

USING LET'S READ APPLICATION IN TEACHING READING TO THE 8TH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMPN 2 MALANGKE BARAT

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to improve the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students at SMPN 2 Malangke Barat through the use of the Let's Read application in reading instruction. The population in this study consists of 16 students from class VIII B, and the sample was selected using purposive sampling technique at SMPN 2 Malangke Barat. The method used in this research is Classroom Action Research (CAR) with the Kemmis & McTaggart design, which includes four stages: planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection, conducted in two cycles. Data collection was conducted through tests, observations, and questionnaires. The findings indicate that in Cycle I, there were weaknesses, particularly in the low level of participation of some students during the learning process. This is evident when students tend to be passive in responding to the teacher's questions, which is caused by their yet-to-be-optimal understanding of the material presented. After improvements were made in cycle II through the implementation of more effective learning strategies, there was an increase in student participation and reading comprehension. Students showed more active involvement, both in answering questions and in group discussions, and were more enthusiastic in expressing their opinions related to the reading content. In conclusion, overall, the research results show a significant improvement. As many as 13 out of 16 students successfully achieved the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM). The average reading comprehension score of the students increased from 46.87% in the initial test to 60% in Cycle I, and further increased to 74.37% in Cycle II.

Keywords: Let's read application, reading comprehension, classroom action research, recount text.

1) INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the four fundamental English language skills that students must master. Through reading, students can develop vocabulary, acquire knowledge, and improve overall learning. Reading is a fluid process in which readers actively combine text information with their existing knowledge to construct meaning (Nunan, 2003). Proficiency in reading is, therefore, considered foundational for academic achievement and lifelong learning.

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Based on observations conducted in class VIII B of SMPN 2 Malangke Barat, students demonstrated low reading comprehension skills. This was attributed to monotonous learning practices that relied heavily on printed textbooks as the primary instructional medium, without any integration of digital or interactive tools. Teachers were not yet accustomed to using technology in teaching reading comprehension, resulting in low student engagement and passive participation during the learning process.

In response to these challenges, the researcher applied Classroom Action Research (CAR) to address the classroom problems and enhance the quality of learning. The Let's Read application was selected as an innovative digital learning medium due to its rich collection of English story texts accompanied by colorful illustrations at varying difficulty levels. This application enables students to engage with reading materials in an interactive and enjoyable manner, which can help stimulate reading interest and comprehension.

The Let's Read application is a free digital library platform developed by Books for Asia, a literacy program under The Asia Foundation, established since 1945. The application provides picture storybooks in multiple languages, including English, Indonesian, and regional languages, accessible through smartphones or computers via <https://www.letsreadasia.org/>. Its features include adjustable reading levels (Levels 0–5), categorized story topics, and zoomable color illustrations that support contextual understanding.

Several prior studies have confirmed the effectiveness of the Let's Read application in improving reading comprehension. Mahmudah and Rosalina (2024) found that the application significantly improved eighth-grade students' reading skills at SMP Islam Miftahul Huda, with the average pretest score increasing from 18.83 to 26.83 on the posttest. Azara and Fadhilawati (2024) reported a significant improvement in reading skills among eleventh-grade students at SMAN 1 Kademangan Blitar. Stevani and Ambarini (2023) demonstrated that combining the Let's Read application with a visualization strategy resulted in reading comprehension gains in tenth-grade students. These studies, however, predominantly employed experimental designs. The present study differs in its use of the CAR method, focusing specifically on the process of improvement through iterative planning-action-observation-reflection cycles.

This research therefore, aims to determine how the use of the Let's Read application can improve reading comprehension of eighth-grade students at SMPN 2 Malangke Barat. The

significance of the study lies in its potential contributions to teachers, students, and future researchers in the area of technology-assisted English reading instruction.

2) METHODS

The population of this study consists of 16 students from class VIII B, and the sample was selected using purposive sampling technique at SMPN 2 Malangke Barat. This study uses the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method with the Kemmis & McTaggart design, which consists of four interconnected stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. This research was conducted in two cycles, with Cycle II as an improved continuation of Cycle I based on the results of reflection.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at SMPN 2 Malangke Barat from September 16 to September 23, 2025. The school was selected based on the identification of low reading comprehension among students and the school's openness to classroom-based research initiatives. The population consisted of 31 eighth-grade students across two classes (VIII A and VIII B). Using purposive sampling, the researcher selected class VIII B, comprising 16 students, as the sample, as this class was specifically identified as having reading comprehension difficulties requiring intervention.

