



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE EFFECTS OF ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY AND VOCABULARY MASTERY TOWARDS STUDENTS' READING SKILL (IN EXPOSITORY)

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Abstract: This study examines the effects of academic self-efficacy and vocabulary mastery towards students' reading skills in expository text at private Madrasah Tsanawiyah schools in Rumpin, Bogor Regency, West Java. Employing a quantitative correlational design, the study involved 91 eighth grade students from three schools. Data were collected using an academic self-efficacy questionnaire, a vocabulary mastery test, and an expository reading comprehension test, and analyzed with SPSS. The results revealed that academic self-efficacy ($M = 107.60$) and vocabulary mastery ($M = 103.58$) were categorized as very good, whereas expository reading skills ($M = 19.77$) were very low. Multiple regression analysis revealed that both predictors jointly exerted a significant effect on reading skills ($R = 0.796$, $R^2 = 0.633$, $p < .001$), accounted for 63.3% of the variance. Individually, academic self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.502$, $p = .001$) and vocabulary mastery ($\beta = 0.313$, $p = .036$) significantly predicted reading performance.

Keywords: academic self-efficacy; vocabulary mastery; expository text; reading comprehension; EFL students.

PENGARUH EFIKASI DIRI AKADEMIK DAN PENGUASAAN KOSAKATA TERHADAP KETERAMPILAN SISWA DALAM MEMBACA TEKS EKSPOSITORI

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji pengaruh efikasi diri akademik dan penguasaan kosakata terhadap kemampuan membaca teks ekspositori siswa Madrasah Tsanawiyah swasta di Rumpin, Kabupaten Bogor, Jawa Barat. Menggunakan desain korelasional kuantitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan 91 siswa kelas delapan dari tiga sekolah. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner efikasi diri, tes penguasaan kosakata, dan tes pemahaman bacaan ekspositori, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan SPSS. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa efikasi diri akademik ($M=107,60$) dan penguasaan kosakata ($M= 103,58$) berkategori sangat baik, sedangkan kemampuan membaca ekspositori ($M=19,77$) sangat rendah. Analisis regresi berganda menunjukkan kedua variabel secara simultan berpengaruh signifikan terhadap kemampuan membaca ($R=0,796$; $R^2=0,633$; $p < 0,001$), menjelaskan 63,3% varians. Secara parsial, efikasi diri akademik ($\beta=0,502$; $p=0,001$) dan penguasaan kosakata ($\beta=0,313$; $p=0,036$) juga secara signifikan memprediksi kemampuan membaca siswa.

Kata kunci: efikasi diri akademis; penguasaan kosakata; teks ekspositori; pemahaman bacaan; siswa EFL.

INTRODUCTION

English as a global lingua franca and serves as a primary medium for knowledge exchange in contemporary education. Rovita & Gulo (2020) noted, English enables communication across diverse linguistic backgrounds, reinforcing its central role in national education systems worldwide. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language across all educational levels, requiring students to develop four fundamental skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Al-Jiboury, 2024). Among these skills, reading plays a particularly critical role in academic contexts because it enables learners to access disciplinary knowledge, interpret information, and construct meaning.

Reading is not merely a decoding process but a complex cognitive activity that facilitates intellectual development and lifelong learning (Doughlass, 1986). In junior secondary education, students are frequently exposed to expository texts, which are designed to inform and explain through structured and factual content. Academic reading often involves “reading to learn,” particularly from informational or expository texts (Duke, 2011). Therefore, the ability to comprehend expository texts is essential for academic achievement in EFL settings.

However, many students experience difficulty understanding expository texts. One major linguistic factor influencing comprehension is vocabulary mastery. Vocabulary knowledge is central to reading comprehension, particularly in academic contexts where texts contain dense and specialized language (Webb & Nation, 2021). Vocabulary size has been identified as one of the strongest predictors of reading comprehension (Teng, 2021). In many EFL classrooms, however, vocabulary instruction remains limited to memorization practices, which may not foster the depth of word knowledge required for complex expository texts.

Beyond linguistic competence, psychological factors also influence reading performance. Academic self-efficacy, grounded in Bandura’s social cognitive theory, refers to individuals’ beliefs in their capability to organize and execute academic tasks (Smith & Grant, 2025). Students with higher self-efficacy demonstrate greater persistence, strategic engagement, and motivation when facing challenging tasks (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Conversely, low self-efficacy may result in avoidance behaviors and reduced academic performance. Middle school years are particularly critical for the development of academic self-beliefs, which can significantly shape future motivation and achievement trajectories (Fryer et al., 2025).

