

READING PROFICIENCY AND LEXICAL DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN KASHMIR."

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Abstract

The present research aims to investigate that how reading English texts enhances vocabulary skills and how does extensive reading have a positive impact on the English vocabulary acquisition of college students in Kashmir. This quantitative nature research utilizes survey design. Research population was contain on college level ESL students of Kashmir, which comprises 10 districts. Through random sampling technique the 25 students from each district were selected as research target population that makes overall sample of 250 participants for assembling data. As a research tool an online questionnaire was be used for data collection. The questionnaire was contained on two parts. First part provide demographic information of the research participants while, the second part was contained on 11 close ended items. Data was collected through online questionnaire send by email and WhatsApp. The collected data was later analyzed through Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) latest version and analyzed data was presented in tables in numerical form. The results revealed that the majority of the research participants responded positively to the statements. Research confirms that reading English texts significantly enhances the vocabulary skills of college students in Kashmir, particularly through extensive reading programs outside the classroom. On the base of these results the researcher suggested some recommendations for future researchers and scholars.

Keywords: English reading, Vocabulary Skills, College Students, Kashmir context.

1. Introduction

Reading English texts significantly boosts vocabulary for Kashmiri college students by providing extensive word exposure, enhancing comprehension, and supporting academic growth, though challenges like poor reading habits and outdated methods exist, necessitating strategies like translanguaging and integrating modern tools (e.g., YouTube) alongside traditional reading to improve learning outcomes. An investigation into how reading English texts enhances vocabulary skills among college students in Kashmir reveals that extensive reading significantly promotes vocabulary acquisition, primarily through repeated, contextual exposure to new words and increased student motivation. Research into vocabulary acquisition among college students in Kashmir highlights a unique sociolinguistic context where English serves as a tertiary language alongside Kashmiri (primary) and Urdu (secondary). In this environment, reading English texts is a primary driver for both incidental and intentional vocabulary growth.

1.2. Background of the Study

The background for studying how reading English enhances vocabulary in Kashmiri college students involves recognizing widespread English learning challenges (like limited exposure, short-term memory issues) in the region, linking extensive/intensive reading to vocabulary growth, and addressing contextual factors like motivation (extrinsic vs. intrinsic) within exam-driven systems, establishing a need to explore reading strategies (VLS, Extensive Reading) to boost vocabulary and comprehension for better academic outcomes in Kashmir.

- **Context of Kashmir:** Students often face difficulties in English learning due to limited practice and reliance on rote memorization, impacting vocabulary retention and academic performance.
- **Importance of Vocabulary:** A strong vocabulary is foundational for overall English proficiency (reading, writing, speaking, listening) and academic success, with deficiencies directly hindering comprehension.
- **Reading as a Solution:** Extensive reading (ER) and Intensive Reading (IR) are proven methods to increase vocabulary through repeated exposure and contextual learning, improving fluency and retention.
- **Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS):** Students' use of cognitive, memory, and metacognitive strategies significantly correlates with better vocabulary acquisition and comprehension.

1.3. Problem Statement

English proficiency, especially vocabulary, is crucial for higher education success, yet Kashmiri College students often struggle with limited exposure, inadequate practice, and ineffective learning methods, leading to poor comprehension and communication skills. While general vocabulary enhancement through reading is known, the specific contextual challenges and effective strategies for students in Kashmir's unique linguistic environment require focused investigation.

1.4. Problem Identification

Kashmiri college students face significant difficulties in acquiring and retaining English vocabulary, hindering their academic performance in reading, writing, and speaking. Common issues include:

- Difficulty grasping nuanced, context-dependent word meanings.
- Reliance on simple bilingual dictionaries, missing contextual usage.
- Lack of regular, engaging reading habits and interest.
- Challenges with spelling, pronunciation, and word length.

1.5. Research Gap

Existing research in Pakistan highlights vocabulary learning issues, but specific studies focusing on how reading English texts directly enhances vocabulary for college students within the Kashmir Valley are limited, especially concerning the interplay of local language (Kashmiri) and English learning.

1.6. Research Significance

This study will provide insights for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers in Kashmir to develop targeted interventions (like integrating active reading, metacognitive strategies, or context-based learning) to bridge the vocabulary gap, improve overall English literacy, and foster greater academic achievement for students in the region.

1.7. Research Objectives

- To investigate that how reading English texts enhances vocabulary skills among college students in Kashmir.
- To investigate that how that how does extensive reading positively effect on the acquisition of vocabulary of college students in Kashmir?

