

Algerian EFL Learners' Vocabulary Deficiency: *Insights and Suggestions***Miloud Bouchefra**

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*Received: 03./05/2021**Accepted: .22./05/2021**Published:16/12/2021***Abstract:**

One of the major areas in which Algerian EFL learners struggle the most is acquiring enough vocabulary to be able to comprehend English language materials and express themselves properly. Yet as data regarding Algerian EFL learners' vocabulary size and factors influencing its development is notably lacking, no informed measures can be taken to remedy the situation. Hence, the current study aims at measuring the vocabulary repertoire of secondary school pupils and investigating their reading habits, in addition to analyzing the texts of the coursebooks to gauge their suitability to the current level of the learners and make recommendations in the light of the ensuing findings. The results of the Vocabulary Size Test (VST) for both first-year and third-year pupils revealed the opposite of what would be expected as the former group outperformed their senior counterparts, meanwhile the survey revealed that reading is still largely marginalized amongst Algerian learners. A situation that can only be reversed through a national reading program that aspires to systematically instill reading habit in young learners.

Keywords: EFL; reading skill; test; vocabulary size.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mastering any given language is closely related to how many words one knows in that language, and thus one of the main concerns of language teachers is to systematically increase their learners' vocabulary repertoire to make sure they are able to communicate their ideas and thoughts effectively across a range of topics and functions. To ensure that learners are progressing in that regard, most syllabi come with sets of vocabulary lists that learners are supposed to cover at different stages, yet that puts a considerable pressure on both teachers and learners as they try to meet the designated threshold within the assigned time frame. One way to gauge students' progress is through vocabulary size tests that are designed to measure how many words learners know and estimate the breadth of their vocabulary repertoire be it the receptive one (recognition) or the productive one (recall). Those tests are based on corpora that draw on various native speaking sources such as books and newspapers, then they are arranged based on their frequency with the first most frequent 2000-word families believed to count for more than 82% of the running vocabulary we encounter across various reading materials. As far as language comprehension (receptive vocabulary) is concerned, a large vocabulary repertoire allows for rapid word recognition and smooth transition between micro and macro processing levels of the text and its individual elements, and the lack of an adequate vocabulary knowledge would inevitably hamper meaning construction and result in frustrating comprehension difficulties as the learners get stuck even at the earliest stages of the reading process or get overwhelmed by the sheer amount of the cognitive load they have to deal with as they struggle trying to make sense of the reading material one word at a time (Hacquebord & Stellingwerf, 2007). A problem fairly common among Algerian EFL learners as the majority of them shy away from reading materials written in English and that is largely attributed to the high cognitive load they have to deal with due to their limited vocabulary knowledge. As the problem persists, it is worth investigating the matter by testing vocabulary knowledge of secondary school learners and compare that to the level of vocabulary used in coursebooks as well as exam texts to (1) determine the vocabulary level of first-year and third-year secondary school learners, (2) explore their reading habits, (3) attempt to highlight factors that influence learners' reading habits, (4) measure how their vocabulary develops through the three years they spend learning EFL at the secondary school, and (5) gauge the suitability of coursebooks and exam tests' language to the learners' vocabulary level at each stage. Yet before we get to answering these

questions, it is worthwhile visiting the related literature to shed the light on some key concepts such as vocabulary learning and vocabulary testing.

2. Vocabulary Learning

One of the major questions that face any language learner or course designer is how many words should a learner know by the end of a given stage or grade, and that can be decided by taking into account three parameters that include the total number of words in the target language, the number of words typically known by a native speaker, and how many words are needed for the learner to be able to effectively communicate (Nation, 2001). Regarding the number of words in the target language, one needs to keep in mind that the varied nature of vocabulary would make it virtually impossible for even native speakers to know all the vocabulary that is entailed in their language as a considerable proportion of it falls under what is commonly known as technical vocabulary that is used by particular communities for specific purposes, a good example of that are words used by practitioners in fields such as quantum physics or neuroscience. Another area to account for are proper names of people, places, products, brands, and traditional customs, and whether we want to focus only on the written language or we want to include the spoken language as well. And if we want to cover the spoken vocabulary, one needs to decide what language local variation and dialects can make the cut, as the same thing might be referred to differently from one place to the other, and if the different pronunciations of the word are to be taken into consideration, we would have even more words to count. Matters get even more complicated when we try to decide upon the unit of counting. As there is a huge difference between the total counts one would get from using “tokens” and considering all words regardless to how many times they get repeated, using “type” and take each word into consideration only once, using “lemma” and differentiate between the words based on their meaning and grammatical functions, or reduce the number even more by grouping the vocabulary under “word families” and considering the different inflections and derived forms of the word as the same unit (Nation, 2001).

