JOL

The Relationship between Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Reading Comprehension Skills in Beginner English Learners

Samsidar
[1] Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Jambi, Indonesia.

E-mail: firayani@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension in beginner English learners is often hampered by limited vocabulary. Vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) are believed to improve reading ability by helping students internalize and apply vocabulary effectively. This study aims to analyze the relationship between VLS and reading ability in beginner English learners. The method used is a literature review with a descriptive-correlational approach, by analyzing 12 relevant previous studies, including qualitative, quasi-experimental, and quantitative surveys. The results of the analysis indicate that context-based strategies, metacognitive strategies, and explicit instruction have a positive effect on reading ability, while mechanical memorization strategies or the use of dictionaries without context are less effective. Integration of digital media, task-based activities, and adapting strategies to individual preferences also strengthen vocabulary mastery and reading ability. These findings emphasize the importance of developing a vocabulary learning model that combines metacognitive strategies, context-based strategies, and explicit instruction to support reading comprehension in beginner English learners.

Keywords : Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Reading Comprehension, Metacognitive

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary learning strategies play a crucial role in improving *reading comprehension skills* in beginner English learners. Research shows that vocabulary development through strategies such as *vocabulary self-collection* , *virtual literature circles* , and *contextual redefinition* can significantly improve reading comprehension because these strategies encourage students to be more active and independent in the learning process. Integrating explicit vocabulary instruction with interactive learning methods such as *virtual literature circles* has been shown to effectively improve vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension (El-Esery, 2023) . Furthermore, vocabulary knowledge has been shown to be a key factor influencing reading ability, even more dominant than reading fluency or general linguistic ability (Brooks et al., 2023) .

The learning strategies implemented also have a significant influence on vocabulary mastery. Research on EFL learners in Indonesia shows that the use of various vocabulary learning strategies such as cognitive, metacognitive, memory, and encoding strategies positively contributes to vocabulary achievement, with metacognitive strategies being the best predictor (Zuhairi & Mistar, 2023) . Furthermore, strategies for

discovering meaning through context or inference are considered effective, especially when learners are familiar with these strategies, while using a dictionary without the support of strategic understanding tends to be less than optimal (Alahmadi & Foltz, 2020) . Developments in learning technology also make a significant contribution, as evidenced by increased motivation and vocabulary mastery through digital-based learning and *seamless online collaboration.* (Al ausi et al., 2025) . The word list memorization strategy still widely used by beginner learners is often ineffective due to the weak connection between words and the communication context, thus limiting text comprehension. In contrast, context-based learning strategies such as guessing the meaning of words from sentences or texts have been shown to significantly improve vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension (Al-Ghazo & Ta'amneh, 2022) . Learning vocabulary through context allows for long-term retention of meaning and facilitates access to word meanings while reading because words are processed in meaningful communication situations (Diao, 2025) . Other studies also show that repeating words in the same context can accelerate short-term vocabulary processing and learning, although its long-term effectiveness still requires further research (Chandy et al., 2024) .

The positive relationship between vocabulary learning strategies and reading ability is also evident in their contribution of approximately 12.8% to reading ability in beginner learners (Julistri et al., 2024). Context-based strategies such as meaning inference and morphemic analysis are the most influential strategies because they can help students quickly access word meaning during the reading process, while factors that can weaken this relationship include a lack of structured support, limited vocabulary depth, and a mismatch between strategies and students' learning styles (Lai et al., 2022). The effectiveness of these strategies is further strengthened when supported by the activation of prior knowledge, reading fluency training, and explicit instructional support tailored to the learner's needs (Rahmadillah et al., 2025) . Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the relationship between *vocabulary learning strategies* and *reading comprehension ability* in beginner English learners, identify vocabulary learning strategies that have the greatest influence on improving reading comprehension, and examine supporting and inhibiting factors that can strengthen or weaken the effectiveness of vocabulary strategies in the process of understanding texts.

METHOD

This study employed a library research method *with* a descriptive-correlational approach. This approach was chosen to examine the relationship between *vocabulary learning strategies* and *reading comprehension skills* based on previous research findings without directly collecting data from respondents. The descriptive-correlational library study method combines a systematic literature review process to describe phenomena and analyze relationships between research variables based on secondary data. The descriptive approach is used to describe the characteristics, patterns, and trends of findings in the literature, while the correlational approach is aimed at identifying and explaining statistical relationships between variables as reported in previous research. This study design utilizes secondary data from various scientific publications to compile

a comprehensive picture and examine the relationships between concepts or variables (Marques et al., 2020) .

