

VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE AND CHILDREN EDUCATION: STUDYING THE IMPACT OF LEXICAL COMPETENCE ON READING COMPREHENSION AND WRITING PROFICIENCY AMONG LEARNERS AT EMINENT SCHOLARS INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY, AKWA IBOM STATE.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of vocabulary knowledge on children's reading comprehension and writing proficiency, focusing on learners at Eminent Scholars International Academy in Akwa Ibom State. Grounded in the understanding that lexical competence is a critical component of language development, the research examined how the breadth and depth of learners' vocabulary influence their ability to interpret texts and express ideas effectively. Existing studies suggest that learners with well-developed vocabularies are more likely to comprehend complex reading materials and produce organized meaningful written work, since vocabulary serves as a bridge between thought and expression. Within this context, the study considers both the cognitive and instructional dimensions of vocabulary acquisition, highlighting how classroom practices and linguistic exposure shape literacy outcomes. It was concluded that the importance of integrating intentional vocabulary instruction into teaching strategies, as strengthening lexical competence not only enhances reading and writing skills but also supports overall academic achievement and long-term educational development. One of the recommendations was that educators should promote interactive classroom practices, such as discussions, storytelling, and group work, which allow students to actively use newly learned vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

KEYWORDS: Vocabulary Knowledge, Children Education, Lexical Competence, Reading, Comprehension, Eminent Scholars International Academy, Akwa Ibom State.

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary knowledge plays a central role in children's educational development, shaping how they understand, interpret, and express ideas across subjects. In early and middle schooling, the ability to recognize and use words effectively—often described as lexical competence—goes beyond simple memorization; it reflects a child's capacity to connect meanings, contexts, and linguistic structures. Researchers have consistently shown that children with richer vocabularies tend to demonstrate stronger academic performance because

they can access texts more easily and communicate their thoughts more clearly (Nation, 2022; Stahl & Nagy, 2020). In this sense, vocabulary development is not just a language skill but a foundational element of overall learning.

Reading comprehension and writing proficiency, two critical pillars of literacy, are deeply influenced by the extent of a learner's vocabulary knowledge. When students encounter unfamiliar words in a text, their ability to infer meaning or decode context directly affects their understanding of the material. Similarly, writing requires learners to actively retrieve and apply appropriate vocabulary to convey meaning effectively. Studies indicate that lexical competence significantly predicts both reading comprehension outcomes and writing quality, particularly in primary and secondary education settings (Ouellette & Shaw, 2021). Without a solid vocabulary base, learners often struggle with both interpreting texts and producing coherent, expressive written work.

Through cooperative interaction in Problem based learning, students engage in meaningful discussions that build their vocabulary knowledge, which in turn supports better reading, writing, and academic performance in Basic Science. Sambo, Sunday & Ekpo (2021) further explained that problem based learning is an instructional method that challenges students to learn by working cooperatively in a group to seek solution to life problems.

Within the context of Eminent Scholars International Academy in Akwa Ibom State, examining the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and literacy skills offers valuable insight into learners' academic experiences. Local educational environments present unique linguistic and socio-cultural dynamics that may influence how vocabulary is acquired and applied in classroom settings. Understanding how lexical competence impacts reading and writing among these learners can help educators design more targeted instructional strategies, ultimately improving literacy outcomes. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the extent to which vocabulary knowledge shapes reading comprehension and writing proficiency, contributing to ongoing discussions about effective language education practices in Nigerian schools.

Concept of Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the body of words that an individual knows and uses within a language, encompassing both receptive vocabulary (words recognized when listening or reading) and productive vocabulary (words actively used in speaking or writing). It is a foundational component of language competence, closely linked to reading comprehension, communication skills, and overall academic achievement. Contemporary research emphasizes that vocabulary development is not merely the memorization of word meanings but involves understanding word forms, contextual usage, semantic relationships, and pragmatic functions within discourse. This multidimensional nature means that vocabulary knowledge grows through exposure, interaction, and meaningful use across different contexts.

