

## Arabic Vocabulary Mastery and Its Relationship with Reading Skills (*Mahārat al-Qirā'ah*) Among Arabic Literature Students

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 <https://doi.org/10.58194/eloquence.v5i1.3277>

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Article History	ABSTRACT
Received 12-12-2025 Accepted: 10-03-2026 Published: 23-04-2026	<p><b>Background:</b> Learning Arabic as a foreign language requires mastery of four main skills, namely listening (<i>istimā</i>), speaking (<i>kalām</i>), reading (<i>qirā'ah</i>), and writing (<i>kitābah</i>). Among these skills, reading skills (<i>mahārat al-qirā'ah</i>) play an important role in understanding academic and religious texts. However, most students in the Arabic Literature Study Program at the Indonesian Muslim University (UMI) still face obstacles in understanding Arabic texts due to their limited vocabulary (<i>mufradāt</i>) and weak grammatical understanding (<i>nabwu-sharaf</i>).</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> This study examines the relationship between students' Arabic vocabulary mastery and their reading skills (<i>mahārat al-qirā'ah</i>) and explores the role of grammatical understanding (<i>nabwu-sharaf</i>) in supporting text comprehension.</p> <p><b>Method:</b> This study employed a quantitative correlational design. Data were collected from 20 third-semester students of the Arabic Literature Study Program at UMI using a vocabulary test and a reading test. Because the population was small, total sampling (census) was applied. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation.</p> <p><b>Results and Discussion:</b> The results showed that 55% of students achieved grade A in vocabulary mastery, while reading skill scores were in the good category. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading skills (<math>r = 0.82</math>; <math>p &lt; 0.01</math>). Students with better mastery of <i>nabwu-sharaf</i> also demonstrated stronger reading comprehension.</p> <p><b>Conclusion and Implications:</b> Vocabulary mastery was significantly associated with Arabic reading skills (<math>r = 0.82</math>; <math>p &lt; 0.01</math>). Arabic language learning should integrate vocabulary instruction with grammatical analysis and contextual meaning so that students can comprehend texts more comprehensively.</p>
<b>Keywords:</b>	<i>Vocabulary Mastery; Arabic Language; Arabic Language Learning; Mahārat al-Qirā'ah</i>
	<b>ABSTRAK</b>

**Latar Belakang:** Pembelajaran bahasa Arab sebagai bahasa asing menuntut penguasaan empat keterampilan utama, yakni menyimak (*istimā'*), berbicara (*kalām*), membaca (*qirā'ah*), dan menulis (*kitābah*). Di antara keempat keterampilan tersebut, keterampilan membaca (*mahārat al-qirā'ah*) memiliki peranan penting dalam memahami teks akademik dan keagamaan. Namun, sebagian besar mahasiswa Program Studi Sastra Arab Universitas Muslim Indonesia (UMI) masih menghadapi kendala dalam memahami teks Arab akibat keterbatasan penguasaan kosakata (*mufradāt*) dan lemahnya pemahaman gramatikal (*nahwu-sharaf*).

**Tujuan:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara penguasaan kosakata mahasiswa dan keterampilan membaca (*mahārat al-qirā'ah*), serta melihat peran pemahaman gramatikal (*nahwu-sharaf*) dalam mendukung pemahaman teks.

**Metode:** Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuantitatif korelasional. Data dikumpulkan dari 20 mahasiswa semester III Program Studi Sastra Arab UMI melalui tes kosakata dan tes membaca. Karena jumlah populasi kecil, teknik total sampling (sensus) digunakan. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan korelasi Pearson.

**Hasil dan Pembahasan:** Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 55% mahasiswa memperoleh nilai A pada penguasaan kosakata, sedangkan skor keterampilan membaca berada pada kategori baik. Analisis korelasi Pearson menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif yang kuat antara penguasaan kosakata dan keterampilan membaca ( $r = 0.82$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Mahasiswa dengan penguasaan *nahwu-sharaf* yang lebih baik juga menunjukkan pemahaman membaca yang lebih kuat.

**Kesimpulan dan Implikasi:** Penguasaan kosakata berkorelasi signifikan dengan keterampilan membaca bahasa Arab. Pembelajaran bahasa Arab perlu mengintegrasikan pengajaran kosakata dengan analisis gramatikal dan konteks makna agar mahasiswa mampu memahami teks secara lebih komprehensif.

