

Fostering Extensive Reading Comprehension through the Medium of Let's Read" Application

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to measure the effectiveness of "Let's Read" application in fostering students' Extensive Reading comprehension. Two classes of grade 8 students of SMP Muhammadiyah 03 Tangerang participated as the sample of this study, divided into experimental class and control class each of which was occupied by 34 students. These two classes were chosen by using cluster random sampling out of totally 4 classes of grade 8. This quantitative research used quasi-experimental with two-groups post-test only design. The data were gathered by using Reading Comprehension post-test and a questionnaire. All collected data of the post-test were analyzed statistically by using independent t-test. The analysis of the findings revealed that experimental group students' post-test achievement exceeded 12.5 points the achievement of control group students'. Meanwhile, in the statistical analysis, in the significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 5\%$ degree of freedom), t-obtained of 5.677 was higher than t-table of 1.996 (from $df = 66$). Besides, the table also showed that the sig. (2-tailed) of $0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, H_a was accepted and H_0 was rejected. Experimental group students' responses to the questionnaire showed that the majority of them expressed that Let's Read application benefitted them in the activities of extensive reading practices in which for example their reading interest increased after learning reading through this app. Based on these findings, this study concluded that Let's Read application was an effective learning medium in fostering students' extensive reading comprehension.

Keywords: *Extensive Reading; Learning Medium; Let's Read Application.*

INTRODUCTION

In Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), mastering reading skills will help the learners improve other abilities and obtain knowledge and information in the language they want to learn. Students can learn a lot of new vocabulary by reading. When reading is done frequently, this can help them understand a reading structure, recognize tenses, and write sentences. Reading is one of four language skills that require particular teaching activities, methods, and procedures Mulatu & Regassa, (2022).

There are two types of reading; extensive and intensive Reading Mikeladze, (2015). Extensive Reading is typically carried out for the enjoyment of the readers (Day & Bamford in Iwata, 2022), while Intensive Reading involves detailed analysis of

vocabulary and grammar in a short passage under the guidance of a teacher (Mart in Cárdenas, 2020). Between these two, a reading activity that the students mostly prefer is the extensive one. The grand theory of extensive reading is referred to as “Krashen’s Comprehension Hypothesis”, which states that language acquisition and literacy development depend on readers’ ability to understand what they read and what they hear, as he called it ‘comprehensible input’ Ng et al., (2019). Implicitly, in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, this hypothesis explains that the more students read, the more their literacy in English will develop; hence, their understanding of the reading they read will obviously improve.

Extensive reading refers to reading large amounts of texts where these texts are easy to understand. The reading is done for pleasure and has the purpose to acquire general knowledge Bamford & Day in Ateek (2021). Extensive Reading activities not only involve students and their reading materials but also enrich vocabulary, supply information, encourage motivation, and give various reading experiences Mutiarani & Rahman (2019). Waring & McLean in Tanaka (2017) argue that there are four core elements in extensive reading, namely: 1) Fluent and sustained comprehension of texts; 2) reading in large quantities; 3) reading for long periods of time; and 4) focusing on the meaning of the texts. According to Day (2018), apart from increasing reading fluency and comprehension, extensive reading positively impacts the affective side of foreign language readers by boosting motivation and creating positive attitudes toward reading. Further, he added that since extensive reading proven to be an effective way to develop reading fluency and strengthen reading comprehension, it might be used to train EFL learners to improve their language skills.

In regards to that, another way to increase students’ interest in literacy and create a fun learning atmosphere is for teachers to use innovative strategies by providing students with a variety of reading materials available in various online reading sources’ mediums. Sofian & Laily (2021) state that teachers as facilitators in the instructional process are required to build appropriate conditions for students to learn in order to achieve the objective of the learning. Therefore, in this technological era, where the integration of technology in the teaching and learning process has become one of the crucial aspects to carry on, teachers’ creativity to utilize any technological medium to support learning activities is highly demanded, as well as in reading classes. As Bitner & Bitner cited by Boholano et al., (2021) claim that teachers are required to be competent in utilizing technology in their teachings so that they will be benefitted in the teaching and learning process in the classrooms.