In the case of English language, several studies indicated that native speakers’ vocabulary repertoire includes around 20,000 word families as they add on average 1,000 word families every schooling year after the age of six (Nation, 2001). Achieving the same goal is doable for second language learners yet less so for those who study the target language as a foreign language, as the latter have much less chance to interact with the target language out of the school environment. This leads us back to the dilemma of how many words a language learner needs to know

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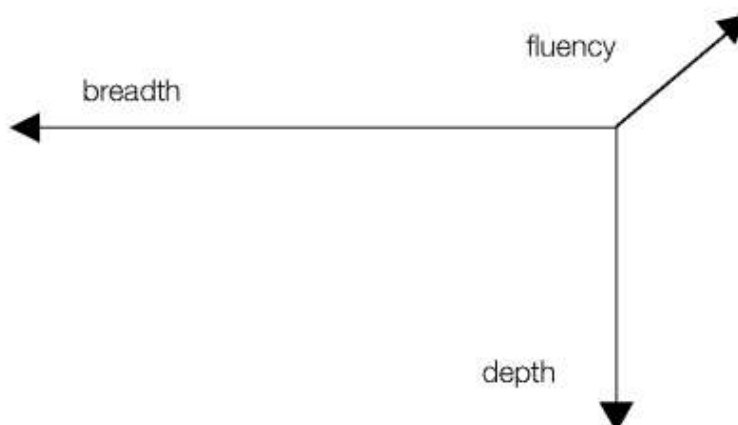
to communicate effectively. To answer this, one needs to keep in mind that not all vocabulary is equally used by the target language speakers, as some words are more frequent and come in handy across more functions and situations compared to other less frequently used words; and thus learning the more frequently used vocabulary would enable language learners to communicate effectively in situation that do not require the knowledge of academic or specialized vocabulary as the 2,000 most frequent words enlisted in West's (1953) "A General Service List of English Words" count for around 80% of the tokens in mainstream texts.

The most frequent 2,000 English words are used by English speakers across different situations. They include both function and content words and good examples of these lists include West's (1953) "A General Service List of English Words" and Nation and Hwang's (1995) "General Service List". The first 1,000 high frequency word cover around 77% of the running words in the academic texts whereas the second 1,000 high frequency word list covers around 5% (Nation, 2001). Thus, any language course or graded reader must make the 2,000 high frequency words as its main target before moving to other levels such as specialized vocabulary that is function specific such as academic vocabulary or technical vocabulary. Similarly, advanced learners must be made aware of low frequency words that mostly consist of proper nouns and rarely used vocabulary, though even this is arbitrary as it is governed by a number of factors including the nature of the examined corpora, the learners' personal experiences and fields of interest, and shift in trends over time that might bring a certain low frequency word to the forefront and push another high frequency word down in terms of their usage (Nation, 2001).

3. Lexical Space

While the general focus is on gauging vocabulary knowledge in terms of the breadth of the vocabulary repertoire by counting how many words a learner can recall or recognize, more voices are calling for changing this view so that vocabulary tests are designed to take into consideration the other overlooked two aspects, namely fluency and depth. Consequently, this gave birth to the notion of 'lexical space' which can be defined as an analogical description that likens vocabulary repertoire to a three-dimensional space where every dimension represents an aspect of the word (Daller et al., 2007). The idea behind lexical space is to be able to accurately gauge learners' vocabulary knowledge by taking all major aspects and their interactions into consideration.

Fig. 1. The lexical space: dimensions of word knowledge and ability.



Source: Daller et al. (2007, p. 8).

The horizontal axis in Figure 1 represents vocabulary breadth which covers all the known words forms regardless to how well they are known (Daller et al., 2007). The vertical axis represents the conceptual knowledge of the word across a number of areas including concepts, associations, grammatical functions, and collocations and how the word interacts with other words (Daller et al., 2007). Meanwhile, the final axis represents fluency of using the word in terms of speed and accuracy of recalling or accessing the word and employing it properly either receptively or productively (Daller et al., 2007). Tests that measure the vocabulary across the three dimensions simultaneously would enable researchers to form a more complete idea of the size and the nature of vocabulary acquired by the learners and facilitate the design of more effective interventional plans in the case of deficiency. However, the main challenge remains combining the three aspects in a way that would result in a test that is contextualized, representative of the target language vocabulary, not too long, and easy and time effective to design, administer, take, and correct.

