

# A Correlational Study Between Vocabulary Mastery And Reading Comprehension Of The Eighth-Grade Students Of SMPN 2 Ubud

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**Abstract.** Reading, one of the basic language skills, is essential to gain information and meaning. This language skill allows students to express their ideas, broaden their horizons and increase their knowledge. Reading enables them to open up their minds to new ways of thinking, perceiving, and doing things; as a result, books can be their teachers, mentors, and inspirations. This research was mainly intended to determine whether there is any significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud in academic year 2021/2022. The present correlational research was conducted by administering the research instruments: matching cloze procedure test and short answer tasks. The research instruments were administered to 50 students who were chosen as the representative samples by applying a simple random sampling. The collected data were statistically analyzed through prerequisite and hypothesis testing in which Pearson product-moment correlation formula and t-test were applied. Based on the data analysis, it was figured out that there was a significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud in academic year 2021/2022. This research finding showed that students' vocabulary mastery was important when they would like to understand the reading texts further. They should master many vocabularies to make a comprehensive meaning after reading a text. In addition, the finding of this research further suggests that teachers should pay attention to students' vocabulary mastery during the practice of reading comprehension in the teaching and learning process.

**Keywords:** correlational research, vocabulary mastery, and reading comprehension.

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the important skills in the teaching and learning process, and by reading, students can improve their ability to acquire knowledge of the world. Reading can help to get the solution to the problems and also as a source of information. Reading is defined as reacting to a written text as a piece of communication. Reading positively affects students' vocabulary knowledge, spelling, and writing [1]. Reading is also someone's ability to understand the meaning of the symbols contained in the written texts. They read for enjoyment when they immerse themselves in novels, magazines, or even comic books. Through reading, the readers can learn to comprehend the reading texts to answer the questions, expand grammar knowledge, vocabulary, etc.

According to [2], reading consists of two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. In addition, comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text. [3] state reading comprehension is the ability to take information from written text and do something with it in a way that demonstrates knowledge or understanding of that information. comprehension is the process of deriving meaning from connected text. It involves word knowledge as well as thinking and reasoning [2].

[4] state that reading is essential. It is the process by which people gain information and ideas from books, newspapers, manuals, letters, constructs, advertisements, and a host of other materials. [5] adds that comprehension is a process demanding strategic approaches. The readers actively construct meanings as they read. They also direct their own comprehension by using basic strategies and monitoring their own understanding. It means that an appropriate strategy is very important to motivate the students to achieve their reading comprehension. The strategy applies in reading activity has a very important role since it is a way for readers to understand the text, which can be directed by a series of reading steps involved in strategy.

According to [2], reading comprehension relates prior knowledge to new knowledge contained in written texts. Prior knowledge basically deepens on the students lived experience related to new knowledge that will be gained in reading content. Reading comprehension is explained as understanding new information of what is already known. Prior knowledge is expressed with words. When the meaning of the word is unknown, the reader does not have background knowledge or has no experience in that area. Without background knowledge or without the vocabulary that comes with various experiences, the students will not comprehend the content of the text.

[6] defines reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. The use of the word extracting and constructing is to emphasize both the importance and the insufficiency of the text as a determinant of reading comprehension. It will involve identifying and recognizing printed or written symbols that serve as exciting for the recall of meaning built up through the readers' manipulation of relevant concepts already in their possession. It means their prior knowledge is critical to their understanding of what they have read based on the reading texts.

[7] describe that reading comprehension is a multi-component, highly complex process that involves many interactions between readers and what they bring to the text (previous knowledge, strategy use) as well as variables related to the text itself (interest in reading text, understanding of the content of the reading text). Reading comprehension is explained as understanding new information of what is already known. Prior knowledge is expressed with words. When the meaning of the word is unknown, it means the readers do not have background knowledge. Without background knowledge or the vocabulary that comes with various experiences in learning, the students will not comprehend the content of the reading material which is being read.