#### Kata Kunci

*Penguasaan Kosakata; Bahasa Arab; Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab; Mahārat al-Qirā'ah*



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## INTRODUCTION

Learning Arabic as a foreign language plays an important role in the development of science, especially in the context of Islamic higher education in Indonesia. Arabic is not only a means of communication but also the main language of Islamic scholarship, covering both classical (*turāt*) and modern texts.[1] Therefore, mastery of Arabic is a basic competency for students in Arabic Literature and Arabic Language Education programs. In Arabic language learning, four main skills are emphasized: listening (*istimā'*), speaking (*kalām*), reading (*qirā'ah*), and writing (*kitābah*). Among these skills, reading skills or *mahārat al-qirā'ah* occupy a central position because they are the main gateway to understanding academic, religious, and socio-cultural texts in Arabic. However, many students at the Universitas Muslim Indonesia (UMI) still face difficulty understanding Arabic texts due to limited vocabulary (*mufradāt*) and weak understanding of Arabic grammar (*nahwu-sharaf*).[2]

The main problem in the reading skills of UMI Arabic Literature students lies in their limited vocabulary. Based on initial observations and preliminary research results, many third-semester students do not have sufficient vocabulary to understand academic and religious texts.[3], [4] Most students rely on conventional, non-contextual memorization methods, resulting in passive and inflexible vocabulary mastery in diverse reading contexts. In addition, some students show a high dependence on dictionaries or literal translations, which slows down their ability to understand the content of the reading as a whole.[5], [6] This condition is exacerbated by the low level of integration between vocabulary learning and reading skills in the lecture process. Vocabulary is

often taught separately from the context of sentences or reading texts, so that students are not accustomed to associating words with their contextual meanings.[7], [8], [9] As a result, reading skills do not develop optimally even though the learning time is sufficient. This problem poses a challenge for Arabic language teachers to create learning methods that can strengthen the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading skills. Recent syntheses in Arabic literacy research emphasize that metalinguistic knowledge, especially morphological awareness, plays a central role in reading comprehension development.[21], [24]

Previous studies have shown that vocabulary mastery has a significant relationship with reading skills. Text comprehension is highly dependent on the breadth of vocabulary possessed by learners,[10], [11], [12] and this relationship is further strengthened by metalinguistic skills that support Arabic reading comprehension, such as morphological and orthographic awareness.[21], [23] Other findings also indicate that students with a high level of vocabulary mastery demonstrated better reading skills.[15] In addition, one study proved that 78% of Arabic language students' reading ability is influenced by vocabulary mastery.[1]

In addition, most of these studies were conducted on advanced students or in the general context of Arabic language learning. There is still little research that specifically highlights early-stage university students, especially those who have just taken the *Mahārat al-Qirā'ah* 1 course. In fact, this early stage is crucial for forming a strong foundation of text comprehension. This gap shows the need for research that explores the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading skills in early-level students, so that more effective and contextual learning strategies can be formulated.

This study aims to fill this gap by conducting empirical research on third-semester students in the Arabic Literature Program at the Indonesian Muslim University. Using a quantitative correlational approach, this study measures the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading skills and examines the extent to which vocabulary mastery predicts students' reading performance.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on third-semester students in the context of the *Mahārat al-Qirā'ah* 1 course, a foundational stage where lexical gaps may critically impede comprehension. While many previous studies have focused on more advanced learners, this study highlights the early stage of developing academic Arabic literacy skills.

Another novel aspect is the integration of vocabulary skills and text comprehension strategies. This study not only assesses the number of words mastered, but also how students use those words to understand the meaning of the text. Thus, this study contributes to the development of an empirical data-based Arabic language learning model, which combines linguistic aspects (vocabulary and language structure) with a contextual pedagogical approach.

The scientific contributions of this study include: (1) providing local empirical data on the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading skills in the UMI environment; (2) developing a more contextual vocabulary learning concept; and (3) providing a basis for the development of a competency-based curriculum in Arabic.

This study has strategic significance in efforts to improve the quality of Arabic language learning in higher education. First, the results of this study can help teachers in designing more effective vocabulary teaching methods, not only emphasizing memorization, but also understanding the context of word usage in texts. Second, this study supports efforts to improve academic Arabic text literacy among students, which is an important competency in Islamic and Arabic language studies. Third, institutionally, this research is in line with the UMI Research Strategic Plan (Renstra), which emphasizes improving the quality of research-based education,

strengthening the humanities, and developing graduates who excel in Arabic literacy. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Describe the level of Arabic vocabulary mastery among Arabic Literature students at the Indonesian Muslim University.
2. Examine the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading skills (*mahārat al-qirā'ah*).
3. Assess the strength of the relationship between vocabulary mastery and students' ability to understand reading meanings.
4. Through the achievement of these objectives, it is hoped that this study can provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading skills, as well as serve as a basis for developing more effective, contextual, and competency-oriented Arabic language learning strategies for students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Overview and Conceptual Framework

Learning Arabic as a foreign language requires mastery of four main skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Of these four skills, *mahārat al-qirā'ah* (reading skills) is strategically important because it is the basis for understanding scientific, religious, and cultural Arabic texts. Good reading skills require adequate vocabulary, correct sentence structure, and effective reading strategies. Thus, mastery of vocabulary (*mufradāt*) is a prerequisite for achieving optimal text comprehension.

