

*The Effect Of Using The Oxford Reading Club Application On Vocabulary Mastery
Among Vocational School Students*

**Pengaruh Penggunaan Aplikasi Oxford Reading Club Terhadap Penguasaan Kosakata
Pada Siswa Sekolah Kejuruan**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of the Oxford Reading Club (ORC) application on students' vocabulary proficiency through intensive reading combined with synonym–antonym strategies. A quasi-experimental design was used involving 60 tenth-grade vocational school students divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group used ORC, while the control group received conventional instruction. Data were collected through pre-test and post-test assessments. The results showed that although both groups improved, the experimental group achieved significantly better results ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that integrating ORC with contextual reading and semantic strategies effectively enhances vocabulary proficiency. The study offers novelty by combining a digital reading platform with synonym–antonym strategies to support deeper vocabulary learning in EFL vocational contexts. Theoretically, it contributes to understanding how contextual digital input supports vocabulary acquisition. Practically, it suggests that ORC can be used as an engaging and interactive tool for vocabulary learning.

Keywords: Oxford Reading Club Application, vocabulary comprehension, EFL learners

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji pengaruh penggunaan aplikasi Oxford Reading Club (ORC) terhadap penguasaan kosakata siswa melalui pembelajaran membaca intensif yang dipadukan dengan strategi sinonim–antonim. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain quasi-eksperimental yang melibatkan 60 siswa kelas X sekolah menengah kejuruan yang dibagi ke dalam kelompok eksperimen dan kelompok kontrol. Kelompok eksperimen menggunakan ORC, sedangkan kelompok kontrol mendapatkan pembelajaran konvensional. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes awal (pre-test) dan tes akhir (post-test). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun kedua kelompok mengalami peningkatan, kelompok eksperimen memperoleh hasil yang secara signifikan lebih baik ($p < 0,05$). Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi ORC dengan pembelajaran membaca kontekstual dan strategi semantik secara efektif meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata.

Penelitian ini menawarkan kebaruan dengan menggabungkan platform membaca digital dengan strategi sinonim–antonim untuk mendukung pembelajaran kosakata yang lebih mendalam dalam konteks EFL di sekolah kejuruan. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman tentang bagaimana input digital kontekstual mendukung pemerolehan kosakata. Secara praktis, hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ORC dapat digunakan sebagai media pembelajaran yang menarik dan interaktif untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran kosakata.

Kata kunci: Oxford Reading Club Application, pemahaman kosakata, pelajar EFL

1. Introduction

Reading is widely acknowledged as a fundamental skill in English language learning because it enables learners to acquire vocabulary, interpret meaning in context, and improve overall language proficiency. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, vocabulary mastery

plays a crucial role in supporting students' reading comprehension, speaking, and writing abilities. Nation (2013) states that vocabulary forms the foundation of language competence since learners cannot communicate effectively without sufficient lexical knowledge. However, vocabulary acquisition remains one of the major challenges faced by EFL learners, particularly at the vocational school level where students are expected to understand both academic and practical English texts related to their fields of study.

Recent educational developments have highlighted the growing integration of digital technology in language learning. The use of digital reading platforms, mobile-assisted language learning applications, and interactive educational tools has increased significantly in EFL classrooms worldwide. These technologies provide learners with opportunities to access authentic materials, interactive vocabulary exercises, multimedia support, and personalized learning experiences. Nevertheless, despite the rapid development of digital learning environments, many EFL students still demonstrate limited vocabulary mastery and low engagement in reading activities. Several studies indicate that students often struggle to understand unfamiliar vocabulary, identify semantic relationships between words, and retain newly learned lexical items over time. These challenges are also evident in Indonesian vocational schools, where vocabulary learning frequently depends on traditional methods such as memorization, translation, and teacher-centered instruction.

Preliminary observations conducted at a vocational school on October 7, 2025, revealed that many students experienced difficulties understanding English texts due to limited vocabulary knowledge. Students tended to rely on rote memorization, dictionary translation, or guessing meanings from context without sufficient reinforcement or meaningful practice. As a result, students were often able to recognize vocabulary items during reading activities but failed to recall or use them accurately in productive language skills such as speaking and writing. Furthermore, classroom instruction still relied heavily on printed materials and conventional exercises that provided limited interaction and reduced student motivation during reading activities.

