# جلة علمية محكمة تصدر عز كلية التربية الخمس جامعة المرقب

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## هيئة التحرير

## رئيس هيئة التحرير

د/ صالح حسين الأخضر

## أعضاء هيئة التحرير

- د . ميلود عمار النفر
- د . عبد الله محد الجعكى
  - د . مفتاح محد الشكري
    - د . خالد محد التركى

استشارات فنية وتصميم الغلاف: أ. حسين ميلاد أبو شعالة

المجلة ترحب بما يرد عليها من أبحاث وعلى استعداد لنشرها بعد التحكيم . المجلة تحترم كل الاحترام آراء المحكمين وتعمل بمقتضاها كافة الآراء والأفكار المنشورة تعبر عن آراء أصحابها ولا تتحمل المجلة تبعاتها . يتحمل الباحث مسؤولية الأمانة العلمية وهو المسؤول عما ينشر له . البحوث المقدمة للنشر لا ترد لأصحابها نشرت أو لم تنشر . حقوق الطبع محفوظة للكلية .

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الافتتاحية العدد 8

#### الافتتاحية

من السمات الطيبة الحميدة التي يتميز بها مجتمعنا العربي عامة والليبي خاصة سمة التسامح والتكافل والتعاضد، متأثرين بأخلاق أجدادنا، متبعين لتعاليمَ حثنا عليها ديننا قال تعالى وتعاونوا على البر والتقوى ولكن المجتمعات قد تعتريها الغفلة فيصيبها شيء من الخلل فتنقلب القيم والمفاهيم لديهم، تحل البغضاء محل الحب، والانتقام محل التسامح، فما أحوجنا اليوم أكثر من أي وقت مضى إلى التشبث بهذه الأخلاق النابعة من ديننا الإسلامي.

لقد تقشت ويشكل ملفت للنظر الكراهية والحقد بين أبناء المجتمع، وسرت في دمائهم النفعية الضيقة، والأنانية المقيتة، إن هذه الأخلاق السيئة ليست من سمات مجتمعنا، ولا من تعاليم ديننا، وإنها لمن عوامل الضعف قال تعالى: ﴿ ولا تنازعوا فتقشلوا وتذهب ريحكم ﴾ فالحب والوئام روح القوة والسمو، وهو جوهر الأخلاق والدين، والإنسان المتوازن نفسيا والمتشبع بتعاليم الدين كله تسامح وإحسان، فإن الإناء بما فيه ينضح، يحسن الظن بالآخرين، وبلتمس العذر للمخطئين.

وما الصراعات في المجتمعات الإسلامية عامة والليبي خاصة إلا نتاج هذه الكراهية المصنوعة، والبغض المبثوث، والتنافس غير الشريف، مما يجعلنا فريسة سهلة المنال للأعداء، انتشرت الكراهية حتى أصبحت الكلمات النابية والجارحة تتقاذف بين الناس، والأدهى والأمر أن تنتشر بين بعض طلبة أهل العلم، وعلى منابر العلم والمعرفة، وأصبح دم المسلم يراق صباحا ومساء، ليلا ونهارا، بذنب وبدون ذنب.

لقد تقدمت قضايا هامشية على حساب أخرى جوهرية مصيرية، فأين قضية فلسطين والقدس وما يفعله بأهلها اليهود أعداء الله مما يدور الآن، فعلى أهل العلم الفضل وبخاصة أساتذة الجامعات والباحثين أن يتقدموا الصفوف في الدعوة لنبذ الكراهية وإنعاش بذرة الخير في قلوب الناس، وتعزيز دعائم الحب والوئام . هيئة التحرير

Measuring the receptive and the productive vocabulary sizes of 8 Libyan secondary school students

Mrs. Suad Husen Mawal

Mrs. Aisha Mohammed Ageal

Mrs. Najat Mohammed Jaber

Faculty of Education, Al- Mergib University

#### **Abstract**

Libya is one of the Arab countries that present English asa main subject within the curriculum in primary school, secondary school as well as university, and teaching English in Libyan schools has a long history. However, as there are not any studies that measure the vocabulary size of Libyan students, we do not know their receptive and productive vocabulary size, consequently, we do not know whether their vocabulary knowledge allow them to study in an English environment or not. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the receptive and the productive vocabulary size of Libyan secondary school students, also, it aimed to determine the relationship between receptive and productive vocabulary.

