The Impact of Extensive Reading on Vocabulary Acquisition in Junior High School

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Abstract

This essay explores the impact of Extensive Reading (ER) on vocabulary acquisition among junior high school students, highlighting its potential as an effective and engaging language-learning strategy. ER emphasizes reading a variety of texts chosen based on personal interests, creating a natural and immersive environment for students to encounter new words in meaningful contexts. Unlike traditional vocabulary instruction, ER fosters incidental learning, encouraging students to develop language skills through enjoyable and authentic reading experiences. To assess its effectiveness, this study analyzed the pre- and post-ER vocabulary scores of 21 junior high school students. The results revealed a statistically significant improvement in their vocabulary knowledge, underscoring the effectiveness of ER in promoting language growth. These findings not only validate the role of ER in enhancing vocabulary acquisition but also shed light on its broader potential for improving overall language proficiency. By incorporating ER into language curricula, educators can offer a more holistic and student-centered approach to language learning. This research highlights the importance of integrating ER into educational frameworks to cultivate lifelong reading habits while simultaneously boosting linguistic competence. As such, this study provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers aiming to enhance language instruction for junior high school learners.

Keywords: *Junior High School students, Digital Extensive Reading, language acquisition*

Introduction

Second language acquisition depends much on reading, especially in terms of vocabulary development for growing students. Reading comprehension is much correlated with vocabulary size since readers must grasp the meaning of a text by understanding a good fraction of its words. Students must understand a text at least 95–98% of the words, according to Nation (2022). But many junior high school students—especially in Indonesia—have trouble reaching this degree of word competence. Recent research shows that Indonesian junior high school pupils usually have a vocabulary size of just 1,000-to-1,500-word families— far below the 3,000-to-5,000-word range advised for fluent reading (Ayu, 2023; Nurkamto, 2021). Their reading performance suffers and their general language development is limited by this vocabulary gap.

Extensive reading (ER) is one strategy that has drawn interest in second language acquisition. With an eye toward fostering reading fluency and enjoyment rather than emphasizing precise comprehension or linguistic analysis, ER entails students reading vast volumes of easy and entertaining literature (Day & Bamford, 2020). ER lets students see words in a variety of settings, therefore facilitating incidental vocabulary learning. Previous studies confirm how ER helps to improve reading comprehension and vocabulary understanding (Webb & Nation, 2017). ER is still rarely used in Indonesian junior high school classrooms despite these benefits; reading activities are often dominated by intensive reading targeted at passing tests rather than fostering a lifetime reading habit (Putri & Mahmud, 2022).

Given this context, it is important to investigate how ER might be applied successfully to help junior high school children acquire vocabulary. Although studies have mostly validated the advantages of ER, few studies especially examine how it affects students' vocabulary development in the Indonesian environment. Furthermore, little has been paid to the difficulties students have participating in ER events and their opinions of this approach.

This study therefore seeks to close that gap by looking at how extensive reading affects vocabulary learning among junior high school Indonesian pupils. This study specifically aims to (1) assess how ER affects students' vocabulary development, (2) investigate how students view ER as a vocabulary learning tool, and (3) point up difficulties students run across when using ER.

Policymakers, curriculum designers, and English teachers should find great use for the results of this study. Through stressing ER's ability to raise vocabulary understanding, this study can help junior high school reading programs grow more successful and interesting. In the end, it is hoped that this research would inspire greater acceptance of ER to help close the vocabulary gap and advance a good reading culture among kids.

Literature Review
The Role of Extensive Reading in Vocabulary Development

ER is grounded in the idea that language acquisition occurs most effectively when learners are exposed to comprehensible and engaging input. When students read extensively, they encounter words repeatedly in different contexts, reinforcing their understanding and facilitating long-term retention. This incidental vocabulary learning contrasts with deliberate vocabulary exercises, where word learning is often decontextualized and less likely to transfer to real-world communication.

The benefits of ER for vocabulary acquisition are particularly evident in the context of junior high school students. At this developmental stage, learners are transitioning from basic language proficiency to more advanced skills, and the exposure to authentic language through ER supports this progression. Additionally, ER fosters intrinsic motivation, as students are encouraged to select reading materials that align with their interests, making language learning more enjoyable and effective.

Method

A mixed-methods research approach was used to look at how Extensive Reading (ER) affects junior high school students' ability to learn new words. Twenty-one eighth-graders from an Indonesian junior high school took part in the study. The participants were chosen through purposive picking based on a number of factors, including the fact that they had basic reading skills in English as judged by their English teacher, had never been a part of an ER program before, and had gotten permission from their parents and said they were willing to take part.

