A Vocabulary Analysis of 'Life' and 'New Headway' Textbooks: Vocabulary Coverage, Frequency, and Repetition

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Abstract

Despite the recognition of the role of textbooks as primary sources of word development, little research has examined three key vocabulary-related aspects (coverage/load, frequency, and repetition) across two globally used commercial English language textbooks, in this case *Life* and *New Headway*. This study adopted a corpus-based approach to analyze all the lexical items appearing in each of the two students' main textbooks, along with the accompanying workbooks, on the basis of the three word-related aspects given above. Particularly, it compared the 95% and 98% lexical coverage of the two textbooks, and the frequency and repetition of high-frequency words across both textbooks. The findings revealed that students using these textbooks would need to develop knowledge of between 2,000 and 3,000 word families to generate an acceptable understanding of their content. The largest number of running words across the *Life* and *New Headway* textbooks belonged to the high word

frequency group, and approximately 50% of these words were repeated 15 times or more within each textbook. The study concludes with a discussion of several pedagogical implications and suggestions for further research.

Keywords: EFL textbooks, Vocabulary coverage, Vocabulary knowledge, Word frequency

1. Introduction

In the realm of language education, it is now generally accepted that vocabulary knowledge is a crucial element of communicative competence, and that a robust vocabulary enables learners to understand written and spoken language more effectively (Webb & Nation, 2017). However, Saudi students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in Saudi Arabia often struggle with vocabulary acquisition. These students are characterized by a limited vocabulary size (Al-Nujaidi, 2003; AlSaif, 2011; Ashraf, 2018; Masrai & Milton, 2012). Several factors have been proposed to explain this difficulty, ranging from the influence of the mother tongue (Arabic) (Al-Nasser, 2015), teaching methods and students' motivation (Fareh, 2010; urRahman & Alhaisoni, 2013), to limited opportunities to practice English beyond the classroom setting (Al-Khasawneh & Maher, 2010; Rababah, 2005), and textbooks (Alshumrani & Al-Ahmadi, 2022; Fareh, 2010; urRahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). The last proposed factor is of interest in the present study.

Limited vocabulary stock has been one element, often the central one, of a range of difficulties in the four language skills (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, and listening) for most Arab university EFL learners (Al-Khasawneh & Maher, 2010). They need a vast vocabulary for the development of these language skills. For example, to effectively read authentic English texts, students need to develop knowledge of about 8,000–9,000 word families (Nation, 2006). Achieving this level of vocabulary requires extensive exposure to the target language (Nation & Webb, 2011) and repeated encounters with these words in different contexts (Bergström et al., 2022). However, since textbooks are the primary sources of lexical input in Saudi EFL context, it is crucial to evaluate their suitability for vocabulary development.

Textbooks play a critical role in vocabulary development in most EFL contexts, serving as a framework for teachers and learners to organize their instruction (Alsaif & Milton, 2012; Yang & Coxhead, 2020). In this regard, Hutchinson and Torres (1994) advocate "No teaching–learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook" (p. 1). Commercial textbooks are an essential component of language classes worldwide and without them language teaching seems impossible (O'Loughlin, 2012). Many universities, including those in Saudi Arabia, base their intensive English courses on reputable publishers' commercial EFL textbooks. However, these textbooks vary in their treatment of important lexical aspects such as coverage/load, frequency, repetition, and representations of word knowledge facets. This diversity makes it challenging for EFL teachers to select the most appropriate textbooks.

While there is a wealth of published literature on vocabulary in learning materials, there is still limited research focusing on key vocabulary-related variables like coverage, frequency,

and repetition in widely used commercial EFL textbooks. This exploratory study aims to analyze two EFL textbooks from renowned international publishers to understand how they present lexical items and to evaluate three essential word-related factors: coverage/load, frequency, and repetition. This will contribute to our knowledge and provide valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of EFL learning materials.

2. Literature Review

There are a range of key word-related aspects, such as frequency, recycling/repetition, coverage, and load that are particularly relevant and important to the present study. These aspects are discussed below, followed by an overview of foreign language textbook analysis in the Saudi context.