The target participants of this study were 60 students from three different levels in a secondary school. Two kinds of vocabulary tests were used to measure students' vocabulary size, the X-Lex test to measure the receptive vocabulary and the translation test to measure the productive vocabulary. The obtained results of this study showed that Libyan students leave secondary school with a reasonable number of words. The findings also indicated that receptive vocabulary size and productive vocabulary size were almost the same and that any increase in receptive vocabulary leads to an increase in productive vocabulary.

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#### Introduction

It is an indisputable fact that vocabulary is an essential part of any language, because it is the means whereby people can communicate, explain their ideas and express their feelings. According to Wilkins (1972, 111) "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". Therefore vocabulary is regarded by many researchers as an important element in language learning. The 1980s and the 1990s witnessed a great interest in vocabulary learning and teaching (Henriksen, 1999), and there are many studies which addressed the topic of vocabulary, its importance and its size. It is widely accepted that vocabulary is the most essential part in all languages and it is the indicator of the learners' proficiency in all language skills.Meara (1996, 37) writes, "Learners with big vocabularies are more proficient in a wide range of language skills than learners with smaller vocabularies". According to Laufer (1998), examining vocabulary size of second language learners is important in language research and pedagogy, because it assists teachers to decide the amount of teaching which is needed for learners to reach the vocabulary threshold that is necessary for reading and writing comprehension.

Over the last decades, there have been a great number of studies that were conducted in the field of vocabulary acquisition. The main issues in most studies are the meaning of aword or, more specifically, what we count as a word, what we mean by knowing a wordand how many words a learner needs to know in another language. In fact, it has beensuggested that answering these questions will lead to different estimations of vocabularysize. According to Nation&Gu (2007), there are different meanings to the term *word*depending on the method of counting such as tokens, types, lemmas and word families. Also, there are different kinds of word knowledge. It has been believed that vocabulary knowledge

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consists of many levels of knowledge; however, some researchers insist that vocabulary knowledge can be receptive knowledge or productive knowledge. These two terms include all the other aspects of knowing a word such as the knowledge of form, meaning and use.

Estimating vocabulary knowledge that learners have, was the focus of many studies. Some have believed that measuring receptive vocabulary size, which is known as breadth knowledge of vocabulary, is extremely crucial for both native speakers and foreign language learners. This is due to several reasons such as the association between vocabulary size and reading comprehension ability (Read, 2007). Therefore, many studies were carried out to estimate both receptive and productive vocabulary sizes of L2 learners and different kinds of vocabulary tests were developed. However, some believed that productive vocabulary knowledge is more difficult to be estimated than the receptive knowledge. To sum up, in the light of the results ofmost of these studies it seems that receptive vocabulary is larger than productivevocabulary.

#### Literature Review

Some learners believe that learning another language means mastering its vocabulary, but at some point they realize that learning another language requires mastering many other things such as grammar, pronunciation and so on. However, words remain a central concern (Faerchet al, 1984). One of the most important issues that face researchers and teachers is what should be counted as a word. In fact there are many different ways of categorizing a word in a text- as tokens, word type or lemmas; all depends on the purpose for which we are counting (Nation&Gu, 2007).

Nation (2001) states that counting words as tokens means that we count every single word in a text; even when the same word occurs more than one time in the same text we count it as an individual word with its meaning and place. Tokens are sometimes

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called running words. This way of counting is suitable when we count the number of words that are in a passage, or how long a learner's piece of writing is (Milton, 2009). However, although tokens is a well-known method for counting words, it seems that nobody has suggested using it for measuring the vocabulary size of both native and non-native learners.

