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**AN ANALYSIS OF VOCABULARY DIFFICULTIES IN  
READING COMPREHENSION AMONG EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

**The CASE of first-year students at Abou-bakr Belkaid  
University, Tlemccen**

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## ABSTRACT

It is often agreed that the reading ability is a prerequisite to an effective language learning since reading is considered as one of the most important language skills. Moreover, reading is getting more attention than it has in recent years. Far too little is known, however, about ways to deal with the reading problems of EFL learners. Indeed, first-year students at Abou-Bakr Belkaïd University-Tlemcen- are said to have serious problems in reading comprehension. These are mainly related to vocabulary knowledge. This aspect of language, which is considered as being indispensable for university students to improve their reading ability, represents the major source of most of our learners' deficiencies since poor word identification ability is a good predictor of difficulty in reading comprehension.

For this purpose, the aim of the present research work is to show how consistent vocabulary knowledge is useful and helpful to the reading comprehension process. It also attempts to give an overview of our learners' source of difficulties so that to propose eventually an appropriate remedial work and to suggest alternative solutions that are hoped to alleviate the problem. The central belief guiding this dissertation, however, is the crucial role of reading in language teaching and learning.

The handling of the issue is embodied in four distinct chapters. The introductory chapter introduces a survey of the key concepts related to this research, starting by defining the reading skill and its sub-skills and describing the main aspects of the reading process as well as identifying the interwoven relationship which exists between the reading skill and vocabulary recognition. This investigation may help English first-year students get information from the printed page efficiently, rapidly and ultimately with full understanding. The second chapter describes the target learning/teaching situation and analyses the

various variables characterizing it. From the analysis of learners' profile and needs, a description of the research tools for data collection is included too; namely teachers and learners' questionnaires and tests. In chapter three, the researcher proceeds to a direct vocabulary instruction to the learners and describes its results. The aim is to show how this latter is beneficial and offers the most effective means for promoting lexical acquisition in EFL contexts, and hence develop the reading ability. Finally, the fourth chapter represents the core of this research. It presents a set of some suggestions and recommendations for both teachers and learners. It also consists of some remedial activities, tasks and pedagogical implications that may be helpful for the development of the reading skill in an ELT context.

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## KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

AST	After Strategy Training
BST	Before Strategy Training
CD-ROM	Compact Disc Read Only Memory
DT	Deceptive Transparent
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESP	English for Specific/Special Purposes
ESL	English as a Second Language
<i>et al</i>	<i>et alii</i>
FL	Foreign Language
Ibid	Ibidem
I.T	Information Technology
L1	Learners' First Language (Arabic in this case)
L2	Learners' Second/Foreign Language (French or English in this case)
SL	Second Language
SQ3R	Survey Question Read Recite Review
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
U.K.	United Kingdom
U.S.A.	United State of America

# **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

It has often been said that the one language skill students need most and retain throughout their lives is reading. Indeed, learning English to be able to read various topics in English is the major goal of many EFL students who wish to complete their university studies. Clearly, reading is part of the core of curriculum in all second / foreign language learning settings. It is one of the most important foreign language skills in any language classroom; not only as a source of information and a pleasurable activity, but also as a means of consolidating and extending one's knowledge of the language and the world .

Yet, the teaching of reading at an advanced level is a difficult language task which is part of many university programmes in different countries for many years. However, it is often observed that, in language pedagogy, little attention is devoted to this skill. Moreover, very little literature seems to be available on reading at an advanced level, and on the different ways to deal with the reading problems of EFL learners.

This has negatively affected our first-year university students who are said to be weak in the Reading Comprehension module. Most teachers report that our learners show a very limited ability to read systematically, autonomously and with full comprehension. This is, probably, due to their lack of a reading habit and a poor and limited vocabulary stock; since a number of researchers have established a strong correlation between reading vocabulary knowledge and reading achievement scores. That is students who perform well on vocabulary assessments often perform well on reading comprehension tasks and activities.

Thus, the present dissertation is an exploratory case study that seeks to incorporate a vocabulary instruction in reading comprehension, for first-year English students, in view of enhancing reading comprehension and vocabulary recognition development as well as making their reading abilities more systematic, more efficient and more adequate to their needs, level and profile.

The investigation is also based on the results of second language vocabulary acquisition and the contribution of a consistent vocabulary knowledge in the fields of first, second and foreign language reading. From the assumption that less-successful readers may benefit from the vocabulary techniques and strategies of successful ones. The idea of incorporating an effective strategy training in vocabulary instruction to improve reading comprehension is more and more supported by research in this area.

All in all, this research essentially aims at:

First, identifying our first-year EFL students' needs, styles and more importantly the main difficulties that lie behind their poor achievement in the Reading Comprehension module, especially those related to vocabulary recognition, by isolating one possible cause: their lack of exposure and knowledge of vocabulary and also lack of strategies to learn new words. Another probable cause is their lack of an appropriate vocabulary training in reading instruction conducive to promote effective reading.

Second, presenting a systematic framework for the development of reading vocabulary in EFL classrooms by means of some strategies and tasks, then testing the learners' tangible enhancement in the reading skill in general.

From this viewpoint, the present work aims at undertaking a preliminary investigation of whether our learners' awareness of the importance of vocabulary instruction, may constitute one significant factor facilitating, therefore, access to pleasurable reading with full understanding. In other words, does learners' awareness and training in some vocabulary techniques and strategies correlate positively or not with their reading achievement?

This question forms the core of the present research work. What is more, a set of sub-questions have to be asked in order to have a reliable answer to this general question:

(1) Why do students score badly in the Reading Comprehension module and what are the real sources of their reading difficulties? Can they be traced back to their poor linguistic background or to the reading skill nature?

(2) Are learners equipped with any vocabulary recognition technique or strategy for the enhancement of their reading abilities or not?

(3) Is there any awareness on their part of the vocabulary strategies and the strong correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading achievements?

(4) Is a vocabulary awareness-raising, through a direct instruction in some vocabulary techniques and word-attack skills by means of some effective strategies likely to contribute to learners' better achievement and progress in both vocabulary and reading? However, a set of hypotheses are worth noting here:

(1) The reading comprehension problems are mainly caused by a lack of a solid vocabulary knowledge base and learners score badly in the Reading Comprehension module because they frequently meet a set of unfamiliar vocabulary items that block their paths, since comprehension cannot proceed without word identification. Therefore their reading difficulties are of a linguistic nature.

(2) Learners are equipped with poor, limited and inefficient vocabulary strategies to enhance reading comprehension and eventually vocabulary development.

(3) Learners are not aware of the close relationship that exists between vocabulary knowledge and the reading skill.

(4) It is assumed that if learners' vocabulary awareness were raised through a direct instruction in reading vocabulary using some strategies, they might make progress in reading comprehension as well as vocabulary knowledge.

It should be mentioned from the outset that the informants chosen for this research work are forty first-year EFL students at the English Language Department of Abou Bakr Belkaid University, Tlemcen. They have been selected because of their poor achievements in the Reading Comprehension module and their major need for a vocabulary awareness- raising and instruction at that level.

To test the hypotheses and make the results more reliable, two research tools are used to collect data, namely a questionnaire for both students and teachers of the Reading Comprehension module as well as tests. Thus, learners' profile, needs and difficulties have been analysed through a questionnaire at the beginning of the investigation. Pre-training and post-training tests have been used to analyse the effects of strategy training on learners' progress in both reading and vocabulary.

# **CHAPTER ONE : LITERATURE SURVEY**



# **CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE SURVEY**

## **1.1.Introduction.**

## **1.2.The Reading Skill Defined.**

## **1.3. Reading Processes.**

## **1.4.Reading sub- Skills and Types.**

### 1.4.1. Reading Sub - Skills.

- i) Skimming.*
- ii) Scanning.*
- iii) Careful Reading.*
- iv) Predicting.*

### 1.4.2. Reading Types:

- i) Intensive Reading.*
- ii) Extensive Reading.*

## **1.5. Selection of Reading Material.**

## **1.6. Types of Reading Comprehension Difficulties with a Focus on Vocabulary Knowledge.**

## **1.7.Vocabulary Defined.**

## **1.8.Teaching Vocabulary.**

## **1.9. Techniques Used in Teaching Vocabulary.**

- 1.9.1. Verbal Technique.
- 1.9.2. Visual Technique.
- 1.9.3. Using a Dictionary.
- 1.9.4. Using Realia.

## **1.10. Vocabulary Development.**

## **1.11. The Relationship between Vocabulary and Reading.**

## **1.12. Conclusion.**

## **Notes to Chapter One**

## CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE SURVEY

### 1.1. Introduction

This chapter will shed some light on one of the exciting linguistic skills, notably 'reading' which is, perhaps, the most difficult language skill to teach, for it involves so many different elements such as: mechanical eye movement, vocabulary, grammar and intellectual comprehension. Today, many teachers and educators realise that the skill students need most is reading. By all measures, reading would seem to be the most attainable language skill for students in countries where English is not widely used.

The chapter will deal with identifying some reading processes and the major skills involved in reading. These skills also called strategies, have to be worked on; so that comprehension would take place. In addition to this, the important reading types will be presented, i.e. extensive and intensive reading. The main purpose is to encourage students to pay more attention to the reading process.

After dealing with these strategies, it is important to speak about the different types of reading deficiencies mainly some vocabulary problems, which will be much more focused on. This idea leads to the need to define vocabulary. Then, a major attention will be attributed to the process of teaching / learning of new items, mainly to some of the techniques used in presenting and teaching vocabulary.

Finally, the researcher will discuss the close relationship that exists between vocabulary knowledge and reading; for vocabulary building is indispensable for university students to improve their reading proficiency.

## 1.2. The Reading Skill Defined

Defining reading is not an easy task. It is difficult to explain it briefly and correctly since the process involves the interaction of various components used in different ways, by different readers. In this regard, reading is seen as a complex skill involving the interaction of various cognitive, metacognitive, linguistic and sociolinguistic elements. Accordingly, researchers recognise the complex nature of the reading process. Dubin, for instance states that:

*“Reading is a multifaceted, complex skill made up of a number of psychological, physical and social elements. Just as there are many sides to knowing a language, so there are many aspects to effective mature reading”.*

(Dubin, 1982: 125)

Therefore, the process involves the interaction of the reader's general information, linguistic competence<sup>1</sup>, visual and mental means as well as socio-cultural knowledge. In traditional approaches to language teaching, reading was labelled as a passive skill. However, the reader is equally involved in guessing, anticipating, checking, interpreting, evaluating and interacting.

Reading, therefore, is thought to be a receptive skill. It is both a process and a product. Indeed, reading is more than just receiving meaning in a literal sense. It involves bringing an individual's entire life experience and thinking powers to be able to understand what the writer has encoded and to provide readers or learners with a wealth of interesting information. In this respect, Strevens suggests that:

*“Advanced reading is no longer a language task, but ...a contribution to the general education and intellectual development of the learner”.*

(Strevens, 1977: 116)

In the same line of thought, Rivers notes that: *“reading is certainly an important activity for expanding knowledge of a language”* (Rivers, 1968: 263). Indeed, all quotations from educationalists concerned with reading in a second or a foreign language, stress that active interaction must take place between the writer of the text and the reader. Goodman (1988) and others have posited a psycholinguistic view of reading in which reading is viewed as an interactive process between language and thought:

*“Reading is a long- distance discussion between a reader and an author ...There is an essential interaction between language and thought in reading ...the writer encodes thought as language, and the reader decodes language to thought”.*

(Goodman, 1988: 12)

The decoding aspect of reading, according to Goodman, is a meaning decoding. The reader's role is to find answers to questions about possible meaning. In the same vein, Anderson states that:

*“Reading is an active, fluent process which involves the reader and the reading materials in building meaning. Meaning does not reside on the printed page, nor is it only in the reader”.*

(Anderson, 1999: 1)

In this respect, and according to Coady: **“This interactive process involves three factors: conceptual abilities, background knowledge, and process strategies”.** (Coady, 1979: 07). In other words, for successful reading to occur, an individual must possess basic intellectual ability, knowledge of the world, and reading strategies such as familiarity with the phonology, grammar and the lexicon of the language. Accordingly: **“Reading may well be a psycholinguistic guessing game but words are the toys you need to play it right”.**

(Laufer cited in Coady & Huckin, 1997: 32)

Therefore, words and phrases are essential to language learning in general and reading in particular. The only real issue is the best manner by which to acquire them. For a long time, reading classes have tended to focus on the last factor, i.e. the process strategies. As Coady points out: "*A typical reading class involves the reading of a passage followed by comprehension questions, vocabulary exercises ..., etc.*" (Coady, 1979: 9). Another point, which deserves consideration, is that reading is viewed as "*A two fold phenomena involving process (comprehending) and product (comprehension)*". (Silberstein, 1985: 30).

It has been commonly agreed on among researchers and applied linguists such as Grabe and stoller (2002) that students must read slowly and carefully in order to extract information and understand the material. For comprehensive reading, a combination of various types of knowledge and techniques must be acquired. These techniques are emphasized because they can help students deal successfully with the problems they face while reading. To read comprehensively, students must learn and practice the following:

1. Vocabulary recognition.
2. Sentence comprehension.
3. Paragraph analysis.
4. Interpretation of illustrations.

1. *Vocabulary recognition*: When reading material in English, the student frequently faces a crucial problem: being unable to determine the meaning of words and, thus being unable to understand what he is reading.

2. *Sentence comprehension*: When reading a textbook, an article, or other materials in English, it frequently happens that although a student knows every word in a sentence, he still cannot understand what the sentence means, especially when it is long and complicated.

3. *Paragraph analysis*: Sometimes the student understands all the sentences in a reading passage, but still does not understand what it says as a whole. This is because he does not know how the material is organized.

4. *Note – taking*: To gain more from their readings, students should take notes as they read. This will help them to understand better as well as to retain what they have read.

Up to this point, there has been a great emphasis on the reading skill and the role it can play as it is the most attainable language skill for students in countries where English is not widely used. However, it is not sufficient to speak only about reading since it includes intricate processes and skills, which differ according to tasks, purposes and language abilities. Without knowing these elements independently, the concept of reading remains unclear. Therefore, in order to get a better understanding of the reading mechanisms, reading processes, skills and purposes (of different kinds of reading) will be discussed in the following sections.

### 1.3. Reading Processes

Although reading comprehension abilities are complicated, there is a set of common underlying processes that are activated when ones reads. (Grabe and Stoller, 2002: 20) make a list of these processes:

Lower- level processes	Higher- level processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Lexical access.</li> <li>* Syntactic parsing.</li> <li>* Semantic proposition formation.</li> <li>* Working memory activation<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Text model of comprehension.</li> <li>* Situation model of reader interpretation.</li> <li>* Background knowledge use and inferencing.</li> <li>* Executive control process.</li> </ul>

Table 1.1. Reading processes (Grabe and stoller, 2002:20).

Grabe and Stoller state:

*“The lower- level processes represent the more automatic linguistic processes and are typically viewed as more skills oriented. The higher- level processes generally represent comprehension processes that make much more use of reader’s background knowledge and inferencing skills”.*

(Grabe & Stoller, 2002:20)

Brown (2001) claims that processing time of reading need not to be emphasized too much because most reading contexts allow readers to read at their own rate. However, because of the existence of the working memory, the speed processing is indispensable. Indeed, Grabe and Stoller (2002) highlight the important role of working memory because the information fades from memory quickly, which makes the reading process inefficient.

To sum up, then, reading involves various types and levels of cognitive<sup>3</sup> and meta-cognitive<sup>4</sup> processes, which are intertwined complicatedly. Therefore, all of these processing should be taken into consideration in developing students’ reading sub -skills.

#### **1.4. Reading Sub - Skills and Types**

It is important for students to identify the different reading sub-skills and types required for different reading situations. These skills are naturally used when reading in the native language, but are often forgotten when applied to English reading. In fact, students in many situations come across unfamiliar words; therefore, different set of strategies is needed. Among these strategies: to deduce the meaning of these words by referring to the words already known by students, though it is not a so successful strategy, since it is better to guess the unfamiliar word from the text to give a diffuse idea of its meaning. Therefore, it is important to help students employ one of their natural mother tongue reading skills in an EFL context.

### 1.4.1. Reading Sub- Skills

Teaching reading can be an arduous task as it is often difficult to know how to improve student's skills. Reading skills can be described roughly as a: "*Cognitive ability which a person is able to use when interacting with written text*". (Urquhart and Weir, 1998: 88). Indeed, one of the most obvious points about reading is that there are different types of reading skills. These include skimming, scanning, careful reading and predicting.

#### i) *Skimming*

A term commonly used in discussion about reading is *skimming*, which refers to the way of reading in which readers quickly run their eyes across a whole text for its gist. Skimming may sometimes be the prerequisite of reading for full understanding. One of the effective series of procedures for approaching reading text, so-called 'S Q 3 R technique'<sup>5</sup> (see, for example, Nuttall, 1996; Brown, 2001) starts with skimming the text for an overview of main ideas and then readers embark on more focused reading. It is also a common part of many reading tasks. The best way, however, to teach skimming is to have students read the first and last paragraphs in full, and pick up the key words such as: dates, figures and names while moving their eyes down the page.

#### ii) *Scanning*

*Scanning* or *searching reading* is also a common reading activity when readers extract necessary pieces of information from a text without reading through the whole text. They do not have to read every word and line; on the contrary, such an approach would stop them scanning successfully. This is a useful skill to locate (a) specific item (s) of information needed, such as: a date, a figure, or a name. The wide spread of the internet may well accelerate the need for this type of reading.



*iii) Careful Reading*

Urquhart and Weir (1998) point out that *careful reading* is associated with reading to learn. The reader attempts to handle detailed information in the text. Thus, reading rate seems to be rather slower than other types of reading because in this type of reading, readers often require rereading and inferencing to connect information with background knowledge<sup>6</sup>.

*iv) Predicting*

According to the psycholinguistic models of reading, efficient reading depends, to a large extent, on making correct predictions with minimal sampling. At the word level, the reader guesses the meaning of unfamiliar words by using the context. At the syntactic level, the reader uses what he/ she knows about the form of the language to extract meaning without actually reading all the words. Therefore, predicting is regarded as a very useful skill.

**1.4.2. Reading Types**

Most of skills and strategies we want our students to develop are generally trained by studying short texts or stories in detail. Others should be developed by the use of longer texts, including complete books. This is what is traditionally referred to as 'Intensive Vs Extensive Reading'. In this way, Nuttall claims that: "*Their principle function is to make the student concentrate on the text and to give him a clear purpose for reading.*" (Nuttall, 1982:137).

*i) Intensive Reading:*

This is an activity involving reading for details. This type of reading, which seeks to grasp the whole message including both arguments and supporting details, encourages careful, literal processing of texts. Teachers should provide students with some opportunities to engage in intensive reading depending on the purpose of reading by the careful selection of texts.

Anderson (1999), while highlighting the superiority of extensive reading, still emphasizes the importance of intensive reading through which readers can develop strategies and skills, which they can transfer to extensive reading contexts. Nuttall (1996) also states the importance of teaching how meaning is produced through intensive reading, which is intended to train readers to cope with the texts through reading strategies. However, teachers should be careful not to put too much emphasis on intensive reading, so that students will not think it is the only way of reading.

ii) Extensive Reading:

Many ESL or EFL experts emphasise the importance of extensive reading. However, in reality, extensive reading is not promoted in many secondary schools in Algeria. Grabe and Stoller (2001: 198) point out a set of reasons why extensive reading is not promoted in EFL reading courses; among these:

- 1- Teachers sometimes do not feel that they are teaching when students are reading silently in class: they think that extensive reading is something that should be done at home.
- 2- Sometimes, there are limited resources for good class or school libraries.
- 3- In some cases, schools have resources but they do not include books that interest students, or they do not allow students to check out books to be read at home.
- 4- Some teachers would like to involve their students in extensive reading, but do not know how to incorporate it into their lessons.

Indeed, extensive reading will improve learners' command of a second/foreign language on at least certain levels. Nuttall (1982:168), for example, claims that: "*The best way of acquiring proficiency in a language is to read extensively in this Language*". However, if students do not know

the pleasure of reading, it is necessary to give them some passages, which are interesting and provide some extra reading time to read them in class. The teacher can also provide some interesting articles and passages as assignments.

The purpose of the extensive reading programme is to train students to read fluently in the target language. Thus, extensive reading is to be included in any reading programme to fulfill the following objectives:

- 1- To strengthen and develop learners' reading ability.
- 2- To push them to become more autonomous readers.
- 3- To develop learner's stock of vocabulary and make them experience the language in several forms and contexts.

The last idea is important in the sense that EFL learners, who achieve advanced reading proficiency in a language, will acquire most of their vocabulary knowledge through extensive reading rather than from instruction. For example, Krashen (1989) argues that language learners acquire vocabulary and spelling most efficiently by receiving comprehensible input while reading. Similarly, Grabe and Stoller (2001) conclude that reading and vocabulary abilities develop as a result of extensive reading practice. Thus, an effective way to develop language abilities over time is through extensive reading.

### **1.5. Selection of the Reading Material**

Adults, in general, and university students, in particular, should be given material appropriate to their level of cognitive functioning. Indeed; the students themselves are best capable of choosing what interests them. Therefore, every effort should be made to enable them to select the text themselves.

Nuttall (1996) points out that speed, enjoyment and comprehension are closely linked with one another. Since enjoyment is a key to success, teachers must consider what kind of materials they should use carefully. If reading gives them pleasure, students will manage to find time to read even if they are busy. In this context, the use of content area reading materials which students

find interesting might increase students' motivation and create real purpose for improving their reading skills.

Therefore, the first critical decision the teacher is to face is the selection of the appropriate readings for a particular class. The readings should be challenging for the students but not overwhelming. To use Krashen's terminology, students need to be exposed to language at the level of  $i + one$  (input + 1) (Dulay *et al* 1982; Krashen 1985), in order to prevent reading difficulties. As regards the choice of text proposed as reading material, there are some conditions among these:

- 1 - The material should appeal to the students who are to read it.
- 2 - It should not be too heavily culture-laden or carry too many assumptions unknown to the students.
- 3 - The language level of the text should be suited to the student's linguistic competence.
- 4 - Before tackling a text, students should clearly keep in mind why they are going to read it. Therefore, they can adopt the most suitable strategy in order to prevent reading difficulties.

#### **1.6. Types of Reading Comprehension Difficulties with a Focus on Vocabulary Knowledge**

Saville- Troike summarizes an effective way to teach EFL reading when she says that: "*Improving the reading skill of any student begins with identifying his weaknesses and then implementing appropriate methods for strengthening these skills*". (Saville –Troike, 1979: 103). Thus , the first thing for the teachers of EFL reading to do is to find out the weaknesses or difficulties of their students through questionnaires, diagnostic tests, classroom observation and other related aspects . The researcher found that first -year EFL university students at the University of Abou-Bakr Belkaid, Tlemcen face three major kinds of reading problems: These are classified from the less to the most important difficulty:

- 1- Structural problems.
- 2- Content (especially cultural) problems.
- 3- Vocabulary problems.

The first type of problem has received a good deal of attention. The second type of problem – which, of course, varies from one kind of reading material to another – often involves a cultural mismatch<sup>7</sup> between the reader and the writer. It is this area of difficulty, i.e., vocabulary problems, that has received the least attention. The researcher, therefore, will focus on identifying some reading difficulties related to vocabulary knowledge, and then try to propose some solutions and strategies to overcome these problems.

It is worth saying that advanced readers think they do not know the foreign language well enough to read efficiently in it. They start reading a text or a passage with the fear that they are going to have problems with vocabulary and unfamiliar words. The vocabulary and syntax of new magazines, novels and nonfiction books seem quite beyond the reach of most foreign language readers since they all too frequently believe that to comprehend the text, they must first understand every single word in the text. Obviously, *“For many third world students, the syntax, general vocabulary, and sub-technical vocabulary are a sufficient hurdle to reading fluency”*. (Walsh 1981, cited in English Teaching Forum. July 1982. p. 28.)

Therefore, if the vocabulary is complicated and esoteric with too many new items per page, students will feel swamped. They will lose confidence in their ability to read a text directly without the support of the teacher or a dictionary, and will often fall back on translation instead.

In the same line of thought, Haynes and Baker (1993) note that the most significant handicap for E FL readers is not lack of reading strategies but insufficient vocabulary in English. What their studies indicate is that the threshold for reading comprehension<sup>8</sup> is, to a large extent, lexical. Lexical problems will, therefore, hinder successful comprehension and efficient reading since the lack of lexical knowledge still constitute a major obstacle to reading comprehension.

In the same vein, Ulijn 1984, Ostyn and Godin 1985, Ostyn, Vandecasteele, Deville and Kelley 1987, and Ulijn and Strother 1990, have come to the conclusion that indispensable conditions for comprehensive reading in EFL are understanding the text's words and the knowledge of its subject matter. In this context, the researcher has found that in interpreting texts, students tend to regard words as main landmarks of meaning. Background knowledge is relied on to a lesser extent. Therefore, there is a well-established link between the vocabulary difficulty and readability of texts. (Nation and Coady, 1988).

Indeed, the major problem for most second language readers, even when the interest level is high, is the lack of a solid language base and consistent vocabulary stock. In this context, Laufer 1992 argues that there is a lexical threshold for reading comprehension consisting of about 3,000 word families (approximately 5,000 words). She claims that even highly skilled readers cannot read on task at the criterion of 70% comprehension unless they have such a lexical foundation. In other words, even the most intelligent students with high academic ability, and who are good readers in their native language cannot read well in their L2 if their vocabulary is below the threshold.

