Master of Education (MEd)
(English Language Teaching)

Dissertation

Facilitating Reading Comprehension for IELTS
Through the Use of Principled Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

By

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of principled explicit vocabulary instruction on the acquisition of vocabulary and the consequent impact on reading comprehension, in preparation for the IELTS. Students at a university in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on an IELTS preparation course learned lexical items through principled explicit vocabulary instruction. Tests were given that measured vocabulary gains and reading comprehension, before and after instruction. Results of the study indicate that principled explicit vocabulary instruction facilitates the acquisition of new vocabulary, and knowledge of the vocabulary improves reading comprehension. The implementation of principled vocabulary instruction prior to reading comprehension tasks is proposed.

Keywords

Vocabulary, words, lexical, explicit vocabulary instruction, vocabulary instruction, ESL, IELTS, reading, reading comprehension, teacher, learner, principled, principles, test.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Sultan Tejani, who has supported me tremendously, for which I am grateful. And to my children Sayed and Farah, who took great pride in their mother completing her Master's degree, while they were at university. Thankfully, they were in the undergraduate program!

Not to be forgotten, are my many students of various nationalities and cultures, in England, Canada and Dubai, who over the years have made teaching a fulfilling profession for me.

Contents

Introduction

1.1

Personal Interest

This study investigates the effectiveness of principled explicit vocabulary instruction on vocabulary acquisition. It expands on the current studies on explicit vocabulary instruction, by identifying the essential principles, which underpin effective explicit vocabulary instruction. It also explores and examines the concept that vocabulary knowledge facilitates reading comprehension, adding to the limited L2 studies on the connection between vocabulary and reading comprehension. Thus this study adds to the very limited number of classroom based L2 studies into vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension; and occupies its own unique position for various reasons, including its IELTS context. The aim of this study is to provide teachers with guidance on pedagogical issues in the classroom.

Being a teacher of English as a Second Language, English for Specific Purposes and English for Academic Purposes for over two decades, the importance of vocabulary for all the language skills has grabbed my attention. Furthermore, its essential role in reading comprehension and the importance of reading comprehension has been highlighted, and has captured my interest.

During my professional career teaching ESL, EAP, ESP, IELTS and TOEFL preparatory courses, in England, Canada and Dubai, I have recognized the importance of vocabulary and the need for explicit vocabulary instruction for the development of all language skills including reading comprehension. Students of all nationalities and cultures whose second language is English, have also often cited difficulties with vocabulary as one of the challenges they face, when completing communicative tasks including reading comprehension. As an IELTS examiner, I have also noted that inadequate vocabulary influences candidates' achievements.

My interest in vocabulary stems from my early days in England teaching English to secondary school students in the lower tiers of English. These students who had lower levels of English were both native and non-native speakers of English. Teaching a certain number of lexical items, their spellings, their antonyms, and their meanings was part of the weekly curriculum. Reading both in class and out of class was expected and monitored, although there were always a few reluctant readers. Reading comprehension exercises sometimes included various pre-reading, post-reading vocabulary exercises and related writing tasks. The inclusion of vocabulary as part of the curriculum assisted students in their reading comprehension and writing tasks that were part of the Key Stage 3 and GCSE exams.

Many years later having moved into teaching ESL to adults, who were new immigrants in England, I noted that the comprehension of texts and writing tasks were challenging for students, partially due to their lack of vocabulary. In order to meet their needs, I implemented various methods of vocabulary instruction. Following teaching certification in the new British ESOL Curriculum for adults, it was mandatory for me to use the new curriculum at the educational institution. It is interesting to note that this curriculum, the teachers guide and the resources contain references and materials for vocabulary instruction and overall reflect the importance of vocabulary for all the language skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

The importance of vocabulary emerged again when I was teaching ESL to new immigrant adult learners in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The focus of the program was to improve language skills of the learners who were new immigrants and thus assist them to pass the entrance exams of educational programs, vocational programs or employment. Getting a good grade in the IELTS exam was the goal for many of them. Learners often cited vocabulary as a major challenge for them and often brought in queries about lexical phrases, collocations and idioms they had encountered in speech or in text. Students sometimes brought in articles from newspapers and magazines requesting assistance on the comprehension of the texts. As a result, time in the lesson was specifically allocated for teaching vocabulary, using a range of teaching methods

with the aim that this knowledge would ripple through all the learners' skills. It is interesting also to note, that while teaching the Medical English course, a large percentage of my class time was spent on teaching the relevant lexicon in context and assessing the learners' grasp of the technical vocabulary.

While teaching ESL at higher educational institutions in Dubai, students' struggles with vocabulary when faced with tasks in all the skills, has grabbed my attention again. Although the institutional course books and workbooks contain vocabulary exercises, these are not sufficient to provide learners especially those preparing for the IELTS exams, with an effective understanding of all the required lexis. During listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks, students often ask questions related to lexical items they encounter or require to effectively express themselves. Sometimes, in their speech or writing, students use a word in the wrong context or inappropriately and therefore require correction and explanation. Therefore my teaching repertoire consists of creative active methodologies to increase learners' vocabulary, its effective use and practice in all the skills. Students have usually responded positively and with enthusiasm. This has been equally noticeable when teaching ESP at professional institutions, where learners have noted the improvement in their ability to communicate in their professional careers, following explicit vocabulary instruction.

Being an IELTS Examiner the link between vocabulary and other skills is often highlighted when examining candidates. During the speaking sessions, candidates sometimes struggle finding the right word to express their views in response to a question or they use a word inappropriately. On the other hand, some candidates who have an adequate or good vocabulary usually reflect their lexical resource in response to questions, and find it easier to maintain their fluency. Furthermore, the quality of their writing responses, to the set questions of both task 1 and 2 is also influenced by the candidates' lexical resource and use. Thus their lexical resource and ability to use it effectively impacts their band grade achievements. Suffice to say, that knowledge and understanding of words assists students in the listening and reading tasks and this too affects their band achievements.

1.2

Significance and Purpose of Study

Observations noted above are also supported by others in the field of ESL. For example, Reves & Levine (1990) noted that "Lack of vocabulary is often cited by EFL learners as one of the obstacles to text comprehension" (p.37). Zhou (2009) also found that ESL "Learners were particularly concerned about improving vocabulary" (p.39). His study revealed that learners who were enrolled on a pre-university EAP course expressed a desire to improve general vocabulary which included adjectives, nouns, verbs, transitional expressions, phrases and idioms. Additionally, they wanted to learn advanced formal words and vocabulary related to future professions, EAP and discipline specific courses. Papadakis and Bahloul (2007, p. 313, citing Green & Meara, 1995; Meara, 1980.) state that "Many learners see vocabulary acquisition as their greatest source of problems". Adding to the students' voices, Folse (2004) reported that when ESL college students were asked what could improve ESL programs, they indicated more vocabulary instruction as the most important improvement. This was reiterated by Gobert (2007) who conducted a study in the United Arab Emirates. She reported that all the students in her study indicated regrettably that their teachers did not explicitly teach collocations or lexical phrases.

Many of the studies (e.g. Cobb, 2007; Davidson & Huntley, 2007; Lewthwaite, 2007; Turlik, 2007.) conducted in the Gulf indicate or reflect students' lack of vocabulary, its link with reading and writing skills and the need to find effective solutions for this. For example, a study (Badry, 2007) in the UAE examined the writings of Arab ESL learners. Writings of thirty eight students, who were in the last course of a three sequences writing program at university were analyzed. Findings indicated that students were often unsuccessful in conveying their ideas due to their errors in their choice of vocabulary. Similar issues exist across the ocean. Santos (1988, cited in Nation, 2001) reported that university professors had a tendency to judge lexical errors in the writings of EFL learners, as the most serious errors These studies reflects the fact that students

lack vocabulary knowledge which is then reflected in the standard and quality of their work.

Some researchers have quantified the vocabulary knowledge of learners and put it in numerical terms. Laufer & Yano, (2001) noted that the vocabulary of foreign learners who are high school graduates and university students is less than a quarter of those known by their native speaking peers Elaborating on this further Laufer (2000, table 1 below) also noted that the vocabulary sizes of learners are well below requirements.

Table 1 English vocabulary size of foreign learners

Country	Vocabulary size	Hours of instruction	Reference (re-size)
Japan EFL University	2000	800-1200	Shillaw 1995
Chinese English majors	4000	1800-2400	Laufer 2001
Indonesia EFL University	1220	900	Nurweni & Read 1999
Oman EFL University	2000	1350+	Horst et al. 1998
Israel High school graduates	3,500	1500	Laufer 1998
Greece Age 15, high school	1680	660	Milton & Meara 1998

Adapted from Laufer 2000, p. 48.

In light of the above observations and studies that indicate students' lack of vocabulary and an essential need for vocabulary instruction, questions need to be asked. How can effective vocabulary instruction be provided, that will result in an increase in the learners' lexical knowledge? Will better vocabulary knowledge result in improved reading comprehension? These questions are a reflection of what Decarrico (2001) states as questions that "reflect the current focus on the needs of learners in acquiring lexical competence and on the role of the teacher in guiding them toward this goal" (p.285).

Thornbury (2002) adds to this when he explains that although there have been developments in new approaches to teaching vocabulary, "these have been slow to reach teachers in a form that is easily transferable to the classroom" (p.vi). This is again pointed out by McCarthy (2003, p.iix) "And yet vocabulary often seems to be the least systemized and the least well catered for of all the aspects of learning a foreign language". There could be various reasons for this. Read (2004) suggests that teachers are uncertain about how vocabulary can be incorporated into their teaching plans. My discussions with many colleagues over many years have revealed that teachers are not aware of the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction, nor the various methodologies or principles underlying   effective methodologies. I have also noted that most teachers rely on the vocabulary exercises in the course books and leave it up to the student to develop their own vocabulary. It is hoped that this study will provide for the teacher, some direction in implementing effective principled explicit vocabulary instruction in the classroom.

Although there has been some research conducted regarding this, they have been very few and far between. Milton (2009, p 3) states "While the study of vocabulary had recently become much more fashionable at an academic level, this interest had yet to transfer itself to the foreign language teaching mainstream". Folse (2010) reiterates this when he explains why Nation (2001) spends only two very general paragraphs discussing "vocabulary in classrooms" in his book Learning Vocabulary in Another Language. Folse (2010) explains that the reason for this is that there have been only a handful of studies that have recorded vocabulary teaching or learning in actual classrooms. Nunan (1992) had also pointed out that much of the research that provides guidance on pedagogic practice is not generated from actual language classrooms and advised that the research agenda needs to be extended to incorporate classroom based studies. Webb (2009) stated in his research that although there are many studies investigating the effects of
 pre-learning vocabulary on reading comprehension, he only found two conducted within the L2 context and consequently suggested further research.

