

ABSTRACT

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Thesis Title: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VOCABULARY SIZE AND READING COMPREHENSION PERFORMANCE OF 12TH GRADE THAI EFL LEARNERS

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Foreign language learning (L2) reading research has produced overwhelming evidence that vocabulary size is a good predictor of reading performance. However, conceptions of reading literacy are still evolving. For example, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) regards reading as a problem-solving activity and includes texts of different genres in its reading tests. This thesis reports a study that required Thai secondary school students (N=140) to take four parts of the PISA reading test and a test of English vocabulary size (Nation, 1990). The reading comprehension and vocabulary size scores were correlated to establish whether vocabulary size was related to reading comprehension overall, as measured by the PISA tests of reading literacy. Significant positive correlations were found between overall reading comprehension and vocabulary size, measured at 2000K ($r=.750$, $n=140$, $p<0.01$), 3000K ($r=.680$, $n=140$, $p<0.01$), 5000K ($r=.624$, $n=140$, $p<0.01$) and Academic Wordlist (AWL) ($r=.672$, $n=140$, $p<0.01$) levels. A follow-up analysis calculated the correlations between vocabulary size and particular PISA reading skills: (a) retrieving information, (b) interpreting texts, and (c) reflecting and evaluating in order to establish whether vocabulary size was also closely related to different

types of reading skills. The results confirmed that significant positive correlations exist between vocabulary size and all three groups of reading skills assessed by PISA. The research concludes that vocabulary size appears to have a strong positive relationship not only with reading comprehension overall, but also a range of individual reading skills.