2.1 Word Frequency

One of the primary goals of many EFL learners attending language classes is vocabulary learning (Yang & Coxhead, 2020). However, word learning involves more than just picking up a large stock of vocabulary; rather, the goal is often to learn the most frequently used words to achieve comprehension of spoken and written language (Bergström et al., 2022). Since it is nearly impossible to learn all the words that exist in English, vocabulary scholars have maintained that vocabulary learning should be structured based on frequency – how often words occur in the language in different types of discourse (Nation, 2008; 2012). On the basis of their frequency levels, vocabulary items have been divided by Nation (2006) into three categories: high (the 1st 2,000 words as well as function and content words), mid (words from the 3rd 1,000 word list to the 9th 1,000 word list), and low (words from the 9th 1,000 word list onward). High-frequency words are words that occur very frequently and are needed for both formal and informal language, in speaking and writing tasks. The highest proportion of lexical items in any English text comes from the high category (Yang & Coxhead, 2020). On the other hand, low-frequency words are regarded as the biggest group of words. These words occur rarely and are not frequent enough to be part of the high-frequency list. Some of these words are technical and specific to an academic subject or discipline (Nation, 2008). Since high-frequency vocabulary items are essential for EFL learners, they should be represented quite well in general English coursebooks (Sun & Dang, 2020). On the other hand, due to their unimportant role for comprehension, it has been suggested that low-frequency words should not be taught in class (Laufer, 2013). Researching the lexical profiles of language textbooks in terms of frequency can inform teachers and researchers about why some textbooks and activities (vocabulary, reading and listening, writing) might be difficult for learners. In terms of vocabulary learning, a consensus among researchers is that the more frequent a word is in a language, the earlier it is learned (Milton, 2009).

2.2 Repetition

The predictive role of repetition in word learning is now uncontested (Bergström et al., 2022; Webb & Nation, 2017). Word development is "incremental in nature" and, therefore, it is essential to have meaningful exposure to novel words across multiple contexts (Grabe &

Stoller, 2018). That is why textbooks should aim to recycle taught words, with each encounter adding to the learner's vocabulary knowledge. Researchers advocate that the learning of new words needs to be associated with encountering these words many times in various meaningful contexts, as this will lead to word development (Ellis, 2002). A sufficient number of repetitions has been reported to be closely related to word development (Uchihara et al., 2023). In reading, for example, Grabe and Stoller (2018) suggest that key vocabulary should be recycled and explored as learners engage in post-reading comprehension tasks. These activities "guide students in noticing additional useful words and permit teachers to supply additional information about the words" (p. 4).

2.3 Vocabulary Load and Coverage

Vocabulary load refers to the density of unfamiliar lexical items in a context (Nation, 2012; Webb & Nation, 2008), while vocabulary coverage refers to ''the percentage of running words in the text known by the learners'' (Nation, 2006, p. 61). Several studies have investigated learners' vocabulary knowledge (i.e., coverage) and reading comprehension. If readers know 90% of the words in the text, then they are likely to encounter 10 unknown words in every line, while at the 95% threshold it is one unknown word every two lines (Hirsh & Nation, 1992). For text comprehension, EFL learners need to know at least 95% of the running words (Laufer, 1989). Achieving 95% or 98% text coverage varies according to the type of text or genre. For academic texts, reaching a coverage of 95% requires a vocabulary size of around 4,000 word families (Hirsh & Nation, 1992). For newspapers and novels, one needs to know around 8,000–9,000 frequent word families (Nation, 2006). On the other hand, spoken discourse and everyday interaction require knowledge of the most frequent 2,000–3,000 word families (Adolphs & Schmitt, 2003; Nation, 2006; Van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013). Hu and Nation (2000) reported that when 90% to 95% of the words are known in the text, only some readers gain adequate comprehension. This could be attributed to a number of factors such as the clues used, knowledge of the topic, and readers' language proficiency.

2.4 English Language Textbook Analysis in EFL Contexts

According to Al-Yousef (2007), "textbooks are central to how EFL teaching is done in Saudi Arabia, there is much need for an evaluation of their content and to investigate their role in teaching practice and methodology" (p. 7). Therefore, there is a continuous need for their evaluation and analysis. A handful of studies have researched and evaluated textbooks used in the Saudi educational system. These studies have evaluated the textbooks with regard to their layout, objectives, topics covered, language skills, activities, language structures and vocabulary, cultural values/appropriateness, and teacher's needs, from either the perspectives of teachers (Alghamdi, 2021; BinObaid, 2016), parents (Al-Jarf, 2022), both teachers and students (Al-sowat, 2012), and/or researchers (Aldeaij, 2023).