One approach that can support vocabulary development is intensive reading, which emphasizes careful analysis of texts to help learners understand vocabulary usage, contextual meaning, and semantic relationships. Through intensive reading activities, students can develop deeper lexical understanding by identifying synonyms, antonyms, and word associations that strengthen their semantic awareness. However, intensive reading in many EFL classrooms is often implemented only to assess comprehension rather than to develop vocabulary depth and meaningful word relationships. Consequently, students may achieve surface-level understanding without significantly improving their vocabulary proficiency.

The advancement of digital learning technology offers potential solutions to these challenges. One digital platform that has attracted attention in EFL learning is the Oxford Reading Club (ORC) application. ORC provides graded reading materials integrated with audio support, vocabulary features, comprehension activities, and interactive multimedia elements that may increase student engagement and facilitate vocabulary acquisition. In recent years, several studies have reported positive findings regarding the use of digital reading applications in language learning. Previous research has shown that mobile reading applications can improve reading engagement, vocabulary retention, learner autonomy, and reading comprehension through interactive and contextualized learning experiences. Similarly, online reading platforms equipped with built-in vocabulary support features help learners identify unfamiliar words more efficiently and encourage independent learning.

Despite these promising findings, previous studies have primarily focused on general reading comprehension, learner motivation, or overall language achievement. Only limited studies have specifically examined vocabulary development through intensive reading strategies integrated with synonym–antonym learning activities. Furthermore, research concerning the implementation of the Oxford Reading Club application in Indonesian vocational school contexts remains scarce. Most prior studies have not explored how ORC can be integrated with cognitive

vocabulary-learning strategies to develop deeper semantic understanding among EFL learners. This condition indicates a clear research gap regarding the effectiveness of combining ORC, intensive reading, and synonym–antonym strategies to improve vocabulary mastery at the vocational school level.

In addition, the current state-of-the-art of digital language learning emphasizes not only technology integration but also the importance of meaningful interaction with vocabulary in context. Contemporary EFL pedagogy increasingly encourages the use of digital platforms that promote active learning, contextual vocabulary exposure, and semantic processing rather than passive memorization. However, empirical evidence regarding how these approaches influence vocational school students' vocabulary proficiency is still insufficient, particularly in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Therefore, further investigation is necessary to determine whether digital reading applications such as ORC can effectively support vocabulary learning when combined with intensive reading and synonym–antonym strategies.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to investigate the effect of using the Oxford Reading Club application on students' vocabulary proficiency through intensive reading combined with synonym–antonym strategies at a vocational school. Specifically, this study seeks to examine whether the integration of ORC into intensive reading activities can enhance students' vocabulary mastery more effectively than conventional instructional methods. The findings are expected to contribute to EFL pedagogy by providing empirical evidence regarding the integration of digital learning applications and semantic vocabulary-learning strategies in vocational school contexts.

In conclusion, vocabulary mastery remains an essential component of successful reading comprehension and overall English proficiency among EFL learners. However, conventional vocabulary teaching methods that rely heavily on memorization often reduce student engagement and limit long-term vocabulary retention. The integration of digital reading platforms such as the Oxford Reading Club application, combined with intensive reading and synonym–antonym strategies, offers a potentially more interactive and meaningful approach to vocabulary learning. Therefore, this study seeks to address the existing research gap by examining the effectiveness of this integrated approach in improving vocational school students' vocabulary proficiency.

2. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test control group design to investigate the effect of the Oxford Reading Club (ORC) application on students' vocabulary proficiency at a vocational school. A quasi-experimental design was selected because the researcher was unable to randomly assign students into newly formed classes due to existing academic and administrative regulations at the school. Therefore, intact classroom groups were maintained during the research process while still allowing comparison between the experimental and control groups. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to examine the effectiveness of the treatment by comparing students' vocabulary achievement before and after the intervention.

The participants of this study consisted of 60 tenth-grade students from a vocational school during the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants were selected using cluster random sampling, in which existing classes were randomly chosen as research samples. This sampling technique was used because the population was naturally organized into classroom groups, making it more practical and suitable for educational research settings. Two classes were randomly selected and assigned as the experimental group and the control group, with each group consisting of 30 students. Before the treatment was conducted, both groups completed a pre-test to identify their initial vocabulary proficiency and ensure that the groups had relatively comparable starting abilities.

The treatment was conducted over six meetings within three weeks, with each session lasting approximately 90 minutes. Both the experimental and control groups received the same amount of instructional time to maintain consistency during the research process. The experimental group participated in intensive reading activities using the Oxford Reading Club application during each meeting, while the control group received conventional vocabulary instruction using printed materials and teacher explanations.