It is also interesting to note that that the book "Teaching and Learning Vocabulary in a Second Language" by Davidson et al (2007), consists of twenty seven chapters, which

are a comprehensive blend of theoretical articles, research studies and articles, written by various authors within and outside of the Gulf region, on subjects related to vocabulary. These chapters indicate and reflect that students lack vocabulary and this has an effect on their language skills and that systematic explicit vocabulary instruction is lacking in the classroom. However, there are only three chapters reflecting a link with reading and there are no chapters on the link with explicit vocabulary instruction prior to reading comprehension. This indicates a broad area of still further research that needs to be conducted. Furthermore, no research on reading comprehension had been conducted with students on an IELTS preparatory course using IELTS preparatory text materials.

Therefore this research expands the current research in many different directions. Firstly, it will add to the current limited studies on explicit vocabulary instruction and reading comprehension within an L2 classroom setting. In addition, the students are in a higher education institution in Dubai, UAE, on a multi-level English course preparing for the IELTS exam, and the materials used i.e. the target vocabulary and the reading text are from an IELTS preparatory book. Thus extending the current research and adding special relevance to those teaching IELTS preparatory courses, both within and outside the Gulf region. It also provides guidance on instruction in the classroom.

Although this is a small scale study, it is hoped that this research gives greater insights into ways in which ESL teachers can facilitate the improvement of students' vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension in the classroom. Furthermore, it may help ESL teachers to develop the pedagogy and the curricula of vocabulary instruction in relation to reading; for effective learning and development of essential skills required for academic progress. In addition, it is hoped that this study will assist teachers preparing students either on a multi-level IELTS preparatory course or an intensive IELTS preparatory course. This study is also of relevance to those who teach ESP courses as knowledge of the technical vocabulary is essential for the comprehension of its content.

1.3

Research Questions

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate the effects of explicit vocabulary instruction on the reading comprehension of ESL learners, on an IELTS preparatory course. In light of the above the following four research questions were developed to guide this study:

- To what extent does explicit vocabulary instruction facilitate the acquisition of new vocabulary?
- To what extent does explicit vocabulary instruction improve sentence comprehension?
- What are the pedagogical implications of this study for the teacher in the classroom?

Chapter 2
Literature Review

2.1
Role of Vocabulary

The last section explained my personal interest in vocabulary and reading, presented research supporting my observations, explained the significance and purpose of this study and highlighted the research questions. This section establishes the important role of vocabulary, discusses explicit vocabulary instruction and presents the link between vocabulary and reading comprehension.

"Words are the building blocks of language and without them there is no language" (Milton, 2009, p.3). This statement reflects the importance of vocabulary. Vocabulary has value because it has a place, position and an essential purpose in language. Folse (2004, p.1) reinforces the value and importance of vocabulary by stating, "Many argue that vocabulary is one of the most important- if not the most important components in learning a foreign language". He (citing Krashen, 1982) elaborates that for acquisition of language, the input needs to be comprehensible to the learner. He argues that, if however, the learner does not know much of the vocabulary then the language is not comprehensible and therefore affects language acquisition.

This is further supported by McCarthy (2002) who explains that even if the student successfully masters the grammar and the L2 sounds he or she cannot communicate in any meaningful manner without vocabulary. This is a bone of contention in language circles. Thornbury (2002) argues that grammar is very important and that vocabulary is a "collection of items, grammar is a set of rules" (p. 14). He adds that grammar can generate many sentences. However, Wilkins' (1972, p. 11) response, puts vocabulary first. He argues, "..without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". This statement is echoed by many in the field of language acquisition. However, my experience indicates that both vocabulary and grammar have a

role to play, as knowledge of grammar enables the individual to use the lexis effectively and appropriately, and a combination of both, leads to successful communication. Lewis (2002) admits to this combined role "Grammatical knowledge permits the creative recombination of lexis in novel and imaginative way" (p.15). However, he points out that it is only useful when adequate lexical knowledge exists to which "grammatical knowledge can be applied" (p.15). Thus the importance of vocabulary is highlighted again.

Decarrico (2001, p. 297) places great emphasis on the pivotal role of vocabulary in all communication when she states that, "Lexical competence is a central part of communicative competence, and teaching vocabulary a central part of teaching language" Brown (2007, p. 435) establishes the importance of vocabulary by elaborating on its role. He reminds us that "lexical items are basic to all of the four skills" and the skill is generated in "the efficient storage (competence) and adept retrieval (performance) of those units". In my opinion, this provides a good argument for combining the instruction of vocabulary and the practice and testing of its use in all the skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing. This has several implications for the teacher in the classroom and the researcher. Firstly it provides the rationale to engage learners in task-based learning and is one of the reasons that communicative language testing was used in this study. This is discussed further in [section 3.1].

The importance of vocabulary knowledge for the development of all language skills i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking has been highlighted by many. Its important role in reading and reading comprehension is widely recognized by many in the education field. Beck et al (2002, p.1) emphasizes its link to reading "A large vocabulary repertoire facilitates becoming an educated person to the extent that vocabulary is strongly related to reading comprehension in particular and school achievement in general". Experience indicates that the vocabulary and reading link is a cyclical or two ways process in which knowledge of vocabulary facilitates reading and reading facilitates the acquisition of vocabulary. It is within this process that explicit vocabulary instruction has an essential role to play. Vocabulary also plays a significant role in L2 writing (Lee, 2003; Coxhead

& Byrd, 2007; Folse, 2008a). This link to writing is also supported by Nation (2001) who found that an increase in vocabulary is a contributory factor in higher evaluations of the L2 academic writing. As mentioned earlier, experience indicates that students' lack of vocabulary affects their ability to express themselves in written form and orally. This link is also reflected in proficiency in L2 listening (Nation, 2006; Chang, 2007) which is distinctly reflected when students carry out listening tasks in preparation for IELTS tests. In order to answer the questions, they need to comprehend the words they have heard. The arguments presented above for its link with the skills, supports the method of vocabulary instruction used in this study. Schmitt (2008) presents an overview on the relationship of vocabulary to all skills and my voice is reflected in his reporting, "One thing that students, teachers, material writers, and researchers can all agree upon is that learning vocabulary is an essential part of mastering a second language" (Schmitt, p.329). Although, without a doubt, vocabulary has an essential role to play, it is the balance of various aspects of language and knowledge including grammar, phonics, tone and background knowledge (see schema later) which enable the student to communicate effectively.

2.2
Tests – IELTS & TOEFL

This importance of vocabulary is also reflected in tests that many ESL learners are expected to take. Tests, such as such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), test students' vocabulary directly and indirectly. These exams like many English tests consist of reading comprehension, writing, listening and speaking sections which expect students to have a rich vocabulary among other skills. In the writing and speaking sections students have to tap into their lexical resource in order to produce a response both in the written format and the spoken form. Nation (2001) supports this when he explains that producing adequate responses in writing and speaking tests requires semantic coherence, rhetorical organization, syntactic complexity, background knowledge, as well as the motivations and interests of the candidate, however, it is equally clear that having an adequate

vocabulary is the basis for understanding the grammar and lexical meanings. In the listening and reading tests the texts are composed of words that have to be understood in order for the questions to be answered correctly. Lewthwaite (2007, p.323) presents a numerical figure on the number of words required for IELTS readings. He states "For coverage of academic texts, such as an IELTS readings, a larger vocabulary size of 4000 word families would be needed, composed of 2,000 General Service List, around 570 general academic words as from the Academic Word list (Coxhead, 1998) and 1,000 or so technical words, low frequency words and proper nouns (Nation, 2001)". Therefore one can surmise that for learners to comprehend the texts they encounter in the IELTS and other similar tests an adequate vocabulary is required.

Furthermore, the rubrics of the TOEFL and the IELTS exams indicate the importance that these tests place on vocabulary. TOEFL writing has four categories which cover 25% of the overall examination score. The categories are development, organization, appropriate and precise use of grammar and vocabulary, and completeness and accuracy of the content. In addition to vocabulary being listed as one of the four categories, proper development and accuracy of the content depend greatly on extensive knowledge of specific vocabulary (Folse, 2008). The TOEFL Independent writing rubrics has vocabulary included in the score rating rubrics ranging from 2 to 5 which is the highest.

Regarding the IELTS, the importance it places on vocabulary is reflected by the grading criteria. Both the Academic and General training version of the writing task 1 and task 2 are graded into bands 1 – 9 based on four criteria. These criteria are Task Achievement, Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource and Grammatical Range and Accuracy. It can be argued that task achievement is also dependent on knowledge of vocabulary. The speaking section is similarly graded into bands under the criteria of fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy and pronunciation. Once again it can also be argued that fluency is dependent on knowledge of vocabulary.

Therefore, one can conclude that both the format and the rubrics of the TOEFL and the IELTS reflect that, in order for our students to do well in these exams they need to

possess a rich vocabulary, in addition to other skills. Therefore, as teachers we have an ethical responsibility to our learners to facilitate their acquisition of vocabulary, in order to provide them with an essential tool, that will assist them in their exams, their studies and their future career.

2.3
Need for Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

The last section presented the important place of vocabulary in the IELTS and TOEFL. This section explores the research that defines the need for explicit instruction.

Learning vocabulary is not an easy task for L2 learners because there are so many facets to word knowledge. Nation (2001) refers to the effort involved in learning a word as the "learning burden" (p. 23). It can be argued that the word 'burden" acknowledges and reflects the difficulty that learners face when learning a new word in a second language. Therefore this section focuses on what learners need to know about a word and explores the need for explicit vocabulary instruction.

Word knowledge is divided into receptive or passive knowledge and productive or active knowledge. Nation (2001) defines receptive vocabulary use as involving "perceiving the form of a word while listening or reading and retrieving its meaning" (p. 25). While he defines productive vocabulary use as involving "wanting to express a meaning through speaking or writing and retrieving and producing the appropriate spoken or written word form" (p.25). He explains that the terms receptive and productive vocabulary covers everything that is involved in knowing a word and generally a word involves form, meaning and use. He incorporates all the above theories and provides a more complete summary of word knowledge (see table below). This is used to support the method of instruction in this study.

