

A STUDY ON THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF USING M-READER

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the perception of Indonesian EFL learners of using M-Reader and what suggestions they give to improve the utilization of M-Reader. This study used descriptive research to describe the nature of the existing conditions. The data were derived from two sources: questionnaires with close-ended and open-ended questions and interviews. The students' reading report was also attached to supplement the data. Of ninety students enrolled in the extensive reading program, only seventy-six participated in this study. This study concluded that the students perceived M-Reader positively and were satisfied with using M-Reader in their extensive reading activity. This study also concluded three main suggestions regarding the website, the book collection, and the promotion of the program to improve the utilization of M-Reader in the extensive reading activity.

Keywords: *Perception, Extensive Reading, M-Reader*

INTRODUCTION

Several studies have revealed that Indonesian students largely lack reading culture both in Indonesian and English. OECD Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA 2018, ranked Indonesia 71st out of 76 countries on students' proficiency in reading (Schleicher, 2019, p. 6). McKenna & Miller (2016, p. 29) reported that Indonesia was the second-least literate nation in the world, just ahead of Botswana. In addition, low interest in reading in Indonesia contributes to Indonesian students' low average reading scores on the PISA (Nugrahanto & Zuchdi, 2019, p. 376).

In response to this condition, an approach is needed to encourage the students to read and enjoy reading, one of which is extensive reading. Many researchers have proven that extensive reading (Maharsi, Ghali, & Maulani, 2019; Mohd-Asraf & Ahmad, 2003; Renandya, 2007; Yang, 2007) to be having many positive impacts on improving students' reading motivation. Quinn (2018, p. 137) asserts that the pleasure of reading advocated by extensive reading is a motivating force that leads the students to improve and extend their reading. Day et al. (2016, p. 21) have listed the contribution of extensive reading to language learning from numerous researchers where the students improve vocabulary range and knowledge, writing skills, positive motivation, attitude, speaking proficiency, listening proficiency, and grammar. Sufficient evidence has been raised so that extensive reading needs to be implemented in English Language Teaching.

During the extensive reading activity, M-Reader was used as the tool to monitor the student's progress. M-Reader is a website designed for managing extensive reading activities, which contains over 4500 quizzes on graded reader

books from different publishers. McBride and Milliner (2014, p. 29) assert that M-Reader has effectively allowed instructors to manage extensive reading activities, for example, recording the students' reading progress and facilitating the students' engagement with graded reader books.

This study focused on the student's thoughts, beliefs, and feelings about their experiences of using M-Reader during the extensive reading program. According to several researches summarized by Day et al. (2016, p. 21) the general assumption of an extensive reading approach is that students will be motivated to read, develop positive attitudes towards reading, and improve vocabulary range and overall English language skills. Therefore, this study investigates some aspects of perception towards the using of M-Reader during the extensive reading program, namely, perceptions on the likeability of M-Reader, perceptions on the impact of M-Reader on the student's English language skills and motivation, and perceptions of particular aspects of M-Reader (reading target and quizzes).

This study investigates the perception of Indonesian EFL learners of using M-Reader, and what suggestions they give to improve the utilization of M-Reader. International researchers (Al Damen, 2018; Cheetham, Harper, Elliott, & Ito, 2016; Hulse, 2020; Kipling, 2017; Rajabpour, 2020) have conducted a few studies on using M-Reader until recently, and no single study exists that discusses the utilization of M-Reader in Indonesia. Therefore, this study provides an exciting opportunity to figure out what the Indonesian EFL learners perceive about using M-Reader in the extensive reading.

METHOD

Research Design

This study investigated the students' perception of using M-Reader and what suggestions they give for better implementation. Therefore, this study employed a descriptive research method. The researcher gathered data to describe the nature of the existing conditions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 205). A descriptive study describes and interprets what is (Best & Kahn, 2006, p. 118). They explain that the researcher does not manipulate the variables, decide who receives the treatment, or arrange for the program to happen. The current study investigated the students' perception of using M-Reader in the extensive reading activity and their suggestions to improve the implementation of the M-Reader program.

Participants

The participants of this study were selected using purposeful sampling procedures. Purposeful sampling is when the researcher intentionally selects participants who have experienced the central phenomenon being explored in this study (Creswell & Clark, 2018, p. 252). Therefore, the current study was conducted on Indonesian learners enrolled in the Extensive reading activity held at Tanjungpura University Language Center, Indonesia.