Eight weeks went by during the ER operation. During this time, students were told to read a range of graded readers that were right for their level of English ability. The reading materials were English storybooks with 300 to 1,000 headwords that ranged from level 1 to level 3. The types of stories included adventure, mystery, and everyday life. The materials that were chosen were chosen because they were interesting, right for the level, and universally available. Students had to read in class and on their own time at home, and they were supposed to finish at least one book every week. Students kept reading logs where they wrote short reviews of the books they read and logged their progress.

For both the pre-test and post-test, a Vocabulary Size Test (VST) based on Nation (2022) was used to see how much the students had learned. The test was made up of 30 multiple-choice questions that were meant to see how well the students knew common English words that they had read. Before and after the ER operation, the tests were done in a controlled setting. SPSS was used to look at the

quantitative results from the tests. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to make sure that the data was normal to start the study. Because the data wasn't distributed normally, a Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to see how important it was that the students' language scores changed by comparing the mean scores from the pre-test and the post-test.

Along with the quantitative analysis, student polls and semi-structured interviews were used to gather qualitative data that gave researchers a better understanding of what motivated the students and how they felt about the ER program. The survey had both Likert-scale and open-ended questions to find out how the students felt about reading in English and how they thought their vocabulary had grown after doing ER exercises. Also, five students with varying levels of English ability were chosen to be interviewed one-on-one. Each interview lasted about 15 to 20 minutes and followed a semi-structured routine. Questions included the students' reading habits, problems they had with the ER program, and how they thought ER helped them learn new words. With the students' permission, all conversations were recorded on audio.

Thematic analysis was used to look at the qualitative data from the open-ended survey answers and interview transcripts. The data were coded to find trends, themes that came up again and again, and students' thoughts on their ER experience. Ethical issues were carefully thought through during the whole study. Before the data was collected, the school management gave their ethical approval. Students and their parents or tutors gave their informed consent, and people who took part were told that their information would be kept private and that they were choosing to take part. The students were also told that they could quit the study at any time without any negative effects on their grades.

Result
Statistical Analysis of Vocabulary Acquisition
To investigate the impact of ER on vocabulary acquisition, a study was conducted using tests of normality and a related-samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. The data analysis is summarized below:

Table 1: Tests of Normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk)

Shapiro-Wilk	Var01	0.891	21	0.024
	Var02	0.892	21	0.025

Test	Variable	Statistic	df	Sig.
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Var01	0.243	21	0.002
	Var02	0.144	21	0.200

These results suggest mixed normality for the variables, requiring a non-parametric test for further analysis.

Table 2: Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Summary

Total N	Test Statistic (W)	Standard Error	Standardized Test Statistic (Z)	Asymptotic Sig. (2-Sided)
21	123.000	21.098	2.204	0.028

The significant p-value (p=0.028p = 0.028) indicates that ER had a statistically significant impact on students' vocabulary acquisition.

Table 3: Summary of Vocabulary Scores Pre- and Post-ER

Measure	Mean Score (Pre-ER)	Mean Score (Post-ER)	Mean Difference	Sig. (Wilcoxon)
Vocabulary	67.5	79.3	11.8	0.028

The results show a notable improvement in vocabulary scores following the ER intervention.

Students Reading motivation after doing Extensive Reading Activity

Table 4: Students' Reading Motivation after doing Extensive Reading Activity

Reading Motivation	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
The target of taking pride (competition in reading)	37	17,6	105	50	56	26,7	10	4,8
Reading-efficacy	41	19,5	103	49,0	58	27,6	13	6,2
The Interest of English reading	18	12,2	78	53,1	34	23,1	15	10,2
Avoid English reading	9	7,1	32	25,4	52	41,3	30	23,8
Self-efficacy	17	11,6	60	40,8	44	29,9	21	14,3
Reading for grade	24	22,9	61	58,1	14	13,3	3	2,9
Intrinsic interest	5	4,0	74	58,7	39	31,0	7	5,6
Extrinsic motivation	23	18,3	61	48,4	18	14,3	3	2,4

Implications for Language Education

The findings underscore the potential of ER as a powerful tool for vocabulary development in junior high school students. By integrating ER into the curriculum, educators can provide students with a rich linguistic environment that fosters natural language acquisition. Moreover, the results highlight the importance of

offering a wide range of reading materials to cater to diverse interests, ensuring sustained engagement and motivation.