Vocabulary mastery can be viewed in two aspects: breadth (the number of words known) and depth (how well words are known and can be used).[10] In Arabic reading development, depth-related knowledge is often intertwined with morphology and orthography, which have been shown to contribute to reading comprehension.[23], [24] Without sufficient vocabulary mastery, learners cannot understand the content of reading materials, even if they understand sentence structure. In addition, vocabulary determines the extent to which a person can understand, produce, and interpret meaning in foreign language communication.[12]

### 2. Conceptual Definition of Research Variables

#### a. Vocabulary Mastery (Mufradat)

Vocabulary mastery is the ability to understand, recognize, and use words in the appropriate context. Vocabulary mastery not only includes knowledge of the lexical meaning of words but also includes morphological forms, syntactic functions, and contextual meanings.[4] In the context of Arabic language learning, vocabulary mastery refers to the extent to which learners are able to recognize words, understand their meaning in sentences, and use them communicatively in the context of Arabic discourse.

Vocabulary mastery can be viewed in two aspects: breadth (the breadth of known vocabulary) and depth (depth of knowledge of words).[10] Breadth refers to the number of words known by learners, while depth includes the ability to understand layered meanings, collocations, and semantic relationships between words. In this study, vocabulary mastery is understood as the level of students' ability to recognize and understand the meaning of words, both lexically and contextually, when reading Arabic texts.

#### b. Reading Skills (*Mahārat al-Qirā'ah*)

*Mahārat al-qirā'ah* is defined as the ability to understand written texts by identifying meaning, main ideas, relationships between sentences, and contextual inferences. Reading is an interactive

process between the text and the reader, in which the reader constructs meaning through the integration of linguistic knowledge and background knowledge.[5]

In the context of Arabic language learning, reading skills are not only related to the ability to pronounce letters or words, but also the ability to understand sentence structure (*nahwu*), word forms (*sharaf*), and the contextual meaning of texts. Reading skills include four main components: (1) recognizing written symbols, (2) understanding the meaning of words, (3) interpreting the meaning of sentences, and (4) drawing conclusions about the overall meaning of the text.[2] Thus, reading skills are complex abilities that require the integration of vocabulary, grammar, and cognitive strategies.

### 3. Basis of Theory

The relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading skills is explained in various linguistic and language learning theories. One of these is the Lexical Threshold Hypothesis, which states that to understand a text effectively, readers must master at least 95% of the vocabulary contained in the text.[10] In Arabic reading contexts, vocabulary demands also relate to how instructional texts align with high-frequency word exposure, which can affect comprehension opportunities.[22] If vocabulary mastery is below this threshold, comprehension of the text will be significantly impaired.

In addition, interactive views of reading emphasize that reading is a process of interaction between linguistic knowledge (vocabulary and grammar) and the reader's conceptual knowledge. The richer a person's vocabulary, the greater their ability to understand the meaning of a text inferentially.[5], [12] In the context of Arabic, this means that students with a strong command of *mufradāt* will find it easier to recognize the meaning of words, understand the context of sentences, and grasp the overall message of a text.

### 4. Previous Research Studies

Several previous studies have reinforced the link between vocabulary mastery and reading skills in Arabic. One study found a significant positive correlation between the level of *mufradāt* mastery and the reading ability of Arabic Language Education students. Students with a larger vocabulary demonstrated a better level of text comprehension.[15]

Research on students also shows that 78% of students' Arabic reading ability is determined by their vocabulary mastery.[1] The higher the students' vocabulary mastery, the better their ability to understand Arabic academic texts. Another study added that the use of a contextual approach in vocabulary teaching can improve reading skills compared to traditional memorization methods.[7]

One study highlights the challenges of reading Arabic for non-Arabic speakers, where the main difficulties lie in weak vocabulary mastery and a lack of contextual inference skills. It suggests using contextual guessing and intensive reading techniques as strategies to enrich vocabulary while strengthening reading comprehension.[3]

Another study showed that students' reading skills improved significantly after participating in vocabulary and reading text integration-based learning [9]. Other findings emphasized the importance of a morphological (*sharaf*) approach in expanding vocabulary mastery and improving the ability to understand classical Arabic texts.[8]

Thus, previous literature consistently shows that vocabulary mastery plays an important role in Arabic reading skills. However, most of these studies were conducted on advanced students or in a general learning context, so few have focused on early-stage university students as in this study.