During the even semester of the academic year of 2021/2022, ninety students from the Sociology study program participated in the Extensive reading Activity held at the Tanjungpura University Language Center. Seventy-six of them participated in this study as the questionnaire respondents, and five were willing to participate in the follow-up interview.

Techniques and Tools of Data collection

For this research, the data were derived from two sources: questionnaires with close-ended and open-ended questions (see Appendix 1) and interviews. All participants were given a questionnaire to measure their perception of using M-Reader in their extensive reading activity. Two open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire were collected to obtain more clarification of students' perceptions and to answer the second research question on the suggestions to improve the implementation of M-Reader. A semi-structured interview was conducted with five students willing to be interviewed to explore students' experiences with M-Reader. In addition, students' reading report was obtained from M-reader to supplement the data.

Techniques of Data Analysis

This study collected both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data of this study were analyzed descriptively, and the results of the analysis are presented in a descriptive statistics table. Descriptive statistics describe numerical data, and the easiest way to describe the numerical data of one variable is with a frequency distribution (Neuman, 2014, p. 396). The data obtained were ordinal, so each item was calculated by the percentage of respondents who answered the item. In addition, the mode data were also calculated to summarize the information into a single value.

The formula to calculate the percentage of total respondents based on the frequency distribution for each item is:

$$P = \frac{R}{N} \times 100\%$$

Legends:

P = Total respondents who answered a particular scale in one item
(Percentage)

R = Number of respondents who answered a particular scale in one item

N = Total Number of Respondents

Meanwhile, the qualitative data of the questionnaire were analyzed manually following the word repetition technique (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 89). Words that appear frequently are often seen as important in respondents' minds. Therefore, the results were sorted according to the frequencies of the word repeated by the participants.

The Interview data were analyzed through the process of coding by following the procedure suggested by Cresswell and Cresswell (2017, p. 268), namely:

- a. Organize and prepare the data for analysis;
- b. Read or look at all the data;
- c. Start coding all of the data;
- d. Generate a description and themes;
- e. Representing the description and themes.

The qualitative data were then included in the discussion section and cited verbatim (word-for-word according to the original source) to support the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

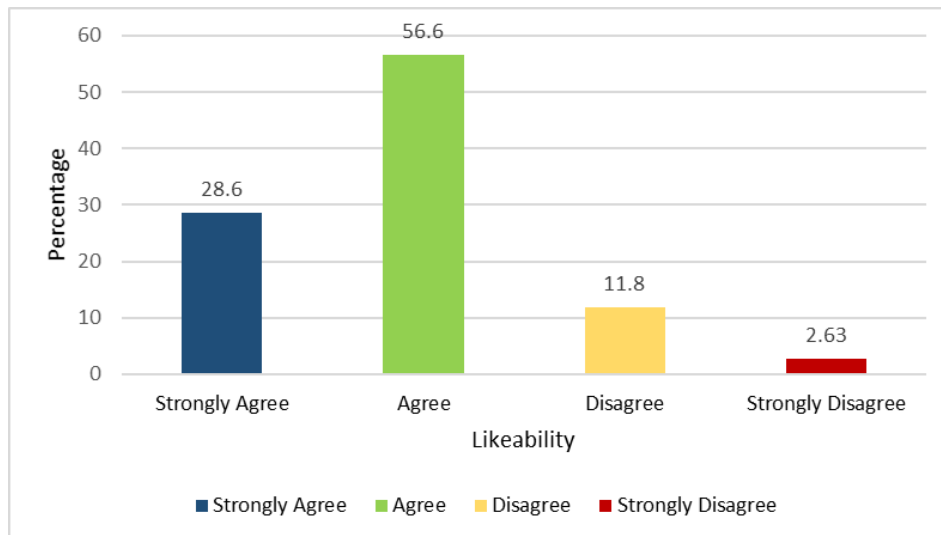
In general, the research found that most respondents chose either Strongly Agree or Agree. Only a small percentage of the respondents chose the option of

Disagree and Strongly Disagree. As shown in Table 1, Strongly Agree was chosen by 35,5%, Agree by 46,3%, Disagree by 16,7%, and Strongly Disagree by 1,4% of all respondents. This result answers the first research question and shows that they agreed with the statements about their perceptions of using M-Reader in an extensive reading program.

