

**THE USE OF LET'S READ APPLICATION IN READING BUDDIES
PROGRAM FOR GRADE VII STUDENTS AT MTS NURUL MUHAJIRIN,
MOSWAREN DISTRICT, SORONG, WEST PAPUA**

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Abstract

The School Literacy Movement (GLS) is a movement that aims to boost students' habits in reading, writing, and literacy skills. Some schools do a 15-minutes reading activity before class to do GLS. Knowing that some schools in remote areas do not have GLS and have limited English storybooks to read, this study aimed to apply a reading program called Reading Buddies using the Let's Read application in an English class. This study also aimed to find out whether the students are interested and motivated in reading English storybooks. This study used a survey method and collected data from teacher observations and questionnaires for students. The respondents were grade VII students at MTs Nurul Muhajirin in Moswaren, South Sorong, West Papua. The results showed that the Reading Buddies program using the Let's Read application could increase their reading interest and motivation.

Keywords: The School Literacy Movement (GLS), Reading Buddies, Let's Read application, reading interest, reading motivation

Introduction

Many English language teaching (ELT) experts believe that reading habit is essential for our students. Students who read regularly enjoy numerous language learning benefits; they become more fluent readers, know more words, develop more sophisticated grammar, become better speakers and writers and develop more positive attitudes towards learning (Renandya, 2015). In response to Indonesian students' low reading habit, the government released Permendikbud No. 23 of 2015 which known as School Literacy Movement or Gerakan Literasi Sekolah (GLS). The School Literacy Movement (GLS) is a movement that aims to boost students' habits in reading, writing, and literacy skills. One of the activities in GLS is reading 15-minute non learning books. That activity also aims to give students exposures on reading activities. The regular reading activity is believed to begin students' reading habit. According to Faizah et al. (2016), the activity of reading for 15 minutes promotes two benefits, namely increasing new vocabulary items, and providing extensive reading for the students. They illustrate that by doing regular 15-minute-reading, a student reaches 5,475 minutes of reading in a year, which means that there are 1 million words can be exposed. Some schools in Indonesia do a 15-minutes reading activity to read English or Indonesian books before class to do GLS. Unfortunately some schools in remote areas do not apply GLS. One of the

reasons is due to the limited time and limited books, more specifically English books.

In this globalisation era, teachers can use any resources from the gadget, internet or social media. One of the literacy resources can be used by teacher is Let's Read application, an android application that provides collections of graded reading materials. Knowing that some schools in remote areas do not have GLS and have limited English storybooks to read, it is necessary to build a reading habit in those schools by promoting a reading program as well as a rich reading resource like Let's Read application.

Objective of the Study

This study aims to apply a reading program called Reading Buddy using the Let's Read application in an English class for VII students at MTs Nurul Muhajirin in Moswaren, South Sorong, West Papua . This study also aims to find out whether the students are interested and motivated in reading English storybooks.

Literature Review

In this part, teaching reading, reading buddies, and let's read application will be explained. In addition, the use of Let's Read and Reading Buddies program in this study will be elaborated.

Teaching Reading

Reading is one of the main ways students get comprehensible language input. So, in place of the usual 'read-then-answer-the-comprehension-questions' approach, we can make better use of class time by having students do more reading (silent reading, paired reading, buddy reading, etc.) (Renandya & Day, 2020) Moreover, students can read the reading materials before they come to class. If the texts are easy and interesting, students will be motivated to read them (Renandya & Day, 2020). By having the reading habit before students come to class will equip students with good reading quantity and benefits. Bamford & Day (2004, p.1), write: Good things happen to students who read a great deal in the foreign language. Research studies show they become better and more confident readers, they write better, their listening and speaking abilities improve, and their vocabularies become richer. In addition, they develop positive attitudes toward and increased motivation to study the new language.

Day and Bamford (2002) determined what made reading habit successful, and then developed ten principles, some of them are:

1. The reading material is easy.
2. A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics is available.
3. Learners choose what they want to read.
4. Learners read as much as possible.
5. The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding.
6. Reading is individual and silent.

Let's Read Application



Figure 1. Let's Read Application

Since amount of reading is usually associated with a higher language learning benefits, schools usually have a sizeable collection of graded readers in their library. For well-resourced schools, the cost of purchasing graded readers may not be a huge problem. But for most schools in low resourced cities, the cost may simply be too prohibitively high (Renandya, 2020). Considering some principles what made reading habit successful, Let's Read Application is one of the appropriate reading resources. Let's Read! Was established by The Asia Foundation composes and translates children digital books. The collaboration among local authors, illustrators, and editors to produce high quality books provides more chances for Asian children to have enough or even more reading exposures using their gadgets. Classroom teacher can use any gadgets, such as smartphones or classroom's PC and projector. It provides collection of graded reading materials that can be easily accessed through gadgets. It has a variety of reading material on a wide range of topics. The students can choose their grades or levels of reading, and they can choose what they want to read.

Reading Buddies

Reading Buddies is a concept that pairs different grade-level classrooms for community reading time an upper-grade classroom connects with a lower-grade one and student's partner for time with books (Wheeler, 2018). Another meaning of reading buddies comes from teachervison.com. Reading buddies is a program in which two or more individuals read together. For example, older students can read with younger students, and volunteers from the community can read with students of all ages. A Reading Buddies program can help model good reading. As with any skill, reading needs to be practiced on a regular basis, and with this practice as well as modeling, students can improve their skills. A reading buddies program allows older students the opportunity to develop fluency as well as a sense of pride in their accomplishments. In addition, they often come to see the value of reading. Students can not only promote good practices but gain self-esteem. Repeatedly reading easier books has been shown to improve reading abilities in poor readers, and this program provides students with a reason to read easier books.