Al-Hajailan (1999) looked at the quality of an English third-grade secondary coursebook in Saudi Arabia. A questionnaire was distributed to teachers and supervisors in Riyadh to capture their perceptions and opinions about the textbook, in addition to interviews and document analysis. The study found positive perceptions in favor of the appearance,

utilization of colors, good organization of the content, and integration of Saudi learners' culture. On the other hand, some of the textbook's major limitations were the absence of rationale for the sequencing of the topics covered, an unattractive book cover, repeated grammar lessons, and reading passages that were not followed by comprehension questions or recorded on the accompanying cassette. Through a retrospective mixed-methods approach design using interviews, document analysis, and questionnaires, Al-Yousef's (2007) study focused on the third-grade intermediate coursebook *Say it in English*. His study found that content and visuals were perceived as the highest elements, while grading materials, recycling learned content, and supplementary materials were poorly rated. These previous studies did not explicitly focus on lexical items in their textbook analysis.

On the other hand, there is another approach to analyzing EFL textbooks in terms of how vocabulary items are represented and their nature. Alsaif and Milton (2012) investigated the content of 22 national textbooks taught at levels 6–12 in Saudi public schools. The researchers also attempted to explain the low vocabulary scores of Saudi learners and the factors that contributed to the small vocabulary uptake by these EFL learners. In terms of word frequency, the study reported that in the 22 examined textbooks, 84% of lexical items belonged to the 2nd 1,000 most frequent word list, and 55% were from the 5,000 most frequent words. This shows the importance of word frequency in learning, which should be taken into account in language textbooks. Schmitt (2010) maintains that "Frequency is one of the most important characteristics of vocabulary, affecting most or all aspects of lexical processing and acquisition" (p. 13). Another study by Alshumrani and Al-Ahmadi (2022) analyzed 12 local Saudi language textbooks taught at public primary and intermediate levels with the aim of investigating the vocabulary dimensions addressed in the books' activities. The researchers reported that primary textbooks tended to focus on the word form of new words first, followed by meaning and then use. On the other hand, word meaning had greater emphasis in intermediate-level textbooks, followed by use and form.

Similar studies have been conducted in other EFL contexts. For example, in their study on the textbook series *The New Concept English* Books 3 and 4, Yang and Coxhead (2020) examined the vocabulary that learners would encounter in terms of frequency and coverage. They found that as the textbooks advanced in their English levels, so did the frequency word lists required to comprehend 95% and 98% of the textbooks. Furthermore, there were more high-frequency words in Book 3 than in Book 4, which might be due to the lower language level. However, it was noticed that as high-frequency words dropped, the number of mid-frequency words increased, as more of these were present in Book 4. This allowed learners at this level to begin learning this set of words. The researchers also found that when the supplementary word list was not included in the lexical coverage, there was higher demand on a higher word-list family than when the supplementary list was included.

Despite the wealth of published research on vocabulary in EFL textbooks, several important word-related factors, such as coverage, frequency, and repetition across key international English language textbooks remain underexplored. In particular, there is a dearth of studies investigating the extent to which various EFL textbooks produced by international publishers pay attention to these three vocabulary aspects. Additionally, most of the published literature

on vocabulary in national or international EFL textbooks does not include in the analysis all the lexical items that appear in students' main books and the accompanying workbooks. Therefore, our understanding of these vocabulary aspects still remains low. It is hoped that the present study can provide invaluable insights into these issues.

3. The Present Study

This article aims to investigate the lexical profiles of two beginner-level English language textbooks used widely in key Saudi universities. It evaluates the vocabulary coverage of the two textbooks to examine the vocabulary size needed to achieve reasonable comprehension of the textbooks. It also examines the repetition of high-frequency lexical items to check whether the words are met frequently within each textbook. In particular, this investigation addresses the following research questions:

(1) What is the vocabulary size required to reach 95% and 98% coverage of the *Life* and *New Headway* textbooks?

(2) To what extent do high-frequency words recur within each textbook?

4. Methods

Language Textbooks

The present corpus-based research focused on two general English language textbooks, *Life* and *New Headway*, which are produced by two leading international publishers (see Table 1). The two beginner-level textbooks, aimed at English language learners who are expected to be at the A1 level, are student-centered and cover reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar tasks. All the written materials in the student's books and the accompanying workbooks, along with the transcripts of the listening tasks, were included in the analyses. The textbooks are structured in units ranging from 12 to 14 units. *Life* and *New Headway* were chosen as they are commonly used and most popular as learning and teaching resources at several major universities in Saudi Arabia.