Although vocabulary mastery and academic self-efficacy have been widely examined in reading research, most studies investigate these variables independently. Yet reading is a multidimensional process involving linguistic, cognitive, and motivational components (Huan, 2024). Limited research has explored how vocabulary mastery and academic self-efficacy jointly influence students’ comprehension of expository texts, particularly within Islamic junior secondary school contexts. Several studies have previously examined related variables, yet they differ significantly in scope and focus.

For instance, Shaona (2025) investigated the role of reading motivation and self-efficacy within a blended learning environment in China. While that study emphasized technological instructional modes and general reading achievement, it did not isolate the specific cognitive demands of expository texts nor address the psychological construct of academic self-efficacy outside of a digital framework. Similarly, Zahra and Zuhri (2025) explored the correlation between vocabulary knowledge and expository text comprehension among tenth-grade students. However, their research was restricted to a single senior high school using a purposive sampling technique, focusing solely on a single independent variable. In contrast, the current study employs a cluster-simple random sampling method across three different Madrasah Tsanawiyah schools; MTs Raudhatussa’adah, MTs Annajah, and MTs TEI Multazam to provide a broader empirical basis and investigate the dual impact of both linguistic and psychological factors. Furthermore, Putri et al. (2024) analyzed the general correlation between self-efficacy, vocabulary, and reading ability. Their findings indicated relatively weak relationships and utilized self-efficacy as a general construct

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without specifying a text genre. The current research addresses these limitations by narrowing the focus to academic self-efficacy and expository text comprehension, which requires higher-level cognitive processing and specialized academic vocabulary. By integrating these specific linguistic and psychological predictors within the unique context of Islamic boarding schools, this study aims to fill the existing gap in understanding how these variables jointly determine academic reading success for junior secondary students.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the effects of academic self-efficacy and vocabulary mastery on students' reading skills in expository at a private Madrasah Tsanawiyah in Rumpin, Bogor Regency. Specifically, it investigates the simultaneous effect of both variables on reading skills and their individual contributions. The main problem of this research will be divided into three, they are: (1) Are there any Effects of Academic Self-efficacy and Vocabulary Mastery towards Students' Reading Skill (in Expository)? (2) Is there any Effect of Academic Self-efficacy towards Students' Reading Skill (in Expository)? (3) Is there any Effect of Vocabulary Mastery towards Students' Reading Skill (in Expository)?. By integrating linguistic and psychological perspectives, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of EFL reading comprehension and offers practical implications for instructional strategies in Madrasah and similar educational contexts. The study is limited to eighth-grade students and focuses exclusively on expository reading comprehension within a correlational research design.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design to examine the predictive effects of academic self-efficacy and vocabulary mastery on students' expository reading comprehension. The design was non-experimental, with no manipulation of variables. Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to estimate both the individual and combined contributions of academic self-efficacy and vocabulary mastery to reading performance. The population consisted of 913 eighth-grade students enrolled in three private Madrasah Tsanawiyah schools in Rumpin, Bogor Regency, West Java, during the 2025–2026 academic year. Sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula with a 10% margin of error, yielding 91 participants. Cluster random sampling ensured proportional representation from each school. Inclusion criteria required participants to be actively enrolled in Grade 8 and present during data collection. Students outside this level were excluded to maintain developmental consistency. The final sample represented approximately 10% of the total population.

Three instruments were used to measure the study variables. Academic self-efficacy was measured using a 30-item likert-scale questionnaire (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) assessing confidence in completing academic tasks, persistence, resilience, and strategy use. Content validity was established through expert review. Construct validity was examined via item-total correlations using Pearson's Product-Moment analysis during pilot testing ($n = 30$). Five items with low correlation coefficients ($r < r\text{-table at } \alpha = .05$) were removed, resulting in 25 valid items. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha \geq .70$ considered acceptable). Vocabulary mastery was assessed using a 30-item multiple-choice test measuring contextual word knowledge, synonym–antonym recognition, lexical usage, and phrasal verbs. Item validity was evaluated through item-total correlation analysis during pilot testing, and non-performing items were excluded.

Reliability was estimated using Cronbach's alpha to ensure internal consistency. Reading comprehension was measured using a 30-item objective test assessing main idea identification, factual and inferential understanding, text purpose recognition, contextual vocabulary interpretation, and detail comprehension in expository texts. The reliability of the research instruments was verified through Cronbach's Alpha. The results showed very high reliability scores: .959 (Academic Self-Efficacy), .878 (Vocabulary Mastery), and .931 (Reading Skill). These results confirm that the



instruments are stable and consistent for measuring the research variables. All instruments were administered with standardized instructions in Bahasa Indonesia to minimize construct-irrelevant variance.