No	Items	Mode	SA		A		D		SD	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	Likeability	Agree	22	28,9	43	56,6	9	11,8	2	2,63
2.	Reading Ability	Agree	18	23,7	42	55,3	14	18,4	2	2,63
3.	Grammar	Agree	9	11,8	40	52,6	24	31,6	3	3,95
4.	Vocabulary	Agree	20	26,3	34	44,7	21	27,6	1	1,32
5.	Overall Motivation	Agree	27	35,5	37	48,7	11	14,5	1	1,32
6.	Reading Goal	Strongly Agree	34	44,7	33	43,4	9	11,8	0	0
7.	Update from Teacher	Strongly Agree	34	44,7	33	43,4	9	11,8	0	0
8.	Top-readers table	Agree	25	32,9	36	47,4	13	17,1	2	2,63
9.	15.000-word	Strongly Agree	42	55,3	26	34,2	8	10,5	0	0
10.	Quizzes	Strongly Agree	39	51,3	28	36,8	9	11,8	0	0
TOTAL			270	35,5	352	46,3	127	16,7	11	1,4

Table 1 Questionnaire Results

Of 10 items exposed to the respondents, a detailed presentation of the findings is categorized into four groups: overall perceptions, English language skills, motivation, and particular aspects. First, the overall perceptions of the respondents are shown in Chart 1, where most students agreed that they like using M-Reader. Of the total respondents, 28,6% strongly agreed, and 56,6% agreed with the statement that they liked using the M-Reader.



This positive perception is also reflected in the student's comments on the open-ended questions. The most frequent comment is that students thought M-Reader was helpful (14 times mentioned), very good (10 times mentioned), and influential (7 times mentioned). The students believed that M-Reader helps them to read more words and practice their reading ability through quizzes. Some other students also mentioned that M-Reader is influential due to its easy access and the availability of books.

The interview data also support this finding. For instance, Participant 1 stated that she finds M-Reader useful during extensive reading activities. Due to M-Reader, she can read whenever and wherever she desires. Participant 3 revealed that M-Reader enhances his enjoyment of reading English text, and the reading does not bore him. In addition, Participant 4 mentioned that she was happy with M-Reader because it helped her to learn English, as extracted in (1), (2), and (3).

- (1) "I think having M-Reader is very helpful, such as in daily activities, for example, if you have free time, you can take the time to open M-Reader to read the available books" (P1)
- (2) "I think the M-Reader makes me like reading English text. I don't feel bored in M-Reader" (P3)
- (3) "I am very happy with M-Reader because it can help me to learn English through reading books. Then I became more familiar with English vocabulary and the use of correct grammar" (P4)

The second category concerns the students' perceptions of M-Reader concerning their English language abilities. This research found that the majority of the respondents agreed that M-Reader had improved their reading ability, grammar, and vocabulary. Of the 76 respondents, more than 60 percent believed that M-reader had improved their English language skills positively, as shown in Chart 2.

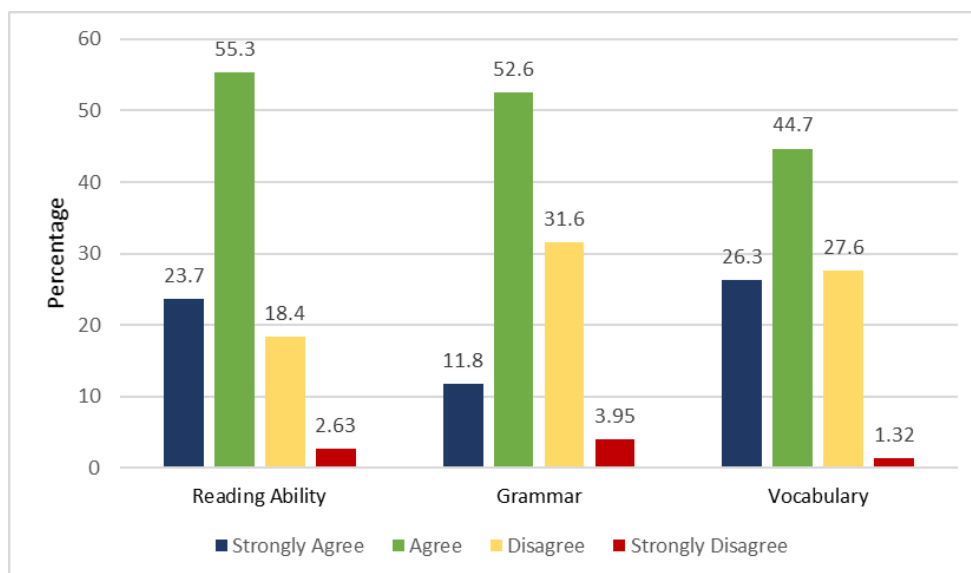


Chart 2 Perceptions of M-Reader concerning English Language Skills

This positive perception is supported by the student's comments about how M-Reader contributes to their English language improvement. The most frequent comment is that students believed M-Reader improved their vocabulary range (30 times mentioned). Some students believed that M-Reader helped them to learn English (17 times mentioned) and that M-Reader has improved their reading skills (12 times mentioned). From the interview data, four participants stated that M-Reader assisted them in learning new vocabulary. One of them even pointed out how M-Reader had taught her the correct grammar as cited in (4), (5), (6), and (7).

