

Research Problem Success at university level mainly depends on existing pre-entry university attributes, including the mastery of some fundamental academic skills (Tinto, 1993). Firth (1957) stated, "You shall know the word by the company it keeps" (p. 11). The intended message of Firth's citation here is to classify words not only on the basis of their meanings, but also on the basis of their co-occurrence with other words. Word collocation includes the distribution of word uses and senses, comparing the use of synonymous words, and dictionary definitions. Investigating the use of synonymous distribution enables learners to determine the contextual preferences associated with other collocates (Firth, 1957). Nation (2001) provides a comprehensive framework of the information that is necessary to improve word use at different levels. The information consists of three components: form, meaning, and use. Each class encompasses three different aspects of knowing a word, in which he also split the knowledge of words into two types: receptive and productive knowledge. These components and sub-components are made to enable learners to differentiate their capabilities to receive language input through reading or listening and understand it. In addition, the aforementioned components help to distinguish the learners' ability to produce oral or written words in an appropriate context, utilizing the proper spelling and pronunciation. The 'form' aspect involves the written and spoken knowledge that learners should take into consideration when learning new words. The aspect of 'meaning' includes words' meanings, concepts, referents, and the association of words. The aspect of 'use' covers the grammatical functions of words, their collocations, and their use restrictions. The following table illustrates Nation's framework (2001) regarding vocabulary knowledge. Nation (2001) classified vocabulary knowledge into 18 questions grouped into three categories, in which each category contains receptive and productive aspects. The framework defines vocabulary knowledge from different perspectives: pragmatic, semantic, and morphological perspectives and it shows that all of the aspects are closely interrelated. For instance, the meaning of a word could be derived from the context or the form of that word (Gu, 2017). However, Nation realizes that this framework is incomplete and needs modification. He indicates the difficulty of measuring vocabulary knowledge by only using this classification. He also added that the aspects of this classification are interrelated with each other, which makes differentiating between certain words difficult.

Vocabulary size refers to the amount of vocabulary needed to understand and use the language (Karakoc & Kose, 2017). Language learners need to expand their vocabulary size since "vocabulary is a continually changing entity with new words and new uses of old words being added and old words falling into disuse" (Nation & Waring, 1997, p. 6). Within the context of L2 research in reading, findings on the reading processes and vocabulary threshold have consistently indicated the importance of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension (Fukink et al. 2005, Garcia 1991, Koda 1994, Laufer, 1997, Zhang 2000, 2002a, 2002b; see Alderson 2000, Bernhardt 2005, and Nation 2001, for reviews). Vocabulary Size Test: The VST provided a quantitative measure of the participants' vocabulary size so that the scores could be collated and subjected to statistical data analysis. The Vocabulary Size Test employed in this study was originally developed by Nation (1983) and later it was amended and revised by Schmitt et al. (2001). For the study of human phenomena, qualitative researchers employ a variety of systems of inquiry, such as biography, case study, historical analysis, discourse analysis, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology, as opposed to logical and statistical methods. This analysis helps in

evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the reading comprehension assessment and the extent to which it promotes different levels of thinking .Content analysis is a research method used to systematically examine and categorize the content of text, including reading passages and comprehension questions.The selection of those words has also taken into consideration the words' universality (words are that are used across countries where English is the primary medium of communication), utility (words that cover a broad range of genres), and usefulness (words that are useful when attempting to define other lexical items) of the words selected (Gilner, 2011).Methodology The method Qualitative research is the study of the nature of phenomena, which includes their quality, different manifestations, the context in which they appear, or the perspectives from which they can be perceived, but excludes their range, frequency, and place in an objectively determined chain of cause and effect ( Philipsen .Beyond Vocabulary Size :Content analysis can extend to examining the broader context of the test, such as the types of texts or tasks used, to ensure they are appropriate for the intended learners and aligned with their language learning goals.Content analysis in reading comprehension tests involves examining the characteristics of the reading passages and the questions used to assess understanding, focusing on aspects like content, cognitive levels, and the types of thinking they elicit.The main difference between skilled and less skilled readers lies in slower and inefficient lexical access and semantic processing (Bernhardt 2005, Grabe and Stoller 2002, Nassaji 2003, Segalowitz et al. 1991).The researchers who created small-scale corpora (Campion & Elley, 1971; Ghadessy, 1979; Praninskas, 1972) included between 300,000 to 500,000 words due to manual word counts, while Coxhead's (2000) scale included around 875,000 words across four disciplines (arts, science, law, and commerce).Instruments Content analysis: Content analysis in the context of a vocabulary size test refers to the process of examining and categorizing the content of the test itself, often focusing on the words included and their characteristics.In addition, many researchers and authors claim that vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension are strongly related and several studies have confirmed such a relationship between the two (Hsueh-Chao & Nation, 2000; Schmitt, 2000; Nation, 2001; Zhang, 2012; Karakoc & Kose, 2017).Thus, most students employ non-university strategies to read academic texts, which result in students taking a surface approach to reading (Torgesen, Houston, Rissman, Decker and Roberts 2007).Theoretical background Vocabulary size : The process of how vocabulary learning takes place is still unclear as it requires various components of knowing a word, taking into consideration that the process of learning vocabulary is gradual in nature leading to continuity (Schmitt, 2000).They generally take them for granted as they tend to presuppose that all students already acquired these skills either as part of their secondary education or elsewhere in other courses at university or college (Erickson, Peters & Strommer, 2006).According to what was presented above and what great many of researchers including (Laufer 1996, Meara 1997, Nation 2001, Read 2000) and many more attest to, the significance of the role of vocabulary in reading comprehension is clearly acknowledged.Hence, working within this context, the present researchers deemed it indispensable to launch a study where vocabulary is paid little heed to in most reading comprehension courses.To better understand ideas, opinions, or experiences, qualitative research involves gathering and analyzing non-numerical data (such as text, video, or audio).This analysis helps in validating the test, ensuring it

effectively measures vocabulary knowledge, and provides insights for test design and interpretation. In addition, the content vocabulary items in the reading passages were found in the vocabulary lists in the participants' university textbooks, which represents content validity in the reading passages. She selected academic words representing a wide variety of academic disciplines, taking into consideration the different linguistic features that may differ across those disciplines. Stahl (2003: 246) contends that studies from readability formulae have found that the most important factor in determining the difficulty of a text is the difficulty of the words.

**Research Objectives** The main purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between vocabulary size and reading comprehension of Saudi EFL learners, so this study sought to:

**Limitations** The present study aimed at investigating the extent of vocabulary knowledge and the relationship between the vocabulary size and reading comprehension of Saudi EFL learners. It involves analyzing the vocabulary items to understand their frequency, difficulty, and relevance to the intended test-takers. This allows for a content analysis to ensure that the items are graded in difficulty and representative of the target vocabulary range. In the context of reading comprehension tests, it involves analyzing:

**Content of the passages & Cognitive levels of questions.** Fast and efficient word recognition, word encoding and lexical access are necessary for a higher level of meaning construction (Adams 2004, Just and Carpenter 1987, Lesgold and Perfetti, 1978). A number of studies have revealed consistent correlations between vocabulary and comprehension (Laufer 1992a, 1992b, Qian 1999, 2002, Nation 2001). What is missing is a blithe disregard for vocabulary in approaching reading comprehension, particularly in the EFL setting of KSA.

**Q2 To what extent does vocabulary knowledge contribute to reading comprehension among Saudi EFL learners?** There is no accurate number of words to be known for native speakers or language learners since the number of words is continuously changed (Karakoc & Kose, 2017). Champion & Elley (1971) and Praninskas (1972) created academic word lists based on small corpora, in which they counted words by hand. This large corpus has been divided into roughly equal sections to calculate the range of academic vocabulary across the entire corpus, and then the size of the corpus is considered. Zimmerman (1997) pointed out that extensive reading on various texts leads to expanding the vocabulary knowledge. To this end, the study aims to answer the following research question: Does vocabulary size have any effect on reading comprehension of Saudi EFL learners?

