

## The Efficiency of Extensive Reading Using Reading A-Z On Vocabulary Enrichment

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### Abstract

Gadgets can either distract or facilitate students' learning activities in this digital age. As for positive impact, gadgets are effective tools to intrigue students' perceptions and behaviors in reading. Reading A-Z, one of the digital literacy platforms with more than 2000 fiction and nonfiction books at various levels, has been encouraging its users worldwide to read extensively – including some schools in Indonesia. A small-scale quantitative study was carried out in second grade at one private primary school in Bandung to discover the efficacy of Reading A-Z in cultivating students' vocabulary development. Ten students with low reading performance are chosen and distributed into two groups: control & experimental. The first group is not exposed to extensive reading activities, while the latter has a 2-week reading session with various themed books from Reading A-Z. Questionnaires and Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) by Nation & Schmitt are arranged before and after. The findings show that there is a significant improvement on the students' vocabulary mean score of the experimental group from 49,6 to 55 while there is not any improvement shown by the control group. It is suggested that using digital literacy platform such as Reading A-Z for extensive reading program can potentially increase student's vocabulary development.

**Keywords:** *extensive reading; vocabulary; enrichment; Reading A-Z*

### INTRODUCTION

Amidst this digital age, the advancement of technology can possibly distract or facilitate students' learning activities. As for positive impact, devices with their sophisticated features are effective medium to intrigue students' perceptions and behaviors towards English reading activities. Generally, students are way more excited to find something out through gadget. That is why the growth of English online reading applications could be used to drive the students' curiosity in EFL classrooms.

There are a bunch of reading platforms subscribed by educational institutions to facilitate their students and teachers, one of them is Reading A-Z. Reading A-Z is one of digital products of Learning A-Z, it is an online library platform that has 3000+ printable,

projectable, and digital leveled books which includes 50,000+ teacher resources and student activities. Launched in January 2002, Reading A-Z now has more than 12 million members in more than 170 countries, including some schools in Indonesia.

By means of Reading A-Z, EFL teachers get to design various reading activities, especially extensive reading. Its themed books would allow the learners to choose and read any types of books they are interested in. It is certainly in line with one of the ER principles stated by Day & Bamford (2004) that “Learners choose what they want to read.”

As a literacy platform that has won a number of educational awards for its innovation in reading instruction, Reading A-Z offers some benefits, such as reading fluency, comprehension, phonics accuracy, and vocabulary enrichment. However, Scarborough (2001) believes that vocabulary mastery is a component for a student to comprehend a passage. Numerous studies have shown that extensive reading is beneficial in vocabulary enrichment, including in English as foreign language (EFL) context (Tiryaki & Tütüniş, 2012; Siregar, 2020; T. Wero, Machmud, & Husain, 2021).

Nevertheless, studies related to the use of Reading A-Z especially in Indonesian EFL context are still limited. Therefore, this paper aims to discover the efficiency of Reading A-Z in cultivating students' vocabulary development. Ten students with low reading performance are chosen and distributed into two groups: control and experimental. The first group is not exposed to extensive reading activities, while the latter has a 2-week reading session with various themed books from Reading A-Z. Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) by Nation & Schmitt are arranged before and after.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Extensive Reading amidst Digital Era**

Independence and pleasure are two words that are commonly used to describe extensive reading (ER). By overabundance studies of ER that revealed its benefits, we get more believed that self-selected reading has myriads linguistic benefits, such as improving reading fluency and vocabulary enrichment (Renandya et al., 2018). Since the idea of conducting extensive reading program in English classes is to make students read sources in target language and like them, so the more students enjoy the reading process, the more benefits they can reap (Ernawati, 2019).

Back to 2002, Day and Bamford as cited in Renandya, Chong, & Ng (2019), developed 10 principles of ER which could be regarded as recipe of a fruitful ER program and stimulated teachers to “cook” and “serve” them. The 10 ingredients were:

1. Easy reading materials
2. Innumerable reading topics
3. Self-selected reading
4. Learners read as much as possible.
5. Reading is for pleasure, and to gain information and general understanding.
6. Reading is the reward itself.