Another problem was raised by most educationalists such as Laufer (1988), who associate lexical problems in reading comprehension with non-familiarity with words in the text. This is certainly a major obstacle which was referred to as "*words you don't know*". However, in addition to the phenomenon of miscomprehension of words, the following point will tackle some examples related to the lexical plight in foreign language reading, and that may seriously impede reading comprehension in L<sub>2</sub>. The problem is that most first-year EFL university students often experience miscomprehension of certain words that look familiar even though they are unknown. This problem is also called "*pseudo-familiar words/or words you think you know*". These words are *Deceptively Transparent (D.T.)* (Laufer: 1989 a), i.e., they look as if they provide clues to their meaning. For example the word '*infallible*' looks as if it is composed of in + fall + ible and means 'something that cannot fall'.

The deceptively transparent words, (hence D.T. words) seem to fall into one of five distinct categories:

- 1- Words with a deceptive morphological structure: These are words that look as if they are composed of meaningful morphemes; an example of this is the word '*outline*' which is misinterpreted as "out of the line".
- 2- Idioms: '*a short in the dark*', and '*miss the boat*', are translated literally, word by word. The student's assumption, here, is that the meaning of the whole is the sum of the meanings of its parts.
- 3- False friends: '*sympathetic*' is interpreted as '*nice*' (French '*sympatique*'), '*to deceive*' is interpreted as '*to disappoint*' (French '*décevoir*'), '*copy*' is interpreted as '*reproduction*' (French '*exemplaire*'). The mistaken assumption of the learner in this case is that if the form of the word in L<sub>2</sub> resembled that in L<sub>1</sub>, the meaning would be the same too.
- 4- Words with multiple meanings: It often happens that students know one meaning of a word and are reluctant to abandon it, even when, in a particular context, its meaning is different. For example '*since*' is interpreted as "from the time when" though it means 'because'; '*abstract*' as "not concrete" instead of 'summary'; '*state*' as 'country' instead of 'situation'. The mistaken assumption of the learner in this case is that the familiar meaning is the only meaning.
- 5- 'Synforms' (similar lexical forms): Laufer (1988- 1991 b). Generally speaking, some synforms are similar in sound (cute / acute; available / valuable; price / prize); some are morphologically similar (economic / economical, reduce / deduce / induce). Here, the learner might have studied both synforms but since the knowledge of both is insecure, he or she is not sure which word is associated with which meaning.

Therefore, since learners are unaware of their ignorance of the D.T. words, they will stick to the false meanings and may use them as clues to guess other words. It is, then, argued that readers with lower awareness of D.T. words also score lower on reading comprehension tests. (Laufer 1991 b).

In sum, the three major lexical problems that may seriously impede reading comprehension in a foreign language are (1) the problem of insufficient vocabulary: because the greatest lexical obstacle to good reading is insufficient number of words in the learner's lexicon. Lexis was found to be the most predictor of success in reading, better than syntax or general reading ability; and a large vocabulary will provide a good lexical coverage of a text. (2) The misinterpretations of deceptively transparent words, as explained above and (3) inability to guess unknown words correctly. This problem occurs when the reader is trying to guess unknown words, more precisely, words that have been recognized as unfamiliar. The importance of guessing has been widely discussed (Nation, 1985; Nation and Coady, 1988; Van Parreren and Schouten – Van Parreren, 1981, and many others). One of the factors that contribute to successful guessing is the reader's background knowledge about the subject matter of the text. Indeed, the learner who has been taught guessing strategies will not automatically produce correct guesses since clear cues are also needed. Cues<sup>9</sup> may at least help prevent mis-guesses.

What has been said in this section confirms the interwoven relationship that exists between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. This is why, a major attention should be attributed to the notion of vocabulary in general and the process of teaching new items in particular, in the following section.

### 1.7. Vocabulary Defined

Vocabulary is the name for words one must know in order to listen, speak, read, and write effectively. According to Hatch and Brown: *“Vocabulary refers to a list or set of words that individual speakers of a language might use.”* (Hatch & Brown, 1995:01). Accordingly, vocabulary is the amount of words that characterizes a given language. Without this vocabulary, the learner would be unable to use and comprehend the target language. Time and again, researchers have found strong connections between the sizes of students' vocabularies, how well they comprehend what they read,



and how well they perform in learning. Wilkins summarizes his view of the role of vocabulary in language instruction by noting that: “*Knowledge of a language demands mastery of its vocabulary as much as of its grammar ...*”( Wilkins, 1974:32). He suggests that the learner must experience considerable exposure to the language. Therefore, vocabulary, as a bearer of meaning, is considered to be very important to the language acquisition process. “*Acquisition will not take place without comprehension of vocabulary*” (Krashen & Tenell, 1983: 155).

In the same context, Lewis asserts that: “*Language is not words and grammar; it is essentially lexical*” (Lewis, 1993: 196). It is becoming increasingly apparent that teachers must enable students to learn and acquire a lexical base in order to achieve success in language learning in general and reading in particular. It is worth saying, in this context, that vocabulary and lexis are closely related to each other. In this respect, Crystal posits: “*To study the lexicon of English, accordingly, is to study all aspects of the vocabulary of the language*”. (Crystal, 1995: 118). Therefore, when one studies the lexicon, he/she is studying at the same time the vocabulary of the language since both terms are closely interrelated.

### 1.8. Teaching Vocabulary

Vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to the typical language learner in order to understand the target language. In this context, Wilkins asserts that: “*While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed*” (Wilkins, 1972: 111). Vocabulary remains, therefore, the basic element that makes the learners able to use the target language and to make appropriate sentences even if they have a considerable knowledge of grammar.

There are numerous types of approaches, techniques, exercises and practice that can be used to teach vocabulary. The dilemma teachers often face is in deciding which among these numerous types would be best for their students and their circumstances since not all students learn vocabulary in the

same way , and nor does all lexis lend itself to one method of acquisition. Levine and Reves (1990, cited in Anderson, 1999:35) support this idea by advising that teachers should not impose any specific method on the learner. Vocabulary should be presented by a variety of techniques: methods should be varied and combined according to the learner's individual needs and preferences.

From a teacher's point of view, the issue in the classroom usually revolves around how to improve the student's reading comprehension? Should the teacher teach vocabulary directly or incidentally? That is, should words be targeted for the learners or should they develop naturally through reading and the learner's desire to clarify concepts? Evidence falls in both directions. Certainly, vocabulary knowledge can be acquired through reading and discussions about certain contexts (Nagy et al, 1985). However, it appears that direct instruction is more effective and efficient than incidental learning for the acquisition of a particular vocabulary. (Mc Keown and Beck, 1988).

Christen and Murphy ( 1991 ) contend that research clearly emphasizes that for learning to occur, new information must be integrated with what the learner already knows . They feel that teaching vocabulary, as a pre-reading step is an instructional intervention that should be considered when readers lack the prior or background knowledge to read a specific English text. Kueker (1990) also argues that pre-reading activities help enormously in reading comprehension.

Another technique to help students see a word in a broader context is to have them answer the following questions: (1) What is it? ; (2) What is it like; (3) What are some examples? Schwartz and Raphael (1985) believe that this list of three questions helps students see relationships between familiar and less familiar terms and also brings the meaning of an unknown term into focus by requiring analogies and examples.

Nowadays, it is widely accepted that vocabulary teaching should be part of the syllabus, and taught in a well-planned and regular basis. Lewis (1993)

argues that vocabulary should be at the centre of language teaching, because language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar.

However, there are several aspects of lexis that need to be taken into account when teaching vocabulary. The list below is based on the work of Gairns and Redman (1986):

- *Boundaries between conceptual meaning*: Knowing not only what lexis refers to, but also where the boundaries are that separate it from words of related meaning (e.g. cup, mug, bowl)
- *Polysemy* : distinguishing between the various meaning of a single word form with several but closely related meanings ( head : of a person , of an organization , of a department ...)
- *Homophony*: understanding words that have the same pronunciation but different spellings and meanings (e.g. extend, increase, and expand).
- *Affective meaning*: distinguishing between the attitudinal and emotional factors (denotation and connotation), which depend on the speakers attitude or the situation. Socio-cultural associations of lexical items is another important factor.
- *Translation*: awareness of certain differences and similarities between the native and the foreign language (e.g. false cognates).
- *Grammar of vocabulary*: learning the rules that enable students to build up different forms of the word or even different words from that word. (E.g. sleep, slept, sleeping; able unable, disability).
- *Pronunciation*: ability to recognize and reproduce items in speech.

(Gairns and Redman, 1986:136).

The implication of the aspects just mentioned in teaching is that the goals of vocabulary teaching must be more than simply covering a certain number of words on a word list. Teachers must use some teaching techniques that can help realize this global concept of what it means to know a lexical item. This leads the researcher, inevitably, to discuss some teacher's techniques used in teaching vocabulary, in the following section.

## 1.9. Some Techniques Used in Teaching Vocabulary

There are numerous techniques concerned with vocabulary presentation that teachers may employ. We will try to discover, to some extent, the most common ways in which meaning of words is conveyed, notably the techniques used by teachers to present new vocabulary. Among those techniques, the following are the most commonly used: verbal technique, visual technique, using dictionaries, and using realia.

### 1.9.1. Verbal Technique

Verbal explanation is a mode of presentation, which requires from the teacher the use of examples and illustrations, either oral or written. The teacher may explain new vocabulary through the use of synonyms and opposites or by providing definitions. These are useful strategies to understand the meaning as in "what is the opposite of 'happy', it is 'sad' or 'unhappy'".

Additional strategies, which could be of a particular importance for students, are the scales and the examples of the type. The former is a way of revising and feeding in new items e.g. 'adverbs of frequency'

She	Never Hardly never Occasionally Sometimes Often Always	Wakes up at 8 o'clock on Fridays.
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Table 1.2. The scales

The latter could be a best means to acquire vocabulary. To explain the meaning of subordinate such as 'clothes' and 'vegetables', it is better to clarify them into categories.

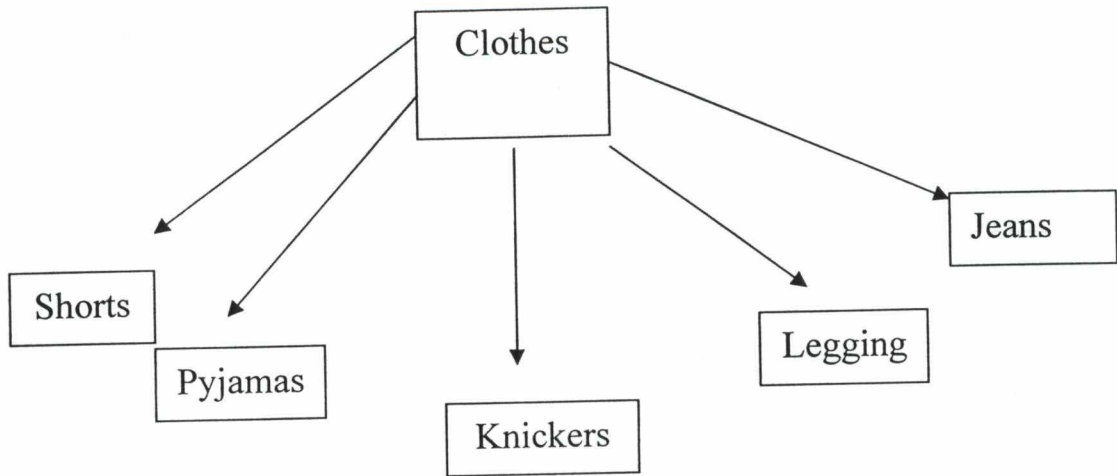


Diagram 1.1. Example of the type concerning “clothes”.

For instance, the teacher in the classroom may ask questions like: 'Tell me four things that are square' or 'Name three vegetable items'. Then, learners are going to group words by their common feature. Sometimes, the teacher can use the derivation of the word to explain it; which means that he divides the word into its root, suffixes and prefixes.

Root	Suffixes	Prefixes
act	<i>action</i>	<i>react</i>
port	<i>portable</i>	<i>import</i>
vid	<i>video</i>	<i>provide</i>
spec	<i>spectacle</i>	<i>suspect</i>

Table 1.3. Word formation.

### 1.9.2 Visual Technique:

- *Visuals*: This method includes pictures, photographs, drawings, i.e. realia themselves. They are used for teaching concrete vocabulary items such as food, furniture, clothes, and professions. Pictures, for instance, are used to explain words that are unfamiliar to the learners and which are confused with each other. According to Tang –Li-Shing:

*“You can make abstract meaning concrete through pictures, and present to your situation that will help to clarify slight differences in meaning.”* (Tang-Li-Shing, 1981:14).

The use of pictures, therefore, will help students use the words in the right way and appropriate contexts, especially those words that do not have equivalents or synonyms.

- Mime and gesture: This technique is used by teacher for supplementing a meaning which has already been explained or which still needs more clarification, for example, the teacher may smile to show his happiness. The teacher can also explain a mood and the meaning will be more easily grasped.

### 1.9.3. Using a Dictionary:

In recent research, the use of a dictionary has been described as a valid activity to find out meanings of unfamiliar words. If the student has no teacher or peer to ask, he/she can save time and energy and can still solve a number of problems by using a dictionary. Burridge and Adam state that:

*“The dictionary can add interest which will motivate students to practice further without becoming bored; it will encourage them to transfer ideas and language from one subject to another. It will broaden their vocabulary.”*

(Burridge & Adam, 1995:08)

Students should start using EFL dictionaries as early as possible, from intermediate upwards. With adequate training, dictionaries are an invaluable tool for learners, giving them independence from the teacher. As well as understanding meaning, students are able to check pronunciation, the grammar of the word, ( e.g. verb patterns, verb forms, plurality, comparatives, etc. ), different spellings (American versus British), style and register, as well as examples that illustrate usage.

The advantage that could bring the use of dictionaries are important for the student to learn a great amount of words, mainly the monolingual dictionary which is considered as a valuable source of information, very useful for vocabulary building. In this sense, Palmberg claims that:

*“Dictionaries are important tools in most vocabulary building exercises and activities .They are also indispensable when the teaching objective of a course is to give learners an extensive adequate vocabulary for whatever purposes.”*

(Palmberg, 1989:19)

The best and available dictionaries for English as a foreign language are learners' dictionaries such as: “Oxford Advance Learner’s Dictionary of Current English”. (Hornby, A.S., 1974) and “The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English” (McCarthy, 1992). These dictionaries are recommended among teachers, that there should be at least one copy of learner's dictionary in every English classroom and students should be encouraged to use it. However, relying on using the dictionary to build up vocabulary can be an obstacle for the mental effort where the learner nearly uses the guessing strategy. Thus, it could be sought after having tried different strategies to understand or grasp the meaning of any given word.

#### **1.9.4 Using Realia**

Vocabulary items can be presented easily and quickly through the use of realia, i.e. the use of real objects and materials to make learning more explicit to students. According to Woolfolk (2001), the main reason for using realia is that it makes the vocabulary more meaningful and beneficial for students. In this context, he states:

*“ By using objects that the students can see and touch , the vocabulary becomes more concrete and will, therefore , be retained and understood better than if a teacher was just using words and concepts.”*

(Woolfolk, 2001:118).

Therefore, the use of real objects to teach new vocabulary is more helpful than any other technique for eliciting the meaning of the new vocabulary items.

### 1.10. Vocabulary Development:

When reading material in English, first-year EFL university student frequently faces a crucial problem: being unable to determine the meaning of words, and thus being unable to understand what he/she is reading. It is obvious that vocabulary development is one of the most crucial points in order to enhance reading ability. However, Grabe and Stoller (2001) point out that reading by itself does not provide full support for vocabulary development. Moreover, in a study result, Mondria and Wit-de Boer (1991) found retention of correctly guessed words sometimes even worse than it was for incorrectly guessed words.

Systematic vocabulary building is, therefore, inevitable if students are to become fluent readers. Guessing the meaning of words is important as one of the reading strategies; however, at the same time, and in order to help English students cope with some reading problems, they should be taught basic vocabulary explicitly. The techniques shown below are adopted by Nation (1990).

- *Rote repetition*: It means that some learners make use of continual repetition of a word and its meaning until they feel the word is learned. Students use this strategy to learn lists of words in isolation by themselves outside class. Flashcards and wordlists are not widely used in the Algerian teaching/learning context though these techniques are very useful for words retention. These lists include the most useful and frequent words, which can be learned by heart and could constitute the learners' vocabulary background since they enlarge their vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, wordlist and flashcards continue as useful strategies and learners seem to take benefit and acquire a great autonomy in learning.
- *Guessing vocabulary words from context by using context clues*: In this technique, teachers have students look at the clause or sentence containing the unknown word and guess its part of speech. In other words, students are taught to find the clues. The context may give some definitions or contrasting statements that students can use to discover the



meaning of the unfamiliar word; or the context may describe a situation that will enable students to use their experience or imagination to guess the meaning of the word. Through this activity, students might become more sensitive not only to vocabulary, but also to the coherence of the text.

- *Analysis of word structure:* The skill of word structure analysis encourages the learner to study prefixes, roots, and suffixes and to use this knowledge to learn new vocabulary by breaking down words into these small elements, i.e. stem, prefix and suffix<sup>10</sup>. Throughout this technique, students are introduced to the meanings of frequently used items and affixes. Students are, therefore, taught to find the meaning of a difficult word by breaking it into small elements, then interpreting the meaning of each element in order to obtain the meaning of the entire word. Consequently, knowledge of morphology can contribute to expanding and elaborating learners' vocabulary knowledge. Indeed, learners who are familiar with English morphology are able to recognize more of the words that they encounter in reading passages. (Mochizuki and Aizawa, 2000; Schmitt and Meara, 1997). In addition to this, research in the field of L<sub>2</sub> reading shows that morphological awareness plays a significant role in reading ability (Carlisle, 1995; Nagy and Anderson, 1993). Empirical evidence suggests that explicit/ direct training is required for learners to expand their knowledge of morphology, as EFL learners who know a base form (e.g., simple) do not necessary acquire other forms of the word (e.g., simply), (Schmitt and Meara, 1997). Students are encouraged to use word analysis, contextual guessing and wordlist for determining the meaning of unfamiliar words, since these techniques do not interrupt the flow of reading. Nevertheless, if students are not successful in obtaining the meaning in either of these ways, they will have to resort to the simplest technique, which is to check the meaning of the word in a dictionary.

- *Using dictionaries:* This is, in a way, a major strategy since many learners commonly consult dictionaries to check spelling, look up the meaning of unfamiliar words and confirm the meaning of partially known words (Scholfield, 1997; Sunner, 1988). Three types of dictionaries are available: bilingual, monolingual and bilingualized. (See 4.11.2.). The student should, therefore, be taught to use the dictionary effectively.

### 1.11. The Relationship between Vocabulary and Reading:

Results of analysis of probable cause of first year EFL university students' failure in reading comprehension indicated that many students with reading difficulties find themselves facing a dilemma: their deficits in vocabulary knowledge cause them reading comprehension problems and their reading comprehension problems prevent them from improving their vocabulary knowledge on their own. For this reason, the researcher tries to show how indispensable good and consistent vocabulary knowledge is to reading comprehension.

The important role of vocabulary and background knowledge in reading and comprehending text has long been recognized by educationalists for some time. Lewis, (1993:196) asserts that: "*Language is not words and grammar; it is essentially lexical*". (Cited in Coady et al, 1997: 235)

Indeed, it is becoming increasingly apparent that teachers must enable students to learn and acquire a lexical base in order to achieve success in language learning in general and reading in particular. Some scholars argue that there is a need for students to quickly acquire a sizable basic vocabulary in order to comprehend successfully in reading. It is then, suggested that this vocabulary base could be acquired more efficiently through some type of direct instruction.

Extensive reading, however, has a major role to play in that process. (See 1.4.2.) Coady (1997) points out that although most vocabulary is acquired through extensive reading, we must take into consideration the beginner's paradox, i.e. students must read in order to learn words but at the same time

they must possess a minimal but critical mass of words in order to be able to read successfully. Moreover, Coady, Magoto, Hubbard, Graney and Mokhtari, (1993), found that explicit learning of 3,000 most frequent words in English had a significant effect on reading comprehension. Their argument was that recognizing these words in a speedy and automatic manner would provide more cognitive processing time.

It has been also suggested, among specialists in the field of language teaching/learning, that learning to read in a second or foreign language centrally involves learning words. Therefore, vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to reading comprehension. In other words, it is a strong correlate to reading ability.

A wealth of research has documented the strength of the relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension. The proportion of difficult words in a text is the single most powerful predictor of text difficulty, and a reader's general vocabulary knowledge is the single best predictor of how well that reader can understand text, (Anderson and Freebody 1981). Laufer, (1991b) also argues that no text comprehension is possible either in one's native language or in a foreign language, without understanding the text vocabulary. It is clear, therefore, that a lack of adequate vocabulary knowledge is already an obvious and serious obstacle for university students in the reading comprehension module. In this context, Grabe and Stoller argue that: *"There is a need for students to quickly acquire a sizable basic vocabulary in order to comprehend successfully in reading"*. (Cited in Coady and Huckin, 1997:283). The same idea is stressed by Krashen (1989) when he states that: *"We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading."* (Ibid: 275).

In other words, reading is normally the major vehicle for continued vocabulary acquisition. Indeed, studies of the relationship between second/foreign language reading practice and vocabulary gains indicate that increasing the amount of reading where learners are motivated and focused on meaning leads to measurable vocabulary acquisition.

Certainly, vocabulary knowledge can be acquired through reading and discussions about certain contexts (Nagy *et al*, 1985), but it appears that direct instruction is more effective than incidental learning for the acquisition of a particular vocabulary, and also more efficient. (McKeown and Beck, 1988). In this context, Kirsmen, Lalor, and Hird (1993) stress *“the importance of lexical training and vocabulary instruction during the initial phase of second language reading.”* (Lalor et al, 1993:226).

As stated before, most educators have long recognized the strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and the ability to read proficiently and comprehensively, since messages are composed of ideas, and ideas are expressed in words. (Chall, 1987:15) asserts that: *“Every study of reading achievement points to the importance of vocabulary knowledge”*. (Cited in Day and Bamford, 1998:17).

Baker, (1995); Nagy, (1988); and Nelson-Herber, (1986), have assumed that vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension are closely related. Similarly, Beck, Perfetti, and McKeown (1982), Kameenui, Garnine, and Freschi (1982), and Stahl (1983) have all demonstrated that an improvement in reading comprehension can be attributed to an increase in vocabulary knowledge. A similar picture of vocabulary as a good predictor of reading success emerges from second language studies; Coady , Magoto , Hubbard , Graney and Mokhtar ( 1993) conducted two experiments that showed that increased proficiency in high frequency vocabulary also led to an increase in reading proficiency , and even if a reader has good metacognitive strategies<sup>11</sup> which she/he uses in L1 these will not be of much help in L2 before a solid language base has been reached, and a wide range of vocabulary stock has been established. The same idea is stressed by Day and Bamford when stating that: *“The need for a large vocabulary is equally true in fluent second language reading”*. (Day & Bamford, 1998:17)

It is clear, therefore, that learning to read requires some knowledge of structure and vocabulary, what is more crucial for reading comprehension is a continuous supply of new vocabulary as suggested by Grabe and Stoller: ***“Learning to read in a second language centrally involves learning words.”*** (Cited in Coady & Huckin, 1997:119). In other words, a large number of known words will be an asset to global comprehension of the text. In fact, most educators intuitively know that: ***“People who do not know the meanings of many words are probably poor readers”***. (Anderson and Freebody, 1983:244).

The lack of such a vocabulary, says Grabe (1988), ***“may be the greatest single impediment to fluent reading by ESL students”*** (Cited in Day & Bamford, 1988:244). Indeed, according to Ulijn (1984) and Ostyn and Godin (1985), indispensable conditions for reading in a foreign language are understanding the text's words and the knowledge of the subject matter. Anderson and Freebody (1981) survey various studies that show that the word variable is more highly predictive of reading comprehension than the sentence variable. Thus reading may well be a psycholinguistic guessing game but words are the toys you need to play it right.

Hence, advanced ability in reading English as a foreign language requires improvement in reading speed, vocabulary recognition and comprehension. These are not exclusive needs of the foreign language learners of English, obviously; they are the skills that native speakers must also develop in order to become efficient readers.

At last, it is nice to be able to report that reading improves vocabulary knowledge and vocabulary knowledge supports reading development. In other words, ***“vocabulary knowledge is normally the major vehicle for successful reading”*** (Coady & Huckin, 1997:119).

### 1.12. Conclusion

This theoretical chapter has tried to cover the vast area on the reading skill stressing its crucial role in language learning and teaching. It is, in fact, an essential skill for success in today's world and its experience provides us with an opportunity to explore and relate to a wider world than one's own.

It also strives to shed light on some reading skills and types including extensive and intensive reading. Intensive reading aims to train students in reading strategies to arrive at a profound and detailed understanding of the text, and extensive reading, on the other hand, improves learners' command of a second language.

Another point which deserves to be discussed is worth noting some types of reading comprehension difficulties related to vocabulary knowledge; which are faced by the majority of EFL students during their university studies.

Finally, the chapter focuses also on vocabulary definition and the ways it is taught in classroom since it has been consistently demonstrated that reading is strongly related to vocabulary knowledge. Thus, the relationship between the two concepts has been highly suggested in research by reading experts.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. The term 'linguistic competence' was coined by Chomsky to denote the speaker's ability to form and interpret sentences. Linguistic Competence stresses on formation rules of language.
2. The term working memory activation, so-called short-term memory, refers to the memory where activated information about words, sentences, texts is stored for a short time while it is analyzed or interrupted.
3. Cognitive: That is related to the mental processes of learning like comprehension, retention or acquisition.
4. Metacognitive: That is used in thinking or planning learning processes.
5. 'SQ3R technique' is a method of reading for study. The aim is to understand the material in some depth. The letters SQ3R stand for:
  - S.....Survey
  - Q.....Question
  - R.....Read
  - R.....Recite (or Recall)
  - R.....Review
  - *Survey*: skim through to gain an overview and not key points.
  - *Question*: devise questions you hope the text will answer.
  - *Read*: slowly and carefully.
  - *Recall*: from memory, write down the main points made by the chapter.
  - *Review*: revisit your questions – compare these to your recall and establish how well the text has answered them. Review all the questions and answers as well as the major points.
6. Background knowledge: Knowledge of the world in general or of the life of their specific society, that people can be assumed to share as a framework for talking to one another. In other words, it refers to all the information, one has gathered in his brain about every thing and on different topics.
7. Cultural mismatch: A mismatch between people's different cultures, i.e. the feeling of confusion and anxiety that somebody may feel when they live in or visit another country.
8. In a study by Laufer (1991a), the number of words readers must have in their sight vocabulary, in other words, the turning point of vocabulary size for reading comprehension is about 3,000 word families. Indeed, it was shown that learners below the threshold level did poorly on reading comprehension tests regardless of how high their academic ability is.