The data sources in this study came from journal articles and proceedings relevant to two research variables: vocabulary learning strategies and reading comprehension skills in beginner English learners. Literature sources were selected based on the appropriateness of the theme, the range of publications in the last five years, and the availability of empirical results that provide information on the relationship between the two variables. Data analysis was conducted in three stages: identifying and collecting relevant research, grouping and comparing findings to observe patterns of relationships between variables, and drawing general conclusions regarding the tendency of the relationship between vocabulary strategies and reading comprehension. The results of this analysis are used to provide a scientific overview of the extent to which vocabulary learning strategies are related to *reading comprehension skills* and the factors that strengthen or weaken this relationship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis was conducted on 12 papers found related to vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) and reading comprehension in beginner English learners. These studies used various research methods, including qualitative, quasi-experimental, and quantitative surveys, and were conducted in various educational contexts, from junior high school, high school, to undergraduate students, both in Indonesia and other countries. The following table presents a summary of each study, including the author's name, article title, sample or participants, study location, and key findings related to VLS and reading comprehension, thus providing a comprehensive overview of vocabulary strategy use patterns, the effectiveness of context-based, metacognitive, social, and digital strategies, and their impact on reading comprehension.

Table 1. Summary of Literature Study Findings

No	Author Name	Article Title	Sample/ Participant	Country/Region	Key Findings related to VLS & Reading Comprehension
1	(Vongsawath et al., 2025)	*EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension Challenges and Strategies: A Case Study of Champasack University in Laos*	10 students end (of study qualitative)	Laos	Limitations vocabulary become obstacle reading ; dictionary strategies , inference , and collaboration used but Not yet structured ; necessary instructions vocabulary explicit For supports reading comprehension.

2	(Holidazia & Rodliyah, 2020)	*Students' Strategies in Learning English Vocabulary*	3 boarding high school students (descriptive qualitative study)	Indonesia (Bandung)	Metacognitive , cognitive , and problem-based strategies context dominant ; memorization mechanical not enough effective ; contextual strategies and activities group support mastery vocabulary and reading comprehension.
3	(Ramadhan et al., 2021)	*Enhancing EFL Learners' Reading Vocabulary Acquisition through Task-Based Instruction*	30 students Grade IX of Middle School (quasi-experimental)	Indonesia (Malang)	Task-Based Instruction (TBI) improves acquisition vocabulary and retention ; tasks contextual provide input and opportunities new word inference so that supports reading comprehension.
4	(Laoli et al., 2025)	*Strategies and Challenges of English Education Students in Vocabulary Mastery*	10 undergraduate students of English Language Education (study qualitative descriptive)	Indonesia (Nias)	Strategy based exposure (reading , watching films/subtitles, digital applications) and metacognitive effective increase mastery vocabulary ; challenges covering burden cognitive and idioms/phrasal verbs, still supports reading comprehension.
5	(Amalia & Sulistyani, 2025)	*Learner's Perceptions on Vocabulary Learning Strategies: A Qualitative Single-Case Study*	1 student (single-case study)	Indonesia (Semarang, Central Java)	Social, metacognitive , and determination strategies are used ; preferences personal influence effectiveness ;

					strategy based digital context and exposure support mastery vocabulary and reading comprehension.
6	(Suparman Sabate & Ridwan, 2024)	*Vocabulary Learning Strategy Employed by Indonesian EFL Learners in Malaysia*	202 students (survey quantitative)	Malaysia	The determination category was used most frequently; the social category was used least frequently; there were no significant differences in VLS based on level/major.
7	(Alifah & Wijirahayu, 2025)	*Exploring English Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Students in a Private Senior High School in East Jakarta*	169 grade XI high school students (quantitative survey)	Indonesia (Jakarta)	Variation use of strategies: digital tools and inference contextual often used ; metacognitive strategies Not yet consistent ; effective memory strategies For retention .
8	(Zuhairi & Mistar, 2023)	*Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Vocabulary Mastery by Indonesian EFL Learners*	180 students (survey quantitative)	Indonesia (East Java)	Identified six VLS categories (cognitive , metacognitive , determination, memory, encoding, activation); metacognitive strategies as predictor best mastery vocabulary .
9	(Nisa', 2023)	*The Relationship Between Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Reading Comprehension Based on Gender*	53 students class VIII SMP (survey quantitative)	Indonesia (Gresik, East Java)	Correlation positive and significant between VLS and reading comprehension in both genders; metacognitive dominant ; RC

No					scores indicate level Good .
10	(Ali et al., 2023)	*Vocabulary Learning Strategies in EFL Classes: Perspectives and Challenges*	40 students , 15 teachers (study quantitative and interviews)	Iraq (Erbil, Salahaddin University)	Determination was used most frequently, followed by metacognitive; teachers reported teaching challenges; VLS was crucial for reading comprehension.
11	(Ghalebi et al., 2020)	*Vocabulary learning strategies: A comparative study of EFL learners*	218 students (survey quantitative)	Iran	Difference significant use of VLS between level academic ; the most effective metacognitive & determination strategies support mastery vocabulary & reading comprehension
12	(Nur & Jusoh, 2022)	*Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Indonesian EFL Learners in Malaysia: A Focus on Gender*	183 students (survey quantitative)	Malaysia	use : metacognitive and exposure stand out ; no There is difference significant based on gender; media/ exposure support vocabulary & reading comprehension

