

The Correlation Between Vocabulary Mastery And Reading Comprehension Skills Among Ninth Grade Students Of SMP Negeri 1 Palasa

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Abstract: Vocabulary mastery is one of the key factors influencing students' reading comprehension, including their ability to identify main ideas, understand detailed information, and interpret implied meanings in a text. This study aimed to examine the correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and their reading comprehension among ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Palasa. A quantitative approach with a correlational research design was employed. The sample consisted of 69 ninth-grade students selected from the school. Data were collected using vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension tests. The research instruments were validated through expert judgment and tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.578 for the vocabulary test and 0.638 for the reading comprehension test. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, the Pearson Product-Moment correlation, and hypothesis testing. The findings revealed a positive and statistically significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension ($r = 0.597$, $p = 0.001$), indicating a moderate relationship. These results suggest that students with higher vocabulary mastery tend to achieve better reading comprehension. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to emphasize vocabulary development through effective instructional strategies to improve students' reading skills..

Keywords: Vocabulary Mastery, Reading Comprehension, Correlation Research, Quantitative Research, Junior High School Students.

Abstrak: Penguasaan kosakata merupakan salah satu faktor penting yang memengaruhi kemampuan membaca siswa, termasuk kemampuan memahami gagasan utama, informasi rinci, dan makna tersirat dalam suatu teks. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hubungan antara penguasaan kosakata dan kemampuan membaca pemahaman siswa kelas IX di SMP Negeri 1 Palasa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain penelitian korelasional. Sampel penelitian terdiri atas 69 siswa kelas IX yang dipilih dari SMP Negeri 1 Palasa. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes penguasaan kosakata dan tes membaca pemahaman. Instrumen penelitian divalidasi melalui expert judgment dan diuji reliabilitasnya menggunakan koefisien Cronbach's Alpha, dengan nilai reliabilitas sebesar 0,578 untuk tes kosakata dan 0,638 untuk tes membaca pemahaman. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, uji normalitas Kolmogorov-Smirnov, uji korelasi Pearson Product-Moment, dan uji hipotesis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif dan signifikan antara penguasaan kosakata dan kemampuan membaca pemahaman ($r = 0,597$; $p = 0,001$), yang termasuk dalam kategori korelasi sedang. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa siswa dengan penguasaan kosakata yang lebih baik cenderung memiliki kemampuan membaca pemahaman yang lebih tinggi. Oleh karena itu, guru bahasa Inggris disarankan untuk lebih menekankan pengembangan kosakata melalui strategi pembelajaran yang efektif guna meningkatkan kemampuan membaca siswa.

Kata Kunci: Penguasaan Kosakata, Pemahaman Bacaan, Penelitian Korelasi, Penelitian Kuantitatif, Siswa Sekolah Menengah Pertama.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an essential language skill that supports students' academic success. In addition to helping students understand texts, reading also develops other skills, such as writing and speaking. In learning, reading comprehension depends heavily on students' vocabulary knowledge. This is supported by research indicating that students with stronger vocabulary mastery tend to have a greater ability to comprehend main ideas, detailed information, and implicit meanings in the texts they read (Vienarahayu, Budiarta, and Krismayani, 2022). The greater the students' vocabulary knowledge, the better their reading comprehension.

Many previous studies have shown that students' reading comprehension skills are positively related to their vocabulary mastery (Rahmah et al., 2023; Lisana et al., 2022; Fitri, 2021). These findings consistently demonstrate that students with better vocabulary are also better at reading comprehension. This suggests that vocabulary is not simply a collection of words students know but also serves as a cognitive aid that supports their understanding of the ideas, information, and meaning contained in a text. However, these studies were conducted in different contexts, with varying participant characteristics and learning environments, so the level of correlation between vocabulary comprehension and reading comprehension found was not always consistent.