9. A psychologists' term for a specific feature seen as an aid to the perception e.g. of some larger structure. Thus, intonation is thought of as a cue for the construction of a sentence.
10. According to Bauer and Nation (1993), the most frequent of these are the regularly inflected suffixes-plural, third person singular, present tense, past participle,-ing, comparative, superlative and possessive forms. Next, the most frequent and regular derivational affixes can be taught and these include: -able,-er, -ish,-less,-ly,-ness,-y,-th,-non, and un-. A third level of common derivational affixes that should be learned early; and these include: -al,-ation,-ess,-ful,-ism,-ist,-ity,-ize,-ment,-ous, and in- . Relatively less common affixes can then be taught later as the learners become more proficient. Although these categories may have pedagogical value, Nation (2001:268) acknowledges that no empirical research has been conducted showing that the list is related to an order of acquisition.
11. Metacognitive strategies include:
  - *Advanced organization or/ planning ahead*: Previewing the main ideas and concepts of the material to be learned; reading the first sentence of each paragraph.
  - *Selective attention*: Attending to or scanning key words.
  - *Self-monitoring*: Checking one's comprehension during reading; checking if guesses are correct; formulating questions while reading.
  - *Self-evaluation*: Judging how well one has accomplished the reading task.
  - *Self-management*: Seeking or arranging the conditions of a good reading.
  - *Reading with purpose*: Adjusting reading style or speed to purpose; fixing objectives for reading.



**CHAPTER TWO : THE LEARNING  
SITUATION ANALYSIS**

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE LEARNING SITUATION ANALYSIS**

### **2.1. Introduction.**

### **2.2. The Educational Context.**

### **2.3. The Reading Comprehension Module and its Status in the English Language Department.**

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#### 2.5.1. Learners' Profile.

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##### 2.6.1.1. The Learners' Questionnaire.

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### **Notes to Chapter Two**

## CHAPTER TWO: THE LEARNING SITUATION ANALYSIS

### 2.1. Introduction:

This chapter is concerned with the empirical phase of this extended essay. It is the practical aspect of the theoretical one which describes the reading behaviour in addition to the different variables and characteristics of the learning situation of a particular population selected for this study. In other words, the present chapter attempts to give a systematic description of the educational context, with a close reference to the EFL reading skill at the university level, and more specifically to first-year English students. The reading skill is chosen on account of its importance in learning a foreign language, and for the fact that it is the skill the most neglected by our learners. As for the choice of the first- year, it is considered to be the only year in which the Reading Comprehension module is implemented. The outset of this chapter will deal with the Reading Comprehension module by shedding light on its status at the university level. It equally stresses both the method and profile of the teachers.

Furthermore, students' profile is drawn and their needs discussed and analysed so that they match with the objective of the research work. Therefore, the learners' age, level, interests, reading background and mainly reading difficulties are all described and analysed in relation to their proficiency level in the English language. The last part of the chapter, however, attempts to draw the research methodology, involving questionnaires for both teachers and students. Therefore, the research instruments used for data collection are presented and described.

Besides, a thorough analysis of the teaching/learning of the reading skill would, expectantly shed light on the causes of such low proficiency output and achievement in this module, and would hopefully guide efforts towards improvement.

## 2.2. The Educational Context:

The present dissertation is concerned with a case study carried out at the Department of Foreign Languages, for EFL students at Abou Bakr Belkaid University in Tlemcen. This university was founded thirty years ago. The English language Section, however, was founded sixteen years ago and still related to the French Language Section; and both the French and English sections form the Department of Foreign Languages whose objective is to train students to become future English/French teachers or graduates in English/French. Bright students can, also, carry on their higher studies as post-graduate students. The "Licence" of the English language is accomplished through a four- year curriculum which comprises language skills (oral and written expressions), literature, civilization and pedagogy; which help students, after graduation, teach the English language appropriately and efficiently. The existing academic modular division falls into four broad disciplines. The following table summarizes the curriculum of the Foreign Language Department, section of English adapted from the academic year 1983-1984.

Year level Discipline	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Linguistic or/and language skills	Linguistics (1/30)  Phonetics (1/30)  O.C.E. (3 hours)  W.C.E. (4/30)  Grammar (3 hours)	Linguistics (1/30)  Phonetics (1/30)  O.C.E. (1/30)  W.E. (1/30)  Grammar (1/30)	Socio- linguistics (1/30)  Phonology (1/30)  O.C.E. (1/30)	Seminars in Linguistics (1/30)
Literary	None	British Literature (1/30)  American Literature (1/30)	British Literature (1/30)  American Literature (1/30)  African Literature (1/30)	Seminars in Literature -Anglo- American (1/30)
Historical	None	British Civilization (1/30)  American Civilization (1/30)	British Civilization (1/30)  American Civilization (1/30)	Seminars in Civilization (1/30)
Didactic	None		General Psychology (1/30)	Educational Psychology (1/30)  TEFL (1/30)
<b>Teaching Time (per week)</b>	<b>(12 hours)</b>	<b>(13/30)</b>	<b>(12 hours)</b>	<b>(7/30)</b>

Table 2.1. Official Curriculum of the 'Licence' in English Studies. (Cited in Benmoussat, 2003: 161)

It is worth noting that the modular courses (linguistics, civilization and literature) are largely teacher-centred and based on the lecture- dictation method. As a partial fulfillment of the requirement of the 'Licence', fourth-year students must either write an extended essay (mémoire) or a relevant topic related to one of the aforementioned modular courses, or undergo pre-service teacher training sessions in secondary schools. At the end of the training period, the students write down a Pedagogical Training Report as a pre-service assignment.

Concerning the Reading Comprehension examination, the learners are asked to read the text or passage, and then answer a set of reading comprehension questions related to the text. The last part of the exam consists of free personal expression or a summary of the reading passage. When evaluating students' exams in the Reading Comprehension module, teachers consider equally form and content. Nevertheless, the results are in fact deceiving. The learners' production do not reflect the exposure they have had to the target language in terms of dense vocabulary, rich grammatical structures and so on. The fact that urges us to investigate the sources of the problem causing EFL failure in general, and reading poor achievement in particular.

After four-years of study, learners are not expected to teach English only, but to participate in the research carried out in different fields in English, and to keep informed with the development in the world thanks to the English language. Thus, the teaching of English aims at achieving certain level of accuracy and mainly fluency for an acceptable communication.

### **2.3. The Reading Comprehension Module and its Status in the English Language Department:**

It has often been said that one foreign language skill that students retain throughout their lives is reading. Indeed, learning English to be able to read interesting subject matter in English and to cope with English references is a

major goal of the majority of EFL students. Therefore, the Reading Comprehension course is considered as being one of the most important components of the English curriculum. This module is scheduled for students in the first year only, once a week. Therefore, it is practised in short period of time: To be precise, for one hour and a half. The coefficient of the module is equal with that of oral and written expression as well as grammar, i.e., 3 points.

The English students are trained throughout a four- year programme in the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, it must be stated from the outset that reading is of paramount importance. It is not only important for students, but for everyone who speaks and uses English for communication as well as for other purposes (EAP or ESP)<sup>1</sup> Therefore, learners of English should first learn to read in order to be able to read to learn. In other words, reading is a necessary tool for language acquisition. It facilitates, without any doubt, the access to foreign language learning; an access that requires, especially, the reading skill which is the bridge to the bulk of literature and knowledge of the language. Indeed, reading gives learners an ability to master the remaining skills and to be able to do better in the other modules. In other words, students can derive the maximum benefit from reading.

The teaching of reading at an advanced level is a language task and the first critical decision the teacher faces is the selection of appropriate reading material for a particular class. The reading should be challenging for the students but not overwhelming. However, no reading programme exists and no directives are given about its teaching and evaluation.

The objective of teaching reading, as stated by the Ministry of Higher Education is to make learners able to read any piece of written English discourse, without giving directions about its teaching and without emphasizing reading sub-skills. Some teachers argued that students have already acquired the reading skills and sub-skills while reading in their native or even second language, but it is essential to mention at this level, that

students who are efficient readers in their native language are not necessary efficient foreign language readers. Some students start reading a text with the fear that they are going to have problems with unfamiliar vocabulary and structures.

The teaching of reading, however, is still done by providing students with a text and comprehension questions which aim at increasing reading rate and discouraging the word-by-word translations. Smith describes reading as basically the process of finding answers to questions:

*“To read we must ask questions, implicit questions”,  
and: “There are many different kinds of text and  
many different purposes for reading. The one aspect  
of reading all have in common is that questions are  
asked of the text. Comprehension occurs when  
answers to these questions are found”*

(Smith, 1985:124)

As a matter of fact, this traditional reading exercise, with the text followed by questions, retreat the learners into a submissive stance, even though they are quite capable of being assertive or even aggressive towards texts in the foreign language. In fact, reading may be viewed as a life-long process and it may be developed by learners according to the adequacy of the teaching and to their needs for reading which may change from one situation to another. Therefore, one of the major tasks of the teacher is to show to his students the flexibility of reading. This leads to open a discussion on the teachers' methodology for the teaching of this module, in the following section.

#### **2.4. EFL Teachers' Profile and Methodology:**

Despite the learner-centredness of education, the teacher remains the central pivot of the teaching-learning process. Likewise, the role of the teacher has been expanded to include a number of role specifications. EFL teachers at the university level strive hard to accomplish their mission: They are asked to



make learners 'score well' in tests and exams. Thus, the EFL reading teacher has to manage teaching the reading skill, sub-skills and other related subjects to students with mixed abilities, different learning strategies<sup>2</sup> and of low motivational drives. Some of these learners have rather low proficiency level in English, and most importantly, limited vocabulary knowledge and negative attitudes towards foreign cultures. For all these reasons, the reading teachers are eclectic<sup>3</sup> in their teaching methodology, trying to apply any teaching technique in order to pursue their task. It should be noted, however, that the teachers' experience varies from 10 to 23 years as teachers of Reading Comprehension module to first-year students at the English Section of Abou-Bakr Belkaid University, Tlemcen. They are two Algerian teachers who obtained their degrees from Algerian universities. One holds a 'Magister' in Applied Linguistics and TEFL, and is preparing his 'Doctorat'; and the other is a Senior Lecturer in TEFL and Applied Linguistics. Both of them are full-time teachers.

Among teachers of reading, there is a common belief that reading is considered as the easiest skill in the teaching since it requires them to select any text and have students read and answer comprehension questions about the content. In addition, the foreign language teacher often assumes that because his students have already acquired reading skills in their native language, reading in the foreign language should not be difficult for them.

Moreover, the selection of topics, the content of the course or even the kind of exercises are given to learners without taking into account their preferences and interests for learning one thing or another, accordingly, no space is opened for the raising of their awareness and interaction which will certainly decrease. In this way, the teaching of reading, in this situation, is too much monopolized by the teacher and the text content. The reading course is most of the time geared towards teaching foreign culture idioms, and proverbs, without any reference to the communicative nature of the reading process. Nevertheless, it is often assumed by specialists such as Swain, that the acquisition of a skill results from productive practice of this skill:

*"... [Frank] Smith ....has argued that one learns to read by reading, and to write by writing. Similarly, it can be argued that one learns to speak by speaking. "*

(Swain, 1985: 248)

In other words, *"The point of the reading course should be reading"*. (Eskey, 1983: 130). So, instead of encouraging learners to concentrate on this skill and take the responsibility to be autonomous learners, teachers emphasize grammar as a key to linguistic difficulties.

It is worth mentioning that the aim of the reading comprehension course is to develop both a linguistic competence and a reading proficiency. However, learners are asked to read in order to learn the foreign language, but they are never taught how to read (Eskey, 1983). Consequently, until university, learners remain tutored, unable to be autonomous readers, unaware of the importance of vocabulary which underlies learning in general and reading in particular. This is why teachers have failed in making them able to manage their learning even at the level of university.

Learning to read is, therefore, a process that goes on at several levels and continues over many years, it is a long-life skill. According to (Feitlson, 1973), success in learning to read clearly requires careful "mapping" from the beginning and an attempt to co-ordinate materials, methods, and procedures, and suit them to the special requirements of each reading course. In addition, differences among groups of learners have to be taken into account when preparing learning materials and in devising teaching techniques, especially for the teaching of reading.

The teacher's role is, therefore, to help the student identify his or her reading purposes and the source of the difficulties encountered, and to monitor the strategies available for overcoming difficulties. Students are likely to develop no awareness of the reading process or their reading styles and strategies. All this makes it necessary to analyse the learners' profile, to identify their needs and to shed light on their interests as well as learning

The informants were observed during the Reading Comprehension courses, since for many teachers, a first priority in designing a reading programme is to get general information about the students, their different perceptions brought to their learning task, the general background knowledge, their interests, and their expectations and strategies for reading and learning, Davies (1995).

The students chosen as a sample are advanced learners coming from different schools, and their age ranges between eighteen and twenty-two. They have studied the English language for 5 to 10 years. The majority of learners belong to the literary stream (the coefficient of English in this stream is two), and some of them were in scientific section (whose coefficient for English is also two). It should be noted at this level that although these learners have undergone the same formation in secondary education (i.e., formal instruction), they differ greatly in many respects. In this context, Wilkins admits that: "*Getting educated is a personal matter; in contrast, providing education is a social enterprise.*" (Wilkins, 1972:149). Learners, therefore, vary from one another because of their differences in motivation, attitudes, learning aptitudes<sup>4</sup> language anxiety<sup>5</sup> and learning strategies. Despite all these differences, the majority of students opted for the 'Licence' as a first choice. However, for the rest, it was either a third or even a fourth choice.

As far as the students' reading background is concerned, some learners used to read in Arabic and French since their early childhood: a fact which is said to be a determinant contributor in developing good reading habits, styles and strategies in learners. Indeed, and in most adults reading situations in English as a foreign language, most purposeful reading is for information rather than enjoyment, as it is reported by the majority of the informants, though some students have reported that since they do not know the foreign language well enough to read efficiently in it, they start reading an English text with the fear that they are going to have problems with unfamiliar vocabulary and structures, and so they read slowly and carefully, with, sometimes, a dictionary at their elbow as a support system. In addition, the

learners mentioned that the number of books they read per month, varies from two books, few pages, to no reading at all in English, i.e., they rarely read in English. One can, therefore, conclude that students' reading of English is recent and less practised than their first and second language reading, and this may be a possible reason for their difficulties and poor achievement in the Reading Comprehension course.

In this context, and as it was noticed in the questionnaire (See Appendix A), learners seem to be aware of their needs for what is called: "a good method for reading". Indeed and when expressing their difficulties in the reading course, they mentioned having some problems with vocabulary and grammar and they have considered their learning as essential and most urgent need. Moreover, the biggest deal of the students' interests is in societal topics, i.e., in English idioms and proverbs.

Another students' characteristic having a great interest is the learning style which comprises both a person's cognitive approach to learning and his or her attitudes toward the task, O'Malley and Chamot, (1990). Learners' styles can, to some degree, affect their preferences in terms of how and what to study. The majority of informants use the re-reading strategies and the over reliance on the dictionary (usually English-Arabic dictionaries) but some of them keep trying to guess the meaning from the context and their previous knowledge.

To conclude, students have no special strategies to reading and prefer other 'inappropriate' ones like translation and asking the teacher for clarification. Learners' preferences for learning, whether due to their learning styles or to their beliefs about how languages are learned, will influence the kind of strategies they choose in order to learn or to read new materials.

Learners' profile, learning background, preferences and reading styles have been identified in this section and the following point will necessary analyse their needs.

### 2.5.2. Learners' Needs Analysis:

For many teachers and researchers, a first priority in designing a reading programme, a training or a reading course is to get information about the different perceptions students bring to the learning task according to their language background, interests, and about their needs, expectations and strategies for learning in general and reading in particular. Thus, it is generally desirable to collect and interpret data about learners and the institutional context in which they learn.

A variety of different types of information can be collected. Such information might include biographical information about the learners, data about the different types of reading tasks that learners might want or need to carry out in the target language, information on the ways in which the learners prefer to learn, and so on.

The investigation of such factors is seen as a prerequisite task since it can provide an important database for reaching the goals of the research and planning some strategies so that the teaching of learners can cater for their needs. It has been also agreed, among specialists, such as West, (1997) that a wide range of information can be collected through needs analysis procedures. Nunan and Lamb, for example, claim that:

*“Needs analysis provides a basis for setting goals and objectives. Goals and objective setting are important tasks in most educational contexts, because they provide a rationale for selecting and integrating pedagogical tasks, as well providing a point of reference for the decision making process”.*

(Nunan and Lamb, 1996: 27)

Indeed, needs analysis is to be a guide in the selection of topics, themes, skills, teaching methods that learners' training requires taking into account their preferences and wants to raise their motivation and increase their awareness in reading tasks. Thus, in a situation such as the one studied in the

present work, one has to consult and shed light on specific needs more than others, according to students' priorities, level, view and difficulties in dealing with reading comprehension. For this purpose, the learners' perception and awareness of their different needs have been assessed at the beginning of the investigation through a questionnaire (See Appendix A) which may be seen as a fruitful tool to analyse the learners' needs and lacks.

Results of the questionnaire showed the learners' lacks in understanding their needs since they responded differently, but they all converged to the need for a reading methodology and specific points like vocabulary learning which represents the major source of their difficulties; thus, it has been defined as an urgent need for them. What is more, these learners share many common points. They need to be instructed in a safe learning environment, where their learning strategies are developed rather than repressed; they need their motivation and self-esteem to be enhanced and their negative attitudes to be lowered so that to cater for an urgent need: being able "to score well" in the EFL examination in general, and the Reading Comprehension exam in particular.

On the whole, the subjects selected for this investigation are all aware of the importance of the reading skill. In fact, what they call 'needs' are the learning of vocabulary and grammar, in addition to being able to read any material in English since for the student in a non-English speaking environment, the only practical reason for studying English is to gain the ability to read materials in that language. The fact that English is the key to much of the world's knowledge; knowledge that is required to keep informed with the up-to-date development in the world. For students, by learning how to read effectively, they will be able to speak, write and understand the target language in a better manner. This awareness of the importance of reading to their future needs will certainly increase the students' motivation, on the one hand, and on the other, it will help in having them interested in reading courses and strategies training. What is more is that students' contact with the English language is limited and sometimes inexistent beyond the threshold of

the language classroom. Besides, they do not see any immediate use in speaking or reading in the target language. Therefore, first-year EFL university students seem to have neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motivation to read English materials even in holidays. They perceive no necessity in devoting much effort for such a long-term need as learning to read in English. They are rather interested in the oral skill and other modules. It should be noted that most students show little competence in the Reading Comprehension module compared to the other modular courses. These students conceive reading as the most difficult skill. What is more, many learners do not submit their reading homework, or are reluctant to do the reading activities in class. And even if they do, the results are unsatisfactory. An alarming situation that appeals to careful thinking and investigation about the source of the problem in the reading skill low achievement so as to arrive at satisfactory solution.

It is also important to bear in mind that adult learners need interesting adult-level material to read as they learn. The reading material for EFL students should be the type of material that would interest a comparable group of native speakers. The learner must become engaged in what interest him and want to understand the message. In this very specific context, Widdowson's remarks seem to touch the heart of this issue:

*"The language learner's interest is an intrinsic part of the language- using process itself, not a state of mind it is desirable for learners to be in so as to make them more receptive to teaching".*

(Widdowson, 1983: 91)

In the field of language teaching/learning, different systems of needs analysis have been put forward: Munby, (1978), Alderson, (1980), Allwright, (1982), Hutchinson and Waters, (1980), in addition to Brindley (1989) who has suggested that there are basically three different approaches to needs analysis. He calls these the language proficiency orientation, psychological

/humanistic orientation and the specific purpose orientation. The three approaches are differentiated according to their educational rationale; the type of information collected the method of data collection and the purpose for which the data are collected.

The other systems, mentioned above, can be applied to different learning situations, and the most comprehensible scheme which emerges from those systems is the following:

- Target situation needs.
- Deficiency analysis or learners' lacks.
- Learners' wants or expectations.
- Learning needs.

As far as the target situation needs, the learners need to learn in order to be able to function appropriately in the target situation. These needs are defined by Chambers (1980) as:

*"The most common form of needs analysis is devoted in establishing the learners' language requirement in the occupational or academic situation. They are being prepared for target situation analysis".*

*(Quoted in West, 1993: 08)*

Thus, learners' individual characteristics and patterns of language use should be taken into consideration so that the required language points and skills can be selected to achieve the purpose of the researcher. However, before fulfilling those target situation needs, it is preliminary to determine what kind of language proficiency learners lack.i.e, the learners' deficiencies analysis so that teachers can plan language content relevant to their proficiency level; which results from what learners have not sufficiently acquired or not yet learned. This is expressed below by Hutchinson and Waters as follows:



*“The target proficiency ... needs to be matched against the existing proficiency of the learner. The gap between the two may be referred to as the learners’ lacks”.*

(Hutchinson and Waters, 1989: 56).

Learners mentioned that unclear meaning, complex sentences and difficult vocabulary constitute the main difficulties and handicaps in the reading skill; difficulties that some attribute to a lack of reading outside school, a lack of interest in the reading courses and to the lack of vocabulary knowledge or what is called a solid vocabulary base .

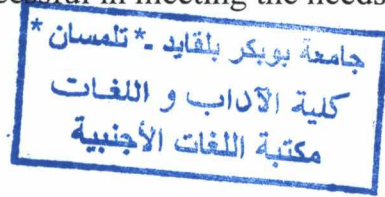
Moreover, it is essential to take into consideration the expectations and wants of the learners which are required in the establishment of learners’ needs. In so doing, the teacher will be able to select any topic which suits them, and ultimately increases their motivation and interests. As regard the learners’ expectations from the reading course, they expressed their urgent need to learn more vocabulary (word meaning), grammar and to learn more about foreign cultures. But there was an over-emphasize on vocabulary learning and grammar since they are considered as the key which makes reading successful and effective.

As for the students’ learning needs, it has been noticed that learners lack some skills and strategies; especially on what concerns vocabulary learning. These skills are necessary in order to be able to function effectively in the target situation. Therefore, learners need to be equipped with appropriate techniques and procedures to overcome their reading difficulties related mainly to vocabulary, i.e., the lexical and semantic features of the text. This could be achieved by teaching them, for instance, some aids or techniques to improve their vocabulary. In other words, the focus should be put on some word-attack skills. Nuttall, (1982) ;( See 4.11.2.), since most EFL learners have problems coping with unfamiliar words.

Thus, in order to help the students deal successfully with the problems encountered while reading English materials, and for the sake of comprehensible reading, a combination of various types of knowledge and

techniques must be acquired such as vocabulary recognition as aids to understand word (s) meanings.

In this regard, the present work is an attempt to cater for the learning needs mentioned above. This will be undertaken through an investigation on how overcoming the learners' reading difficulties by making them aware of the nature of the reading skill and through a direct vocabulary instruction. But before this, it is necessary to shed light on the research instruments which have been used to elicit from learners all what is needed in this investigation and to be able to adapt teaching practices that are successful in meeting the needs of a particular group of students.



## 2.6. The Research Instruments:

A variety of research tools have been opted for to carry out the pre-training phase of this investigation. Data are collected on both teachers and learners in order to compare between them and obtain ~~x~~ more reliable results and information about the case study.

### 2.6.1. The Questionnaire:

The questionnaire is an approach that is effective for pedagogical, political as well as research reasons<sup>7</sup>: Johns, (1981 b, 1986). It is often referred to as a “*self-report method*” Weir and Roberts, (1994); which is used to tap into the knowledge, opinions, ideas and experiences of learners, teachers or whatever. In other terms, the questionnaire serves to elicit the students' attitudes towards a teaching method, their profile, learning styles, needs and so on, Seliger, *et al.* (1989). In the present investigation, the questionnaire has been directed to both learners and teachers so that to elicit students' difficulties in the Reading Comprehension courses and try to find some solutions to overcome these deficiencies

### 2.6.1.1. The learners' Questionnaire:

Questionnaires help a lot in collecting relevant information about the learners. This kind of tool is applied at the beginning of the research so that to pilot it with another group, for the questionnaire can provide only a first step, or an entry into research. Moreover, the questionnaire can save time if the questions are usually set out in a very systematic way. The questionnaire is very often answered by reading the questions and then ticking responses, or writing in short answers. The results obtained from questionnaires can then form the basis for written works, discussions, or prepared talks (Harmer, 2001).

The learners' questionnaire (See Appendix A) has been meant to fulfill the following aims:

- 1- To get an idea about students' profile, linguistic level, reading background, view of their needs, learning styles, preferences and expectations.
- 2- Part of the goals of the questionnaire is also to identify students' problems and difficulties in reading courses, on the one hand, in order to try to find some effective means of teaching those students to read and develop a better understanding, on the other.
- 3- The task of the questionnaire is also to eliminate the influence of socially desirable answers of the participants.

Moreover, and in environments where English is the sole medium of instruction, there may be other purposes for distributing questionnaires to the informants. One can be to determine which 'skill (s)' is/are the most important to students at a particular level- listening, speaking, reading, or writing - in order to establish emphases within a literary curriculum (Johns, 1997). For

undergraduate students in this case, reading is considered to be the most important of the four skills since they believe that it is the key to language acquisition and learning in general.

