

# Receptive Vocabulary Knowledge or Productive Vocabulary Knowledge in Writing Skill, Which One Important?

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DOI: 10.6007/IJARBS/v6-i11/2395 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v6-i11/2395>

## ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of vocabulary knowledge on the writing performance of the Arabic language which known as a foreign language in the Malaysian education system. It also discussed the role of each part of vocabulary knowledge which namely receptive vocabulary knowledge and productive vocabulary knowledge. This paper reviews scholars' views regarding the relationship of both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge in producing written text. It also highlights the comparison between Arabic vocabulary knowledge and English due to enhance learners' writing skill. Conclusion and recommendations such as integrating receptive and productive instructional styles were made in order to increase learners' interest towards writing in Arabic.

**Keyword:** *Vocabulary knowledge, Receptive vocabulary knowledge, Productive vocabulary knowledge, Writing skill*

## INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary knowledge is known as the knowledge of the word (Nation, 1990, 2001; Laufer et al., 2004; Milton 2009). In the research on vocabulary, vocabulary knowledge is also known as the depth of vocabulary that brings up to the extent to which the word is understood by speakers. Vocabulary knowledge also means students learn the words with deep meaning, including pronunciation, meaning, spelling, frequency, sound structure, syntax and collocation according to context (Qian, 2002). While Haastrup and Henriksen (2000) define the vocabulary knowledge is knowledge of words from the perspective of meaning, knowledge, and collocation.

Nation (1990) stipulates that vocabulary knowledge is knowledge of words in speech and writing that includes syntax, collocation, frequency of use, compatibility, meaning, concept and

relationship with other word vocabulary knowledge totalling nine at all. More simply, Schmitt (2014) concluded that vocabulary knowledge is knowledge of the components of vocabulary, lexical organisation, receptive and productive mastery and fluency. Therefore the process is more than just knowing the word, but also understand the various aspects of the process and vocabulary constructs.

Pullido & Hambrick (2008) found that knowledge of vocabulary to be an indicator of the quality of a person's vocabulary. Vocabulary knowledge is a benchmark of proficiency in writing, reading, listening and speaking. In fact, knowledge of vocabulary dominated a student influences the quality of their writing (Engber, 1995; Milton, 2013; Park, 2012; Stæhr, 2008) and shows that students need to master the meaning of the word and its use in the context of writing skills (Chen et al. 2015). It is agreed by Leki & Carson (1994) that the lack of vocabulary will affect the quality of writing as compared to other factors such as attitude, motivation, and preparation for the exam. Therefore, for students who learn a second language, and a foreign language they should dominate the vocabulary of quantity and quality with the goal of understanding and expressing meaning in writing (Milton, 2013).

### **RECEPTIVE VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE VS PRODUCTIVE VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE**

Most prominent researchers in this field agreed to divide, renowned vocabulary knowledge within the scope of its use in either the skills of writing, reading, listening and speaking. Thus, they divide vocabulary knowledge into productive and receptive vocabulary (Laufer, 1998; Laufer & Paribakht, 1998; Henriksen, 1999; Nation, 2001; Read, 2000; Schmitt, 2014). However, Harmer (2001) has identified knowledge of vocabulary to the active vocabulary which students can use and call it orally. While a passive vocabulary of words known by learners through recognition, but they cannot call and produced through writing.

Distribution of this definition seems to limit the knowledge of vocabulary receptive and productive just to function, meaning and word structure. Nevertheless, it should be investigated to what extent both parties have a relationship or not in learning a second language and foreign language. Henriksen (1999) divided the knowledge of vocabulary into three dimensions, (a) a partial trend towards the right dimensions that reflect the level of meaning and understanding; (b) the depth dimension, such as the construction of the system showing the relationship between words; and (c) receptive-productive dimension that shows the learner control and access to knowledge about the word. These dimensions may bring light to guide researchers in determining aspects of vocabulary to stress in their study.