4. Vocabulary Testing

Vocabulary tests vary in their nature to entail a number of forms including true or false test (Nation, 1993, as cited in Nation, 2001), vocabulary breadth test (Read, 1995, as cited in Nation, 2001), definition completion test (Read, 1995, as cited in Nation, 2001), multiple-choice test (Joe, 1994, as cited in Nation, 2001), and translation test (Nurweni and Read, 1999, as cited in Nation, 2001) to name some. Though the range of tests might make it hard for researchers and practitioners to decide which one to choose, one must keep in mind that the test should have at least 30 items to be considered reliable and the that the activities

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properly target the type of the vocabulary one desires to measure (Nation, 2001). Multiple choice questions represent the main stream type of tests generally used by researchers due to the fact that they are easier to make, take, and grade. The items in multiple choice tests are decontextualized yet distractors are clearly different from the correct answer (Nation, 2001). It should be also pointed out that multiple choice tests are prone to the students' use of test-taking strategies to maximize their scores and thus the results are to be taken with a pinch of salt (Milton, 2007).

Meanwhile, the use of translation in vocabulary instruction and testing is greatly opposed amongst academic communities mainly because of its association with ineffective and outdated methods such as Grammar Translation Method, yet research clearly demonstrates that translation has a similar effect as the use of realia and L2 synonyms (Nation, 2001). Hence, as there are no two words that are completely identical in meaning within the same language, using translation seems sensible to provide the exact same equivalent. Additionally, asking SL or FL learners to provide a definition in the target language might simply be beyond their linguistic abilities as the process of generating and expressing meaning is such a sophisticated and complex skill that only advanced learners can live up to the task (Nation, 2001).

Vocabulary is often classified into receptive and productive. When we test receptive vocabulary, we are basically gauging learners' ability to recognize a word in its written and spoken form, associate it with its meaning, recognize its different parts and attached affixes, and recognize nuances in its meaning that might vary according to the context (Nation, 2001). Whereas, testing productive vocabulary involves gauging learners' ability to correctly pronounce and write the word, correctly modify it using proper affixes and inflations, properly use the word across different contexts to express the range of meanings it covers, and know synonyms, antonyms of the word, and other words generally associated with it (Nation, 2001).

A study conducted by Laufer (1998) tested 16 years-old ESL and EFL learners revealing that passive (receptive) vocabulary size is larger than active (productive) vocabulary size, and the gap grow larger with every passing year, though it should be pointed out that the direct form-focused instruction prevalent among EFL classes result in a closer correlation between the size of passive and active vocabulary (Laufer, 1998). It should also be pointed out that a number of studies including the one conducted by Stoddard (1929, as cited in Nation, 2001) revealed that learners passing receptive vocabulary tests tend to get twice the score they usually get when they pass productive vocabulary tests. Thus, not only receptive vocabulary learning

is much less demanding on the learner compared to the productive vocabulary learning as far as learning burden is concerned, but also the retention rate is much higher with receptive vocabulary than it is with the productive one on the medium and the long run (Nation, 2001).

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Sample Population and Setting

The researcher opted for secondary school students as a target population because the secondary cycle education is the last stage where all learners tackle a set of unified curricula that allows for comparison and generalization of results. The administered test primarily aims at gauging the vocabulary level of secondary school learners both at the entry-profile level (first year) and exit-profile level (third year), and exploring their reading habits. The tests were administered to more than 300 secondary school learners across three secondary schools located in Sidi Bel Abbès province north-western Algeria. Eventually, 240 tests were returned, 137 first-year learners and 103 third-year learners.

5.2 Vocabulary Size Test

The test that was administered to the students entails two different parts, the first part is a questionnaire that investigates learners' background, reading habits, and potential factors that would influence them. Meanwhile, the second part is Paul Nation's Vocabulary Size Test (VST) that is designed to measure learners' written receptive vocabulary size in English language. VST is a multiple-choice test specifically designed for Arabic native speakers with the main statement written in English language followed by four different options written in Arabic language. The test includes 100 elements, with each ten elements representing 1000-word family's level. The total score is multiplied by 200 to give a rough estimate of the size of learners' vocabulary repertoire, albeit, a moderately generous one (Nation, 2001).