## 5. Research Gap Analysis

The main gap found in previous studies is the lack of empirical studies focusing on early-stage university students, especially in the context of the *Mabārat al-Qirā'ab* 1 course. Students at this level are generally still developing foundational Arabic language skills, so examining the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading skills at this stage is important.

In addition, many previous studies used descriptive approaches without testing quantitative relationships in depth. This study uses a quantitative correlational approach to statistically analyze the relationship between vocabulary mastery and the reading skills of Arabic Literature students at UMI.

Another difference lies in the learning context. Many studies examine general texts, while this study uses academic and religious texts that are appropriate for Arabic Literature students. This is a novel aspect and a real contribution to the development of Arabic language learning in an academic environment.

## 6. Theoretical Synthesis and Research Relevance

Based on the results of the literature review, it can be concluded that there is a close relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading skills theoretically; the more vocabulary learners master, the higher their ability to understand texts quickly and accurately. However, in higher education, vocabulary teaching is often separated from reading skills. Consequently, students may find it difficult to apply their vocabulary knowledge in the context of text comprehension.

This study attempts to bridge this gap by examining contextual vocabulary mastery and linking it directly to students' reading abilities. Thus, the results of this study are expected to reinforce the theory that vocabulary mastery is not only a linguistic prerequisite but also a cognitive foundation for the development of *mabārat al-qirā'ab*.

## 7. Theoretical Framework of Research

Conceptually, the relationship between the two research variables can be explained through the following framework:

1. **Vocabulary Mastery (X)** includes quantitative aspects (number of words mastered) and qualitative aspects (ability to understand meaning in context).
2. **Reading Skills (Y)** includes the ability to understand literal, inferential, and evaluative meanings in Arabic texts.
3. The relationship between X and Y is expected to be positive; higher vocabulary mastery tends to be associated with better reading ability.
4. Supporting factors such as mastery of *nabwu-sbaraf* and contextual reading strategies may strengthen the association between the two variables.

## METHOD

### 1. Research Design

This study uses a **quantitative correlational** approach to examine the relationship between two variables based on numerical data that can be analyzed statistically.[14] The independent variable is Arabic vocabulary mastery (X), and the dependent variable is reading skills (*mabārat al-qirā'ab*) (Y).

This approach was chosen because it is suitable for testing the relationship between vocabulary mastery and the reading skills of Arabic Literature students at the Indonesian Muslim

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University. Quantitative methods were combined with descriptive analysis techniques to describe the factual conditions of vocabulary mastery and reading ability, as well as inferential analysis techniques to test the relationship between the two variables.[6]

This type of research is classified as field research because the data were obtained directly from respondents in the field, namely students who were attending *Mahārat al-Qirā'ah* 1 lectures. The research was conducted at the Arabic Literature Study Program, Faculty of Literature, Indonesian Muslim University (UMI), Makassar.

## 2. Population and Sample

The population in this study was all third-semester students of the Arabic Literature Study Program at UMI who took the *Mahārat al-Qirā'ah* 1 course in the 2025 academic year. The total population was 20 students.

Because the population consisted of only 20 students and all participants met the inclusion criteria (enrolled in *Mahārat al-Qirā'ah* 1), this study employed **total sampling (census)**, where all members of the population were included as the sample ( $n = 20$ ).

## 3. Research Instrument

Research instruments are tools used to collect valid and reliable data. In this study, two main types of instruments were used, namely:

### a. Vocabulary Mastery Test

This test is designed to measure the extent to which students understand the meaning of words in Arabic, both lexically and contextually. The test consists of multiple-choice questions and short-answer questions that test students' ability to recognize the meaning of words, synonyms, antonyms, and the use of words in sentences.

### b. Reading Skills Test (*Mahārat al-Qirā'ah*)

This test is used to assess students' ability to understand Arabic reading texts. The test questions consist of short academic and religious texts accompanied by questions on content comprehension, main ideas, inference of meaning, and contextual meaning.

