

INVESTIGATING EXTENSIVE READING EFFECTS TO THE EYL'S ONLINE LEARNING VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE

Gabriella Cynthia Kusumadewi¹ and K. M. Widi Hadiyanti²

^{1,2}Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia

gabriellacynthia10@gmail.com¹ and widi.hadiyanti@atmajaya.ac.id²

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Abstract

An investigation of the issues if Extensive Reading (ER) might upshot EYL (English Young Learners)' vocabulary knowledge in online learning was accomplished. It was followed by uncovering the students' attitude. Thirty two fifth graders of a private school were to join an activity of reading outside classes. The participants undertaken a treatment dealing with one of two online Graded Readers from their own choice for a period of a month. The scores of the online pre-test and post-test regarding the students' vocabulary cognition were then compared and explored. Even though the difference between the score averages was from the one below the school passing grade standard for English subject to that above it, the result of SPSS analysis displayed that ER was not effective to enhance the subjects' vocabulary development. Despite of the fact, the PSL students' responses to the questionnaire concerning their experiences during the ER program revealed that they enjoyed the activity and gained benefits of it.

Keywords: effect, extensive reading, EYL, online learning, vocabulary knowledge

Introduction

The circumstances of Covid-19 pandemic have made a massive shift in online learning systems, it was because the application of online class had to be done simultaneously all-over elementary school and higher education. Over the past decade, numerous researchers have discussed the significance and the role of reading in students' second language learning. The variation of words in written texts is richer than that in oral discussion (Horst, 2005; Nation, 2001). It is the receptive approach in English learning such as extensive reading that can contribute to learners' success in acquiring a higher level of reading competence (Senoo & Yonemoto, 2014). Extensive Reading (ER) builds vocabulary and expands it further through exposure to a large variety of words over and over again. In order to obtain a strong memory retention in vocabulary learning, L2 learners need to be exposed to the same words as often as possible. ER exposes the reader to the same words numerous times, so the words may retain in learner's mind. Chien (2015) stated that teachers could provide reading materials that were suitable for English Young Learner (EYL)'s levels and skills. It would help them learn new words effectively

because vocabulary was one of key components that had to be mastered by the students in learning a new language.

Attitude is a process where someone respond in consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a certain subject. Someone's attitudes are collected from various forms of judgments (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Yamashita, 2013). ER is one the reading methods that will improve students' attitudes. Juan and Cheng (2008) claimed that EYL's attitudes towards reading could increase with the use of ER. There are many aspects affecting EYL's attitudes such as age, gender, and language proficiency level. Some problems involved in investigating vocabulary learning through extensive reading have been discussed by L2 researchers and teachers (Horst, 2005). The first problem in learning vocabulary for EYL's was the students' lack of identifying grammatical structure of words. Next was that younger readers were introduced to fewer words than older readers due to their language levels. It means that young learners have limited assets of words. The third was that most children might have factual knowledge of a term but not the functional concept. As a result, most of them had low vocabulary knowledge. Ahour and Salamzadeh (2014) state that the primary construction piece of a language is vocabulary, it is because sentences, paragraphs and texts are made from a component of word meaning. Therefore, learners should know more about English vocabulary if they want to be able to speak and use English. The more vocabulary they acquire, the better their ability in English will be. The aim of this research was to find out the effects of ER in improving English Young Learners' vocabulary knowledge during online learning classrooms and learners' attitudes towards the use of ER activity in their vocabulary knowledge. Hence, this study was conducted to answer the research questions as follows:

1. Is extensive reading effective in improving English Young Learners' vocabulary knowledge?
2. How significant is the improvement of the E Y L's vocabulary knowledge after the extensive reading (ER) activity?
3. What are the students' attitudes towards the use of ER activity in their vocabulary knowledge?

Literature Review

There are four points of attention to be deliberated in the followings to support our discussions specifically Vocabulary Learning, Extensive Reading, Online Learning, as well as English Young Learners' Attitudes.

Vocabulary Learning

According to Richards and Renandya (2002), vocabulary is a key component in improving PSL students' language proficiency and is the basis for how well student listen, read, speak and write. Teaching vocabulary to English Young Learner (EYL) is very important. Penfield as cited in Stern (1983) said that the younger the age of the learners are better in foreign language learning compares to adults or teenagers. It means that even though EYL learn English as a new thing, they could be better in learning vocabulary than teenagers or adults who might have a previous knowledge beforehand. Kung (2003) as cited in Sitompul (2020) stated that there were important aspects in EYL's vocabulary learning such as appropriate

instruction. The teacher had to facilitate EYL in terms of increasing students' phonemic awareness. Since young learners tended to do simple activities, the teacher could use cognitive strategies like verbal and written repetition. Various materials in different context could help teachers introduce a suitable vocabulary learning techniques for young learners. Teaching English to young learners was different from teaching English to adults. It was because young learners had their own characteristics which needed special treatment because of their unpredictable moods. For EYL, it is necessary for the teachers to make the language learning process as fun as possible to make children enjoy their learning. Lessons and activities could become successful when those fulfilled learners' learning needs (Cameron, 2001). Ellis (2005) endorsed the importance of substantial amounts of input for L2 acquisition and argued that extensive reading was one of the easiest approach of pedagogically exploring the input-rich learning environment.