The use of Let's Read in Reading Buddies Program

This study will use Reading Buddies Program as well as the Let's Read Application. The program will be set in every English class, twice a week. It will be done 15 minutes before the class. One of the students will read aloud a story to the other students, then the students will choose any story that they want to read. All those activities use Let's Read Application. The steps to use Let's Read are: first, the students or the teacher need to install the application (Fig.2), secondly, after getting into the homepage, the students can set the language into English (Fig.3). Then, they can choose the level of the books, and the story they want to read (Fig.4). Finally, they can start to read.

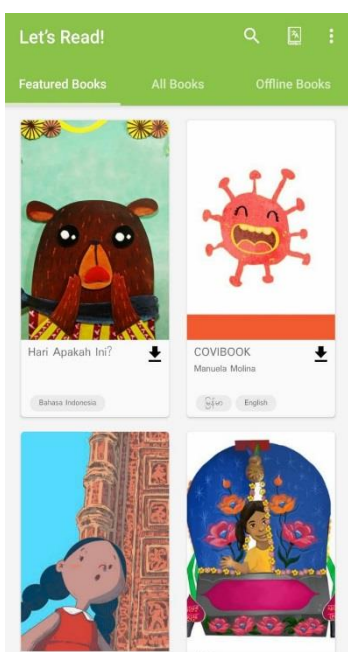


Figure 2. Homepage

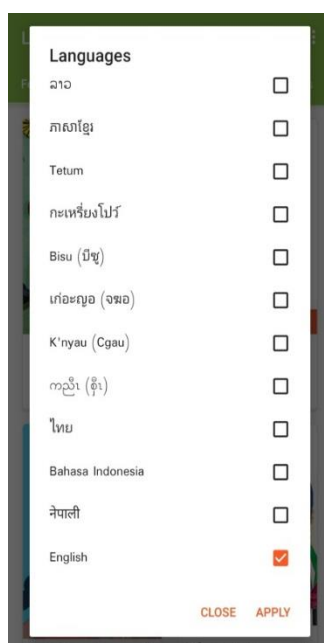


Figure 3. Language setting

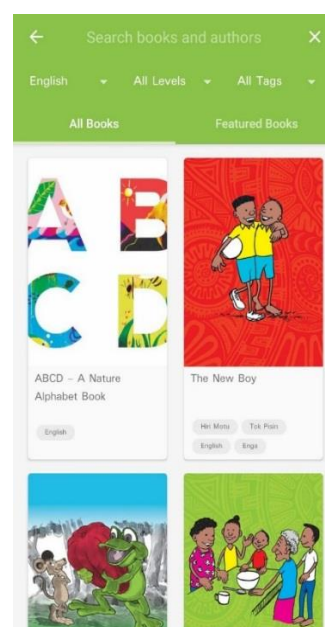


Figure 4. Level

Methodology

This study used survey to gather the data. The researcher used questionnaire to know whether the students are interested and motivated in reading English texts using Let's Read in Reading Buddies program. In addition, the English teacher in that school helped the researcher in doing observations. The respondents were grade VII students at MTs Nurul Muhajirin in Moswaren District, South Sorong, West Papua. The total respondents were 12 students. The program was done from January 2021 to March 2021. The students did 15 minutes reading activity before the English class twice a week, every Tuesday and Thursday. The researcher also did the observations through video calls and also watched the recordings of the activity. The data were analyzed and presented in the form of table and explained narratively.

In doing the research, the researcher faced some constraints. The teacher has not used ZOOM meeting yet, so the researcher used WhatsApp video call to do the observation. Another constraint was bad connection in Moswaren, so it was hard to do virtual meeting using video call with students and the teacher, also sometimes there electricity in Moswaren went off, and then the teacher recorded the activity and sent the videos to the researcher.

Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussion of this study covers the results of the questionnaire and teacher's observation. The set of questionnaire were delivered to the students after the program was done to gather information about their motivation in reading and their feeling towards the program done. The detail of the result is below:

Tabel 1. Result of Questionnaire

Description	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
I was happy when I used Let's Read.	12	100%	0	0%
The use of Let's Read and the Reading Buddies Program increased my motivation to read and learn English.	11	94%	1	6%
The use of Let's Read and the Reading Buddies Program improved my confidence in reading English text.	10	88%	2	12%
By using Let's Read, I felt comfort because I could choose the books based on my level of reading.	12	100%	0	0%

The table above shows that all students were happy, enjoy, and felt comfort in reading English text using Let's Read Application in Reading Buddies Program. Most of them also agreed that using Let's Read could improve their motivation to read and learn English, at 94%. While 88% stated that the application and the program could improve their confidence in reading the English texts. The researcher helped by the teacher also observed students' attention, students' motivation to read and response actively during the class. Based on observation, most of the students had good attention and had motivation to participate during the activity.

Conclusion

The results of this study lead to the conclusion that Let's Read and Reading Buddies Program can be used in developing students' interests and motivation in reading text, more specifically English texts. Those application and program improved students' motivation and confidence in reading and learning English. They also agreed that they felt comfort and they were happy in reading and learning English. Referring to the good result in this study, other researchers related to find out challenging strategies, programs, or applications in improving students' interests or mastery in reading are still needed.

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