاندنی ئەم توێژینەوەیە، شەست خوێندکاری بەشی ئینگلیزی لە پەیمانگای پەیتاخت لە هەرێمی کوردستان-هەولێر هەڵبژێردران بۆ پێکهێنانی دوو گروپ لە سی خوێندکاری قۆناغی یەکەم و سی خوێندکاری قۆناغی یەکەم. دوو ئامێر (تاقیکردنەوەی چەسپاندن و تاقیکردنەوەی تێگەیشتن لە خوێندنەوە) دیزاین کران و بەکارهێنران. پەیوەندی پیرسۆن و تاقیکردنەوەی سەربەخۆی T ئەنجامدرا بۆ شیکردنەوەی زانیارییە پەیوەندیدارەکان. دۆزینەوەکانی توێژینەوەکە دەریانخستووە کە ئەو خوێندکارانەی کە توانای بەهێزتریان لە زانستی وشەدا هەبووە، توانیویانە پێشبینی زیاتری مانای وشەکان بکەن و لە ئەنجامدا تێگەیشتنیان لە خوێندنەوە باشتر بووە. لە بەرامبەردا ئەو خوێندکارانەی کە کەمتر زانیارییان لەسەر وشەکان هەبووە، توانای پێشبینیکردنی مانای وشەکانیان کەمتر بووە و توانای تێگەیشتنیان لە دەقەکان کەمتر بووە. توێژینەوەکە کاریگەریی پێداگۆژی بۆ مامۆستایانی زمانی ئینگلیزی و گەشەپێدەرانی مەنهەج دەخاتە ڕوو.

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علاقه معرفه ألمفردات لمتعلمي أللغه ألإنكليزيه كلغه أجنبيه بمستوى الإتقان في توقع معنى الكلمات وفهم النصوص المقروءه

الملخص:

الكلمات هي الوحدات الاساسيه للغه والني بدونها لا يمكن ان يحدث أي تواصل فعال أو عمليه تعلم.ان امتلاك الطلبه لعدد محدود من المفردات يعتبر عائقا يمنعهم من تطوير مهاراتهم ألتواصليه وكفاءتهم في استخدام أللغه . تبحث ألدراسه الحاليه في تأثير معرفه متعلمي أللغه الإنكليزيه كلغه أجنبيه للمفرده على التنبؤ بمعناها وعلى إستيعاب النص المقروء .ا تم افتراض وجود علاقه مهمه وإيجابيه بين معرفه ألطلبه للمفرده وإلتنبؤ بها و إستيعاب النص المقروء.لاتمام هذه الدراسه تم اختيار ستون طالبا من قسم أللغه ألإنكليزيه في معهد بايتخت في إقليم كوردستان –أربيل حيث تم تقسيمهم على مجموعتين تتكون كل مجموعه من ثلاثون طالبا من المرحله الاولى والمرحله الثانيه .تم تصميم وإستخدام أداتين (اختبارالحروف اللاحقه مع اختبار استيعاب القراءه) بالاضافه الى استخدام اختبارالصله لبيرسون واختبار T لغرض تحليل المعلومات ذات الصله. كشفت نتائج الدراسه إن الطلبه الّذين لديهم معرفه أكثر بالمفرده لديهم قدره أكبر على التنبؤ بمعناها وقدره اكبر على إستيعاب النصوص ألمقروءه .بينما الطلبه الذين لديهم معرفه اقل بالمفرده هم اقل قدره على التنبؤ بمعناها وأقل قدره على فهم وإستيعاب النصوص المقروءه . تضمنت الدراسه مقترحات تربويه لمدرسي اللغه الانكليزيه كلغه اجنبيه ومطوري المناهج