

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter discusses the findings from the interview data collected from several third- and fourth-year English major students at UNIPDA. The interviews aimed to explore their perceptions regarding the role of vocabulary mastery in reading comprehension and to examine the factors that influence their vocabulary development and reading proficiency. The discussion integrates thematic findings and links them with relevant theories and previous research to provide a deeper understanding of the students' perspectives.

A. FINDINGS

The purpose of this research was to describe how English students at UNIPDA perceive the role of vocabulary in understanding reading texts and what factors influence the students' views on the importance of vocabulary in reading comprehension at UNIPDA.

1. Opinion about vocabulary mastery in English

Two subjects said that their current level was being between basic and intermediate. Subject 1 and Subject 2 acknowledged that there is a significant amount of high-level or academic vocabulary that remains unfamiliar to them.

Three subjects said that their vocabulary is fairly good. They recognize that there is still room for improvement. Subject 3, Subject 4, and Subject 5 expressed a desire to expand their vocabulary further to become more confident in their English comprehension.

“I still find it difficult to remember some vocabulary at times”. Subject 6 admitted to experiencing difficulty in remembering certain English words.

2. The Role of Vocabulary in Reading Comprehension

The six subjects consistently emphasized that vocabulary plays a crucial role in reading comprehension. Without adequate vocabulary mastery, they feel that it is extremely difficult to grasp the meaning of sentences, paragraphs, or the entire reading passage. Each subject emphasized that vocabulary is not only important but crucial in enabling readers to decode messages, follow the flow of ideas, and interpret meaning correctly.

Moreover, all of the subjects agreed that vocabulary mastery significantly helps them understand reading texts better. This is because knowing the meanings of words minimizes confusion and reduces the chance of misinterpreting the intended message. Having a wide range of vocabulary allows students to access deeper meanings, understand nuanced language, and comprehend the tone, intent, and arguments presented in the reading.

3. Experience about Having Vocabulary that Influence on Reading Comprehension Development

All of the subject has a different personal experience about having vocabulary that influence on reading comprehension development. Subject 1 shared that whenever they encounter unfamiliar words in a text, he needs to look up the meanings before he can understand the content fully.

Subject 2 shared her personal experience when she watches a film with English subtitles as a way to practice language comprehension. However, she encountered unfamiliar vocabulary that prevent her from fully understanding certain parts of the film and missed the messages of the film.

Whereas subject 3, subject 4, and subject 5 encountered several unfamiliar words when she read a scientific article, which initially made the text difficult to understand. However, after looking up the meaning of those words, their comprehension of the article improved significantly.

“Mostly when reading textbooks or English poems, I can’t understand the meaning of the writings”. The subject 6 shared that she often struggled to comprehend the meaning of the content due to unfamiliar words when reading textbooks and English poems.

4. Perceptions about the Importance of Vocabulary in Reading Comprehension

Subject 1 state “My friends who are good at English usually have strong vocabulary, so I think that’s a big factor”. The subject explained that

her perception about the importance of vocabulary in reading has been strongly influenced by observing her friends who are proficient in English.

Three subjects have the same perception. Their perspective on the importance of vocabulary in reading is influenced by both personal experiences and observation. Subject 2, subject 5, and subject 6 explained that throughout their studies, they often encountered situations where understanding a reading text depended heavily on knowing the vocabulary. They stated that moments of struggling to understand unfamiliar words have made them more aware of how crucial vocabulary is for reading comprehension.

Two subjects said that their perception on the importance of vocabulary in reading has been shaped by experiences in reading classes and by the lecturer's explanations through their studies at UNIPDA.

5. The Improvement of Vocabulary during studying at PBI of UNIPDA

All of the subject said that their vocabulary mastery has significantly improved during their time at the university. Most students attributed this progress to both formal academic instruction and informal learning experiences.

Subject 2 highlighted specific university course such as Vocabulary, Scientific Reading, Critical Reading, and Speaking as being particularly effective in helping them expand their vocabulary. These structured learning opportunities introduced them to new part academic and general English

terms, reinforced word usage through practice, and built their confidence in understanding complex texts.