Table 2 What is involved in knowing a word

Form	Spoken	R	What does the word sound like?
		P	How is the word pronounced
	Written	R	What does the word look like?
		P	How is the word written and spelled?
	Word Parts	R	What word parts are needed to express this meaning?
Meaning	Form and Meaning	R	What meaning does this word form signal ?
		P	Which word form can be used to express this meaning?
	Concept and referents	R	What is included in the concept
		P	What items can the concept refer to?
		P	What items can the concept refer to/
	Associations	R	What other words does this make us think of?
		P	What other words could we use instead of this one?
Use	Grammatical functions	R	In what patterns does the word occur?
		P	In what patterns must we use the word?
	Collocations	R	What words or types of words occur with this one?
		P	What words or of types or words must we use with this one?
	Constraints on use (Register,frequency…)	R	Where when and how often would we expect to meet this word?
		P	Where, when and how often can we use this word?

(Nation, 2001, p.27)

The above reflects the challenge facing students who have to increase and acquire new vocabulary. Graves (2006) rightly describes the vocabulary learning task facing the learners as "enormous" (p. 4). He uses this to support his suggestions that "Educators must develop vocabulary that is principled, efficient and effective" (p.11). He identifies four key components of effective vocabulary instruction, one of which is direct teaching of individual words. This principled systematic approach is also recommended by Nation (2001) who states that "Teachers should deal with vocabulary in systematic and principled ways to make sure that the learners get the most benefit from the time spent" (p. 93). This is supported by Laufer (2005) who explains that focusing on words in the classroom through planned vocabulary instruction is more likely to be the major source of lexical knowledge than reading. Experience supports Folse (2004) who breaks the challenge faced by the learners into details and exposes the reality of it to the teacher. He details "Our students need to learn words, phrases and idioms and they need a tremendous amount of explicit vocabulary instruction in a relatively (and artificially) short time. This is the reality for foreign language learners."

Looking at it form a cognitive perspective, Hinkel (2004, p. 320) provides an explanation for this need for explicit vocabulary instruction. He suggests that L1 vocabulary acquisition is different from L2 because the latter may be processed as an independent entry and hence requires separate focused instruction and effort. Thus those who have researched vocabulary acquisition point in the direction of explicit vocabulary instruction where "students engage in activities that focus attention on vocabulary" (Decarrico, 2001 p. 286).

Studies support the need for explicit instruction. A recent study by Sonbul and Schmitt (2009) highlighted the value of the effectiveness of explicit teaching of new vocabulary in reading passages. The study was conducted in Saudi Arabia with L2 students who were native speakers of Arabic, enrolled in a first-year English for Specific Purposes (ESP) module. The subjects were forty female students of medicine and ten target words were extracted from a reading passage from the course text book. The method of explicit teaching used in this research consisted of one or two reading exposures which comprised

of learners reading the passage silently and explicit instruction of the target words. The latter consisted of the teacher giving two meanings for each item, writing them on the board and repeating them once. The time "did not exceed one minute for any target item." However, it is important to note that the teacher assessed the learners' comprehension of the passage with general and specific questions but no details are given of this. Therefore it can be argued that depending on the format of the comprehension this may have also had some influence on the learners understanding, exposure, and retention of the words.

Sonbul & Schmitt (2009) tested form recall, meaning recall and meaning recognition in their study. They based their tests on Laufer et al (2004) who after an extensive study proposed a 4 element description of the levels of knowledge of the form-meaning link. Sonbul & Schmitt only evaluated "form recall", "meaning recall" and "meaning recognition," as Laufer et al (2004)'s study had indicated similar scores for recognition of form and meaning. The tests were conducted immediately after instruction and a week later. Bearing in mind that learners started with no knowledge of the vocabulary, their results indicated that learners were able to recall the meaning of nearly one-fifth of the target items (14.9%) and recognize the meaning of over one-half of the items (67.60%). For the tests conducted one week later there was an unexpected turn of events when the students read the passage again on their own initiative prior to the second delayed vocabulary test. This was reported as a factor that influenced the accuracy of the delayed figures. They concluded that "direct instruction clearly adds value to the learning process and leads to greater learning" (p.5). Their results demonstrated the value of explicit vocabulary instructions in facilitating vocabulary acquisition, and they concluded that it was important to spend time and effort on explicitly teaching lexical items to ESL students in a reading class.

2.4
Principles of Effective Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

The last section highlighted the need for explicit vocabulary instruction. This section presents and demonstrates the principles of effective explicit vocabulary instruction.

Research has been conducted into the effectiveness of the various methods and there are certain common factors and principles that arise. These include time, number of words, spelling and context, and method of instruction.

Brown also supports allocating time in the lesson and offers some guidelines for the "communicative treatment of vocabulary instruction" (p. 436). The first is allocating specific class time to vocabulary learning. He explains that in a classroom situation it is easy to forget to set aside some time for vocabulary instruction, however, in the interest of communication, it is essential that this is a priority. He explains the reason for this priority stating that as words are the basic components of language and that "survival-level communication can take place quite intelligibly when people simply string words together"(p.436).

Studies into the acquisition of vocabulary have involved lexical items ranging from about 6 words upwards. For example, Webb (2009) focused on 15 items, Lee (2003) on 36 items, Carlo (2004) on 10 – 12 words each week for 15 weeks and Sonbul and Schmitt (2009) on 10 words. Al-Homoud & Schmitt (2009) conducted a study with students in Saudi Arabia over a ten-week course. The study compared an extensive reading class against a class that followed the intensive reading and vocabulary exercises Test scores indicated that the extensive group learned about 390 words over the course i.e. 5.57 words on average for each day. While the intensive group learned about 460 words over the course i.e. 6.57 words per day. Experience indicates that this figure of 5 words per lesson is a more realistic number based on methodology that focuses on understanding and retention of the word. When deciding on the number of words to teach in one session there are certain factors that need to be considered. Students have other aspects of

language to master in addition to vocabulary and teachers have to cover many areas of language within a short space of time. This is especially relevant on English courses at higher education institutions, for example, IELTS preparatory courses, ESP and EAP courses. This is supported by Nations (2004) who advises that pre-teaching which involves rich instruction should only deal with a maximum of five or six words as this avoids learner confusion and promotes better retention.

Another factor has been highlighted by Papadakis & Bahloul (2007) following their study with Arabic and Farsi speaking learners on the use of vocabulary. They point out that explicit instruction has to include a focus on spelling. They point out that this is important to Arabic speaking learners as the Arabic script is different to English. They also reported that students didn't use new vocabulary in their writings in order not to highlight their poor spelling ability. My experience indicates that focusing on spelling is of special relevance to all whose native language script is different to English. In addition to Arabic, other languages include Korean, Cantonese, Mandarin, Russian and Farsi. The inclusion of spelling in instruction is supported by the fact that not only does it represent "the sound system or phonology of the language, it also represents the meaning or semantic system in the language" (Templeton & Morris, 2000, p. 526). Furthermore, it is included in knowledge of the word proposed by (Nation 2001, see earlier table 2) and advocates of the focus-on-form. It can be argued that in addition to spelling assisting in writing, it also enables students to recognize the word when reading texts. The importance of word recognition (Grabe, 2009) is discussed later. It is also of relevance in the IELTS reading comprehension, as knowledge of spelling would enable students to recognize the word in the text during skimming and scanning, and allows learners to retrieve the meaning and thus facilitate reading comprehension. With reference to the writing test of the IELTS, the examining rubrics of the band descriptors include spellings and thus this could impact the band achieved.

Many different methods of explicit vocabulary have been advocated, reviewed and researched by many. These include the use of semantic mapping, visual imagery, keyword, definitions, L1 translations, glossing, word association, and contextually based

meanings, word expert cards, speaking and writing practice, physical response, realia, computer technology, notebooks, word cards and other creative vocabulary activities. The effectiveness of the methods used has underlying principles that have been highlighted by research.

Schmitt(2008) after a comprehensive review of the research into incidental and explicit methods of vocabulary instruction recommended a combined methodology. Within his review he highlighted common principles relevant to explicit instruction that led to effective instruction. These included implementation of different approaches appropriately at different stages. Establishing a meaning-form link is essential followed by repeated exposures. Maintaining the maximum amount of engagement with the lexical items was another key factor. Finally, the enhancement of different aspects of word knowledge by exposing the learner to its different contexts was essential. This principle of context is supported by Brown (2007) who advises that teachers must assist students to learn vocabulary in context. He explains that encountering the words (comprehension and production) within the context of its discourse enables the learner to effectively internalize the vocabulary. Students "will associate new words with a meaningful context to which they apply" (436). This relates to the schema theory detailed later.

Oxford & Crookall (1990) critically analyzed various techniques and concluded by placing the responsibility on the teacher. They advised that "teachers should become familiar with a variety of instructional tools and should train their students to use them" (p. 26). Using a variety of methods was reiterated by Levine & Reves (1990) who after their review reported that in addition to the recycling of words, a variety of techniques should be used. Placing the onus on the teacher, Folse (2010) following his study based on observations in the classroom advises that the teacher should take command of the focus on explicit vocabulary instruction. Experience indicates that it is up to the teacher to learn the various techniques and implement them in the classroom.

Bringing another current effective principle on the table is Morgan & Rivonlucri (2004) who advocate that "learning words is a relational process" (p.6) and describe the process

as "making friends with the words of the target language" (p.6). They elaborate that the acquisition of vocabulary is a process that is branching, non-linear, personal, social and experiential. In light of the current focus on active learning and cognitive engagement, my opinion is that these learner friendly principles are appealing and using various techniques can be implemented in the classroom. These would result in improved interaction and motivation of the learners.

However, research indicates that effective vocabulary instruction will increase vocabulary knowledge but may not necessarily result in improved reading comprehension. To ensure that the vocabulary learned facilitates reading comprehension Nation (2001) warns that pre-teaching vocabulary helps comprehension only if rich instruction is involved. This includes several encounters with the word, a focus on the many aspects of knowledge of the word, encounters with the word in sentence context and learners actively engaging with the word.

Baumann (2009) clarifies this further, citing research and reviews conducted by Graves, 1986; Mezynski, 1983; National Institute on Child Health and Human Development (NICHD, 2000); and well known studies conducted by Beck, Perfetti, and Mckeown (1982), Beck, Omanson, and Perfetti (1983) and Mckeeown, Beck, Omanson, and Pople (1985) who have also provided support for these three main principles.
He explains that three factors are essential for vocabulary instruction to enhance reading comprehension.