As far as the questions are concerned, all the three types are used: closed, semi-closed and open questions. In the first type, i.e., the closed questions, the respondents were asked to choose from a limited range of possible answers (Wallace, 1998). The advantage of closed questions is that they usually make the questionnaire easier and quicker to fill in. Concerning the open questions, they are useful for an exploratory research, especially where facing some difficulties in anticipating the range of responses. This kind of questions, indeed, is more likely to yield more unexpected and interesting data. The third type of questions is a combination of both closed and open elements within the same question, a type which is often used to explain the data.

#### 2.6.1.2. The Teachers' Questionnaires:

Since the emphasis of the research is both on the learner and the teacher, the two teachers in charge of the Reading Comprehension module have been also questioned about their view on the emphasis of vocabulary or word-attack skills as an aid to overcome students' reading deficiencies.

The teachers' questionnaire consists of thirteen (13) questions. The first two questions are asked for the teachers' profile. The next questions turn implicitly around the teachers' methodology in teaching the reading skill. The remaining questions attempt to explore the students' problems in reading viewed through the eyes of their teachers. The last questions are asked parallel to those of the students' questionnaire to obtain facts seen in the teachers as well as the learners' eyes, then to compare between the results obtained for more objectivity. In fact, some questions were dropped and others reformulated in order to gear them towards the heart of the issue.

### 2.6.2. Assessment Tests:

The second research tool is an integral part of the teaching/learning process since testing and teaching are interrelated. Language teachers are testing, informally and intuitively, in every contact with learners. Teachers need to be able to make clear and useful interpretations of tests data in order to better understand their students. What is then a test? In plain ordinary words, a test is a:

***“Method of measuring a person’s ability or knowledge in a given area. The definition captures the essential components of a test.”***

(Douglas, 1997:252)

A test, therefore, has the purpose of measuring a person’s ability or knowledge. Care, however, must be taken in any test to understand who the testees are? What is their previous experience? Is the test appropriate for them? And how are the scores to be interpreted for individuals? Tests are also established and generally used to

***“...collect data about the subjects’ ability in and knowledge of the language in areas such as vocabulary, grammar, reading, meta-linguistic awareness and general proficiency.”***

(Seliger and Shohamy, 1989:176).

It is not sufficient to diagnose the students’ lacks and difficulties, or to measure their language progress in the learning process relying only on one tool. Accordingly, the researcher needed to have more evidence about their reading weaknesses and problems through a reading proficiency test. This kind of test has traditionally consisted of standardised multiple-choice items on grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and sometimes of a sample of writing.

In the section of vocabulary and reading comprehension, proficiency tests test the ability to understand the meanings and uses of words in written English, as well as, the ability to understand a variety of reading materials.

The reading proficiency test, in the present dissertation, aimed to fulfill the following objectives:

1. To determine the nature of learners' lacks and difficulties in the Reading Comprehension module, i.e., whether learners' reading difficulties are of a language nature or of a reading nature;
2. to help them overcome their weaknesses and improve their level as far as reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge are concerned.

The second type of tests used in this investigation, are diagnostic tests assigned to the learners after strategy instruction. The diagnostic test is designed to diagnose a particular aspect of a particular language. They can be used to:

***“Expose learner difficulties, gaps in their knowledge, and skill deficiencies during a course. Thus, when we know what the problems are, we can do something about them.”***

(Harmer, 2001:321).

It must be noted that diagnostic tests are also called progress or formative tests (Harrison, 1989), whose objective is to:

***“Check on students' progress in learning particular elements of the course. The diagnostic test tries to answer the question: How well have the students learnt this particular material?”***

(Harrison, 1989:6)

It should be noticed that this test has been done in the post-training phase to:

1. Assess learners' application and understanding of the word-attack skills as well as vocabulary techniques and strategies taught to them;
2. measure learners' progress after strategy training in word recognition that may be helpful for the development of students' reading vocabulary in a foreign language context

### 2.7. Conclusion:

This chapter has tried to analyse the learning and teaching situation under which reading courses for first- year level are presented. To analyse the situation more objectively, it is then necessary to know first what reading means, and what it involves as teaching and learning practices. Indeed, Variables such as teachers' methodology as far as the reading skill is concerned, learners' characteristics, their reading background and difficulties have been dealt with since they are important parameters in the analysis and interpretation of the study results. Moreover, learners' profile and needs analysis have been identified, shedding light on their lacks, as well as, their preferences in the reading comprehension courses. Therefore, the researcher will strive to tap into the knowledge and experience of applied linguists, educationalists and researchers in order to cater for learners' and teachers' need to learn and improve.

The data collection tools used for testing the research hypotheses have been introduced too. They consist of questionnaires for both learners and teachers as well as assessment tests. The obtained results are to be exposed and discussed in the following chapter.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. As far as the teaching of English as a foreign language is concerned outside its original settings, we are faced with a set of acronyms among which we have:
  - ESP: i.e., English for Specific/Special Purposes: It is used as an “umbrella term” since it contains many sub-categories, and it refers to the role of English in the language course for certain group of learners.
  - EAP: i.e., English for Academic Purposes (what is done in our educational institutions).
2. The literature on learning strategies in second/foreign language acquisition emerged from a concern for identifying the characteristics of effective learner. These strategies, which are reported by students or observed in any language learning situation, appear to contribute to learning. In fact, students do apply learning strategies while learning a second/ foreign language and these strategies can be described and classified. Learning strategies are defined by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) as "special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p.1). Oxford (1994) defines them as "actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques students use, often unconsciously, to improve their progress in apprehending, internalizing, and using the L2" (p.1).
3. Eclecticism means to select the most suitable technique from other different teaching methods for the sake of meeting the demands and needs of a particular teaching situation, or to combine the best elements of traditional methods with those of the new ones.
4. Learning aptitudes is a term which refers to the expression of positive or negative feelings towards the language. We can get feedback about learners' aptitudes towards a specific language (in this case English) through the questionnaire, for example.
5. Anxiety is a phenomenon that exists in all classrooms. It is defined as an uncomfortable feeling of nervousness or worry about something that is happening or might happen.
6. Intrinsic Vs extrinsic motivation: Extrinsic motivation is said to be caused by outside factors, such as the need to pass an exam, to get a financial reward or the possibility of a future travel. While intrinsic motivation comes from within the individual, for the enjoyment of the learning process for example. In ELT, motivation may be “*integrational*” (desire to be part of an English speaking community) or



*“instrumental”* (wish to use English as a means for academic or professional purposes).

7. Although the questionnaire is considered as a data collection tool of a soft evidence category (McDonough, 1995), it has helped in this case for collecting relevant information on the learners. The researcher has used this kind of instrument, at the beginning of this investigation, in order to pilot it with the informants during the first term of 2005.

**CHAPTER THREE : ANALYSIS OF DATA AND  
INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS**

## **CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS OF DATA AND INTERPRETATIONS OF RESULTS.**

### **3.1. Introduction**

### **3.2. Data Collection Procedure.**

3.2.1. The Pre –Training Phase.

3.2.2. The Training Phase.

3.2.3. The Post –Training Phase.

### **3.3. Analysis of Results:**

3.3.1. The Pre –Training Phase Results.

3.3.1.1. Results of the Questionnaire.

*i) Results of Students' Questionnaire.*

*ii) Results of Teachers' Questionnaire.*

3.3.1.2. The Pre –Training Proficiency Test Results.

3.3.2. The Training Phase Results.

3.3.3. The Post Training Phase Results.

### **3.4. Interpretation and Discussion of Results**

### **3.5. Conclusion.**

### **Notes to Chapter Three**

## CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS OF DATA AND INTERPRETATIONS OF RESULTS.

### 3.1. Introduction:

In this chapter, some theoretical facts already stated in the previous chapters will be put into practice. Therefore, the results of each step undertaken in this investigation will be presented, analysed and discussed. This chapter also attempts to find an answer to the question motivating the present research, which is to see whether direct vocabulary instruction in some vocabulary recognition techniques may contribute and correlate positively as means of improving the learners' level in reading comprehension. For this reason the researcher has tried at the beginning of this investigation to pinpoint some of the learners' vocabulary difficulties which constitute a serious handicap for reading comprehension, and find out what the informants' current level of proficiency in vocabulary knowledge and in reading is.

The first point to be examined is the description of the three phases of data collection; namely, the pre-training, the training and the post training phases. The second point is the analysis of the results obtained from each phase. It must be noted, however, that the researcher has resorted to two different research instruments all along the data collection phases in order to cross -check the results and validate them, namely, the questionnaires designed to both first-year English university teachers and students, and the tests. The aim is to hopefully achieve insightful information and to obtain empirical evidence concerning the research problematic.

### 3.2. Data Collection Procedure:

The data collection tools described in chapter two (See 2.6) have been used for collecting data during three distinct phases.

- a) Before learners have been instructed in some word- attack skills or vocabulary recognition strategies and techniques, i.e. the pre -training phase;
- b) The direct EFL reading vocabulary strategy, in other words, the lexical instruction or the training phase;
- c) After the instruction has been completed, i.e., the post training phase.

#### 3.2.1. The Pre-Training Phase:

The aim of this phase is to find out what the subjects' current level of proficiency in language in general and in vocabulary and reading in particular is, especially on what concerns the basic vocabulary building techniques, selected for the study. By the same token, it tries to identify their lacks and difficulties in this area.

The first step in the pre-training phase consists in designing the first-year EFL university students' a questionnaire which has been administered to learners when they enter the course, at the beginning of the academic year 2005-2006, i.e., at the start of the investigation. The subjects have been allowed to answer in their L1 or L2, but the majority of them have opted for English, may be to show their level and ability to use it. This may be an indicator of their high motivation for learning and using English. The students' questionnaire included a set of fourteen questions divided into five rubrics as follows:

Rubric one, including questions 1, 2, 3 and 4, has been designed for gathering general information about the students aiming at determining their characteristics. This was in the objective of having an idea about their

language learning background and the degree of their motivation about learning English. Rubric two, including questions 5, 6, 7 and 8, has been designed to determine the students' view and awareness of their needs, expectations and preferences as far as the reading course is concerned. The researcher has taken those expressed views into account while designing the lexical instruction.

Rubric three, including questions 9 and 10, has been designed to have an idea about the learners' reading methods or strategies. Whereas rubric four, including questions 11 and 12, has been intended to have an idea about the learners' reading difficulties type and their awareness of them. Finally, rubric five, including questions 13 and 14, has been designed to determine the students' beliefs about effective reading as well as their suggestions to improve their vocabulary knowledge which is basic for effective reading ability.

It should be noted, however, that university-teachers in charge of the Reading Comprehension module have also been given a questionnaire which has been designed to have an idea about their own assessment of the reading skill teaching and learning at the university level for first-year EFL students. It also aims at helping learners to overcome some of their reading and vocabulary difficulties.

The questionnaire-in question- consists of fourteen questions. The three first questions deal with some information concerning university teachers. The next questions, i.e., questions 4, 5 and 6 concern the teachers' assessment of their students' level in reading. As far as questions 7 and 8 are concerned, they aim at checking students' main difficulties in reading as well as the main reasons behind their weaknesses.

Questions 9, 10 and 11 deal mainly with the teachers' teaching method in the reading course, and the last question has been designed to determine the teachers' suggestions in order to improve the students reading performance in English and develop their vocabulary stock and strategies.

The second step in this phase consists in assessing the subjects' actual ability at the level of reading in general and vocabulary knowledge in particular, especially on what concerns the four vocabulary building techniques that constitute the sample of the study. This assessment has been designed in the form of a reading proficiency test<sup>1</sup> including a set of activities having a close relationship with vocabulary recognition. This test has been administered to the learners just after having them answered the questionnaire. This step is determinant since: *“One of the soundest reasons to assess students' learning strategies is so you can provide training on how to improve those strategies”*. (Oxford, 1990: 2000).

The reading proficiency test consists of a set of comprehension questions followed by some vocabulary recognition activities. Learners have to answer them in one hour and a half. This type of activities is meant to know how the learners' vocabulary background is. It also checks what vocabulary building techniques learners do adopt while making up their lexis. It should be noted, however, that this phase has preceded the training phase and allowed the researcher to compare results according to learners' reading and vocabulary abilities before and after strategy instruction.

### 3.2.2. The Training Phase:

Once the learners' reading and vocabulary levels have been determined, the second step consists in improving this level through raising learners' awareness of vocabulary recognition and mainly the vocabulary building techniques which support reading development. To reach those objectives, strategy instruction in some vocabulary building techniques also called word-attack skills, have been conducted<sup>2</sup>. This instruction is, in this study, the treatment of the group. It aims at bringing a remedy to learners reading difficulties related to vocabulary knowledge. Nevertheless, since this work aims at testing the effectiveness of vocabulary recognition in reading comprehension, the researcher has resorted to a direct vocabulary instruction in four (4) vocabulary- building strategies, namely using wordlist, guessing

vocabulary words from context by using context clues, analyzing word structure, i.e., (morphological processes) and using dictionaries.

The aim of the researcher behind using the direct vocabulary instruction has been to achieve a better understanding of these techniques in order to be successfully applied and used by learners. It is worth mentioning, in this context, that second language L2 research undertaken in the USA from the late 1960s to the 1980s (Chall, 1967; Perfetti, 1985) confirmed that: *"...an early and explicit emphasis on the medium (on word recognition and decoding) was more effective for reading achievement, not only on tests of word recognition and oral reading, but on silent reading comprehension as well"*.

(Chall, 1987: 10).

In addition, programmes that incorporate direct vocabulary instruction have been found to be more effective for vocabulary development than those that rely exclusively on indirect means. (Folse, 2004; Johnson and Pearson, 1984, Petty, Herold and Stoll, 1968; Zimmerman, 1997). Indeed, the learners lack appropriate awareness of word-attack skills and vocabulary building strategies, and awareness is often the gap between success and failure. Learners may have developed a successful ability for reading so far, but still lack appropriate awareness and consciousness which are said to be essential parts of learning (Brumfit and Widdowson, 1984; Spolsky, 1984, Quoted in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990).

On the whole, the different stages of this instruction are as follows: The first stage consists in the above described pre-training phase (See 3.2.1). Learners needs for reading comprehension are identified, their reading and vocabulary difficulties as well as actual use of some vocabulary-building strategies, assessed. The second stage consists in developing learners' awareness of the reading process in general and vocabulary knowledge in particular. The third stage is the presentation phase, in which the vocabulary-building strategies are presented and named.



The researcher, who has also conducted the training, explains how each strategy is used and when to use it, in relation to the four vocabulary-building techniques. Exemplification of the use of some word-attack skills has been done with the reading proficiency test text and questions. Thus, the four word-attack skills have been presented each with its definition (See 1.10.).

All in all, these vocabulary-building techniques have been presented, named, defined, explained and simplified to learners. Consequently, this important phase has led to the next step in the data collection which is testing the learners' understanding and application of the strategies after this direct instruction.

### 3.2.3. The Post Training Phase:

This phase consists on a final test which has been administered to the subjects in order to test their progress in reading in general, and performing the four vocabulary-building strategies in particular, after strategy instruction. Each technique has been tested through different vocabulary activities.

The learners first read the passage and accomplish the tasks alternatively. Then, their answers have been collected each time. Finally, collective correction follows each task. Moreover, instruction has been reinforced and the word-attack skills have been illustrated and explained again. The post-training test aims, therefore, at measuring learners' progress in vocabulary recognition as far as the use and application of the vocabulary -building techniques are concerned. All in all, and to sum up the data collection phases, it is worth recapitulating the different stages that have been used. Diagram 3.1 below illustrates them.

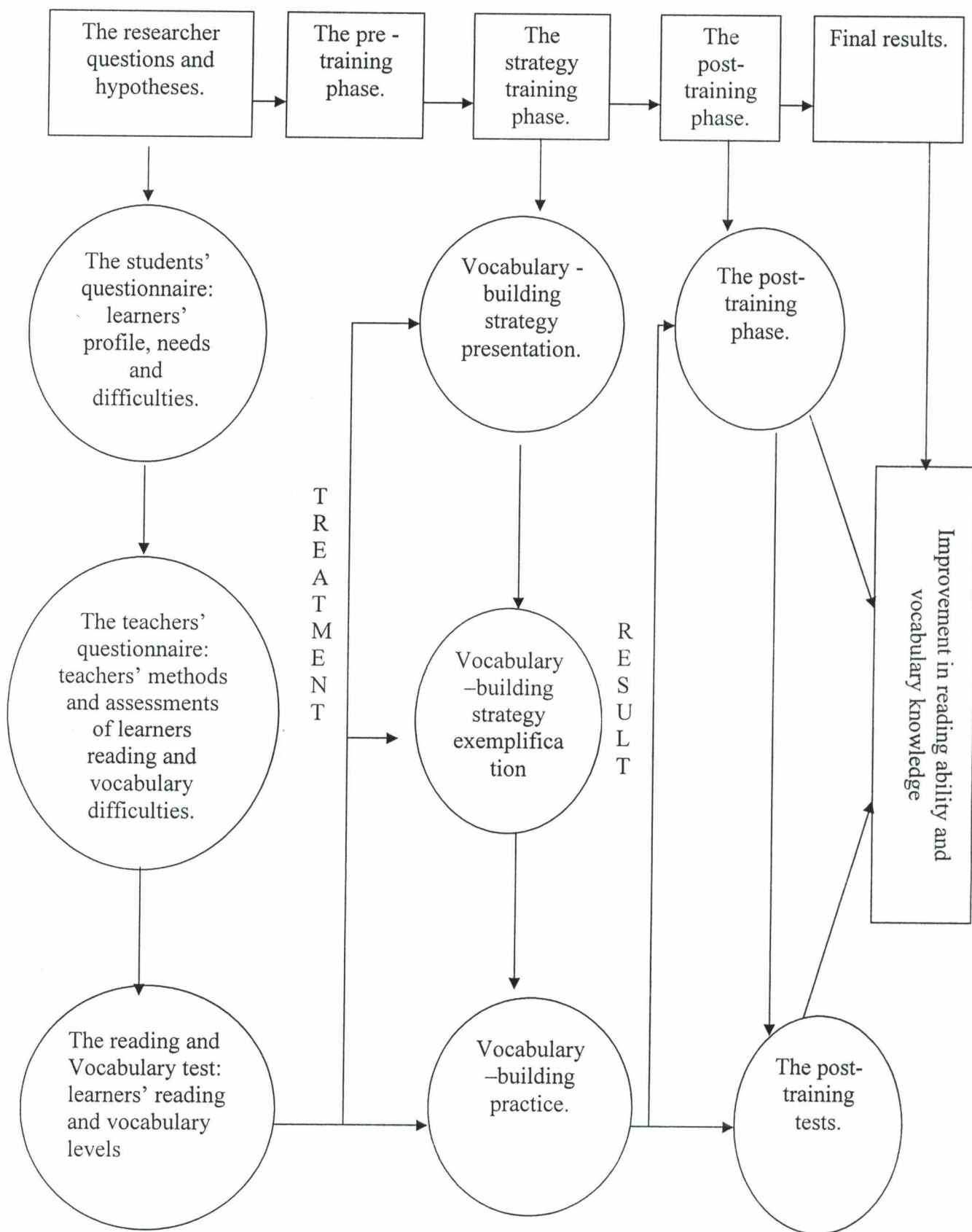


Diagram 3.1: The different steps of the data collection procedure.

### 3.3. Analysis of Results:

In this section, the results of each step undertaken will be given and analysed. The question motivating the current study is whether direct vocabulary instruction in some vocabulary recognition strategies may contribute and correlate positively as means of improving the learners level in reading comprehension. Using the instruments and procedures described earlier, the data collection steps has centered on the following points:

- a. Learners' reading difficulties in relation to vocabulary knowledge;
- b. learners' awareness of some word-attack skills and vocabulary - building strategies before and after the instruction;
- c. learners' progress in reading after the direct vocabulary instruction.

These points will be discussed all along the analysis of the pre-training phase results.

#### 3.3.1. The Pre –Training Phase Results:

The data collected during this phase has been, in fact, the results of two diagnostic tests namely, the questionnaires addressed to first-year EFL university students and teachers, and the pre-training proficiency test.

##### 3.3.1.1. Results of the Questionnaire:

The questionnaire has been chosen as a research tool because it is less - time consuming than an interview or other research instrument, for example, Wallace (1998) asserts that the questionnaire permits the analysis of a big sample of informants in a relatively short period of time anonymously.

The current study has been conducted through two questionnaires: The first has been submitted to first- year EFL university students, more exactly 40 students. The second has been distributed to two teachers in charge of the Reading Comprehension module. It should be noted, however, that in both questionnaires, three types of questions, close-ended, open-ended, and combined questions, have been used.

As we have seen earlier, (See 2.6.1.) the analysis of the two questionnaires has yielded important information about the informants involved in the current study. In other words, the two questionnaires have served to consolidate different perceptions of the most important components of any teaching/learning situation, namely teachers and learners. The students' questionnaire has helped to draw the learners' profile, needs and expectations. Those expressed needs and views of the reading comprehension difficulties, have directed the attention towards the degree of their current level in the English language in general, and reading as a skill in particular <sup>3</sup>.

i) Results of Students' Questionnaire:

The students' questionnaire consists of a set of fourteen questions divided into five sections. As far as the first section is concerned, i.e., general information about the students, it comprises four open questions: First of all, question one concerns their age and nationality: they are all Algerian students whose age ranges between eighteen and twenty-two years old. In addition to this, the students' answers to questions two and three show that most of them come from the "Literary Stream" and only three students come from the "Scientific Stream". As regards their time in EFL studies, it ranges between 5 and 6 years for most of them, but others have studied English for ten years <sup>4</sup>.

As a matter of fact, the questionnaire's answers to section one, two and three helped us draw the learners' profile, determine their level in English, their needs and expectations. At the same time, those questions have given us

a description of the students' reading strategies for facilitating their learning, and making progress in their reading and vocabulary levels. (A detailed analysis of the three sections is given in 2.5.1. and 2.5.2.)

As for the data in the fourth section, and through the answers obtained about the learners' difficulties, the majority have reported having difficulties with vocabulary and ambiguity in meaning, i.e., inability to make inferences and guesses, and with the organization of the text, i.e. complex sentences (or the inability to recognize the relationship between sentences).

Others have expressed their difficulties at the level of pronunciation, for this reason the majority have reported that they have resorted to a bilingual English dictionary (Arabic –English) as a self support guide; especially when a word or an idea is not clear for them. Moreover, almost all informants have attributed their reading difficulties to a “bad” learning at the level of secondary education. Others have explained the difficulties by a lack of interest in reading<sup>5</sup>, and a lack of extra reading outside the classroom, (what is known as extensive reading<sup>6</sup>). However, twelve students among them have reported that the actual reason is the lack of reading materials.

In sum, those answers suggest that learners are aware of their reading difficulties. At the same time, they are conscious about their need to learn how to make their reading more useful, interesting and more fruitful. Nevertheless, the researcher has hypothesised that these reading problems are mainly caused by a lack of a sound vocabulary knowledge base and that the problem may be solved through a direct strategy instruction<sup>7</sup>.

Finally, concerning the informants' beliefs about effective reading, in the light of the answers obtained from question thirteen (See the Questionnaire), the students have mentioned that effective reading could be achieved through the following steps:

- Reading several times.
- Understanding the meaning of every single word.
- Getting the overall meaning of the text.

- Looking up words in a bilingual dictionary (Arabic -French dictionary).

The informants have also proposed the following solutions to be used in order to improve one's reading performance in English. That has been the answer to the last question, i.e., question fourteen (See the Questionnaire), which has indirectly sought to unveil their reading and vocabulary strategies:

- Using a dictionary.
- Reading extensively.
- Teaching vocabulary to learn new words.
- Asking for teachers' help.
- Making students listen to news on radio and English channels.
- Asking students to communicate in English.
- Translating into L1.
- Explaining word -by -word.

These suggested solutions display learners' simplistic view of what reading entails. Learners, therefore, are either equipped with a limited range and number of strategies, or their reading and vocabulary strategies need to be developed. It is worth noting, however, that some learners have given no answer to that question: they have *a priori* no strategies to use in front of complex vocabulary and are easily discouraged when reading. This inevitably leads to an ineffective and unsystematic reading.

Making use of the obtained results, the following assertions and conclusions may be made:

1. Learners display a certain linguistic competence;
2. they show a limited degree of motivation and interest to reading;
3. they view their difficulties as being caused by a lack of grammar and a consistent vocabulary stock.

4. they view their needs as being what they call: “a good method for reading well”.

Hence, the questionnaire has shed light on the identification of learners' difficulties and actual use of some vocabulary and reading strategies. The second step deals with university-teachers' questionnaire used to pinpoint their view about their assessment of the reading skill teaching/learning at the university level for first-year EFL students.

ii) Results of the Teachers' Questionnaire:

The teachers' questionnaire has helped the researcher yield basic information concerning the teachers' view about ways to help learners overcome some of their reading weaknesses in order to become autonomous individual learners on the one hand and their teachers' teaching method on the other. First of all, the questionnaire's three first questions deal with information concerning teachers, beginning by the number of years related to their teaching experience which varies between 10 and 23 years. Then, they have been asked about the modules they have been in charge of.

The remaining questions deal mainly with the teaching of the Reading Comprehension module. Therefore, the first question aims at revealing the main objectives that teachers intend to reach in teaching this course; and it is clearly noticed that teacher (1) aims to reach an effective reading with a level of comprehension of a given text. On the other hand, teacher (2) thinks that the major aim in teaching reading comprehension lies in developing the learners' vocabulary level, i.e., vocabulary building.

The question that follows aims at having an idea about the skill in which students are most involved. Teacher (1) mentions reading whereas the other one thinks that his students are more interested in the speaking skill.

The fifth question aims at having an idea about the teachers' assessment and evaluation on their learners' progress in reading. Both teachers noticed the students' weak and slow progress.

Regarding question six (See the Questionnaire); it deals mainly with students' assignments. It has been clearly noticed that both teachers used to ask students to do some homework related to the reading skill, when necessary.