Although previous research generally indicates that the better a person's vocabulary, the better their reading comprehension, the results obtained sometimes vary. Several studies, such as those conducted by Apriliani et al. (2021), Lisana et al. (2022), Septiana and Hanafi (2022), and Vienarahayu et al. (2022), have shown that vocabulary comprehension is positively associated with students' reading comprehension. Conversely, Ardini et al. (2025) found that. found no significant correlation between vocabulary comprehension and reading comprehension among high school students. These differences in research results suggest that the correlation between the two variables may be influenced by factors such as participant characteristics, educational level, the tools used in the study, or the learning environment. Furthermore, concrete evidence regarding the link between vocabulary comprehension and reading comprehension in ninth-grade junior high school students, particularly at SMP Negeri 1 Palasa, is still lacking. Therefore, this study was conducted to re-examine the relationship between vocabulary comprehension and reading comprehension in this context, and to provide concrete evidence regarding the level of correlation between the two factors.

This research aims to examine the correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. The result is expected to serve as a reference for teachers and educators in designing more effective teaching methods to improve students' reading skills and as a basis for further research in education, particularly on vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. Vocabulary is a fundamental part of language proficiency because it supports learners in both productive skills and receptive skills. The more vocabulary students learn, the better their comprehension of the texts they read. This is reinforced by research showing that vocabulary is the primary foundation for language skills, especially reading (Zeng et al., 2025). Mastering vocabulary well enables readers to understand words correctly, thereby facilitating comprehension of the text. In addition, (Ardiyanto and Sungkono, 2024) explain that vocabulary mastery is important for helping students understand written information, especially in academic texts. Students who have limited vocabulary often have difficulty understanding the main ideas and implied meanings in reading.

According to research by Ardini et al. (2025), students with stronger vocabulary mastery are more effective at understanding main ideas, detailed information, and the contextual meaning of

text. Ardini and his team emphasized that insufficient vocabulary is one of the main reasons students struggle to understand English texts. Vocabulary mastery is a person's ability to recognize, understand, and use words in a language, both orally and in writing. Vocabulary mastery not only refers to the number of words known by learners but also to their ability to understand and use those words appropriately. Zeng et al. (2025) explains that vocabulary mastery consists of two main dimensions, namely *quantity (vocabulary size)* and *quality (vocabulary depth)*. Quantity (vocabulary size) refers to the number of words a person has mastered. The more vocabulary a person has, the greater their ability to understand and express ideas through language. However, effective vocabulary mastery requires more than just knowing a large number of words; it also requires a deep understanding of their meanings and uses. Furthermore, quality (vocabulary depth) is reflected in an individual's ability to understand the meaning of words, both denotative and connotative, as well as the ability to use words appropriately in context.

According to this, reinforced by Holidazia and Rodliyah (2020), who emphasize that vocabulary mastery is the result of an active learning process that involves an implementation strategy for vocabulary learning. They explained that students who can use tactics such as guessing meaning from context, grouping vocabulary by similarity of meaning, and using words repeatedly in a sentence will develop a deeper vocabulary. Reading is a cognitive activity that involves interpreting written symbols such as letters, words, and sentences in order to construct meaning from a text. The reading activity is not limited to paying attention to writing; it also involves an interaction dynamic between the individual and the content. When readers read, they need to recall previously acquired knowledge to interpret and evaluate the text.

Reading is a dynamic activity and a significant process that engages the reader's cognitive abilities in understanding textual content. This is supported by (Roomy, 2022), who emphasized that reading well involves the ability to analyze and evaluate information in the text, using critical reading skills. This view is reinforced by (Abdurasulovna, 2020), who states that reading skills are not only useful for understanding texts but also serve as a learning activity that supports cognitive growth, analytical thinking, and students' independence in learning. Reading comprehension is an active process in which readers construct meaning from the text. According to Sari et al. (2020), reading comprehension involves understanding, analyzing, and evaluating the information presented in a text. This encompasses skills and aspects, such as identifying main ideas, drawing conclusions, and making inferences. In line with this, Franzen (2021) emphasizes that reading comprehension develops through readers' active involvement in meaningful and ongoing reading activities. They explain that the more frequently a person is exposed to text through reading activities (reading volume), the greater the reader's opportunity to construct meaning, enrich vocabulary, and improve reading comprehension.

