

AUGMENTING EFL VOCABULARY
LEARNING AND READING
COMPREHENSION THROUGH MOBILE
PHONE-BASED VOCABULARY LEARNING
TASKS AND COMPUTER-BASED READING
ACTIVITIES

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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I hereby declare that the work in this thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at Universiti Malaysia Pahang or any other institutions.

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my sons Dr. Saad Saud Hassan, Fahad Fahim Hassan and Rayyan Sultan Hassan with the hope that it might serve as a benchmark for their academic pursuits.

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All virtues and praise be to Almighty Allah, who taught Man by pen what he knew not. He whom Allah guides is the [rightly] guided, but he whom He leaves astray - never will you find for him a protecting guide. Choicest blessings and salutation be on Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H), who is forever a beacon of knowledge and mercy for humanity.

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ABSTRAK

Kemahiran membaca *English as a Foreign Language* (EFL) ialah satu input penting yang menjadi tunjang kepada kemajuan akademik, persekitaran kerja dan interaksi sosial seseorang penutur. Kemahiran ini ialah satu proses yang kompleks kerana terdapat banyak faktor yang berperanan memberikan kefahaman kepada pembaca dengan jayanya. Kos kata EFL menjadi sebahagian daripada faktor-faktor yang paling penting dalam proses membaca kerana ia memberikan asas kepada interaksi antara teks dengan pembacanya. Para pakar telah berusaha dengan gigih merancang dan memikirkan cara untuk memperbaiki pemahaman bacaan EFL. Sejak teknologi mula mempengaruhi kehidupan, pakar-pakar telah mula beralih kepada teknologi yang membantu proses membaca. Pengajaran membaca berasaskan teknologi dalam EFL telah menggunakan dua platform: komputer dan telefon bimbit. Kajian ini bertujuan menggabungkan kemampuan kedua-dua platform ini untuk menambahkan kos kata EFL dan meningkatkan pemahaman bacaan pelajar *Preparatory Year Programme* (PYP) sebuah universiti awam di Arab Saudi. Ia juga turut mengkaji sikap para pelajar terhadap EFL secara umum dan sikap mereka terhadap penggunaan gabungan kedua-dua platform tersebut bagi menambahkan kos kata dan meningkatkan pemahaman bacaan EFL secara khusus. Sejumlah 131 orang pelajar yang terlibat dalam kajian ini iaitu 65 orang lelaki dan 66 orang perempuan telah dibahagikan kepada empat kumpulan terlebih dahulu. Kajian ini berlangsung selama enam minggu dan menggunakan reka bentuk kaedah gabungan. Kumpulan pertama (pelajar lelaki, $n = 32$) dan kumpulan kedua (pelajar perempuan, $n = 34$) membentuk kumpulan kawalan sementara kumpulan ketiga (pelajar lelaki, $n = 33$) dan kumpulan keempat (pelajar perempuan, $n = 32$) membentuk kumpulan eksperimen yang diberikan rawatan. Instrumen kajian untuk mengutip data terdiri daripada ujian prestasi, dua set borang soal selidik dan satu protokol temu bual separa berstruktur. Kesemua instrumen ini dibangunkan oleh pengkaji dan menjalani ujian rintis untuk menentukan kebolehpercayaan dan ketekalan. Rawatan merangkumi kedua-dua lembaran pengajaran kos kata dan pemahaman bacaan. Kumpulan rawatan menerima berbilang padanan kos kata melalui telefon bimbit menggunakan *WhatsApp* sementara aktiviti membaca dijana komputer menerusi *Hot Potatoes* sebagai alat untuk menjalankan eksperimen di dalam makmal bahasa. Kumpulan kawalan pula diajar kaedah lazim bilik darjah menggunakan model PPP iaitu *presentation, practice and production*. Data praujian dan pascajian serta borang soal selidik dianalisis bagi mendapatkan statistik perihalan dan statistik pentakbiran. Analisis data temu bual separa berstruktur dibincangkan secara kualitatif. Dapatan kajian menampakkan bahawa para pelajar dalam kumpulan rawatan mengatasi rakan-rakan mereka dalam kumpulan kawalan dari segi komponen kos kata dan pemahaman bacaan dalam ujian prestasi. Hasil analisis borang soal selidik kumpulan rawatan menunjukkan bahawa rawatan yang diberikan memberi impak yang positif kepada sikap dan persepsi para pelajar terhadap kemahiran membaca EFL secara umum dan sikap mereka terhadap penggunaan *WhatsApp* dan *Hot Potatoes* sebagai platform pembelajaran juga positif. Dapatan kajian juga memperlihatkan tiada perbezaan signifikan pada statistik prestasi antara pelajar lelaki dengan pelajar perempuan dalam kumpulan kawalan. Keputusan kajian ini sekali lagi menyerlahkan keberkesanan teknologi sebagai alat bantu yang menambah kos kata dan meningkatkan kemahiran pemahaman bacaan pelajar EFL. Ia turut mencadangkan agar komputer dan telefon bimbit asas yang ringkas digunakan sebagai platform pembelajaran.

ABSTRACT

EFL reading is a crucial input that is central to one's academic progress, work environment, and social interactions. EFL reading is a complex process because there are many factors that play their part in successful reading experience. EFL vocabulary is one the most important factors in reading process as it provides the basis for the interaction between the text and the reader. Experts have been hard at work to devise means and ways to improve EFL reading comprehension. Since technology has permeated our lives, they have turned to technology to assist in the process of EFL reading. The use of technology in EFL reading instruction has been through two platforms: computers and mobile phones. The present study seeks to combine the affordances of these two platforms to augment EFL vocabulary learning and reading comprehension of students in Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) at a public university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It also aims to study the students' attitude towards EFL in general and towards the combined usage of these platforms to enhance EFL reading comprehension and EFL vocabulary learning in particular. The participants were students ($N = 131$) divided into four preformed groups, ($n = 65$) male and ($n = 66$) female students. The study spanned a period of six weeks and had a mixed methods design. One group of males ($n = 32$) and one of females ($n = 34$) formed the control group while the other two groups of males ($n = 33$) and females ($n = 32$) were given the treatment. Research instruments used for data collection were an achievement test, two questionnaires and a semi-structured interview protocol. All data collection instruments were developed by the researcher and were piloted, for reliability and consistency. The treatment comprised of two strands that were vocabulary instruction and reading comprehension. The subjects in the treatment condition received multi glossed vocabulary through mobile phones using WhatsApp tool while computer-generated reading activities made with Hot Potatoes tool were administered in language laboratory. The control groups were taught through traditional classroom method which follows a presentation, practice and production model. Pre-test and post-test data and data from questionnaires were analysed through descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Data from the semi-structured interviews was discussed qualitatively. Findings of the study revealed that the treatment groups outperformed their counterparts in the control groups both in vocabulary and reading comprehension components of the achievement test. Results of the questionnaire for the treatment group showed that the treatment had positive impact on attitudes and perception of the participants towards EFL reading in general and they reported positive attitudes towards the use of WhatsApp and Hot Potatoes as learning platforms. The findings also indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in the performance of male and female groups in treatment group on the basis of gender. The results of the study highlighted yet again that technology can be used as an effective assistive tool to augment vocabulary learning and to enhance reading comprehension skills of EFL learners. The findings of the study also suggested that simple computers and mobile phones can be used as learning platforms.

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