Vocabulary is knowledge of words and word meanings. Actually, vocabulary is more complex. Vocabulary mastery is knowing the words and their meanings and knowing how the words sound and how the words are used in the context. The vocabulary of language always changes and grows. [4] state that vocabulary reflects our knowledge and experience and our social interactions. It means that vocabulary has an important role in understanding the language for the learner, especially the students who learn English at school. Mastering vocabulary will make students easier in learning language skills particularly reading, as their comprehension could increase.

Vocabulary is important to understand and convey the message. [8] defines vocabulary as a basic building block of language learning. Students need to know words, their meanings, how they are spelt and how they are pronounced. It is a tool for communicating with each other in daily life. It is important and to express the feelings and to express the ideas what is on our minds. Building up a useful vocabulary is the basis of learning a foreign language at the primary level. Knowing a lot of vocabulary will make the students easy in learning a language. If the students have good vocabulary mastery, they can read or listen to English clearly and then write or speak the sentences in English.

[9] states that improving a useful vocabulary is a basic point to learning a foreign language early. Learning vocabulary is important because it enriches students' knowledge of the word. Vocabulary and reading cannot be separated because both of them are related to each other. By having and mastering vocabulary, we will know the meaning of vocabulary in the context. It can also help to avoid making mistakes in understanding. Vocabulary becomes something that must be mastered to communicate. Moreover, vocabulary can make students comprehend the words received while listening and reading during the teaching and learning process to improve their comprehension.

[10] states that vocabulary is more than a list of words, and although the size of one's vocabulary matters, it can be understood how to use the one that matters most. In our everyday life provides most of the vocabulary needs. Words are around, but it takes time to take them in to become acquainted with their numerous uses and the contexts in which they are appropriate. Some words may appear to be simply stated. However, some words may also be difficult to state because their meaning may change depending on the word they are attached to. It is impossible for the students to read, write, and speak a foreign language without having enough vocabulary knowledge to use.

According to [11], vocabulary is the knowledge of the meanings of words. This definition becomes complicated when words come in at least from two forms: oral and print. Oral vocabulary is the set of words for which the students know the meanings when speaking or reading orally. Print vocabulary consist of those words

also comes in two forms. A productive vocabulary is used when writing or speaking, and receptive that can be understood or recognized. In mastering vocabulary, we can understand the meaning of a word in the context and transfer the information in written form. Building vocabulary can be started from teacher practice, students influenced by the conversation, short reading text and games. These activities could enrich their vocabulary.

Vocabulary mastery helps the students understand the language. According to [12], vocabulary is an important factor in reading. The more a person memorizes vocabulary, the better her/his language will be. Mastering vocabulary helps the students' chance to speak, listen, read and write. When the students read something, it will sound good if they understand the words or vocabulary in their reading. Because it will guide and help them in pronouncing, reading, and grasping the idea from their reading, they will understand. [9] states that improving a useful vocabulary is a basic point to learning a foreign language at an early level. Students who have a lot of vocabulary of foreign language, they could learn language easily.

The research that was conducted by [13] entitled "The Correlation between Vocabulary Mastery and Reading Comprehension of the Tenth-grade Students of SMK Pariwisata Putra Bangsa Ubud" showed that vocabulary and reading comprehension were correlated. Having a lot of vocabulary can make students easily mastering reading comprehension. Vocabulary mastery could also help the students in comprehending the text with some complicated words. Based on these findings, this research has scientifically proven that vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the tenth-grade students of SMK Putra Bangsa Ubud had a significant correlation. This research finding strengthen the present research which dealt with the same area.

Based on the explanation above, vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension have a strong relationship. Students who do not have a large vocabulary or effective word-learning strategies often struggle to achieve comprehension. Furthermore, [3] state that vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in students' reading comprehension. Regarding this matter, this research attempts to find out whether vocabulary mastery influenced reading comprehension. Based on the research background, the researcher was interested in conducting a research entitled "The Correlation Between Vocabulary Mastery and Reading Comprehension of the Eighth-Grade Students of SMPN 2 Ubud.

Before conducting the research, the research problem should be formulated and specified to make the research problem in the present study more specific. Based on the research background that has been stated, the crucial issue that attracts the researcher in conducting this study concerns the correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. Moreover, the researcher was interested in figuring out the significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension in junior high school. Concerning the aforementioned explanation, the researcher question of the present study can be briefly and concisely formulated as follows: is there any significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud.

