

The Influence of Reading Habit on Students' English Vocabulary Improvement at SMPN 1 Baranti

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of reading habit activities on students' English vocabulary improvement at SMPN 1 Baranti. The research employed a quantitative approach with a one-group pre-test–post-test design. The participants were 22 eighth-grade students selected through purposive sampling. The students participated in structured reading habit activities for four weeks, and their vocabulary performance was measured through a written vocabulary test administered as a pre-test and post-test. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Shapiro–Wilk normality test, and the Paired-Samples t-test. The results showed that the students obtained a higher post-test mean score (74.09) than the pre-test mean score (53.18), resulting in an average improvement of 20.91 points. The Paired-Samples t-test showed a t-value of -31.480 , with $df = 21$ and a significance value of < 0.001 , indicating a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. Therefore, the findings showed that students' English vocabulary performance significantly improved after the implementation of reading habit activities at SMPN 1 Baranti.

Keywords: Reading Habit; English Vocabulary Improvement; Vocabulary Learning; Reading Activities

INTRODUCTION

English functions as an international language in communication, education, technology, and cultural exchange. For Indonesian junior high school students, learning English provides access to wider academic information and future educational opportunities. Nevertheless, the learning process is not always

experienced positively. Students may face limited vocabulary, low confidence, difficulty identifying word meanings, and limited ability to construct coherent sentences, especially when reading habits are weak.

Vocabulary improvement is a central component that underpins all language skills—speaking, writing, reading, and listening. Students with a wider vocabulary are better able to use English effectively in various communicative contexts. Empirical evidence suggests that vocabulary development is closely related to students' reading habits, as regular exposure to written texts provides repeated encounters with lexical items and supports meaningful engagement that enhances vocabulary knowledge (Abid et al., 2023). Reading activities, in particular, provide learners with natural and contextualized opportunities to expand their vocabulary through authentic input and frequent exposure.

Reading habit refers to a stable behavioural pattern that develops through repeated engagement, intrinsic motivation, and supportive learning environments. Within EFL contexts, reading habit is particularly important because it provides learners with linguistic exposure, contextualized vocabulary input, and opportunities for cognitive engagement with texts. Empirical findings have indicated that repeated and assisted reading activities significantly enhance students' vocabulary growth and reading comprehension, as sustained exposure to written texts strengthens incidental vocabulary learning among EFL learners (Soleimani, Mohammaddokht, & Fathi, 2022).

Despite the established importance of reading habits, real classroom conditions indicate a persistent challenge in vocabulary improvement among junior high school students in various Indonesian EFL settings. Preliminary observations at SMPN 1 Baranti revealed that many students exhibit limited knowledge of basic English vocabulary, as reflected in their low reading comprehension, difficulty identifying word meanings, and limited ability to construct coherent sentences. These challenges appeared to be linked to weak reading habits. Interviews with students indicated that many rarely read English texts outside the classroom and display low intrinsic motivation toward independent reading.

These findings are consistent with Al-Jarf (2020), who emphasized that poor reading habits are one of the main factors hindering vocabulary development among learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This conclusion is further supported by Fadillah, Hidayah, and Ramadhani (2024), who found that students with strong reading habits tend to demonstrate greater improvement in vocabulary knowledge. Although several studies over the past five years have examined the relationship between reading habits and vocabulary mastery, most have not explicitly positioned reading habits within the broader construct of learning behaviour. Moreover, the majority of previous studies have focused on senior high school or university students, while research involving junior high school students in public schools located in district-level areas such as SMPN 1 Baranti remains limited.

If students' weak reading habits are not addressed, their vocabulary development is likely to remain stagnant, affecting their comprehension skills, communication ability, and overall readiness for higher levels of English learning. In the long term, this may hinder their capacity to meet the literacy demands of the *Merdeka* Curriculum, which emphasizes communicative competence and critical reading skills. Therefore, this research adopts a quantitative approach to empirically investigate the influence of reading habit on vocabulary improvement among eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Baranti. Accordingly, the study addressed the following research question: Is there a significant improvement in students' English vocabulary performance after the implementation of reading habit activities at SMPN 1 Baranti?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading Habit

Reading habit refers to students' regular, consistent, and continuous engagement in reading activities as part of their learning behaviour. It is a stable behavioural pattern that develops through repeated engagement, intrinsic motivation, and supportive learning environments. Within EFL contexts, reading habit provides learners with linguistic exposure, contextualized vocabulary input, and opportunities for cognitive engagement with texts. Regular reading enables learners to encounter vocabulary in varied contexts, supporting deeper semantic understanding and long-term retention. Learning behaviour includes consistency, self-regulation, responsibility, and active involvement in completing learning tasks. Students who demonstrate positive learning behaviour tend to manage their learning activities in an organized manner, establish consistent study routines, and show perseverance in completing academic tasks. Such behaviour plays an important role in shaping reading habits, as disciplined and motivated students are more likely to engage in sustained reading activities as part of their learning process.