Data collection was conducted between October and December 2025 under standardized classroom conditions. Instruments were administered in three sequential sessions to reduce fatigue effects: (1) self-efficacy questionnaire, (2) vocabulary test, and (3) reading comprehension test. Assessments were delivered electronically via Google Forms and supervised by classroom teachers to ensure procedural consistency. Each session required approximately 30–40 minutes. Data were screened for completeness and accuracy prior to analysis.

Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 22. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution) were computed to summarize the data. Prior to regression analysis, classical assumptions were examined. Normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test ($p > .05$ indicating normal distribution). Linearity was evaluated using deviation-from-linearity tests. Multicollinearity was examined through Variance Inflation Factor ($VIF < 10$) and tolerance values ($> .10$). Homoscedasticity was assessed through visual inspection of standardized residual scatterplots. All assumptions were satisfied before inferential testing. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine bivariate relationships among variables. Multiple linear regression analysis was then performed to evaluate the simultaneous and partial effects of academic self-efficacy and vocabulary mastery on reading comprehension. Statistical significance was set at $\alpha = .05$. Effect size was interpreted using the coefficient of determination (R^2) to estimate the proportion of variance explained in reading performance.

Institutional permission was obtained from the participating schools prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was secured through school administration. Participant confidentiality was maintained through data anonymization. The study involved no intervention beyond standard academic assessment procedures, and no conflicts of interest were reported.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To ensure the internal consistency of the instruments, a pilot test was conducted with 30 students. The reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha revealed that all instruments possessed high internal consistency. The coefficients were .959 for the Academic Self-Efficacy questionnaire, .878 for the Vocabulary Mastery test, and .931 for the Reading Skill test. According to Hair et al. (2019), these values exceed the minimum threshold of .70 indicating that the instruments are highly reliable for data collection. The results of the reliability analysis are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Reliability Analysis Summary (N=30)

Variable	Instrument	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Academic Self-efficacy (X1)	Questionnaire	20	.959	Very High
Vocabulary Mastery (X2)	Test	30	.878	High
Students' Reading Skill (Y)	Test	20	.931	Very High

Descriptive statistics were calculated to describe the general distribution of students' scores for each research variable. This research involved 91 respondents and measured three main variables: Academic Self-Efficacy (X_1), Vocabulary Mastery (X_2), and Students' Reading Skill in Expository (Y). The statistical summary of the collected data is presented in Table 2.

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Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

	Variables		
	Self-Efficacy (X ₁)	Vocabulary Mastery (X ₂)	Reading Skill in Expository (Y)
N	91	91	91
Mean	107.60	103.58	19.77
Median	108.00	103.00	20.00
Mode	100	110	19
Std. Dev	12.473	12.157	2.376

The distribution of the data indicates that while students possess a fairly homogeneous level of vocabulary mastery and self-efficacy, their reading comprehension scores vary, highlighting areas for targeted pedagogical improvement. The descriptive results show that the mean score of students' academic self-efficacy was 107.60 indicating that students generally possessed a high level of confidence in their academic capabilities. Academic self-efficacy reflects students' beliefs in their ability to organize and execute academic tasks successfully. In the context of language learning, higher levels of self-efficacy tend to encourage persistence, learning engagement, and strategic effort when students encounter difficulties.

Similarly, the descriptive analysis of vocabulary mastery revealed a mean score of 103.58 which can be categorized as very good. This result indicates that most students had a relatively adequate knowledge of vocabulary, including the ability to recognize synonyms, contextual meanings, and lexical usage within sentences. Vocabulary knowledge is widely acknowledged as one of the most fundamental components of reading comprehension, as it enables readers to decode and interpret textual meaning effectively.

In contrast, the descriptive results for students' reading skill in expository texts showed a relatively low performance. The mean score obtained from the reading comprehension test was 19.77 which falls into the very low category. This result suggests that although students demonstrated relatively strong vocabulary knowledge and high levels of academic self-efficacy, many of them still experienced difficulties in comprehending expository texts. Such difficulties may be related to the complex structure of expository texts, which typically present factual information, logical explanations, and abstract ideas that require higher-order cognitive processing.

To examine the influence of academic self-efficacy and vocabulary mastery on students' reading comprehension, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The results of the regression analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Multiple Regression Analysis

Variable	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Academic Self-Efficacy	0.502	3.42	0.001
Vocabulary Mastery	0.313	2.14	0.036

Model Summary

R	R ²	F	Sig
0.796	0.633	75.61	<0.001

The regression results show that the correlation coefficient between the independent variables and the dependent variable is $R = 0.796$ which indicates a strong relationship. The



coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.633$ implies that 63.3% of the variance in students' reading comprehension can be explained by academic self-efficacy and vocabulary mastery. This finding suggests that both variables together play a substantial role in predicting students' reading performance. Nevertheless, approximately 36.7% of the variance may be influenced by other factors not included in this study, such as reading strategies, background knowledge, learning environment, and instructional methods.