Research objectives are set to find a solution and answer the research that has been explained above. A clear research objective would be able to direct the researcher in doing the present research. A particular investigation is expected to provide a scientific solution to the research problem. The undertaking of any scientific investigation is always intended to solve the research problem that has been previously formulated. The research objective is to investigate the significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension as described above. In line with the research problem that has been stated, the objective of the present study was intended to figure out whether there is any significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud.

## METHOD

Research design is simply a methodical way of finding answers to questions to discover new information or prove scientific theories. In addition, [14] also defines a research design as the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. The present study dealt with the correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud. The researcher described the overall structure of the present investigation by using an ex-post facto research design which is appropriate with the present research problem.

According to [15], correlational research investigates the possible relationship between two or more variables. Moreover, correlational research is proper in the circumstances, considering the present study determined the significant correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. Additionally, [16] state that correlational research produced indexes called the correlation coefficient that shows the direction of the strength of relationships among variables. In the present study, the researcher emphasized the first useful application of correlational research to assess the relationship between the research variables as the present research dealt with correlational research on the above-mentioned two research variables.

In the present study, the researcher decided to choose the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud as the study population consisted of eight classes with a total of 338 students. It was a big population for the researcher to do research. The researcher decided to choose 50 as the study samples by using a simple random sampling technique with a lottery system. This method is regarded as the best method, suggesting that all populations have the same opportunity and chance to become part of the samples. This type of sampling was appropriate for this research. The processes of simple random sampling technique with a lottery system were as follows: listing all of the population members, making 338 rolls of paper in which each roll of paper had the name of the students and class, taking randomly 60 rolls and whose names were on the rolls of paper were selected as the samples of this study.

Moreover, researchers develop research instruments to achieve the stated objectives when carrying out a study. The existence of research instruments in carrying out research is necessary because the research instruments are tools that can be administered to collect the data. The instruments were in the form of a matching cloze procedure test and short answer tasks. The use of the matching cloze procedure test was to measure the students' vocabulary mastery. Meanwhile, a short answer task was used to gather the data concerning the reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students.

According to [17], the matching cloze procedure test is usually structured by removing important words for the meaning contained in the second sentence of the text. The first sentence of the text should be left intact to provide contextual support. Then to complete the missing words, the test takers must match the choice of words that have been sorted alphabetically or separately grouped into fours. They have to choose an answer that allows no other gap. The blueprint of matching cloze procedure test can be seen as the following table.

In reading comprehension, the researcher used a short-answer task. According to [18], short answer tasks are tasks from interactive reading assessment tasks. The test-takers are presented a reading passage and answer the open-ended and closed-ended reading comprehension questions in a sentence or two sentences. The criteria in this task are the answer related to the information of the text and grammatical structure; designing a rating scale is necessary. In this study, the researcher did not only assess students' ability in reading comprehension based on the correct information they got in the text. The scoring rubric of reading comprehension was adapted from [18].

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Finding

The present study dealt with the correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud. The researcher would like to determine the results which have been finished. The researcher administered the research instruments to the samples which come from the population of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud. The population was about 338 students which consisted of ten classes. There were 50 students who were chosen as the representative samples in the present ex-post facto research. They were chosen by applying the random sampling technique. Furthermore, the researcher also used a directional hypothesis that clearly stated there was a significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud.

To support a research and to obtain valid data, the researcher then collected the required data from the present study samples by preparing research instruments. The research instruments that were used must be related to both variables. They were in the form of matching cloze procedure test and short answer tasks. The use of matching cloze procedure test was to measure the students' vocabulary mastery. Moreover, it consisted of 40 gaps that were carefully developed based on four aspects of vocabulary, such as: noun, verb, adjective, and adverb. Meanwhile, short answer task was used to gather the data concerning the samples' reading comprehension, which was scored using an answer key and scoring rubric adapted from [18].