Extensive Reading

Extensive Reading (ER) is also called self-voluntary reading, pleasure reading, and sustainable silent reading. The crucial part of ER is mainly massive amount of materials, so that students receive pleasure from reading while getting the general idea of the text at the same time (Susser and Rob, 1990). ER materials is a key component in students' commitment to ER. The more interesting the story of the book, the more students' interest rises. If they manage to spend time to read often, they will find an increase in their vocabulary knowledge. Students can read any type of book. Graded readers help determine the appropriate reading materials for students at certain level because new vocabulary and grammatical structures are repeated in graded readers for students to become familiar with them. If they have chosen a book suitable to their own level, they may understand most of the vocabulary and grammar elements.

When English Young Learner (EYL) is concerned, it is difficult to decide the appropriate reading options because there are too many students with diverse levels and variety needs of reading comprehension in the language learning classroom. These are important aspects when it comes to EYL's reading activities: skills, reading drive and student's characteristics. Two characteristics such as internal and external reading motivation conclude that the children's choice of reading is strongly related (Norgate & Duncan, McGeown, Osborne, Warhurst, 2016). Young learners' characteristics play a role in students' motivation in ER activity, students at this age need a lot of support from the teacher and people around them. Following the theory, pleasure reading without the obligations to find all of the new words can greatly improve students' language skills (Green & Oxford, 1995, as cited in Brown, 2000).

Online Learning

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected more than 200 countries worldwide from the year of 2020 to this day. The government issued policies such as self-isolation, social distancing to community activities restrictions enforcement or known as *PPKM* in Indonesia. The ministry of education and culture made a decision to close down schools to prevent the spread of the virus. As a result, students had to stay at home and learn from home (Fauzi and Khusuma, 2020). These conditions forced

educational institutions to adapt to online learning methods in a timely manner. Online learning was defined as learning experiences in synchronous and asynchronous environments using different devices (e.g., mobile phones, laptops, etc.) with internet access. In these environments, students could be anywhere (independent) to learn and interact with instructors and other students (Singh and Thurman, 2019).

Hart and Carta (1994) claimed that vocabulary knowledge was a dominant indicator of students' progress in language learning. They found that vocabulary knowledge was vital in students' reading achievement. Online vocabulary teaching differentiated each student's experience in language learning and raise the recognition of learning strategies which could be useful for the students even after the classroom had been dismissed (Atay and Ozbulgan, 2007). In a way, this activity helped students become independent learners and further motivated them to improve their vocabulary knowledge.

English Young Learners' Attitudes

Attitude is a process which happens in someone's mind as a response to something they listen, see or do. It could be classified as positive and negative attitude. According to Fishbein & Ajzen as cited in Yamashita (2013), attitude was a learned predisposition to respond in consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to given object. EYL's attitudes varied because attitudes were collected from many forms of judgments. Attitudes could progress from the following: affect, behavioral change, and cognition. Learners' preference for a system was a form of physiological response. Meanwhile, verbal indication of learners' plan was called the behavioral intention. Cognitive assessment of the system to form an attitude was called the cognitive response. Most attitudes in learners were a result of observational learning from their surroundings (Mughtar, 2015).

Reading attitude is defined as a state of mind related to reading which makes the learners approach or avoid a reading situation. There are three aspects that affect learners' reading attitudes. First is learners' beliefs about the benefits from reading. Second, it deals with learners' expectations of others based on their motivation to conform to those expectations. Third is learners' reading experiences. PSL learners' perceptions towards reading would create a behavior which is shown from their response to certain subjects whether it is relatively positive or negative. Consequently, some studies also support that if ER is executed accordingly. It could enhance EYL's attitudes towards the use of ER activity in their vocabulary learning (Rojak, 2018).