Questions seven and eight are related to the students' main difficulties as regards the reading skill. The answers to question seven are different and various. Both teachers think that the main reading difficulties are related to vocabulary problems, i.e., ambiguous words. Teacher (1) reports that in addition to vocabulary, students face a major problem related to the sounds of individual words. The other thinks that his students have some difficulties related to the grammatical structures and the organisation of the text.

As far as the main reasons behind the students' reading weaknesses are concerned, both teachers agree that this may be due to the difficulty of the reading skill itself, the lack of appropriate teaching materials including appropriate course books, and the lack of the reading culture, what is also called: extra -reading.

Question nine of the questionnaire reveals the procedures of teaching the reading skill. It has been observed that both teachers teach vocabulary from time to time during the Reading Comprehension course, using a range of techniques to develop students' strategies. Among these techniques, morphological processes to foster learners' stock of vocabulary. When asked about their students' vocabulary background, both teachers have reported that their students are very weak in this area of learning.

As far as question eleven is concerned, there are various materials that university teachers of the Reading Comprehension module make use of in the classroom. Among these: simplified text versions, newspapers and realia.



Question twelve aims at identifying the types of reading strategies taught to students in order to overcome their reading problems and decode independence and autonomy in reading and learning in general. Explicit learning strategies are subsequently taught by both teachers: one teacher uses to raise the students' awareness about the importance of dictionaries; especially monolingual ones which are mainly used to build and elaborate learners' vocabulary knowledge. The other teacher tries to provide his learners with extensive reading as a useful strategy that will help them in putting into practice all the reading strategies. Moreover, it aims at strengthening the learners' reading abilities and, ultimately, helps them become autonomous learners.

The last part of the teachers' questionnaire is, in fact, a kind of suggestions addressed to the learners in order to improve their reading performance in English and develop their vocabulary stock. The suggestions are various, among which the following may be mentioned:

- To enhance learners to read and to read. In other words, to read extensively, which is a source of improvement of the reading process and other skills.
- To adapt and make use of simplified -text versions.
- To drill different vocabulary strategies in class<sup>8</sup>.
- To raise the learners' awareness about the process of reading with comprehending.

The researcher has hypothesised that the learners' reading difficulties lie much more at the linguistic level. This hypothesis needs, of course, to be substantiated by empirical evidence from the second step in the data collection: i.e., the pre-training proficiency test.

**3.3.1.2. The Pre-Training Proficiency Test Results:**

In fact, before the training has been conducted, the researcher has opted for a reading proficiency test in order to assess the learners' reading level in general and vocabulary knowledge in particular, especially on what concerns the four vocabulary-building techniques selected for this research. Therefore, the reading proficiency test responses have been analysed in order to assess the learners' linguistic ability, as well as their ability to use the four vocabulary-building strategies.

The number of informants who have answered correctly for each vocabulary technique has been counted. Then, it has been possible to determine, among the forty informants tested, the number of those who have performed successfully, and the number of those who have performed poorly on the strategies and have failed to reach the required answer. The number obtained for each vocabulary strategy has been, then, counted and translated into percentages. The results obtained are illustrated in the following table and bar-graph:

Vocabulary building techniques / learners' performance	(W)		(G)		(M)		(D)	
	<b>Good scores</b>	6	15%	12	30%	16	40%	18
<b>Bad scores</b>	34	85%	28	70%	24	60%	22	55%

Table 3.1: Learners' reading and vocabulary performance before strategy instruction:

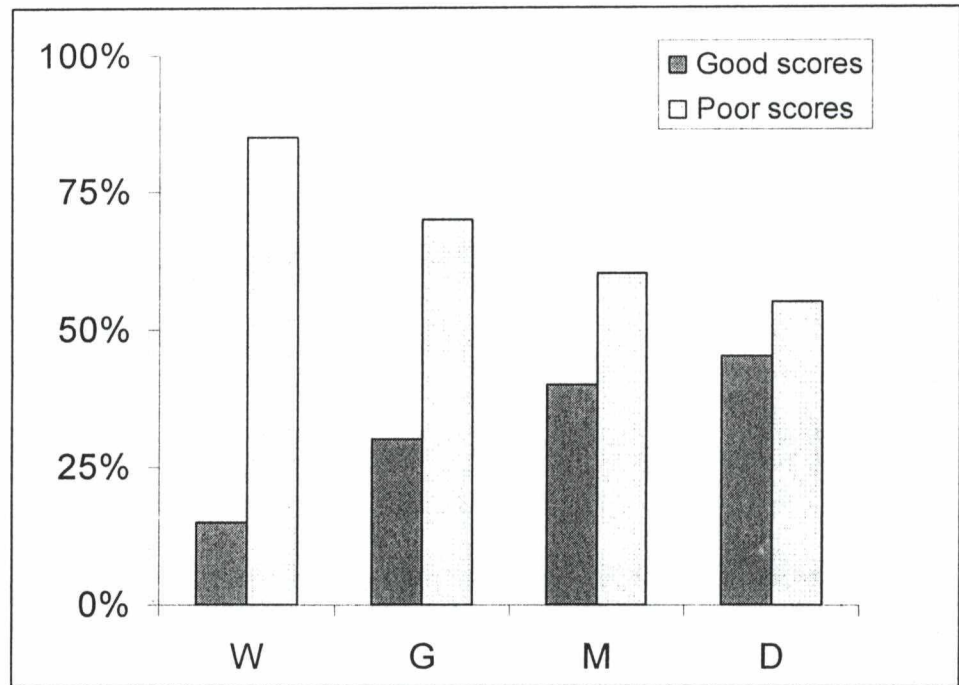
**Key to table 3.1.**

W.....Wordlist

G.....Guessing from context using context clues

M.....Morphological processes

D.....Dictionary use



Bar-graph 3.1 percentages of learners' reading and vocabulary performance before strategy instruction:

**Key to bar-graph 3.1.**

W.....Wordlist

G.....Guessing from context using context clues

M.....Morphological processes

D.....Dictionary use

As it is illustrated in Table 3.1 and Bar-Graph 3.1, most of the forty informants have not been successful in using the four vocabulary-building strategies. Accordingly, a separate analysis has been conducted for each of these strategies. Therefore, for wordlist only 6 of the informants, i.e.15% use wordlist. The remaining learners, i.e., 34 of them have failed to use this strategy as it is reflected in the above Table and Bar-Graph.

For the strategy of guessing from context using context clues, assessed through Task 6 (See Appendix C), only twelve of the informants, i.e. 30% of them could find the correct guesses. Some of the subjects have guessed successfully in some questions, but failed in others. For the rest, i.e., 70%, the answers have been randomly given.

As far as the morphological processes are concerned, i.e. the analysis of word structure, it has been noticed that the informants, i.e.,24 learners have met difficulties in breaking down words into small elements and are unaware about the usefulness of this strategy. In fact only sixteen of them, i.e. 40%, could make use of this strategy; the others lack appropriate strategies for systematically using it.

Finally, for dictionary use, the results shown (See Table 3.1) demonstrate that only 45% of the informants could use the dictionary appropriately, but it is not evident for the rest, i.e., (55%) since they failed in using it. Accordingly, it could be assumed that among the forty informants, except a small number among the tested population have shown an ability to use the four vocabulary-building strategies.

#### **3.3.2. The Training Phase Results:**

To test the researcher's hypothesis which claims that a purposeful strategy instruction through the use of some vocabulary-building strategies could be a significant factor contributing to improve the learners' reading behaviour, depth of lexical knowledge; which is said to be a necessary component of reading comprehension (Anderson and Nagy; 1992; Qian,

1999), and ultimately the learning process in general, a reading and vocabulary strategy instruction has been conducted in four vocabulary techniques namely: the use of wordlist, guessing from context using context clues, word formation through affixation and the use of different types of dictionaries. These are essential if EFL learners are to become highly proficient readers. In other words, if these four types of knowledge are developed for the high frequency and general academic words of English, learners will be in a better position to deal successfully with English texts from a wide variety of topics.

The direct strategy instruction is very important; this is what is clearly stated by Doughty and William's (1998) who claim that when the knowledge is represented explicitly and directly it can contribute to the process of language learning. Therefore, the primary lexical objectives of this strategy instruction are increasing vocabulary stock, elaborating vocabulary knowledge and developing fluency with familiar vocabulary.

**CHAPTER THREE** Analysis of Data and Interpretation of Results

The following diagram illustrates the different procedures of this phase:

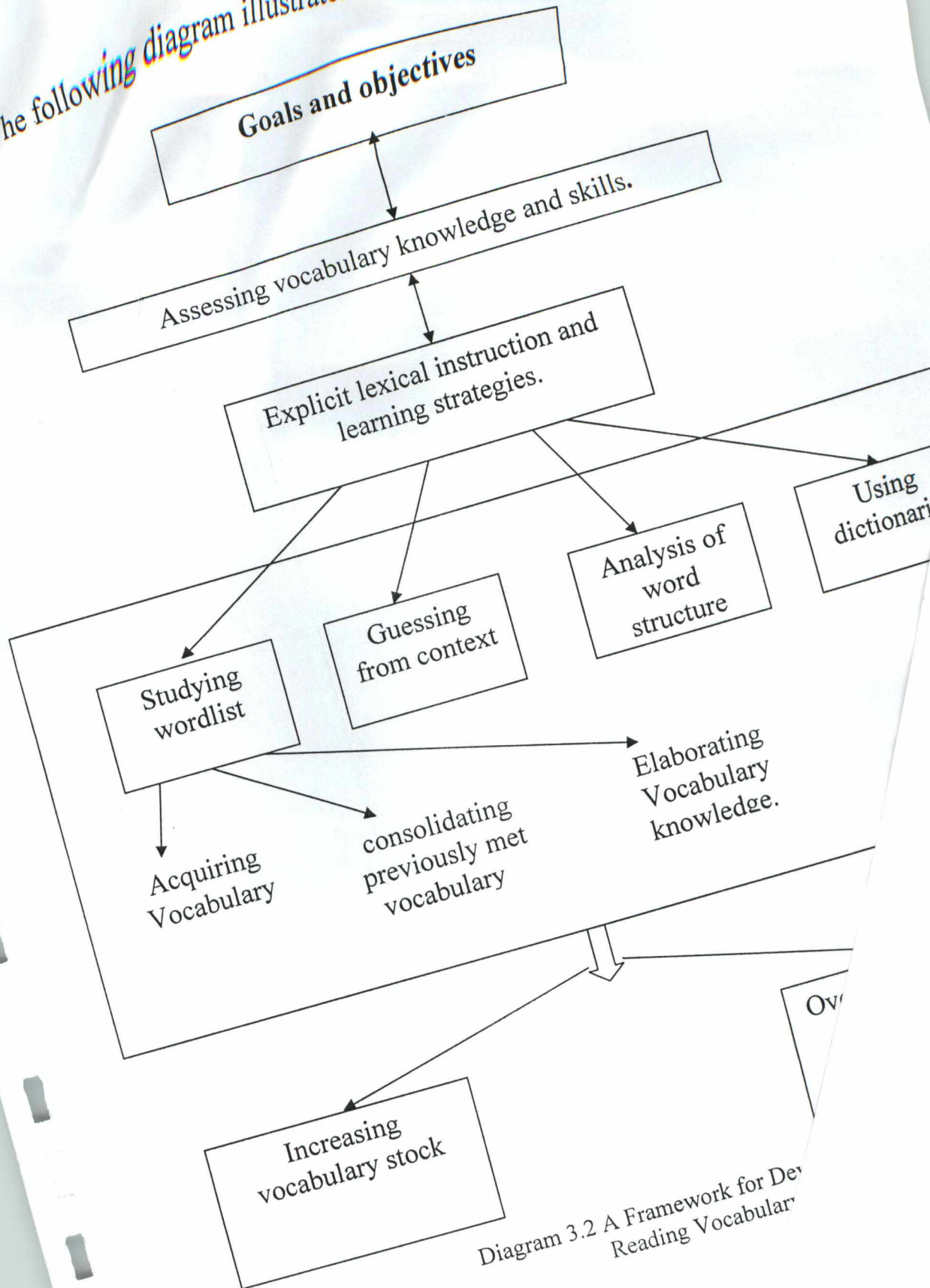


Diagram 3.2 A Framework for Developing Reading Vocabulary

The means for achieving these objectives are skill-based and include training learners to effectively learn these vocabulary-building strategies and engage in reading extensively. It is worth mentioning, however, that during this phase, all the forty informants have received the same reading strategy training. Indeed, a reading passage followed by some vocabulary exercises was selected and presented to be exploited through their training in strategies for vocabulary building. In order to make the strategy more effective, the training, i.e., the instruction has been conducted in the first term of the academic year (2005-2006), for one and a half hour per week, during twelve weeks, that is a total number of eighteen hours.

It is essential to note, also, that this instruction can be highly motivating, especially for learners with positive attitudes toward reading English materials<sup>9</sup> (Yamashita; 2004), and can provide learners with the satisfaction of autonomous reading, which may become a reading habit (Day and Bamford, 1998). It is clear, therefore, that strategy instruction depends primarily on learners' motivation, attention, attitudes and linguistic competence. All these variables have been taken into consideration in the EFL students' questionnaire since they contribute a lot in facilitating this phase. It should also be noted that during the training, the researcher distinguishes between unstructured and structured learners, Sanaoui (1995). Unstructured learners take less initiative, depend more on their friends, and take more time and more explanation to learn the strategies presented to them. Structured learners are better organized and systematically carry out independent learning, self-initiate activities, regularly record new words in note-books and review them, and show a quicker learning and a better understanding of the instruction presented to them.

Finally, this instruction allows learners to be more reflective on their leaning. It has been beneficial, to some extent, since it has offered the most effective means for promoting lexical knowledge; and hence, developing reading ability. After the instruction of some useful vocabulary strategies has been completed, learners have been tested again.

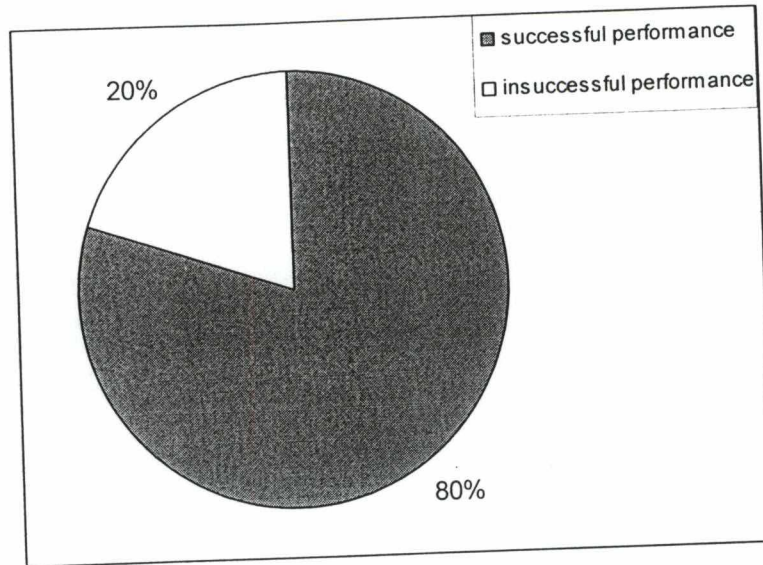
### 3.3.3. The Post –Training Phase Results:

The Post-training test has been administered to the candidates for the sake of testing their improvement in performing the selected four vocabulary-building strategies after the strategy instruction, i.e., learners have been asked to read the passage selected for the test, and then perform different tasks related to the vocabulary -building strategies. The tasks -in question- constitute the post-training test that aims at assessing the learners' progress in reading in general and in the application of the vocabulary recognition strategies in particular.

Hence, a distinctive analysis has been undertaken in order to explain learners' reading and vocabulary performance on each vocabulary-building strategy. It should be noted, however, that each vocabulary strategy will be separately discussed and illustrated. Here are the results obtained from the post-training phase test:

First of all, and concerning the use of wordlist, it has been noticed that the great majority, i.e., more than half of the informants have been apparently able to make a correct use of this strategy, to be exact, thirty five students out of forty, i.e., 80% of the informants value the explicit study of vocabulary and vocabulary cards as a potentially self-initiating activity that can promote autonomy and learning in general. The rest, however, i.e., 20% display an unsuccessful performance of the strategy. This could be explained by the fact that those students have not reviewed regularly outside the classroom and are still confusing between the numerous target words and their different definitions. This difference in percentages is interpreted in the following pie-chart:



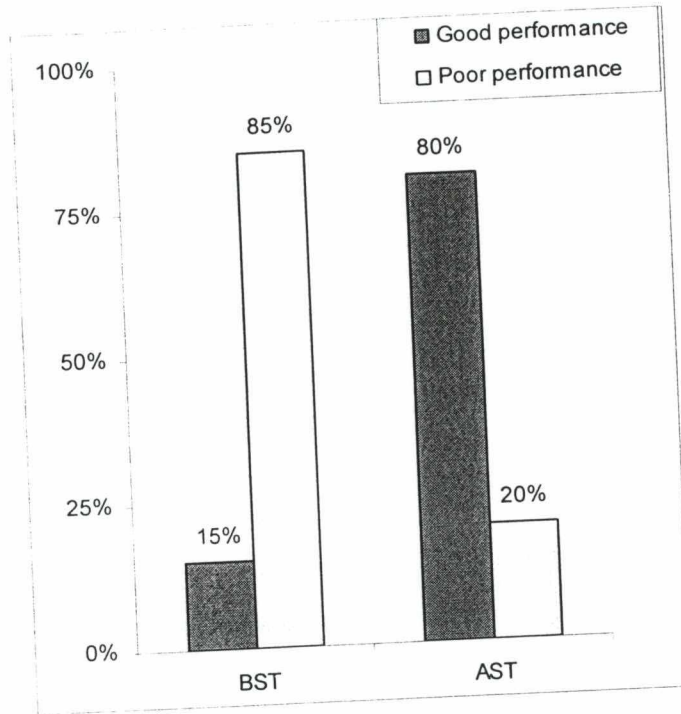


Pie-Chart 3-1: Learners' percentages of their performance in 'wordlist' after strategy instruction

Therefore, since five out of the tested students have failed in this strategy, i.e. 20% of the sample population, an immediate correction has been presented and the vocabulary strategy has been re-explained and re-illustrated. Thus, for the sake of comparison between the two phases, i.e., (before and after strategy training), here is an illustrative table to see the differences:

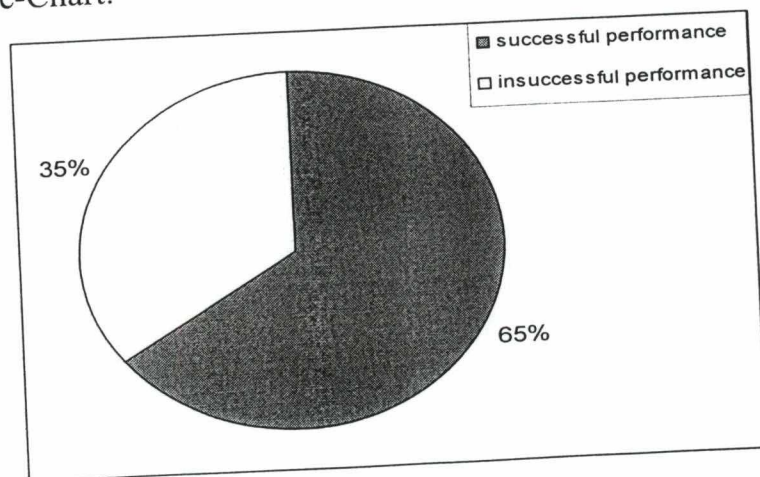
wordlist	Before training		After training	
	Good performance	Poor performance	Good performance	Poor performance
Percentage %.	15%	85%	80%	20%

Table 3.2: Learners' performance in 'wordlist' before and after strategy instruction.



Bar-Graph 3.2: Good and poor performance in 'wordlist' before and after strategy training.

As for the task related to guessing from context, twenty six (26) learners out of forty (40), i.e., 65% could make correct guesses, whereas the others have failed and have not applied the strategy appropriately. Those who have failed, mention that they are still confused when using this strategy and that the clues are not very clear to them. The percentages are represented in the following Pie-Chart.



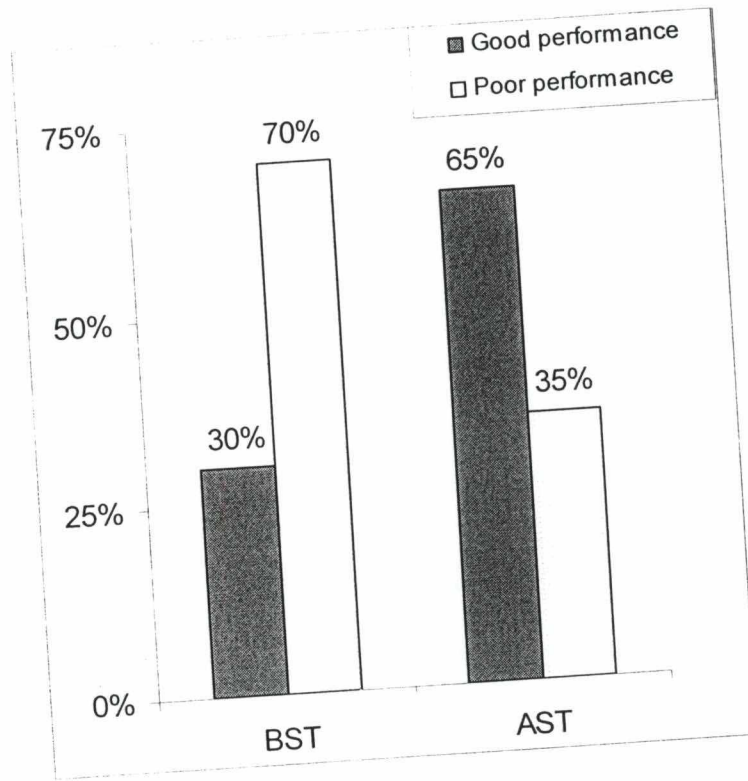
Pie-Chart3 -2: Learners' percentages of their performance in 'guessing from context' after strategy instruction.

If compared to the results of the pre-training phase one could remark that a clear progress has been made on the part of the students. This may be due to their high motivation and interest during the strategy instruction. It should be stated, at this level, that the students' use of this strategy is beneficial since it offers possibilities of guessing through the context, and then the meaning of the words will be sorted out. Furthermore, the context itself is a source of vocabulary input from which learners will constitute their lexical repertoire, as Nagy explains it: *"What a word means on many given occasions is mediated by the many contexts in which it is used and such context provide considerable input from which language users clearly pick up huge of vocabulary knowledge"*. (Nagy, 1998: 64).

The obtained results are illustrated in Table 3.3 and Bar-Graph 3.3

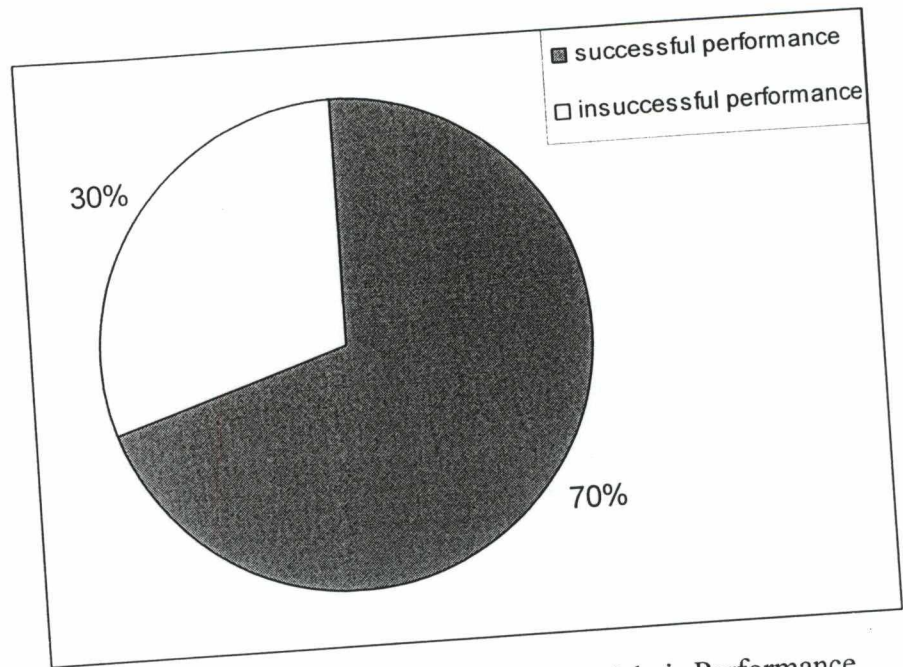
Guessing from context	Before training		After training	
	Good performance	Poor performance	Good performance	Poor performance
Percentage %.	30%	70%	65%	35%

Table 3.3: Learners' performance in 'Guessing from context' before and after strategy instruction.



Bar-graph 3.3: Good and poor performance in 'Guessing from context' before and after strategy training.

The third vocabulary-building strategy, namely 'word structure analysis', consists in the ability to make derivations and to split the word into three parts i.e., prefix, stem and suffix. In this area, twenty eight out of the forty subjects, i.e. 70% have successfully performed the strategy. However, the ones who have poorly performed the task, i.e., 30% of the informants still do not grasp the meaning of frequently used stems and affixes.