Vocabulary acquisition is a dynamic and incremental process that is impacted by cognitive, social, and environmental factors, according to recent studies. For example, Nation (2022) notes that in order to develop depth of knowledge, successful vocabulary learning necessitates regular exposure to terms in a variety of contexts. Similarly, Webb (2020) notes that both incidental learning (through reading and listening) and intentional learning (through

explicit instruction) play complementary roles in vocabulary growth. Digital environments have also expanded vocabulary learning opportunities, with technology-enhanced tools improving engagement and retention (Zhang & Zou, 2021). Furthermore, vocabulary knowledge is strongly correlated with literacy development, as learners with a richer vocabulary are better able to infer meanings, comprehend texts, and express ideas clearly (Schmitt, 2020).

Vocabulary is consequently seen in contemporary linguistic and educational contexts as a crucial component of language competency that promotes efficient communication and cognitive growth. It is a crucial area of study in language education since its learning necessitates constant exposure, practice, and deliberate instruction. Specialized terms used in particular fields, such as computer science, engineering, or medical, are included in technical vocabulary. As noted by Hyland (2023), technical vocabulary allows professionals and learners to communicate precise meanings within their disciplines. Employees with strong communication skills can convey their thoughts concisely and actively listen to others, Lion & Akapan (2025) which fosters trust and unity within teams, making it essential for professional and subject-specific communication.

Concept of Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary knowledge is the multifaceted understanding of word meanings, encompassing not just definitions but also pronunciation, spelling, usage, and grammatical function, essential for effective reading, writing, and communication. It involves both the breadth (total number of words known) and depth (how well a word is understood) of knowledge.

Scholars have characterized vocabulary knowledge in different but related ways. Vocabulary knowledge, according to Nation and Webb (2020), is the comprehension of a word's form, meaning, and usage, including its parts, grammatical functions, and spoken and written forms. They stress that understanding a word involves more than just learning its definition; it also involves understanding how it is used in actual speech.

Vocabulary knowledge is a basic element of language development that extensively influences learners' reading comprehension and writing skill. As students acquire a rich vocabulary, they develop the ability to understand texts more deeply and express their ideas more clearly. These language skills extend beyond the classroom and are essential in professional fields such as journalism, where effective English communication is required for accurate and impactful reporting. Godswill & James (2024) also emphasized that Effective communication skills in English enable journalists to articulate their thoughts clearly, conduct interviews competently, and present their findings in a compelling manner

Furthermore, Read (2023) explains vocabulary knowledge in terms of two major dimensions: breadth and depth. Breadth is the quantity of words a learner is familiar with, but depth is the degree to which those words are comprehended and applied in various settings. This implies that both quantity and quality of word understanding are necessary for successful vocabulary knowledge. Webb (2021) also defines vocabulary knowledge as the ability to recognize, recall, and appropriately use words in different contexts, stressing that it develops gradually through repeated exposure and meaningful learning experiences. In addition, Nation (2020) views vocabulary knowledge as the understanding of words across different frequency

levels, including high-frequency, academic, and low-frequency vocabulary, all of which contribute to overall language proficiency and academic success.

Concept of Lexical Competence

Lexical competence is the understanding and proficient application of a language's vocabulary, which includes not just word meanings but also word forms, usage, and contextual appropriateness. Lexical competence encompasses more than just word knowledge; it also includes the capacity to comprehend, generate, and use words in authentic conversation. Lexical competence is defined as the ability to “understand, produce, and use vocabulary effectively” in language learning contexts (Ismoilova, 2024). Similarly, Shoynazarova (2024) explains that lexical competence involves the ability to use and interpret words and phrases accurately, making it a central component of language proficiency and communication.