- (4) “I can know the vocabulary in English, and I can also know many things in the books I read” (P1)
- (5) “M-Reader really helped me in learning English; I got a lot of new vocabulary from m readers.” (P3)
- (6) “I am very happy with M-Reader because it can help me to learn English through reading books. Then I became more familiar with English vocabulary and the use of correct grammar.” (P4)
- (7) “M-Reader helps me in understanding English vocabulary.” (P5)

The third category concerns the students' perceptions of M-Reader concerning their reading motivation. This research found that the majority of the respondents agreed that M-Reader had motivated them to read more. As shown in Chart 3, Over 80 percent of respondents believed some detailed aspects of M-Reader encouraged them to read more books during the extensive reading program.

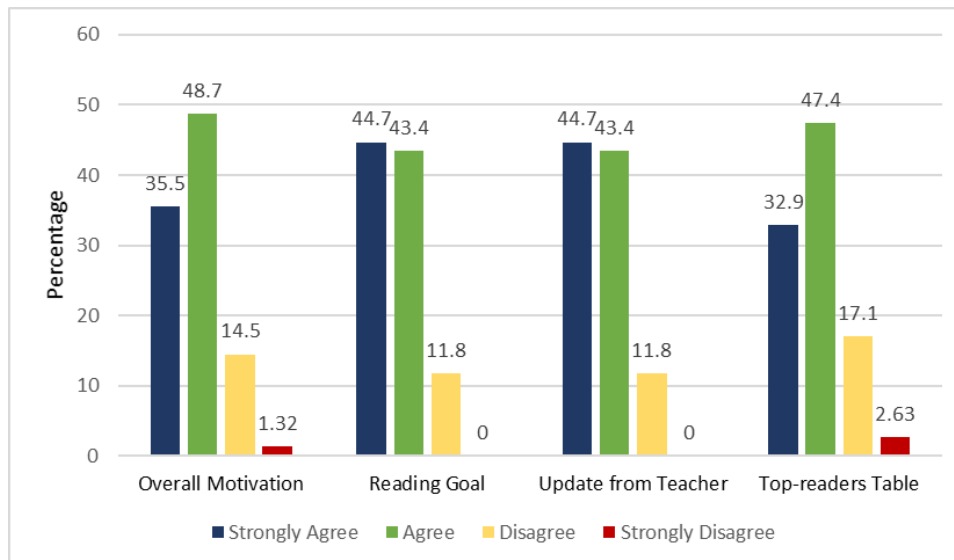


Chart 3 Perception of M-Reader concerning Motivation

This positive perception of motivation is supported by the student's comments about how M-Reader contributes to their motivation to read more. Motivation was mentioned twelve times in the open-ended responses. For instance, Respondent 15 stated that the M-Reader encourages him to read more to reach the reading goal more quickly. Respondent 38 stated that M-Reader encouraged her to read more and be careful while reading. In the interview, Participants 3 and 4 added that the existence of a top-readers list motivated them to continue reading and read more, as cited in (8), (9), (10), (11), (12), and (13).

- (8) “The M-Reader motivates me to read more frequently so that I can reach my reading goal more quickly; as a result, my reading ability has slightly improved.” (R15)
- (9) “A program that can motivate everyone, but students, in particular, to learn English.” (R29)
- (10) “M-Reader really motivates me to read more and be careful in reading” (R38)
- (11) “I think M-Reader is a great platform to learn English and to motivate us to learn English. M-Reader has been giving me so much motivation to read more books, especially outside of M-Reader. So it does help me a lot in my English learning activities.” (R66)
- (12) “There is a list of top readers also motivates me to keep reading” (P3)
- (13) “I think I like the list of top readers on M-Reader because it motivates me to read more” (P4)

The last category is about how the students perceived M-Reader's particular aspects, namely reading goals and quizzes. The students’ perception of these aspects is shown in Chart 4. This research found that the majority of the students perceived M-Reader's particular aspects positively.