Table 1. An overview of the analyzed textbooks

Textbook Title	Publisher and authors	Number of units	Number of lessons in each unit	Number of running words
Life	National Geographic Learning (Stephenson et al., 2019)	12	6	50862
New Headway	Oxford University Press (Liz & Soars, 2018)	14	4-5	52768

5. Data Analysis

The two English language textbooks were downloaded and saved as Microsoft Word document files. They were then transformed into text formats after removing any non-textual items (i.e., pictures) to compile a corpus of the analyzed textbooks. An updated version (2.1.0) of the AntWordProfiler program (Anthony, 2023) was used for the analysis of the textbook's corpus. Nation's (2012) British National Corpus (BNC)/Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) lists of the most frequent 25,000 English words plus the newly added list (off-list) were used to allow for the classification of the lexical items of the inserted corpus based on word families. AntWordProfiler generates vocabulary statistics and frequency information about a corpus of texts fed into it by comparing the corpus to BNC/COCA 1-25K frequency bands and off-lists. It provides the coverage of each frequency-level list.

Prior to feeding the corpus into AntWordProfiler, all lexical items were carefully checked to correct any spelling mistakes and edit any contractions to prevent interference with the analysis. Following past studies (e.g., Bergström et al., 2022), words that were not from the 25,000 word family lists were added to a new list titled "off-list", which included proper nouns, compounds, and abbreviations. Since the aim of our study is to analyze the textbooks from a lexical perspective, all the spoken and written words appearing in the *Life* and *New Headway* students' books and accompanying workbooks were included in the analysis. The vocabulary coverage (95% and 98%) was examined to determine the vocabulary size needed by EFL learners to guess unfamiliar items in context. The percentages of coverage of the 1,000–25,000 frequency lists with and without the off-list were given list by list.

6. Results

The vocabulary coverage of each frequency list (1K – 25K) with the inclusion and exclusion of the off-list across the *Life* and *New Headway* textbooks is presented in Table 2. The data in the table below show that the two textbooks have similar vocabulary loads with regard to the cut-off points of lexical coverage (95% and 98%). With the addition of the off-list (accounting for roughly 2.65% in *Life* and 1.54% in *New Headway*), reaching the 95% and 98% coverage points would require mastering the first 2,000 and 3,000 word families, respectively, in both textbooks. These findings seem to point to the importance of proper nouns, marginal, and compound words in achieving the coverage thresholds required for textbook comprehension. The data also show that the coverage figures of the two textbooks increase when the off-list is excluded. In that case, reaching 95% of the coverage would require mastering the first 3,000 word families, and up to 25,000 word families are needed for the 98% coverage. These findings could suggest that beginner-level EFL learners with limited vocabulary knowledge will meet a high proportion of unknown lexical items, which may negatively impact their learning.

Table 2. The percentages of the lexical coverage per each frequency list across the two textbooks

Word lists	Life		New Headway	
	coverage at the frequency lists without the off-list	coverage at the frequency lists with the off-list	coverage at the frequency lists without the off-list	coverage at the frequency lists with the off list
1K	90.16%	92.72%	90.02%	91.56%
2K	93.31%	95.96%	94.88%	96.42%
3K	95.46%	98.11%	96.56%	98.01%
4K	96.11%	98.76%	96.60%	98.14%
5K	96.15%	98.80%	96.63%	98.17%
6K	96.27%	98.92%	96.88%	98.42%
7K	96.29%	98.94%	96.89%	98.43%
8K	96.41%	99.01%	96.94%	98.48%
9K	96.51%	99.16%	97.00%	98.54%
10K	96.56%	99.21%	97.02%	98.56%
11-25K	97.35%	100%	97.50%	99.04%
Off-list	2.65%		1.54%	

Table 3. The lexical profile of the two textbooks

Word frequency categories	Life	New Headway
High frequency (1K and 2K)	93.31%	94.88%
Mid frequency (3K - 9K)	3.1%	2.06%
Low frequency (9K - 25K)	0.94%	0.56%