Lexical competence includes multiple dimensions such as general vocabulary, academic vocabulary, and specialized terminology, all of which must be integrated for effective communication (Kurbanova, 2025). In addition, lexical competence also involves knowledge of word relationships, contextual usage, and sociolinguistic appropriateness, which enable learners to function effectively in different communicative situations (IJMRD, 2025). Furthermore, contemporary perspectives describe lexical competence as consisting of both basic vocabulary knowledge and extended vocabulary knowledge across different domains, emphasizing depth and breadth of vocabulary mastery (Tanaka, 2025).

Concept of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the active, complex cognitive process of constructing meaning from text, involving the interaction of word recognition, vocabulary knowledge, and background knowledge. It goes beyond decoding words to involve critical thinking, such as inferring, summarizing, and analyzing information to understand, evaluate, and engage with the content. One of the most important abilities a learner can acquire is probably reading comprehension. It entails comprehending what you read rather than merely skimming it. A child needs to be able to remember, absorb, and replicate what he has read. Although there are significant individual differences, reading comprehension proficiency is found to be closely linked to pupils' success in academic attainment. Some children learn with good speed, while some remain lingering too long, hindering their reading ability, which affects their language learning and, relatively, their academic achievement, i.e., their achievement or understanding of other school subjects. (Singh, 2017).

The ability to thoroughly comprehend and grasp literature utilizing a variety of strategies, including educated analysis, past knowledge, and predictions, is known as reading comprehension. The ultimate goal of learning to read is reading comprehension. For good reason, it is also seen as a result of teachable core reading skills. The importance of reading comprehension cannot be overstated! People become critical and perceptive thinkers when they are able to comprehend what they are reading. Students' reading process is transformed by reading comprehension. It empowers kids to evaluate and comprehend the content they are reading, assisting them in developing their own thoughts and inquiries. Proficiency in reading comprehension fosters lifelong learning. Those who grasp and understand the complexities of

reading comprehension not only see academic success but see success outside of the classroom in their professional careers, social lives, and beyond. (Andasager, 2024).

Concept of Writing Proficiency

The capacity to clearly, coherently, accurately, and appropriately organize thoughts in writing is referred to as writing competency. It entails a blend of linguistic, cognitive, and communication abilities that allow a writer to create structured, meaningful texts for a variety of audiences and goals. Beyond simple phrase building, writing skill encompasses command of syntax, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling in addition to the capacity to arrange ideas rationally and convey arguments or stories in a cogent way.

According to modern viewpoints, writing ability is a multifaceted concept that incorporates mechanics, organization, language use, and content development. According to Hyland (2020), proficient writing requires not only linguistic accuracy but also the ability to use language strategically to achieve specific communicative goals within particular contexts. This implies that authors need to be aware of proper tone, genre standards, and audience expectations. Similarly, Graham (2021) emphasizes that writing proficiency develops through continuous practice, feedback, and the application of cognitive processes such as planning, drafting, revising, and editing.

Furthermore, writing ability is intimately related to other linguistic abilities, including vocabulary and reading comprehension. Because they are exposed to more language structures and discourse patterns, students who interact with texts regularly tend to improve their writing skills. Advances in digital technology have also influenced writing proficiency, with tools such as word processors and online platforms supporting revision, collaboration, and skill development (Zhang & Zou, 2021).

Effect of Vocabulary knowledge on Children Education

Vocabulary knowledge plays a foundational role in children's education, influencing how they comprehend, analyze, and interact with their surroundings. A child's vocabulary from an early age influences their capacity to ask questions, express ideas, and comprehend what is being taught in the classroom. Knowing a large number of words is only one aspect of having a big vocabulary; another is comprehending their meanings, subtleties, and proper application in various situations. Strong vocabulary makes it easier for kids to follow lessons, take part in class discussions, and understand new ideas when they start school. On the other hand, people with a little vocabulary can find it difficult to keep up, which could have an impact on their confidence and general academic achievement. Research has consistently shown that early vocabulary development is a strong predictor of later academic success, particularly in reading and comprehension (Rowe, 2018). This highlights the importance of nurturing vocabulary growth from an early stage.