Both instruments underwent content validity review by two UMI Arabic language experts to ensure alignment with the research objectives, content coverage, and clarity of items. Prior to the main data collection, a small-scale try-out and item analysis (difficulty level and discrimination power) were conducted, and the items were revised accordingly. Due to limitations in item-level documentation during manuscript preparation, internal consistency reliability is not reported numerically in this version; however, instrument quality was strengthened through expert review, try-out, and iterative revision.

In addition to the two main instruments, researchers also used observation sheets and field notes to record supporting factors and obstacles that arose during the test.

## 4. Research Procedures

This research procedure consists of several stages that are carried out systematically, namely:

### a. Preparation Stage

- 1) Prepare a research proposal and obtain permission to conduct the research from the faculty and LP2S UMI.
- 2) Identify problems and determine research variables.
- 3) Conducting literature studies related to the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading skills.

- 4) Developing and validating research instruments (vocabulary tests and reading tests).
- b. Instrument Trial Phase
    - 1) Conducting instrument trials on a small group of students outside the main sample.
    - 2) Conducting item analysis to measure the level of difficulty and discriminating power of items.
    - 3) Improve and finalize instruments based on trial results.
  - c. Data Collection Phase
    - 1) Conduct vocabulary and reading tests to 20 respondents according to the predetermined schedule.
    - 2) Vocabulary tests are given first, followed by reading tests in the next session.
    - 3) Each participant is given 60 minutes for each test.
    - 4) Researchers conducted direct supervision during the implementation to ensure the honesty and consistency of the answers.
  - d. Data Processing Stage
    - 1) Respondents' answers were corrected and scored according to the assessment guidelines.
    - 2) Vocabulary test scores and reading test scores are converted to percentages.
    - 3) The test results were then entered into Microsoft Excel and SPSS for tabulation and statistical analysis.
  - e. Analysis and Conclusion Stage
    - 1) The data obtained were analyzed descriptively to describe the students' vocabulary mastery and reading skills.
    - 2) Correlational analysis was performed to determine the relationship between the two variables using the Pearson product-moment test.
    - 3) If the relationship proves to be significant, a simple linear regression analysis is performed to estimate the predictive contribution of variable X to Y.
    - 4) The results of the analysis were used to draw conclusions and recommendations for teaching *Maharat al-Qir'ah*.

## 5. Data Collection Techniques

Data in this study were collected through three main techniques:

- a. Written tests, consisting of a vocabulary test and a reading test, conducted in person.
- b. Direct observation, to record students' behaviour, strategies, and difficulties while answering questions.
- c. Documentation, in the form of grade lists, attendance records, and academic records of students relevant to their Arabic language skills.

## 6. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis consisted of (1) descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) to describe students' vocabulary mastery and reading skills, and (2) Pearson product-moment correlation to test the relationship between vocabulary mastery (X) and reading skills (Y).

Where relevant, simple linear regression was used to estimate the predictive contribution of X to Y.

### 7. Modification of Methods

Modifications were made to the test instrument, whereby vocabulary mastery questions not only measured the lexical meaning of words, but also their context of use in academic and religious sentences. This approach differs from traditional vocabulary tests, which tend to assess memorization of word meanings without context. With these modifications, the research results are expected to be more relevant to the academic reading abilities of Arabic Literature students at UMI.

### 8. Research Ethics

Before data collection, researchers explained the purpose of the study, the procedures, and data confidentiality guarantees to participants. Each respondent voluntarily agreed to participate. All data obtained were used solely for academic purposes and were not disseminated without written permission.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of research on the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading skills (*mahārat al-qirā'ah*) of third-semester students in the Arabic Literature Study Program at the Indonesian Muslim University. Data were obtained through tests covering vocabulary mastery and Arabic text reading skills, including comprehension of structure and meaning.

### 1. Research Findings

Table 1. Research Data

No.	Data	Information	Explanation
1	Vocabulary Proficiency	Vocabulary acquisition	The foundation of understanding text
2	Reading Skills	Understanding Qira'ah	Vocabulary and structure integration
3	Ability to understand the meaning of reading	Comprehending the meaning of reading texts	Mastery of Arabic vocabulary and grammar (Nahwu and Sharaf)

Table 2. Categories of Student Vocabulary Mastery

No.	Categories	Description	Implications for Learning
1	High	Rich vocabulary, understanding context	Able to read quickly and accurately
2	Currently	Memorize some basic vocabulary	Still need intensive reading practice
3	Low	Limited vocabulary, frequently consulting a dictionary	Reading is slow and intermittent.

Table 2 shows that most students fall into the “moderate” category. Students in the low category tend to read in a fragmented manner because the process of decoding words takes a long time. As a result, this leads to weak overall understanding of the text. There are a few students in the high category, but they can construct meaning independently because they have a strong contextual vocabulary.

