

THE EFFECT OF THE LET'S READ ASIA APPLICATION ON ENHANCING STUDENTS' ENGLISH READING ABILITY ON PAKET B AT PKBM MEKAR TEGAL IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2024/2025

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of the Let's Read Asia application in improving students' English reading abilities, particularly focusing on descriptive texts. The research was conducted at PKBM Mekar Tegal, involving seventh-grade Paket B students during the academic year 2024/2025. A quasi-experimental design was used, with one experimental group using the application and a control group receiving traditional teaching methods. Pre-tests and post-tests were conducted to assess reading abilities, and the data were analyzed using SPSS version 27. The results revealed a significant improvement in the experimental group's reading skills, with a mean post-test score of 78.00 compared to the control group's score of 61.50. The paired sample t-test results indicated statistical significance ($p < 0.001$), confirming that the Let's Read Asia application positively impacted students' motivation, vocabulary acquisition, and reading comprehension. The findings suggest that the application is an effective tool for enhancing English reading skills in non-formal education settings.

Keywords: Let's Read Asia, English reading comprehension, descriptive text, digital learning, non-formal education

1 INTRODUCTION

English is a vital global language that opens doors to better education and career opportunities for learners worldwide (Ahmad, 2016). Effective English learning requires mastery of the four language skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—supported by vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (H. D. Brown, 2017). However, Indonesia faces serious literacy challenges; the reading interest index is extremely low at 0.001%, and Indonesian students rank among the lowest globally in reading proficiency (UNESCO, 2012, as cited in Nurhayati et al., 2020; PISA, 2012). Contributing factors include limited access to reading materials, lack of motivation, and insufficient support systems.

Reading comprehension, defined as the active process of extracting meaning from texts (Ahmadi, 2017), is fundamental for EFL learners. In Indonesia, English is the first foreign language taught at the secondary level, both in formal and non-formal education, such as Package B programs (Sukyadi, 2015; Sudjana, 2015). Package B provides opportunities for those who have not completed formal lower secondary education. Nevertheless, students in these programs often struggle with vocabulary, sentence structure, and maintaining interest when reading English texts, resulting in reading abilities below the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM).

The integration of technology-based media is seen as a promising approach to address these challenges. As noted by Molla (2018), effective teaching strategies and a supportive environment, including the use of digital applications, are crucial for comfortable and engaging learning experiences. The Let's Read Asia application offers leveled, illustrated digital stories that are accessible and engaging for students, helping to gradually improve their reading skills (Farhani et al., 2022; Christ et al., 2019). Nurfadiya & Susilo (2025) highlight that, although designed for children, the application's simple language, visual aids, and structured levels also benefit adolescent learners with low reading proficiency.

Based on these considerations, this study investigates the effect of the Let's Read Asia application on enhancing English reading abilities among seventh-grade Package B students at PKBM Mekar Kota Tegal. The research aims to assess students' reading skills before and after using the application and to determine its effectiveness as a technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) tool, which emphasize the role of technology in improving language learning outcomes (Chapelle, 2003).

This study stands apart from previous research because it focuses on non-formal education settings in Community Learning Centers (PKBM), where students come from a variety of backgrounds and age

groups, as opposed to the more homogeneous populations found in regular schools. Using a quantitative approach with pre- and post-tests, this study seeks to give empirical data on the usefulness of the Let's Read Asia application in increasing reading abilities among Package B pupils. This method not only broadens our understanding of technology integration in literacy programs, but it also meets the specific requirements and learning styles of adult and adolescent learners in non-formal contexts. According to Jamaludin, contextual and innovative tactics that match with students' life experiences, such as digital storytelling and application-based reading media, are beneficial at improving reading comprehension and literacy (Sulistianingsih & Jamaludin, 2020). By harnessing technology and responding to the flexible character of PKBM situations, this study aims to provide practical insights for improving English reading competency in a variety of educational settings.

2 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative approach. This approach is defined by Sugiyono, (2011) as a scientific method since it follows scientific ideas, with a quasi-experimental design to investigate the effect of the Let's Read Asia application on the English reading skills of seventh-grade Package B students at PKBM Mekar, Tegal City. The research involved two groups: an experimental group that received instruction using the Let's Read Asia application and a control group that followed traditional learning methods. Both groups consisted of 10 students each, selected using purposive sampling from a population of 30 students. An additional 10 students were used for pilot testing the instruments.