5.3 Textbook and Exam Texts Analysis

The texts of first-year, second-year and third-year secondary school textbooks as well as the texts of the last ten End-of-secondary-cycle (baccalaureate) exams (2010-2020) were analyzed using Laurence Anthony's 'AntWordProfiler' software and Nation (2017) 'BNC/COCA Word Family Lists'. 'AntWordProfiler' is a tool that allows the user to analyze the vocabulary of the target text by comparing it against the 'BNC/COCA Word Family Lists'. The software highlights the different levels of vocabulary and generates statistics regarding the numbers and frequencies of word types, word families, lemmas, and tokens.

6. Data Analysis

6.1 Sample Population Background Information

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The target population is composed of 240 secondary school pupils out of whom the majority (68.8%) are females. Meanwhile, 57.1% of the of the sample population are first year secondary school pupils whereas 42.5% are third year secondary school pupils with ages ranging between 14 and 20, with the majority of the participants (83.4%) falling in the age categories of 15 y.o. to 18 y.o.

Table 1. Sample population background information.

Label	Category	Frequency	Mean	Valid	Missing
Gender	Male	74	30.8	239	1
	Female	165	68.8		
Age	14	19	7.9	239	1
	15-16	104	43.4		
	17-18	96	40		
	19-20	18	7.5		
Grade	1st year	137	57.1	239	1
	3rd year	102	42.5		

6.2 Reading Habits

In order to explore the sample population's reading habits, the researcher used 7 different parameters. (1) As far as reading frequency is concerned, it turned out that around 34.6% of the participants can be considered regular readers with a frequency ranging from four times a week to everyday, meanwhile 14.6% are non-readers as they chose "Never" as an answer. (2) As for the length of the reading sessions, it turned out that 39.2% read for around 30 minutes, 36.7% prefer one-hour long sessions, whereas 18.3% engage in two hours long reading sessions. (3) Meanwhile, Arabic is the main reading language as it is preferred by 48.3% of the participants while French and English came second and third with 19.2% and 17.9% respectively; still 14.6% of respondents declared that they read in more than one language. (4) The fourth investigated parameter is the number of books at home and it turned out that 19.6% of participants do not have any books at home, while 26.1% possessed less than 10 books. 38.7% declared that they possess between 11 and 25 books and only 11.7 of participants possessed more than 50 books. (5) As for visiting libraries, 64% of participants never set a foot at a reading library whereas only 1.7% can be considered regular library goers. (6) Regarding the genres they prefer, 33.2% of participants prefer to read more than one genre of books, while educational books and action and adventure genres come second and

third with 13.8% and 11.2% respectively. (7) As for the type of book materials, 62.8% of participants prefer paper hardback books over electronic once.

Table 2. Learners' reading habits.

Label	Category	Frequency	Mean	Valid	Missing
Reading Frequency	Never	35	14.7	238	2
	1 or 2 times a week	120	50.4		
	4 or 5 times a week	55	23.1		
	Everyday	28	11.8		
Reading Session time	30 min or less	94	41.6	226	14
	One hour	88	38.9		
	2 hours or more	44	19.5		
Reading Language	Arabic	116	48.3	240	0
	French	46	19.2		
	English	43	17.9		
	2 languages or more	35	14.6		
Number of books at home	0 books	44	19.6	225	15
	1 - 10 books	77	34.1		
	11 - 25 books	69	30.7		
	+50 books	35	15.1		
Visits to library	Never	152	63.6	239	1
	1 or 2 times a week	82	34.3		
	4 or 5 times a week	4	1.7		
	Everyday	1	0.4		
Book Type	Paper books	142	62.8	226	14
	E-books	76	33.6		

6.3 Participants' Test Results

The students passed a vocabulary size test designed to measure learners' written receptive vocabulary size in English. The total score is multiplied by 200 to give a rough estimate of the size learners' vocabulary repertoire, albeit, a moderately generous one (Nation, 2001). The test reveals that the overall mean score of learners is 41.27 points (which translates into 9972.26 average score), yet with a SD = 22.869, this means the scores varied largely as the mode score is 32. As for the mean score of the different categories, it turned out that first year

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learners (average score = 9972.26) outperformed third year students (average score = 5947.05) as they averaged 49.82, 19.78 points higher than the score of their senior counterparts; although, the scores of first year learners varied largely with SD = 23.258 compared to the third years’ SD = 16.604.