The other method for counting words is word type. According to Faerchet al (1984) a word type is a word that has a different meaning and form from the other running words. Using the word types' method for counting means that even the same word is repeated many times in the same sentence, we count it only once. This way of counting according to Nation (2001) is used when we want to answer questions such as 'How large was Shakespeare's vocabulary?' 'How many words does this dictionary contain?' and so on. However, some argue that using this way of counting involves many problems. The most severe one is that the same word may have many various meanings such as the word well which can mean good and so on (Nation &Gu, 2007). As a result, many researchers prefer using lemma as a method for counting, but what does lemma mean? Counting lemmas means counting the main word and its regular inflections in any sentence as one lemma, "where both the main word and its inflected forms are the same part of speech", i.e. verb, noun, adjective or so on (Nation, 2004, 6). It has been suggested that lemma is the most suitable way for counting the vocabulary size of elementary and intermediate learners.

The other important issue is the nature of vocabulary knowledge, what does it mean to know a word? Knowing a word involves mastering many aspects of word knowledge. According to Mokhtar (2010) mastering the vocabulary knowledge is not an easy thing that one can get in full; rather it develops gradually over the lifetime. Schmitt and Meara (1997, 17) suggest that mastering all

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these kinds of word knowledge will indicate the learner's ability to use the words in the same way as the native speaker does and speak them fluently. Nonetheless, according to Meara (1996), building measures of these components of vocabulary knowledge for each individual word is a theoretical belief that will be impossible to put into practice in real life.

Read (2000) suggests that knowing the form of words is an important element in measuring the vocabulary size of L2 learners. Furthermore, Schmitt (2000) proposes that the most crucial thing for L2 learners is to master both the written and spoken forms of words, assuming that the other aspects of word knowledge will be useless if the learner cannot recognize or produce a word. However, others such as Henriksen (1999) and Nation (2001) suggest that, vocabulary knowledge should be seen as consisting of two main aspects, receptive and productive knowledge

As Nation (2001) suggests, receptive knowledge means that we receive or obtain the vocabulary through listening to others or reading some written materials and try to understand it, while the productive vocabulary knowledge indicates the idea that we can produce or use words through writing and speaking. These dimensions of vocabulary knowledge include all the aspects that are involved in knowing a word. Laufer&Goldstein (2004) suggest that passive vocabulary knowledge helps learners to read the word and retrieve its meaning, while active vocabulary knowledge helps learners to remember the suitable spoken or written form of the words that they want to use. The issue of receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. Melka (1997) states that "knowing a word is not an all-or-nothing proposition; some aspects may have become productive, while others remain at the receptive level".

A large number of studies that measure receptive and productive vocabulary sizes showed that the receptive vocabulary

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size is greater than the productive one. This means that learners first acquire words passively and later they develop the productive knowledge of these words. However, the relationship between receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge is not clear, because there is no evidence whether the gap between the two kinds of knowledge is stable or changeable. Also, no one has proved that the increase in the receptive vocabulary size leads to an increase in the productive vocabulary or not (Laufer&Paribakht, 1998).

Over the last decades, a great number of vocabulary tests that test the receptive and the productive knowledge of words have been designed, some of them such as the Vocabulary Level Test, Eurocentres Vocabulary Size Test and X-Lex test measure the breadth knowledge of vocabulary (receptive knowledge), while others like Vocabulary Knowledge Scale aim to measure the depth of vocabulary knowledge (productive knowledge). In the early stages of tests development, dictionaries were the main resources for the content of vocabulary size tests. However, over the last two decades, tests have started to depend on the lexical frequency lists that were derived from corpus analysis as the basis of their testing content (Milton, 2005).