> "instruction must include definitional and contextual information
> for the words that are taught; students must have multiple instructional
> encounters with the words; and instruction must require students to engage
> in active processing or high depth of processing" (p.313).

It is important to note that these principles mentioned are prevalent in the reviews of effective vocabulary instruction mentioned above [2.4].

The principles and factors mentioned in this [section 2.4] informed the method used in my study.

2.5
Principles in Action

The last section presented the principles of effective explicit vocabulary instruction. This section analyses and presents studies that have applied these principles in the classroom.

Folse (2010) assessed Explicit Vocabulary Focus that occurred in Intensive English Program classes of Communication Skills, Composition, Grammar, Reading and TOEFL preparation at a large North American university. The students were in the upper-intermediate level with a proficiency of approximately 4 on the IELTS and their first languages were Arabic, French, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish and Thai. The investigation was based on observations in the classroom and thus its findings are relevant to this study. Students' opinions on good teachers and teaching methodologies are also heard through this study, as this is used to highlight the effective practices used by these teachers. The study revealed many bad practices with some teachers not implementing any effective vocabulary instruction; however, after I reviewed the data and focused on highlighting the positive, certain principles of effective explicit vocabulary instruction in the classroom emerge. These principles in action highlighted below in the classroom support those in 2.3.

The Communication skills course which did not have a course book had the highest number of Explicit Vocabulary Focus, as the teacher took ownership of using appropriate techniques and implementing effective explicit vocabulary instruction. This supports my argument that course books don't contain adequate material for teaching vocabulary. Teachers would suggest words and offer words during the lesson thus pushing the students above their comfort zone. So although students would use basic vocabulary, teachers would use more appropriate vocabulary for their level. New words were always written on the board and brief explanations given. Personally, I find this a useful method

especially during speaking and writing tasks. and students have usually appreciated this and often written them down. Another point highlighted was that the teacher gave students' strategies on ways to remember specific words.

Students were encouraged to ask questions and not just the basic meaning of a word but the concept too. Folse suggests that generally students asked basic questions, and didn't ask ones of higher order thinking. He gives the following example (p. 146): "What does X mean" as a basic question. While a higher order thinking question would be "What is the difference between X and Y" or "Can young people use X in conversation". In my experience, even if students don't ask higher order thinking questions, the teacher should and can lead into these and generate higher order thinking.

Another important principle practiced was that the teacher engaged the whole class in word learning thus implementing an interactive methodology which was liked by the students. He gives the example:

> S1: What is the meaning of accurately?
> T (to class): What do you think?
> S2: exactly
> S3: I don't know
> S4: properly
> T: Accurately is like exactly. It means you have the correct answer. (p.147)

Experience indicates that vocabulary instruction that engages the learner, involves the learner, and promotes active learning and cognitive engagement, is an effective principle that should be the basis of explicit instruction. This also has a ripple effect of motivating the students which is also essential in an ESL classroom. Folse's observations support this. He pointed out that in the reading class where explicit vocabulary was disappointingly minimal, and the teacher only asked students to write the words and copy the definition from the textbook, the morale of the students was low and many students walked in late. One can argue that this is due to several reasons. Students found

difficulties comprehending the reading without adequate explanations of the vocabulary and therefore lost interest. Or students were not actively involved with the lesson and therefore found it boring and this impacted on their motivation.

Another effective practice involved teachers designing their own vocabulary teaching and learning activities using different resources (e.g. short video clips with relevant vocabulary activities). Experience indicates that this is effective provided the activities are cognitively engaging. If video clips are used then they should be short chunks and not long episodes as students lose interest. Secondly, these must be used in conjunction with vocabulary tasks that involve some element of careful listening and writing. Task based activities that involve an element of vocabulary instruction which promote active learning and cognitive engagement can be highly effective.

The effective principles in action implemented in class mentioned in the above section can be summed up as importance of spelling, visual representation, contextual information, multiple encounters, active engagement, higher processing and a relational process. [section 2].

The principles reviewed in this section were also put into action by Lee (2003), however his were based on concepts of teacher-directed learner interaction and negotiation capturing the multifaceted view of word knowledge. His method consisted of, visual representation of the word, hearing the word, understanding the word, saying the word and using the word in context. In his study the word was used in writing as his study was based on the link between vocabulary and writing.

The vocabulary instruction method used in my study is based and infused with the principles mentioned in [section 2 and Table 2 in section 1]. The method is explained below.

- Write the word on the board (visual representation, spelling and form). The teacher/researcher writes the word on the whiteboard thus providing a visual representation and spelling of the word and implementation of the focus on form.

- Teacher models pronunciation (hear the word, spoken – written link, focus on form). The teacher pronounces the word, modeling the pronunciation, thus the students hear the word.

- Students pronounce the word. Students pronounce the word thus engaging with the word, processing of the word, linking the phonology and the semantics of the word and implementing the focus on form.

- Definition of the word in context written on the board (focus on meaning and context). Then the definition relevant to the context of the text was written on the board.

- Brief explanation of the word in context including a sentence (understanding and context and negotiation and activating schema). A brief explanation of the definition and context is provided. This gives an understanding within contextual use, activates schema and focuses on developing an understanding of the meaning

- Students to produce sentences verbally (engaging in active processing, negotiation and focusing on use). Then the students are encouraged to produce sentences using the word in context. The teacher corrects and gives effective and appropriate feedback where necessary. This gives students an opportunity to engage in active processing and focuses on the use of the word.

- Encountering the word in different ways (although limited, is present)

2.6
The link between Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension

In light of the above, questions emerge. Is there a link between vocabulary and reading comprehension? If so what is the nature of this link? "Comprehension involves a number of lower order (i.e. word-level) and higher order processes (i.e., processes above the word level) specific to reading" (Pressley, 2000, p. 546). It is important to note that reading

comprehension involves many processes and factors, one of which is vocabulary knowledge. The National Reading Panel (2000) emphasized vocabulary as one of the five key areas essential for literacy because of its relationship to reading comprehension. It concluded that comprehension development cannot be understood without a critical examination of the role played by vocabulary knowledge. This section explores the link between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.

Text is made up of words and thus it follows that the readers' understanding of the words facilitates reading comprehension. Having reviewed a great deal of research Grabe (2009) reports that word recognition is a major contributory factor to reading comprehension, however, word recognition is not reading comprehension. He elaborates fluent reading comprehension requires automatic and quick recognition of a large vocabulary. This occurs when the "visual input from the word on the page activates lexical entries in the readers' lexicon that have well-represented information of all four types: orthographic, phonological, semantic and syntactic" (p.22). Thus one can conclude that on occasions when time is a factor as is in the IELTS exam, then students need to possess this skill, and the above principles need to be incorporated into vocabulary instruction in order to give the students the tools which facilitate reading comprehension. However, it is important to note that students don't necessarily require knowledge of the entire lexicon in the texts in order to comprehend it or in order to answer questions accurately. Like many native and non-native speakers, students can and do infer or logically guess meanings of the word from its context. These strategies should also be part of reading comprehension instruction as it is not always possible for students taking the IELTS to retrieve the meanings of all the words in the text.

The role of words in reading is highlighted again in the concept of bottom-up and top-down processing which is often referred to in reading methodology. Reading is now widely regarded as an interactive process, where the top-down processing draws on the readers experience and bottom-up processing draws on the linguistic processing. It is in the bottom-up processing that knowledge of words play a key role. Brown (2007, p. 358) breaks this process down, "readers must first recognize a multiplicity of linguistic signals

(letters, morphemes, syllables, words, phrases, grammatical cues, discourse markers and use their linguistic data-processing mechanisms to impose some sort of order on these signals". From an experienced teachers' perspective, the interaction between the two processes i.e. top-down and bottom-up, widely referred to as interactive reading, should infuse into teaching methodology. Therefore, in addition to instruction in vocabulary, the instruction of other comprehension skills should also be included.

Acknowledging the importance of the reader in this process of reading comprehension is not just by the top-down processing mentioned earlier, but also the schema theory. McCarthy (2003) using the schema theory proposed by Carrell & Eisterhold (1983) and recognized widely in the field of L2 reading elaborates on its significance. He elaborates that this has relevance and importance "in the classroom setting when the teacher is trying to activate existing knowledge to make the encounter with new words more meaningful" (p. 108). From a cognitive perspective, the schema theory acknowledges the influence of the learner's background on reading comprehension, as it suggests that the reader's background knowledge and experience impacts the way text is interpreted. Brown (2007 pp. 358) detailing this states, that when reading text "the reader brings information, knowledge, emotion, experience, and culture-that is, schemata (plural)-to the printed word". In my experience, this surfaces not just when students are reading and comprehending text, but also when listening to texts and in general oral and written communication. Thus explaining and discussing words within contexts of sentences and/or texts is more effective than simply giving a definition.

Context is linked to the schema theory. Elaborating on the schema theory, Brown (2007) explains that for a full understanding of text the reader has to have knowledge of content schemata and formal schemata. Content schemata include knowledge of people, the world, culture and universe and formal schemata consists of knowledge of language and discourse structure. Brown (2007, p. 359; citing Clarke & Silberstein 1977 pp.136-137) then links the two "Skill in reading depends on the efficient interaction between linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world". Thus from the above it can be deduced that vocabulary provides part of the linguistic knowledge; and to some extent

knowledge of the world is provided by an explanation of the word in context. An interaction between the two assists in the understanding of the text. From an experienced teacher's perspective, this process is apparent when students are completing a reading task or reading aloud. Students ask questions that reflect their search for an understanding of both the lexis and the context i.e. of the formal and the content schemata.

2.7
Hypotheses

This link between vocabulary and reading comprehension has also been explained through various hypotheses. Anderson & Freebody (1981) referred to the connection between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension by proposing three hypotheses. The Instrumentalist hypothesis states that knowing word meanings enables a person to comprehend a text containing those words. They expanded on this with the Knowledge hypothesis which states that vocabulary is related to topic knowledge which in turn is related to reading comprehension. The Aptitude hypothesis proposes that intelligence or general verbal ability plays a mediating role between vocabulary and comprehension. Mezynski (1983) suggested the access hypothesis which indicates that the efficiency with which a reader can locate word meanings influences text understanding; while Krashen (1985) suggested the importance of the amount of comprehensible text known to the reader, referring to this as the input hypothesis. Nagy, (2005); Grabe, (2009); and Wagner et al, (2007) also refer to the metalinguistic hypothesis which is the reader's awareness and ability to reflect on and manipulate language. Experience indicates, that either one or some of the above hypotheses play a part at some time with different individuals and different texts at different times. This is noticeable when observing or assisting students with their reading comprehension tasks. Being aware and recognizing these factors enables one to assist students in improving their reading comprehension.