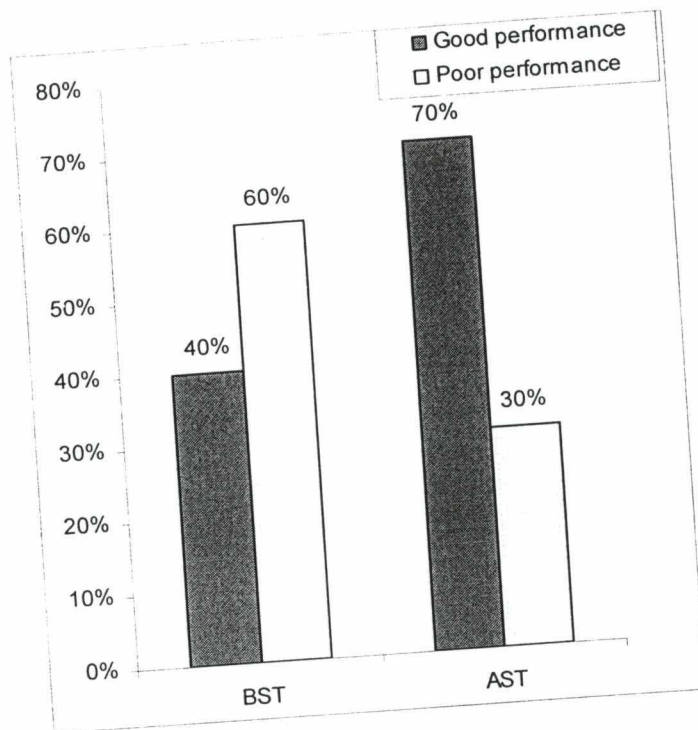


Pie-Chart 3-3: Learners' percentages of their Performance in 'word-structure analysis' after strategy instruction.

Consequently, and if compared with the two preceding strategies, statistical results suggest that learners made progress after strategy instruction when compared to the pre-training phase results for this strategy as it is shown in Table 3.4. and Bar-Graph 3.4.

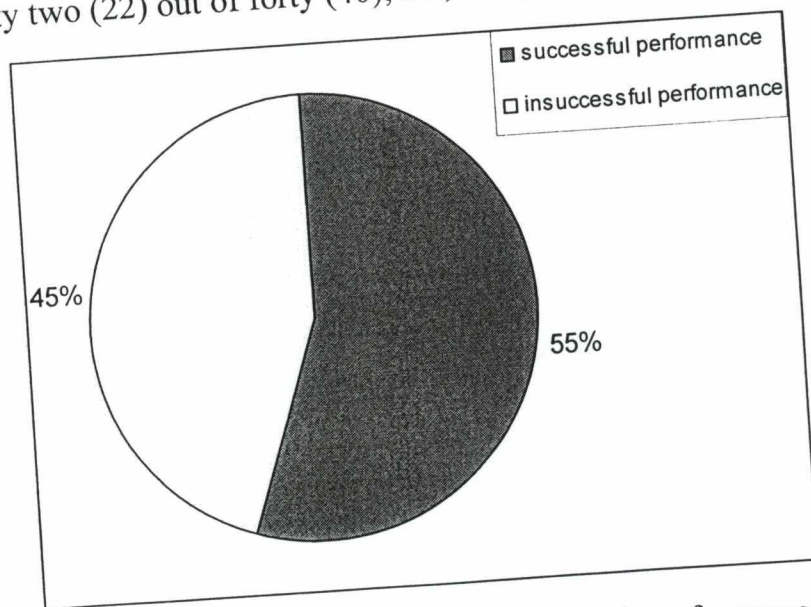
Word-Structure Analysis	Before training		After training	
	Good performance	Poor performance	Good performance	Poor performance
Percentage %.	40%	60%	70%	30%

Table 3.4: Learners' performance in 'word-structure analysis' before and after strategy instruction.



Bar-Graph 3.4: Good and poor performance in 'Word-structure analyses before and after strategy training.

Fourth and last, for the remaining vocabulary strategies, i.e., using dictionaries, a remarkable improvement is noticed among learners. Half of the group under investigation has succeeded in using the dictionary (statistically speaking, twenty two (22) out of forty (40); i.e., 55%).

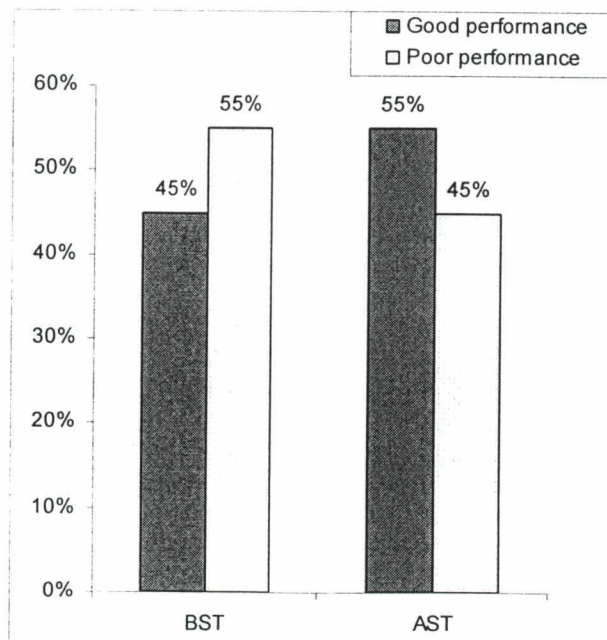


Pie-Chart 3-4: Learners' percentages of their performance in 'dictionary use' after strategy instruction.

A remarkable progress in applying this strategy can be observed. This may be explained by the learners' raising awareness to the importance of dictionaries, namely monolingual ones, in vocabulary development in particular, and language learning in general.

Dictionary use	Before training		After training	
	Good performance	Poor performance	Good performance	Poor performance
Percentage %.	45%	55%	55%	45%

Table 3.5: Learners' performance in 'dictionary use' before and after strategy instruction.

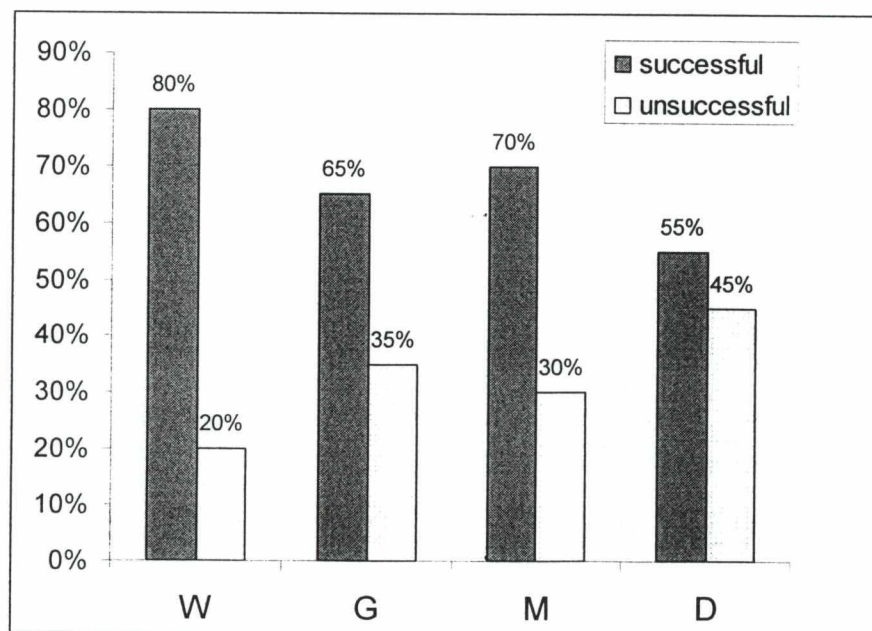


Bar –Graph 3.5: Good and poor performance in 'dictionary use' before and after strategy training.

All in all, one would be tempted to conclude on the bases of the results obtained out of the learners' performance in each vocabulary-building strategy, that there has been a better understanding and application of the majority of those strategies by the informants. The results of the post-training phase, concerning the four vocabulary-building strategies, have made it possible to draw the following table in order to show the learners' progress after strategy instruction

Vocabulary-building strategies.	Performance			
	successful		unsuccessful	
	number	%	number	%
Wordlist.	35	80%	5	20%
Guessing from context.	26	65%	14	35%
Word-structure analysis.	28	70%	12	30%
Dictionary use.	22	55%	18	45%

Table 3.6: Vocabulary-building strategies scores after strategy instruction.



Bar-Graph 3-6: Percentages of the learners' vocabulary performance after strategy instruction.



**Key to Bar-Graph 3.6.**

W.....Wordlist

G.....Guessing from context using context clues

M.....Morphological processes

D.....Dictionary use

On the whole, it has been clearly noticed that most of the learners realised the efficiency and usefulness of those vocabulary-building strategies to approach a given reading text. Furthermore, learners are better able to perceive the difference between their reading behaviours before and after strategy instruction. They concentrate more and feel much more self-confident. This is why their role as readers is no longer seen as a vague behaviour. All that, points to the increase of their awareness of the reading process.

**3.4. Interpretation and Discussion of the Results:**

The results obtained from the data collection and discussed in the above sections seem to answer the research questions and confirm the stated hypotheses. Indeed, as far as the first question of the present work is concerned, in that whether learners' reading difficulties are of a language or of a reading nature, results suggest the following : learners have difficulties that are more of a language nature, related to their lack of a sound vocabulary base as well as a lack of awareness of the importance of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension since a limited lexical knowledge discourages reading and, simultaneously, a lack of reading restricts vocabulary growth (Coady, 1997). This confirms hypothesis one of the research.

Indeed, results yielded by the pre-training phase data collection have answered the second question of the research, which is whether learners are equipped with any vocabulary building strategy or not. As a matter of fact, before learners have received strategy instruction, they display ineffective vocabulary strategies, such as ineffective use of dictionaries, inability to guess

from context using context clues, a limited use of wordlist, etc. Therefore, they have poorly performed, in their majority, on the reading proficiency test. Indeed, analyses of the results obtained from the reading proficiency test suggest that learners show a limited awareness of vocabulary-building strategies. A result that may be due to a poor linguistic background; especially in relation to their secondary school instruction, and a poor and limited vocabulary stock.

Those results lead us to investigate the last question of the research work. In that, whether awareness-raising, through a direct instruction in some vocabulary-building strategies would contribute to learners' better achievements in both vocabulary and reading. Accordingly, results of the post-training test suggest that the hypothesis may be confirmed (See Table 3.6 and Bar-Graph 3.6). As it can be noticed in the table and bar-graph in question, the percentages of learners' good performance have increased after strategy instruction as compared to their performance before. Thus, there is much statistical support for the research general questions.

### **3.5. CONCLUSION:**

This chapter has concentrated on learners' use and awareness of some vocabulary-building strategies and their availability to promote reading comprehension. Thus, it has been an attempt to put into practice some of the suggested strategies so as to constitute the basis of a solid lexical background needed for reading comprehension activities.

The data are analysed and some interpretations are drawn from the information collected. The collected data, specifically from the students' questionnaire, have displayed a poor reading ability due to the unawareness of the suitable vocabulary strategies and word-attack skills. This is why direct vocabulary training in those strategies will hopefully

try to remedy the learners' difficulties to be able to read with pleasure, interest and ultimately with full understanding.

On the light of what has been said, some suggestions will be outlined in the next chapter. Indeed, some vocabulary activities will be given to bridge the gaps, which EFL learners are seeking to overcome. Even more, recommendations will be exposed related to how can vocabulary learning/ teaching be improved and developed in order to facilitate reading comprehension and to iron out learners' reading difficulties in this area.

**NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE**

1. The reading proficiency test text and questions are adapted from Alexander L.G.'s *Developing Skills*.
2. The strategy training sessions have been presented to learners in the beginning of the academic year 2005-2006. They may in no way be themselves the Reading Comprehension course. These were extra hours given to those students in order to complete the strategy instruction.
3. Learners have been asked to answer the questions, but they have been encouraged to extend their ideas and further express any detail that seemed important for them.
4. Some students have an English language learning experience of ten (10) years because they have begun studying English in the Primary School, differently from the majority of students who have begun in the Middle School. It should be added that there has been an attempt to introduce English as a first foreign language in the fundamental cycle (fourth year of Foundation School) to displace the French language. In 1993-94, it was implemented in very few classes. Unfortunately, and despite encouraging and promising results, the experiment ended in the academic year 2000-2001.
5. Research shows that learners' early experiences with reading are an important determinant of their reading status at later stages, (Siegel, 1993).
6. This presupposes that the students read without paying attention to details. The aim is to have students read, without hesitations, length texts and thus expose them to the target language (English in this case).
7. The teacher may intervene with strategy instruction, either to develop the good learners' own strategies, or to help the poor ones learn new ones.
8. This is an intensive language practice exercise to establish habits through repetition. There are different types of drills: chain drill, integration drill, mutation drill, repetition drill, pronunciation drill, replacement drill, and transformation drill.
9. According to Allport (1994), an attitude is a mental state of readiness organized through experience exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related. Some of the informants, in this research work, approach the foreign language with excitement and enthusiasm manifesting, therefore, a willingness and eagerness to learn that language.

**CHAPTER FOUR : SUGGESTIONS AND  
PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **SUGGESTIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

#### **4.2. Advanced Students and Their Needs**

#### **4.3. Developing Motivation for Reading.**

#### **4.4. Developing Fluency.**

#### **4.5. Group Work and Task-based Learning.**

#### **4.6. Longing for Learners' Autonomy.**

#### **4.7. Promoting Extensive Reading and Building Reading culture.**

4.7.1. Encouraging Good Reading Culture in English

4.7.2. Extensive Reading: a Way to Increase Vocabulary Size.

#### **4.8. Integrating Language Skills to Reading.**

#### **4.9. Ways of Integrating New Technology in the Classroom.**

4.9.1. Using Video in Teaching Vocabulary.

4.9.2. Technological Support of the Internet-based Activities.

#### **4.10. Developing and Extending Word Recognition and Comprehension Skills.**

#### **4.11. The Development of Morphological Strategic Analysis.**

4.11.1. Building and Developing Basic Vocabulary for Reading.

4.11.2. Teaching Some Word -Attack Skills and Strategies for Extending Word Recognition.

- i) Using Context – Clues.
- ii) Morphological Analysis.
- iii) Contextual Guessing and Inferring
- iv) Skillful Use of Different Types of Dictionaries.

#### **4.12. Practical Suggestions.**

- 4.12.1. Types of Texts: The Importance of Text Selection.
- 4.12.2. Types of Activities.
- 4.12.3. Other Useful Techniques to Improve Vocabulary Knowledge.

#### **4.13. Recommendations.**

- 4.13.1. Teachers' Role.
- 4.13.2. Learners' Role.

#### **4.14. Conclusion.**

#### **Notes to Chapter Four**

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SUGGESTIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

#### 4.1. Introduction :

This chapter will be devoted to presenting some suggestions and their pedagogical implications as remedial work that would cater for the learners' deficiencies in the Reading Comprehension module. The aim is to help learners overcome their barriers in both reading and vocabulary tasks. Therefore, awareness-raising about the reading process and vocabulary knowledge, and the range of possible vocabulary strategies that may be used to enhance reading comprehension are viewed as essential for both teachers and learners. Furthermore, some word-attack skills have been proposed; namely using context clues, morphological analysis, contextual guessing and inferring, and the skillful use of dictionaries (mainly monolingual/bilingual dictionaries) that may contribute to foster learners' reading fluency, vocabulary knowledge and autonomy. Finally, other practical suggestions are given, as to the choice of the reading material to be used and the selection of some activities and other useful techniques to improve reading and vocabulary knowledge. It is hoped that the suggested activities and their pedagogical implications would meet some of the learners' needs.

#### 4.2. Advanced Students and Their Needs.

Enhancing reading ability and increasing vocabulary knowledge is a basic part of the process of education, both as a means and as an end. Lack of adequate vocabulary knowledge needed for reading comprehension is already an obvious obstacle for many first-year English university students. Advanced learners can generally communicate well, bearing in mind that they already master the basic structures of the language. However, they need to broaden their vocabulary stock to express themselves more clearly and appropriately in a wide range of situations, and ultimately to read English materials with full



understanding. Students might even have a receptive knowledge of a wider range of vocabulary, which means they can sometimes recognize the item. Nevertheless, their productive use of a wide range of vocabulary is normally limited, and this is one of the areas that need greater attention.

At this stage, the researcher is concerned not only with students understanding and recognising meanings of words, but also being able to use them appropriately in order to enhance reading ability. For this reason, teachers have to provide learners with an adequate instruction in some vocabulary strategies, and inform them about the value of some word-attack skills or word recognition in order to make learners skilled, effective and autonomous readers (See 3.2.2.). Therefore, determining learners' needs in terms of vocabulary techniques needed for a good and systematic reading ability may be undertaken by a reading comprehension teacher even after the training or instruction is completed. The learners, then, may select the ones that may best suit them and would work for them. In addition, learners need to be encouraged to self-assess their own progress; difficulties ...etc, and hence develop their reading ability and learning autonomy<sup>1</sup>. Finally, reading and vocabulary strategies are vitally important, but these should be understood and learned by students as flexible tools for meeting their needs and developing their motivation.

### **4.3. Developing Motivation for Reading.**

A serious problem that can confront EFL instructors in reading comprehension courses is the relative lack of reading motivation shown by some learners. Learners who have no desire and no intrinsic interest in reading in a second/foreign language are less likely to engage in independent review of previously met new lexis. On the other hand, learners with positive attitudes toward reading in L<sub>2</sub> are motivated and then have the satisfaction of autonomous reading, which may become a habit, (Day and Bamford, 1998). Consequently, it is important to identify the factors that may increase

motivation for reading. It is clear that motivation, strategy-use and enjoyment are good predictors of reading ability since it is suggested that wider reading is associated with higher reading vocabulary and comprehension as well as a great degree of motivation.

Furthermore, studies on reading motivation have found that access to reading materials has an important influence on the amount students read. All students have interests and preferences, and affording students opportunities to read according to their preferences is likely to increase their motivation. Indeed, social motivation seems essential for reading if students are given the opportunity to read in groups and share texts in many social situations. Similarly, interaction among peers in a social milieu contributes to motivational development.

When students participate in a learning community, they deepen their culturally relevant interests, and acquire social participation norms that enable them to function effectively in groups and to widen their vocabulary stock; especially during a vocabulary instruction. In this context, the most important factor in a successful vocabulary-building programme is motivation. It will be very difficult for students to study words month after month without a strong feeling that it is worth doing so.

#### **4.4. Developing Fluency:**

Research in the field of foreign language teaching/learning has demonstrated that frequency of occurrence is an essential feature of fluency development. (Dekeyser, 2001). Thus, throughout the repeated processing of texts, students develop the capacity for rapidly, accurately, and automatically recognising an increasing large store of words which results in fluent reading. Fluency<sup>2</sup> can be defined as “*Freedom from word identification problems that might hinder comprehension in silent reading or the expression of ideas in oral reading or automaticity*” (Harris & Hodges, 1995:75).

Two essential aspects of fluency are accuracy (freedom from word identification problems) and rapid, effortless decoding (automaticity). Fluent silent reading is critical for effective comprehension and learning as well as to the ability to read for pleasure. Fluency of word identification is not sufficient for reading comprehension; it is rather a pre-requisite. Indeed, all major research syntheses on the topic of fluency stress the importance of much practice in reading as the vehicle for achieving fluency. Guided and repeated reading activities are an important means to fluency development. Fluency does not develop from isolated word recognition practice and study, but from reading in which words are embedded in a meaningful context, for example short stories, novels newspapers articles and so on. As such, the development of rapid lexical access requires that learners meet and use vocabulary frequently in a variety of communicative contexts.

Several options are available to develop more fluent lexical access. First, a core topic can be explored through a variety of integrated tasks, such as reading, discussing a topic, and responding to the text through writing tasks. Second, instructional techniques such as intensive reading under the teacher supervision in the class can contribute to enhanced levels of lexical access and reading fluency. Because the evidence supporting the importance of fluency for reading comprehension is so strong, teachers should regularly evaluate students' fluency. In this context Snow *et. al.* advocate the idea that: ***"Because the ability to obtain meaning from print depends so strongly on the development of word recognition accuracy and reading fluency, both should be regularly assessed in the classroom"*** (Snow et.al.199: 7).

To conclude, nonfluent word recognition results in unrewarding reading experiences that lead to less involvement in reading. Similarly, nonfluent reading leads to a continued failure to develop automatic word recognition. All in all, Adams states: ***"More generally, repeated reading of text is found to produce marked improvement in word recognition, fluency and comprehension"***. (Adams, 1990: 153).

#### 4.5. Group Work and Task-Based Learning:

A good way in which new vocabulary and reading strategies can be acquired is when learners negotiate the meaning of unfamiliar lexis during in-class discussions. During such activities, negotiation may be valuable particularly for lower proficiency learners, since negotiation through group work can lead to vocabulary gains for both those who initiate the negotiation sequence and those who simply listen to the exchange (Ellis *et.al.*, 1994; Newton, 1995).

Indeed, working in groups help foster learning autonomy, and especially in vocabulary work, learners can exchange knowledge asking others to explain unfamiliar items. Group work is also a motivating factor, as students talk about places they have been on holiday to, trying to remember details, exchanging impressions and even good memories. Moreover, group work is very important because learners do not rely too much on the teacher's assistance. Learners should try to co-operate, share and exchange knowledge with their peers who are clever than them. Through this co-operation the learners, little by little, acquire learning strategies, and hence achieve gradual autonomy. Hence, peer and group work has a major role in sharing and exchanging knowledge and experiences between students.

After forming groups, the teacher, then, selects an authentic text that has a limited number of new words and arrange for numerous opportunities for independent reading, taking into account the learners' age and interests. Logically, production will depend on motivation, and this is what teachers should aim at promoting, making use of their awareness of students' needs and preferences. In task-based learning, teachers should provide authentic, meaningful tasks in which students engage to achieve a concrete output, using appropriate language for the context.

It must be noted that the learners themselves can do the selection of the topic since they are expected to be autonomous responsible learners (See 4.6). Students should enhance their autonomy for the expansion of reading and

vocabulary skills. Here, students' motivation plays a crucial role. (See 4.3.). This motivation can be provided by having the student read with the aim of solving a problem, giving a judgement or opinion, making an evaluation or other reflections closely related to the reading skill. Moreover, it is important to have much reading for pleasure, 'reading for the sake of reading', which is not tested at all, that is reading to develop confidence in reading and establish a reading culture (See 4.7.1). As learners adopt such techniques, they can become more autonomous and can actively enlarge their vocabulary and enhance their reading in English.

#### **4.6. Longing for Learners' Autonomy:**

A greater emphasis will need to be placed on training and requiring learners to be responsible for implementing techniques presented by teachers regularly reviewing target lexis, and monitoring their own learning. In this sense, teachers who view language learning as an individualized process encourage their learners to be autonomous. Others go a step further and expose their learners to co-operative learning in the classroom. In a paper entitled "*the Ethnography of Autonomy*", Riley (1988) refers to the importance of group creation, group sharing and negotiation: the readers' independence from the classroom teacher encourages autonomy in the reading process. Learners should be able to move to the stage of "*independent reading*".

Indeed, reading can be seen as a learning skill; a skill that allows learning to be more effective. Systematic reading development can, thus, promote learner autonomy. In fact, the extent to which a reading course can be successful is related to the degree of learners' autonomy in reading. This latter would facilitate their studies all along the next three years of the English Degree and even after.

It is to be noted that learners' autonomy starts when learners are more aware of language and their learning. Thus, learners need "to learn how to learn". They also need to be more responsible for their learning and prepare

themselves for future situations that require independent and autonomous use of the reading and vocabulary skills. It is a well-known fact that developing autonomy within learners is a step forward towards individualised learning. By the same token, the key to autonomy is responsibility. The teacher has to allow learners to make choices about what they want to read and to learn in order to build a sound vocabulary base and to inculcate a life-long reading habit on the learners.

#### **4.7. Promoting Extensive Reading and Building Reading Culture**

Reading is the instrument for acquiring life-long learning and reading skills. Success in reading can be achieved if the extensive reading tool is used and promoted as an affective means of inculcating and building reading habits and sustaining creativity and critical thinking about the material to be read. A major question is raised in this context: What should student read? Often, students with very low stock of vocabulary do not enjoy reading at all because they do not understand many of the words in the printed text. The important idea is to find things to read that are interesting for the students, and to read as often and as much as possible with the idea of learning new words always in mind. Even the student with limited reading and comprehension skills will build up vocabulary and thinking skills through reading.

##### **4.7.1. Encouraging Good Reading Cultures in English**

With the text in one hand and the dictionary in the other, students struggling to draw meanings from the text become tired of having endlessly to look up every single word they encounter in the reading passage. Consequently, many of the students appeared to have already built negative views and attitudes towards reading in the target language. Students should feel confident enough to pick up a book, a magazine or newspaper and read it for their amusement and enlightenment, with only occasional resort to a dictionary. In this way, they

are encouraged to read on their own. This would develop their reading habits and increase their self-confidence.

To encourage good and life-long reading habits, it is necessary to give learners a lot of practice with easy texts. A text that is linguistically difficult for a student is unlikely to be suitable for the development of most reading and vocabulary skills. If it is loaded with new vocabulary and complex structures, it is probable that the student will resort to translation; which may slow down the development of the reading process.

Indeed, some students may not read efficiently even in their L<sub>1</sub>. This will be a hindrance to the development of efficient reading habits in the foreign language. What should be given priority to promote reading ability -in English- in our context is:

1. To enhance vocabulary, grammar and discourse knowledge in English;
2. to promote fluency and automaticity;
3. to increase the amount of exposure for reading in English;
4. to relieve students' anxieties and enhance students' motivation for reading

#### **4.7.2. Extensive Reading: A Way to Increase Vocabulary Size**

Extensive reading is arguably the primary way that EFL learners can build up their reading vocabulary to an advanced level. Experts in the field of language development, agree that the main vehicle for instruction should be to encourage students to read extensively<sup>3</sup>. Accordingly, Day and Bamford (1998), claim that extensive reading is the best possible way for students to develop automaticity- that is, the automatic recognition of words when they see them .It is by far the best way to improve their reading skills and to gain enough exposures to vocabulary items.