7. Learners generally read quickly and not slowly.
8. Reading is silent and individual.
9. Teachers orientate and provide guidance to students.
10. The teacher models being a reader.

The ten ingredients above are in line with Krashen's hypothesis that interesting and compelling sources are needed to gain students' attention (Krashen, 2003). As a result, once students are immersed on the reading activities, they will enter a state of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Speaking of providing attention-grabbing reading sources, EFL teachers and the advancement of technology becomes inseparable. They should follow the development of digital tools and use them as resourceful medium to support their teaching innovation so that they can facilitate the students better (Suwartono & Aniuranti, 2018). Therefore, the implementation of ER activities has shifted from conventional modes where teachers prepare a bunch of printed books, to digital ER program where teachers operate digital tools to utilize various sources on digital literacy platforms in implementing the extensive reading program.

### **Digital Extensive Reading Benefit on Vocabulary Knowledge**

As stated above, there are a bunch of benefits in implementing ER, one of them is vocabulary enrichment. It is generally believed by the experts, including Milton and Daller (2013) that vocabulary knowledge plays an essential role in a language, without vocabulary there would be no production of language and process of comprehension. Wilkins in Alfaki (2014) stated that it makes sense as we can possibly communicate without knowing any grammatical rules, but nothing can be conveyed if we do not know any vocabulary. In EFL classrooms, specifically, the students' lack of vocabulary is difficult to speak in English as they do not know any words to express their own ideas, nor do they can understand what people say.

From the above statements, it shows that vocabulary is the base to all aspects of language proficiency, namely reading, listening, speaking, and writing. For that reason, Ali (2010) also mentioned that a foreign language learner can speak and read fluently, or write and hear accurately, if they have sufficient amount of vocabulary to be used in numerous settings and situations. To answer the essentials, extensive reading is mainly an extremely helpful method to expand the students' vocabulary. According to the research by Mason & Krashen (1997), they found that reading a bunch of interesting books and experiencing language in particular contexts will allow the EFL students to get access to discover myriads new vocabulary and familiarize themselves with their background knowledge and old vocabulary (Coady, 1997).

In Indonesia itself, extensive reading activities have been publicized to be applied through various digital or online platforms. A critical review concerning on the issue has been published to provide an overview or information regarding its implementation (Janah et al., 2022). Twelve articles about digital extensive reading that were published from 2019 to 2022 from respectable national journals were analyzed. They discovered several digital platforms, such as as Let's Read! application, Blogging, Mobile-Assisted, Xreading, Wattpad,

Webtoon, and other various online platforms, such as WhatsApp, Zoom, and Google Classroom have been proven useful in supporting the teachers to facilitate their EFL students'.

Xreading, as an example, is a virtual library with hundreds of graded readers supported by an easy-to-use learner management system. Its features allow the readers to access books, audiobooks, as well as quizzes. In addition, there is also track reading progress which includes books, time, and reading speed. Based on the study conducted by Hidayah & Trisusana (2021) as cited in Janah et al. (2022), they found out that EFL students gave progressive attitudes toward their proficiencies in performing extensive reading through Xreading and its comprehensive features. The students claimed that they could feel several improvements in their reading competence after performing extensive reading through Xreading, such as reading speed, grammatical competence, vocabulary mastery, and general understanding.

As a consequence, it can be concluded that Xreading and also other online literacy platforms with every feature developed could be a suitable platform for EFL students' digital extensive reading as well as for the improvement of EFL students' vocabulary knowledge.

### **Reading A-Z as A Literacy Platform**

Reading A-Z is a wide-ranging blended-learning platform that includes the curricular support and the personalized resources necessary to improve students' reading skills. Created and developed by Benjamin Hilton, Reading A-Z is one of products under Learning A-Z. According to their official website, the company with its award-winning digital products has grown expressively and now used by more than 12 million students in more than 170 countries, including Indonesia.

The platform delivers thousands of high-quality, affordable resources and tools that teachers need to improve the reading skills of every student, at every level. This app resource provides both printable and projectable materials teachers use to differentiate instruction for one-to-one, small-group, or whole class environments. Each book is accompanied by a wealth of supporting resources, such as a lesson plan, quiz, discussion cards, and worksheets.