English Vocabulary Improvement

Vocabulary improvement refers to the students' progress in recognizing, understanding, and recalling English words as a result of continuous exposure to reading activities. Based on Schmitt's framework, vocabulary improvement among eighth-grade junior high school students can be measured through four interconnected indicators: word recognition, meaning understanding, using words in sentences, and vocabulary recall. These indicators represent both receptive and productive dimensions of word knowledge and align with the view that vocabulary development is gradual, multidimensional, and strengthened through repeated exposure and meaningful use (Schmitt, 2020–2023). Word recognition refers to students' ability to identify and distinguish word forms. Meaning understanding involves explaining or selecting appropriate meanings based on sentence context. Using words in sentences requires accurate and contextually appropriate productive

use. Vocabulary recall refers to the ability to remember and reuse previously learned words spontaneously in appropriate contexts.

The Relationship between Reading Habit and Vocabulary Improvement

The relationship between reading habit and vocabulary improvement can be strongly explained through the lexical exposure theory developed in modern vocabulary studies by Nation and Schmitt. This theory asserts that vocabulary develops primarily through sufficient, repeated, and meaningful language exposure, one of which is obtained through reading activities. Schmitt (2020) states that reading provides a rich source of lexical input because it presents words in authentic contexts, enabling learners to recognize word forms, understand meanings, and observe natural word usage. Therefore, students who have consistent reading habits tend to acquire more vocabulary than those who rarely engage in reading.

From the perspective of receptive vocabulary knowledge, reading habit functions as a primary mechanism in the process of word acquisition. Nation (2021) explains that most vocabulary is initially learned receptively through reading texts before it can be used productively. Through regular reading habits, students repeatedly encounter both new words and previously learned vocabulary, thereby strengthening word recognition and contextual meaning understanding. In addition, reading habit contributes to the depth of vocabulary knowledge, including nuances of meaning, semantic relationships, collocations, and grammatical functions of words within sentences (Schmitt, 2022). Consistent reading activities also provide natural spaced repetition of vocabulary, thereby strengthening long-term lexical memory (Schmitt, 2023).

Previous Research and Research Gap

Hermansyah et al. (2022) investigated the use of an Android-based reading aloud application and found that reading aloud helped students recognize word forms, improve pronunciation, and gain repeated exposure to vocabulary. Webb and Chang (2020) examined the impact of extensive reading on EFL students' vocabulary learning through a longitudinal study and confirmed that regular reading provides repeated lexical exposure necessary for vocabulary growth. McLean and Kramer (2023) revealed that consistent reading habits lead to sustained vocabulary growth over time. Napa-Rodríguez (2025) found that students with strong reading habits demonstrated broader vocabulary knowledge.

Despite the valuable contributions of previous studies, several research gaps remain. Most existing studies primarily focus on instructional interventions or extensive reading programs rather than examining students' reading habits as a behavioural pattern. Many studies emphasize vocabulary outcomes without clearly specifying the dimensions of vocabulary improvement. Furthermore, there are a limited number of studies that investigate the direct relationship between reading habit and vocabulary improvement within the Indonesian junior high school

context, particularly among Grade VIII students in district-level public schools. Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps by examining the influence of reading habit activities on students' English vocabulary improvement at SMPN 1 Baranti using a one-group pre-test–post-test design.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employed a quantitative research approach with a one-group pre-test–post-test design, which is a type of pre-experimental design involving a single group without a comparison group. In this design, students' vocabulary performance was measured before the treatment through a pre-test. Subsequently, the students participated in reading-based learning activities designed to develop their reading habits, which served as the treatment of the study. After the treatment period, a post-test was administered to measure students' vocabulary performance. The difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was used to determine the extent of vocabulary improvement resulting from the implementation of reading habit activities. The research was conducted at SMPN 1 Baranti.

The population consisted of all eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Baranti, totaling 44 students from two classes (VIII.1 and VIII.2). The sample consisted of one intact class, Class VIII.2, comprising 22 students, selected through purposive sampling. The criteria used for selecting the sample included the availability of the class, approval from the English teacher, similarity in curriculum implementation, and the stability of students' class membership during the research period. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the researcher did not have the authority to randomly assign students to different classes.

