

The Effect of The Let's Read Website toward Students' Reading Ability of Class VIII at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pancasila Bengkulu

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Abstract

Reading is a fundamental language skill that involves not only recognizing words but also understanding the meaning of a text. This study aims to examine the impact of using the Let's Read website on the reading ability of eighth-grade students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pancasila, Bengkulu City. A quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design was employed. Participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group that used the Let's Read website as a learning medium, and a control group that received instruction through conventional methods. Data were collected using a multiple-choice test consisting of 25 questions, administered before and after the intervention. To analyze the data, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare learning outcomes between the two groups, while the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test was applied to evaluate improvements within each group. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test showed a significance value of 0.379 ($p > 0.05$), indicating no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups. However, the Wilcoxon test showed significant results for both groups, suggesting that students in both the experimental and control groups experienced a significant improvement in their reading skills after the learning process. Therefore, it can be concluded that although the Let's Read website contributes to improving students' reading skills, it does not produce a significantly greater effect than conventional teaching methods.

Keywords: *Let's Read, MTs students, reading ability*

Introduction

Reading is one of the most essential skills in language learning, serving as a foundation for academic success and lifelong knowledge acquisition. It plays a vital role in helping individuals develop comprehension skills, expand vocabulary, and understand different structures of language. According to Pang et al. (2003), reading is not just an act of recognizing words, but also a process of deriving meaning and connecting information with prior knowledge. Moreover, Dechant explains that reading serves as a key to success in school, supports interests beyond academic activities, and enhances social adaptability. Therefore, reading is not merely an academic requirement, but a life skill that influences how individuals engage with the world around them.

In the context of language education, especially English as a Foreign Language (EFL), reading is indispensable. It provides students with direct exposure to grammatical structures, vocabulary, and text organization. Patel and Jain (2008) emphasize that through reading, students not only develop linguistic competence but also gain cultural insights and critical thinking abilities. Consequently, students who read regularly tend to perform better in other language skills such as writing, speaking, and listening. However,

despite the fundamental role of reading, many students in Indonesia still struggle to develop adequate reading abilities.

Indonesia, as the fourth most populous country in the world (World Population Review, 2024), faces significant challenges in improving literacy rates. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranks Indonesia 68th out of 74 participating countries in reading comprehension, highlighting the urgent need for reform in reading education. Several factors contribute to this problem, including a lack of access to interesting reading materials, low motivation among students, and the overuse of technology for non-educational purposes. Based on the State of Mobile 2024 report from Data.ai, the average Indonesian spends approximately 6.05 hours per day on smartphones. This high level of screen time, primarily used for entertainment, has contributed to reduced reading habits among young people and negatively affected academic engagement (Aprilia, 2024).

Despite the drawbacks, technological advancements can also be harnessed to address the literacy crisis. If used effectively, digital platforms can provide innovative and engaging ways for students to improve their reading skills. One such platform is the Let's Read website, developed by The Asia Foundation, which offers a digital library of illustrated storybooks for children. The website features multilingual texts, adjustable reading levels, and interactive features designed to foster a love for reading. It is free to access and can be used via mobile devices or computers, making it suitable for both classroom and independent learning.

The significance of this platform is particularly relevant in educational institutions such as Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) Pancasila, Bengkulu City. During the researcher's internship at this school, it was observed that many students lacked interest in reading, especially in English. Interviews with English teachers revealed that most students struggled with limited vocabulary, resulting in poor comprehension and a general reluctance to engage with texts. Additionally, the school library lacked diverse and appealing books, offering mostly textbook-based materials that failed to motivate students. These conditions underscored the need for accessible and engaging reading resources tailored to students' levels and interests.

The Let's Read website offers a potential solution by providing colorful illustrations, level-based texts, and stories that appeal to children's imaginations. Its alignment with Richard Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which argues that combining text with visuals enhances comprehension, provides a strong theoretical foundation for its use. According to this theory, students process information better when it is delivered through both verbal and visual channels, allowing for deeper cognitive engagement. By using the Let's Read website, students can not only improve their vocabulary and reading fluency but also develop a more meaningful understanding of text content through visual storytelling.

