

SUPPORTING VOCABULARY LEARNING THROUGH GUIDED READING  
ALoud IN AN EFL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM

Tiara H. Salihu<sup>1</sup>, Andi Naniwarsih<sup>2</sup>, Sari Wulandari<sup>3</sup>

<sup>123</sup> English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palu, Palu,  
Central Sulawesi, Indonesia

| ARTICLE INFO                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | ABSTRACT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| <p><b>Article history:</b><br/>Received: November 7, 2025<br/>Revised: December 04, 2025<br/>Accepted: December 21, 2025<br/>Published: December 30, 2025</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b><br/>EFL, pre-experimental study,<br/>Reading Aloud Method,<br/>seventh-grade students,<br/>vocabulary development</p>                                    | <p>This study explored the use of guided Reading Aloud as a classroom approach for supporting English vocabulary learning among seventh-grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Palu. The study responded to a classroom need in which learners showed limited vocabulary knowledge and difficulty engaging with English texts. A quantitative pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test-post-test structure was used. Seven seventh-grade students were selected purposively. Data were collected through written vocabulary tests administered before and after the instructional intervention, supported by classroom documentation. Because the sample was small, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to examine the paired scores. The results showed that the group mean rose from 51.50 on the pre-test to 65.93 on the post-test, giving an average gain of 14.43 points. Six students recorded higher post-test scores, whereas one student showed a very small decline. The Wilcoxon analysis indicated a statistically significant difference between the two measurements (<math>Z = -2.197</math>, <math>p = .031</math>), with an estimated effect size of <math>r = .83</math>. The pattern suggests that guided oral reading may create useful opportunities for learners to repeatedly encounter vocabulary, connect written forms with pronunciation, and process words in context. However, the findings should be interpreted cautiously because the study involved only seven students and did not include a control group or a delayed retention measure. The study therefore presents Reading Aloud as a practical and promising classroom approach for vocabulary instruction in a lower-secondary EFL setting, while recommending larger and controlled studies to establish its effectiveness more robustly.</p> <p><i>This is an open access article under the <a href="#">CC BYSA</a> license.</i></p> <div></div> |
| <p>How to cite: Salihu, T. H., Naniwarsih, A. ., &amp; Wulandari, S. . (2025). Supporting Vocabulary Learning Through Guided Reading Aloud in An EFL Junior High School Classroom. English Language Teaching Methodology, 5(3), 284-291. <a href="https://doi.org/10.56983/eltm.v6i2.2068">https://doi.org/10.56983/eltm.v6i2.2068</a></p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p><b>Corresponding Author:</b><br/>Name of Corresponding: Sari Wulandari<br/>English Education Department,<br/>Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar,<br/>259 Sultan Alauddin Road, Makassar City, Rappocini 90221, Indonesia.<br/>Email: <a href="mailto:sariwulandari@unismuhpalu.ac.id">sariwulandari@unismuhpalu.ac.id</a></p>            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is a central component of English language learning because learners need knowledge of words and their meanings to interpret texts, participate in interaction, and develop the other language skills. Research has repeatedly linked vocabulary knowledge with reading development and broader English competence. A meta-analysis by Dong et al. (2020), for example, showed that vocabulary knowledge contributes to word recognition, inferential processing, and reading comprehension. More recent evidence

from Indonesian learners likewise indicates that vocabulary knowledge is closely related to English competence (Hartini & Ardini, 2024), while vocabulary learning strategies are associated with reading ability among Indonesian junior high school learners (Hamidah Assagung et al., 2024).

Despite its importance, vocabulary remains difficult for many EFL learners, particularly in contexts where English exposure outside the classroom is limited. Students may recognize a word when it appears in a text but fail to pronounce it, recall its meaning, or use it appropriately in a sentence. The problem is especially relevant for lower-secondary learners who are still developing their basic lexical repertoire. In the Indonesian context, studies have reported insufficient vocabulary knowledge and a continuing need for systematic vocabulary instruction and varied learning strategies (Taladngoen et al., 2022; Zuhairi & Mistar, 2023). These conditions make classroom practices that provide repeated, meaningful encounters with words particularly important.