Instead, Nation (2001) has determined the construction of vocabulary knowledge in a broader perspective by combining form (pronunciation, spelling and the words), meaning (structure or meaning of words, ideas and preferences, a combination of words) and use (syntax, collocation, constraints in use). Nation also viewed in detail all aspects of vocabulary knowledge which can serve as guidelines in the construction of measurement instruments and define vocabulary

teaching strategies. Every single aspect of this perspective can also be seen in the form of receptive and productive as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 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 parts are recognisable in this word? P What words parts are needed to express meaning?
	Meaning Form and meaning	R What meaning does this word form signal? What word form can be used to express this P meaning?
	Concepts and referents	R What is included in the concept? P What items can the concept refer to?
	Associations	R What others words does this word 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 this word?
	Collocations	R What words or types of word occur with this one? What words or types of words must we use with this P one?
	Constraints on use	R Where, when and how often would we meet this word?
		P Where, when and how often can we use this word?

Source: Nation (2001: 27)

Note : R receptive, P productive

However, vocabulary knowledge model highlighted by Nation's (2001) categorized by some scholars as complex and detailed (Webb, 2013) and complicate the construction of an instrument for measuring vocabulary knowledge (Milton, 2009). In this case, Nation's ideas has enabled researchers to evaluate and select the language aspects that is truly in keeping with the constructs that form the focus of the study. For example, one aspect which is selected as the productive aspects of meaning can be guided in creating suitable learning strategies and methods of teaching vocabulary in the classroom.

### What Is Receptive Vocabulary Knowledge?

Receptive vocabulary knowledge is known and understood its meaning by learners when reading text or listening to the text. Learners know and recognize the meaning of words that

caused them to understand the text they have read but not used to speak and write. Learning the receptive vocabulary usually in the form in which the teacher will usually give the meaning of the word, using the word in a sentence, but just ask the learners to spell and pronounce only (Nagy, Anderson & Herman, 1987; Webb, 2005).

### **What Is Productive Vocabulary Knowledge?**

Productive vocabulary knowledge assumed as the words that are understood and can be pronounced by the learners. In fact, learners can use these words in speech and writing well. Thus, productive vocabulary can be regarded as a process of active word because learners can generate words to express their thoughts and feelings which understood by others (Webb, 2005). Productive vocabulary knowledge is deemed as the ability to recover the structure and meaning (Laufer et al, 2004; Webb, 2008), or to pass on the word as in the original learners' language (Webb, 2009). Laufer (1998) divides knowledge into productive vocabulary into controlled and free vocabulary. Controlled productive vocabulary knowledge indicates the capacity to construct words when the cue is given while, free productive vocabulary knowledge is the ability to use words spontaneously and without specific encouragement to produce certain words, such as writing independently.

### **Relations Between Receptive Vocabulary Knowledge and Vocabulary Knowledge Productive**

Various assumptions about the nature of receptive vocabulary knowledge and productive vocabulary knowledge which previously existed between them. Although there are various responses the researchers gave, this could only be true if we look over at the each aspect of vocabulary knowledge in broader perspective. For example, the ability to identify spelling in written form will precede the ability to spell correctly, or the ability to identify and recognize the written form may precede the ability to convey meaning and use it in the right words.

On the other hand, is also likely to spell the word correctly (productive vocabulary knowledge in written aspect) or using the right words with grammar (productive vocabulary knowledge in grammatical function) before the meaning of the word is understood (receptive vocabulary knowledge in form and meaning). Therefore, to study and understand the productive vocabulary knowledge, it is necessary to distinguish between receptive and productive knowledge in every aspect of vocabulary knowledge. It should be noted also the main goal is to bring learning vocabulary, in the form of communicative either orally or written.

According to Webb (2013) study of the word receptively only gives impact at the meaning in receptive. While learning vocabulary in productive way, the results accounted for receptive and productive knowledge. Both turned out to have a strong relationship and mutual in the development of the vocabulary, especially in improving the learners' language efficiency. Consequently, teaching and learning vocabulary may optimize and benefit both parties (teachers and learners) when the aspect of vocabulary knowledge and its process being understood.