**Table 3.** Factors Affecting *Mahārat al-Qirā'ah*

No	Factors	Description	Forms of Influence
1	Vocabulary	Quantity and quality of vocabulary	The richer the vocabulary, the stronger the understanding
2	Nahwu–Sharaf	Grammatical structure	Determining the function of words in sentences
3	Reading Exercise	Intensity and variation of text	Developing reading speed and accuracy
4	Reading Strategy	Skimming, scanning, inference	Affecting the ability to grasp implicit meaning

These four factors are key variables in the development of *Mahārat al-Qirā'ah*. Without sufficient vocabulary, students will stop at literal understanding. Without structure, the meaning of the text may change or become distorted. Without reading practice, students will not recognize sentence patterns. Without reading strategies, students will find it difficult to grasp implied meanings and the relationships between paragraphs.

**Table 4.** Main Obstacles in Understanding Arabic Texts

No	Barriers	Description	Impact on Comprehension
1	Difficult vocabulary	New or infrequently used words	Interrupting the flow of reading
2	Complex structure	Long sentences, difficult grammar	Misunderstanding the meaning of a sentence.
3	Minimal exercise	Rarely read Arabic texts	Not accustomed to recognizing language patterns
4	Dictionary dependency	Always searching for the meaning of words	Creating a fragmented understanding

Table 4 illustrates that the main obstacles do not lie in just one aspect, but rather in a combination of limited vocabulary, structure, reading habits, and comprehension strategies. Students' dependence on dictionaries is also a significant obstacle. Although dictionaries are helpful, overuse interferes with the process of constructing meaning as a whole.

**Table 5.** Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used by Students

Strategy	Advantages	Disadvantages	Utilization Rate
<b>Memorization</b>	Quick to remember vocabulary	Easy to forget if not used	High
<b>Reading Texts</b>	Obtaining meaning contextual	Requires time	Currently
<b>Discussion</b>	Increase understanding through dialogue	Not all students are comfortable	Low
<b>Vocabulary Notes</b>	Compiling a list vocabulary	Does not automatically improve comprehension	Currently
<b>Using the Dictionary</b>	Assisting initial comprehension	Slows down the reading process	High

As shown in Table 5, students most frequently relied on memorization and dictionary use, while strategies such as reading texts, discussion, and keeping vocabulary notes were used only occasionally. Table 5 suggests a tendency toward surface learning strategies, indicating the need to strengthen contextual vocabulary learning through guided reading and interactive practice to support sustainable vocabulary growth and reading comprehension.

## 2. Discussion

The following are the percentage scores for each assessment aspect based on 20 respondents:

**Table 6.** Vocabulary Mastery Scores

Value	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
<b>A</b>	11	55
<b>A-</b>	5	25
<b>B+</b>	4	20

As shown in Table 6, students' vocabulary mastery was generally high: 55% of students received grade A (n = 11), 25% received A- (n = 5), and 20% received B+ (n = 4). This distribution suggests that most students had strong vocabulary knowledge at this level, which is consistent with the subsequent correlation results.

Table 6 shows students' vocabulary mastery through memorization and pronunciation of Arabic vocabulary in intensive Arabic reading texts, which were tested through Arabic texts so that students could identify vocabulary items in the reading passages.

Table 6 shows that, in terms of vocabulary mastery, 55% of students received an A, 25% received an A-, and 20% received a B+. Table 6 indicates that the majority of students have excellent vocabulary mastery and are in the advanced category.

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading skills ( $r = 0.82$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that students with higher vocabulary mastery tended to demonstrate better reading performance.

**Limitations.** This study involved a small sample (n = 20) from a single program and cohort at UMI; therefore, the generalizability of the findings is limited. In addition, potential confounding variables (e.g., prior exposure to Arabic, reading habits, and academic achievement) were not controlled. Finally, internal consistency reliability of the tests is not reported numerically due to limitations in item-level documentation; future studies should use larger multi-site samples and report complete psychometric evidence (e.g., KR-20/KR-21 or other appropriate indices for test instruments).

**Table 7.** *Mahārat al-Qirā'ah* Ability (Reading Skills)

Grade	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
<b>A</b>	7	35
<b>A-</b>	6	30
<b>B+</b>	7	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: n = 20; grades represent students' reading-skill performance levels (A = very good, A- = good, B+ = fairly good).

As shown in Table 7, students' reading skills (*mabārat al-qirā'ah*) were generally good to very good, with an even distribution across A, A-, and B+.