Table 3. Vocabulary size test results.

Category	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Range	Min	Max	% of Total N
Overall score	41,27	37	32	22.869	92	0	92	100
First Year	49.82	48	/	23.258	92	0	92	57.3
Third Year	30.04	32	/	16.604	71	0	71	42.7

**6.4
The
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learners’ test performance

The researcher conducted several statistical tests to gauge the effect of various variables on learners scores and it turned out that there were no major effects. Eta coefficient test was used to test the strength of association between vocabulary size and a number of variables including reading language (Eta = 0.119), reading time per session (Eta = 0.123), and book material (Eta = 0.068), and since the scores are all closer to 0 than 1, that means the association is weak one at best. Meanwhile, Pearson correlation coefficient also revealed a very weak correlation between participants’ vocabulary tests and reading frequency (-0.039) as well as reading time (0.083). Similarly, Spearman’s rank correlation test revealed an insignificant negative correlation (-.002) between learners’ vocabulary size and the number of books they possess at home.

6.5 The level of vocabulary in coursebooks and Exams

The researcher examined the vocabulary of the reading texts in coursebooks used across secondary education different levels as well as texts from the end-of-secondary-cycle national exam (also known as Baccalaureate exam) of the last 10 years. It turned out that 58.07% of first year’s coursebook vocabulary falls under the first most frequent 1000-words, 8.06% within the second 1000-words group, 3.49% within the third 1000 words group, whereas 9.34% is spread across the remaining levels ranging from the 11th to the 20th 1000-word groups. As for the

second year, 47.96% of the texts are composed of the first most frequent 1000 words, 18.94% fall within the second 1000-word group, 11.99% within the third 1000-word group, and 3.55% under the fourth 1000-word group, meanwhile 10.43% of the vocabulary is spread across the levels ranging from the 11th to the 20th. Meanwhile, 49.11% of third year texts vocabulary falls under the first 1000-word group, 19.191% under the second 1000-word group, 11.47% under the third 1000-word group, 4.57% within the fourth 1000-word group, and 9.54% is spread thinly across the levels ranging from the 11th to the 20th 1000-word groups. As for the texts used in end-of-secondary-cycle examinations of both literary and scientific streams from 2010 to 2020, the analysis revealed that 48.39% of the vocabulary falls within the first 1000-word group, 21% within the second 1000-word group, 15.01% within the third 1000-word group, and 3.7% within the fourth 1000-word group, whereas 7.37% of the vocabulary falls under the groups ranging from the 11th to the 20th.

Table 4. Text vocabulary analysis results.

Level	Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11+
1st year texts	TOKEN %	80.8 9	8.06	3.49	1.6 3	0.5 3	0.4 4	0.4 9	0.1 5	0.1 1	0.0 4	4,94
	TYPE%	58.0 7	15.3 1	8.72	3.7 1	1.8 2	0.9 9	0.9 9	0.5 3	0.3 8	0.1 5	9,34
2nd year texts	TOKEN %	80.5 8	7.73	4.40	1.3 7	1.1 3	0.5 9	0.4 0	0.1 5	0.2 2	0.0 7	3,37
	TYPE%	47.9 6	18.9 4	11.9 9	3.5 5	2.9 1	1.8 3	1.0 5	0.5 2	0.5 6	0.2 6	10,4 3
3rd year texts	TOKEN %	80.7 2	7.35	4.29	1.3 9	0.4 9	0.5 8	0.1 7	0.2 3	0.1 4	0.2 6	4,37
	TYPE%	49.1 1	19.1 9	11.7 4	4.5 7	1.7 8	1.9 8	0.7 3	0.6 9	0.3 6	0.2 8	9,54
BAC exam texts	TOKEN %	74.4 2	11.4 6	6.79	1.8 4	0.5 9	0.5 4	0.2 3	0.2 1	0.1 3	0.3 4	3,45
	TYPE%	48.3 9	21.0 0	15.0 1	3.7 0	1.5 2	1.1 1	0.6 5	0.6 5	0.2 9	0.3 5	7,34