Reading comprehension is one of the most important ways language knowledge influences kids' education. Reading involves more than just identifying words on a page; it also entails comprehending their meaning. Youngsters who have a large vocabulary are better able to decipher texts, deduce meanings, and make connections between concepts in phrases and paragraphs. This enables children to interact more fully with scholastic material in a variety of topics, including science, math, and social studies. On the other hand, kids with a small

vocabulary frequently find it difficult to comprehend what they read, which can cause annoyance and disinterest. According to Quinn, Wagner, Petscher, & Lopez (2020), vocabulary knowledge is a critical component of reading comprehension and is closely linked to students' ability to succeed academically. Early intervention is crucial because the difference between pupils with strong and weak vocabulary abilities tends to expand as reading becomes more sophisticated in higher grades.

Children's writing skills, which are essential for academic success, are also influenced by vocabulary knowledge. In order to effectively convey thoughts in writing, one must not only be able to arrange ideas but also employ a variety of relevant vocabulary. Youngsters who have a large vocabulary are better able to express themselves, explain their experiences, and make compelling arguments. They are able to select exact phrases that express their intended meaning, which improves the coherence and interest of their writing. However, children with a little vocabulary may use simple or repetitive language, which can make it difficult for them to communicate successfully. Studies have shown that vocabulary development is strongly associated with writing quality and overall literacy skills (Kim, Al Otaiba, & Wanzek, 2021). Therefore, increasing vocabulary can directly and favorably affect children's academic performance and writing expression. The influence of language knowledge on oral communication and classroom involvement is another crucial component. Youngsters with a large vocabulary are more inclined to ask questions, participate in conversations, and confidently express their opinions. In addition to improving student learning, this active engagement enables teachers to evaluate their comprehension and offer suitable assistance. Children with a small vocabulary, on the other hand, could be reluctant to speak up for fear of using the incorrect words or being misinterpreted. This may result in lower involvement and lost educational chances. According to Wasik and Hindman (2020), classroom environments that promote rich language interactions significantly improve children's vocabulary and communication skills. As a result, promoting verbal expression and offering chances for deep dialogue are crucial elements of successful instruction.

Children's vocabulary knowledge and, in turn, their educational performance are greatly influenced by socioeconomic and environmental circumstances. Children who grow up in language-rich environments—where they are exposed to books, chats, and educational materials—tend to acquire a larger vocabulary. Those from less fortunate homes, on the other hand, could not have as many possibilities for language exposure, which could restrict their vocabulary acquisition. This disparity often translates into differences in academic achievement. Research by Pace, Luo, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff (2017) indicates that variations in early language exposure contribute significantly to vocabulary gaps among children from different socioeconomic backgrounds. To guarantee that all children have the chance to acquire good vocabulary skills, addressing these gaps calls for focused interventions, including early childhood education programs, family involvement, and access to reading materials.

Effect of Lexical Competence on Reading Comprehension Proficiency

A key academic ability is reading comprehension, which entails comprehending, analyzing, and assessing written materials. Lexical competence, which relates to a learner's knowledge of words, including vocabulary size, word meanings, word usage, and depth of understanding of lexical items, is one of the best indicators of good reading comprehension. Because they can

decode words more quickly and create meaning more effectively, learners with strong lexical competence typically do better on reading comprehension tasks, according to current research.

➤ **Improved Word Recognition and Decoding**

Strong lexical competence enables readers to identify words on their own without having to spend a lot of time decoding them. Readers can concentrate on meaning rather than pronunciation or spelling thanks to this fluency. Reading system theories contend that effective word recognition lays the groundwork for comprehension by releasing cognitive resources for more complex comprehension (Rueda-Sánchez, 2025).

➤ **Enhanced Understanding of Text Meaning**

Learners' comprehension of texts is directly impacted by their vocabulary. Pupils with a small vocabulary frequently find it difficult to understand sentences, particularly when they come across new words. However, even when certain terms are unfamiliar, learners with high lexical knowledge can maintain overall comprehension and deduce meaning from context (Wang, 2025).