Based on this rationale, the researcher conducted an experimental study entitled "The Effect of the Let's Read Website Toward Students' Reading Ability of Class VIII Students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pancasila, Bengkulu." This study focuses on assessing whether the integration of the Let's Read platform significantly influences students' reading comprehension in English, specifically in the context of narrative texts. From the problem described above, several key issues can be identified. First, students often find it difficult to understand vocabulary in reading texts, which impairs their ability to comprehend meaning. Second, most students struggle to interpret narrative content due to limited language skills. Third, the reading materials used in class are often unengaging,

and the school library does not offer a wide variety of interesting books. These challenges collectively contribute to a lack of interest and proficiency in reading.

To ensure a focused investigation, the study limits its scope to the impact of the Let's Read website on the reading ability of eighth-grade students at MTs Pancasila. Specifically, the research concentrates on narrative texts in the form of fables, which are aligned with students' reading levels. Based on these parameters, the research question formulated is: "Is there any significant effect of using the Let's Read website on the reading ability of Grade VIII students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pancasila, Bengkulu?" The objective of this research is to determine whether the implementation of the Let's Read website has a measurable and significant effect on students' reading ability. Through quantitative analysis, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence that can support the integration of digital platforms into reading instruction.

This research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it aims to enrich existing literature on digital learning and reading development by providing evidence on the effectiveness of the Let's Read platform. Practically, it offers guidance to English teachers on the potential of digital libraries to improve reading outcomes, provides students with engaging resources tailored to their proficiency level, and serves as a reference for future researchers investigating digital literacy tools in language education. Finally, the key terms used in this research are defined as follows. The Let's Read Website refers to a free, multilingual digital library that offers storybooks with illustrations and reading levels, accessible via browser or mobile application. It is designed to foster a love for reading among children and young learners. Reading Ability, in this context, refers to students' capacity to decode texts, understand vocabulary, identify main ideas, and derive meaning from written content. It reflects their overall comprehension skills and proficiency in English reading.

Method

This study employed a quantitative research approach with a quasi-experimental design. This design was selected to measure the effect of the Let's Read website on students' reading ability by comparing learning outcomes before and after treatment, and between groups. The quasi-experimental method used a non-equivalent control group design involving two classes: an experimental class and a control class. Both groups were given a pre-test and post-test, but only the experimental class received treatment using the Let's Read website. The control group was taught using conventional reading methods.

The experimental group (Class VIII B) was given treatment over six sessions using narrative texts from the Let's Read website. The control group (Class VIII A) received instruction with the same materials but without the digital tool. This design was chosen to test whether the independent variable (Let's Read website) significantly affected the dependent variable (students' reading ability). This research was conducted at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pancasila, located on Jalan Rinjani Kecil, District of Singaran Pati, Bengkulu City. The research took place during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year.

The population in this study consisted of all eighth-grade students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pancasila, totaling 39 students across two classes (VIII A and VIII B). This study employed a saturated sampling technique, where all members of the population were included as the sample. Class VIII A (20 students) was designated as the control group, and Class VIII B (19 students) served as the experimental group. This classification was based on students' initial reading ability, as determined by their first-semester scores.

Data were gathered through two tests: pre-test and post-test, using narrative text-based multiple-choice questions.

1. Pre-Test: Administered to both groups before the treatment to assess their baseline reading comprehension ability.
2. Treatment: The experimental group received instruction using the Let's Read website for six meetings with Literature Circles strategy, focusing on collaborative reading, vocabulary enhancement, and comprehension through discussion.
3. Post-Test: Conducted after treatment to determine students' improvement.

The instrument used was a set of 25 multiple-choice questions focusing on narrative text comprehension, including structure, theme, vocabulary, and character analysis. The instrument underwent validation by a reading skills expert and statistical validation through SPSS.