In extensive reading, learners select and read large amounts of materials that interest them and that are within their level of comprehension. Research studies as those initiated by Day and Bamford (1998) credit extensive reading with improvements in motivation, reading, writing, spelling, vocabulary

growth and reading fluency . Because of these benefits, extensive reading should be implemented early in EFL reading programmes, for the purposes of increasing vocabulary size and developing fluency with familiar vocabulary, (Nation and Wang, 1999); and for the sake of fulfilling the following objectives:

- To make learners practice some word-attack skills and reading strategies learned in the reading course;
- to strengthen learners' reading ability and develop it;
- to help them become more autonomous readers, and
- to develop learners' vocabulary stock and make them experience the language in several forms and contexts.

What is suggested is to use the extensive reading activity at the end of the course. In other terms, after learners show mastery and command of both linguistic forms, reading sub-skills and vocabulary strategies. The extensive reading task may be followed by an oral presentation of the work .Thus, the language skills may be integrated too. Thus, reading the material -which has to be a selection of authentic texts –should be chosen according to students' needs, interests and preferences, writing a small report about it, exposing it orally, and giving the opportunity for others to listen and ask questions. In the following section, ways of integrating language skills, namely the writing skill will be tackled.

#### **4.8. Integrating Language Skills to Reading.**

Common sense dictates that reading cannot be taught in isolation from the other language skills. There is, indeed, a kind of constant interplay between writing, reading, speaking and listening in the reading course, that the teacher has to exploit:



***“It would seem appropriate that reading instruction be taught in a content centred integrated skills curriculum. Content provides learners with motivation and purposeful activities; the integration of skills reinforces learning.”***

(Grabe, 1991:336)

To put it differently, there is a mutual relationship between the four language skills. As a matter of fact, opportunities to practise speaking and listening may be given to learners all along the reading course. As far as writing is concerned, this skill is closely related to reading. Indeed, writing is one of the primary ways in which students are encouraged to process word meanings in an active and generative way. Each week, teachers assign at least five of the vocabulary words for the unit. Writing is, then, an invaluable tool for providing students with opportunities to improve their reading vocabulary.

Furthermore, numerous studies show that, in language learning, reading and writing are interrelated processes (Sakiey and Cagney, 1987), and recent research and pedagogy on integrating reading and writing suggest: *«The facilitating effects of reading practice upon writing practice and of writing practice upon reading skills»*. (Applebee 1977, quoted in Scott and Piazza 1987:32). Thus, various writing activities can be used to aid the teaching of reading in an advanced EFL environment. In this area, the following tasks are suggested:

1. Questions and answers: That is to provide students with questions based on the reading materials. These questions should be stimulating and interesting to the students.
2. Summary: In teaching reading to foreign language students, there are other areas a teacher needs to consider besides the meaning of words, clauses, sentences, etc. The summary writing technique is very useful: the teacher provides learners with a long reading text and asks them to read and to write a 200-250 word summary of it. This activity has a two-fold objective: first, to check learners' comprehension, and second to

make them practice summarizing in its written form which is a cognitive strategy.

3. Book report: A book report is another way in which reading can be combined with a particular writing activity. In the reading course, book report is done as a directed writing activity
4. Writing journals: Another follow up activity is having students keep a journal in which they can write anything they like. For example, writing down words or phrases that can help them understand the reading material.

As a conclusion, it is worth noting that incorporating language skills and particularly writing activities in the reading class actively involve the students in the reading process, and including writing in the reading class shifts the emphasis in learning from product to process and from separate skills to an integrated approach.

#### **4.9. Ways of Integrating New Technology in the Classroom:**

Today, there is a wealth of new technology tools available for use in the classroom: videodisk plays, CD-ROM drives, and computers plus Internet. These new technologies break down classroom walls as never before. With technology we have a new powerful tool that will enable our students to become critical thinkers, problem solvers and producers of useful information products.

##### **4.9.1. Using Video in Teaching Vocabulary:**

Most well-equipped language labs have video as a technical resource. It is possible to incorporate video into many different aspects of language teaching and learning. A series of studies by Gildea et. al. (1990) provides both support and methodology for video use in a language lab setting.

Researchers state that *“pictures [video] improve sentence production for many words”*. (Ibid: p.25). This would indicate that if vocabulary learning is going to be measured by productive use, video is certainly facilitative. Thus, video is a useful part of vocabulary teaching/learning. The following section explains how internet-based activities can be introduced while learning/teaching.

#### **4.9.2. Technological Support of the Internet-based Activities.**

The Internet has become an important tool. Even more, it has become now a major component of the learning process. This is why students should have access to internet. The Internet should be incorporated in schools as well as universities environment since it can offer a wealth of information and unlimited resources that teachers can use in order to expose students to authentic language use. Exposure, however, is not enough to trigger language acquisition. Students need to be involved in tasks that integrate the use of computers and enhance language acquisition. However, EFL students should be guided through their exploration of the internet and helped to carry out projects that will ultimately help them improve their reading and writing skills and enrich their vocabulary.

The uses of the internet and e-mail for teaching English have increased in the recent years. Most language institutions today are equipped with computers, with most of the information on the internet appearing in English, the web offers an abundance of language teaching resources. Furthermore, using the internet is fun. Web sites are full of animation, colours, sounds, pictures, interactive forms and digital video clips adding to the students motivation and enjoyment of the learning process.

Using the internet has become a part of our life and learning how to use it is an essential skill for students. So, through the use of computers and internet, students can develop basic information technology (IT) skills (e.g. word processing skills, web-browsing skills, etc.) and learn English at the same time as well as foreign cultures (Muehleisen 1997).

Moreover, using the internet for EFL enhances students' autonomy (Warschauer, Turbee *et. al.* 1994) and gives learners the opportunity to manage their own learning. Students can continue using the internet and be exposed to English even outside the classroom, making learning English an on-going process. However, learners should be guided on how to use the web and learn English at the same time. Frizler (1995) exclaims: "*Teachers must create interactive activities, which involve WWW. For examples, can also work in pairs or groups to do research projects via WWW*".

(Frizler, 1995:55)

Therefore, there is a need for teachers' assistance and materials that will guide students as they surf the internet and give them direction and motivation to complete the task (Yang, 1998). Students can, also, utilise web sites not only as resources of information and task-based reading, but also to initiate communication and discussion (Magoto, 1995). Finally, the use of the internet must have a pedagogical focus that is clear not only to the teacher, but the students as well. Students, however, should not be burdened with complicated and unnecessary computer tasks.

#### **4.10. Developing and Extending Word Recognition and Comprehension Skills:**

Comprehension is dependent upon the reader's word-processing skills. In other terms, it is aided when students can identify words quickly and accurately. Thus, automaticity in word recognition is a significant strategy in comprehension, especially when students can decode most of the words. The reading comprehension of even skilled readers is likely to be disturbed if most of the words are not recognized or if they are not identified accurately and rapidly. Hence, accuracy and fluency in word recognition are clearly essential to reading comprehension. (Pany and McCoy, 1988). Reading, therefore, is seen as a word-recognition process. It should be obvious that comprehension will not be very effective if the reader has not mastered word identification

and recognition. Comprehension does depend upon fluent and accurate word recognition and word recognition is necessary for comprehension to occur because:

*“as automaticity in word recognition develops students read faster and have greater opportunity to gain meaning from the text. Difficulty in recognizing individual words hampers the ability to gain meaning from the text... Thus, accuracy alone is not enough; accurate word recognition must be completed rapidly for fluency to occur”.*

(Stricker et.al. 1998: 299)

It is clear, therefore, that one of the aspects of reading is the development of automaticity in word recognition (Eskey and Grabe, 1988). What is more, and as stated by Paran: *“Automatic word recognition is indeed a major attribute of the L<sub>2</sub> reader’s reading behaviour”.* (Paran, 1996: 30). Hence, reduced automaticity in word recognition leads to reading comprehension deficiencies. Indeed, word recognition instruction is an efficient way of not only developing automaticity in word identification, but also improving attitudes in foreign language reading in the language classroom. Moreover, the training of students in this skill appears to affect their success in learning the English language in general. Whenever possible, teachers should set aside a time for providing the learners with word recognition exercises, especially to those poor readers who are often found to have deficiencies in fluent reading and hence a poor understanding of the text. Word recognition exercises would help learners improve their level of reading fluency, and consequently encourage them to read more, thereby breaking the vicious circle in which weak readers tend to be trapped. They do not enjoy reading because they do not understand, and because they do not understand, they do not read.

After students’ instruction in some word recognition strategies, we suggest that word recognition skill development was an effective and pleasurable way for students to develop a positive attitude towards reading in English. Results indicate, for example, that as a result of undertaking the

instruction and exercises in vocabulary-building strategies, several students who have had negative attitudes toward reading can become more positive learners of English and more fluent readers of English materials.

#### **4.11. The Development of Morphological Strategic Analysis:**

Knowledge of morphology can contribute to expanding and elaborating learners' vocabulary knowledge. Indeed, learners who are familiar with English morphology are able to recognize more of the words that they encounter in reading passages (Mochizuki and Aizawa, 2000; Schmitt and Meara, 1997). Thus, morphological awareness plays a significant role in reading ability (Carlishe, 1995, Nagy *et al*, 1993). Moreover, empirical evidence suggests that explicit training is required for learners to expand their knowledge of morphology as EFL learners who know a base form (e.g., simple) do not necessarily require other forms of the word (e.g., simplify) (Schmitt and Meara, 1997).

Teachers should introduce inflectional suffixes early in the language programme. However, caution may be called for when introducing derivatives, particularly for lower proficiency EFL learners with small vocabularies, because they are more likely to be misinterpreted. Therefore, deficiencies in sight vocabulary and the students' miscues in reading words are often the direct consequence of an inability to handle morphemic cues.

##### **4.11.1. Building and Developing Basic Vocabulary for Reading:**

Building an adequate vocabulary usually comes slowly. It requires a strong desire to build word power, wide reading, practice in mastering words and using the words in oral and written communication. Most important, it requires a systematic deliberate attempt to develop word power on a daily basis. Every student should know his dictionary well and consider it his most important reference book.

Indeed, distributed or spaced practice, even for a few minutes throughout the day, is a very effective and painless way of building a good vocabulary base. A good predictor of how well foreign language students will learn a new word is the number of times they encounter it. The best predictor, however, is the richness and diversity of meaningful contexts in which they encounter it. One of the ways in which teachers can accomplish this is via cloze, or fill-in-the gaps/blank, sentences. Students are introduced to use each word only once in this activity, which initially presents them with much difficulty. This is especially true when more than one word could fit into a sentence frame. Furthermore, teachers should teach the new vocabulary needed for reading mainly:

1. Important words, those key to understanding the text.
2. Useful words, those that will be used again and again.
3. Difficult words, those that have multiple means or those that may be difficult, such as idioms.
4. Provide instruction that actively involves students with the new vocabulary,
5. Give students opportunities for repeated involvement with the new vocabulary in numerous contexts.
6. Teach word learning strategies or word-attack skills, (See 4.11.2.).
7. Teach the skilful use of dictionaries (See 4.11.2.).
8. How to use other reference aids.
9. How to use word parts: affixes – prefixes and suffixes.
10. How to use context-clues provided in the words and sentences that surround the new word.

Experienced teachers report that knowledge of word roots and stems helps students decipher new words, particularly if they connect the root to a word they know well. All in all, vocabulary instruction should include the following:

1. Vocabulary instruction should be continuous and purposeful.
2. Students should spend considerable time reading a variety of texts, both silently and aloud. They should be taught strategies for learning word meanings independently as they read.
3. Students should also be engaged in active learning of vocabulary through relevant contexts and activities. They should study a minimum of 150 words each semester.
4. Activities should include more than one or two exposures to each word (Kolich, 1988).
5. Mixed method approaches, including semantic mapping<sup>4</sup>, features analysis<sup>5</sup> (Pearson, 1986; Bos *et. al* 1990), keyword method<sup>6</sup> (Mastropieri et al 1990), and different writing activities have been shown to improve vocabulary knowledge.

To conclude, it is undeniable that vocabulary development is one the most crucial points in order to enhance reading ability. Learners need to master different vocabulary skills, what Nuttal (1982) calls, ' *word-attack skills*' which are essential for an effective reading. This will be well explained in the following section.

#### **4.11.2. Teaching Some Word-Attack Skills and Strategies for Extending Word Recognition:**

Teachers must prioritize which types of vocabulary knowledge will receive an explicit emphasis at different stages in the curriculum, because when reading English materials, the majority of first-year English university students face a major problem: being unable to determine the meaning of (a) word(s), and thus being unable to understand the overall meaning of the text. To help them cope with this problem and read English material comprehensively, students should learn and practice vocabulary recognition activities. Consequently, learning how to deal with unfamiliar vocabulary may be a way to overcome a number of learners' which could be minimized by



looking in the context for clues to its general sense, identifying its grammatical category, studying its morphological information, guessing the unknown words, in addition to learning the skilful use of different types of dictionaries in order to establish some form of leeway. These listed above strategies represent the core of the following section:

*i) Using Context Clues:*

The student should be taught to find the clues: good readers think about the meaning of what they are reading and use their understanding of the surrounding words, sentences, or even paragraphs to help them read and recognize an unfamiliar word. Indeed, the most important skill for determining the meanings of unfamiliar words is the use of context clues. This could be achieved, if the reader has some degree of shared experience with the author and some knowledge of how the language works. The skill in using context-clues is tidely related to the reader's wide vocabulary stock. Indeed, knowledge of the multiple meanings of polysemic words is basic and represents an asset to the comprehension process. Context-clues, therefore, is a direct means for determining the meaning of a word.

*ii) Morphological Analysis:*

It has been noticed that recognizing the formation of words (also called morphology or structural analysis) is the widely used strategy among learners since the skill of word structure -analysis encourages the learners to study prefixes, roots and suffixes, and to use this knowledge to learn new vocabulary following the same pattern accordingly. Indeed, Hill (1998) suggests helping students develop word power by teaching roots and prefixes. Therefore, students should be taught to break down words into small elements: stem, prefix and suffix. They should be introduced to the meanings of frequently used stems and affixes, as in the following table:

Stem	meaning	example
1. act	do	Action, actor, react, transact.
2. loc	place	Allocate, dislocate, locate
3. dic	speak	Dictate, predict, contradict, verdict
4. port	carry	Import, export, transport, porter

Table 4.1. Table representing morphological changes (stem, meaning and examples).

Students need also to be taught to identify and understand the meaning of word parts-roots prefixes and suffixes. For example, begin with simple words such as *play* and *play-ing*, and then move to more complex words like *agree* and *dis-agree-ment*.

Prefixes	meaning	examples
1. auto-	self	Automobile, automatic, autobiography
2. de-	opposite	Deactivate, degrade, deplete, deform
3. in-	not	Inaccurate, inactive, indecisive
4. re-	again	Rewrite, repaint, reappear

Table 4.2. Table representing morphological changes (prefixes, meaning and examples).

The student is, thus, taught to find the meaning of a difficult or unfamiliar word by breaking it into two small elements in order to obtain the meaning of the entire word. All in all, the learners should practice how to use word parts; these include:

\* affixes – prefixes and suffixes e.g.: il – im – un /or: - ment – ity – hood. (e.g. *illegal, impossible, unable, employment, charity and childhood*).

\* base words: words from which other words are formed (e.g. *use, useful, usefulness*).

\* root words: words from other languages that form the original stem of many English words (e.g. *porter, transport, export and import*, from the Latin root “*port*” meaning “*to carry*”).

Concerning activities in this area, teachers can provide learners with numerous tasks:

**Task1:** teachers can ask learners to use the correct prefix, from a long list, to make negative forms of words taken from a text.

**Task2:** teachers can ask learners to fill in the blank with the appropriate suffix or prefix.

**Task3:** teacher may give learners a list of words, and then ask them to classify these words in a table: e.g. “uncountable”

Prefixes	Roots	suffixes
un	count	able

*iii) Contextual Guessing and Inferring:*

In fact, contextual guessing and inferring the meanings of unfamiliar words in context is itself a major avenue of vocabulary growth (Nagy, *et al* 1985; Nagy, *et. al* 1987). However, EFL learners may have difficulty identifying context clues because of their relatively undeveloped vocabularies. Consequently, EFL reading teachers will initially need to provide simplified contexts, focus on the most effective clue types, such as modifying phrases and cause and effect relations, and clearly model and explain how to identify them (Williams, 1986).

Teacher can assist learners by making the words which learners should try to infer before using other sources as well as by providing glosses (Hulstijn, *et al* 1996). Once learners decide that a word is worth guessing, they might follow a five-step procedure like the one proposed by Nation and Caody (1997):

1. Think about the possible meaning of the word from its root, following the morphological processes, i.e. determine the part of speech of the unfamiliar word.
2. Look at the immediate context and simplify it if necessary, since “*words become meaningful because of their relation to other words*” (Kintsch, 1998: 43).
2. Look at the wider context. This entails examining the clause with the Unfamiliar words and its relationship to the surrounding clauses and sentences.
4. Guess the meaning of the unfamiliar words using one’s experience and imagination, or try to infer the meaning from context.
5. Check that the guess is correct: If student fails to obtain the meaning in either of the previous ways, he will, ultimately, have to resort to the dictionary, starting first by using a monolingual one.

Finally, Liu and Nation (1985) suggest practicing this strategy (i.e. guessing and inferring) as a class rather than as individual work. Learners may elaborate through the context of words that may be familiar to them. They may re-read to discover context -clues. They may also make use of imagery to assist comprehension. The following tasks are suggested to be used:

**Task 1:** The teacher provides learners with a number of sentences. He asks them to guess the meaning of some underlined words, and then mention what has helped them to guess, using the following table:

Sentences	Meaning of words	Context that helped me to guess
The athlete was <u>persistent</u> even though he had injuries.	Someone who hangs in there despite difficulties.	This athlete overcomes a bunch of obstacles to succeed

Table 4.3. Practicing the contextual guessing.

**Task 2:** Learners may be provided with a passage on a familiar topic, in which anomalous words are inserted. Learners should spot them when they do not make sense in context.

**Task 3:** Learners are asked to try to guess the meaning of the following idioms from the context.

1. It's midnight. Time to hit the sack.
2. This is just Kid's stuff. I want something challenging!
3. He was down and out for two years, but then he got a job and found a home for himself.

*iv) Skilful Use of Different Types of Dictionaries:*

With increasing interest in effective learning strategies and learner independence, the dictionary has come into focus as an important classroom and personal resource. Therefore, another important study skill learners need is the use of a dictionary. It is one of the most helpful techniques, since it provides the exact meaning of the word in terms of denotations, connotations and other related meanings. Many learners commonly consult the dictionary to check spelling, look up the meaning of unfamiliar words and confirm the meaning of partially known words (Scholfied, 1997). Three types of dictionaries are available-bilingual, monolingual, and bilingualized- and these can be found in either paper or electronic form.

Bilingual dictionaries have been found to result in vocabulary learning (Knight, 1994). Grabe and Stoller have found that using a bilingual dictionary in a consistent and appropriate manner is indeed beneficial for both vocabulary learning and reading development. In the same line of thought, Knight states: "*A bilingual dictionary may be much more likely to help lower proficiency learners in reading comprehension because their lack of vocabulary can be a significant factor in their inability to read*". (Knight, 1994: 32).

Both bilingual and monolingual dictionaries have their unique strengths and weaknesses for developing vocabulary knowledge and reading ability as illustrated in the following tables:

1. *Bilingual dictionaries:*

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learners value them.</li> <li>2. They can improve the reading comprehension of lower proficiency EFL learners.</li> <li>3. They assist vocabulary learning at all levels of proficiency (Hulstijn et al; 1996).</li> <li>4. Their definitions are usually short and relatively easy to understand.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. They may include too little information in their entries.</li> <li>2. They can contribute to an over reliance on one-to-one word translation (Tang, 1997).</li> </ol>

Table 4.4. Strengths and Weaknesses of Bilingual Dictionaries. (Adopted from Hunt *et al.* 2005:35).

2. *Monolingual dictionaries:*

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. They can be used to build and elaborate learners' vocabulary knowledge using up-to-date and reliable sentence examples drawn from corpus data that provide information about meaning, grammar and usage (Harvey and Yuill, 1997)</li> <li>2. They are very essential to build spoken versus written lexis, frequency, collocations and associations.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Their major weakness is that learners must know 2,000 words or more to understand their definitions.</li> <li>2. Some monolingual dictionaries omit multiword items from frequency counts (Kilgarriff, 1997).</li> </ol>

Table 4.5. Strengths and Weaknesses of Monolingual Dictionaries. (Adopted from Hunt *et al.* 2005:36).

Given these strengths and weaknesses, providing access to and training for both bilingual and monolingual dictionaries can enable more EFL learners to reach higher levels of proficiency. Indeed, good quality bilingualized dictionaries, which combine the advantages of bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, may have some advantages in assisting EFL learners. Bilingualized dictionaries essentially do the job of both a bilingual and a monolingual dictionary. Indeed, using bilingualized dictionaries is more efficient than using separate bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, and they are more flexible because beginning and intermediate learners can rely on the L<sub>1</sub> translation and advanced learners can concentrate more on the L<sub>2</sub> part of the entry. (Laufer and Hadar, 1997).

Electronic dictionaries, however, are easier and more convenient to use than printed dictionaries (Laufer and Hill, 2000), and some are packaged with grammar and usage texts as well as thesauruses, which allow learners to search multiple resources. Some offer advanced searches, provide multimedia annotations, such as illustrations and video that assist in reading comprehension and vocabulary learning (Chun and Plass, 1996). Electronic dictionaries frequently allow learners to save and review words and definitions; many provide sound. This is more effective than text alone. Pocked bilingual electronic dictionaries also have the significant advantage of being portable.

Furthermore, students should start using EFL dictionaries as early as possible, from intermediate upwards. With adequate training, dictionaries are an invaluable tool for learners, giving them independence from the teacher. Teachers, however, should model and create regular opportunities for learners to practice effective dictionary use by teaching them to identify the unfamiliar word's part of speech as well as contextual clues, which are necessary for finding the most appropriate dictionary entry. Learners should be helped to use the dictionary effectively by paying attention to the following: when looking up a word in the dictionary, first:

- \* Decide what part of speech it is, i.e. noun, verb, adjective, adverb, etc.
- \* Study its context and the information it gives about it.
- \* Select the meaning that fits the context in the dictionary.
- \* Pay attention to words with multiple meanings, i.e. polysemic words.
- \* Consider the word stress and punctuation, etc.
- \* Read the entire entry for the word because words can have more than one meaning.

Finally, dictionaries are a vital tool for advanced learners, and so is contextual guessing, which play a major role in systematically developing the learners' vocabulary knowledge and hence reading ability.

#### **4.12. Practical Suggestions:**

In this section, suggestions of a more practical nature are given, as to the choice of the reading material to be used and the selection of some reading activities; which teachers should provide learners with when dealing with a particular text.

##### **4.12.1. Types of Texts: The Importance of Text Selection:**

Reading educators and researchers have always considered the major role that reading material itself plays in reading and vocabulary fluency development. They have documented the importance of practice in manageable texts, texts that 'fit' the reading level of the student, for the development of reading ability and vocabulary knowledge.

Moreover, it is often assumed that using authentic and simplified texts that are adequate to the students' level of cognitive functioning, is more appropriate for reading comprehension courses at advanced levels. In addition to this, the choice of texts is primarily the task of experienced teachers, but this has to be done in accordance with learners' profiles too. Consequently,



learners may be asked to bring their own contribution to the task. It is important to consider some criteria for text selection as follows:

1. The linguistic complexity: the language level of the text should be suited to the students' linguistic competence, i.e. they are to be lexically and grammatically within their reach. Extensive reading should also be easy enough for students' current level of English proficiency to allow them to learn new grammatical structures and vocabulary and develop other related skills.
2. The material should appeal to the students who are to read it. To put it another way, there should be a variety in the choice of texts and topics across a series of lessons so that all learners' interests and motivation will be catered for in the end. As an example, a selection of texts dealing with geography of the U.K. countries may be introduced instead of those texts dealing with uninterested topics.
3. The material should not be too heavily culture-laden or carry too many assumptions unknown to the students.
4. Before tackling a text, students should clearly keep in mind why they are going to read it, so that they can adopt the most suitable strategy.
5. Materials should include text-books, video and audiotapes, computer software and visual aids since they influence the content and procedures of learning; these are becoming easier to obtain.

### **4.12.2. Types of Activities:**

In view of what has been said in the previous sections. A variety of reading activities may be used to reinforce vocabulary development, since systematic vocabulary building is inevitable if students are to become fluent readers. Moreover, advanced ability in reading English as a foreign language requires improvement in vocabulary recognition and reading comprehension. Therefore, the following techniques and exercises can be suggested as a means to increase vocabulary-knowledge.

First, concerning vocabulary in context, or the use of context clues, the students are given small passages on a familiar topic; the teacher chooses a list of words from these passages and asks students to find the most suitable synonym for each word. For example, "A dynamic person can keep Washington affairs from becoming boring. Often, though his activity, he can become well-known in a short time." The most suitable synonym for the word *dynamic* is:

- |             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| - powerless | - forceful |
| - athletic  | - cheerful |

In this type of activity related to guessing from context, learners may be provided with sentences with a gap to fill as it is shown in the examples below:

1. ... rained all day yesterday.
2. A .... year has 366 days.
3. Close all the windows and turn ... the lights before leaving the house.
4. ... matter what he says, it won't help us.
5. I have been ... for a cab for half an hour. Are the drivers on a strike?

For activities related to morphological analysis, the following activities may be used:

**Task 1:** Negative prefixes: The learners are provided with a list of negative prefixes, then, they are asked to use the correct prefix to make negative forms of some words in sentences. E.g. Use the correct prefix from this list (dis-, im-, in-, mis-, un-) to make negative forms of the following words:

1. He always .....connects the wires.
2. She always .....pronounces the words.
3. His work is completely .....satisfactory.