Subject 1 and Subject 4 said that classroom instruction, interactions with peers, especially using English in daily conversations or group discussions, also contributed to vocabulary growth. Subject 5 mentioned that chatting with friends in English created an immersive environment that made learning new words feel more natural and less stressful. Subject 3 reported that frequent exposure to English reading materials such as articles, books, or assignments also played a key role in enhancing their vocabulary mastery. Moreover, subject 6 emphasized the importance of active engagement, such as practicing new vocabulary through writing or speaking tasks.

All six subjects agreed that vocabulary improvement is essential for enhancing reading comprehension, and they offered various effective strategies for vocabulary development.

One of the most widely recommended methods was reading more English materials, such as articles, books, and online content, which exposes learners to a variety of new words in context. Subject 3 and subject 4 also emphasized the importance of using a dictionary to look up unfamiliar words immediately, which promotes accurate understanding and prevents confusion. Additionally, subject 2 suggest to keep a vocabulary notebook as a useful tool for recording and reviewing new words, which aids long-term retention.

Whereas subject 1 said that practicing vocabulary in both spoken and written forms was also seen as highly beneficial, as it helps reinforce learning and allows students to apply new words actively. Subject 5 highlighted the value of consistency and focus in learning, stressing that students need to be disciplined and committed in order to see progress. Subject 6 pointed out that learners should find personalized or effective learning methods that suit their style, such as flashcards, language apps, or group discussions.

B. DISCUSSION

Based on the thematic analysis of the interview data, the discussion below explores how English students at UNIPDA perceive the role of vocabulary mastery in understanding reading texts and the factors that influence these perceptions. The analysis reveals a consistent understanding among students of the significant role vocabulary plays in reading comprehension, as well as various internal and external influences that shape their views.

1. Perception of the Importance of Vocabulary

a. Vocabulary as a Key to Reading Comprehension

The findings of this study revealed that English students at UNIPDA hold a strong perception of vocabulary as a fundamental element in reading comprehension. Across the interviews, subject consistently emphasized that vocabulary is the key to unlocking the meaning of texts. They believed that having a broad and strong vocabulary base allows readers to understand sentences, grasp the overall context, and engage

more deeply with reading materials. This perception is in line with existing research which highlights vocabulary as a central component of reading success, particularly in second language learning. Students recognized that when they encountered texts with familiar words, they were able to comprehend content with greater ease and confidence. This supports the view of Corpuz, Morales, Clarin, Dionio, & Cocolan (2024), who argues that strong vocabulary skills significantly contribute to all aspects of reading comprehension.

Moreover, several subjects explained that vocabulary mastery plays a vital role in their ability to understand not just surface meanings, but also the nuances, implied messages, and author's intentions in reading passages. This aligns with So-In & Chaya (2024) claim that vocabulary is an essential element that facilitates the development of speaking, writing, listening, and reading abilities for both foreign language acquisition (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL). For many students, vocabulary mastery is seen as a prerequisite for critical reading and academic success. They expressed that without sufficient vocabulary, their ability to infer meaning, summarize information, or evaluate arguments is significantly hindered.

b. Vocabulary Difficulties Lead to Reading Challenges

Subjects highlighted that lacking vocabulary often leads to significant reading challenges. When faced with unfamiliar words especially academic or technical terms, they often found it difficult to

understand the entire passage, even if they understood the surrounding sentences. This experience aligns with claim of Salimi & Zangeh (2022) that the students face certain difficulties throughout the vocabulary learning process because it is a complex, repetitive process that calls for students to repeatedly repeat words while also expanding their vocabulary and using them correctly in sentences across a range of contexts. Some students reported that encountering too many unknown words made them lose interest or become frustrated, ultimately reducing their motivation to read further. This perception confirms that vocabulary gaps can become barriers to effective reading comprehension, as struggling with individual words can disrupt the overall understanding of a text. This reflects the notion by Tan, M., & Abdullah, S. (2025) that readers need to know at least 95% of the vocabulary in a text to comprehend it well.