**Table 8.** Reading Comprehension Scores Based on Sentence Structure

Value	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
A	10	50
A-	10	50
B+	0	0

Table 8 shows students' ability to understand the meaning of the reading material based on their answers to comprehension questions and sentence-translation items derived from the Arabic reading text that had been taught.

Table 8 shows that students' reading comprehension skills are in the excellent category. Ten students (50%) received grade A and ten students (50%) received A-, while no students received B+.

Overall, Table 8 indicates a consistently high level of reading comprehension related to sentence structure, with all students achieving grades A or A- and none falling into the B+ category. Table 8 suggests that students have developed adequate grammatical awareness to answer structure-based questions, which likely supports their broader text comprehension.

### 1. Vocabulary Mastery as the Key Determinant of Reading Success

The results of the study show that students' vocabulary mastery is still at an intermediate level and has not yet reached a level that allows them to understand more abstract, academic, or complex texts. This phenomenon is significant because vocabulary in Arabic is not just a collection of word meanings but also includes the dimensions of word structure (morphology), contextual meaning, semantic relationships, and syntactic function in sentences.

In Arabic, changing a single letter in a pattern can drastically alter meaning, for example changing from the pattern fa'ala to fa'ila or shifting from isim to fi'il. Because of this, a limited vocabulary not only prevents students from knowing the meaning of a word but also prevents them from recognizing the function of that word in a sentence. This results in misunderstanding the overall structure of the discourse.

The fact that most students study vocabulary only a few times a week shows that vocabulary acquisition has not yet become part of the learning culture. In second language acquisition, vocabulary must be learned gradually, repeatedly, and in various contexts to be stored in long-term memory.[27] Recent classroom work in Arabic also supports the use of spaced repetition software (SRS) to strengthen vocabulary acquisition and retention.[25]

Students who study vocabulary sporadically tend to forget it quickly and are unable to connect it to the texts they read. As a result, their reading skills do not improve. These findings highlight the need for systematic, regular, and integrated vocabulary learning habits in reading activities.

### 2. Vocabulary Acquisition Strategies and Their Effectiveness in Learning

Research findings show that students use rote memorization more often to learn vocabulary. This strategy is quick, but theoretically, it is a low-level learning strategy that is not effective enough for long-term language learning.

Vocabulary learning based solely on memorization causes students to know the meaning of words separately, but not how those words are used in sentences or texts. As a result, students have difficulty understanding the meaning when the word appears in a real context. They can memorize 20 words a day, but still have difficulty reading texts because they do not understand the relationship between words and sentence structure.

On the contrary, reading Arabic texts is a much more effective strategy because:

- a. Presenting vocabulary in context.
- b. showing the function of words in structure,
- c. Training students to find meaning through the interrelationship between words.

However, only some students use this strategy. Prior studies suggest that context-based vocabulary learning tends to support stronger retention than rote memorization.[16]–[18] In addition, gamified practice has been shown to improve Arabic vocabulary mastery [26], and AI supported conversational tools can facilitate vocabulary learning and retention through interactive support features.[28]

Discussion strategies have also proven to be very effective. Through discussion, students can gain a deeper understanding because they can ask questions about anything they don't understand and get explanations directly. Unfortunately, however, discussion strategies are not widely used by students.

The results of this study indicate that students' vocabulary mastery is still fragmented and needs to be developed through a combination of strategies: memorization + context + discussion + repeated practice.

### 3. The Strong Relationship between Nahwu–Sharaf and Reading Ability

One of the important findings in this study is that students recognize the importance of understanding grammatical structure (*nahwu–sharaf*) in reading skills. Arabic has a syntactic system that is highly dependent on word order in sentences, i'rab signs, and word forms.

For example, a change in the final sign (harakat) can shift the subject to the object or vice versa. Without an understanding of nahwu, students may misinterpret the overall meaning of a paragraph.

Mastery of Sharaf is also important. Changes in wazan cause changes in meaning and word category. Without understanding the patterns, students cannot identify:

- a. verbs,
- b. adjectives,
- c. infinitives,
- d. words that change meaning due to their additional forms.

This shows that reading Arabic texts is not merely the ability to recognize words, but the ability to understand how words work within the language system.

Research findings support the linguistic theory that reading should be taught in conjunction with structure. Separate teaching (e.g., memorizing vocabulary without understanding structure) will not result in good text comprehension.