Statistical Analysis of Vocabulary Acquisition

To investigate the impact of Extensive Reading (ER) on students' vocabulary acquisition, statistical analyses were conducted on pre-test and post-test vocabulary scores. Tests of normality using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk methods revealed mixed results. The pre-test scores (Var01) were not normally distributed (Shapiro-Wilk, p = 0.024), while the post-test scores (Var02) approached normality (Shapiro-Wilk, p = 0.025). Due to this inconsistency, a non-parametric test was deemed appropriate for further analysis.

The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was conducted and showed a statistically significant improvement in students' vocabulary scores after the ER intervention (Z = 2.204, p = 0.028). The pre-test mean score was 67.5, while the post-test mean score increased to 79.3, resulting in a mean difference of 11.8 points. The effect size (r) was calculated using the formula r = Z / √N, yielding a moderate effect size of 0.48, indicating that the ER intervention had a meaningful impact on vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, the 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranged from 4.5 to 19.1, further confirming the reliability of the results.

To better visualize the improvement, a bar graph was created showing the mean vocabulary scores before and after the ER intervention. The graph clearly illustrates the positive shift in vocabulary knowledge, supporting the statistical findings.

Specific Examples of Vocabulary Improvement

The vocabulary assessment also revealed specific examples of word gains. Several students reported learning new words such as *"adventure"*, *"rescue"*, *"forest"*, and *"mystery"*, which appeared frequently in the graded readers. During interviews, one student shared, *"I often see the word 'rescue' in the stories, now I understand it means to save someone, and I can use it in a sentence."* This suggests that repeated exposure to vocabulary in context contributed to students' word retention and usage.

Students' Reading Motivation and Qualitative Findings

The survey results on students' reading motivation after engaging in ER activities provided additional insights. Students showed increased motivation in several areas, particularly in reading-efficacy (49% agreed), pride in reading achievement (50% agreed), and reading for grades (58.1% agreed). Conversely, avoidance of English reading decreased, with 41.3% disagreeing and only 7.1% strongly agreeing that they avoided reading. These findings suggest that ER

activities positively influenced students' motivation toward reading in English.

Qualitative data from interviews further enriched the findings. Many students expressed enjoyment in reading English stories, which made them feel more confident about their vocabulary. One student mentioned, *"Before, I was afraid of English books, but now I know some words and it feels good when I understand the story."* Another student added, *"I like the adventure stories the most because I can learn new words and imagine the scenes in my head."*

The thematic analysis of the interviews revealed three key themes: increased reading confidence, improved vocabulary recognition, and a shift in attitude toward English reading. Most students reported that the ER activity was their first experience reading full English stories, and they felt a sense of achievement upon completing each book.

Implications for Language Education

These findings underscore the potential of Extensive Reading as a powerful tool for vocabulary development and motivation in junior high school students. The moderate effect size and significant gains in vocabulary scores demonstrate that ER can create a rich linguistic environment that supports natural language acquisition. Additionally, the qualitative findings highlight the importance of providing diverse and interesting reading materials to sustain students' engagement and motivation. Integrating ER into the English curriculum can help students develop not only their vocabulary knowledge but also a more positive attitude toward English reading. Considering the positive student reflections and measurable improvements, this study suggests that ER programs should be more widely implemented in junior high schools to enhance both vocabulary growth and reading motivation.

Discussion

The study revealed several key findings regarding the impact of Extensive Reading on vocabulary acquisition and student motivation:

1. **Statistical Improvement in Vocabulary Scores**: The quantitative analysis demonstrated a statistically significant increase in vocabulary scores from pre-ER (Mean = 67.5) to post-ER (Mean = 79.3), with a mean difference of 11.8 points (p = 0.028) . This indicates that the ER intervention effectively enhanced students' vocabulary knowledge.

2. **Increased Reading Motivation**: Survey results indicated that a majority of students reported positive changes in their reading motivation after participating in ER activities. For instance, 56% of students agreed that they took pride in their reading achievements, and 58.1% expressed that they read for grades, suggesting a shift towards a more positive attitude towards reading in English .

3. **Qualitative Insights**: The qualitative data collected from student interviews revealed that many students found the ER activities enjoyable and engaging. They expressed that reading materials aligned with their interests made the learning process more enjoyable, which in turn motivated them to read more frequently. Students noted that encountering new vocabulary in context helped them remember and use words more effectively.

