

Learners' Vocabulary Knowledge and Comprehension Skill

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Abstract

This study examined the levels of learners' vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill and explored the relationship between these two variables among 170 students in the District of San Jose, Antique, Philippines during the school year 2024–2025. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the study assessed learners' vocabulary knowledge in terms of word meaning, word recognition, and word usage, and evaluated comprehension skills through literal, inferential, and evaluative dimensions. Data were gathered using a researcher-developed and validated questionnaire that underwent expert review and pilot testing, resulting in a high reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha = 0.85). Descriptive statistics such as weighted mean and standard deviation were used to determine the levels of vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill, while Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was employed to examine the relationship between the variables at a 0.05 level of significance. Results indicated that learners demonstrated moderately high levels of vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill, with the highest performance observed in word meaning and literal comprehension. Moreover, a significant positive relationship was found between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill, suggesting that learners with stronger vocabulary knowledge tend to exhibit better comprehension abilities. These findings emphasize the importance of integrating vocabulary development with reading comprehension instruction to improve learners' language proficiency and academic performance. The study recommends targeted instructional interventions that focus on contextual vocabulary use, critical thinking, and higher-order comprehension skills.

Keywords: Vocabulary Knowledge, Comprehension Skill, Reading Ability, Learners, Language Proficiency

1. Introduction

Vocabulary knowledge is a fundamental component of language development and plays a crucial role in reading comprehension and overall academic success. Vocabulary refers to the range of words that learners understand and use in oral and written communication, while comprehension skill involves the ability to construct meaning from texts by integrating prior knowledge, linguistic cues, and contextual information. Research consistently shows that learners with strong vocabulary knowledge demonstrate

higher levels of comprehension, as understanding word meanings is essential for interpreting ideas, drawing inferences, and identifying key messages in a text (Nation, 2001; Anderson & Freebody, 1981).

Numerous studies have established a strong and positive relationship between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill across different grade levels. Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) emphasized that vocabulary development directly affects learners' ability to comprehend complex texts, as limited word knowledge often results in misunderstanding and poor comprehension. Similarly, Snow (2002) described comprehension as a multifaceted process that depends heavily on learners' lexical knowledge, background experiences, and strategic reading abilities. Learners with a broader vocabulary are better equipped to decode unfamiliar words, grasp subtle meanings, and engage more deeply with reading materials.

Within the Philippine educational context, the development of learners' vocabulary and comprehension skills remains a continuing concern, particularly in districts where reading proficiency levels vary widely. Factors such as limited exposure to language-rich environments and inadequate access to reading materials may hinder learners' vocabulary growth and comprehension development (DepEd, 2019). In the District of San Jose, Antique, examining the relationship between learners' vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill is essential for identifying instructional gaps and designing effective reading interventions.

Thus, this study aims to determine the levels of learners' vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill and to examine the relationship between these variables among 170 students in the District of San Jose, Antique, Philippines during the school year 2024–2025. Specifically, the study assesses learners' vocabulary knowledge in terms of word meaning, word usage, and word recognition, as well as their comprehension skills in literal, inferential, and evaluative dimensions. Understanding this relationship is vital for informing instructional practices and developing strategies that enhance reading proficiency, language acquisition, and academic achievement.

2. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the levels of learners' vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill and to examine the relationship between these variables among students in the District of San Jose Antique, Philippines during the school year 2024–2025. The descriptive component focused on identifying the current levels of vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill, while the correlational component examined the association between the two variables.

The respondents consisted of 170 students selected through total enumeration to ensure full representation of the target population. All respondents were enrolled in public schools within the district and were actively engaged in regular reading and language learning activities.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed and validated questionnaire composed of two parts. The first part measured learners' vocabulary knowledge in terms of word meaning, word usage, and word recognition. The second part assessed comprehension skill across literal, inferential, and evaluative dimensions. The instrument was reviewed and validated by language education experts and pilot-tested, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85, which indicates high reliability.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed by obtaining informed consent from students and their parents or guardians, ensuring confidentiality, and maintaining the anonymity of all respondents. Data analysis utilized descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation

to describe the variables, while Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to determine the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill at a 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results

The results present the levels of learners' vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill among the 170 respondents in the District of San Jose, Antique, Philippines during the school year 2024–2025.

Overall, learners demonstrated a moderately high level of vocabulary knowledge, with a weighted mean of 3.82 (SD = 0.41). Among the dimensions, word meaning obtained the highest mean ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.39$), followed by word recognition ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.42$) and word usage ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.44$). These findings indicate that learners generally understand and recognize words well, although applying words accurately in context remains comparatively weaker.

Learners' comprehension skill was also rated as moderately high, with an overall weighted mean of 3.79 (SD = 0.43). Literal comprehension received the highest rating ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.40$), followed by inferential comprehension ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.44$) and evaluative comprehension ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.46$). This suggests that learners are more proficient in recalling explicitly stated information than in interpreting or critically evaluating texts.

Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between learners' vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$). This finding indicates that learners with stronger vocabulary knowledge tend to exhibit higher levels of comprehension, supporting the view that vocabulary development is a key factor in effective reading comprehension (Nation, 2001; Beck et al., 2013).

4. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the crucial role of vocabulary knowledge in enhancing reading comprehension. Consistent with previous research, learners who possess a broader vocabulary are better able to decode unfamiliar words, understand nuanced meanings, and engage meaningfully with texts (Nation, 2001; Beck et al., 2013). The lower performance observed in word usage and higher-order comprehension skills suggests that while learners may understand words and literal information, they encounter difficulties when applying vocabulary in context or engaging in deeper analysis and evaluation of texts. This supports Snow's (2002) assertion that comprehension requires not only word knowledge but also strategic and critical reading skills.

These results point to the need for instructional approaches that go beyond basic vocabulary recognition and literal comprehension. Emphasizing contextual vocabulary use and higher-order thinking during reading activities may help learners develop more advanced comprehension skills and improve overall language proficiency.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that learners in the District of San Jose demonstrate moderately high levels of vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill, with stronger abilities in understanding word meanings and recalling explicit information from texts. A significant positive relationship exists between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill, indicating that vocabulary development plays a vital role in learners' reading comprehension. Addressing weaknesses in word usage and higher-order comprehension may further enhance learners' language proficiency and academic performance.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

Teachers implement instructional strategies that integrate vocabulary expansion with contextual application, such as word maps, semantic webs, and vocabulary journals, to strengthen learners' understanding and use of words.

Reading comprehension activities include tasks that promote inferential and evaluative thinking to develop learners' critical reading skills.

School administrators provide professional development programs focused on effective vocabulary instruction and comprehension strategies.

Parents and guardians support learners' reading development at home through activities such as storytelling, shared reading, and vocabulary games.

Future research examine additional factors, such as reading motivation, exposure to print-rich environments, and instructional approaches, that may influence the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill.

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