Note: Coverage figures (in percentages) without the off-list

To further explore the coverage of word frequency lists, they were divided into high (1K and 3K), mid (3K to 9K), and low (9K to 25K) frequency words. The data displayed in Table 3 reveal that the two textbooks provided similar figures of coverage across the high-, mid-, and low-frequency categories. Over 93% and 94% of the running tokens were from the high-frequency words list across both the *Life* and *New Headway* textbooks, respectively, representing the largest proportion of word frequency. Mid-frequency lexical items covered

approximately 3.1% in *Life* and 2.06% in *New Headway*. However, the smallest proportion of coverage (0.94% and 0.56%, respectively) across the two textbooks was provided by the low-frequency word category. These results mean that *Life* and *New Headway* encompass higher proportions of high-frequency lexical items.

Table 4. Repetition of high frequency lexical items across both textbooks

Number of repetitions	Life	New Headway
1 - 5	18.9%	14.4%
6+	31.9%	24.3%
15+	49.2%	61.3%

This part of the analysis focuses on the number of repetitions of high-frequency lexical items across the *Life* and *New Headway* textbooks. To investigate the extent to which high-frequency lexical items recur in each textbook, they were divided into three groups based on their repetition in the textbook corpus: (1) 1–5 repetitions, (2) 6 or more repetitions, and (3) 15 or more repetitions. A look at the table above shows that the two textbooks provided multiple chances to encounter high-frequency words. Almost half of the high-frequency words were repeated 10 times or more in both textbooks, and only a small number of high-frequency words had between one and five recurrences. Words that appeared six times or more accounted for approximately 31% and 24% of words in the *Life* and *New Headway* textbooks, respectively. These findings indicate that the two textbooks offer good opportunities for expanding knowledge of high-frequency lexical items, as words are frequently recycled within each textbook.

7. Discussion and Implications

The present study extends previous research in two ways. Firstly, it examines three key word-related dimensions – coverage/load, frequency, and repetition – that, as it has been suggested, play important roles in word learning across two global EFL textbooks produced by prominent publishers. Secondly, the analysis includes all the words that appeared in the main student textbooks, the accompanying workbooks, and the transcripts of aural exercises. Thus, it provides valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of these textbooks from three vocabulary-related aspects.

Regarding the first research question, the findings have shown that across both *Life* and *New Headway*, reaching 95% lexical coverage would require knowledge of the first 2,000 word families. These findings are in line with Matsuoka and Hirsh (2010), who reported that knowledge of the first 2,000 word list is required to generate sufficient understanding of the *New Headway* upper-intermediate textbook. The 95% lexical coverage point is reported to be closely related to reasonable understanding of written and spoken discourse (Van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013). Unfortunately, vocabulary coverage of *Life* and *New Headway* will be unattainable for beginner-level Saudi EFL learners due to their limited vocabulary knowledge. Past research involving Saudi EFL learners has reported that most students fall short of the first 2,000-word level (AlSaif, 2011). The results also indicated that to reach the 98% lexical coverage, which was deemed necessary for achieving ideal or optimal comprehension (Sun & Dang, 2020), learners should have a vocabulary size of 3,000 word families. This figure is

even further beyond the reach of beginner-level EFL learners than the 95% coverage point. Considering the limited English instruction time in several EFL contexts, it is highly unlikely that most students will acquire a sufficient number of new lexical items (the first 3,000 words) to generate acceptable understanding of these textbooks. This is reminiscent of results by Yang and Coxhead (2020), who showed that even their intermediate-level EFL learners had not mastered the vocabulary size required for comprehension of the *Yilin* textbook series. When considering the coverage of the 25,000 frequency list without the off-list, the vocabulary demand of *Life* and *New Headway* becomes even heavier, as reaching the 95% and 98% coverage points would require knowledge of anywhere between 3,000 and 25,000 word families. These findings generally correspond to the results of other EFL studies (e.g., Yang & Coxhead, 2020; Rahmat & Coxhead, 2021). For beginner-level students in an EFL setting, these figures are simply not realistic. It is thus assumed that they will struggle to cope with the vocabulary demands of these textbooks, as they will meet many unknown lexical items and thus their comprehension of the textbooks will be limited. Admittedly, this lexically challenging nature of these textbooks may explain the vocabulary limitation reported by some EFL learners in several former studies (AlSaif, 2011). However, since the present study did not measure the vocabulary knowledge of the beginner-level EFL learners who use these textbooks, it cannot provide solid evidence in favor of this assumption.