### 4. The Role of Reading Habits in Developing *Mahārat al-Qirā'ah*

Students who rarely read do not have enough experience to recognize Arabic sentence patterns. The habit of reading is one of the biggest factors that influence the improvement of

reading skills. Students who read more often will be more familiar with variations in language style, long sentences, idiomatic vocabulary, paragraph patterns in Arabic, inference techniques (guessing meaning), and narrative and argumentative structures.

- a. variations in language style,
- b. long sentences,
- c. idiomatic vocabulary,
- d. paragraph patterns in Arabic,
- e. inference techniques (guessing meaning),
- f. and narrative and argumentative structures.

Conversely, students who only read occasionally do not have the opportunity to process language input repeatedly. They may understand the theory, but they do not have sufficient exposure to authentic texts. As a result, they know texts superficially, are unable to grasp implicit meanings, and often struggle when faced with long sentences.

The students' self-assessments reinforce these findings. Most admitted to only "somewhat understanding" the texts, and none claimed to understand them very well. This indicates that the students have achieved a basic level of comprehension, but have not yet attained academic reading skills.

#### **5. Comprehensive Obstacles in Understanding Texts**

The study identified three main obstacles:

##### **a. Low Vocabulary Proficiency**

Students have difficulty grasping the overall meaning if they have to look up every word in the dictionary. This slows down the reading process and interrupts the flow of understanding.

##### **b. Limited Language Structure Comprehension**

Errors in recognizing subjects, objects, or word forms lead to misinterpretation. This is the biggest obstacle when reading academic texts.

##### **c. Lack of Reading Practice**

Even if students know the theory, their reading skills cannot improve without intensive practice. Lack of practice makes students unfamiliar with dealing with text variations.

Overuse of dictionaries is also an obstacle in itself. Students get stuck on lexical meanings rather than contextual meanings. In fact, good reading requires the ability to use strategies to guess meanings based on context.

#### **6. Students' Reading Comprehension Level and Metacognitive Awareness**

Most students stated that they understood the text sufficiently, but not to the extent of understanding it critically. Students still had difficulty when they had to:

- a. summarizing the content of the text,
- b. identifying the main ideas,
- c. understanding the relationships between paragraphs,
- d. grasping implicit meanings,
- e. or understanding argumentative texts.

Students' awareness of these difficulties indicates metacognition: they know what they have and have not mastered. This awareness is an important asset for improving reading skills, but it still requires guidance through appropriate reading strategies.

### 7. Significance of Research Findings

The findings of this study confirm that:

- a. Vocabulary is the foundation of understanding.
- b. Language structure (Nahwu–Sharaf) is a tool for analyzing meaning.
- c. The habit of reading strengthens reading ability and comprehension.

These three components form a learning system that must work together. Learning vocabulary without context is ineffective; learning structure without reading is also limited; reading without mastery of vocabulary and structure will result in superficial understanding. Thus, *Mahārat al-Qirā'ah* learning must be integrative, gradual, and focused on the use of language in real contexts.

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the results of the study on the relationship between vocabulary mastery and reading skills (*mahārat al-qirā'ah*) of third-semester students in the Arabic Literature Study Program at the Universitas Muslim Indonesia, it can be concluded that students' vocabulary mastery is generally at a fairly good level but has not yet reached the ideal academic competency standard. The correlation results indicate that vocabulary mastery is significantly associated with students' Arabic reading performance ( $r = 0.82$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), supported by students' understanding of applicable linguistic structures (Nahwu–Sharaf).

This study implies that vocabulary learning needs to be directed towards comprehensive, context-oriented strategies, supported by intensive reading exercises, so that students can develop analytical and critical reading skills. The integration of vocabulary with Nahwu–Sharaf material through authentic texts is essential to strengthen linguistic competence and comprehensive understanding of meaning. In addition, educators are recommended to develop learning models based on contextual vocabulary instruction, task-based learning, and technology so that vocabulary acquisition becomes more effective, applicable, and sustainable.

**Limitations.** This study involved a small sample ( $n = 20$ ) drawn from a single study program and one cohort at UMI; therefore, the generalizability of the findings is limited. In addition, this study did not control potential confounding variables such as prior exposure to Arabic, reading habits, and academic achievement. The internal consistency reliability of the test instruments is also not reported numerically due to limitations in item-level documentation; future research is recommended to use larger, multi-site samples and to report complete psychometric evidence (e.g., KR-20/KR-21 for test instruments).

Educators are recommended to develop learning models based on contextual vocabulary instruction, task-based learning, and technology so that vocabulary acquisition becomes more effective, applicable, and sustainable.[25], [27], [28] In parallel, emerging evidence on classroom uses of generative AI highlights the need to design technology integration carefully to support learning outcomes.[29]

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