This view is reinforced by Iqbal et al. (2024), who stated that reading comprehension is the core of reading, as reading success depends on the reader's ability to understand the text's meaning. Reading comprehension involves the ability to interpret information literally, draw conclusions, and analyze the implied meaning in a text. This view is confirmed by (Syahrani Ramadani and Saiful, 2021), who identify that the ability to read is strongly influenced by students' skills in recognizing and understanding the meaning of words in context, given the text being read. Information processing theory states that understanding a reading is not only about recognizing words, but also about linking the meaning in the reading with previously acquired knowledge. Several studies have reported a positive association between vocabulary comprehension and students' reading comprehension (Apriliani et al., 2021; Lisana et al., 2022; Septiana & Hanafi, 2022; Vienarahayu et

al., 2022). In contrast, Ardini et al. (2025) found that vocabulary comprehension was not a significant predictor of students' reading comprehension. At SMP Negeri 1 Palasa, students come from diverse backgrounds and differ in their vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. Therefore, this research aims to examine the factors influencing these variables and provide tools to improve students' reading skills.

METHOD

The researchers used a quantitative, correlational research design. This design was chosen to determine the correlation between vocabulary mastery and students' reading comprehension. This research will be conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Palasa, with ninth-grade students as subjects. The population in this research included all ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Palasa. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, based on specific criteria. The sample was selected by considering several specific criteria, such as: students are at the same grade level, students have studied vocabulary and reading materials according to the applicable curriculum, students actively participate in the English learning process, students have adequate basic reading skills, and students are willing to be participants in this research, to obtain a sufficient number of students and representative results. In this research, the researchers selected 69 students to assess their vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension.

As stated in the book by Sugiyono (2020), the researchers used a vocabulary test to assess students' vocabulary mastery. The test consists of multiple-choice questions. This test is designed to measure how well students understand and recognize words in various situations. Furthermore, to evaluate reading comprehension, researchers used a test containing several texts with questions related to those texts, particularly those using the simple past tense, to assess students' understanding. The research instrument was validated through expert assessment. Before being administered to participants, experts in the field of English teaching evaluated the content, language, and relevance of each item to ensure it accurately measured students' vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. Feedback from the experts was used to revise and refine the instrument before data collection began.

The reliability test results showed that the vocabulary mastery measuring instrument had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.578. Based on these criteria, this value ranges from 0.41 to 0.60, making it quite reliable. This indicates that the Vocabulary Mastery instrument is quite consistent in measuring students' vocabulary mastery. Meanwhile, the Reading Comprehension instrument achieved a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.638. This value is within the range of 0.61 to 0.80, making it fairly reliable. Therefore, the Reading Comprehension instrument has good internal consistency and can be relied upon to measure students' reading comprehension abilities. In general, both research instruments met reliability standards based on the Cronbach's Alpha criteria used. The Vocabulary Mastery instrument had adequate reliability, while the Reading Comprehension instrument had good reliability. Therefore, both instruments were considered suitable for use in data collection in this research. Data collection was conducted by administering two types of tests to the students: a vocabulary test and a reading test. Students were given sufficient time to complete both tests. Once the data were collected, the researchers analyzed the results using descriptive and inferential statistics to determine the correlation between vocabulary skills and reading comprehension.

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to calculate the correlation between the two variables (Sugiyono, 2020). The researchers conducted

descriptive analysis to provide a general overview of the average, highest, and lowest scores for vocabulary and reading comprehension skills of students at SMP Negeri 1 Palasa. Furthermore, an inferential analysis was conducted to determine whether there was a significant correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and their reading comprehension. Next, the data need to be tested to see if they have a normal distribution. Normality testing was performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method. After ensuring that the data are normally distributed, the next step is to calculate the correlation between the two variables using the Pearson Product- Moment Correlation method. After completing the correlation analysis, the final step is to conduct a hypothesis test. This test addresses the research question examining the correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and their comprehension of reading texts. Using a systematic, structured research method, this study is expected to provide a clear explanation of the correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. Furthermore, this research is expected to significantly improve the effectiveness of learning strategies at SMP Negeri 1 Palasa and other schools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