Instrument and Procedure

The research instrument employed in this study was a written vocabulary test designed to measure students' English vocabulary improvement. The test consisted of 30 written test items focusing on key indicators of vocabulary improvement, including word recognition, meaning understanding, vocabulary recall, and the use of words in sentences. Word recognition was assessed through multiple-choice items, while vocabulary recall was measured through matching items. The same vocabulary test was administered twice to the same group of students: before the implementation of reading habit activities as the pre-test and after the treatment as the post-test.

The research was conducted for four weeks, with two meetings per week. In the first meeting, the students were given a vocabulary pre-test to determine their initial vocabulary ability. The reading habit activities were then carried out for four weeks. In each meeting, the students read English texts regularly for approximately 15–20 minutes. During the reading process, students were instructed to identify new

vocabulary found in the texts, understand the meanings through context or teacher assistance, and record the vocabulary as part of their learning activities. After all treatments were completed, the students were given a vocabulary post-test. The reading materials and vocabulary used during the treatment were aligned with the curriculum and instructional materials applied at SMPN 1 Baranti.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process was carried out through several stages using SPSS software. First, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to summarize the main characteristics of students' English vocabulary scores, including the mean, highest score, lowest score, and standard deviation for both the pre-test and post-test. Second, the Shapiro–Wilk normality test was conducted to determine whether the difference scores between the pre-test and post-test were normally distributed, as the sample size was less than or equal to 50. Third, a Paired-Samples t-test was employed to determine whether there was a significant difference in students' English vocabulary performance before and after the treatment. The decision to accept or reject the hypotheses was based on the Sig. (2-tailed) value: if Sig. < 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Classification of Students' Vocabulary Scores

The classification of students' pre-test and post-test vocabulary scores based on the score ranges proposed by Agustina and Budiyantri (2024) is presented below.

Table 1. Classification of Students' Pre-test Vocabulary Scores

Score Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage
81–100	Very Good	0	0%
61–80	Good	7	31.82%
41–60	Moderate	11	50.00%
21–40	Low	4	18.18%
0–20	Very Low	0	0%
Total		22	100%

Table 1 shows that before the treatment, the majority of students were in the Moderate category (11 students; 50.00%), followed by Good (7 students; 31.82%)

and Low (4 students; 18.18%). No students were classified as Very Good or Very Low.

Table 2. Classification of Students' Post-test Vocabulary Scores

Score Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage
81–100	Very Good	8	36.36%
61–80	Good	9	40.91%
41–60	Moderate	5	22.73%
21–40	Low	0	0%
0–20	Very Low	0	0%
Total		22	100%

Table 2 presents the classification of post-test scores. After the treatment, 9 students (40.91%) were classified as Good, 8 students (36.36%) as Very Good, and 5 students (22.73%) remained in the Moderate category. No students were classified as Low or Very Low. Compared with the pre-test results, the distribution of students' scores shifted toward the higher categories, indicating an improvement in students' English vocabulary performance.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min – Max
Pre-test	22	53.18	12.549	30 – 75
Post-test	22	74.09	15.626	44 – 100

As presented in Table 3, the students obtained a mean pre-test score of 53.18 (SD = 12.549), with a minimum score of 30 and a maximum score of 75. After the implementation of reading habit activities, the mean post-test score increased to 74.09 (SD = 15.626), with a minimum score of 44 and a maximum score of 100. This indicates an increase of 20.91 points in the students' mean vocabulary score after the treatment.

Normality Test

Table 4. Shapiro–Wilk Normality Test

Data	Statistic	df	Sig.
Difference (Post-test – Pre-test)	0.977	22	0.867

Based on Table 4, the Shapiro–Wilk test showed that the difference scores between the pre-test and post-test obtained a significance value of 0.867. Since the significance value of $0.867 > 0.05$, the difference scores were normally distributed. Therefore, the normality assumption was met, and the data were appropriate for further analysis using the Paired-Samples t-test.

Hypothesis Testing (Paired-Samples t-test)

Table 5. Paired-Samples t-test

Mean Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
-20.909	-31.480	21	< 0.001

Based on the results of the Paired-Samples t-test, the mean score of the students' vocabulary performance in the pre-test was 53.18, while the mean score in the post-test increased to 74.09. The results of the analysis showed a t-value of -31.480 with $df = 21$ and a Sig. (2-tailed) value of < 0.001 . Since the significance value was lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference in the students' English vocabulary performance before and after the implementation of reading habit activities. The negative sign of the t-value and mean difference occurred because SPSS calculated the difference using the order pre-test – post-test; the comparison of the mean scores shows that students' vocabulary performance increased by an average of 20.91 points.