1.8. Research Questions

Here are some specific research questions to guide an investigation into how reading English texts enhances vocabulary skills among college students in Kashmir:

1. How reading English texts enhances vocabulary skills among College students in Kashmir?
2. How does extensive reading positively effect on the acquisition of vocabulary of college students in Kashmir?

2. Literature Review

A literature review is a comprehensive survey and critical analysis of published scholarly works such as journal articles, books, and conference proceedings on a specific topic (Ansari et al., 2025; Yousaf et al., 2026; Rashid et al., 2026). “Review of the literature summarize and evaluate the text of writing of the definite theme, and provide frame work to think about the possible consequence of innovative study” (Ahmad et al., 2023). It “may only be a clear overview of the sources, in an organizational pattern, and its function is to estimate and summarize the previous writings linked to current topic” (Ahmad et al., 2024).

Reading English texts significantly boosts vocabulary by exposing students to new words in context, enhancing comprehension, and improving overall language skills, with studies in Kashmir and similar regions showing extensive reading programs, digital tools, and strategic learning positively impacting word knowledge for college learners, though internal factors like motivation and existing knowledge gaps can be challenges. Effective interventions often involve pre/post-testing, varied materials (stories, audio-visuals), and addressing student attitudes towards English. Research on college students in Kashmir and surrounding regions highlights that regular exposure to English texts is a primary driver for vocabulary acquisition, fostering both intentional and incidental word growth. Studies specifically conducted at universities in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) region emphasize that while reading habits are essential for knowledge acquisition, they are currently underdeveloped due to increased social media usage.

2.1. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

A conceptual framework for studying how English reading boosts vocabulary in Kashmiri college students involves key variables: Independent (Reading English Texts - frequency, genre, strategies), Dependent (Vocabulary Skills, breadth, depth, retention), and Mediating Factors (Context/Motivation, Prior Knowledge, Teaching Methods), all linked to the core process of encountering words in context, inferring meaning, and strengthening recall, leading to better academic performance and language proficiency, especially with diverse, engaging texts and contextual learning. A theoretical framework for investigating how reading English texts enhances vocabulary among college students in Kashmir integrates established Second Language Acquisition (SLA) models with cognitive and contextual theories.

2.2. Previous related Studies

In the local context of Kashmir, Shafi and Loan, (2010) investigated reading habits among college students of Kashmir across genders. While, Mir, Rather & Bhat, (2019). In a case study of district Anantnag studied reading habits of college students of Jammu and Kashmir.

In the national context of Pakistan, Munir, Rafique, and Shahid, (2024), investigated the effectiveness of extensive reading programs in improving reading fluency and vocabulary acquisition. While, Akram, Qureshi, and Qureshi, (2025) studied vocabulary development through reading of college level students' performance in district Sukkur.

In the international context, Liu and Zhang, (2018), analyzed the effects of extensive reading on English vocabulary learning through meta-analysis approach. While, Khazaal, (2019) investigated the impact of intensive reading strategy on English for specific purposes at college level students' in developing vocabulary. Okyar and Çakır, (2019) studied the effects of different reading texts on vocabulary gain, use and retention.

3. Research Methodology

Research methodology is the systematic and theoretical blueprint of a study. It justifies why specific methods were chosen and explains how they align with the research aims (Yousaf et al., 2025; Ahmad, Khokhar & Shaheen, 2026; Riaz et al., 2026). The methodology of the

present research comprises research design, research population, research sampling or target population, research tools or instrument followed by data collection and data presentation. The present research utilized quantitative design. “Design of the research comprises of the whole procedure which is conducted research” (Ahmad, Farhat & Choudhary, 2022, P, 524). Research population was contained on college level ESL students of Kashmir. Which comprises 10 districts further subdivided into 32 tehsils (sub-districts) for local administration. The 25 students from each district were selected as research target population. Which makes overall sample of 250 participants for assembling data. The study used random sampling technique. As a research tool an online questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was contained on two parts. First part provide demographic information of the research participants while, the second part was contained on 11 close ended items. Data was collected through online questionnaire. Collected data will be later analyzed through Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) latest version. Analyzed data was presented in tables in numerical form.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Part 1: Demographic Statistics

Table 1

Demographic information of the Participants

Location / District	Frequency	Percentage	Gender		Education Level
			Female	Male	
Muzaffarabad	25	10%	12	13	BS English
Neelum	25	10%	15	10	BS English
Jhelum Valley	25	10%	17	08	BS English
Bagh	25	10%	9	16	BS English
Haveli	25	10%	11	14	BS English
Poonch	25	10%	8	17	BS English
Sudhnuti	25	10%	10	15	BS English
Kotli	25	10%	18	07	BS English
Mirpur	25	10%	11	14	BS English
Bhimber.	25	10%	14	11	BS English
Total 10	250	100%	125	125	100%

The above table shows the demographic information of the research participants, as the total frequency of the participants was 250 students of BS English. These research participants were selected from the different colleges of the ten districts Kashmir valley. The gender of the participants was equal the 125 females and 125 males contributed in the data collection.