RESULTS

This part starts with displaying descriptive statistics of the variables used, then continues with inferential analysis, which consists of three stages, namely the normality test, analysis of correlation using the Pearson method, and hypothesis testing. Analysis: This learns the correlation between two variables and evaluates the hypothesis based on the results found. Research: This aims to determine whether there is a correlation between the two variables discussed. In the descriptive analysis, the researcher explains the results, which assess vocabulary mastery and reading skills for both variables.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Vocabulary Mastery And Reading Comprehension Skills Data

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Vocabulary Mastery	69	6	23	10.57	2.836
Reading Comprehension	69	10	20	14.80	2.868

Based on Table 1, the descriptive statistics show differences in scores for the two variables studied: vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. The scores obtained for both variables indicate differences in student abilities. Furthermore, the nearly identical standard deviation values indicate that the distribution of scores for both variables is not significantly different, indicating that students' vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension abilities show a relatively equal level of difference.

Table 2. Normality Test Using by One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Unstandardized Residual	
N	69
Test Statistic	.098
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) ^c	.099

Based on Table 2, the results of the normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method show a significance value of 0.099, which is higher than the 0.05 level. This result indicates that the residual data follows a normal distribution, thus meeting the assumption of normality. Therefore, the data meets one of the requirements for parametric statistical analysis, namely the Pearson Product Moment correlation test.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Analysis

		Vocabulary Mastery	Reading Comprehension
Vocabulary Mastery	Pearson Correlation	1	.597***
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	69	69
Reading Comprehension	Pearson Correlation	.597***	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	69	69

Based on Table 3, the results of the Pearson Product-Moment correlation test show that the correlation coefficient (r) is 0.597 and the significance value (2-tailed) is less than 0.001. These results indicate that the ability to remember words and comprehension of the texts read by students have a good and meaningful correlation. Based on the explanation of the correlation coefficient according to (Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion, Keith Morrison 2018), the r value of 0.597 falls into the category of a fairly strong correlation. These findings indicate that the better students master vocabulary, the better their ability to comprehend the texts read. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted.

Table 4. Hypothesis Test

Variable	Person correlation (r)	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
Vocabulary Mastery and Reading Comprehension	0.597	< 0.001	Moderate positive and statistically significant correlation

Based on Table 4, the Pearson Product-Moment correlation test shows a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.597 with a significance value ($p < 0.001$). This finding indicates a statistically significant positive correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and their reading comprehension. The correlation coefficient shows a moderate positive correlation, meaning that students with better vocabulary skills tend to show better reading comprehension. Since the significance value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research indicate a significant positive correlation with moderate strength between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension, with a correlation coefficient value of $r = 0.597$ and a significance level of $p = 0.001$. This finding indicates that students with higher

vocabulary mastery tend to have better reading comprehension skills. This result is consistent with previous studies conducted by Apriliani et al. (2021), Lisana et al. (2022), Septiana and Hanafi (2022), and Vienarahayu et al. (2022), all of which reported that students' reading comprehension skills are closely related to their vocabulary mastery. These findings suggest that vocabulary mastery is an important factor in helping students understand reading content, identify main ideas, and interpret the meaning of texts more accurately. The consistency of these findings indicates that vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to reading comprehension. Students with a rich vocabulary are more likely to understand word meanings, connect information across sentences, and summarize the content of a text effectively. Therefore, improvements in vocabulary mastery are generally accompanied by improvements in reading comprehension.