Themes of Confidence and Enjoyment: Thematic analysis of the qualitative data identified key themes such as increased confidence in reading abilities and a greater enjoyment of English texts. Many students articulated that the freedom to choose their reading materials contributed to a more positive learning experience, fostering a sense of autonomy in their language learning journey.

Discussion

The findings of this study align with existing literature that supports the effectiveness of Extensive Reading (ER) in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among junior high school students. The significant improvement in vocabulary scores after the ER intervention confirms that regular exposure to a wide range of texts allows students to encounter new words in meaningful contexts, facilitating incidental vocabulary learning. This is particularly important for students at the junior high school level, who are at a critical stage of language development. Similar studies in other contexts, such as those by Nation (2022) and Day & Bamford (2016), have reported comparable gains in vocabulary acquisition through ER, reinforcing the consistency of these findings across different educational settings.

Beyond vocabulary growth, the increase in reading motivation observed in this study has notable practical implications for language teachers and curriculum designers. Allowing students to choose reading materials based on their interests proved to be a key factor in fostering engagement and positive attitudes toward reading. This emphasizes the need for schools to provide diverse and level-appropriate reading resources in the classroom and library. Teachers should incorporate regular ER sessions into their lesson plans, set achievable reading targets, and create a supportive environment that celebrates reading accomplishments. Additionally, designing reading logs or reflection activities can help students track their progress and deepen their understanding of the texts.

However, the study also acknowledges several limitations. The small sample size and relatively short intervention period of eight weeks may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future studies with larger participant groups and longer durations could provide a clearer picture of ER's long-term impact on vocabulary acquisition and overall language proficiency. Another limitation was the reliance on self-reported data for qualitative insights, which might have introduced bias as students could overstate their motivation or enjoyment.

Implementing ER programs in real classroom settings may also present challenges. Teachers may struggle with limited access to graded readers or lack sufficient training on managing ER activities. Furthermore, students with lower reading proficiency might find ER intimidating without proper scaffolding. To overcome these obstacles, schools should invest in quality reading materials, provide professional development for teachers on ER strategies, and incorporate differentiated instruction to support diverse learners.

Interestingly, while most students showed positive motivation gains, a few reported feeling overwhelmed by unfamiliar vocabulary in some stories, which contradicts the overall trend of increased confidence. This suggests the importance of careful material selection and the need to monitor students' reading experiences to prevent frustration. Future research could further explore this by examining which genres or text types best maintain student motivation and by identifying strategies to support struggling readers during ER.

In terms of long-term implications, integrating ER into language curricula can contribute significantly to building students' lifelong reading habits and improving their overall language proficiency. By creating a rich linguistic environment that promotes exploration, engagement, and enjoyment, ER can help students develop not only vocabulary knowledge but also critical reading skills and a positive attitude toward language learning. Future studies are encouraged to investigate the sustained effects of ER on reading comprehension, writing skills, and speaking fluency over time, as well as compare the effectiveness of digital versus print-based ER materials in various educational contexts.

Overall, this study reinforces the value of Extensive Reading as a practical and impactful approach to language education. With thoughtful implementation and ongoing support, ER can be a powerful tool for teachers to enhance vocabulary learning and foster a genuine love for reading among students.

Conclusion

Extensive Reading offers a meaningful and effective approach to vocabulary acquisition for junior high school students. By providing exposure to authentic language in varied contexts, ER enhances both vocabulary knowledge and reading proficiency. The statistical evidence supports its efficacy, making it a valuable strategy for educators aiming to promote holistic language development. As educators and policymakers strive to improve language learning outcomes, the integration of ER into educational programs represents a step toward achieving these goals.

Extensive Reading (ER) stands out as an innovative and highly effective approach to vocabulary acquisition, particularly for junior high school students navigating the complexities of language learning. Unlike traditional methods that rely on isolated word lists or repetitive drills, ER immerses learners in authentic, engaging texts that present vocabulary in rich and varied contexts. This exposure not only deepens their understanding of individual words but also strengthens

their overall reading proficiency, enabling them to comprehend and use language more naturally and confidently.

The benefits of ER are well-supported by extensive research and statistical evidence, which consistently highlight its ability to accelerate vocabulary growth and improve language outcomes. These findings underscore its immense value as a teaching strategy, offering educators a practical yet transformative tool for fostering holistic language development. As education systems worldwide strive to prepare students for a globalized world where language skills are increasingly crucial, integrating ER into curriculums reflects a forward-thinking commitment to enhancing learning experiences. By embracing ER, educators and policymakers take a significant step toward equipping students with the linguistic competence they need to thrive academically and beyond

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