**Task 2:** The learners are asked to fill the blank with the proper negative prefix.



As far as vocabulary cards and wordlist are concerned, the tasks that follow are suggested to be used:

**Task 1:** As a supplemented activity, teachers can introduce vocabulary cards as an efficient way to speed up the initial process of lexical acquisition. Many teachers value the explicit study of vocabulary and vocabulary cards which are a potentially self-initiating activity that can promote autonomy. Vocabulary cards are also invaluable in consolidating initial gains because of their portability, ease of use and the number of communicative activities in which they can be used, as well as their potential for increasing student motivation. For example, after initially meeting a number of new words, learners could review the items the next day, then two days later, then one week later, and so on.

**Task 2:** As stated above, as a complementary aspect are the tasks and activities. When designing the task, words that the teacher hopes the students will learn should be incorporated into the list of features because they are more likely to receive more attention than words in the introduction. For example, *zenith, conservative, autonomy, abstinence*, etc.

Finally, word identification activities are also suggested through the tasks below:

**Task 1:** Learners are provided with many sentences with underlined words and asked:

- a) Select among the following words, the one that is closest in meaning to the underlined one.
- b) Justify your choice.

E.g. The cure for alcoholism is complete abstinence from alcohol.

a- absence      b- avoidance      c- sickness      d- prescription

**Task 2:** Learners are asked to read a passage and underline the difficult words or unfamiliar vocabulary. Then, they have to complete the following table:

Word	Grammatical category	Context	Probable meaning

**Task 3:** Learners are asked about some commonly confused words. They are asked to fill in the gaps with the appropriate word as shown in the following examples:

1. The ... of the propellers could be heard for many miles.
  - a. were
  - b. where
  - c. whir
2. The ... of the ship is at the front.
  - a. bough
  - b. bow
3. The ... of the story is never trust a stranger.
  - a. moral
  - b. morale

To conclude, these are some of the reading and vocabulary activities that may be used in the reading comprehension course to develop learners' vocabulary strategies and techniques needed for an effective reading. Other useful techniques to improve vocabulary knowledge development will be tackled in the following section.

#### **4.12.3. Other Useful Techniques to Improve Vocabulary Knowledge.**

It is important to teach EFL students some instructional strategies concerning vocabulary techniques which are basic for EFL readers. Among these:

1. **Explicit instruction**, e.g. explanations of definitions, instruction about strategies to attack unfamiliar words using prefixes, suffixes or roots, or pre-teaching vocabulary before reading.
2. **Implicit instructions**, e.g. exposure to a wide range of reading materials.
3. **Multimedia methods**, e.g. inclusion of semantic maps or other kinds of graphic displays.

4. *Capacity methods*, e.g. opportunities for learners to make connections between what they know and the words they encounter that they don't know. (Adapted from the National Reading Panel, 2000).

It is also suggested to help EFL readers learn vocabulary by the following directions:

- \* Select a text that has a limited number of new words,
- \* arrange for numerous opportunities for independent reading.
- \* teach new vocabulary so that it is pronounceable and repeatable and draws on students' knowledge of English sound-symbol relationships, spelling, morphology, word formation, and grammar.
- \* Include synonyms, multiple meanings, and cognates as part of instruction.
- \* Include "school language" in vocabulary instruction, e.g. predict, explain, classify, compare and summarize. (Birch, 2000).

Theories about memory claim that unless new words are recycled they will soon be mislaid or forgotten. So it is necessary that teachers create opportunities in the classroom for students to practice what they have 'learnt'. It is also important that this practice is carefully spaced and that students are not overloaded with too many new words at the same time. Another function of recycling is to help students store words in memory effectively. This can easily be done by way of "warm-up" activities. For example, the teacher could present a list of disparate words learned in previous lectures and ask students to organize them into different categories. (Adopted from Gairns and Redman, 1986).

All in all, the teachers' role will be to help students identify their reading purposes and the source of reading difficulties, and to monitor the strategies available for overcoming difficulties. Therefore, it is reasonable to determine what roles the teacher of reading comprehension module plays in a reading class, in the following section.

### 4.13. Recommendations:

In this section, some practical recommendations are suggested for both teachers and learners in the process of teaching /learning reading and vocabulary techniques in order to compensate for the reading deficiencies since reading comprehension depends upon fluent word recognition (Samuels: 1988).

#### 4.13.1. Teachers' role:

Reading is both a word-identification process and a comprehension process, and reading requires an integration of these two processes. The teacher must understand these processes, must know how to develop them, must know how to correct and remediate when and where deficiencies occur, and must be able to help students to integrate them.

Nuttall maintains (1982); the reading teacher has two main tasks: first, to provide suitable texts, and second to develop activities that will focus the student's attention on the text. Therefore, the teacher's roles in the reading class should necessarily change. He has no longer the role of absolute holder of knowledge since the way the reading course is viewed, is learner-centred rather than teacher-centred, Nunan (1991).

In this context, teachers should select reading activities and material that motivate and interest students; activities such as group work tasks, activities that would involve the expression of their own points of view and opinions, for example:

- Read and discuss;
  - read and imagine the end;
  - Involve students in the choice of topics, texts and activities;
  - Find words reference;
  - Involve students in gap filling activities;
  - Find words, phrases or expressions closest/ opposite in meaning to ...
- (Adapted from Haoulia, 2002)

Indeed, because each student has his/her own individual learning style, it is important that learners be presented with a variety of strategies from which to choose. These techniques may offer learners the opportunity to become more aware of their individual needs, preferences and learning styles, an important step on the path to become more confident and autonomous learners.

Moreover, and in enabling his/her students to become communicatively competent in reading, the teacher has mainly to be:

1. *A manager/ planner*: This means that he/she must be responsible for students' learning both inside and outside classroom. In order to do this, he/she must know the need and wants of the learners in the reading class. Teachers need to discuss strategies and to device exercises and tasks that will help learners not only to learn specific words, but also to approach vocabulary in different ways.
2. The teacher acts as *a counsellor/ social worker*: she/he should create an atmosphere of friendliness and trust by listening to students, accepting their opinions, and if they have any problem finding ways to solve it. In this way, students will feel relaxed, confident and assured.
3. The teacher is *a supporter*: he/she should promote students' self-reliance to develop their competencies, their autonomy, as well as responsibility. She/he has to focus on the learners-centred approach by enhancing them to play an active role in reading, to develop their autonomy.
4. Last but not least, the teacher is a *monitor*. This involves going around the class while students do their reading activities, in order to observe their performance, listen to them, and give advice when necessary. (Nunan, 1991:54)



In fact, what a reading comprehension teacher should and may do to help students become autonomous readers is:

- a) Provide them with various and suitable texts.
- b) Equip them with the necessary vocabulary skills and strategies to overcome their reading difficulties.
- c) Provide them with activities that will promote their level at word-recognition.
- d) To raise learners' awareness of what they are doing and make them interested in how to do it properly.

If the teacher fulfils these roles in the reading class, learners will become more efficient readers. Learners, however, have not to be too dependent on the teacher; rather, they should be made more responsible for their learning and more aware of their needs and difficulties. Identifying the teacher's roles in the reading class will certainly need to be completed by the identification of the learners' roles too.

#### 4. 13. 2. Learners' Role

It is worth noting that learners, as teachers, have to follow and respect some steps in their learning. For instance, when learners get involved in reading tasks, they should go through different steps so that to achieve the level required by the teacher. These are as follows:

\* First of all, the atmosphere of the classroom must be appropriate so that to raise the learners' awareness about their learning. (Wenden, 1987), Wenden mentioned that without awareness, learners will never be autonomous.

\* Students should work in groups: Group-work is very important because learners do not rely too much on the teachers' assistance. Peer and group-work has a major role in sharing and exchanging knowledge and experience between students. (See 4.5).

\* Another point is that students should not be expected or encouraged to stop whenever they meet a new or rather unfamiliar word. This act must be discouraged.

\* Similarly, students are expected to increase their vocabulary stock by keeping individual note -books in which they copy-down words they wish to remember. These words should be copied down in complete phrases or sentences, i.e. in a meaningful context.

\* Finally, students need to understand what strong readers do when they encounter unknown words. Learners should acquire the “will” to learn new words, to use Nagy's term: “*Skilled readers depend not just on knowing a large number of words, but also on being able to deal effectively with new ones*”. (Nagy et. al, 1994:46)

#### **4. 11. Conclusion:**

In view of what has been suggested and recommended in this chapter, it is interesting to note that the reading skill should be supported by a set of activities as a remedial work, or rather alternative solutions to overcome some of the difficulties that learners usually encounter, namely a limited vocabulary stock, the inappropriate use of dictionaries, and the lack of reading and vocabulary strategies. Concerning teachers, they have to consider learners' needs, their learning styles and strategies. They also have to frame their teaching practices according to the requests of learner-centred education, and collaborative learning and teaching. The fundamental objectives for teachers would be to make EFL learners improve their knowledge in the target language and at the same time enjoy the Reading Comprehension lectures as well as their reading products.

Therefore, the remedial proposals and recommendations are addressed to both teachers and learners. These consist in eliciting the

roles that the teacher is to play to help his/her learners overcome some of their reading weaknesses and difficulties, and roles that learners use to develop their autonomy and responsibility rather than being imprisoned under the teacher's authority. They must develop the ability to read on their own, what is also called building the reading culture through the reinforcement of the learners' background knowledge, the purposeful teaching of vocabulary and grammar, and the explicit teaching of some reading sub-skills.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. Learners were better able to determine their progress in terms of reading English texts. They displayed an awareness of their reading behaviour that they did not show before strategy instruction. Therefore, learners' attitudes towards reading English changed, not only to be more self-directed, but also more autonomous learners.
2. Fluency is the easy flow of native like speech of learners (antonym: accuracy). Brumfit (1981) defines it as "*the ability to communicate spontaneously and effectively*".
3. In this research work, an extensive reading activity was used at the end of the programme. It showed satisfactory results, since it reflected students' understanding and application of the strategy instruction they received earlier.
4. Semantic mapping, i.e., to establish relationships among new and old words by having students brainstorm, categorize, label the categories, and discuss words (concepts) related to a target word.
5. Semantic feature analysis, i.e., to identify whether a class of objects have or do not have identified semantic features, e.g., whether maple, orange, and pine trees have features such as being evergreen, coniferous, and fruit/nut bearing.
6. Keyword method, i.e., to construct a visual image that connects the target word and a familiar, concrete word that shares some common feature. For example, in the word *carlin*, which means *old woman*, the keyword *car* might be used to have the student generate the image of an old woman driving a car. When asked to recall the meaning of *carlin*, the student retrieves car because of its acoustic similarity to *carlin*, and then recalls the visual image and the meaning of *carlin*.

# **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

In the present study, the researcher has been primarily interested in finding some evidence for the strong correlation that exists between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. The researcher has mainly focused on some reading deficiencies and weaknesses that learners usually display when dealing with an English text in the Reading Comprehension module. Accordingly, a case study has been proposed on first-year EFL students at Abou-Bakr Belkaid University, as a means to check the sources through which these difficulties spring.

Raising learners' awareness about vocabulary recognition and word-attack skills have been predicted to be a significant factor contributing to their reading efficiency. Initially, scholars and educators' views about reading and vocabulary learning/ teaching have been collected in the first chapter. The learning/teaching situation analysis and research methodology have been designed in the second one. In this context, it was possible to determine learners' need for a vocabulary instruction in reading comprehension, after the analysis of their profile, needs and reading as well as vocabulary levels. On the whole, and as hypothesized, the problems of poor reading comprehension and lack of a consistent vocabulary knowledge were documented through data collected from standardized tests and questionnaires. Results of analysis of probable cause data indicated that students lack exposure and knowledge of vocabulary and also lack strategies to learn new words. In addition, the informants are equipped with poor, inefficient and limited vocabulary stock.

In fact, results of studies pointed at the positive contribution of a direct vocabulary instruction on learners' successful achievement in reading comprehension. This supports the first claim and confirms the hypothesis that

awareness-raising may help learners develop their vocabulary stock and reading strategies, making it more systematic , and hence more operational .

As a matter of fact, comparison of the results obtained in the third chapter suggested improved performance in reading comprehension after the training. Moreover, learners expressed their satisfaction after the learning of these new strategies, as they were more able to control their reading and overcome their difficulties. A reasonable conclusion, then, was that awareness –raising through strategy training in some vocabulary strategies was beneficial for learners to promote reading development. It may offer a productive alternative for helping them developing their vocabulary stock and using appropriate reading strategies.

To conclude, it is undeniably true that much more empirical research is needed in the area of reading and vocabulary knowledge to document the effects of vocabulary instruction on increasing vocabulary size and enhancing reading abilities. In other words, the present work cannot give a one-for-all solution to the problem, but hopefully aims at reevaluating the learning/teaching of EFL reading skill at the university level with an ultimate goal of making it more fruitful and enjoyable practice for both teachers and learners. Nevertheless, having some evidence about what an effective reading behaviour is, it is to be hoped that unsuccessful readers may benefit from this knowledge.

It would be really beneficial for learners to approach any English reading text autonomously and confidently. As regards teachers and educators, they should shift in their methodology and fulfil new roles of instructional designers rather than knowledge transmitters. They also need to work simultaneously on two fronts: the continued expansion and refinement of students' understanding of ways to enhance lexical acquisition and the effective implementation of this knowledge in the reading classroom.

Finally, the researcher might state that this dissertation is far from being exhaustive. It is still a tentative and modest contribution which needs much elaboration. Indeed, more practice and research need to be done to find out how it can improve the students' level in reading comprehension and the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language. It is hoped that this work will provide a contribution to the work in this field and at the same time stimulate further research in the field of foreign language learning and teaching.



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B/ Secondary Resources

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# **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A

### First- Year EFL University Students' Questionnaire

**Dear Students:**

The following questionnaire aims at collecting information about you and at making your learning easier and our teaching more appropriate to your needs and preferences. You are, therefore, kindly requested to answer the questions, and making comments when necessary. (You can use any language you want)

Thank you for your collaboration.

**1- General Information about the Students:**

1. Age and nationality:
2. Stream of secondary school studies:
3. For how many years have you been studying English now?
4. Is the "Licence d'Anglais" your first choice or is it a computer orientation?

**2- The Students' Needs, Expectations and Preferences:**

5. What is/are your favorite skill (s)?

Listening

Speaking

Reading

Writing

6. Do you regularly read English materials other than the readings assigned in your courses?

Yes

No

If yes, check the type (s) of materials you most often read.

Newspapers

Magazines

Novels

Other

Please, specify.....

7. What are your favorite topics in the Reading Comprehension Courses?

8. Why do you generally read?

To learn new vocabulary

For pleasure

To get information

To make book report

Others

Specify,.....

### **3. The Students' Reading Methods / Strategies:**

9. When you read in English, you are able to:

- Understand the general idea of the text

- Use your previous knowledge and experience to understand the content of the text you are reading.

- Anticipate what will come next in the text.

Others

Specify,.....

10. How do you usually manage to read a passage in English? Do you:

- Rarely translate into your mother tongue and guess from context?

- Translate very often and guess from context?

- Translate and guess from your own knowledge?

- Translate and do not guess?

**4. The Students' Reading Difficulties:**

11. When reading in English, if you don't understand an idea, do you:

- Keep on reading and hope for clarification further on.
- Look up unknown words in a dictionary.
- Give up and stop reading.
- Others  Specify,.....

12. According to you, what are the main difficulties while reading in English?

- Recognizing ambiguous words (vocabulary)
- Getting the sentence's meaning.
- Recognizing the sounds of individual words.
- Grammatical structures.
- Getting the overall meaning of the text.
- The organization of the text.
- Others  specify,.....

**5- The Students' Beliefs About Effective Reading:**

13. When reading in English, the things-you believe- which enhance effective reading are:

- To understand the meaning of every single word.
- To get the overall meaning of the text.
- The grammatical structures.
- To relate the text to what you already know.
- To look up words in a dictionary.
- To focus on the details of the content.

- To be able to guess at word meaning well.

- To read several times.

- Others

Specify,.....

14. What do you suggest to improve one's reading performance in English, and to overcome some of the reading difficulties?.....

.....

.....

## Appendix B

### University Teachers' Questionnaire

**Dear teacher:**

The following questionnaire aims at having an idea about your own assessment of the reading skill teaching and learning at the university level, for first- year students. It also aims at helping your learners to overcome some of their reading difficulties and to become autonomous individual.

For this purpose, you are kindly requested to answer the questions, and give your comments when necessary.

Thank you very much for your collaboration.

1. Teaching experience: number of years .....
2. Modules in charge .....
3. What objectives do you intend to reach in teaching reading comprehension to first -year students?
4. In which skill (s) are your students most involved?

Listening

Speaking

Reading

Writing

5. How would you assess your students' progress in reading?

Good

Average

Weak

6. Do you ask your students to do assignments related to the reading skill?

Yes

No

If yes, how often?

7. What are the main difficulties that face your students while reading an English text?

- Ambiguous words ( vocabulary )
- Grammatical structures
- The organization of the text
- The sounds of individual words
- Others  Please, specify.....

8. According to you, what are the main reasons behind the students' reading weaknesses?

- Difficulty of the reading skill itself?
- Difficulty of the reading passage / text
- Lack of motivation.
- Lack of a reading habit.
- An exposure to an ambiguous vocabulary.
- Lack of time to enhance the students' reading performance.
- Lack of appropriate teaching materials (visual aids, computer labs, course books...)

If others, please specify. ....

9. Do you teach vocabulary during a reading comprehension course?

- Yes  No

If yes, how do you proceed?.....

10. If you were to give a level of vocabulary background to your students, how would you grade them?

- Bad  Average  Good



11. What types of reading materials do you use in class?

Newspapers

Magazines

Novels

Short stories

Articles

Texts

Others, please specify.....

12. What types of reading strategies do you teach to your students in order to overcome their reading weaknesses and enhance their autonomy?.....

13. Relying on your teaching experience, what suggestions would you make to help your learners improve their reading performance in English and develop their vocabulary stock and techniques?.....  
.....

## Appendix C

### Pre-training test and tasks

Text one: Silent Enemies:

Few countries will admit officially that they employ spies. However, from time to time, a spy is caught and the public sometimes gets a glimpse of what is going on behind the political scenes. Spies are rarely shot these days. They are frequently tried and imprisoned. If a spy is important enough, he is sometimes handed back to an enemy country in exchange for an equally important spy whom the enemy have caught. Few people have the opportunity to witness such exchanges, for they are carried out in secret.

One cold winter morning on December 17<sup>th</sup> last year, a small blue car stopped on a bridge in a provincial town in northern Germany. Three men dressed in heavy black coats got out and stood on the bridge. While they waited there, they kept on looking over the side. Fifteen minutes later, a motor-boat sailed past and drew up by the river-bank. Three men got out of the boat and looked up at the bridge. The men on the bridge silently walked down the stone steps leading to the river-bank. No words were spoken when they met the men from the boat. After a while, the motor-boat moved off and three men returned to the bridge. Now, only two of them were wearing black coats. The third was dressed in a light grey jacket. Anyone who had been watching the scene might not have realized that two master spies had been exchanged on that cold winter morning.

(Adapted from L.G. Alexander, Developing skills p.8)

**Task 1:** Read the passage and try to answer the following activity:

In this exercise, you will be asked to explain words and phrases. You may use a phrase to explain a word if necessary. Try to find another word to replace the word or phrase in the passage: *employ; from time to time; gets a glimpse; rarely; frequently; handed; witness.*

**Task 2:** Supply the missing words in the following passage:

Perhaps the.....extraordinary building of the nineteenth century was The Crystal Palace which was built in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851. The Crystal Palace was different.....all other buildings.....the world, for it was made of iron and glass. It was one of the..... (big) building.....all time and a.....of people from.....countries came to see it. A great....goods were sent to the exhibition from various parts of the world. There was also a great.....of machinery on display.

**Task 3:** Supply the missing words in these sentences:

- a- There will be a dance tonight....the Green Park Hotel.
- b- The players.....our team are all.....red shirts.
- c- He returned.....England.....August 10<sup>th</sup>.
- d- I'll meet you.....the corner.....Wednesday.
- e- I always feel tired.....the end of the day.
- f- As soon as he got.....the taxi, he asked the driver to take him....the station.
- g- We'll go for a walk.....the afternoon.

- h- He's incapable.....controlling the class.
- i- He is not interested.....anything outside his work.
- j- I don't want to be involved.....this unpleasant affair.
- k- He failed.....his attempt to reach the top of the mountain.
- l- The surgeon decided to operate.....the patient.
- m- I am not satisfied.....your explanation.
- n- I think someone is knocking.....the door.
- o- His debts amount.....£500.

**Task 4:** *Word formation*: write these sentences again giving the correct opposites of the words in italics:

- a- He was extremely *polite*.
- b- I *agree* with you.
- c- His handwriting is quite *legible*.
- d- This report is *accurate*.
- e- Have you *locked* the door?
- f- Have you learnt these *regular* verbs?

**Task 5:** *Word building*: Study these sentences:

- a- He works hard. He is a hard worker.
- b- He plays the violin. He is a violinist.
- c- He is very careless. I have never seen such carelessness.
- d- Can you explain this? Can you give me an explanation?
- e- He has a responsible position. He has a lot of responsibility.

Note how new words can be formed by adding -er, -ist, -ness, -ion, -ity.

**Task 6:** *Contextual guessing:* Read the following sentences and try to guess the meaning of the underlined words from the context.

- Sentence1: “If a spy is important enough, he is sometimes handed back to an enemy country in exchange for an equally important spy whom the enemy have caught.”
- Sentence2: “Three men dressed in heavy black coats got out and stood on the bridge. While they waited there, they kept on looking over the side.”

## Appendix D

### Post-training test and tasks

Text two: An Unknown Goddess:

Some time ago, an interesting discovery was made by archaeologists on the Aegean island of Kea. An American team explored a temple which stands in an ancient city at one time must have been prosperous, for it enjoyed a high level of civilization. Houses-often three storeys high-were built of stone. They had large rooms with beautifully decorated walls. The city was even equipped with a drainage system, for a great many clay pipes were found beneath the narrow streets.

The temple which the archaeologists explored was used as a place of worship from the fifteenth century B.C. until Roman times. In the most sacred room of the temple, clay fragments of fifteen statues were found. Each of these represented a goddess and had, at one time, been painted. The body of one statue was found among remains dating from the fifteenth century B.C. Its missing head happened to be among remains of the fifth century B.C. This head must have been found in Classical times and carefully preserved. It was very old and precious even then. When the archaeologists reconstructed the fragments, they were amazed to find that the goddess turned out to be a very modern-looking woman. She stood three feet high and her hands rested on her hips. She was wearing a full-length skirt which swept the ground. Despite her great age, she was very graceful indeed, but, so far, the archaeologists have been unable to discover her identity. (Adapted from L.G. Alexander, Developing skills p.16.

**Task 1:** Read the passage and try to answer the following activity:

Give another word or phrase to replace the following words as they are used in the passage: *explored, ancient, prosperous, storeys, beneath, fragments, remains.*

**Task 2:** Look at the following list of words taken from the reading passage, then try to find their definitions in an English monolingual dictionary. Use the words in sentences of your own: *storey, story, worship, and warship.*

**Task 3:** Choose the correct words in the following sentences:

1. (Is) (Does) it worth five pounds?
2. Is this worth (buying) (to buy)?
3. Your car (does) (is) not worth £500.
4. I don't think it is worth (to go) (going) to all that trouble.

**Task 4:** Give opposites of the following words keeping the same roots:

1)adequate		7)tidy	
2)harmful		8)suitable	
3)possible		9)important	
4)efficient		10)fair	
5)valuable		11)harmful	
6)fitting		12)satisfy	

**Task 5:** Read the passage carefully, select all the verbs then, complete the following table:

Verb	Noun	Adjective
explored	exploration	explored

**Task 6:** This task is designed to measure your ability to understand various kinds of reading materials, as well as your ability to understand the meaning and use of words. Therefore, you are to choose the one word or phrase that best keeps the meaning of the original sentence if it substituted for the underlined word or phrase.

1. Chris told us to hand in our term paper next Monday.
  - a. to write our paper by hand
  - b. to submit
  - c. to correct
  - d. to proof-read
2. Professor Wilson is a wonderful teacher but there are too many assignments in his course.
  - a. His marks are always low
  - b. There are too many books to read
  - c. He often gives homework
  - d. There are too many students in his course
3. Since I wanted to buy the new course catalog, I had to put in an order through the store manager.
  - a. The store-manager didn't want to buy it
  - b. the course catalog was out of print
  - c. I had to ask for it to be bought for me



- d. The computer was out of order
4. Did you know it's down to three of us for the job in the library?
- a. The three of us will be working in the library
  - b. There are only three applicants left
  - c. The library only hires three students
  - d. At least three students will be retrained
5. To major in astrophysics you need an extra math course.
- a. to get higher grades in astrophysics
  - b. to specialise in astrophysics
  - c. to finish your astrophysics
  - d. to better understand the astrophysics

## Appendix F

### The Extensive Reading Sheet

Read and then complete the following sheet:

Type of material read:

- short story
- novel
- newspaper or magazine article
- others  please, specify.....

- Title:.....
- Author:.....
- The general idea:.....
- Summary:.....
- Writer's message:.....

\* In case it is an article:

- The author's arguments:.....
- I agree with.....
- I disagree with.....

\* In case it is a short story or novel, it is suggested to answer these questions:

1. What is the story's central theme?
2. Who are the main characters?
3. What is their contribution in the story?
4. What is the author intended message?
5. What symbols can you find in the story?
6. Find a suitable proverb to illustrate the message.
7. Write a short summary of the story.

## Appendix E

**A Word List for a Unit from the Reading is Fame Vocabulary  
intervention (Curtis and Longo, 1997)**

astound	To fill with surprise or sudden wonder
confine	To keep or hold in
elusive	Hard to describe or understand
extinguish	To put out, do away with
longevity	A long duration of life
persistent	Refusing to give up or let go
remote	Far off in place or time
spectacular	Making a very unusual or impressive sight or display
taunt	To insult or ridicule, mock
vital	Having to do with or necessary for life

**This table shows a sample 10- word list from the *FAME* course.**