Research Instruments

Three instruments were used to collect data: (1) Tests – a pre-test and post-cycle tests composed of 10 multiple-choice questions on recount texts, used to measure students' reading comprehension progress across three evaluation points; (2) Observation Sheets – structured observation forms covering 10 aspects of the learning process (5 for teacher behavior and 5 for student participation), used to systematically record the dynamics of each lesson; and (3) Questionnaires – a closed-type questionnaire consisting of 10 statements rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), administered after all learning cycles to gauge students' perceptions and responses toward using the Let's Read application.

Research Procedure

The research began with a pre-test on September 16, 2025. Cycle I consisted of three meetings held on September 17–19, 2025, and Cycle II was conducted over three meetings on

September 20–23, 2025, with the final cycle test administered on September 23. Each meeting followed a structured lesson plan incorporating warm-up, pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities as described by Williams (1994).

In Cycle I, the learning activities included introducing the Let's Read application, guided reading of story texts such as 'Going to School,' 'Picnic in the Park,' and 'The Way to School,' followed by individual question-answering tasks and class discussion. In Cycle II, based on reflection findings from Cycle I, the researcher added group discussion activities, positive reinforcement strategies, and a more supportive classroom atmosphere to address the identified weakness of low student participation.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Students' scores were calculated using the formula: $\text{Score} = (\text{Number of Correct Answers} / \text{Total Items}) \times 100$. The mean score (M_x) was computed as $M_x = \Sigma x / n$, and the percentage of students achieving the KKM (≥ 70) was calculated as $P = (F/N) \times 100\%$. Student scores were classified into five categories: Excellent (90–100), Very Good (80–89), Good (70–79), Fair (60–69), and Low (0–59). Qualitative data from observations and questionnaires were analyzed descriptively to complement the quantitative findings.

Success criteria were established as: (1) at least 70% student participation in learning activities, and (2) an increase in mean test scores, with at least 70% of students achieving the KKM score of 70 by the end of Cycle II.

3) RESULTS

Pre-Test Results

The pre-test was administered on September 16, 2025, before any instructional intervention. The results revealed a mean score of 46.87 across 16 students. Only 1 student (6.25%) achieved a score at or above the KKM of 70, while 11 students (68.75%) scored in the 'Low' category (0–59), and 4 students (25%) scored in the 'Fair' category (60–69).

Table 1. Frequency of Students' Scores in Pre-Test

Score	Category	Frequency	Percentage
90–100	Excellent	0	0%

Score	Category	Frequency	Percentage
80–89	Very Good	0	0%
70–79	Good	1	6.25%
60–69	Fair	4	25%
0–59	Low	11	68.75%
Total		16	100%

Cycle I Results

After the three-meeting intervention in Cycle I (September 17–19, 2025), the mean score improved to 60. The number of students achieving the KKM (≥ 70) rose to 5 students (31.25%). Table 2 shows the distribution of scores.

Table 2. Frequency of Students' Scores in Cycle I

Score	Category	Frequency	Percentage
90–100	Excellent	0	0%
80–89	Very Good	2	12.5%
70–79	Good	3	18.75%
60–69	Fair	6	37.5%
0–59	Low	5	31.25%
Total		16	100%

Observation results in Cycle I revealed a notable weakness: the participation level of some students remained low. Several students displayed passive attitudes and failed to respond to teacher questions, suggesting insufficient comprehension of the material. Based on these findings, the researcher proceeded to Cycle II with a revised action plan.

Cycle II Results

In Cycle II (September 20–23, 2025), strategic improvements were implemented, including group discussion activities, vocabulary pre-teaching, positive reinforcement, and a more supportive classroom atmosphere. The mean score increased to 74.37, with 13 students (81.25%) achieving the KKM. No student scored in the 'Low' category. Table 3 presents the full distribution.