To help readers develop necessary foundational and key reading skills, Reading A-Z provides a variety of teaching materials, including a complete phonics program, alphabet and high-frequency resources, shared reading books, readers theater scripts, fluency passages, and various assessments which will support the teaching of key reading skills, including fluency, comprehension, writing, and vocabulary.

### **Vocabulary Level Test by Nation & Schmitt**

The Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) has proven to be an effective tool for both diagnosing and placing students based on their vocabulary knowledge. Schmitt et al. (2001) highlight its usefulness in identifying lexical weaknesses at specific frequency levels and quickly grouping students according to their vocabulary abilities. Despite the limited number of studies examining the validity of the VLT, it appears to be highly beneficial for teachers in fulfilling these objectives.

Schmitt et al. (2001) conducted a comprehensive validation study of the revised VLT, which involved 801 EFL learners from various countries. The results of their extensive research demonstrated that the test versions with an increased number of items (30 items per level) exhibited high reliability. Furthermore, the items effectively differentiated between stronger and weaker learners, indicating their discriminative power (Schmitt et al., 2001). The VLT, developed by Paul Nation, can be accessed on the website [www.lex tutor.com](http://www.lex tutor.com). This website enjoys a global reputation and is widely popular among researchers in the field of language teaching and learning.

## **METHOD**

This small-scale classroom research employs a quantitative method which intended to see whether extensive reading using Reading A-Z would make any noteworthy distinction in the vocabulary development of the EFL students in one private primary school in Bandung. Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) by Nation & Schmitt are arranged before and after.

### **Participants**

In conducting the research, ten second-grade students with low reading performance are chosen and distributed into two groups: control & experimental. The first group is not exposed to extensive reading activities, while the latter has a 2-week reading session with various themed books from Reading A-Z. The session took place in the classroom before starting the lessons, so the researcher got to supervise all students.

At the time this study was being carried, the five experimental-group students accessed their accounts on Reading A-Z and read some books on their own during the allotted time: 15 minutes per day. Not only reading, the app also allows the kids to listen to the audiobook, read and record their voice while reading, as well as complete the quiz.

### **Data Collection**

A pre-test and a post-test were given to gather the data. The pre-test was given on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023 which aimed to check the participants' mastery of 1000 word level vocabulary. The post-test was carried out on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 to discover how much enhancement the participants might have after having extensive reading session for two weeks. The vocabulary tests used in this research was developed by Nation (2001). The 1000-word level vocabulary tests were selected as the participants read 1000-word-level books. The allotted time for each test was 15 minutes.

The type of the tests was true-false tests consisted of 40 questions which included one question as an example. There were three options on each question that the participants could choose: "T" if they decided a statement to be true; "N" if they considered a statement to be not true; and "X" if they could not comprehend the sentences. However, the "X" answers were considered wrong since the test was to measure the knowing words which indicated students' vocabulary mastery (Corson in Putri & Husada, 2008).

### **Data Analysis**

Once the data had been gathered, the researchers input the result to be displayed as bar charts which represent the result of pre-test and post-test of two groups; control and experimental. To find the significance of participants' vocabulary learning progress, the researcher used inferential statistics to find means and standard deviation. A Paired-Samples T-test in SPSS was also applied to analyze the data by comparing the pre-test and post-test means of two groups. The paired-samples t-test compares the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test within the experimental group and control group to determine if there is a significant difference.

## FINDINGS

The research question pursued to find out whether extensive reading using Reading A-Z would make any noteworthy distinction in the vocabulary development of the ten second-grade students in one private primary school in Bandung. The result of the pre-test and post-test given to the students are presented in Diagram 1 and 2.