However, these findings differ from those reported by Ardini et al. (2025), who found no significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension among senior high school students. This discrepancy suggests that the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension may be influenced by various factors, including student characteristics, educational level, research instruments, and learning contexts. One possible explanation for the differing results is the variation in the characteristics of the study participants. Ardini et al. (2025) conducted their research with senior high school students, whereas the present study involved ninth-grade junior high school students. Furthermore, differences in measurement instruments, reading materials, and learning environments may also affect the strength of the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. Therefore, the findings of the present study provide additional empirical evidence supporting the important role of vocabulary mastery in enhancing reading comprehension, particularly among ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Palasa.

The findings of this study also support the interactive reading model proposed by Carrell et al. (1998). According to this model, reading comprehension results from the interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing. Vocabulary mastery contributes to the bottom-up process by enabling students to recognize and accurately understand the meanings of words. At the same time, prior knowledge facilitates the top-down process by helping students connect new information with their existing knowledge. Therefore, the positive correlation identified in this study reinforces the theoretical perspective that these two cognitive processes work together to construct successful reading comprehension. The results have implications both theoretically and for real-world applications. Theoretically, the results support the idea that vocabulary mastery is a crucial component in understanding texts. A moderate positive correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension indicates that students with higher vocabulary mastery tend to have better text comprehension. The results also provide concrete evidence of the correlation between the two variables, particularly in the context of ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Palasa.

In fact, these findings suggest that vocabulary learning should not be taught in isolation, but rather integrated into reading activities. This way, students can learn the meaning of new vocabulary while simultaneously using it to understand the text. Teachers can combine vocabulary learning with reading activities in various ways, such as studying vocabulary in context, selecting reading materials appropriate to students' abilities, and conducting reading exercises that introduce and reinforce new vocabulary. In this way, students can expand their vocabulary mastery while improving their comprehension of the texts they read.

The findings indicate that for students, enriching their vocabulary is an important way to improve their ability to comprehend English texts. This shows that expanding vocabulary mastery

not only helps students understand the meaning of individual words, but also supports them in identifying correlation between ideas, drawing inferences, and understanding the overall meaning of the text. Furthermore, these results can serve as a reference for other researchers exploring other factors related to reading comprehension, such as learning motivation, reading style, reading interest, background knowledge, and reading frequency. Future research could also use a larger sample size or diverse educational levels to gain a clearer understanding of the factors influencing students' reading comprehension abilities, as well as using a mixed methods or longitudinal approach to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

The limitations of this research should be considered when interpreting its results. First, the research only involved 69 ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Palasa, so the results may not be applicable to other schools or educational settings. Second, this research used a quantitative correlational design, which only shows correlations between the variables studied, not cause-and-effect correlations. Therefore, the results cannot prove that vocabulary mastery directly improves students' reading comprehension. Third, this research only examines vocabulary mastery as an independent variable, while reading comprehension ability may also be influenced by other factors, such as learning motivation, reading strategies, reading interest, and background knowledge that were not analyzed in this research. Therefore, it is recommended that future research involve more people from diverse backgrounds, include other variables, and use different research tools or methods to obtain more comprehensive results.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates a significant positive correlation between vocabulary mastery and students' reading comprehension. The findings indicate that students with higher levels of vocabulary mastery tend to achieve better reading comprehension, suggesting that vocabulary knowledge plays a fundamental role in enabling students to understand word meanings, identify main ideas, and interpret information presented in texts. These results reinforce the view that vocabulary mastery is an essential component of effective reading comprehension among ninth-grade junior high school students. From a theoretical perspective, the findings strengthen the understanding that reading comprehension is achieved through the integration of word recognition, vocabulary knowledge, and the use of prior knowledge during the reading process. From a practical perspective, the results imply that English teachers should integrate systematic vocabulary instruction into reading activities through contextualized vocabulary learning, meaningful reading tasks, and instructional strategies that encourage students to apply newly acquired vocabulary in authentic reading situations. Such instructional practices are expected to improve both vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. This study is limited by its relatively small sample size and its focus on students from a single school, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future studies are recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples from different educational settings. Further research may also examine additional factors that influence reading comprehension, such as reading strategies, learning motivation, reading interest, prior knowledge, and metacognitive skills, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' reading achievement.

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