Yalçın & İncik (2022) argue that the need for the integration of technology into education and the use of educational technology in the teaching and learning process is an idea that is widely accepted in the field of education. Currently, students tend to use their gadgets in all their daily activities; thus, using these devices can potentially increase their motivation to actively participate in learning activities because they can also gain knowledge on how to utilize technological-based mediums for their learning. The appropriate utilization of technology as a learning medium has produced the best learning results and escalated the achievement of learning objectives Ge, (2021).

There are numerous numbers of applications that can be used as mediums in English learning, particularly for reading. One of them is Let's Read application.

Let's Read application is an online library initiated by Asia Foundation. This application provides a variety of books equipped with illustrative images, types of genres and levels that can be selected according to students' interests and abilities. It was reported by Let's Read Asia in 2022 that this digital library had 9.194 book titles available in 15 categories, including critical thinking books, science, health, folktales, about family, etc. With a variety of categories, this application is suitable for students to increase their interest in reading and developing their extensive reading comprehension. Besides, Kadwa & Alshenqeeti (2020) add that this mobile application platform offered book collections in multiple languages equipped with audio and level features. Additionally, Let's Read can be downloaded on the Play Store, App Store, and or accessed via the Website.

Several studies have been carried out to examine the positive impact of the Let's Read application. Jannah et al. (2022) state that the use of the Let's Read application as a medium for reading activities has been evidenced by several studies to be helpful in supporting EFL students' reading practices since online book collections and various features support them. Ermerawati (2019) suggested Let's Read to students who are learning English to improve their reading skills because this application provides opportunities for them to explore stories they want to read since this application prepares materials with bunch of various reading topics.

A qualitative study conducted by Samsudin & Rahmawati (2023) entitled: "Digital Literacy through Let's Read App to Improve Reading Interest of Elementary School Students" reported that students became happier while waiting for the next reading activity. Besides, learning reading by using this app also increased their interest in reading due to the many interesting illustrations displayed on this app. Another study by Ni'mah & Umamah (2020), entitled "Mobile-Assisted on extensive reading: Students' Voices", showed that students had positive perceptions regarding the use of digital reading in extensive reading practice. The students perceived that reading by using e-books through mobile devices is more practical, flexible, easy and mostly available for free. However, it was found that most prior studies scrutinized this application were still limited, in which most of them discussed the utilization of online apps in general. Besides, the researches were also dominated by qualitative studies.

Referring to the background above and previous studies, the authors are interested in conducting a quantitative research study to investigate the effectiveness of the Let's Read App in fostering students' extensive reading practice to fill the gaps in the prior studies. Thus, this research aimed to answer the following research question: "What is the influence of utilizing the medium of the Let's Read app in fostering students' extensive reading practice?". The researchers expect that this study will give positive contributions to the theories of TEFL, especially in terms of reading skills and teaching and learning media, also to those who are in English teaching and learning areas, teachers and students, to gain other insights getting precious knowledge on how to develop extensive reading skills.

METHOD

This research applied quantitative method with a quasi-experimental research design. The experiment itself was conducted in the even semester of the academic year 2023/2024 at SMP Muhammadiyah 03, Tangerang. There were two classes of grade eight students who participated as the sample of the study, in which each of the class was occupied by 34 students. These two classes were selected from totally of 4 classes of grade 8 through cluster random sampling. Simkus (2023) explained that a cluster random sampling is a sampling technique where the researcher puts all populations into separate groups as clusters. In this study, the researchers considered all grade 8 classes as clusters before randomly choosing 2 classes, which were directly assigned as the experimental group and control group. In collecting the data, the researchers used a post-test and a questionnaire administered after seven meetings of the treatment. As Campbell & Stanley, cited by Muse & Baldwin (2021), explained that a post-test design was used to compare two groups, i.e., the treatment group and the control group. The test was about reading comprehension, and the researchers gave the students three reading passages to analyse.