## **VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE IN WRITING SKILL**

Writing is a process to convey the meaning which is complicated and requires coordination of various metacognitive skills. To produce a narrative writing, a writer must be able to organize and generate ideas, develop plans for ideas, review and revise what you have written and monitor performance in writing (Olinghouse & Leaird, 2009). Writing is also a behaviour which serves to recall an event in a form that is understandable using letters and words. Through writing, learners' thinking can be highlighted through their preparation, consolidation and development of ideas and seeks a relationship that can help learners understand their thinking organizations (Marohaini, 1999).

While Rosni (2009) states writing skills is an expression that describes the learners' ability in language use. In order to master writing skills, listening skills must be mastered in advance to get the language. Next, learners should have the reading skills to recognize the letters and writings. After mastering these skills the learners considered can write well. This coincided with Nation (2001) that stated writing skills are not skills acquired naturally, but involves coordination of other senses to stimulate metacognitive. Therefore, to master the writing skills, vocabulary selection is one of an important skill. Olinghouse & Leaird (2009) & Flower et al. (1981) also defines that vocabulary in writing symbolizes the maturity and authenticity of words selection for the learners which is stated as one of the writing theories in second or foreign language.

In relation with the theoretical ideas, vocabulary knowledge is the key factor to ensure that written production is understandable and meaningful. If there is no appropriate vocabulary, writing results will not be understood. Rosni (2009) urged on the acquisition of words via a process of recognizing letters and words followed by the ability to read the words which known as a learning process for receptive vocabulary knowledge. Efforts to produce an understandable sentences using words that can be read and known by the learners is the development of vocabulary knowledge productively. This clearly shows that the development of the receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary is a complex process in language acquisition.

The study by linguistic researchers suggest reading the text containing the target words can encourage students to write well (Chen & Hirsh, 2012; Webb, 2009). Even the vocabulary acquired through direct teaching can improve the knowledge of the words, increase words memory and ability to use the words, especially in writing (Chen & Hirsh, 2012; Lee, 2003; Zimmerman, 1997). These findings confirmed the opinion that the acquisition of receptive words affects words acquisition productively. This case turned out to be that learning process for receptive vocabulary related to productive vocabulary.

Coxhead (2007) also saw a continuation of receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge model featured by Nation (2001) and used it as a guide to build the constructs in writing skills model. He adapted the aspects of language which assumed suitable and that should be emphasized in writing skills, as described in Table 2.

Table 2 Knowledge required for production word in writing (Coxhead, 2007)

Form		How is the word written and spell?
Meaning	Form and meaning	What word form can be used to express this meaning?
	Concepts and referents	What items can the concept refer to?
	Associations	What other words could we use instead of this one?
Use	Grammatical functions	In what patterns must we use this word?
	Collocations	What words or types of words must we use with this one?
	Constraints on use	Where, when and how often can we use this word?

Therefore, in the transferring process from receptive to productive knowledge known as a final stage in vocabulary learning. Learners' ability in writing new words that they learnt can also stimulate their confidence in conveying meaningful written text. These conditions showed the success of vocabulary knowledge acquisition in second or foreign languages.

### **VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE IN ARABIC WRITING**

In learning Arabic, mastery of word meanings in depth will help learners link the word with another word in addition to using it in the context of the proper grammar. This is in line with the concept of productive vocabulary knowledge in English language studies. However, factors such as the context, culture, social environment and purpose should be taken into account to ensure that the meaning can be interpreted by the other parties whom hear and read it accurately (Che Radiah & Norhayuza, 2013).

Division of aspects of vocabulary knowledge as has been debated by Henriksen (1999) and Nation (2001) in accordance with aspects of vocabulary knowledge of Arabic language debated by Al-Shuwairkh. Al-Shuwairkh (2001) was classified the vocabulary knowledge in Arabic into four elements namely; 1) know the words and patterns of words, 2) learn how to apply their morphology in words to form a pattern of different words, 3) distinguish the word speech with the written words and 4) learn how to conclude a short pronunciation of context. Harun (2014) also divides Arabic vocabulary knowledge into five aspects, namely as; 1) singular, 2) clause, 3) synonym, 4) translation and 5) words usage in sentences.

