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The Relationship Between Vocabulary Mastery And Reading Comprehension At Students Of English Education Study Program Of Uin Mataram

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Abstract

Vocabulary mastery is widely recognized as one of the most influential factors affecting reading comprehension among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. However, many university students still encounter difficulties in understanding academic English texts due to limited vocabulary knowledge. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension among English Department students at UIN Mataram. The study employed a quantitative correlational research design involving 33 students selected through convenience sampling. The instruments used were a vocabulary mastery test and a reading comprehension test consisting of multiple-choice items. The validity of the instruments was evaluated through expert judgment, while reliability testing showed acceptable results with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients above 0.70. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, normality tests, and Spearman Rank Correlation through SPSS version 25.

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The findings revealed that the mean score of vocabulary mastery was 87.27, while the mean score of reading comprehension was 86.96. Furthermore, the correlation analysis showed a significant positive relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension ($r = 0.712$, $p < 0.05$). This result indicates that students with higher vocabulary mastery tended to achieve better reading comprehension performance. The study concludes that vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role in supporting students' comprehension of academic texts. Therefore, English lecturers are encouraged to integrate vocabulary-building activities into reading instruction to improve students' academic reading ability.

Keyword: vocabulary mastery, reading comprehension, EFL learners, English Department students, UIN Mataram

INTRODUCTION

The globalization of English has established it as a lingua franca across multiple disciplinary domains, including academia, scientific research, technology, and international commerce (Kim & Friginal, n.d.). Consequently, English language instruction has become a pedagogical imperative in educational systems worldwide, extending from primary through tertiary education levels. Within the Indonesian context, English functions as a critical foreign language curriculum component, necessitated by its role in facilitating access to international academic discourse, enabling cross-cultural communication, and promoting professional advancement (Saputra et al., 2026). In higher education settings, English proficiency serves as a prerequisite for engaging with scholarly literature, conducting research, and participating in global intellectual communities. Among the principal macro-skills in language acquisition, reading comprehension occupies a position of paramount importance, as it constitutes the primary mechanism through which learners access complex disciplinary knowledge, assimilate academic content, and consolidate their overall linguistic competence. The reading process exposes learners to diverse lexical inventories, complex syntactic structures, and multifaceted ideas that collectively facilitate language development and conceptual understanding (Akbar, 2022). In university contexts, where students routinely encounter discipline-specific texts including peer-reviewed journals, scholarly monographs, and digital repositories, the capacity to comprehend English texts with proficiency represents an indispensable skill for academic and professional success.

Despite the recognized significance of reading comprehension in academic achievement, a substantial proportion of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners continue to encounter substantial impediments when engaging with English texts. Empirical observation suggests that

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lexical limitations constitute a primary deterrent to effective comprehension, as vocabulary knowledge forms the foundational substrate upon which linguistic competence is constructed. Without adequate lexical resources, learners encounter insurmountable obstacles in text decoding and semantic interpretation (Shete & Ghodke, 2026). Frequently, learners encounter unfamiliar lexical items while processing academic passages, thereby interrupting cognitive flow and necessitating disproportionate time allocation to lexical retrieval and translation. This linguistic bottleneck compromises reading fluency and diminishes comprehension efficacy, resulting in learners' failure to identify principal ideas, discriminate supporting details, interpret contextual meaning, or engage in inferential reasoning. These challenges are particularly pronounced among English Department students at the State Islamic University (UIN) Mataram, who are required to engage with an extensive array of English-medium academic materials including peer-reviewed journals, scholarly textbooks, research articles, and online academic resources. Constrained lexical knowledge diminishes not only comprehension capacity but also attenuates learners' self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation toward English reading materials, ultimately compromising academic reading performance in EFL contexts.

Scholarly consensus recognizes lexical mastery as a fundamental component of reading comprehension achievement (DESTA ADLINA, 2025). Learners possessing expansive lexical inventories demonstrate superior capacity for text comprehension, enabling rapid lexical recognition and precise semantic interpretation. Conversely, learners with attenuated vocabulary knowledge frequently experience miscomprehension and cognitive dissonance during reading tasks. Extant literature examining the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension consistently demonstrates positive correlational relationships, indicating that lexical knowledge constitutes a significant predictor of reading achievement. Learners demonstrating elevated vocabulary mastery typically manifest superior performance in reading comprehension assessments, as expanded lexical resources facilitate more efficient textual processing and comprehension (Nora et al., 2026). Nevertheless, the preponderance of empirical investigations have concentrated on specific institutional contexts or homogeneous educational populations, particularly English-major undergraduate students. Empirical research specifically examining the lexical-comprehension nexus among English Department students at UIN Mataram remains limited in scope and depth. Furthermore, existing investigations have frequently emphasized vocabulary size while neglecting the mechanisms through which lexical knowledge influences comprehension of academic texts across diverse contextual parameters. Consequently, additional investigation is warranted to elucidate the relationship between vocabulary mastery

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and reading comprehension within this specific population and institutional context.