The results of this test were assessed by using an extensive reading assessment rubric adapted and modified from Susani (2018). This rubric consisted of 5 assessment aspects, i.e. 1) characters recognition; 2) information quality (related to the synopsis); 3) personal opinion; 4) English writing accuracy, and 5) completeness, where each of the aspect has the scores ranging from 10 (the highest) to 0 (the lowest). Meanwhile, the questionnaire was adapted and modified from Strong et al. (2023). This questionnaire consisted of 10 closed questions with the options of 'Yes' and 'No' covering 3 aspects, namely: 1) opinion; 2) impact on learning, and 3) media implementation results. This survey was aimed to see students' opinions about the use of Let's Read application, therefore, it was only distributed to students in the experimental group.

In analysing the post-test data, statistical analysis of independent t-test was applied. This calculation took several steps as follows: first, computing the results of students' tests in both classes by referring to rubric assessment to get the mean score of each class; second, conducting normality and homogeneity tests to ensure that all the data were normally distributed and homogenous; third, doing t-test calculation to determine whether or not there was an influence of Let's Read app on students' extensive reading comprehension; fourth, presenting data analysis results of the questionnaire. The final results of the statistical test were also used to confirm which hypothesis was accepted and which one was rejected. Students' responses to the questionnaire were simply analysed by having frequency calculations, which showed how many students responded 'Yes' or 'No' to each of the questions given.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As it was explained previously, the researchers took several steps in analyzing the data as follows:

1. The results of students' Extensive Reading comprehension post-test assessed by referring to Extensive Reading assessment rubric are presented in the following Table 1:

Table 1. Students' Extensive Reading comprehension post-test's results

Students' Group	Total Score	Average Score	The Highest Score	The Lowest Score
Experimental	2.761	81.2	94.6	58.6
Control	2.280	68.7	68.7	46.6

From the table above, it can be seen that the students in the experimental group performed better than those in the control group. In total, the students of the experimental group reached 2.761 for their extensive reading post-test score with the average of 81.2. Meanwhile, control group students achieved a total score of 2.280 with an average of 68.7. In this test, the highest score gained by experimental group students was 94.6 and the lowest one was 58.6, whereas the highest score hit by control group students was 68.7 and the lowest one was 46.6. The following Figure 1 summarized the achievement of the students in the two groups:

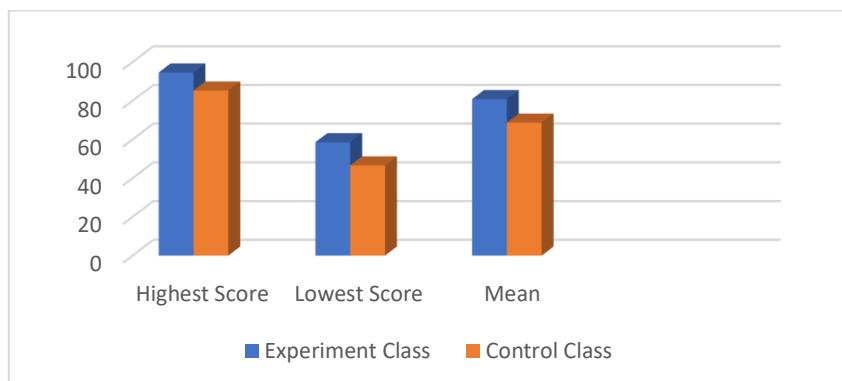


Figure 1. Students' Extensive Reading Post-test Results

Based on these results, this study made an initial conclusion that experimental group students reached higher achievement than the control ones because the students were taught by using the Let's Read application. At this stage, the researchers deduced that this application was effective in fostering students' extensive reading achievement, in which the average score they achieved in 12.5 points exceeded the one gained by control group students. These increasing points were obtained from the difference of students' average score in the pre-test; 68.7 and in the post-test; 81.2. In order to proceed to statistical analysis, these results were computed into descriptive statistics to get the standard deviation of each group's result. The descriptive statistical analysis is presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Descriptive statistics analysis

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Sd
Experiment	34	58.60	94.60	81.2265	8.07744
Control	34	46.60	85.30	68.7706	9.92192

In order to strengthen the initial conclusion above, an Independent t-test was conducted first to find out the homogeneity and normality of the data as the requirements for using this formula.