2.8
Research Studies

Referring back to the links between lexis and reading, further questions emerge. Does this link materialize into improved reading comprehension in a classroom and test setting? Does this link materialize into better reading comprehension scores for students preparing for the IELTS reading test?

There is very little research exploring the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension that has been conducted with ESL learners. Laufer (1989) in his study with Arabic and Hebrew speaking learners involved learners reading texts comprising of various percentages of unknown words (10%, 15%, etc). He reported that when 95% of words in a text were known to some degree then successful comprehension was achieved. Carlo et al (2004) conducted a study with fifth-grade Hispanic ESL learners. Over the course of 15 weeks, the students were taught 10 to 12 new words each week, using intensive rich instruction that included spelling, pronunciation, context, depth of meaning, morphology and syntax. Their study indicated gains in both vocabulary and reading revealing that pre-learning vocabulary facilitates reading comprehension. On the other hand, Johnson (1982) reported that vocabulary learning had no significant impact on reading comprehension tests. It is important to note that, studying the definition of target words was the method used and details of the instruction are not given. Referring back to Baumann (2009) this result supports his review that only certain types of instruction are effective in improving reading comprehension.

Webb (2009) examined the effects of pre-learning vocabulary on reading comprehension of Japanese university students who were in an EFL class having studied English for a minimum of 6years. His study involved the use of receptive and productive word pairs which were nine nouns and 6 verbs and used contrived sentences rather than authentic text. In addition, words were substituted for nonsense words although participants were not aware of this. Participants were given 6 minutes to learn 15 target words where translation was given and were tested soon after. In the receptive group participants

covered the translation and then looked at the target words and tried to recall each word's translation. They were allowed to uncover the translation and check the meaning. In the production group, translations were given on the left, target words on the right hand side and participants covered the target words and then tried to recall them. The score for L2 vocabulary gains for the receptive group was 42% and for the productive group was 29%. On the comprehension test the receptive group scored 73% and the productive group scored 64%. He concluded that pre-learning vocabulary was an effective method of improving reading comprehension. The reading comprehension test used a True/False format in which the sentence was constructed so that the target word was critical for accurate comprehension. This valid method was used in the comprehension test administered in my study. However, his results need to be seen in the light of the fact that the tests followed a picture description test format. One can argue that his low vocabulary gains may be due to various factors including the large number of words i.e. 15 words that students had to learn, only 6 minutes given to the students to learn the words and translations and no other explicit vocabulary instruction provided by the teacher. Although he had valid reasons for using nonsense words, and students were not aware of it, I did not use nonsense words as this may have resulted in students feeling de-motivated at the end of the study and moreover, time is a crucial factor in IELTS preparatory courses.

2.9

Correlation values

Placing a numerical figure on the correlations between vocabulary and reading comprehension has been researched in L1 settings and these have demonstrated a strong causal relationship. However, in comparison there have been very few studies in ESL settings. Laufer (1997) cited a few assessment studies with strong correlations between vocabulary knowledge and reading. The values ranged from r = .50 to r = .75. Focusing on the international exams Qian (2002) found correlations from r = .68 to r = .82 between TOEFL reading and vocabulary measures. Although there have been no studies on the

correlations between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension using IELTS materials in an L2 classroom, nor have there been any based in the classroom; experience indicates that there is a strong correlation. It is hoped that the current study will shed more light on this.

2.10
Pre-reading Activities

The previous [sections 2.6, 2.7, 2.8,] explain and explore the connection between vocabulary and reading comprehension and the principles of explicit vocabulary instruction. This leads to the next question of when can this be implemented so that it is most effective in enhancing and fostering reading comprehension?

The pre-reading phase is the time when principled explicit instruction can be implemented as part of the pre-reading instruction. Experience indicates, that is the time when it is the most fruitful and most effective in assisting with reading. Familiarizing with the text and activating schema are the two key teacher directed processes which should be implemented as pre-reading instruction. It is within this framework that principled instruction of key vocabulary can be applied. It is important to note though, that although it is an important part of pre-reading, and plays an important role in enhancing reading comprehension, it is not the only component of pre-reading instruction. The latter consists of essential components that should form a pre-reading strategy Grabe & Stoller (2001, p. 191) highlight some pre-reading activities which include previewing the text to establish the general subject of the reading, relevant vocabulary and challenges. Skimming the text to determine the main ideas, answering questions or posing questions about the text, exploring key vocabulary and reflecting on or reviewing information from previously read texts are other recommended activities. Brown (2007) details the pre-reading activities, "advising skimming, scanning, predicting, and activating schemata" (p.375). The purpose of pre-reading instruction is highlighted by Grabe & Stoller (2001):

It helps students' access background information that can facilitate subsequent reading, provides specific information needed for successful comprehension, stimulates students' interest, sets up student expectations and models strategies that students can later use on their own. (p.191)

Although the focus on this study has been primarily pre-reading, activities during reading and post reading are also advised. Similar principles as indicated in [section 2] should be applied at these times too. In addition, the instruction of other comprehension skills is also recommended to enhance reading comprehension.

Chapter 3

Method

3.1

Background of Research Method

The previous section presented the pivotal role of vocabulary, the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction, the principles of effective explicit vocabulary instruction and the critical connection between vocabulary and reading comprehension. The principles of effective explicit vocabulary instruction highlighted are implemented in this research. This section exhibits the details of this research.

Quantitative research was used in this study as it controls measurement, is objective, reliable and the data can be replicated. Moreover it is outcome-oriented and assumes a stable reality. (Nunan, 1992).This was a classroom based study because the aim of the research was to have something "positive to say to those looking for directions and signposts to practice" and context is important in research if it is to effectively guide on pedagogic practice (Nunan, p.105). Context is important to me because as a teacher I always look for directions, suggestions, effective methods and guidance in pedagogy as part of my professional development. In addition to listening and participating at conferences and workshops, I turn to reading articles, books and research studies. It is the context among other things that shouts out at me and captures my attention.

Based on the guidelines and research in Read (2000) this study used the discrete-point approach and the communicative approach to language testing. The discrete-point approach was used to measure the target vocabulary known and selective vocabulary measure was used. A multiple choice test was used for several reasons. Firstly, it makes efficient use of time, and this was an important factor in this study as it was classroom based and conducted within a lesson. This type of test is commonly used by language teachers to make an assessment of both the students' progress in learning the target vocabulary and in the diagnosis of areas of weakness of knowledge of the target

vocabulary. Words are treated as "independent units" (Read, 2000, p. 3) and the test is devised to measure learner's knowledge of individual words. The individual unit concept supports Hinkel (2004) mentioned earlier [section 2.1]. In addition to being used frequently by those interested in teaching and learning vocabulary (Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997; Sonbul & Schmitt, 2009.), it is also "most commonly used in standardized tests" (Read, 2000, p.2). Further details of the test are discussed in [section 3.2].

The discrete point approach has its critics because among other drawbacks of this test, this approach does not test the ability of the learner to draw upon or use the knowledge in communication situations or tasks. (Read, 2000). Although this approach is widely used, current trends in English-speaking countries are in favor of the communicative approach to language testing. Recent studies (Chang, 2007; Lee 2003; Webb, 2009.) have used the communicative approach to demonstrate the connection between vocabulary and other skills. The approach was also used in this study to demonstrate the link between knowledge of vocabulary and reading comprehension. However, the discrete approach was also used in this study for several reasons. It was going to be followed by the communicative approach to language testing. Secondly, it was needed in order to demonstrate the extent of the vocabulary gains after principled vocabulary instruction; and a causal relationship between the two factors of vocabulary and reading comprehension. The scoring method used in the comprehension test was based on knowledge of the target word indicated in the vocabulary test. [See further details in section 3.1].

As mentioned above, also used in this study was the communicative approach to language testing which is based on a task and the test-taker is evaluated on their ability to meet the language demands of the task, specifically, their language knowledge and strategic competence (Read, 2000). In this study the task was a comprehension test and the text was extracted from an IELTS Intermediate workbook used with Intermediate level students on a preparatory IELTS Course. As there are many texts available, this one was chosen for its readability i.e. the lexical and structural difficulty was appropriate but

not overwhelming for this group of participants. As Read (2000) points out that for second language readers a lack of cultural knowledge and organization of the text referred to as content and formal schemata [see 2.4] can affect the readability of the text. Hence the text was carefully chosen for its readability and suitability to reduce other interfering factors that may affect the accuracy of the results. The text was also chosen for its potential of exploitability. Although for the purpose of this study, exploitability was not relevant, the intention was to use the material to generate production of other skills at the next lesson. Therefore, by using the communicative approach to language testing, the students would be evaluated not just on their vocabulary knowledge but also their ability to draw upon and use their knowledge in communication, specifically in a reading comprehension task. Another factor considered was that the participants found meaning in doing the test and this would be generated if there was a relevance to the task. Therefore, this task of reading comprehension is of relevance to their current and future studies and is also encountered in the IELTS. [See section 1 & further details and discussion in section 3.2]. Furthermore, understanding a text during reading is of importance in their daily lives. Consequently, in order to gain greater insight into effective pedagogy the communicative approach was used.

It is interesting to note that the communicative approach to language testing also is supported by Brown (2007), [see section 2.1] who proposed that language skills are generated by factors, one of which is lexical items. Thus one can argue that setting tasks that are based on similar lines as communicative language testing will enable students to practice their skills and can be used for formative and summative assessments. Furthermore, it gives them practice in test taking which is also important for academic progress.

3.2
Participants

The participants were nine ESL learners of English enrolled on an IELTS preparation course which follows the integrated skills approach at a university in Dubai, UAE. The

classes are tiered and all the participants had taken an assessment test either at the end of the previous class or as part of the entrance assessment, prior to joining this class. The participants were in the Intermediate level class. They came from multi L1 backgrounds – three were Arabic speaking learners, three were Iranians, two were Russian speaking and one was Korean. Participants were informed of the tasks and the nature of the tasks they would carry out. Participants displayed an interest and an eagerness to carry out the tasks. Their responses and comments confirmed the validity of my study from a learners' perspective.