During the treatment phase, the experimental group received vocabulary instruction through intensive reading activities using the Oxford Reading Club application. The ORC application was integrated into classroom learning through several features, including graded digital reading materials, audio-assisted reading, interactive vocabulary support, and comprehension exercises. The learning process followed the Five-Step Reading Process provided by ORC, namely warm-up, listen, read, speak, and wrap-up activities. In the warm-up stage, students were introduced to the topic and key vocabulary before reading. During the listen and read stages, students listened to and read digital texts while identifying unfamiliar words using the built-in dictionary feature. Students were then guided to analyze synonyms and antonyms of selected vocabulary items to strengthen their semantic understanding. In the speak stage, students discussed vocabulary meanings and contextual usage with peers or the teacher. Finally, in the wrap-up stage, students completed vocabulary-related exercises and reflection activities to reinforce vocabulary retention.

Meanwhile, the control group received conventional instruction using printed reading texts and teacher explanations without digital learning support. Students in the control group learned vocabulary through translation, memorization, and textbook-based exercises commonly used in classroom instruction. Both groups studied similar reading topics and received the same duration of instructional time to maintain instructional consistency.

The instruments used in this study consisted of vocabulary tests and classroom observation sheets. The vocabulary test included multiple-choice and contextual vocabulary questions focusing on synonyms, antonyms, and word meanings. The instrument was examined through content validity to ensure that the test items aligned with the research objectives, vocabulary indicators, and learning materials taught during the treatment. In addition, the reliability of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's Alpha to determine the internal consistency of the test items before they were administered to the participants.

Data were analyzed quantitatively using statistical software. First, descriptive statistics were used to identify the mean scores, score distribution, and students' vocabulary improvement in both groups. Before conducting hypothesis testing, normality and homogeneity tests were administered to ensure that the data fulfilled the assumptions required for parametric statistical analysis. After the assumptions were met, an independent sample t-test was used to compare the post-test results of the experimental and control groups, while paired sample t-tests were used to examine students' improvement within each group. The level of significance used in this study was 0.05.

The findings of the statistical analysis were used to determine whether the implementation of the Oxford Reading Club application significantly improved students' vocabulary proficiency compared to conventional teaching methods. Through this methodology, the study aimed to provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of integrating digital reading applications and intensive reading strategies in EFL vocabulary instruction at the vocational school level.

3. Literature Review

Vocabulary in English

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of language proficiency because it enables learners to understand and communicate meaning effectively in various contexts. In EFL

learning, vocabulary supports reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills. According to Nation (2001) and Nation and Beglar (2007), vocabulary mastery includes three dimensions: form, meaning, and use. Therefore, vocabulary learning involves not only memorizing words but also understanding pronunciation, spelling, contextual meanings, and appropriate usage.

From the perspective of language acquisition theory, vocabulary learning is closely related to meaningful language input. Krashen's Input Theory states that learners acquire language more effectively when exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current proficiency level. Through contextual reading activities, students encounter vocabulary repeatedly in meaningful situations, which supports vocabulary retention and semantic understanding. This perspective highlights the importance of intensive reading in vocabulary development.

Contextual learning theory also emphasizes that vocabulary is learned more effectively when students connect new words with meaningful contexts and semantic relationships. In this study, synonym and antonym strategies are important because they help learners develop deeper semantic understanding. Synonyms are words with similar meanings, while antonyms are words with opposite meanings that strengthen conceptual understanding and vocabulary networks.

Vocabulary knowledge is commonly divided into receptive and productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary refers to words learners recognize while reading or listening, whereas productive vocabulary refers to words actively used in speaking and writing (Talib, 2022). Both aspects are essential for balanced language proficiency.

Previous studies indicate that limited vocabulary knowledge negatively affects students' comprehension and communication abilities. However, conventional teaching methods often rely on memorization and translation, which may not promote long-term retention. Therefore, more contextual and interactive approaches are needed in EFL vocabulary instruction.

Oxford Reading Club Application

The development of educational technology has encouraged the use of digital platforms in language learning. One digital platform widely used in EFL learning is the Oxford Reading Club (ORC), developed by Oxford University Press. ORC provides graded reading materials, audio narration, interactive dictionaries, comprehension exercises, and progress tracking systems that support contextualized vocabulary learning.

The use of ORC aligns with Krashen's Input Theory because students are exposed to comprehensible input through graded reading texts appropriate to their proficiency levels. Repeated exposure to vocabulary within meaningful reading contexts supports incidental vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary retention.