Method

Mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative were used in this research to measure the effects of Extensive Reading (ER) in improving EYL's vocabulary knowledge and learners' attitudes towards the use of ER to their vocabulary knowledge. The participants were 32 Year-5 students from a private elementary school in Jakarta, Indonesia. The participants were gathered in one experimental group. They were at the age of 9 to 11 years, consisted of 58.1% female and 41.9% male. The students' native language was Indonesian and they were learning English

as a foreign language. Fifth grade students were more exposed to a larger quantity of vocabulary items than those in lower grades. Meanwhile, the sixth-grade students were occupied with the preparation of final exams. Hence, it was decided to make fifth grade students as the main subjects of this research.

To collect the data, the instruments used for the research were vocabulary knowledge pre-test and post-test, as well as a questionnaire about students' attitudes towards the use of Extensive Reading (ER). The vocabulary knowledge pre-test and post-test were in a format of multiple choices. The tests consisted of 20 vocabulary items regarding the students' knowledge of words found in the reading materials. For the questionnaires, it was also delivered online via Google Forms consisting of 13 statements and 2 open-ended questions. The questionnaire was around students' experience after joining the ER program whether they enjoyed the activity and benefitted something out of it. For the 13 close-ended questions, the students had to answer if they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the statements. The questionnaire was adopted from Ferdila (2014). It was used to measure the percentage in terms of students' fondness of the activity using interval score as the fundamental measurement. The 2 open-ended questions were to share about their experience which could explore more in depth of students' attitudes towards the use of ER in their vocabulary knowledge.

The data were collected over 4 weeks from March to April 2021. It was conducted upon the participant's agreement to take part in the study along with the headmaster and teacher's permissions to hold the study at the school. There were two online meetings on Zoom for the study due to Covid-19 pandemic. Before the test, a presentation was to elicit the benefits of extensive reading to students. Then, the students took a vocabulary knowledge pre-test by accessing the link on Google Forms where they had to answer 20 items of multiple choices questions in a duration of 18 minutes. Later, graded readers reading materials were provided for the students to engage in Extensive Reading (ER) program concurrently for 4 weeks. The two books chosen from the ER foundation graded readers list were: (1) *The Phantom Airman* by Allan Frewin Jones and (2) *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. The first book had 66 pages and the second one had 85 pages. They were suggested by the ER foundation graded readers list from the Macmillan sections because the language level met the English proficiency of fifth grade students in an EFL context.

At the end of the treatment, another link was for the students to respond to the questionnaire which consisted of 13 statements and 2 open-ended questions to get an insight of students' experiences in the ER program with the reasons behind their opinion on ER activity. The students were asked to respond to the questionnaire on Google Forms in 4 minutes.

The numbers of words the participant scored on the pre-test and post-test were counted individually and the scores' differences between the two tests were calculated to see the vocabulary growth. Afterwards, the scores of each test were compared and explored through a descriptive and an inferential analysis using statistics measurement. The test involved vocabulary items the participants' acquired throughout the treatment. After that, the vocabulary growth was seen by calculating the reliability score and correlations coefficient between the two

variables which consisted of the vocabulary knowledge pre-test and post-test using SPSS statistical software.

Findings and Discussion

The combination of the quantitative and qualitative analysis led to insights about the PSL students' vocabulary improvement as well as their attitudes towards the use of Extensive Reading headed for their vocabulary knowledge during online learning classrooms.

The Vocabulary Knowledge Pre-Test and Post-Test

The vocabulary pre-test was administered on March, 17th 2021 and the post-test was done on April, 21st 2021. The results of the analysis showed that from 32 students who successfully participated in the study, both scores of the pre-test and the post-test had positive correlation with each other (Pre-test $r = .559$; Post-test $r = .559$) and the $p = .001$ ($\alpha < 0.01$). It was proven to be significant. The implication of the correlation statistics supported the ground for concluding the data (rater scores) which were reliable and appropriate to become the basis of further investigation. The results exhibited the descriptive statistics for each variable. In the further analysis, the mean score of the pre-test was $14.28 \times 5 = 71.4$. Meanwhile, the school's minimum score to pass the English subject was 75 out of 100. The mean score of the pre-test showed that the PSL students' vocabulary knowledge was below the school's minimum score at the beginning of the treatment. Therefore, the vocabulary knowledge post-test was administered after the PSL students were engaged in an extensive reading program for a month. It was later found that the mean score of the post-test was $15.34 \times 5 = 76.7$ (slightly above the minimum score to be acquired by the students at that school).

The correlations coefficient and inferential statistics of the results from the vocabulary knowledge pre-test and post-test was that the $p = .072$ corresponded to the $t = 1.859$ with 31 degrees of freedom. It shows that the improvement between vocabulary knowledge pre-test and post-test is proven to be insignificant as $p = .072$ ($\alpha > 0.05$). Despite of the students' post-test mean scores that reached the school's minimum score to pass the English subject, these numbers showed that PSL students only gain a small amount of improvement which was less than 10% (0.5) in their vocabulary knowledge tests' scores. Therefore, it indicated a strong evidence that the results of the vocabulary knowledge tests corresponded to the statistically insignificant p-value.