7. CONCLUSION

The data revealed that 14.7% of our respondents are non-readers and that can be referred to different factors including the lack of access to reading materials as 34.1% of respondents do not possess any books at home. To exacerbate the issue further, 63.6% of the respondents declared that they never go to the library despite

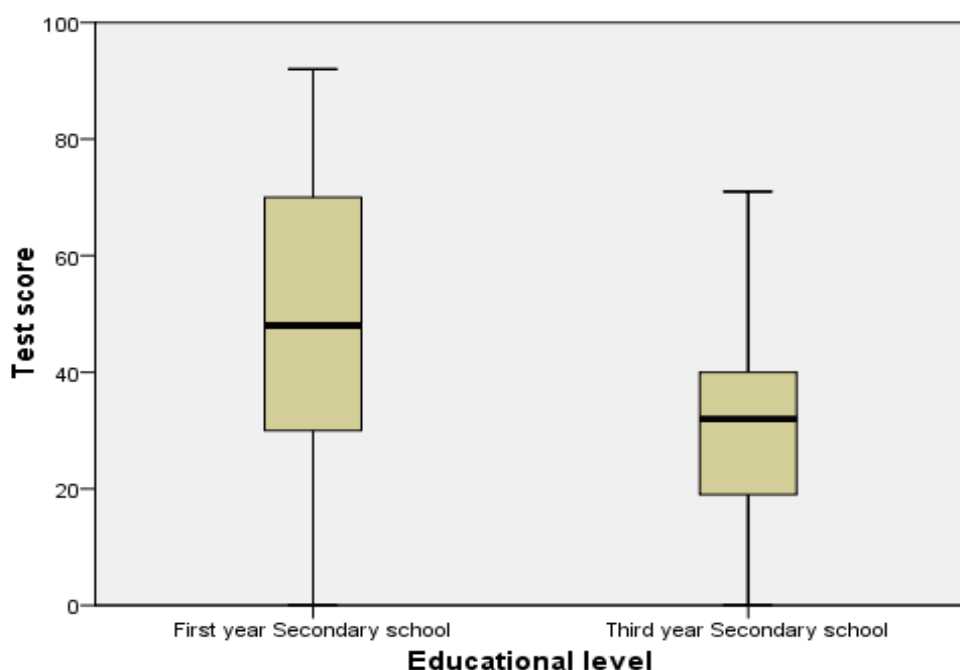
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the fact the city of Sidi Bel Abbes, where the study took place, has seven public libraries that are either free to access or require a symbolic annual subscription. Additionally, all secondary schools are equipped with libraries that are free for the learners to use, so the abstention from reading is more of a cultural phenomenon and a personal choice than it is due to the lack of libraries. Yet, it is worth pointing out that Algerian learners see studying more of an exam preparation process than a learning process, with attaining the pass mark and the desirable average by the end of the academic year being the ultimate objective for both learners and their parents, so leisure reading is replaced by diligent studying and developing one's language proficiency is replaced by studying for the tests; the fact that hugely led to the use of libraries in Algeria as mere studying spaces that provide the learners with the calm environment they need to focus, in addition to gaining a free access to the internet network. Besides, the reading materials written in English are relatively rare in all the reading spaces mentioned above and if they exist, they do not provide the diversity that would appeal to all tastes as almost all of them are of literary nature with novels claiming the lion's share. Furthermore, those novels are generally intended for advanced readers leaving the less proficient English speakers with no suitable reading materials, especially in the absence of graded readers that are to a large extent still rare in Algeria.

As for the VST results, they are strikingly the opposite of what anyone would expect, as first-year learners reported better test results than their third-year counterparts as the vocabulary repertoire of the former averages 9972 word-families whereas the latter is around 5947 word-families despite the two-years of schooling difference. Still, one should keep in mind that VST results tend to be generous in terms of overestimating the vocabulary size of the learners and that receptive vocabulary size tested in our case tends to be double the productive vocabulary size. Yet this unlikely decline in the vocabulary repertoire size despite two years difference of schooling is counterintuitive and can be attributed to a number of factors that might contribute in one way or another. First, English language instruction at secondary school level is much more test-oriented as the learners' focus is predominantly on successfully passing the test than it is on acquiring the language with around 65% of the syllabi dedicated to form-focused and grammar instruction. Second, third-year learners, whose primary goal is to prepare for the end-of-secondary-cycle examination, rely heavily on contextual cues to make sense of the reading texts and the decontextualized nature of the test might have presented them with a challenge they could not cope up with. Third,

English language is considered one of the subjects in which students fail the most in the end-of-secondary-cycle exams, and instead of improving their proficiency in the language, most learners resort to either test-taking strategies that would help them pass the test with best possible mark and limit the damage they are bound to endure, or focus on other more manageable subjects to offset the low marks they get in English language tests. Forth, first-year learners might have just taken the test more seriously, resorted to test-taking strategies, and even used dictionaries as they had access to their smartphones during the test.