Students also shared real-life examples of how unfamiliar vocabulary impacted their ability to complete reading assignments or fully grasp classroom materials. For instance, one student mentioned that failing to understand idiomatic expressions or formal academic language made it difficult to follow arguments in scholarly texts. Others emphasized how vocabulary difficulties often slowed down their reading speed, requiring them to frequently pause and look up definitions, which disrupted the reading flow. These responses indicate that students are not only aware of the importance of vocabulary but also

recognize how vocabulary limitations can directly affect their reading outcomes. This perspective is supported by Rahmasari, Baa, & Korompot (2023), who emphasizes that students are better able to understand, evaluate, and derive meaning from written content as their vocabulary grows.

2. Factors Influencing Perception

The perceptions of English students at UNIPDA regarding the importance of vocabulary in reading comprehension are shaped by a variety of influential factors. One of the most significant is personal reading experience. Several subjects reflected on their own struggles or progress while reading English texts throughout their academic journey. These experiences helped them realize how essential vocabulary is in making sense of texts. This notion is proven by claims from Suyadi & Aisyah (2023) who state that a student who perceives English as a valuable skill for future prospects tends to approach learning with excitement and commitment. For instance, some students mentioned that encountering difficult or unfamiliar words during reading tasks often made comprehension more challenging, while successful reading experiences, where they understood the vocabulary, reinforced the belief that word knowledge is crucial. These personal encounters with text served as direct evidence that vocabulary plays a central role in reading comprehension. This statement aligns with Corpuz, Morales, Clarin, Dionio, & Cocolan (2024) who state strong vocabulary skills significantly contribute to all aspects of reading

comprehension across these areas, enabling readers to understand explicit information, infer implicit messages, critically analyze texts, and understanding in practical contexts.

In addition to personal experiences, exposure to English media and academic activities was also seen as a major factor in shaping students' perceptions. Students who frequently engaged with English-language materials such as novels, news articles, YouTube videos, and online journals recognized the importance of vocabulary in understanding and enjoying the content. This continuous exposure not only increased their vocabulary size but also made them more aware of how vocabulary helps in connecting ideas, recognizing main points, and following detailed explanations. This informal learning outside the classroom supplemented their academic understanding and shaped a more positive and proactive view toward vocabulary development.

Another significant influence comes from lecturers and formal reading courses. Some subjects cited that structured classes such as Vocabulary, Critical Reading, and Scientific Reading at UNIPDA contributed to their growing awareness of vocabulary's importance. Through these courses, students were introduced to strategies for dealing with unfamiliar words, such as using context clues, breaking down word parts, or using dictionaries effectively. Lecturers also emphasized the role of vocabulary in reading comprehension, reinforcing this idea during class discussions, assignments, and assessments. These academic influences

played a major role in shaping students' beliefs and motivated them to develop their vocabulary systematically. This factor aligns with Melati (2024) who claim that positive perceptions of teacher competence can boost motivation and academic performance, whereas negative perceptions can lead to lack of engagement.

Lastly, the influence from peers and academic surroundings also shaped the students' perceptions. Some subjects shared that observing classmates who had strong vocabulary skills inspired them to pay more attention to their own vocabulary growth. In classroom discussions or group projects, students often noticed that those with better vocabulary could articulate their understanding more clearly, participate more confidently, and engage more deeply with texts. This peer influence created a sense of awareness and competition that encouraged vocabulary development as a necessary skill for academic success

3. Vocabulary Development Over Time

The subjects in this study generally agreed that their vocabulary mastery had improved significantly during their time at UNIPDA. One major contributor to this growth was the formal coursework they encountered throughout their academic journey. Courses such as *Vocabulary*, *Critical Reading*, and *Scientific Reading* were frequently cited as crucial in enhancing their word knowledge. These courses not only introduced a wider range of vocabulary but also emphasized the use of vocabulary in context, reading comprehension strategies, and critical

analysis. Through these structured lessons, subjects became more aware of word formation, connotations, collocations, and usage, which played a role in reinforcing their vocabulary retention and comprehension skills.