Based on analysis of 12 relevant studies , it is seen that learning strategy vocabulary (Vocabulary Learning Strategies/VLS) plays a role positive to ability reading (Reading Comprehension) in learners Language English level beginner and intermediate low . These findings are consistent across contexts, including qualitative, quasi-experimental, and quantitative survey studies. The strategies used include context-based, metacognitive, social, and determination approaches, as well as the use of digital media, which generally enhance vocabulary acquisition and support text comprehension.

A case study in Laos by Vongsawath et al. (2025) showed that limited vocabulary was a major barrier to reading. Students used dictionary, inference, and collaboration strategies, but their implementation was unstructured, thus limiting their effectiveness. The authors emphasized the need for explicit vocabulary instruction and metacognitive strategy training to support reading comprehension. Similar results were found by

Holidazia & Rodliyah (2020) in Indonesia, where metacognitive, cognitive, and context-based strategies were more effective than mechanical memorization, with group activities supporting vocabulary mastery.

In a quasi-experimental context, Ramadhan et al., (2021) reported that Task-Based Instruction (TBI) in junior high school students improved vocabulary acquisition and retention. Task-based activities provide authentic language input and opportunities for inferencing new words, so the acquired receptive vocabulary directly contributes to improved reading comprehension. Laoli et al., (2025) added that exposure-based and metacognitive strategies in undergraduate students through reading, watching subtitled films, listening to music, and digital applications expand vocabulary, despite facing challenges of cognitive load and idioms. A single-case study by Amalia & Sulistyani (2025) emphasized that a combination of social, metacognitive, and determination strategies effectively helped students internalize new vocabulary. Individual preferences influenced the effectiveness of the strategies, while the use of context-based strategies and digital exposure supported reading comprehension. These findings emphasize the importance of motivation and learning context in the effectiveness of VLS.

Quantitative evidence from surveys shows a similar pattern. (Suparman Sabate & Ridwan (2024) found that determination strategies were most frequently used by students in Malaysia, while social strategies were rarely used. (Alifah & Wijirahayu (2025) showed the dominance of digital tools and contextual inference in high school students. Memory strategies proved effective for vocabulary retention, while metacognitive strategies were the best predictors of vocabulary mastery, as explained by Zuhairi & Mistar (2023). In the context of gender and academic level, Nisa' (2023) found a positive correlation between VLS and reading comprehension in junior high school students, while Ghalebi et al., (2020) and Nur & Jusoh (2022) confirmed that metacognitive and determination strategies are effective across academic levels and countries. Ali et al., (2023) added that despite the challenges of large classes and pronunciation errors, determination and metacognitive strategies remain crucial for students and teachers.

Synthesizing, these 12 studies indicate that context-based strategies, metacognitive strategies, and explicit instruction are the most effective combination of strategies for improving vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. Mechanical memorization strategies or the use of dictionaries without context are less conducive to learning. The integration of digital media and task-based activities enhances vocabulary exposure and learning motivation, while individual factors, the context of the EFL environment, and personal preferences also influence the effectiveness of the strategies. These findings provide important pedagogical implications for developing vocabulary learning models that support reading comprehension for beginner-level EFL learners.

CONCLUSION

Vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) have a positive impact on reading comprehension in beginner English learners. Context-based, metacognitive, and explicit

instruction strategies have been shown to be most effective in improving both vocabulary mastery and reading ability, while mechanical memorization or the use of dictionaries without context are less effective.

The integration of digital media, task-based activities, and the application of strategies tailored to individual preferences contribute to the effectiveness of VLS. EFL environmental factors, motivation, and learning experiences also influence vocabulary acquisition and reading skills. These findings underscore the importance of developing vocabulary learning models that combine metacognitive, context-based strategies, and explicit instruction to optimally support reading comprehension in beginner-level English learners.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Al-Ghazo, A., & Ta'amneh, I. (2022). The Impact of Implementing Contextual Guessing Strategy on Improving EFL Learners' Vocabulary Competence and Reading Comprehension. *World Journal of English Language*, *12* (6), 176–183. https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v12n6p176

Al Ausi, M. Berlin Al Ausi, Lailatul Maimunah, & Muamar Chadafi. (2025). The Enhancing Vocabulary Mastery Through Seamless Learning: A Digital Approach to English Language Instruction. *JEET, Journal of English Education and Technology*, *6* (01), 45–64. https://doi.org/10.59689/jeet.v6i01.40

Alahmadi, A., & Foltz, A. (2020). Effects of Language Skills and Strategy Use on Vocabulary Learning Through Lexical Translation and Inferencing. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, *49* (6), 975–991. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-020-09720-9

Ali, R.I., Muhammad, A., & Hussein, Q.M. (2023). Vocabulary Learning Strategies in EFL Classes: Perspectives and Challenges. *Zanco Journal of Human Sciences*, *27* (788), 470–479.