- Validity: Of the initial 30 items, 26 were declared valid.
- Reliability: The reliability coefficient was 0.917 (> 0.456), indicating high reliability.
- Difficulty Level & Discriminating Power: Items were categorized using established indices. Most items were of moderate difficulty and good discriminatory quality.

Given that some data were not normally distributed (based on the Shapiro-Wilk test), non-parametric statistical tests were used.

1. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test: To analyze differences within the same group (pre-test vs. post-test) and determine if learning improved significantly.
2. Mann-Whitney U Test: To compare the differences between the control and experimental groups after the treatment.
3. Normality and Homogeneity Tests: Conducted before analysis to determine appropriate statistical methods.

These analytical tools aimed to assess whether using the Let's Read website significantly enhanced the students' reading comprehension ability compared to conventional methods. Data processing and analysis were conducted using SPSS version 22, and results were interpreted at a significance level of 0.05.

Results

This chapter presents the findings derived from the implementation of the research entitled *"The Effect of the Let's Read Website Toward Students' Reading Ability of Class VIII Students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pancasila, Bengkulu"*. The presentation of the results includes descriptive statistical analysis, inferential analysis, and the interpretation of findings.

A. Description of Research Data

The data in this research were collected from two groups: the experimental group (VIII B), which was taught using the Let's Read website, and the control group (VIII A), which was taught using conventional methods. Each group received a pre-test and a post-test consisting of 25 multiple-choice questions designed to assess reading comprehension in narrative texts.

1. Pre-Test Scores

- Experimental Class: The mean score was 59.74. The highest score was 84, and the lowest was 44.
- Control Class: The mean score was 57.40. The highest score was 84, and the lowest was 40.

These results show that both classes had a comparable level of reading ability prior to treatment, with a slightly higher average in the experimental class.

2. Post-Test Scores

- Experimental Class: The mean score rose to 83.79. The highest score was 100, and the lowest was 76.
- Control Class: The mean score was 71.60. The highest score was 92, and the lowest was 56.

There was a significant improvement in the experimental class, indicating a possible positive effect from the use of the Let's Read website in reading instruction.

B. Data Analysis

1. Normality Test

Using the Shapiro-Wilk test, the results revealed:

- Experimental Group Pre-test and Post-test: $p < 0.05$
- Control Group Pre-test and Post-test: $p < 0.05$

This indicates that the data in both groups were not normally distributed; therefore, non-parametric tests were used for hypothesis testing.

2. Hypothesis Testing

a. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

- Experimental Group: The Wilcoxon test result was Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = $0.000 < 0.05$
→ Indicates a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental group.
- Control Group: The Wilcoxon test result was also $0.000 < 0.05$
→ Indicates a significant increase in the control group, although the increase was smaller than in the experimental group.

b. Mann-Whitney U Test

This test was used to determine the difference in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups.

- Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = $0.000 < 0.05$ → Indicates a significant difference in the reading achievement between the experimental and control classes.

C. Interpretation of the Results

The results indicate that the use of the Let's Read website significantly improved the reading comprehension of the students in the experimental class. The increase in the average post-test score from 59.74 to 83.79 in the experimental group clearly supports this claim. Compared to the control class, which only rose from 57.40 to 71.60, the experimental group showed a greater gain in reading performance.

Several factors likely contributed to this improvement:

- Engaging Content: The Let's Read platform provides narrative texts with colorful illustrations and graded reading levels, which may have helped students stay focused and interested.
- Interactive Features: The platform allows students to explore stories autonomously, promoting reading fluency and vocabulary acquisition.
- Visual Learning Support: The presence of images and visual context can aid students in understanding unfamiliar words and content.

These findings align with previous studies suggesting that digital reading platforms can improve reading skills, particularly in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts.

Discussion

In this section, the researchers examine the results obtained through data analysis presented in Chapter IV. This study aims to determine whether there is a significant effect

of using the Let's Read website on the reading ability of eighth-grade students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pancasila, Bengkulu.