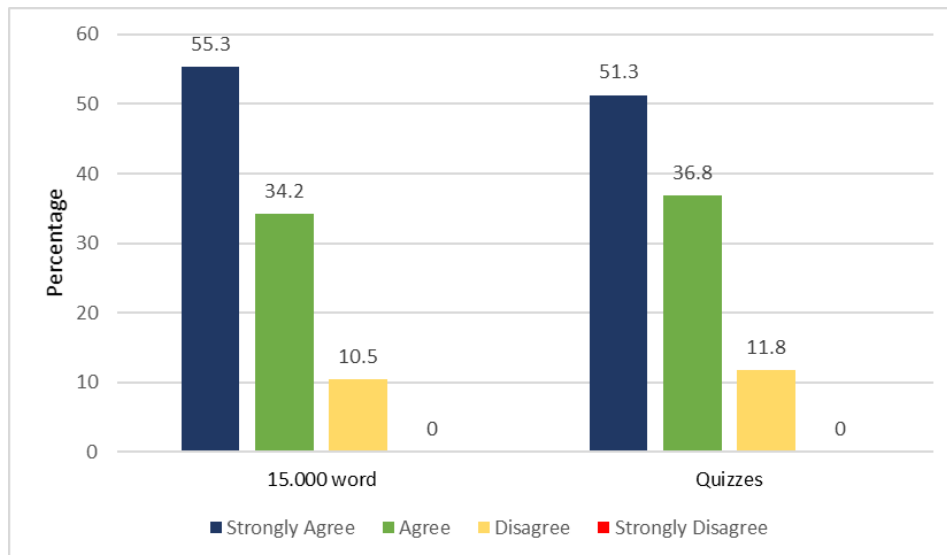


Chart 4 Perceptions of M-Reader Particular Aspects

A 15,000-word reading goal was believed to be achievable by most of the respondents. Respondent 63 mentioned that M-Reader had motivated him to read more, and the 15,000-word target was a challenge for him. In addition, the student reading report revealed that of the 90 students enrolled in the extensive reading program, 79 met the reading goal, and 60 read over 30,000 words. The students' reading reports can be seen in Appendix 3.

The respondents had a positive perception of the quizzes' existence in M-Reader. Regarding the existence of quizzes on M-Reader, some students made comments. For instance, Respondent 59 and Participant 3 mentioned that because of quizzes, they were required to read books carefully, as cited in (14), (15), and (16).

- (14) "With the m-reader, there is a sense of wanting more, let alone the addition of quizzes, so I must read carefully, and the more I read, the more vocabulary I can comprehend." (R59)
- (15) "My opinion so far about M-Reader is that it motivates me to read better, and read more, and having a 15,000-word goal is a challenge for me." (R63)
- (16) "we are required to be really careful in reading books because at the end of every book reading there is, of course, a quiz. This is what I like; it teaches me to study carefully and understand reading on the m-reader" (P3)

The second research question was to find out the students' suggestions to improve the utilization of M-Reader. This research collected the findings from the open-ended questionnaire and the interview to answer them. In general, the research found three main suggestions regarding the website, the book collection, and the promotion of the program.

Firstly, the students commented on the M-Reader website. They believe that the student dashboard's display needs enhancement. The developer needs to add more flexibility in design to make it more pleasing to the eye and neater, as cited in (17) and (18).

- (17) "Maybe the home display section can be made even more

attractive and neater, and also in my opinion for the reading list section it can be focused on another page, so it's not on the home screen, because in my opinion, it takes up too much space, so it's not neat. The home can focus on quiz levels, score tables, etc.; maybe that's just my suggestion." (P4)

(18) "Dashboard design must be improved." (R29)

Respondents 18 and 53 also added that they suggest that M-Reader add more features to minimize errors when doing quizzes, as cited in (19) and (20).

(19) "My suggestion for m-reader is that please add useful features in m-reader to avoid errors when doing the quiz." (R18)

(20) "Add back button when doing a quiz." (R53)

Secondly, the students commented on the book collection from the administrator. Several students suggested adding new books for each level and more genres to accommodate a variety of student interests, as cited in (21), (22), (23), (24), and (25).

(21) "It's better if you add more books about famous heroes or public figures because I think it's interesting." (R56)

(22) "Continue to improve the M-Reader at Tanjungpura university, and increase the number of books." (R65)

(23) "Perhaps more books could be provided so that readers have an easier time selecting books that are on their reading level." (R68)

(24) "Maybe the addition of story books and fairy tales, because reading containing fairy tales makes us more comfortable." (R75)

(25) "What needs to be improved is that the choice of the type of book is incomplete because I often don't get the book I want and match my level." (P5)

Thirdly, the students commented on the promotion of the program. Some students felt that the M-Reader program needs to be widely promoted so more students from other departments can utilize it, as cited in (26), (27), and (28).