The findings of this research showed that students' English vocabulary performance significantly improved after the implementation of reading habit activities. The statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, together with the increase in the mean score from 53.18 to 74.09, provides evidence of improvement following the treatment. The distribution of students' scores also shifted toward the higher categories in the post-test, with 36.36% of students achieving the Very Good category and 40.91% achieving the Good category. The improvement observed in this study is in line with the role of reading as a source of vocabulary development. Regular reading provides learners with opportunities to encounter vocabulary repeatedly and in meaningful contexts, which can support the development of vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 2022). In addition, repeated exposure to words through reading can contribute to vocabulary learning because learners have opportunities to strengthen their knowledge of word forms and meanings across different encounters (Webb & Chang, 2020). Through repeated encounters with vocabulary in different contexts during the reading habit activities, students had opportunities to recognize unfamiliar words, understand their meanings, and become more familiar with their use.

The findings are also consistent with previous research. Hermansyah et al. (2022) demonstrated that active reading practices significantly enhanced students' exposure to vocabulary and word recognition. Webb and Chang (2020) confirmed

that regular reading provides repeated lexical exposure necessary for vocabulary growth. McLean and Kramer (2023) revealed that consistent reading habits lead to sustained vocabulary growth over time. The present study adds a contextual contribution by showing how reading habit activities influence vocabulary improvement among eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Baranti, a district-level public junior high school in Indonesia. An important implication is that reading habit activities, when implemented consistently and structured within the classroom, can support vocabulary development even in contexts where students initially have limited reading habits and low vocabulary knowledge. The treatment in this study involved regular 15–20 minute reading sessions over four weeks, during which students identified new vocabulary, understood meanings through context, and recorded vocabulary. This structured approach created repeated and meaningful exposure to English vocabulary.

However, because this study employed a one-group pre-test–post-test design without a control group, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. The results indicate improvement after the implementation of the reading habit activities, but they do not establish a definitive causal relationship between the treatment and the improvement. Other factors, such as classroom instruction, teacher feedback, peer interaction, or general maturation during the four-week period, may also have contributed to the observed gains. Future studies can involve larger samples, control groups, multiple schools, or repeated measurements and can examine whether high vocabulary improvement from reading habit activities translates into measurable development in listening, speaking, writing, or reading comprehension.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results suggest that teachers in junior high school EFL settings can integrate short, regular reading sessions into their weekly routine without requiring major curriculum changes. Fifteen to twenty minutes of guided reading, combined with simple vocabulary recording and contextual meaning discussion, appears sufficient to produce measurable gains over a relatively short period. This approach is compatible with the *Merdeka* Curriculum emphasis on literacy and communicative competence. Teachers should select texts that are slightly challenging yet accessible, align vocabulary targets with existing instructional materials, and encourage students to notice and reuse new words across activities. The significant improvement in vocabulary scores supports the theoretical claim that consistent reading provides the repeated, meaningful lexical exposure necessary for vocabulary growth. At the same time, the design limitations of the present study call for cautious interpretation and for further research that isolates the specific contribution of reading habit from other instructional variables.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Baranti experienced a significant improvement in English vocabulary performance after the implementation of reading habit activities. The vocabulary test produced a pre-test mean score of 53.18 and a post-test mean score of 74.09, equivalent to an average

improvement of 20.91 points. The Paired-Samples t-test showed a t-value of -31.480 , with $df = 21$ and a significance value of < 0.001 , confirming a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The classification of scores shifted from predominantly Moderate (50%) in the pre-test toward Good (40.91%) and Very Good (36.36%) in the post-test. No students remained in the Low or Very Low categories after the treatment.

English teachers may therefore use structured reading habit activities as a complementary strategy for vocabulary development, particularly for activities involving regular reading of grade-appropriate English texts, vocabulary identification, contextual meaning inference, and vocabulary recording. Reading material selection should consider students' proficiency, age, and curriculum alignment. Activities should also provide active roles for students so that reading exposure is connected with meaningful language use rather than remaining purely passive. Consistent, short reading sessions integrated into weekly English lessons can help address limited vocabulary knowledge among junior high school EFL learners.

The study nevertheless has limitations. The quantitative findings were derived from 22 students in a single class at one school, so the results should be interpreted as descriptive of this context rather than generalized to all junior high school students. The study did not include a comparative control group or a longitudinal measure of whether vocabulary improvement was sustained over time. Future research should examine reading habit activities with larger and more diverse samples, control groups, and explore the relationship between reading habits and specific dimensions of vocabulary knowledge word recognition, meaning understanding, productive use, and retention as well as other English-language skills.

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