3.3

Materials

In order to eliminate the possibility that the participants had been previously exposed to the text, students were asked to confirm that the text had not been seen by them previously. An additional precaution was taken by administering the tests during the first week of the class in the new term. In order to ensure an appropriate level of difficulty and bearing in mind the students were working towards the IELTS exam, the reading comprehension passage was selected from the Cambridge Objective IELTS Intermediate Workbook (Black & Sharp 2006, p. 6), [Appendix 2]. Only six target words were selected from the text due to reasons mentioned earlier (Nation, 2001, Al Homoud & Schmitt, 2009). The six words were distinctive, responded, undesirables, commercials, suspicious, and script. These target words were specifically selected as a result of a pilot study with other learners at the same level, in the previous term which had indicated that participants would have very limited or no knowledge of these words. The vocabulary test [Appendix 1] which was a paper-pencil test was developed to take into consideration various factors. Firstly, the test had to measure the meaning recognition of the word thus requiring the learner to demonstrate knowledge of word meaning and receptive knowledge. Also, the explicit vocabulary instruction had been aimed at word form and meaning and the comprehension test was a receptive task aimed at testing the learners' receptive knowledge of the word. However, Schmitt and McCarthy (1997, p.98) note that there are various techniques used for testing vocabulary (e.g. multiple choice, illustration,

definition,) and all relate to the meaning of a word therefore having very little to do with receptive or productive.

The paper-pencil test followed the multiple-choice format [see 3.1] similarly used by Sonbul and Schmitt (2009) when testing meaning recognition for their investigation into vocabulary acquisition. Each target word included five choices: the correct answer, three distracters and one "I do not know" option. The latter option was given to the students in order to reduce guessing the right answer. The distracters were chosen using the criteria of meaning of words close to spellings of the word (e.g. suspicious, suspensive, suspension). The Yes/No test which is commonly used requires the learner to respond to the question 'Do you know this word?' was not used. This test which is part of the "X-Lex" test (Swansea Levels Test) follows Meara and Milton (2003); however, as Milton (2005) reports that this test may not reflect the true extent of vocabulary knowledge of native Arabic speakers and therefore does not record accurate results. Different groups of learners display differences in the use of this test as the term "know" is open to different interpretations and judgments. Experience with the Yes/No test in other countries indicates a similar evaluation, that this is not an accurate measurement of the learners' vocabulary because the term "know" is unclear. Students either underestimate their knowledge or over estimate their knowledge. The multiple choice format test was also used because this is a popular method of assessment [see 3.1]. Coombe (2007, citing Coombe, Huxley and Folse, 2007.) explains that Multiple Choice Questions are widely used to assess learning at the recall and comprehension levels. Reasons given for this popularity include their reliability, their ease of marking and versatility in assessing students at all levels.

Full text comprehension was not tested as various factors interplay in text comprehension and thus it would not have given an accurate reflection of the critical role played or not played by vocabulary. The reading comprehension test consisted of six questions [Appendix 2]. These were devised to measure sentence comprehension of the sentence that contained the target word; thus an accurate answer required an accurate understanding of the target word (Webb, 2009; Lee, 2003). Moreover, these are similar to

some of the questions found in the IELTS exam thus making a connection between the comprehension text, test and the IELTS. The questions were devised for testing and therefore involved "accuracy-type exercises" in contrast to questions devised for teaching purposes which should "develop the skills" (Grellet, 2002, p.9). The questions followed a True/False/Do not know format which is similar to the True/False/Not Given format consistently used in the IELTS exams. The option of Do not Know was substituted for Not Given in order to prevent the participant from guessing the answer. Three questions were selected from the Cambridge Objective IELTS Intermediate Workbook (Black & Sharp 2006, p. 6) and three further questions were devised. [Appendix 2] The results of the pilot study conducted in the previous term with different learners at the same level, had indicated that the learners could answer the questions correctly, if the meaning of the vocabulary was given.

Each accurate answer in the comprehension task would only be given a mark if the target word was answered correctly in the vocabulary test. Therefore this links the two and would give a true reflection of the learners' understanding of the word and its impact on comprehension. This scoring method reduces the chances of the learner scoring a mark for a right answer that resulted from guess work. It is also an accurate reflection of the impact of vocabulary knowledge and a more accurate reflection of the causal relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension.

3.4
Procedure

Several measures were taken to provide optimum conditions for the investigation maintain the integrity of the research and hence generate accurate results.
1. Tables were set out in a similar layout as when taking tests or exams.
2. Students were advised of the format and the tasks and the sequence of presentation.
3. They were asked to switch off their phones or to put the silent tone on their phones, in addition to not taking or making phone calls or texting.

4. They were asked to move any books or bags away from their table.

5. Electronic or hard copy dictionaries were not allowed and peer assistance was strictly prohibited.

6. To ensure that students did not stress over these tests and not engage in guesswork, they were also informed of three things.

    a) Firstly they were informed that their results would have no bearing on their final course marks or their final exam marks, therefore relieving the pressure off them and allowing them to avoid guesswork.

    b) Students were told to view these as tasks not as tests because as Milton(2005, p.342) states that "In reality we know that faced with a test they do not always behave either reasonably or consistently"

    c) Finally students were informed not to engage in guesswork, if they didn't know they were not to hesitate to indicate a response of 'do not know'.

7. A pretest [Appendix 1], consisting of the vocabulary test [see 3.1] was administered during the first hour of the session.

8. Participants were first given the paper-pencil vocabulary test. They were told to read the instructions, the target words and the meanings on the vocabulary test very carefully.

    a) They were reminded that if they did not know the answer they must not guess but should circle or tick the option "I do not know".

    b) Students were advised not to ask for assistance or to refer to their dictionaries.

9. When all the students had completed the vocabulary test, the completed papers were collected.

10. Then students were given the reading comprehension test. [see 3.1, 3.3 & Appendix 2]

11. Once again the students were told to read the text, the instructions and the questions carefully.

    a) The format of the task was explained.

b) They were advised that if they didn't know the answer they were not to guess the response but to circle or tick 'Do not know'.

c) Students were asked not to ask for assistance from anyone or to refer to their dictionaries.

d) They were reminded that the marks would not impact on their course or exam grades.

e) They were advised to do the best that they could.

12. On completion the vocabulary test and comprehension test papers were collected.

To control for any further exposure to the material (as occurred in Sonbul & Schmitt (2009), [see section 2.4] and to prevent students from searching for meanings, the next part of the investigation was carried out during the same session.

Explicit vocabulary instruction was used to explain the meanings of the six target words. One word at a time was handled with each target word taking approximately two to three minutes with a total of fifteen minutes. The timing was strictly adhered to guarantee that there was enough time for the comprehension test. The principled model of instruction explained earlier [section 2] was implemented.

1. The teacher/researcher wrote the word on the whiteboard thus providing a visual representation and spelling of the word and implementing the focus on form.

2. The teacher pronounced the word, modeling the pronunciation, thus the students heard the word. Thus providing a visual and audio encounter and link.

3. The teacher asked the students to pronounce the word together. Students pronounced the word thus engaging with the word, processing of the word, linking the phonology and the semantics of the word and implementing the focus on form.

4. Then the definition relevant to the context of the text was written on the board, and a brief explanation of the definition and context was provided. This gave an

understanding within contextual use, activated schema and focused on developing an understanding of the meaning.

5.   Then the students were encouraged to produce sentences using the word in context, three students were called on and some volunteered. The teacher corrected and gave effective and appropriate feedback where necessary. This gave students an opportunity to engage in active processing, negotiation and focused on the use of the word.

6.   The different steps also generated encounters with the word, albeit a little limited.

After the principled explicit vocabulary instruction, post-tests were administered. The post-tests consisted of the same paper-pencil vocabulary test and comprehension test administered in the pre-test. The same procedures and conditions and instructions implemented in the pre-test were strictly followed to maintain the integrity of the investigation. The papers were collected and later scored. Statistical numbers were calculated. The results are displayed in the table 3 below and analyzed.

Chapter 4 **Results & Analysis**

4.1
Summary of Results

The section above [See section 3] presented the background of the method of the study, the materials, the details of the participants and the procedure that was followed in this investigation. This classroom based investigation consisted of paper-pencil pre-tests, principled explicit vocabulary instruction and post-tests of both vocabulary and reading comprehension, within strict conditions to ensure the validity, the integrity and the accuracy of the results. The tests were scored, statistics calculated and the results tabulated in the table below.

Descriptive statistics i.e. the scores, means, mode, range, standard deviation, correlation coefficient for the pre-test and post-test vocabulary test and comprehension are reported in Table 3 below

Table 3

The scores, means, mode, range, standard deviation, correlation coefficient for the pre-test and post-test vocabulary test and comprehension are displayed in the table below.

	Vocabulary (6 words)		Comprehension (6 questions)	
Student	Pre- test	Post-test	Pretest	Post-test
1	1	6	1	5
2	0	5	0	5
3	1	5	1	5
4	0	6	0	5
5	2	6	1	6
6	0	4	0	3
7	1	5	0	4
8	0	5	0	5
9	1	6	1	5
Range	0 - 2	4 - 6	0 - 1	3 - 6
Mode	1	6	0	5
Mean	0.66	5.33	0.44	4.77
Standard Deviation	**0.707107**	**0.707107**	**0.527046**	**0.833333**
Mean %	11%	89%	7%	80%
Improvement in mean score %	78%		73%	
Correlation Coefficient (Vocabulary- Reading Comprehension)	**0.777817**			

NB. It is important to note that as mentioned earlier a score was only given to the comprehension if the target word was also right.

4.2

Vocabulary Data Analysis

Table 4 presents the pre-test and post-test vocabulary test results.

	Range	Mode	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Percentage
Pre-test	0 - 2	1	0.66	0.707107	11%
Post-test	4 - 6	6	5.33	0.707107	89%

The results show that prior to explicit vocabulary instruction the number of words students' knew ranged between 0 to 2 and the mode of 1 indicates that most students' knew only 1 word. The average number of target words known by the students was 0.66, the standard deviation was .7070107 and the mean percentage score was 11% indicating a low vocabulary score. Following explicit vocabulary instruction the number of words students' knew ranged from 4 to 6 and the mode of 6 indicates that most students' knew 6 words. The average number of target words known by the students was 5.33, the standard deviation was .7070107 and the mean percentage score was 89% indicating a higher vocabulary score.