The present investigation endeavors to examine the relationship between lexical mastery and reading comprehension among English Department students at UIN Mataram. Specifically, this study seeks to determine whether students demonstrating elevated vocabulary mastery exhibit correspondingly superior reading comprehension performance. The research further aims to ascertain the magnitude and nature of the contribution that lexical knowledge exerts upon students' capacity to comprehend English texts with proficiency. Additionally, this inquiry attempts to provide enhanced understanding regarding the facilitative role of vocabulary knowledge in scaffolding students' academic reading competence within EFL pedagogical contexts. Through systematic examination of these variables, the investigation is anticipated to yield empirical evidence substantiating the theoretical and pedagogical significance of vocabulary mastery in enhancing students' reading comprehension achievement.

This investigation is anticipated to generate both theoretical and practical contributions to English language instruction, particularly within EFL pedagogical contexts. From a theoretical perspective, the findings may augment the extant literature concerning the relationship between lexical competence and reading comprehension among university-level learners (Vaughn et al., 2024). The investigation may further facilitate enhanced comprehension of the mechanisms through which vocabulary knowledge facilitates learners' comprehension processes during reading engagement. From a practical standpoint, the empirical findings may assist English language instructors at UIN Mataram in developing pedagogically sophisticated teaching methodologies designed to optimize vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension instruction. The results may additionally motivate learners to expand their engagement with English reading materials and cultivate more efficacious vocabulary learning strategies. Furthermore, this study may function as a foundational reference for subsequent investigators pursuing inquiry into vocabulary mastery, reading comprehension, and English language instruction in tertiary educational contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Vocabulary Mastery

Vocabulary mastery refers to learners' ability to understand and use words appropriately in different contexts. Vocabulary knowledge includes understanding word meaning, pronunciation, spelling, grammatical usage, collocation, and contextual interpretation (Nasarudin et al., 2025). Vocabulary is considered a central component of

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language learning because learners cannot communicate effectively without sufficient lexical knowledge. In EFL learning contexts, vocabulary mastery becomes highly important because students rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge to understand written and spoken texts.

Vocabulary knowledge can be categorized into receptive and productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary refers to words that learners can recognize and understand while listening or reading, whereas productive vocabulary refers to words that learners can actively use in speaking and writing. Students with extensive vocabulary knowledge generally demonstrate better language performance because they are able to process information more efficiently (Taye & Lodebo, 2026)

2. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the process of understanding, interpreting, and constructing meaning from written texts (Spivey, 2023). Reading comprehension involves several cognitive processes such as identifying main ideas, understanding supporting details, interpreting vocabulary in context, making inferences, and evaluating textual information. Effective reading comprehension requires readers to combine their linguistic knowledge, background knowledge, and reading strategies.

In EFL contexts, reading comprehension is often influenced by learners' vocabulary knowledge because unfamiliar vocabulary may interrupt understanding and reduce reading fluency (Dong et al., 2020). Students who possess sufficient vocabulary knowledge are generally more capable of understanding academic texts effectively.

3. Relationship between Vocabulary Mastery and Reading Comprehension

Vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension are closely related. According to (Taye & Lodebo, 2026b) Students with broader vocabulary knowledge tend to comprehend texts more effectively because they can recognize words more quickly and understand meanings accurately. Vocabulary knowledge enables readers to process textual information efficiently and interpret ideas presented in a text.

Several previous studies have shown that vocabulary mastery positively contributes to reading comprehension achievement. Learners with higher vocabulary knowledge generally achieve better reading performance because vocabulary supports the comprehension process. Conversely, limited vocabulary knowledge often causes learners to experience difficulties in understanding texts, identifying important information, and interpreting contextual meaning(Vaughn et al., 2024).

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4. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the lexical threshold theory, which states that learners need sufficient vocabulary knowledge to understand written texts effectively (Jin et al., 2026). According to this theory, students who know most words in a text are more capable of focusing on comprehension rather than decoding unfamiliar vocabulary. Therefore, vocabulary mastery is assumed to positively influence reading comprehension ability (Virgana & Lapasau, 2019).

In this study, vocabulary mastery serves as the independent variable (X), while reading comprehension serves as the dependent variable (Y). The framework assumes that students with better vocabulary mastery tend to achieve higher reading comprehension performance(Rahmah et al., 2023).

METHOD

1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design. Correlational research aims to investigate and identify the relationship between two or more variables without any manipulation from the researcher (Devi et al., 2023). In this study, the design was utilized to examine the relationship between vocabulary mastery (Variable X) and reading comprehension (Variable Y) among English Department students at UIN Mataram.

2. Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at UIN Mataram. From this population, a sample of 33 students was selected using a convenience sampling technique. The participants were chosen based on two criteria:

a. They had completed reading-related English courses.
b. They expressed voluntary willingness to participate in this research.

3. Research Instruments

Data were collected using two primary instruments, which were validated through expert judgment by senior English lecturers. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded coefficients above 0.70, indicating that both instruments were reliable for data collection.

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a. Vocabulary Mastery Test: This instrument consisted of 20 multiple-choice items designed to measure students' understanding of vocabulary meanings, synonyms, antonyms, and contextual vocabulary usage.

b. Reading Comprehension Test: This instrument comprised 10 multiple-choice questions based on academic reading passages. The items were designed to measure students' ability to identify main ideas, locate supporting details, make inferences, and understand contextual meaning.

4. Data Collection Procedure

The data collection was carried out directly during classroom sessions. The researcher administered both the vocabulary mastery test and the reading comprehension test to the participants, who were required to complete them within an allocated time frame. Upon completion, the raw scores were collected, tabulated, and prepared for statistical analysis.

5. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics via SPSS version 25.

a. Descriptive Statistics: Used to determine the mean, minimum score, maximum score, and standard deviation of the datasets.

b. Normality Test: Conducted using the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov* and *Shapiro-Wilk* tests to check the data distribution.

c. Hypothesis Testing: Since the normality test revealed that the data were not normally distributed, a non-parametric statistical measure—Spearman's Rank Correlation $r_s$was employed to determine the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. The significance level for testing the hypotheses ($H_1$and H_0)was set at $\alpha = 0.05$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the researcher conducted field research to investigate the relationship between students' vocabulary mastery and their reading comprehension among English Department students at UIN Mataram. After completing the research process, the researcher collected the data from the students' vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension test scores. The data were obtained from students who had participated in English reading courses and completed both tests administered by the researcher.

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The researcher analyzed the scores of 33 students to determine whether there was a significant relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Spearman Rank Correlation through SPSS version 25. In this chapter, the researcher presents the description of the data and compares the students' achievement in vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension.

Based on the results of the vocabulary mastery test, the total score obtained by the English Department students at UIN Mataram was 2880. Meanwhile, the total score of reading comprehension was 2870. The detailed results of students' scores can be seen in the following tables.

Table.1 The Scores of Vocabulary Mastery (X)

NO	Names	X
1.	Students 1	100
2.	Students 2	75
3.	Students 3	100
4.	Students 4	100
5.	Students 5	95
6.	Students 6	90
7.	Students 7	100
8.	Students 8	100
9.	Students 9	100
10.	Students 10	100
11.	Students 11	100
12.	Students 12	100
13.	Students 13	75
14.	Students 14	95
15.	Students 15	100
16.	Students 16	90
17.	Students 17	95
18.	Students 18	100
19.	Students 19	100
20.	Students 20	100
21.	Students 21	25

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22.	Students 22	25
23.	Students 23	95
24.	Students 24	75
25.	Students 25	90
26.	Students 26	95
27.	Students 27	70
28.	Students 28	100
29.	Students 29	15
30.	Students 30	90
31.	Students 31	95
32.	Students 31	90
33.	Students 33	100
Total		**2880**

Table.2 The scores of Reading Comprehension (Y)

NO	**Names**	**Y**
1.	Students 1	100
2.	Students 2	60
3.	Students 3	100
4.	Students 4	100
5.	Students 5	100
6.	Students 6	100
7.	Students 7	100
8.	Students 8	100
9.	Students 9	100
10.	Students 10	100
11.	Students 11	80
12.	Students 12	90
13.	Students 13	90
14.	Students 14	90
15.	Students 15	100
16.	Students 16	90

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17.	Students 17	90
18.	Students 18	100
19.	Students 19	100
20.	Students 20	100
21.	Students 21	80
22.	Students 22	60
23.	Students 23	100
24.	Students 24	20
25.	Students 25	80
26.	Students 26	90
27.	Students 27	70
28.	Students 28	100
29.	Students 29	20
30.	Students 30	90
31.	Students 31	100
32.	Students 31	80
33.	Students 33	90
Total		**2870**

Data Analysis

a. Correlation Analysis

Because the normality test indicated that the data were not normally distributed, the researcher employed the Spearman Rank Correlation test to determine the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension.

The result is presented in Table 3 below.

Table.3 Spearman Rank Correlation Analysis

Correlations			
		X	Y
X	Spearman's rho	1	.712**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	33	33

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Y	Spearman's rho	.712**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	33	33

The table 3 showed that the result of spearman

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Vocabulary Mastery and Reading Comprehension	0.712	< 0.001	Strong Positive Correlation

The results revealed a correlation coefficient of 0.712 with a significance value below 0.05. This indicates a statistically significant and strong positive relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. Therefore, students who demonstrated higher vocabulary mastery tended to achieve better reading comprehension performance.