ORC also reflects contextual and constructivist learning theories, which emphasize active learning through interaction and meaningful experiences. Through interactive dictionaries, audio-assisted reading, and vocabulary activities, learners actively analyze meanings, semantic relationships, and contextual word usage instead of relying solely on memorization.

In addition, the Five-Step Reading Process in ORC—Warm-up, Listen, Read, Speak, and Wrap-up—supports active vocabulary learning through contextual exposure and productive language use. Previous studies have shown that digital reading platforms can improve vocabulary acquisition, learner motivation, reading comprehension, and learner autonomy through interactive learning environments.

However, limited studies specifically investigate the use of ORC for vocabulary mastery through synonym–antonym strategies, especially among vocational school students in Indonesian EFL contexts. This research gap indicates the need to explore how ORC combined with intensive reading and semantic vocabulary strategies can improve students' vocabulary proficiency more effectively.

Based on the reviewed literature, this study proposes that the Oxford Reading Club application, combined with intensive reading and synonym–antonym strategies, can support contextual vocabulary learning, strengthen semantic understanding, and improve students' vocabulary proficiency in EFL learning contexts.

4. Result and Discussion

Result

This study involved 60 tenth-grade students from a vocational school, divided equally into an experimental group (30 students) and a control group (30 students). Before hypothesis testing, normality and homogeneity tests were conducted to ensure that the data met the assumptions for parametric analysis.

The Shapiro–Wilk test showed that the significance values for the pre-test and post-test were 0.102 and 0.292, respectively. Since both values were higher than 0.05, the data were considered normally distributed. Meanwhile, the homogeneity test revealed significance values of 0.739 for the pre-test and 0.194 for the post-test, indicating that the variances between the two groups were homogeneous. After the assumptions were fulfilled, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The result showed a significance value of 0.04, which was lower than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups after the treatment.

The findings indicate that students who learned through the Oxford Reading Club (ORC) application achieved better vocabulary proficiency than those who received conventional instruction. This suggests that integrating digital reading platforms with intensive reading and synonym–antonym strategies contributed positively to vocabulary development.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Oxford Reading Club (ORC) application had a statistically significant effect on students' vocabulary proficiency. The result supports Krashen's Input Theory, which emphasizes that language acquisition occurs through meaningful and comprehensible input. Through graded reading materials and contextualized vocabulary exposure, students encountered new vocabulary repeatedly within meaningful contexts, which may support vocabulary retention and semantic understanding.

The effectiveness of ORC can also be explained through contextual and constructivist learning perspectives. The application encouraged students to actively interact with texts, multimedia features, and vocabulary exercises rather than relying solely on memorization. Through activities involving synonyms and antonyms, students were guided to analyze semantic relationships and contextual meanings more deeply.

Another factor contributing to the effectiveness of ORC was student engagement. Features such as audio narration, interactive dictionaries, and progress tracking created a more interactive learning environment compared to conventional instruction. In addition, the Five-Step Reading Process—Warm-up, Listen, Read, Speak, and Wrap-up—supported vocabulary learning through repeated exposure, contextual understanding, and active language use. The findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that digital reading platforms can improve vocabulary acquisition, learner motivation, and reading comprehension through interactive and contextualized learning experiences. However, this study specifically highlights the integration of intensive reading and synonym–antonym strategies in vocational school contexts.

Overall, the findings suggest that ORC can support vocabulary development more effectively than conventional methods when combined with contextual vocabulary-learning strategies. Future research is recommended to involve longer treatment durations and additional variables such as learner motivation and digital literacy to obtain more comprehensive findings.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the effect of the Oxford Reading Club (ORC) application on students' vocabulary proficiency through intensive reading combined with synonym–antonym strategies. The findings revealed that both the experimental and control groups showed improvement; however, the independent samples t-test indicated a statistically significant difference between the two groups (Sig. = 0.04 < 0.05). This result suggests that the use of the ORC application was more effective than conventional instruction in enhancing students' vocabulary proficiency. The findings highlight that integrating digital reading platforms with structured vocabulary strategies can contribute to more effective vocabulary learning outcomes in EFL contexts.

In addition to its statistical significance, this study provides important pedagogical implications. The ORC application offers interactive features that promote student engagement, contextualized vocabulary exposure, and active learning. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to incorporate digital reading tools alongside explicit vocabulary instruction to optimize learning outcomes. However, this study was limited by the sample size and duration of the treatment. Future research is recommended to involve larger samples, longer instructional periods, and more intensive vocabulary-focused activities to further examine the effectiveness of digital learning platforms in vocabulary acquisition.

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