While Al-Naqah (1985) categorize writing skills into four phases; 1) write Arabic letters, 2) write Arabic words with correct spelling and can be read, 3) sentence structure understood by Arabic readers and 4) using structures in Arabic verse paragraphs explaining the clarity of ideas. Al-Naqah's view this explanation as the development of writing skills through a combination of knowing about the Arabic letters which known as *harf hijaiyyah* until finally forming a combination of vocabulary knowledge aspects that will be able to form a complete sentence that can be understood in oral or written interaction. When a word cannot be understood,



indirectly its not using accurate words according to contextual. For example, in shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Sample of sentences

Correct use of vocabulary knowledge	ذهب زيد الى المدرسة على قدميه
Incorrect use of vocabulary knowledge	ذهب زيد الى المدرسة على الرجل

Mistakes are often done on learners of Arabic, especially at primary and secondary school levels. This is because they understand and know the meaning of the words, but could not discern the meaning by grammatical function, combination of words, collocations and proper use.

Highlighting the concept of Arabic productive vocabulary knowledge in writing, to note the aspect of form it is emphasized at single word. While in the aspect of meaning one must know the translation and the word that is synonymous with the word target. In terms of use, students need to know how the word can be developed into a complete sentences. Obviously here, vocabulary knowledge in Arabic language writing skills concluded as productive, whereas in common with the ideas brought by Coxhead (2007) as shown in Table 2 above.

Therefore, in Arabic productive vocabulary knowledge not only concern from the number of words which are mastered, but also its use as a significant impact on producing words of one's writing skills. Rosni (2009) before it, confirmed that gaining the word receptively is the initial phase before the learner will be able to produce words in written text. Chen & Hirsh (2012); Webb (2013) also stated that productive vocabulary knowledge acquired through receptive and productive. Practically, the learners' ability to generate new words in writing is productive despite the acquisition of a word occurs in both ways.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING**

In the context of learning Arabic as a foreign language, learners are less likely to use the language learned in communication outside the classroom. While in the classroom, learning the vocabulary is taught implicitly with other skills. Al-Juhany (1990), Al-Shuwairekh (2001) and Al-Batal (2006) have stressed the importance of mastering the vocabulary of Arabic from its form, the word and usage Therefore, more attention should be paid to the development of productive vocabulary knowledge since it was a benchmark of language proficiency especially in writing and speaking skill.

Thus Arabic teachers should pay attention to the level of vocabulary knowledge which was occupied by learners in order to adapt the teaching strategies to the level of learners' ability. Indirectly, when teachers have identified the level of vocabulary knowledge of learners,

teaching writing strategies can be designed efficiently. Teachers also need to be creative in delivering instruction to suit the level of learners' knowledge. Teachers can manipulate reading skills, to improve learners' new word acquisition (Hulstijn, 2001; Webb, 2008) and utilize various vocabulary learning approach, especially involving learners participation actively (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001). Teachers also need to design a variety of activities to meet the needs and level of learners' language proficiency which varied from each other.

Teachers also can integrate the teaching of vocabulary and reading practice in the context of writing. Since the writing process can provide a space for learners to think about the words that correspond to convey their ideas. This is in contrast to the speech that requires immediate reaction to convey ideas. Thus, teachers can combine exercise in a receptive and productive to improve the mastery of words that have been taught in their writings.

Learning vocabulary directly by setting the number of target words to be learned can be an advantage and increase learners focus on learning a foreign language. So, in learning Arabic language at secondary level teachers should pay attention around 3,000 words which often repeated in the written text and speech. Teaching and learning that focused on the target words will be able to improve learners' mastery of vocabulary effectively.

Teachers support also serve as a catalyst to encourage learners to use new words in their writing without fear or shame. Factors such as motivation, desire and environmental support should also be given attention to ensure successful use of productive vocabulary knowledge. In addition, knowledge in productive vocabulary knowledge aspects also provides information and guidelines for teachers in developing appropriate instruments to measure the level of knowledge of students about words, its form and use.

### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Harun Baharudin of National University of Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia for his guidance and support in the writing of this manuscript. I would also like to thank the Ministry of Education for the financial assistance.

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