Making a vocabulary test is not an easy process as one might think; there are many criteria that one has to put in mind when developing a new test whether it is a vocabulary test or another test. It has been suggested that there are two main factors that have to be taken into consideration for developing and designing a good test, its reliability and its validity. The reliability of a test is its consistency. This means that the test should stay the same all the time without any change in the quality. Also, it means that the same results should be obtained wherever the test is used. Schmitt (2000, 166) states that "if an examinee took a test several times, without his or her ability changing, the test would ideally produce the same

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score each administration". However, there are some elements that may result in changing the test scores such as the testee alertness, motivation or the test itself (Schmitt, 2000). It has been suggested that some types of tests are more reliable than others. Milton (2009) proposes that objective tests that depend on forced answer or multiple choices are more reliable than subjective tests that relay on open question comprehension or require writing an essay.

The validity of a test, on the other hand, means that it estimates what is believed to estimate (Nation &Gu, 2007). In other words, it indicates whether the students' answers to the test items show their real knowledge of the target words, either they are on the test or in the set that did not make it onto the test (Schmitt, 2000). According to Nation &Gu (2007, 112) designing a valid test includes two main steps: understanding the exact things that are needed to be measured and developing an item that does this. Measuring a vocabulary test validity is supposed to be a complex issue because there are many areas that have to measure such as content validity, construct validity, concurrent validity and face validity.

There is no doubt that words in any text, either written or spoken text, differ in their occurrence. Some of them occur more than once in the same text such as article: *the*, *a*-proposition: *of*, *in*, *to*-pronouns: *I*, *we*, *they*....etc. However, other words occur only once; this means they are not likely to be met with again in the text (Milton, 2009). Since the increased interest in vocabulary research over the last century, it has been supposed that learning vocabulary has strong relationship with their frequency. Most researchers assume that frequency has a positive role in learning vocabulary. This means that the more frequently heard words will be the earlier they will be learnt (Goodman *et al*, 2008).

Meara (1992) developed a profile which describes the relationship between word frequency and word size. This profile

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suggests that a typical learner will know more words in the first band of the most frequent words than in the second 2000 band, and in the second more than in the third band and so on. According to this profile, when the vocabulary knowledge of the learner increases this leads to increase in the profile until it reaches the peak at 100%. However, the profile stays high at the left where the most frequent words are and low at the right where the less frequent words are.

This study will estimate both the receptive and the productive vocabulary size of secondary school students to see how large the vocabulary knowledge of learners in Libya is. The questions of the current study will be the following:

- 1- How large is the vocabulary knowledge of learners on leaving primary school?
- 2- How large is vocabulary on leaving secondary school and entering university?
- 3- What progress is made in vocabulary learning during secondary school?
- 4-Will receptive vocabulary size be larger than productive vocabulary, as is expected?
- 5-What is the relationship between receptive and productive vocabulary?

#### **Materials and Methodology**

The study involved 60 students from three different levels of secondary school (first, second and third year) at AlwatikaAlkhadra Secondary School, 23 of them were males and the other 37 were females. They were aged 16, 17 and 18 respectively. Twenty of them were at the first level grade 10 and had studied English for approximately 4 years. The other twenty were at the second year grade 11 and they have been studying English for 5 years and the rest of the students were studying at the third level grade 12 with 6 years of English instruction.

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Two tests were used in this study. The primary test was the X-Lex vocabulary test. It is a diagnostic test described in Meara and Milton (2003) that measures the receptive vocabulary size. This test asks the test-takers to recognize the words rather than writing them. It was selected because it is a breadth test that is simple and easy to manage and correct. The second test was translation test for measuring the productive vocabulary size. This test contained 100 words from the first five most frequent bands, 20 words from each band. The participants were presented with L1 meanings and asked to provide the L2 forms of these target words. The translation test was selected because it is a very common and reliable test.