(26) "M-Reader has been extremely useful and must be shared with other students." (R9)

(27) "It can be recommended for all Untan students from the lower to the upper semesters." (R24)

(28) "My suggestion is to promote M-Reader to make it more appealing to students so that M-Reader becomes more popular and many students' vocabulary expands thanks to M-Reader." (30)

As presented in the research finding, this research found that most respondents perceived the use of M-Reader positively. Only a minority of them perceived M-Reader negatively.

This result can be understood and explained well because M-Reader has demonstrated its support for and adherence to the majority of Day and Bamford's (2002) proposed principles. For example, the students can choose what they want to read. The administrator provides the graded readers' books so the students can start from the easier text. In addition, various books on a wide range of topics and

genres are available. Therefore, the students can read as much as possible and can read for pleasure.

Students' perceptions of their growing English skills and motivation indicate that the program adheres to Day and Bamford's (2002) principles. This result is consistent with that of Waring (2011, p. 5), who discovered that a higher-level book would increase the difficulty level by including more advanced grammar and vocabulary, and so on up the levels, which may contain several thousand unique words and complex grammar. In the present study, students were encouraged to read numerous books that varied in reading level, and then the students must take quizzes to check their understanding of the story. Students benefited greatly from this system provided by M-Reader. They become more careful when reading, cultivate a desire to succeed, and immediately level up to unlock access to reading books at the next level.

Other aspects contributing to motivating students are a realistic reading goal, the teacher's role, and the top-readers table. The 15.000-word target was considered realistic for students with a low English proficiency level. The current results conform with Hulse's recommendation (2020, p. 53) that all students would benefit from a more realistic word count goal, and their reading ability, vocabulary, and grammar would improve more noticeably as a result of using M-Reader. In this study, the reading target was established following the recommendation of the Extensive Reading Foundation cited in Uden (2013, p. 11), which is reading at least one book or more per week at their skill level.

The teacher can have a role in encouraging the students to continue reading by announcing the word count progress. The teacher also can update the information about the top-readers monthly. It is comparable to a score leaderboard in online games, giving students a competitive desire to see their names on the M-Reader homepage. This is consistent with Kipling (2017, p. 143), who found that competition and self-imposed challenges can motivate students to read more than their classmates or to be the first to surpass the word count goal.

In conclusion, the finding of this research confirms that the implementation of M-Reader in the extensive reading program was perceived positively by most of the respondents, and the students have formulated suggestions regarding the website, the book collection, and the extensive reading program to improve the utilization of M-Reader.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the students positively perceived the M-Reader. In addition, the research found three main suggestions regarding the website, the book collection, and the promotion of the program to improve the utilization of M-Reader.

The current investigation has yielded significant findings regarding how Indonesian students perceived M-Reader in their extensive reading activity. The results are quite encouraging that students are massively in favor of the M-Reader in terms of its usefulness, improvement in various skills and motivation, and their interest in using it during their reading activity.

M-Reader has demonstrated its support for and adherence to the majority of Day and Bamford's (2002) proposed principles. With the improvements made to the system and its implementation, it is time for M-Reader to be implemented

more broadly so that all students who wish to experience the benefits of extensive reading have access to it. Overall, this study concluded that the students were satisfied with using M-Reader in their extensive reading activity.

However, to maximize the utilization of M-Reader, the developer of M-Reader should improve the appearance of the website to make it more user-friendly and attractive, so the students can get a better experience using the tool. In addition, the developer should consider adding an Android application to the website. In this situation, mobile applications can provide superior user engagement and experience compared to websites. Nonetheless, additional research and development should be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of this plan. The administrator of the M-Reader program in this study, Tanjungpura University Language Center, should consistently freshen up their graded readers' books library in order to accommodate the rising number of students who participated in the program. The books should be added more in terms of quantity and variety of genres. The teachers who incorporated M-Reader into their classrooms should introduce the program well. They can consider starting by following the guide provided by the Extensive Reading Foundation in Uden (2013, p. 7) in case of introducing the program step-by-step.

Further researchers could follow up on the findings of this study which concluded that the students believed that their overall English skills and vocabulary had improved due to M-Reader. Further studies can probably work on how M-Reader affects the improvement of students' reading skills, grammar, and vocabulary.

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