Alifah, AN, & Wijirahayu, S. (2025). Exploring English Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Students in a Private Senior High School in East Jakarta. *ENGLISH FRANCA : Academic Journal of English Language and Education*, *9* (1 May SE-Articles), 17–30. https://doi.org/10.29240/ef.v9i1 May.12329

Amalia, FZ, & Sulistyani, UNL (2025). Learner's Perceptions on Vocabulary Learning Strategies: A Qualitative Single-Case Study. *Journal of Educational Research*, *42* (2), 115–123. https://doi.org/10.15294/jpp.v42i2.28169

Brooks, G., Clenton, J., & Fraser, S. (2023). Exploring the importance of vocabulary for English as an Additional Language learners' reading comprehension. *EAL Research for the Classroom: Practical and Pedagogical Implications*, *11* (3), 35–58. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003274889-5

Chandy, R., Serrano, R., & Pellicer-Sánchez, A. (2024). The effect of context on the processing and learning of novel L2 vocabulary while reading. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, *45* (6), 1086–1113. https://doi.org/DOI:10.1017/S0142716424000407

Diao, Z. (2025). Exploring Vocabulary learning in English Reading Teaching at Compulsory Education Level. *Literature Language and Cultural Studies*, *1* (2), 47. https://doi.org/10.63313/llcs.9025

El-Esery, A.M. (2023). Implementing virtual literature circles for developing English learners' vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies* , *12* (2), 74–85. https://doi.org/10.55493/5019.v12i2.4723

Ghalebi, R., Sadighi, F., & Bagheri, M. S. (2020). Vocabulary learning strategies: A comparative study of EFL learners. *Cogent Psychology* , *7* (1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2020.1824306

Holidazia, R., & Rodliyah, RS (2020). Students' Strategies in English Vocabulary Learning. *Journal of Educational Research* , *20* (1), 111–120.

Lai, HS, Abdullah, T., Abdul Aziz, A., & Abdul Samat, N. (2022). Vocabulary Learning in Reading Comprehension: Learners' Perception of the Use of Morphemic Analysis and Contextual Clues Strategies. *LSP International Journal* , *9* (2), 49–64. https://doi.org/10.11113/lspi.v9.19309

Laoli, A., Hikmah Giawa, N., Putri, D., Zebua, J., Fransiskus, E., & Namo, J. (2025). Strategies and Challenges of English Education Students in Vocabulary Mastery. *Eltin Journal: Journal of English Language Teaching in Indonesia, 13(1), .* , *1* (13), 157–170.

Marques, T.M., Narciso, I., & Ferreira, L.C. (2020). Empirical research on parental alienation: A descriptive literature review. *Children and Youth Services Review* , *119* , 105572. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105572

Nisa', NK (2023). The Relationship Between Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Reading Comprehension Based on Gender. *Journal of English Teaching, Literature, and Applied Linguistics* , *7* (1), 8. https://doi.org/10.30587/jetlal.v7i1.3723

Nur, RM, & Jusoh, ZB (2022). VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES OF INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS IN MALAYSIA: A FOCUS ON GENDER. *IJEAL (International Journal of English and Applied Linguistics)* , *2* (3), 431–444.

Rahmadillah, S., Wardani, N., Dega, AB, & Lubis, Y. (2025). Improving Reading Comprehension in English: Tips & Strategies for Beginners. *Invention: Journal of Research and Educational Studies* , *6* (3), 364–374. https://doi.org/10.51178/invention.v6i2.2510

Ramadhan, GR, Saukah, A., & Andreani, S. (2021). Enhancing EFL Learners' Reading Vocabulary Acquisition through Task-Based Instruction. *JoLLA: Journal of Language, Literature, and Arts* , *1* (2), 221–238. https://doi.org/10.17977/um064v1i22021p221-238

Suparman Sabate, & Ridwan. (2024). Vocabulary Learning Strategy Employed By Indonesian English As a Foreign Language (EFL) Learners in Malaysia. *Journal of Education, Language Teaching, Linguistics and Literature* , *1* (1), 31–41.

Vongsawath, K., Prasitiwi, Y., & Hidayat, N. (2025). EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension Challenges and Strategies: A Case Study of Champasack University in Laos. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics* , *10* (1), 11. https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v10i1.1495

Zuhairi, A., & Mistar, J. (2023). Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Vocabulary Mastery by Indonesian EFL Learners. *World Journal of English Language* , *13* (8), 453–461. https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n8p453