**Diagram 1.** Result of the Control Group's Pre-test and Post-test

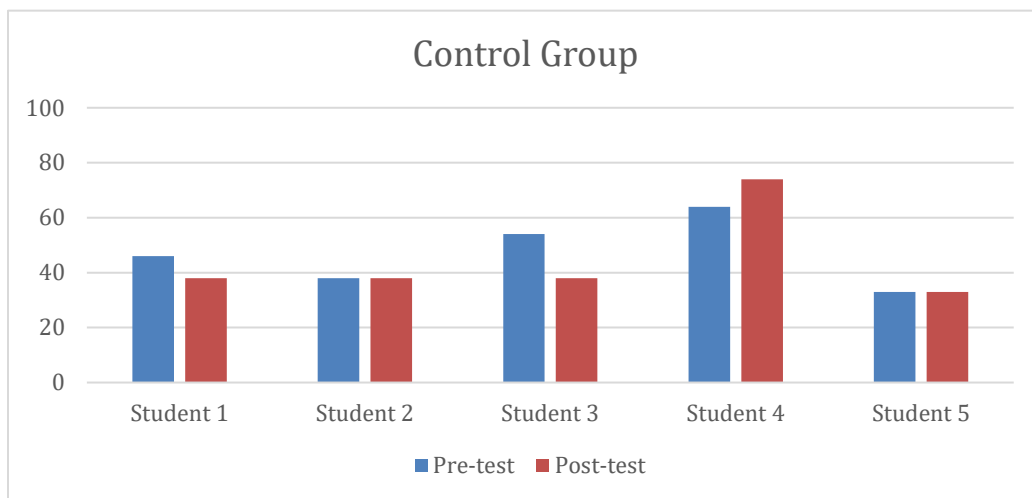


Table 1 presents pre-test and post-test results of the five participants in the control group, the pre-test is represented by the blue bars, while red bars describe the post-test results. As it is shown, the highest score obtained in the pre-test was 64 and the lowest was 33. Nevertheless, the highest score in the post-test was 74 and the lowest was 33.

**Diagram 2.** Result of the Experimental Group's Pre-test and Post-test

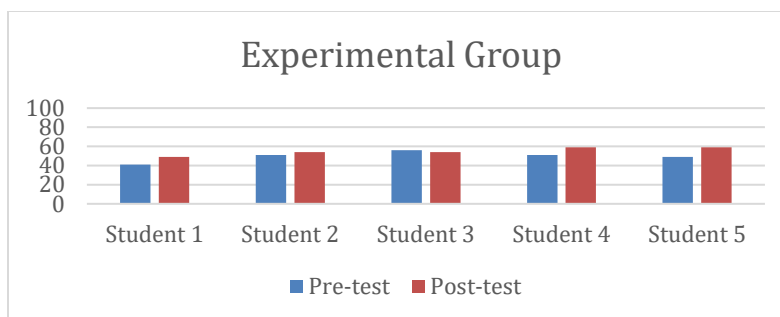


Table 2 shows pre-test and post-test results of the five participants in the experimental group. As it is displayed, the highest score obtained in the pre-test was 56 and the lowest was 41. In addition, the highest score in the post-test was 59 and the lowest was 54.

To examine the data further, a Paired-Samples T-test in SPSS was also applied to analyze the data by comparing the pre-test and post-test means of two groups. The results are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 1.** Result of the Paired-Samples T-test

Experimental Group		Control Group	
Pre-test M(SD)	Post-test M(SD)	Pre-test M(SD)	Post-test M(SD)
49,6(5.4589)	55(4.1833)	47(12.4097)	44,2(16.7988)

As presented in the above table, the result indicate that the control and experimental group got relatively similar pre-test scores which is less than 50. However, experimental group is upper than the control group. In the post-test, experimental group performed better so that the number is significantly increased, from 49,6 to 55 while the control group's test result which declined from 47 to 44,2. In the experimental group, the mean score of post-test is 55 which is higher than the pre-test mean score which is 49.6, suggesting that there is a potential improvement in vocabulary improvement after using Reading A-Z. In contrast to the control group, the post-test mean score is 44.2 which is lower than the pre-test mean score 47, suggesting that there is not any enrichment in vocabulary.

Considering the control group's pre-test and post-test is lesser than the experimental group achieved, its standard deviations for each test rises. On the other hand, standard deviations in the experimental group considerably dropped. In accordance to Hatch and Lazaraton (cited in Putri & Husada, 2008) that if a group of research participants are given a pre-test and then after a period of time received another test, the mean of post-test is supposed to be higher than the previous test, while the standard deviation of the post-test is supposed to be much smaller.