The Questionnaire

The analysis to the students' responses to the 13 statements showed that almost all of them (96.7%) agreed that ER activities helped them in developing their vocabulary knowledge. Whereas, 80.6% of them approved that the story of the reading materials was interesting for their age. In addition, there were 77.5% of students granted that reading homework was a beneficial assignment. The same amount of students supported that ER was an interesting routine activity in their English class. Less than three third of students disagreed that they faced difficulty in reading without teacher's guidance. On the other hand, 74.2% of students agreed that group discussion encouraged them in sharing the information from the text they

read. More two third (67.8%) disagreed that they were not interested in reading English if there was no assignment. Meanwhile, there were more than half of students agreed that reading homework was a fun assignment. Whereas, 51.6% of them disagreed that there was a lot of homework. Therefore, it was displayed that more than half of students had positive attitudes towards the use of ER in their vocabulary knowledge. It meant that the majority of PSL students had a pleasant experience in ER activity as they were happy to be involved in the activity, and planned on reading the whole book offered by the teacher. This affected their overall attitudes towards ER. In applying the interval score in scale by Sugiono (2012), it was found out that ER became a favorable activity for the PSL students with a total score of 1148 out of 1872, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. EYL's Attitudes towards the Use of Extensive Reading

No.	Statements	SA %	A %	D %	SD %	Score for each statement
1.	I am not interested in reading English if there is no assignment.	6.5	25.8	48.4	19.4	68
2.	Reading homework is a fun assignment.	19.4	48.4	25.8	6.5	87
3.	Reading homework is a beneficial assignment.	19.4	58.1	16.1	6.5	90
4.*	I face difficulty in reading without teacher's guidance.	6.5	19.4	48.4	25.8	91
5.	The story of the reading materials is interesting for my age.	25.8	54.8	16.1	3.2	94
6.	I understand more vocabulary after the extensive reading activity.	16.1	58.1	19.4	6.5	88
7.*	There is a lot of homework.	22.6	25.8	35.5	16.1	76
8.	Extensive reading is an interesting activity.	19.4	58.1	16.1	6.5	90
9.	Extensive reading activities help me in developing my vocabulary.	32.2	64.5	0	3.2	101
10.	Extensive reading activities increase my confidence in reading English.	32.2	38.7	25.8	3.2	93
11.	Group discussion encourages me in sharing the information from the text that I have read.	25.8	48.4	22.6	3.2	92
12.	I agree if extensive reading as a routine activity in my English class.	22.6	54.8	16.1	6.5	91
13.	I plan on finish reading the whole book provided by the teacher.	16.1	54.8	22.6	6.5	87
Total Score						1148
Ideal Score						1872

Note that number 4 and 7 are negative statements.

Dealing with students' reading time as Figure 1 illustrates, 5mins indicates the range of reading time between 15 to 29 minutes, 30mins (30-59 minutes), 1hr (60-119 minutes), 2hr (120-179 minutes), 4hr (240-299 minutes), and 5hr (300-359 minutes). It revealed that more than one third of students spent an hour of their day to read the available book. Some students, 21.9%, spent 2 hours to read daily and 18.8% of them read for 30 minutes only. Less than a quarter of students spent less than 30 minutes to read per day, whereas a small percentage of students stated that they read for 4-5 hours. It meant that most of the students did not spend sufficient time to read outside of the classroom. Since students' engagement in reading was crucial in a successful ER program, these findings heavily affected students' outcome.



Figure 1. The Chart for EYL's Reading Time a Day

Table 2. shows the PSL students' responses to the last open-ended question. More than half of students stated that they liked ER activity because it helped them learn many unfamiliar words to later work on their follow up activities. They added that the story of the book was interesting for them. Whereas, those who were neutral stated that they did not have a specific feeling, they had no idea what to feel about ER. Meanwhile, the students who thought that ER was a fun activity commented that it was very useful for their vocabulary learning too. However, a few of them stated that they hated the ER activity because they did not like to read whatsoever. Anyhow, the findings put forward that PSL students' attitudes towards the use of ER were mostly positive in improving their vocabulary knowledge (as declared by almost three third of the participants).

