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The Impact of Learners' Breadth of Vocabulary Knowledge on Their Reading Comprehension

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Reading comprehension is very significant in language learning process. Reading is realized for many reasons such as getting information, learning a new skill or reading just for pleasure; however, the main aim is to get an understanding of what the reading text is trying to convey since reading is of great significance. As reading comprehension is a learned skill that is dependent upon some external factors, to get into the heart of the problem, first of all some factors should be examined. Among these factors, the most observable one is knowledge of vocabulary. Vocabulary is what the learners most complain about reading texts because it is closely related to reading comprehension. At this juncture, it can be said that despite the indispensable role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension, it is essential to look into the depth of it in detail to understand how strong predictor the breadth of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension is.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the breadth of vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension and to figure out to what extent the vocabulary knowledge effects the comprehension during the reading process.

The research questions driving this study were:

1. Does vocabulary knowledge lead to a gain in scores on the RCT (Reading Comprehension Test)?
2. What are the EFL students' perspectives on vocabulary breadth of knowledge, and how do these affect their reading comprehension?

This study aims to investigate the scores of participants on the breadth of vocabulary knowledge test (VKT) and a reading comprehension test (RCT) if vocabulary knowledge has an effect on reading comprehension or not. It was conducted with 40 students at prep school by employing quantitative and qualitative research methods. In this study three instruments were employed including i) reading comprehension test (RCT), ii) breadth of vocabulary knowledge test (VKT), and iii) interview.

When the interviews and RCT and VKT results were analysed, the findings showed that vocabulary knowledge affects the scores in reading comprehension to a great extent. Also students' perceptions on vocabulary breadth of knowledge are that their reading comprehension is much dependent on their vocabulary knowledge.