Table 3. Frequency of Students' Scores in Cycle II

Score	Category	Frequency	Percentage
90–100	Excellent	3	18.75%
80–89	Very Good	3	18.75%
70–79	Good	7	43.75%
60–69	Fair	3	18.75%
0–59	Low	0	0%
Total		16	100%

Table 4. Mean Scores Across Pre-Test, Cycle I, and Cycle II

Evaluation Stage	Mean Score	Students Achieving KKM	Percentage
Pre-Test	46.87	1	6.25%
Cycle I	60.00	5	31.25%
Cycle II	74.37	13	81.25%

Questionnaire Results

After the completion of all learning cycles, a questionnaire was distributed to assess students' perceptions of the Let's Read application. Results showed uniformly positive responses: 100% of students responded positively to the application's design and visual features; 100% agreed that the app was easy to use; 93.75% reported feeling motivated to continue learning English through the application; and 100% expressed willingness to recommend the Let's Read application to their peers. These results affirm that the application created a positive and motivating learning experience for the students.

4) DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Let's Read application is an effective instructional medium for improving the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students at SMPN 2 Malangke Barat. The progressive improvement in mean scores from 46.87 (pre-test) to 60 (Cycle I) and 74.37 (Cycle II) indicates a clear and measurable impact of the intervention across the two cycles.

The improvement between Cycle I and Cycle II can be largely attributed to the addition of collaborative strategies in the second cycle. While Cycle I successfully introduced students to the application and produced initial gains, it was insufficient in addressing all students' learning needs,

particularly those with low participation. The integration of group discussions in Cycle II created a more interactive learning environment, enabling students to collaboratively analyze story texts, share opinions, and clarify comprehension. This finding aligns with Safrianti (2020), who demonstrated that small group discussions effectively promote active learning and collaborative understanding in reading instruction.

The visual features of the Let's Read application, particularly the colorful illustrations and adjustable reading levels, played a significant role in supporting comprehension, especially for students who struggled with purely text-based materials. The application's multilevel structure (Levels 0–5) also allowed the teacher to select appropriately challenging materials, ensuring that reading activities were accessible yet stimulating. These features are consistent with principles of differentiated instruction, which emphasize the importance of matching instructional materials to students' varying ability levels (Grabe & Stoller, 2020).

The results are also consistent with findings from prior research. Mahmudah and Rosalina (2024) found significant improvement in reading comprehension through the Let's Read application at SMP Islam Miftahul Huda. Salsabila Azara and Fadhilawati (2024) similarly reported notable reading gains and increased student motivation at SMAN 1 Kademangan Blitar. Stevani and Ambarini (2023) found that using the application in combination with visualization strategies improved both comprehension skills and student engagement. Saputri and Ritonga (2024) also reported successful improvement in reading comprehension among fifth-grade elementary students through the application. The present study corroborates these findings and extends their scope to the context of junior high school students using a CAR approach.

The questionnaire responses further support the effectiveness of the application, with 100% of students expressing positive attitudes toward the tool and its features. High levels of motivation and willingness to recommend the application to peers suggest that the Let's Read application successfully addressed not only cognitive but also affective dimensions of language learning. This is in line with research on technology-enhanced language learning, which highlights the role of digital tools in increasing student engagement and reducing learning anxiety (Rahmawati, 2023).

Despite these positive outcomes, the study has several limitations. First, the reliance on internet connectivity presents a practical constraint in schools with inconsistent or limited network access. Second, the test instrument, consisting of only 10 multiple-choice questions per cycle, may not fully capture the depth of students' reading comprehension skills. Future research is

encouraged to incorporate essay-type questions alongside multiple-choice items to provide a more comprehensive assessment of reading comprehension. Additionally, future studies may consider extending the research duration and including a larger sample or control group to allow for broader generalizability of the findings.

5) CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the use of the Let's Read application as a teaching medium in Classroom Action Research significantly improved the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students at SMPN 2 Malangke Barat. The average score improved from 46.87 on the pre-test to 60 in Cycle I and 74.37 in Cycle II. The percentage of students achieving the KKM also increased from 6.25% (1 student) in the pre-test to 31.25% (5 students) in Cycle I, and reached 81.25% (13 students) in Cycle II, surpassing the 70% success criterion.

The success of the intervention was attributed to the application's engaging visual features, adjustable reading levels, and the collaborative strategies introduced in Cycle II, including group discussions and positive reinforcement. Questionnaire data confirmed that 100% of students responded positively to the application, indicating high levels of satisfaction and motivation.

Based on these findings, the researcher recommends that teachers at SMPN 2 Malangke Barat and similar schools consider integrating the Let's Read application into regular English reading instruction. For future research, it is suggested to use a broader sample, extend the intervention period, and incorporate both multiple-choice and essay-type assessments to obtain a more comprehensive picture of students' reading comprehension development.

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