The tests' words were chosen according to their frequency band. The most common words that students have studied and learned according to their English course books have been chosen. About the translation test, the target words have been translated into the students' first language (Arabic). They have been translated according to the translation used in the Oxford Word power Dictionary (2006) which is the most common one among Libyan learners.

The receptive and the productive vocabulary tests were administered to the three classes four months after the beginning of their school year. As the same tests were used for the three different levels, the tests were conducted at the same time. The students were divided between three classes each level in an individual classroom. Before the students were given the X-Lex test presented in a pencil and paper version, obvious explanation were given in the students' native language to clarify what they need to do. The students were informed that "knowing" a word means being able to understand it in a simple sentence. They were also told that some words look like English words but are not actual words, and that blind guessing would lead to decrease in their

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scores. An example of how to complete the test was shown to students before they start the test. After that the participants were asked to do the translation test, where they had to translate words from Arabic to English.

For the X-Lex test, the participants got one mark for each ticked word. The numbers of ticks in each column (except the unreal words) were added up, then the numbers of ticks in the five columns were added up and multiplied them by 50. This gave an unadjusted score out of 5000. Thereafter, the number of ticked unreal words in the five columns was added up and multiplied by 250. After that, that score was deducted from the unadjusted score; that gave the adjusted score. In the translation test the participants got one mark for each translated word. Spelling mistakes were not taken in consideration when scoring these words; this means that, words with spelling mistakes were marked as correct if the overall form of the translation was a close approximation of the target word. This means that the translation is acceptable if there was only one letter missing.

#### **Results and Discussions**

Table 1 below shows the descriptive statistics of the receptive and the productive vocabulary on the X-Lex and the Translation tests of the first level students. It seems that the mean scores of the students at the first level of the secondary school are not so high. They scored about 20% on the receptive vocabulary test (X-Lex) and 15% on the productive vocabulary test (Translation). This indicates that Libyan students leave primary school with a small vocabulary size both receptively and productively.

Table 1: Summary of first level students' scores on both tests

| Test        | Level | Number of students | Min.<br>scores | Max. scores | Mean<br>scores |
|-------------|-------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| X-Lex       | 1     | 20                 | 350            | 1650        | 972.5000       |
| Translation | 1     | 20                 | 50             | 1450        | 750.0000       |

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Table 2 below shows the results of the X-Lex and the Translation tests of level two and level three students at the secondary school. It appears that the mean scores of students at the second level of secondary school are not so low on both the X-Lex and the Translation tests, about 39% and 36% respectively. In addition, the students' mean scores at the final level are a bit higher, approximately 43% on the receptive test and 48% on the productive test. This means that students leave secondary school with good size of vocabulary.

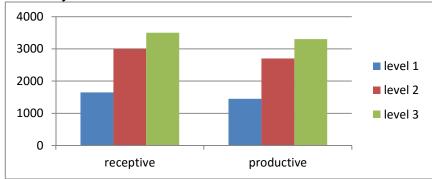
**Table 2:** Summary of level two and level three students' scores on both tests

| Test        | Leve<br>l | Number of students | Min.<br>scores | Max. scores | Mean<br>scores |
|-------------|-----------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| X-Lex       | 2         | 20                 | 250            | 3000        | 1927.5000      |
| A-Lex       | 3         | 20                 | 800            | 3500        | 2135.0000      |
| T1.4        | 2         | 20                 | 900            | 2700        | 1797.50000     |
| Translation | 3         | 20                 | 1300           | 3300        | 2382.5000      |

Figure 1 below demonstrates clearly the progress that students achieved during the secondary school in both receptive and productive vocabulary. According to this figure it seems that on the X-Lex test that measures the receptive vocabulary knowledge there was a big different between students' scores at level one and students' scores at levels two and three, but there was not big difference between the second and the third level students' scores. On the other hand, the Translation test scores for the three groups were completely different. Overall, it seems that the differences between the groups are significant. These scores indicate that there is a remarkable progress in students' vocabulary size during the secondary school.