During the exploratory phases of a study, educators use qualitative research to find patterns or fresh perspectives. This article discussed the approaches to qualitative research, qualitative data collection methods, advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research and tools for analyzing qualitative data. The present study does not focus on any vocabulary acquisition problems that learners might face, but seeks to investigate the level of their vocabulary knowledge and its relationship with reading comprehension. The two reading passages are associated with 10 multiple-choice questions, and each correct answer was assigned one point; so the maximum possible score of the reading comprehension test was 10 points. The accurate use of words can be achieved through the knowledge of the words' pronunciation and spelling; however, it is clear that the real knowledge of words goes beyond these two aspects (Schmitt, 2008). Other researchers have turned to pedagogical word lists to help learners prioritize their vocabulary learning. Ghadessy (1979) devised an academic word lists based on notes made in textbooks by students, indicating words they faced for the

first time. Xue & Nation (1984) used the lists from the aforementioned studies and created a large-scale academic word list, which they called the University Word List (UWL). To understand text meaning, one must be able to decode the printed message (Adams 2004, Alderson 2000, Day and Bamford 1998). Vocabulary knowledge is one of the contributing factors for comprehending reading texts (Nation & Coady, 1988). Research Questions: The study attempted to answer the following questions: Q1 What is the extent of the vocabulary size of Saudi EFL learners? A more practical guideline can be added to this formal definition: qualitative research typically includes data in the form of words instead of numbers (Punch, K. F., 2013). The aim of qualitative research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena in their natural environments. It relies on the direct experiences of people as meaning-making agents in their daily lives and focuses on the why rather than what of social phenomena (Fossey, E., 2002). Finding insights that can result in testable hypotheses is the main goal of the data collection, which is frequently done in narrative form. Determine the vocabulary size of Saudi EFL learners. Examine the relationship between vocabulary size and reading performance among Saudi EFL learners. The researcher does not claim that the results are representative as regional academic differences may exist between students from different places in the Kingdom. This test includes four parts, which provide estimate of vocabulary size at 2000, 3000, 5000, and 10,000-word frequency levels. It also includes all the words in each group that represent the same type of word with no syntactic clues for the accurate matches (Varnaseri, 2016). The test encompassed two reading passages and they were taken from one TOEFL preparation manual. Learning high-frequency words is one of the vocabulary challenges facing EFL learners. Coxhead (2000) used a more representative list of academic words based on the principles of corpus linguistics. The presence of high density of unknown words in a text may seriously hinder comprehension (Curtis 1987, Nation, 2001). A number of scholars and authors have emphasized the relationship between vocabulary size and reading comprehension. Hsueh-Chao & Nation (2000) emphasized the relationship of vocabulary knowledge on reading comprehension as well as the relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Despite the importance of these skills for academic success, lecturers seldom teach them. A methodology called qualitative research is created to gather non-numerical data to produce insights. It is not statistical and is either semi-structured or unstructured. It is predicated on data gathered using a research methodology that provides an answer to the why. It can be used to uncover intricate details about a situation or to spark fresh research concepts. The modified version of the Vocabulary Size Test has proved that 30 items per level was more reliable than the 18 items found in Nation's (1983) test. The first two parts (2000 and 3000-word frequency levels contain only high frequency words in English; the 5000-word frequency level falls between high-frequency words and low-frequency words; and the 10,000-word frequency level includes low-frequency words. This version of the test contains ten clusters in which six words and three definitions are provided. West's selection of those words was primarily based on frequency, assuming that these words are the most essential words for foreign language learners. Vocabulary size is thus a strong predictor of reading comprehension. Hills & Laufer (2003) indicated that post-reading tasks that focus on target vocabulary lead to better vocabulary knowledge. These include reading, writing, critical thinking, oral presentation, and media literacy. The reality is that most first-year students lack

academic reading skills, especially because university-level reading greatly differs from high school reading. The first passage was about British Columbia and had 117 words; and the second passage was about Rain and was 242 words in length. In order to help learners, overcome this, West (1953) created a word list known as the General Service List (GSL). GSL words were obtained from a 2.5 million word corpus. Many attempts have been made to create academic word lists. This list was widely used for several years in a variety of teaching and research contexts. Vocabulary size seems to play a vital role in reading comprehension. This fact simply goes unnoticed by a host of KSA teachers. Qualitative research is concerned with feelings, ideas, or experiences. This vocabulary test was chosen because it reduces the guessing to one response among six choices. The participants are expected to match the word with its correct definition. Clock \_\_\_ 6 \_\_\_ part of a house 3. Horse \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ animal with four legs 4. Pencil \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ something used for writing 5. These two reading passages were chosen due to their suitability to the students' level. Vocabulary Size and Reading Comprehension The role of vocabulary in reading comprehension is a complex one. frequency. The following is an example taken from the 2000-word frequency level: 1. Business 2. Wall Reading Comprehension Test: The reading comprehension test was .the second instrument used in the present study. H., 2007).. Shoe 6