In other words, students who have better vocabulary mastery tend to achieve better reading comprehension scores. Since the significance value was lower than 0.05, the correlation was statistically significant.

According to the correlation interpretation scale, a correlation coefficient of 0.712 belongs to a strong correlation category. Therefore, vocabulary mastery has an important contribution to students' reading comprehension ability.

b. Descriptive Statistic

Descriptive statistics were used to identify students' general performance in vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension.Table 4 below.

Table.4 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
X	33	15.00	100.00	87.2727	22.74488
Y	33	20.00	100.00	86.9697	20.68889
Valid N (listwise)	33				

The results showed that students generally had relatively high scores in both vocabulary

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mastery and reading comprehension. The mean score of vocabulary mastery was 87.27, while the mean score of reading comprehension was 86.96.

c. Normality Test

A normality test was conducted to determine whether the data were normally distributed or not. The result of the normality test is presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Normality Test

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
X	.336	33	<.001	.600	33	<.001
Y	.285	33	<.001	.660	33	<.001

Based on the normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, the significance values of both variables were lower than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data were not normally distributed.

Since the data were not normally distributed, the researcher continued the analysis using Spearman Rank Correlation to identify the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension.

The findings of this study revealed a significant positive relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension among English Department students at UIN Mataram. The correlation coefficient (r = 0.712) indicated a strong positive relationship between the two variables. This finding suggests that students who possess broader vocabulary knowledge are more likely to achieve higher reading comprehension

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performance.

One possible explanation for this result is that vocabulary knowledge enables students to process textual information more efficiently. When students are familiar with most of the words appearing in a text, they can focus their attention on understanding ideas, identifying important information, and making inferences rather than spending excessive time decoding unfamiliar vocabulary. Consequently, students with higher vocabulary mastery tend to comprehend texts more effectively than those with limited vocabulary knowledge.

The findings of this study support the Lexical Threshold Theory, which argues that learners require sufficient vocabulary knowledge to achieve successful reading comprehension. According to this theory, vocabulary serves as a foundation for understanding written texts because readers cannot effectively interpret information if they do not understand the words used in the text. Therefore, vocabulary mastery can be considered an essential prerequisite for successful reading comprehension.

The findings are also consistent with previous studies. Dong et al. (2020) found that vocabulary knowledge significantly contributed to reading comprehension achievement among language learners. Similarly, Rahmah et al. (2023) reported that students with higher vocabulary mastery tended to achieve better reading comprehension performance. Nora et al. (2026) also found a positive relationship between vocabulary knowledge and students' critical reading ability. The consistency between the present study and previous research strengthens the argument that vocabulary mastery plays a crucial role in reading comprehension.

In the context of UIN Mataram, vocabulary limitation appears to remain one of the major challenges faced by students when reading academic texts. Many students still rely heavily on dictionaries or translation applications when encountering unfamiliar words. Although such strategies may help students understand individual vocabulary items, excessive dependence on translation can interrupt reading fluency and reduce overall comprehension effectiveness.

The findings of this study have several pedagogical implications. English lecturers should integrate vocabulary development into reading instruction through activities such as extensive reading, contextual vocabulary learning, vocabulary notebooks, and technology-assisted learning. Students should also be encouraged to increase their exposure to English reading materials, including academic articles, books, and digital

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resources. Through continuous vocabulary development, students may improve not only their reading comprehension but also their overall English language proficiency.

Overall, this study confirms that vocabulary mastery is a significant factor influencing reading comprehension among English Department students at UIN Mataram. Therefore, efforts to improve students' vocabulary knowledge should be considered an important component of English language instruction.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension among English Department students at UIN Mataram. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between the two variables, indicating that students with higher vocabulary mastery tended to achieve better reading comprehension performance. The Spearman Rank Correlation analysis showed a strong positive correlation, suggesting that vocabulary knowledge plays a substantial role in supporting students' ability to understand English texts.

The findings support the view that vocabulary mastery is an essential component of successful reading comprehension. Students who possess broader vocabulary knowledge are generally more capable of identifying main ideas, understanding supporting details, interpreting contextual meanings, and comprehending academic texts effectively.

Based on these findings, English lecturers are encouraged to integrate more vocabulary-focused activities into reading instruction. Students are also recommended to improve their vocabulary learning habits through regular reading activities and increased exposure to English materials. Furthermore, vocabulary development should be considered a priority in English language instruction because it contributes significantly to students' academic reading performance and overall language proficiency.

Future researchers are encouraged to investigate other variables that may influence reading comprehension, such as grammar knowledge, reading strategies, motivation, and language learning habits.

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