Comparing the two sets of data indicates that after explicit vocabulary instruction the number of words students knew increased, the mode increased indicating that the number of words that most students knew increased and the average number of target words known increased. Moreover, the percentage mean score increased by 78% thus indicating that students' learnt 78% more words than known prior to the instruction. This reflects a substantial increase in vocabulary gained after principled explicit vocabulary instruction.

The results indicate that explicit vocabulary instruction resulted in a significant increase in the acquisition of new vocabulary. The results support the important role of explicit vocabulary instruction as indicated earlier by Decarrico, 2001; Folse, 2004; Graves, 2006; Laufer, 2005; Nation, 2001; & and other researchers [see section 2.1] . The rationale underlying the effectiveness of the method used is supported by Hinkel, 2004

who refers to the necessary processing of independent words as mentioned earlier [see 2.3]. The results also highlight the effectiveness of the method of explicit vocabulary instruction used thus supporting proposals made by Brown, 2007; Folse, (2010); Lee, 2003; Schmitt, 2008; Thornbury, 2002; & and others mentioned in [section 2.3, 2.4]. Furthermore, it strengthens their argument, including mine, for the need of systematic principled vocabulary instruction. The results of this study support studies conducted recently by Carlo, 2004; Lee, 2003; Sonbul & Schmitt, 2009; & Webb, 2009; who reported gains in vocabulary following explicit vocabulary instruction.

Considering that the vocabulary instruction focused on the acquisition of six words, took 15minutes and resulted in significant gains one can surmise that this is a feasible methodology for use by teachers in the classroom. Experience indicates that in ESL classes especially IELTS preparatory courses a great deal of vocabulary needs to be covered within a limited span of time. [See 2.2, 2.3] The significant gains in vocabulary make this method a viable methodology for use in the classroom.

Although a good post-instruction vocabulary score was achieved by all the students, and the mode was 6 words, it is important to note that there was a variance in the scores, not all students achieved a 100% score and some students did not achieve the six. This may be due to the fact that students are individuals with differing learning styles, cognitive abilities. Although steps were taken to ensure that students didn't get stresses [see section 3.2] it is possible that there was an element of stress, thus affecting students abilities to complete the task to the best of their ability. Alternatively it may be because some students require several encounters with the words in order to retain them in their memory. The need for several encounters for the retention of vocabulary meanings especially long term is suggested by many (e.g. Baumann, 2009; Schmitt, 2008;) and can also be implemented by the teacher. This would be an area for future research. However, the concern for the absence of 100% score by all students needs to be balanced out by the fact that other studies (Sonbul & Schmitt, 2009; Webb, 2009,) did not achieve a 100% score by all its participants either. Most importantly, all the participants' scores

demonstrated an increase in vocabulary gains after principled explicit vocabulary instruction.

The present study suggests that ESL teachers should not neglect the teaching of vocabulary and should allocate time during the class for the direct teaching of vocabulary. Studies in Section 1, section 2 indicate several factors. These include, the important role of vocabulary in the acquisition of all the language skills, the importance of vocabulary knowledge and use in exams such as IELTS, a lack of specific vocabulary instruction in the classroom reported by both researchers and students, and principles of vocabulary instruction that can be implemented in the classroom. Therefore, the results of this study that indicate significant improvements in vocabulary gains, highlights a practical way of implementing vocabulary instruction and offers a principled method of vocabulary instruction, that is highly successful and effective. It offers a feasible method of implementing effective vocabulary instruction in the classroom within the set times allocated. [see section 3]. Moreover, it is a valid method that can be used by the teacher in the classroom in IELTS preparatory classes. Furthermore, it is a method that can be used in an ESP class using target vocabulary in the relevant texts, whether it is a Medical English course, a Business English course or Police English course.

4.3
The Reading Comprehension Data Analysis

Table 5 presents the pre-test and post-test reading comprehension results

	Range	Mode	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Percentage
Pre-test	0 - 1	0	0.44	0.527046	7%
Post-test	3 - 6	5	4.77	0.833333	80%

Looking at the reading comprehension results, these indicate that prior to the vocabulary instruction, the students got a range of 0 to1 questions right and the mode of 0 indicates

that most students got none of the questions right. The average number of questions students answered accurately was 0.44, the standard deviation was 0.524064 and a percentage of 7% of the questions were answered accurately indicating a low percentage reading comprehension score. However, following explicit vocabulary instruction of the relevant vocabulary, the number of questions answered accurately ranged from 3 to 6 with the mode of 5 thus indicating that most students achieved 5 accurate answers. The average number of questions students answered accurately was 4.7, the standard deviation was 0.83333 and a percentage of 80% of the questions were answered accurately, indicating a significantly higher percentage reading comprehension score. The difference in the pre-test and post-test percentage score of 73% indicate a significant improvement in the comprehension scores following principled explicit vocabulary instruction. A higher comprehension score was achieved following the vocabulary instruction.

The value of the correlation coefficient which is used to examine the relationship between two sets of data i.e. the vocabulary after explicit instruction and the comprehension after explicit instruction of the vocabulary is 0.777817. This value gives an indication of the strength and the nature of the relationship between the vocabulary and the comprehension. As the correlation coefficient can range from +1.00 which represents a perfect relationship to -1.00 which indicates a negative relationship, the correlation coefficient of this relationship using this data reports a + 0.77 indicating a strong positive relationship, albeit not a perfect relationship. This correlation results between vocabulary and reading comprehension results support studies conducted by Laufer (1997) and Qian (2002). This causal relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension is visually highlighted in Chart 1 below.

<u>Chart 1 presents the pre-test and post-test vocabulary scores and pre-test and post-test comprehension scores</u>
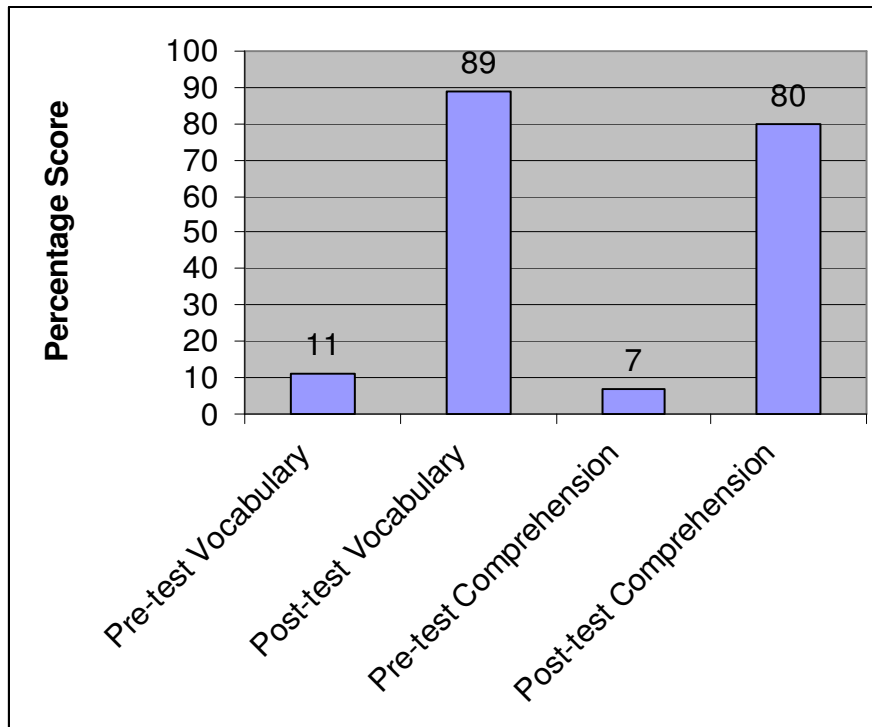
The results also indicate that students who have pre-learned the vocabulary in the sentences understand the latter better and this leads to better reading comprehension. This in turn ripples into more accurate responses in the reading comprehension. This is supported by the Instrumental hypotheses, the Knowledge Hypotheses, the bottom-up processes and the schemata referred to earlier in [section 2].

The positive results also validates the effectiveness of the principled explicit vocabulary instruction used supporting studies and research mentioned in section 3. It also is supported by the studies and research mentioned in [section 3] that indicate that following certain principles of explicit vocabulary instruction results in improved reading comprehension. This effective pre-teaching of the vocabulary in the text resulting in improved comprehension has pedagogical implications for the teacher. The teacher can implement this within the classroom within the time frame of the lesson with effective results. This method can also be implemented at all levels on courses that prepare

students for the IELTS exam. Furthermore, it is a method that can be used in an ESP class using target vocabulary in the relevant texts, whether it is a Medical English course, a Business English course or Police English course.

The range in accurate answers of 3 to 6 reflects a variance in the students understanding which may be due to various factors. Firstly, students are individuals with different abilities, aptitudes, learning styles, backgrounds and previous experiences. This variance is also supported by the Aptitude and Metalinguistic Hypotheses [See 2.4] which also acknowledges individual differences. Referring to the differing experiences of the learner, it is possible that the content schemata [see 2.4] may have not have been adequately activated during the explanation of the vocabulary. Therefore one can argue that in order to combat the above as effectively as possible, the teacher needs to actively engage the learners with the text using different methodologies and instruct learners in additional comprehension strategies to complement vocabulary instruction.[see section 2] From experience this is an effective methodology that can be implemented and would meet the needs of all learners. This is an area that should be researched into further. It is also possible that even though they were informed that this would have no bearing on their marks, students still get stressed under test conditions and this may have affected their performance. This reinforces the argument that students need plenty of practice with tasks that are similar to communicative language testing. [see section 3.1]

However, this variance of improved scores must not detract attention from the importance of the overall positive results of this study which indicated that all the participants improved their reading comprehension scores and thus reflecting their improved reading comprehension. As this principled method of explicit vocabulary instruction improves reading comprehension and it can be implemented in the classroom, it should be combined with other comprehension strategies used in pre-reading, during reading and post-reading to elicit the best results possible. Better reading comprehension would have a ripple effect in motivating students [see section 3].

Summary of analysis of vocabulary and reading comprehension

The results of this study supports other studies' [see section 2] findings and adds more to the very limited number of L2 classroom studies into the vocabulary and reading link [see section 1] The key important information gained from this study, is that explicit vocabulary instruction based on certain guiding principles, results in the acquisition of relevant vocabulary knowledge that in turn facilitates and fosters reading comprehension.