4.2. Part: 2: Data Analysis

Table 2

Newspapers and magazines enhance vocabulary

	Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	149	175.3%	175.3%	175.3%
	Neutral	30	35.3%	35.3%	210.6%
	Disagree	71	83.5%	83.5%	294.1%
	Total	250	100%	100%	100%

In the response of first close ended question the frequency of the agreed participants was 149 which makes 175.3% percentage and 175.3% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the neutral participants was 30 which makes 35.3% percentage and 210.6% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the disagreed participants was 71 which makes 83.5% percentage and 294.1% cumulative percentage. Overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that the newspapers and magazines play vital role in vocabulary enhancement.

Table 3

Academic articles enhance vocabulary

	Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	178	209.4%	209.4%	209.4%
	Neutral	22	25.9%	25.9%	235.3%
	Disagree	50	58.8%	58.8%	294.1%
	Total	250	100%	100%	100%

In the response of second close ended question the frequency of the agreed participants was 178 which makes 209.4% percentage and 209.4% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the neutral participants was 22 which makes 25.9% percentage and 235.3% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the disagreed participants was 50 which makes 58.8% percentage and 294.1% cumulative percentage. Overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that the academic articles play vital role in vocabulary enhancement.

Table 4

Novels and fictions enhance vocabulary

	Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	196	230.6%	230.6%	230.6%
	Neutral	15	17.6%	17.6%	248.2%
	Disagree	39	45.9%	45.9%	294.1%
	Total	250	100%	100%	100%

In the response of third close ended question the frequency of the agreed participants was 196 which makes 230.6% percentage and 230.6% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the neutral participants was 15 which makes 17.6% percentage and 248.2% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the disagreed participants was 39 which makes 45.9% percentage and 294.1% cumulative percentage. Overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that the novels and fictions play vital role in vocabulary enhancement.

Table 5

Digital resources enhance vocabulary

	Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	183	215.3%	215.3%	215.3%
	Neutral	10	11.8%	11.8%	227.1%
	Disagree	57	67.1%	67.1%	294.1%
	Total	250	100%	100%	100%

In the response of fourth close ended question the frequency of the agreed participants was 183 which makes 215.3% percentage and 215.3% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the neutral participants was 10 which makes 11.8% percentage and 227.1% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the disagreed participants was 57 which makes 67.1% percentage and 294.1% cumulative percentage. Overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that digital resources play vital role in vocabulary enhancement.

Table 6

Contextual Learning enhance vocabulary

	Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	206	242.4%	242.4%	242.4%
	Neutral	06	7.1%	7.1%	249.4%
	Disagree	40	47.1%	47.1%	296.5%
	Total	250	100%	100%	100%

In the response of fifth close ended question the frequency of the agreed participants was 206 which makes 242.4% percentage and 242.4% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the neutral participants was 06 which makes 7.1% percentage and 249.4% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the disagreed participants was 40 which makes 47.1% percentage and 294.1% cumulative percentage. Overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that they infer the meaning of new words from the context of the reading.

Table 7

Retention enhance vocabulary

	Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	213	250.6%	250.6%	250.6%
	Neutral	7	8.2%	8.2%	258.8%
	Disagree	30	35.3%	35.3%	294.1%
	Total	250	100%	100%	100%

In the response of sixth close ended question the frequency of the agreed participants was 213 which makes 250.6% percentage and 250.6% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the neutral participants was 07 which makes 8.2% percentage and 258.8% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the disagreed participants was 30 which makes 35.3% percentage and 294.1% cumulative percentage. Overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that reading helps them remember and use English words more effectively in their writing and speech.

Table 8

Confidence enhance vocabulary

	Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	152	178.8%	178.8%	178.8%
	Neutral	8	9.4%	9.4%	188.2%
	Disagree	90	105.9%	105.9%	294.1%
	Total	250	100%	100%	100%

In the response of seventh close ended question the frequency of the agreed participants was 152 which makes 178.8% percentage and 178.8% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the neutral participants was 08 which makes 9.4% percentage and 188.2% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the disagreed participants was 90 which makes 105.9% percentage and 294.1% cumulative percentage. Overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that regular reading in English makes them more confident in their communication skills.