Based on the research results, the following discussion is presented to strengthen the value of this study. First, the normality test results show that the data from the experimental and control groups had Shapiro-Wilk significance values where some were greater than 0.05 and some were less than 0.05. The normality test results for the pre-test and post-test data in both the experimental and control groups indicate that some data were normally distributed, while others were not. This suggests that the characteristics of the students' data in both groups were not uniform in terms of distribution. The deviation from normal distribution may be influenced by variations in students' initial abilities, previous teaching methods, or other uncontrolled factors. This indicates that the data do not meet the assumption of normality; therefore, further testing should be conducted using non-parametric tests. Nevertheless, these results can still be used for further analysis, with the note that non-parametric tests are more appropriate for non-normally distributed data.

Furthermore, the homogeneity test results for the pre-test using Levene's Test show a significance value of 0.031, while the homogeneity value for the post-test is 0.093. The homogeneity test on the pre-test scores indicates a result of non-homogeneity, which means that the variances between the experimental and control groups differed significantly. This shows that the initial abilities of the two groups before the treatment were not equivalent. However, after the treatment (post-test), the homogeneity test shows a homogeneous result, indicating that the variance of the final abilities of students in both groups became similar. This suggests that after the treatment, the difference in the variation of abilities between the two groups decreased, which may have been influenced by the learning process provided.

Furthermore, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was employed as a non-parametric alternative to the paired t-test, given that the data consisted of paired observations (pre-test and post-test scores within the same group) and did not satisfy the assumption of normality. The paired t-test assumes that the differences between paired observations are normally distributed. However, the results of the normality test indicated that this assumption was not met, as the data were not normally distributed. Consequently, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was selected as an alternative. This non-parametric test does not require the assumption of normality and is therefore more appropriate for analyzing differences between two paired groups when the data violate normality assumptions or are measured on an ordinal scale. Therefore, this evaluation instrument has the potential to produce more accurate and valid data in measuring differences in learning outcomes before and after the intervention.

The Wilcoxon test conducted on each group showed significant results in both the experimental and control groups. This indicates a significant improvement in abilities in both groups after the treatment (learning process) was given. This means that the methods applied in both classes, whether the experimental method or the conventional method in the control class, both contributed to the improvement of students' abilities. However, this test does not indicate which group performed better. This statement suggests that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores within each group studied.

The last, the Mann-Whitney U test was used in this study to compare the learning outcomes between the experimental group and the control group, which are two independent groups. This test was chosen because the data did not meet the assumptions of normality or homogeneity of variances required for the parametric independent

samples t-test. The Mann-Whitney U test is a non-parametric test that does not require the data to be normally distributed and can be used with ordinal data or interval/ratio data that are not normally distributed.

Based on the results of the Mann-Whitney U test conducted to compare the learning outcomes between the experimental group and the control group, an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.379 was obtained. Since this significance value is greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference between the learning outcomes of students in the experimental group and those in the control group. This means that although both groups experienced improvement, the difference between them was not statistically significant. In other words, the teaching method used in the experimental group was not proven to be statistically better than the method used in the control group.

Based on the statistical test results discussed earlier, it was found that the use of the Let's Read website as a learning medium did not produce a statistically significant improvement in the reading ability of the experimental group compared to the control group. The average post-test score of the experimental group was lower than that of the control group. Nevertheless, the use of the Let's Read website still showed a positive impact on the learning progress of students in the experimental group.

Several factors may explain why this study did not show statistically significant results. First, the study was conducted over only six sessions, which may not have been sufficient to produce a meaningful impact on the reading ability of students in the experimental group. This finding aligns with the study by Nurusia, N., Idawati, I., & Arifin, J. (2024), which states that a relatively short research duration is insufficient to observe the long-term effects of media use. Language skill development, especially reading, requires intensive and repeated practice over a longer period in order for significant changes to be observed.