4.4
Discussion

This research study has highlighted the vital and pivotal role of vocabulary in the development of all language skills i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking. Additionally, it has pointed out the importance placed on lexis in the rubrics of exams such as the IELTS, thus indicating one of the reasons for its value in classroom instruction. Furthermore, it has drawn attention to the challenges students face in vocabulary acquisition and the unfortunate lack of explicit vocabulary instruction that still persists in the classroom. In response to the above factors, this research study has pointed towards a principled approach to explicit vocabulary instruction, highlighting the practice of key principles that underpin effective instruction and demonstrating its impact on vocabulary acquisition. Taking this a step further, this study has emphasized the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension, highlighting vocabulary as one of the key factors essential in reading competence. Moreover, through relevant reading theories and hypotheses, it has exhibited the connection, between the implementation of a principled approach to vocabulary instruction and the facilitation and fostering of reading comprehension. Consequently, this research study offers valuable practical guidance to the teacher on classroom instruction in an ESL setting.

There are several pedagogical implications of this research study which can be used to direct us teachers, experienced and novices, in the direction of effective instruction of English as a second language. The research study has taken many different perspectives

which include the learner, the teacher, the course requirements, the materials, the classroom setting and the demands of IELTS.

It is notable that L2 learners, whatever their native first language, in whichever part of the world, have some characteristics in common. They are individuals and although this sounds like an oxymoron it is none the less true. All the learners are individuals with differing abilities, learning styles, cognitive abilities, backgrounds and experiences. On a linguistic level they possess differing lexical resources, reading abilities and language skills even though they may be in the same level class or aiming for the same IELTS level. They have joined into the English class with differing reasons ranging form admittance to Academic programs, career progress, employment or immigration. Their motivations vary as does their past experiences of English language learning. However, all the learners in the class have invested their time, efforts and finance into the development of their language skills. Many of their families have equally invested into the development of their skills, and in many parts of the world including the UK, Canada and Gulf region, the investors include the leadership of the country. Therefore, from an ethical standpoint it is crucial that instruction in the classroom is effective and guided by knowledge based principles. Furthermore the pedagogy that is implemented should aim to develop the potential of every individual learner and facilitate the development of their English language skills.

This study gives, us the teachers, some direction and guidance. Firstly, in order to accommodate for learner differences, it is important that instruction should include a range of effective techniques and methodologies. The teacher needs to take the onus and responsibility of learning about various techniques that have proven to be effective and then to implement them in the classroom. This applies to vocabulary instruction, reading comprehension and all the other skills and factors in second language acquisition. The methods need to be knowledge based, systematic, logical and principled.

With reference to vocabulary instruction and reading comprehension certain principles should be applied. Firstly, time needs to be allocated in the lesson in the classroom

setting for principled explicit vocabulary instruction as its importance in all skills is widely recognized. The principles that it should include are focus on form, meaning and use. Furthermore, explanations should include context, activate schema both content and formal. Engaging the learner, active processing, active learning, initiating higher order thinking skills and interactive learning must be part of the repertoire of instruction. Furthermore, knowledge and implementation of a wide range of methods including creative and innovative methods is also important. Pre-reading activities should include principled explicit vocabulary instruction. Although this study primarily focused on pre-teaching vocabulary and reading, it is important that during reading activities and post-reading activities, and other comprehension skills should be incorporated in the reading lesson based on similar principles. These same principles can also be implemented during other skill learning at various times in the lesson. Learners should also be taught strategies that can assist them in learning vocabulary thus enabling them to draw upon a wider lexical resource. Materials selected need to be considered for readability, content and exploitability. The latter enables one text to be used for various tasks can be connected to all the skills which would help activate schema, provide bottom-up and top-down processing and enable integration and connectedness to the material. Providing tasks e.g. reading comprehension, which generates the use of language known is another important guideline that has emerged from this study. This could be part of formative and summative assessment.

Moving on to the IELTS, achieving a good band score in the IELTS is crucial to many students who attend the ESL, EAP and IELTS preparatory courses because they have a great deal riding on the results of the IELTS. Their admittance into specific programs at the universities, their career opportunities, career progress and/or their future is dependent on their competence in English and their achievements in the IELTS. Therefore, the teacher's ethical responsibility is to ensure that the students are given all the tools to develop their potential and succeed to the best of their ability. Following a principled approach in the classroom as described above, is a means for the learners to achieve good results.

Finally on a personal note, the study has increased my knowledge and understanding of effective instruction of vocabulary and reading comprehension. It has broadened and deepened my understanding of principles that must infuse the instruction of vocabulary in the classroom and reading comprehension. Effective instruction is essential, and effective is the key word – as this encompasses systematic, principled, methodical, competent, logical instruction which is goal-oriented. This instruction, that is knowledge based, stems from an understanding of the why, how, what, when and where that has resulted from this research. The goal of the teacher in the classroom from a broader point of view is to assist in the development of the English language skills of every learner and to give them the tools that will enable them to communicate effectively in the academic world, the social world and work arena. An additional goal is to engender a motivated learner, an interested learner and a learner who doesn't see English language as a daunting challenge, but rather as an attainable useful skill, that enables him or her to communicate effectively with a wider world.

4.5

Limitations

This study has its limitations due to it being a small scale study conducted with only nine learners within a classroom environment. Secondly, the learners had read the text as part of the pre-test and so were already familiar with the text prior to the comprehension post-test. This may have had some influence on the post-test reading comprehension, although it is difficult to ascertain this for certain. Furthermore, no delayed post-test on vocabulary were conducted and therefore it was not possible to determine the retention of the vocabulary. Delayed post-tests were not conducted due to lack of time. The courses are intensive and a great deal of material has to be covered in a short space of time therefore it was not feasible to allocate any more time for further research.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The results gained from this study have great significance, as reading is an important part of daily life, and we live in a knowledge society which places importance on the written word. Referring back to the research question, this study indicates that principled explicit vocabulary instruction facilitates the acquisition of new vocabulary to a significant extent. This study also indicates that principled explicit vocabulary instruction improves sentence comprehension to a significant extent. Allocating a certain amount of time in the classroom for explicit vocabulary instruction prior to reading comprehension and/or other text based activities will have a significant impact on learning. Moreover, principled explicit vocabulary instruction facilitates reading comprehension for IELTS.

Although vocabulary plays a vital and essential role in reading comprehension, it is important to note that reading comprehension is a complex process that involves many processes and factors. Therefore, it is the ethical responsibility of the teacher to provide the learner with all the necessary tools that will assist them in their tasks and thus help develop their full potential. The provision of these tools includes vocabulary instruction based on key principles combined with other reading comprehension skills.

 The research method in this study focused primarily on sentence comprehension and therefore it would be interesting to conduct another study focusing on text comprehension. Reading comprehension is an important skill and therefore further research should be conducted combining explicit vocabulary instruction with the instruction of other comprehension skills. Further research needs to examine the retention of the words and durability of the learning. Repeating the study with another group of learners would add greater support and conclusivity to the findings. Adding a writing component to the explicit instruction of vocabulary would give further insight into an effective method. Furthermore, as vocabulary plays a critical role in all the skills and the IELTS is of importance to many ESL learners, research needs to be expanded into the use of

techniques that improve the learner's competence in answering different reading comprehension questions and in completing writing, listening and speaking tasks. Finally, a classroom based study increases the teachers' knowledge and enhances his or her skills, in addition to providing valuable guidance on pedagogy; and thus is highly recommended for future research.

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Appendix 1

Vocabulary Task

Read the words and meanings carefully. Then choose one response.

1. Suspicious

a. supporting or suspending
b. to pause or stop for a period
c. to remain alive
d. not trust or not trusting
e. do not know

2. Commercials

a. advertisements on radio or television
b. the buying or selling of goods
c. awards or honours
d. to express approval or praise
e. do not know

3. Distinctive

a. easy to identify, unique, different
b. unpleasant, disagreeable
c. to spend or use up
d. divert
e. do not know

4. Responded

a. showed esteem
b. sprayed again
c. acted in return or in answer
d. a period in which someone is not required to work
e. do not know

Continued

5. Undesirable

a. to cancel or reverse
b. endless
c. out of work
d. unwanted
e. do not know

6. Script

a. a wallet
b. a list of names
c. to economize
d. the text of a play, film or broadcast
e. do not know

Appendix 2

Reading Comprehension Task

Read this article about fast food. Then answer the questions.

Fast Food – behind the image

We all know what a fast-food outlet looks like and what it serves. This is because when a big modern business offers fast food, it knows that we, its customers, are likely to want no surprises. We are hungry, tired and not in a celebratory mood.

The building itself is easy to recognize and designed to be a "home from home", on the motorway or in the city. However, the usual things you find in a restaurant are a little different – tables and chairs are bolted to the floor, and cutlery is either non-existent or not worth stealing. Things have to be called by their correct names (cheeseburgers, large fries); the staff have a script they must learn – you know the sort of thing: 'Will that be with cheese, sir?," "Have a nice day' – something I find particularly irritating. The staff wear a distinctive uniform, menus are always the same and even placed in the same spot in every outlet in the chain; prices are low and the theme of cleanliness is repeated endlessly.

The company attempts to play the role of kind and concerned parent. It knows people are suspicious of large corporations and so it tries to stress its love for children. It responds to social concerns, but only if beliefs are sufficiently widely held and therefore correct. Take, for example, the worry about fat in our diets. Fast food chains only responded by putting salad on the menu when there was pressure in various countries from doctors and health ministers.

Fast food chains know they are ordinary. They want to be ordinary and to be thought of as almost inseparable from the idea of everyday food consumed outside the home. They are happy to allow their customers time off for holidays – Thanksgiving, Christmas and so on – for which they do not cater. Even those comparatively rare holiday times are turned to a profit because the companies know that their favorite customers – families are at home together then, watching television, where carefully placed commercials will spread the word concerning new fast-food products and re-imprint the image of the various chains for later. Families are the customers the fast-food chains want; good, law-abiding citizens who love their children, teaching them how good hamburgers are for them. The chains even have very bright lighting to make sure that 'undesirable' people don't want to come in.

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the reading passage?

Write:

True or False or Do not Know

1. Each employee is encouraged by the chain to have his/her own individual way of communicating with customers.

2. The staff wears a uniform that is easy to recognize.

3. The companies know that people do not trust large corporations.

4. Fast-food companies started selling salads because of worries about health.

5. Fast-food companies distribute leaflets to customers' homes during the holidays informing them of the new fast-food products.

6. There are certain types of customers who are not welcome at fast-food outlets.