The main instrument for data collection was a standardized reading comprehension test, administered as both a pre-test and a post-test to measure students' abilities before and after the intervention. The test included multiple-choice questions based on descriptive texts, with performance evaluated using a scoring rubric covering literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, vocabulary, and organization. To ensure validity and reliability, the instruments were piloted and tested statistically.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, while normality and homogeneity tests ensured that assumptions for parametric testing were met. The primary analysis utilized a paired sample t-test to compare pre-test and post-test results within and between groups, determining the significance of the Let's Read Asia application's impact on students' reading abilities. If the p-value was less than 0.05, the intervention was considered to have a significant positive effect.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Test Instrument Data Analysis

3.1.1 Normality Test

Table 3.1 Normality Test Result

Kelas		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Hasil	pre-Eks	0,130	10	.200*	0,948	10	0,649
	post-Eks	0,191	10	.200*	0,875	10	0,114
	pre-Kontrol	0,140	10	.200*	0,979	10	0,962
	post-Kontrol	0,233	10	0,132	0,911	10	0,288

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The normality test in this study was carried out to determine whether the data collected were normally distributed, utilizing SPSS version 27 with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. The results demonstrated that all significance values for the pre-test and post-test scores in both the experimental and control groups exceeded 0.05. Specifically, the experimental group's pre-test significance values

were 0.200 (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) and 0.649 (Shapiro-Wilk), while the control group's pre-test values were 0.200 and 0.962, respectively. For the post-test, the experimental group obtained 0.200 (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) and 0.114 (Shapiro-Wilk), whereas the control group reached 0.132 and 0.288. Since all p-values were above the 0.05 threshold, it can be concluded that the data in both groups were normally distributed. This finding validates the assumption of normality required for subsequent parametric statistical analyses, such as the paired sample t-test, thus ensuring the reliability of the interpretation of further results in this research.

3.1.2 Homogeneity Test

Table 3.2 Homogeneity Test

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Hasil	Based on Mean	0,006	1	18	0,941
	Based on Median	0,023	1	18	0,881
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	0,023	1	17,948	0,881
	Based on trimmed mean	0,007	1	18	0,936

After confirming normality, a homogeneity test was conducted using SPSS version 27 to determine whether the variances of the experimental and control groups were equal. The results, as shown in Table 4.1.9, indicated a significance value of 0.941, which is well above the threshold of 0.05. This demonstrates that the data variances between the two groups are homogeneous, meaning there is no significant difference in variance and the samples are comparable. The fulfillment of this assumption further supports the validity of using parametric statistical tests in the subsequent analysis.

3.1.3 Descriptive Statistics

Table 3.3 Descriptive Analysis Result

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
preEks	10	30	75	53,00	14,944
postEks	10	60	90	78,00	10,853
preKT	10	25	70	45,00	13,944
postKT	10	40	75	61,50	10,288
Valid N (listwise)	10				

A descriptive statistical analysis of pre-test scores revealed that, in the control group, the majority of students (eight out of ten) fell into the low proficiency category (scores 0-59), with only one student in the medium category (60-69) and one at the lower end of the high category (70-79); no students scored above 80. Similarly, in the experimental group, six students were rated as low, two as medium, and only two as high (70-79), with none scoring more than 80. These findings show that, previous to the intervention, both groups had typically low levels of English reading competence, with very few children demonstrating greater competency in reading descriptive texts. This baseline underlines the importance of focused interventions to enhance reading skills among Package B students.

3.1.4 Paired Sample T-Test

Table 3.4 Descriptive Analysis Result

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	preEks - postEks	-25,000	11,304	3,575	-33,086	-16,914	-6,994	9	0,000
Pair 2	preKT - postKT	16,500	13,550	4,285	-26,193	-6,807	-3,851	9	0,004

After confirming that the data met assumptions of normality and homogeneity, the paired sample t-test was conducted using SPSS version 27 to evaluate the effect of the Let's Read Asia application on students' English reading abilities. The results showed a significance (2-tailed) value of <0.001 for the experimental group (Pair 1) and 0.004 for the control group (Pair 2), both well below the 0.05 threshold. This indicates statistically significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores in both groups. Specifically, the experimental group showed a mean improvement of 25 points ($t = -6.994$), while the control group improved by 16.5 points ($t = -3.851$). These results clearly demonstrate that the intervention, particularly the use of the Let's Read Asia application, had a substantial positive impact on students' English reading proficiency.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study indicate that the Let's Read Asia application has a notable impact on enhancing students' English reading skills, especially in comprehending descriptive texts. The experimental group that employed the application demonstrated a mean score increase of 25 points, achieving a significance value of <0.001. In contrast, the control group, which adhered to traditional teaching methods, recorded a mean increase of 16.5 points with a significance value of 0.004. The significant advancement observed in the experimental group can be linked to the interactive and engaging elements of the Let's Read Asia application, including illustrated materials and contextual vocabulary support, which enhanced student motivation, engagement, and comprehension. In contrast, the control group exhibited challenges with motivation and perceived traditional reading activities as monotonous, resulting in more restricted progress.

The findings underscore the efficacy of digital resources in facilitating literacy advancement within non-formal education environments such as PKBM Mekar Tegal. The findings indicate that students ought to regularly utilize the Let's Read Asia application to improve their reading abilities, while teachers are advised to incorporate comparable technology-driven platforms into their instructional methods to boost student involvement and educational results. Moreover, educational institutions ought to allocate resources towards enhancing access to digital tools and providing pertinent teacher training. Future investigations should aim to incorporate wider samples and mixed-method approaches—such as classroom observation and in-depth interviews—to delve deeper into the long-term advantages and implementation strategies of digital literacy applications.

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