Fig. 2. Learners vocabulary level representation.



Meanwhile, a series of statistical correlation tests were executed by the researcher in the hope of identifying variables that might affect learners' vocabulary score either positively or negatively, yet no result was decisive enough to be of any significance. As for the coursebooks' texts vocabulary level, the analysis revealed that the coursebooks progress gradually and in a logical manner with around 88% of the vocabulary limited to the first 2000-word families with words from the third 1000 level counting for around 4% throughout the three different levels. Yet research (Hu & Nation, 2000; Schmitt, et al., 2011) has proved that learners need to be in control of 98% of the running words to be able to use the contextual cues to guess the remaining 2% effectively, and with 34.6% of the learners' scores ranging

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at around 3000 words-families or less, syllabi designers must remedy this by ensuring that another 10% of the is adapted to fall within the first 3000-words-families, and shift the focus away from form-based instruction and ensure more comprehensive input and enough spaced-encounters with the new vocabulary for the learners to develop their vocabulary repertoire. As for the-end-of-secondary-cycle examinations' reading texts, 15.6% of the vocabulary type is beyond the 3000-word families scope and that is largely due to the academic nature of texts; thus, teachers as well as syllabi designers have an important task of ensuring that the learners encounter academic vocabulary often enough and on suitable intervals to ensure its acquisition.

As for the measures that need to be taken, the fact that 34.9% or respondents are regular readers and 80.5% of respondents prefer between 30 min and one hour sessions must be capitalized on by integrating reading in the curriculum in a way that instills this habit in Algerian youngsters, though the choice of the reading language is still largely down to the preferences of the individual learners, still a wholistic plan and giving reading more prominence by relating it directly to the final grades should help ensure a more balanced development across the three major languages, namely Arabic, French, and English. According to Stephen Krashen, all it takes is one enjoyable reading experience to turn a non-reader into an avid reader, that instant feeling of gratification that one feels after one good book should be the aim of a reading national program. Given that enjoyment results from full comprehension of the reading material and full-emersion requires as little interruption as possible, learners must be provided with libraries of graded readers that appeal to different tastes and all levels ensuring that every learner finds an interesting book that suits their proficiency level. Still, as the quality is just as important as the quantity, the program must ensure that learners are exposed to a gradually increasing number of tokens to ensure vocabulary acquisition. In this regard Nation and Wang (1999) suggest one graded reader every two weeks. One way to ensure systematic exposure to the needed number of tokens that allow for effective vocabulary acquisition is by following the forty weeks program devised by Nation (2014).

Table 5. Amount of reading input and time needed to learn each of the most frequent nine 1000-word families.

1,000 word list level	Amount to read	Time needed for reading per week (per day) at a reading speed of 150 words per minute
2nd 1,000 families	200, 000	33 minutes (7 minutes per day)
3rd 1,000 families	300,000	50 minutes (10 minutes per day)
4th 1,000 families	500,000	1 hour 23 minutes (17 minutes per day)
5th 1,000 families	1,000,000	2 hours 47 minutes (33 minutes per day)
6th 1,000 families	1,500,000	4 hours 10 minutes (50 minutes per day)
7th 1,000 families	2,000,000	5 hours 33 minutes (1 hour 7 minutes per day)
8th 1,000 families	2,500,000	6 hours 57 minutes (1 hour 23 minutes per day)
9th 1,000 families	3,000,000	8 hours 20 minutes (1 hour 40 minutes per day)

Note. The per week figure is based on forty weeks, and the daily rate is based on 5 days.

Source: Nation (2014, p.8).

Though the main objective of such a program is to develop the reading habit and help learners grow their vocabulary repertoire systematically, there is still a need for creating opportunities for meaning focused output where learners must be required to put the vocabulary they learned into use through follow-up reading-comprehension activities where they talk or write about what they read and transfer their vocabulary from receptive repertoire to the productive one and develop the needed fluency (Nation, 2013).

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