2. Normality and Homogeneity Tests

Normality Test

The normality test was conducted to measure whether or not all data of the post-test normally distributed. In this test, Shapiro Wilk was used with the following analysis and hypotheses criteria:

The normality criteria:

- If the significance of Shapiro Wilk > 0.5 then H_a is accepted, H_0 is rejected.
- If the significance of Shapiro Wilk < 0.5 then H_0 is accepted, H_a is rejected.

The hypotheses testing criteria:

- H_a : The data is retrieved from a normal distribution.
- H_0 : The data is not retrieved from a normal distribution.

Table 3. Normality test of experimental group post-test data

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Experimental	.140	34	.099	.939	34	.062

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The results of the normality test above showed that significance value of .062 was higher than $\alpha = 0.05$ (sig. value $> \alpha = 0.05$). This indicated that the data from experimental class were all normally distributed.

Table 4. Normality test of control group post-test data

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Control_Class	.147	34	.078	.936	34	.060

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As well as experimental group results, the normality test of the control group also revealed that the significance value of .060 was higher than $\alpha = 0.05$ (sig. value $> \alpha = 0.05$). This also indicated that the data from control class were all normally distributed.

Homogeneity Test

Homogeneity test was taken to determine whether or not all sample data of the population has homogeneous variance. This test was done by using Levene test.

Table 5. Homogeneity test of experiment and control groups

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.699	1	66	.105

The homogeneity test of Levene above shows that the significance value of the post-test was equal to .105 or greater than 0.05. Thus, it was confirmed that all the sample data from both experimental and control groups had the same variance or homogenous.

Since all data used were normally distributed and homogenous, the statistical calculation of independent t-test could be proceeded.

3. Independent Sample t-test

Table 6. Independent samples test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Score	Equal variances assumed	2.699	.105	5.677	66	.000	12.45588	2.19417	8.07507	16.83669
	Equal variances not assumed			5.677	63.392	.000	12.45588	2.19417	8.07171	16.84006

The results of the independent samples test above revealed that in the significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 5\%$ degree of freedom), t-obtained of 5.677 was higher than t-table of 1.996 (from $df = 66$). Thus, this result concluded that H_a was accepted and H_0 was rejected. Besides, the table also showed that the sig. (2-tailed) of $0.000 < 0.05$. This finding showed that there was a difference on the average score of the students' outcomes of the two groups. In other words, the post-test of Extensive Reading results of the group taught by using the Let's Read application and the one that was not taught by using this application revealed different achievements, specifically in the extensive reading. This finding supported the initial conclusion above that the Let's Read application was proven to be effective in fostering students' extensive reading comprehension.

4. The results of the questionnaire analysis were presented on the following Table 7:

Table 7. Experimental students' responses to the questionnaire

No.	Question	YES	NO
01.	Did you like reading English books before using the Let's Read application?	8	26
02.	Do you prefer reading English online books rather than paper books?	31	3
03.	Does the Let's Read application help you study English?	28	6
04.	Does the Let's Read application make you become more motivated in reading?	30	4
05.	Do you feel happy while doing extensive reading activities by using Let's Read application?	26	8
06.	Do you have experience reading online before using the Let's Read application?	3	31
07.	Did this reading activity enrich your English vocabulary?	27	7
08.	Do you want to use the Let's Read application for English reading activities in the future?	27	7
09.	Do you feel enjoyed during extensive reading activity?	29	5
10.	Do you think the Let's Read has helped improve your English proficiency?	32	2