The researcher conducted the research on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2021 to 50 samples by collecting the data through two steps. First of all, the samples must fill 40 blank gaps in four texts that have already been provided, and they had 40 minutes to submit the answer of the test. Moreover, the researcher provided six descriptive texts about animals. Each text had five questions that must be answered briefly. The researcher scored them using an answer key and scoring rubric. After the required data of this research were collected, the researcher then analyzed the data through two important statistical analyzes; they were pre-requisite analysis and hypothesis testing.

A normality test is needed for the researcher to know whether the population or data involved in the research is in a normal distribution. The purpose of a normality test is to determine whether research data is normally distributed or not. If a variable fails a normality test, it is critical to look at the histogram and the normal probability plot to see if an outlier or a small subset of outliers has caused the non-normality. One way to detect data normality can be done with Shapiro-Wilk technique. According to the data analysis of the normality test, it



was known that the significance value of vocabulary mastery was a figure of 0.70. It was higher than 0.05; besides, for reading comprehension, it can be seen on the significance value 0.195, which was higher than 0.05. In other words, it means the data of vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension already had a degree of normality. In conclusion, the data have already fulfilled the pre-requisite analysis in terms of the normality test.

Homogeneity test is done to test two or more sample data group which sources from the sample population variant. A homogeneity test is a test that assesses whether there are differences in variance between the two groups or more. The homogeneity test is different from the normality test even though they are both used as a condition in the parametric test. In the homogeneity test, the researcher needed to know the students' scores in both of the research variables. The testing was statistically computed through Levene's test, and the researcher used SPSS 26 version for windows to calculate the data. Based on the homogeneity test for this research, the calculations showed a figure of 0.387, which showed higher than the minimum number for the significance of homogeneity, that is 0.05. It means the data of vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension already had a degree of homogeneity. In conclusion, the research variables: vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension were homogeneously distributed.

After conducting a normality and a homogeneity test, the researcher proceed the data of the research to the hypothesis testing. Hypothesis testing is a test that tests the research hypothesis studied to combine two or more variables. Within this hypothesis, there is a possibility of whether it is accepted or not. In this research, the researcher constructed a directional hypothesis that clearly stated a significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud. The hypothesis testing applied SPSS 26 program for windows. In line with hypothesis testing, there were two tests that were used in hypothesis testing, namely the Pearson product-moment correlation and T-test.

Pearson product-moment is a measure of linier correlation between two normally distributed variables. In this section, Pearson product-moment correlation was employed to examine the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient was a range from -1 to +1 for the indication of positive or negative correlation. Range value -1 indicates a perfect negative correlation, and +1 indicates a perfect positive correlation. Meanwhile, a value of 0 indicates that there is no correlation at all. In this research, the researcher analyzed the correlation between the two research variables: vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. According to the Pearson product-moment correlation test results, it can be observed that the significance of the variables was about 0.000. The significance of the variable was lower than the minimum value of significance that was 0.05. In addition, the variables of vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud indicated that there was a correlation between each other. Furthermore, the next hypothesis testing can be continued by using T-test.

The final analysis of the hypothesis testing was the T-test. T-test is one of the statistical tests used to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of two groups, which may be related to certain features. In this research, the researcher used the Paired Sample T-test to get the final result. This technique was used to test whether certain values differ significantly from the average sample. Here, the researcher looks for values from the probability value. If the probability value is less than the significant standard 0.05, it meant there was a significant correlation between both variables. However, if the probability value is more than significant standard 0.05, it meant there was no significant correlation between research variables. According to the table of the paired-samples t-test output above, the probability value level was 0.036. The significant value of the data was statistically indicated lower than the minimum value that was 0.05. Based on these research findings, it can be stated that there was a significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud. In conclusion, the present research data have already proven that vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud have a significant correlation.

## DISCUSSION

This research was conducted by implementing an ex-post facto research design or known as correlation design. In this section, the study was intended to know how significant the correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud. There were 338 students as the population and the samples who were selected were 50 students. The samples were selected by using the random sampling method. In this research, the research instruments were matching cloze procedure tests and short answer tasks. The required data were collected by computing the samples' data source statistically using SPSS version 26 for windows. The results of the data analysis were discussed as follows.