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**Figure 1:** Receptive and productive vocabulary growth during secondary school



The table below gives some figures about the mean scores for both receptive and productive vocabulary size tests of the 60 students through the three levels of the high school. It is clear from these figures that the receptive vocabulary in general is slightly larger than the productive ones but there is not a big gap between them as it has been suggested in the previous studies. Rather, it seems that the receptive and productive vocabulary items of Libyan students are almost the same.

**Table 3:** The X-Lex and the Translation tests' scores

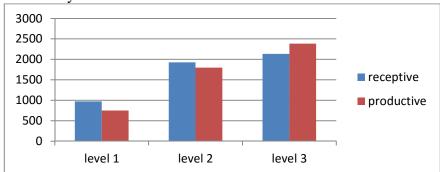
| Test        | Number of students | Mean scores |
|-------------|--------------------|-------------|
| X-Lex       | 60                 | 815.70219   |
| Translation | 60                 | 817.83440   |

Figure 2 below gives some information about the relationship between the receptive and the productive vocabulary scores that were obtained from this study. It is clear from this bar chart that the two types of vocabulary knowledge develop at almost the same rate. This indicates that as the receptive vocabulary sizes go up the productive vocabulary scores go up too. Also, it is obvious that the gap between both receptive and productive vocabulary is

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changeable and not stable. This means that, although the receptive vocabulary sizes are larger than the productive ones at the beginning of the secondary school, at the final year of the secondary school it seems that the receptive vocabulary items are activated and then the productive vocabulary become larger. However, the gap between the two kinds remains small and not too significant.

Figure 2: The relationship between receptive and productive vocabulary sizes



#### Conclusion

The essential aim of this study was measuring the receptive and the productive vocabulary size of Libyan secondary school students. This study has given important outcomes that showed that Libyan learners leave primary school with small amount of vocabulary, but as soon as they enter secondary school their vocabulary sizes start to increase and they leave secondary school with good amount of words. The main conclusion to be drawn from these findings is that, there is a significant progress in the vocabulary size of the Libyan students during the secondary school. Another conclusion was obtained from this study is that, the receptive and the productive vocabulary of Libyan students were

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almost the same in size and that there was not a significant gab between them. Also, according to the results of this study it appears that there is a positive correlation between the receptive and the productive vocabulary scores. This means that, any increase in the receptive vocabulary leads to an increase in the productive vocabulary too.

#### Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study the researchers would like to recommend that English teachers in Libyan schools need to pay more attention to vocabulary, especially the most frequency words, in order to improve the students' ability for communication. Also, teachers have the responsibility for helping learners enlarge their receptive and productive vocabulary by developing the input that is presented to students during the class. They have to provide their students with more drills and exercises that will heighten their mastery of their vocabulary skills.

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يشترط في البحوث العلمية المقدمة للنشر أن يراعي فيها ما يأتي:

- أصول البحث العلمي وقواعده .
- ألا تكون المادة العلمية قد سبق نشرها أو كانت جزءا من رسالة علمية .
- يرفق بالبحث المكتوب باللغة العربية بملخص باللغة الإنجليزية ، والبحث المكتوب بلغة أجنبية مرخصا باللغة العربية .
  - يرفق بالبحث تزكية لغوية وفق أنموذج معد .
  - تعدل البحوث المقبولة وتصحح وفق ما يراه المحكمون.
- التزام الباحث بالضوابط التي وضعتها المجلة من عدد الصفحات ، ونوع الخط ورقمه ، والفترات الزمنية الممنوحة للعديل ، وما يستجد من ضوابط تضعها المجلة مستقبلا .

#### تنبيهات:

- للمجلة الحق في تعديل البحث أو طلب تعديله أو رفضه .
  - يخضع البحث في النشر الأوليات المجلة وسياستها .
- البحوث المنشورة تعبر عن وجهة نظر أصحابها ، ولا تعبر عن وجهة نظر المجلة .

ضوابط النشر

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