Adapted and modified from Strong et al. (2023)

The results of the responses above described that most of the students in the experimental group gave a positive attitude towards the Let's Read application. In the first question, a total number of 26 students admitted that they did not like reading English books before using the Let's Read application. This response gave an idea of how the Let's Read application could encourage their interest in reading. Second, the majority of the students (31) said that they preferred to read English online books rather than paper ones. This answer implicitly showed that reading by using Let's Read application online was preferable for them. Third, a number of 28 students agreed that Let's Read application helped them studied English. This response indicate that the students got the benefits of learning English by using this application. Fourth, most of the students (30) admitted that they became more motivated after studying reading by using this application. This response was very positive because if the students had good motivation, they would enjoy the learning process, hence, the objective of the learning would be well achieved.

Fifth, there 26 students felt happy while doing extensive reading activities by using the Let's Read application. This answer showed that this application provided them fun learning atmosphere. Sixth, in terms of reading online experience, almost all students (31) responded that they did not have any experience before using Let's Read application. This fact showed that the students never utilized their devices, such as gadgets, PCs or laptops to practice their reading, even for reading for pleasure. Seventh, a number of 27 students said 'yes' to answer that the Let's Read application gave benefits to their English vocabulary. This answer revealed that using the Let's Read application gave benefits to students in terms of their vocabulary enrichment. Eighth, surprisingly, 27 students confirmed that they would like to use the Let's Read application for their English activities in the future. This was a very positive point from the students in that they would still continue reading practices in the future and or after the experiment, this study was accomplished. Ninth, a number of 29 students expressed that they enjoyed the extensive reading activity while using the Let's Read application. This expression indicated students' positive attitude towards the Let's Read application. Tenth, almost all students (32) thought that the Let's Read application improved their English proficiency. This opinion showed that extensive reading activities through the Let's Read application benefitted the students and their English proficiency.

Based on the results of the questionnaire analysis above, this research work confirmed that in terms of attitudes, the students gave very positive responses to Let's Read after they were introduced to this application and taught extensive reading practice by using this application.

After presenting the results of the study and discussing each of the data analysis step above, the researchers found that the utilization of Let's Read application in fostering students' extensive reading comprehension was successful. The experimental group students' extensive reading post-test achievement not only outperformed the control group outcomes, but the students also showed very positive responses towards Let's Read application used as a medium in extensive reading practice. The findings of this research were in line with the research's result of Stevani et al., (2023) who proved

that Let's Read was an advantageous application to enhance students' reading comprehension. Having good ability in comprehending texts is very crucial aspect to support students' language acquisition. By reading, students will be able to get any knowledge through huge numbers of learning sources.

CONCLUSION

This research had the objective of measuring the effectiveness of the Let's Read application as a learning medium to foster students' extensive reading comprehension. The results of the data analysis concluded that the Let's Read application was proven to be an effective medium in fostering students' extensive reading comprehension. This conclusion was based on the evidence: First, the average score of extensive reading post-test of experimental group students was 12.5 points higher than the score gained by the control group. Second, the statistical computation of post-test results revealed that in the significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 5\%$ degree of freedom), t -obtained of 5.677 was higher than t -table of 1.996 (from $df = 66$). Besides, the sig (2-tailed) of $0.000 < 0.05$ indicated that different average score achieved by the experimental group students from the control group students was affected by the use of the Let's Read application in the treatment. The findings of these quantitative analysis results were strengthened by the analysis of the questionnaire, which showed that the majority of the students agreed that Let's Read application benefitted them in the activities of extensive reading practice.

Due to several limitations of this research, the researchers would like to suggest further studies to add more variables to be measured to get wider and more comprehensive findings, such as students' reading styles, text-types/genres of the reading materials, and students' prior English proficiency, and so on and so forth. Furthermore, using a greater number of samples from various grades might also result in other interesting findings.

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