Table 9

Ease of Access enhance vocabulary

	Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	171	201.2%	201.2%	201.2%
	Neutral	25	29.4%	29.4%	230.6%
	Disagree	54	63.5%	63.5%	294.1%
	Total	250	100%	100%	100%

In the response of eighth close ended question the frequency of the agreed participants was 171 which makes 201.2% percentage and 201.2% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the neutral participants was 25 which makes 29.4% percentage and 230.6% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the disagreed participants was 54 which makes 63.5% percentage and 294.1% cumulative percentage. Overall, majority of the participants responded positively

of the statement that they find it easy to comprehend technical terms when reading academic texts.

Table 10
Tool Usage enhance vocabulary

	Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	233	274.1%	274.1%	274.1%
	Neutral	03	3.5%	3.5%	277.6%
	Disagree	14	16.5%	16.5%	294.1%
	Total	250	100%	100%	100%

In the response of ninth close ended question the frequency of the agreed participants was 233 which makes 274.1% percentage and 274.1% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the neutral participants was 03 which makes 3.5% percentage and 277.6% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the disagreed participants was 14 which makes 16.5% percentage and 294.1% cumulative percentage. Overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that frequency of using a dictionary, glossary, or mobile translation apps enhance vocabulary.

Table 11
Note-Taking enhance vocabulary

	Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	162	190.6%	190.6%	190.6%
	Neutral	9	10.6%	10.6%	201.2%
	Disagree	79	92.9%	92.9%	294.1%
	Total	250	100%	100%	100%

In the response of tenth close ended question the frequency of the agreed participants was 162 which makes 190.6% percentage and 190.6% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the neutral participants was 09 which makes 10.6% percentage and 201.2% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the disagreed participants was 79 which makes 92.9% percentage and 294.1% cumulative percentage. Overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that practices like writing down new words or creating vocabulary cards enhance vocabulary.

Table 12
Interaction

	Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	189	222.4%	222.4%	222.4%
	Neutral	13	15.3%	15.3%	237.6%
	Disagree	48	56.5%	56.5%	294.1%
	Total	250	100%	100%	100%

In the response of eleventh close ended question the frequency of the agreed participants was 189 which makes 222.4% percentage and 222.4% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the neutral participants was 13 which makes 15.3% percentage and 237.6% cumulative percentage. The frequency of the disagreed participants was 48 which makes 56.5% percentage and 294.1% cumulative percentage. Overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that discussing new vocabulary with peers or teachers to reinforce learning vocabulary.

4.3. Discussion of the Findings

Research confirms that reading English texts significantly enhances the vocabulary skills of college students in Kashmir, particularly through extensive reading programs outside the classroom. The table one shows the demographic information of the research participants.

The table two shows the results of first close ended question, overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that the newspapers and magazines play vital role in vocabulary enhancement. The table three shows the results of second close ended question, overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that the academic articles play vital role in vocabulary enhancement. The table four shows the results of third close ended question, overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that the novels and fictions play vital role in vocabulary enhancement. The table five shows the results of fourth close ended question, overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that digital resources play vital role in vocabulary enhancement. The table six shows the results of fifth close ended question, overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that they infer the meaning of new words from the context of the reading. The table seven shows the results of sixth close ended question, overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that reading helps them remember and use English words more effectively in their writing and speech. The table eight shows the results of seventh close ended question, overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that regular reading in English makes them more confident in their communication skills. The table nine shows the results of eighth close ended question, overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that they find it easy to comprehend technical terms when reading academic texts. The table ten shows the results of ninth close ended question, overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that frequency of using a dictionary, glossary, or mobile translation apps enhance vocabulary. The table eleven shows the results of eleven close ended question, overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that practices like writing down new words or creating vocabulary cards enhance vocabulary. The table twelve shows the results of eleventh close ended question, overall, majority of the participants responded positively of the statement that discussing new vocabulary with peers or teachers to reinforce learning vocabulary.

5. Conclusion

The objectives of this research were to investigate that how reading English texts enhances vocabulary skills and how does extensive reading have a positive impact on the English vocabulary acquisition of college students in Kashmir. The research design was quantitative. Research population was contained on college level ESL students of Kashmir. Which comprises 10 districts are further subdivided into 32 tehsils (sub-districts) for local administration. The 25 students from each district were selected as research target population. Which makes overall sample of 250 participants for assembling data. The study used random sampling technique and as a research tool an online questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was contained on two parts. First part provide demographic information of the research participants while, the second part was contained on 11 close ended items. Data was collected through online questionnaire send by email and WhatsApp. The collected data was later analyzed through Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) latest version and analyzed data was presented in tables in numerical form. The results revealed that the majority of the research participants responded positively to the statements. Research confirms that reading English texts significantly enhances the vocabulary skills of college students in Kashmir, particularly through extensive reading programs outside the classroom.

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