The regression analysis also revealed that academic self-efficacy significantly predicts students' reading comprehension, with a standardized coefficient of $\beta = 0.502$ ($p = .001$). This result indicates that students who possess stronger confidence in their academic abilities tend to perform better in reading tasks.

Similarly, vocabulary mastery also shows a significant effect on reading comprehension, with a regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.313$ ($p = .036$). Although its contribution is slightly lower than academic self-efficacy, vocabulary knowledge remains an essential factor supporting students' understanding of expository texts.

The results of this study demonstrate that both academic self-efficacy and vocabulary mastery significantly influence students' reading comprehension. These findings highlight the importance of integrating both psychological and linguistic perspectives when examining reading performance in EFL contexts.

The significant influence of academic self-efficacy supports Bandura's social cognitive theory, which emphasizes that individuals' beliefs about their capabilities influence their motivation, behavior, and academic outcomes. Students with higher academic self-efficacy tend to approach learning tasks with greater confidence and persistence. When encountering difficult texts, such students are more likely to apply strategies, maintain effort, and remain engaged in the learning process (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

The findings are also consistent with previous research suggesting that self-efficacy plays a critical role in academic achievement. Wang et al. (2025) found that students with stronger academic self-beliefs demonstrate higher levels of cognitive engagement and better academic performance. In the context of reading, self-efficacy may influence how students approach complex texts and whether they persist when comprehension difficulties arise.

In addition to motivational factors, vocabulary mastery also significantly contributes to reading comprehension. Vocabulary knowledge enables readers to decode meaning and interpret textual information more effectively. According to Teng (2021), vocabulary size is one of the strongest predictors of reading comprehension among EFL learners. Students who possess broader vocabulary knowledge are better equipped to understand complex sentences, identify relationships between ideas, and infer meaning from context.

Interestingly, despite relatively high vocabulary mastery and self-efficacy scores, students' reading comprehension remained low. This finding suggests that reading comprehension is a multidimensional process that cannot be explained solely by vocabulary knowledge and motivational beliefs. Other cognitive factors, such as reading strategies, prior knowledge, and metacognitive awareness, may also influence comprehension performance.

Another possible explanation is that students may possess surface-level vocabulary knowledge but lack deeper lexical understanding required for interpreting academic texts. Webb and Nation (2020) argue that effective reading comprehension requires not only vocabulary breadth but also vocabulary depth, including knowledge of word associations, collocations, and contextual meanings.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings indicate that improving students' reading comprehension requires a comprehensive instructional approach. Teachers should integrate vocabulary instruction with explicit reading strategy training. Strategies such as identifying text structure, summarizing key information, and making inferences can help students process expository texts more effectively. Furthermore, teachers should also focus on strengthening students' academic

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self-efficacy by creating supportive learning environments. Providing constructive feedback, encouraging student participation, and promoting autonomy in learning activities may help students develop stronger confidence in their academic abilities. Hence, the results of this study emphasize that both motivational and linguistic factors play significant roles in shaping students' reading comprehension performance.

CONCLUSIONS

Grounded in social cognitive theory and the lexical quality hypothesis, this study advances an integrated explanatory model of expository reading comprehension by empirically examining both affective and linguistic predictors within a single analytic framework. The findings demonstrate that academic self-efficacy and vocabulary mastery jointly account for a substantial proportion of variance in reading performance (63.3%), underscoring the interdependence of psychological agency and lexical competence in processing informational texts. Academic self-efficacy emerged as the more robust predictor, suggesting that learners' beliefs in their capacity to succeed academically may shape not only engagement and persistence but also the effective deployment of reading strategies. Vocabulary mastery, while comparatively smaller in magnitude, remained a statistically significant contributor, reaffirming the centrality of high-quality lexical representations in comprehension. By situating affective and cognitive variables within the same predictive model, this study addresses a gap in reading research that often isolates linguistic proficiency from motivational constructs.

The findings indicate that reading comprehension should be conceptualized not merely as a function of textual decoding and vocabulary knowledge, but as a self-regulated academic performance influenced by students' confidence, resilience, and strategic effort. In educational contexts where reading outcomes remain suboptimal despite adequate vocabulary exposure, strengthening academic self-efficacy may represent a critical intervention pathway. Nevertheless, the cross-sectional correlational design limits causal interpretation, and the geographically bounded sample constrains generalizability. Future studies should employ longitudinal or experimental approaches to clarify causal mechanisms and explore potential mediating or moderating roles of metacognitive strategies, intrinsic motivation, and background knowledge. Overall, this study contributes to a more holistic understanding of reading achievement and highlights that sustainable improvement in expository comprehension requires the simultaneous cultivation of learners' psychological empowerment and lexical depth.



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