## DISCUSSION

This small-scale research examined whether extensive reading plays a crucial role on vocabulary improvements of second-grade EFL students. As stated in the literature review,

the connection between reading or other language skills and vocabulary development is notably important.

The results of the data analysis show different patterns in the two groups: control and experimental. Control group which was consisted of five students who were not assigned to the extensive reading activities using Reading A-Z, they performed positively during the pre-test. As exposed in the Diagram 1, the results were numerous starting from 33 to 64, and they reached the mean of 47 with standard deviation 12.4097. However, the majority of the participants in the group fell rapidly in the post-test, such as student 1 (46 to 38) and student 3 (54 to 38). Followed by student 3 and 4 that showed stagnant result. By contrast to the other participants, student 5's post-test result climbed dramatically from 64 to 74. Nonetheless, in summary, this group generally finished both tests with average results with increasing standard deviation up to 16.7988.

In regards to the experimental group, the progress of the five students who joined a 2-week extensive reading using Reading A-Z appears to be steady. The Diagram 1 gives information that 4 students in the group show similar growth and generally stable, even though there is one student whose result slightly declined. Their pre-test which ranged from 41 to 56 gained mean 49,6 and standard deviation 5.4589. It has been mentioned earlier that if a group of research participants are given a pre-test and then after a period of time received another test, the mean of post-test is supposed to be higher than the previous test, while the standard deviation of the post-test is supposed to be much smaller. The statement is proved by the experimental group as their post-test got mean 55 with standard deviation 4.1833. All in all, with all the findings that have been previously described, using digital literacy platform such as Reading A-Z for extensive reading program can potentially increase student's vocabulary development.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed at exploring the effectiveness of a digital literacy platform named Reading A-Z in enhancing vocabulary development of the primary school students in second grade. The statistical findings have shown that there are some improvements made by the students of the experimental group when doing extensive reading using Reading A-Z. The data showed that the mean score of the post-test of the experimental group was higher than their pre-test result. Meanwhile, the mean score of the post-test of the control group was lesser than their pre-test score, indicating that there is not any vocabulary enhancement made the students of the control group. Thus, it is suggested that using digital literacy platform such as Reading A-Z for extensive reading program can potentially increase student's vocabulary development.

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# Appendixes

Figure 1. The Overview of Reading A-Z Platform

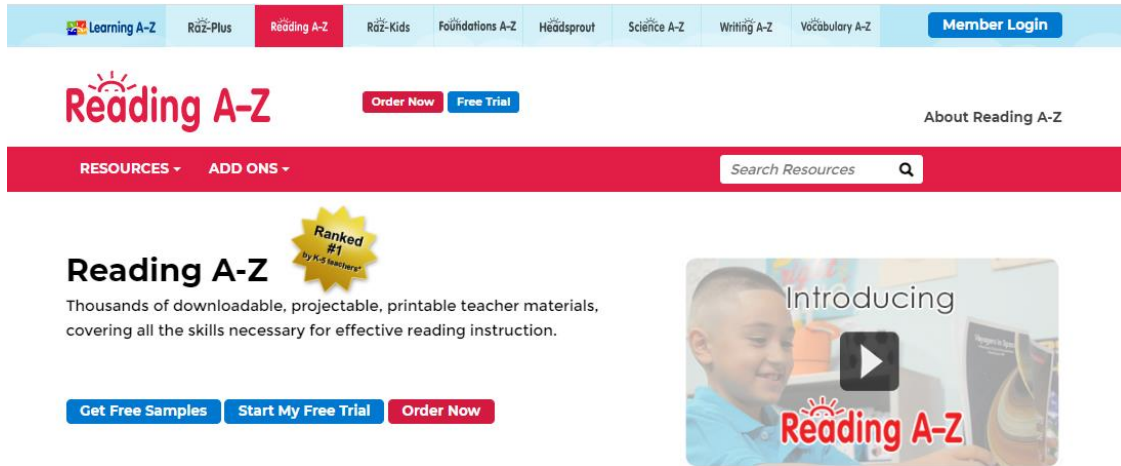


Figure 1. Sample of Reading A-Z Book and Worksheet