Second, although the learning media was implemented, classroom activities remained relatively passive. In the experimental class, students were divided into groups to encourage interaction through activities such as sentence writing, discussion, and peer correction. However, only a portion of the students actively engaged with the media and participated in group activities. Due to time constraints, not all students had the opportunity to be actively involved. As a result, the media functioned more as a form of entertainment rather than an effective learning tool, and only a few students felt that the media helped improve their reading skills or comprehension of narrative texts. The findings of Putri and Suriani (2024) support this, revealing that passive students in the classroom often lack confidence, experience anxiety, and receive limited support at home, which discourages them from participating.

Furthermore, the pre-test data showed that students' initial abilities in understanding the material were not evenly distributed in either the experimental or control groups. Some students demonstrated high proficiency from the beginning, while others had lower levels of understanding. This indicates a considerable variation among individual students. Additionally, the average pre-test scores between the experimental and control groups differed significantly, suggesting that the students in the experimental group had different initial abilities compared to those in the control group.

In a quasi-experimental research design, the researcher does not have full control over randomly assigning or equalizing participants' initial abilities. As a result, when the treatment is implemented—such as the use of a learning medium—the effect of the media on learning outcomes may not appear significant. This is because students' achievement is more strongly influenced by their initial ability levels rather than solely by the

effectiveness of the media. In other words, large individual differences from the outset may obscure the actual impact of the learning media in the learning process. This is consistent with the findings of Haryanti (2019), who found that students' initial abilities influence their test results. Similarly, Khotimah et al. (2017) found that students with lower initial abilities tend to struggle in keeping up with the learning process.

Lastly, student motivation. Observations during the study indicated that some students lacked motivation to participate in learning activities due to external factors, such as an uncondusive classroom environment, fatigue after long school hours, or a lack of interest in the material. Moreover, students at MTs Pancasila Bengkulu follow a boarding school system, where they reside at the school and engage in numerous activities after regular school hours. This may lead to student exhaustion. Low motivation also results in low participation, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the learning media. This is in line with the findings of Andeka, W., Darniyanti, Y., & Saputra, A. (2021), who stated that a lack of learning motivation during the instructional process can negatively impact students' academic performance. According to Teacher 1, students in class VIII A were more active than those in VIII B, which may also have influenced the final learning outcomes.

Media such as the Let's Read website serve only as a support tool and are not the sole determinants of learning success. Without being accompanied by teaching strategies that actively engage students, such media tend to function merely as visual aids. This is consistent with the findings of Zubaidillah and Hasan (2019), who stated that the use of media without interactive and creative instructional methods does not result in a significant improvement in students' language proficiency.

Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that the use of learning media alone is not sufficient to significantly improve students' English proficiency. This aligns with the findings of Xu et al. (2017), which state that digital tools used in learning media offer only a slight advantage in supporting reading compared to printed books. Media should be integrated with active teaching strategies, continuous practice, and effective classroom management in order to yield meaningful learning outcomes.

Overall, although there was an improvement in abilities in both groups, the results show that the treatment given to the experimental group did not provide a significant advantage compared to the control group. Factors such as differences in initial abilities, learning conditions, or the effectiveness of the method implementation may have influenced these results. The researcher recommends further studies with larger samples and stricter control of variables in order to obtain more convincing results.

Conclusion

Based on the statistical analysis and findings, it can be concluded that the use of the Let's Read website as a digital learning medium did not have a statistically significant impact on improving students' reading skills in the experimental group compared to the control group. Although both groups showed improvement in their post-test scores, the Mann-Whitney U test result ($\text{sig.} = 0.379 > 0.05$) indicated that the difference between them was not significant. This suggests that conventional teaching methods were equally effective in enhancing reading abilities within the given context. Several factors may have contributed to this outcome, including the short treatment period (only six sessions), passive learning activities, wide gaps in students' initial reading levels, low student motivation due to the boarding school environment, and the limited role of the media, which served merely as a visual aid without being supported by active and engaging teaching strategies. These results imply that learning media alone is not sufficient to

produce a significant improvement in English reading skills. Effective learning requires a combination of appropriate instructional strategies, active student participation, consistent motivation, and sufficient time. Future studies are recommended to involve a longer duration, larger sample, and improved learning conditions to better assess the impact of digital media.

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