In addition to coursework, many subjects highlighted the role of extensive reading and listening practices as instrumental in their vocabulary development. By engaging with various types of English materials, such as novels, news articles, journals, academic texts, and English-language media such as YouTube videos, movies, and podcasts, subjects were exposed to authentic and diverse vocabulary in meaningful contexts. This type of exposure helped solidify their understanding of word meanings and usage beyond textbook definitions. Moreover, hearing how words are used in spoken English contributed to their ability to recognize and comprehend vocabulary more easily, especially when encountering it again in written form.

Furthermore, several subjects emphasized the importance of habitual learning and repeated exposure to vocabulary. They developed personal strategies to enhance their vocabulary mastery, such as keeping a vocabulary notebook, reviewing unfamiliar words regularly, and making an effort to use new vocabulary in speaking and writing. These self-directed practices reflected a shift from passive learning to active vocabulary acquisition. The combination of academic and informal learning methods helped subjects not only expand their vocabulary but also internalize it more effectively over time. Repeated exposure to vocabulary in various settings

created stronger mental associations and long-term memory, which enhanced their ability to recall and use words accurately when reading and producing English texts. These strategies align with (Fauzi & Yuliawati, 2023) idea that vocabulary instruction involves activities such as introducing new words, providing context, and practicing word application to improve vocabulary acquisition and retention.

4. Strategies for Improving Vocabulary

The subjects in this study offered a variety of strategies they personally used or recommended for enhancing vocabulary mastery, particularly in relation to improving reading comprehension. One of the most common suggestions was the importance of extensive reading. By reading a wide range of English materials such as books, articles, online blogs, and academic texts students are exposed to new vocabulary in authentic contexts. This kind of exposure not only helps in recognizing word meanings from context but also aids in developing a sense of how words function within different sentence structures. In addition, many subjects recommended the use of dictionaries as an essential tool to support reading. Looking up unfamiliar words during or after reading helped them understand the text better and expanded their word bank more effectively.

Another frequently mentioned strategy was the active use of vocabulary in speaking and writing. Several subjects emphasized that it is not enough to simply memorize new words; using them in daily communication helps internalize vocabulary and solidify understanding.

When students try to incorporate new words into conversations or written assignments, they are forced to recall and apply vocabulary in a meaningful way. This active use enhances long-term retention and increases confidence in language production. Some also reported that using new vocabulary with peers or in class discussions created a practical learning environment where language could be practiced and reinforced collaboratively.

Furthermore, some subjects shared more personalized and reflective strategies, such as keeping vocabulary notebooks. These notebooks were used to record unfamiliar or important words, their meanings, example sentences, and sometimes even synonyms and antonyms. The act of writing down vocabulary helped reinforce memory, while revisiting and reviewing the notes regularly ensured continued exposure. However, the effectiveness of this strategy was often linked to consistency. Subjects who maintained a regular routine of reviewing and practicing vocabulary reported greater improvement than those who used the strategy sporadically. This consistency was key in transforming passive vocabulary mastery into active use.

Table 4.1 Thematic Analysis of Findings

Theme	Sub-theme
Perception of the Importance of Vocabulary	Vocabulary as a Key to Reading Comprehension
	Vocabulary Difficulties Lead to Reading Challenges
	Personal reading experience

Factors Influencing Perception	Exposure from English Media and Activities
	Influence from lecturers and reading classes
	Influence from peers and surroundings
Vocabulary Development Over Time	Improvement through coursework
	Improvement through reading and listening practices
	Habitual learning and exposure
Strategies for Improving Vocabulary	Extensive reading and dictionary use
	Using vocabulary in speaking and writing
	Keeping vocabulary notes and being consistent