The extent to which high-frequency lexical items are repeated within the *Life* and *New Headway* textbooks was addressed by the second research question. The findings clearly demonstrated variations between the two textbooks regarding the numbers of repetitions of high-frequency words. Specifically, the proportion of words that had 15 occurrences or more was approximately 50% in *Life* and over 60% in *New Headway*. These high percentages of word repetition could greatly boost vocabulary growth and retention (Nguyen, 2020).

Although it is likely that EFL learners who use *Life* and *New Headway* textbooks will face a heavy vocabulary load, they could fine-tune their knowledge of novel lexical items through multiple encounters with them in different contexts within the students' main book and the accompanying workbook. Multiple encounters with novel words are assumed to be particularly beneficial for learners with small vocabulary sizes (Zhang, 2022), as their memory of the novel lexical items can be enhanced through multiple encounters (Nation, 2012). This is plausible because learners who encounter novel words frequently in different contexts are highly likely to notice them and pick them up easily.

Implications of the study can be extended to EFL textbook writers, teachers, and English language program or curriculum textbook decision makers. EFL textbook writers need to know the nature of their audience when it comes to vocabulary items. If the vocabulary load is far beyond the boundaries of students' vocabulary size/stock, learners will struggle to comprehend the text (Webb & Nation, 2008; Yang & Coxhead, 2020). EFL textbook writers could analyze the vocabulary load of different textbooks used, for example, in Saudi Arabia, to understand the Saudi learner. Then, they could provide materials (including supplementary lists) that contain vocabulary that recycles previously taught words and also introduces words from higher frequency lists. These books could be "special editions" for Saudi universities. Furthermore, the frequency lists should be spread out over several textbooks with repetitions of vocabulary from previous frequency lists present. Regarding teachers, they can create

vocabulary profiles for their learners using vocabulary size measures. This information is taken into account when designing activities such as reading exercises in the classroom. Materials can be analyzed through the AntWordProfiler program to determine their coverage and compare it to the learners' vocabulary levels. Teachers can then introduce new words from higher vocabulary lists or substitute words in the text. Additionally, teachers can provide more information about the lexical items encountered in the tasks. For example, they can ask about the parts of speech, synonyms, antonyms, etc. This information can enhance the depth of the learners' vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, teachers can reinforce previously taught vocabulary throughout the course by asking learners to write sentences using preselected words or by challenging them to write about a specific topic using all of the words. These activities can also be incorporated into speaking tasks.

In terms of English language programs or curriculum textbooks, decision makers should consider vocabulary frequency, load, and repetitions when selecting appropriate materials for their students. It is also recommended that trials of potential textbooks be conducted with a small sample of learners and teachers over one or two semesters. Feedback should then be gathered from both learners and teachers, with special attention given to various key elements of the language program or institution, particularly regarding vocabulary.

8. Limitations

The present investigation was limited in several ways. Firstly, due to cost and time constraints, this study only evaluated the vocabulary profile of two beginner-level EFL textbooks. Further research should examine all three word-related factors (coverage, frequency and repetition) of the entire series of textbooks to provide a comprehensive analysis. Second, the study did not consider the perceptions or experiences of learners or teachers who are using the analyzed textbooks. It would be interesting for future studies to include the perspectives of both learners and teachers, as they are closely connected to the textbooks. Furthermore, we did not measure the vocabulary size of the target learners who are using these textbooks and compare it to the word coverage provided by the textbooks. Future research should compare learners' vocabulary size with the frequency and lexical coverage of the vocabulary presented in the textbooks to determine if learners can comprehend texts beyond their vocabulary.

9. Conclusion

Textbooks play a crucial role in language learning, especially when they are the main source of language input (Alsaif & Milton, 2012). The analysis conducted in this research provides an overall evaluation of three important vocabulary-related factors in two widely used EFL textbooks, *Life* and *New Headway*, in the Saudi context. This research has revealed that the vocabulary component of *Life* and *New Headway* is relatively challenging for EFL learners in terms of vocabulary load. Beginner-level EFL learners using these textbooks would need vast vocabulary knowledge (between 2,000 and 3,000 word families) to cultivate an acceptable understanding of their content. The study also found that the majority of words appearing in both textbooks were high-frequency words, and these words were repeated frequently within each textbook.

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