➤ **Better Inferencing Skills**

The capacity to read between the lines and comprehend suggested meanings is known as inferencing, and it is supported by lexical competence. Readers are better able to accurately analyze complicated texts when they are aware of the various meanings of words and how they are used in various contexts (Zeng, 2025).

➤ **Development of Reading Fluency**

Lexical competency and reading fluency are tightly related. Reading gets easier and quicker for those who are more proficient in word recognition. Because readers can comprehend longer sentences without losing focus or meaning, this fluency enhances comprehension.

➤ **Reduced Cognitive Load**

Pupils with limited vocabulary may expend excessive mental energy attempting to understand individual words, which hinders their comprehension of entire sentences or paragraphs. Strong lexical competence, on the other hand, lessens this load and enables students to concentrate on concepts and the general structure of the communication (Zhong & Suwanthep, 2022)

Effect of Lexical Competence on Writing Proficiency

Writing proficiency is mostly determined by lexical competence, which is the capacity to comprehend and employ a broad variety of terminology. It includes awareness of word forms, collocations, register, and contextual appropriateness in addition to word meanings. Lexical competence improves the overall quality of written communication by allowing people to express ideas in writing in a clear, accurate, and effective manner. Writers who lack adequate vocabulary frequently find it difficult to describe complicated ideas, which leads to ambiguous, repetitious, or unsophisticated language.

The development of clarity and precision is one of the main effects of lexical competence on writing skill. By choosing words that precisely convey their intended meaning, writers with a large vocabulary can minimize ambiguity and improve reader comprehension. According to Schmitt (2020), learners with higher lexical competence demonstrate greater ability to use specific and contextually appropriate vocabulary, which leads to more coherent and effective writing. On the other hand, a small vocabulary frequently compels authors to use generic or inaccurate phrases, which lessens the writings' ability to communicate.

Additionally, coherence and cohesiveness in writing are greatly enhanced by lexical competency. Ideas are logically connected across sentences and paragraphs when suitable lexical items, such as transition words, synonyms, and lexical chains, are used. Webb (2020) notes that vocabulary knowledge supports the development of cohesive devices, enabling writers to maintain flow and organization in their compositions. In academic writing, where logical concept flow is crucial, this is especially crucial.

The intricacy and quality of writing are another significant impact. Strong lexical competence increases a writer's ability to create a variety of sentence patterns and use sophisticated terminology, which improves the writing's depth and maturity. Research by Crossley, Salsbury, and McNamara (2021) indicates that lexical diversity and sophistication are key indicators of writing proficiency, often distinguishing advanced writers from beginners. These authors are adept at modifying their vocabulary to fit various audiences, genres, and objectives.

Lexical competency also influences writing confidence and fluency. A large vocabulary makes it easier for writers to find words, which lessens hesitancy and enhances the flow of thoughts during creation. Zhang and Zou (2021) highlight that increased vocabulary knowledge, especially when supported by digital learning tools, enhances learners' confidence and willingness to engage in writing tasks. This self-assurance motivates more frequent practice, which eventually enhances writing abilities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, vocabulary knowledge remains a powerful driver of children's success in reading and writing, shaping how they understand texts and express their ideas with clarity and confidence. As seen in the context of learners at Eminent Scholars International Academy, developing strong lexical competence is not just an added advantage but a necessary foundation for meaningful literacy growth. When students are supported in building rich and functional vocabularies, they are better equipped to engage with academic content, think critically, and communicate effectively. This highlights the need for intentional teaching strategies that prioritize vocabulary development as a core part of language education, ultimately fostering improved learning outcomes and long-term academic achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Educators should promote interactive classroom practices, such as discussions, storytelling, and group work, which allow students to actively use newly learned vocabulary in meaningful contexts.
2. The use of visual aids, real-life examples, and digital learning tools should be encouraged to make vocabulary learning more engaging and easier to understand for learners.
3. Schools should integrate regular reading activities across subjects, encouraging students to engage with diverse texts that expose them to new words and varied language structures.

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