The findings of this research indicated the hypothesis showed that there was a significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud. In this research, the statistical analysis showed that the samples who had more vocabulary tended to master reading comprehension than students who were lack of vocabulary mastery. It can be clearly seen from their scores in

vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. In addition, knowing a lot of vocabulary will help students to enhance their reading comprehension. Furthermore, those phenomena confirmed that vocabulary mastery is one of the factors that can affect reading comprehension.

Additionally, this research was supported [19] indicated there was a significant correlation between vocabulary and reading comprehension. The students' vocabulary to their reading comprehension was shown when the students got high scores in vocabulary mastery test, they also got high scores for their reading comprehension score. One thing that makes it different between students who have normal and high vocabulary mastery and those who have low vocabulary mastery is that the students with normal and high vocabulary mastery are able to accept all weaknesses then make decisions about whether or not they want to improve themselves.

Moreover, the research was in connection with the prior study which was conducted by [20]. She found that there was a significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. She found that most of the students had high vocabulary mastery in reading comprehension. In addition, more than a total half of the students are categorized into the students who have a good reading comprehension. It indicates that most of students utter their read properly and they understand the content that they read. Therefore, their English reading comprehension are well. Furthermore, she concluded that vocabulary mastery plays an important role in developing competencies in students' self that make them brave trying to read something and understand reading.

According to [3], vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in students' reading comprehension. It means that if students do not understand the words used in the text, they will not understand the text. Vocabulary is one of the language aspects that should be learned by students or language learners. Therefore, the students who had good mastery in vocabulary were easy to construct their ideas, primarily in comprehending the text. A high score on the vocabulary mastery test supposed that the students would have a high score on the reading comprehension test in this research. This is in line with the theory that has been previously stated above.

In this research, the researcher found a significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud. One of the characteristics of good readers is prompted to consider the selection of well-mastered vocabulary which is in this case it is one of the features that may make the effective reading. Furthermore, vocabulary mastery is one of the features that should be considered and it is required to understand the reading. These results also supported the existing theory of [11], who state that vocabulary is the knowledge of the meanings of words. This theory tells that mastering vocabulary will help the students understand the reading comprehension qualities depend on the quality and quantity of vocabulary that the students have.

Furthermore, in accordance with the results of data analysis, it can be seen that the variables had a significant correlation. It showed that in terms of criteria of reading comprehension, most samples could understand reading comprehension that fulfilled the criteria: identify general information, specific information, textual meaning, and textual reference. Most of students easily in answering the test given because of they were able to comprehend the ideas of the text with many vocabularies that they have had. This could be signified that the vocabulary mastery strongly influenced reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud.

Based on what has been explained above, it can be concluded that vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension had a significant correlation. Moreover, the present research data have already proven that vocabulary mastery was significantly correlated with reading comprehension. It could be seen from the results of the hypothesis testing, which made use Pearson product-moment correlation and t-test. In other words, the present ex-post facto research finally confirmed the directional hypothesis that has been previously stated; there was a significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to figure out the significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud. The data of the present ex-post facto research was collected by administering two research instruments: the matching cloze procedure test and short answer tasks. The research instruments were constructed based on the criteria, and the thesis advisors have judged them. These instruments was intended to 50 samples of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud, which were carefully determined by using the random sampling method.

After collecting the samples' scores on vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension, the researcher computed and analyzed the data statistically using SPSS 26 version for windows. The first analysis test was a pre-requisite analysis. The tests showed that the data of the research normally and homogeneity distributed. The second test was a hypothesis analysis. Moreover, the results of the hypothesis testing signified there was a significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading

comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud. Furthermore, the results indicated that vocabulary mastery was an important factor that affected the students' reading comprehension and it confirmed the directional hypothesis.

In conclusion, the final findings of the research implemented an ex-post facto research design with the two research variables. Thus, the researcher could only report the study results without giving treatment. Therefore, an ex-post facto design was needed so that the results can be more accurate. Additionally, based on the computation results for the data source which was computed by using SPSS 26 version, there was a significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud. Furthermore, this can be seen from data computation that showed vocabulary mastery impacted reading comprehension.

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