Table 2. EYL's Opinion about the ER Program

Students' Responses	Quantity	%
Students liked ER because of the story of the book, and unfamiliar words they learned.	19	59.4
Students did not have a specific feeling about ER (neutral).	7	21.9
Students thought that ER was a fun activity because it was useful to learn vocabulary.	4	12.5
Students hated ER because they do not like reading at all.	2	6.2

Discussion

SPSS analysis displayed that the PSL students' scores differences between the pre-test and the posttest were insignificant. To appropriately address the results, they should be interpreted with caution. According to Day and Bamford as cited in Miller (2012), to implement a successful ER program, the following characteristics should emerge: the student spends plenty of time to read outside of the class, the students choose reading materials that interest them, the reading materials meet students' levels of difficulty in reading, the main purpose of the reading activity is for pleasure so that the students obtain the information for general comprehension. Last but not least, the teacher keeps record and track what each student has read. However, the findings showed that some students only spent an hour of their day to read the book. The rest of them even read less than 30 minutes on a day-to-day basis. It indicated that the majority of students did not read the text as often as they should have. It resulted in PSL students' small vocabulary growth. Further stated that students had to read the book as much as possible, but the participants in this research did not do as expected. That might explain why the ER treatment was not effective in improving PSL students' vocabulary knowledge.

There are likewise possible reasons to further support the findings, it was because the study was done through asynchronous learning. Bijeesh, 2017, as cited in Sadeghi, M., (2019) argued that the chances of getting distracted and missing school's deadlines were high because the lack of real-life interaction between students with teacher and students with peers. It was difficult to keep record and track students' reading progress because the learning process in terms of clarifications and explanations were easier to be done with face- to-face encounter between a teacher and students. Therefore, it was exceedingly hard for the teacher to monitor students' engagement in reading assignment because students fully relied on their time management skills. Consequently, since the tests for assessments was done online, the researcher could not control or regulate students' poor activities in terms of students' performance in school's assignment or tests. PSL students had to rely on their own responsibility to complete a task according to the time allocated. Learning readiness, learning performance, and learning satisfaction were the crucial things that teachers could not monitor during online learning (Hung et al., 2010). That might explain the insignificant scores differences between the pre-test and post-test.

Birkenveit (2018) specifies that it is possible that the students need a greater variety of reading materials within each reading level and genre in order to have a real choice of material. As autonomy and word noting choice is crucial for students' motivation in order for them to spend a sufficient reading time. The options of two graded readers from the present study might be too limited for the students' preferences or interests in comparison to the previous study as it was shown on students' reading engagement in the materials. Furthermore, the other aspect was the short period of the ER program, the subjects might not have an adequate time to improve their reading habits. If the students had participated in a longer ER program, the results could have been different (Song, 2020). Lastly, even though students' perceptions about their vocabulary knowledge were found affirmative after the ER program, the duration of the treatment for the present study was fairly brief to see any remarkable improvement.

Conclusion

In regard to the findings of this study, we can conclude that ER is not effective in improving PSL students' vocabulary knowledge. It showed that online learning had several disadvantages that contributed to the results of PSL students' vocabulary knowledge pre-test and post-test. It turned out that students could not perform as well as in offline classrooms. The possible explanation of the findings was students' lack of interactions or relations with peers or educators during online learning affected their performance in school's assignment. Therefore, the findings bring implications for the academic world that ER is insignificant to increase PSL students' vocabulary knowledge during 4-week treatment. The duration of the treatment could be one of the feasible reasons of the findings. The other reasons were that students had difficulty in managing their time during online learning and it resulted in their performance in reading home assignment and their lack of engagement in the reading materials. However, PSL students had positive attitudes towards their experience in ER activity which was shown on their responses to the questionnaire.

Concerning with vocabulary learning as it is related to extensive reading, the conclusion brought some of the following suggestions. First, the learner should write a vocabulary notebook as a reference to the words they encountered during ER to increase their vocabulary knowledge. According to Kung (2003) as cited in Sitompul (2020), young learners tend to do simple activities, the teacher can use cognitive strategies like verbal and written repetition. Second, the teacher should incorporate interesting learning strategies such as graphic form, where the teacher can underline or make a flashcard of the target words as well as make a small group discussion so students no longer learn in isolation, the main purpose is to keep students motivated throughout the ER program. Third, further researchers could conduct two groups experimentation consisting of a control and an experimental group to gauge the effects of ER in PSL students' vocabulary knowledge. It is to see the contrast between the two groups' results prior and subsequent to the treatment. In regard to that, the researcher may also include specific questions about ER on the open-ended questions so that the data could be more detailed for the purpose of discussion. More titles of the books available may provide options for the students to enjoy their reading outside class so they can get pleasure and at the same time improve their vocab knowledge. Finally, a longer treatment duration may also be conducted to achieve significant results.

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