Reading Aloud is one such practice. In language education, reading aloud involves the oral production of written language so that learners simultaneously attend to visual word forms and their sounds. This combination can provide opportunities to notice pronunciation, rehearse new words, connect sound and meaning, and receive immediate feedback. Badawi et al. (2021) reported that teachers viewed reading aloud as useful for connecting written symbols with sounds and correcting pronunciation. Similarly, Wahyuni (2022) found that reading aloud could improve English pronunciation, while Kaharuddin et al. (2023) reported a significant relationship between reading aloud, vocabulary enrichment, and speaking performance among Indonesian learners.

Evidence specifically connecting reading aloud and vocabulary development is also emerging. Shin (2023) found that repeated reading-aloud practice in an EFL extensive-reading context supported vocabulary growth, with learners who initially had lower vocabulary levels showing particularly meaningful progress. A multisensory study by Jang and Jang (2023) further showed that combining aural input with read-aloud practice was effective for learning and retaining both vocabulary meaning and pronunciation. Research on processing tasks has also indicated that translation reading-aloud can positively influence L2 word acquisition (Eskandari et al., 2024). These findings support the view that oral engagement with written words can be more than a pronunciation exercise; it may also contribute to lexical learning.

The study therefore asks the following research question: Is there a significant difference in the English vocabulary performance of seventh-grade students before and after the implementation of the Reading Aloud Method at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Palu? The study contributes a small-scale classroom-based account of Reading Aloud as a vocabulary teaching strategy for Indonesian lower-secondary EFL learners. Its contribution lies not in claiming universal causal effectiveness, but in documenting a statistically significant pre-post change and interpreting how the pedagogical features of Reading Aloud may support vocabulary learning in this specific setting.

## CONCEPTUAL BASIS

### Reading Aloud as a multisensory vocabulary practice

Reading Aloud can be conceptualized as a form of guided oral reading in which learners see written language and simultaneously produce or hear its spoken form. The practice is pedagogically relevant to vocabulary because a new word can be encountered through several connected representations: orthography, pronunciation, meaning, and contextual use. Research on reading-aloud strategy in EFL contexts suggests that oral production can increase attention to sound and word form while creating opportunities for repeated exposure (Shin, 2023). Lapp and Wolsey (2021) emphasize that read-aloud

practices are most useful when teachers make the purpose of the activity explicit and provide appropriate scaffolding.

From a vocabulary-learning perspective, repeated exposure alone is not sufficient; learners need opportunities to notice, retrieve, and use words. Vocabulary instruction research stresses the importance of meaningful context, repetition, and active engagement with lexical items (Dakhi & Fitria, 2019). The present study therefore treats Reading Aloud not as simply asking students to pronounce a passage, but as a classroom sequence in which students encounter target words in text, listen to a model, read the words aloud, receive correction, and work with the meanings and uses of the words.

### **Vocabulary development in EFL**

Vocabulary knowledge involves more than knowing a translation. Learners need to recognize words, understand their meanings, use appropriate forms, and retrieve them in context. The assessment framework in this study consequently considered word range and variety, contextual accuracy, word form and grammar, collocation and phrasing, and pronunciation/spelling. This multidimensional view is consistent with research showing that vocabulary knowledge is closely connected with reading and broader language performance (Dong et al., 2020; Krepel, 2021).

Indonesian EFL research also shows that vocabulary learning is influenced by the strategies learners use. Zuhairi and Mistar (2023) found that cognitive, metacognitive, memory, encoding, and activation strategies were related to vocabulary mastery. Utami and Daulay (2024) similarly reported that Indonesian EFL learners employed a range of vocabulary-learning strategies. These findings suggest that teachers should not rely exclusively on memorization; classroom activities should create conditions in which students actively process and retrieve vocabulary.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research design**

This study employed a quantitative pre-experimental design using a one-group pre-test–post-test structure. The design was represented as  $Y_1-X-Y_2$ , where  $Y_1$  was the pre-test,  $X$  was the Reading Aloud treatment, and  $Y_2$  was the post-test. The purpose was to determine whether students' vocabulary scores changed after the instructional intervention. A one-group design is appropriate for an exploratory classroom study in which a researcher seeks to document change within an accessible group, although it does not provide the same causal strength as a randomized controlled design.

### **Participants and setting**

The study was conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Palu during the 2025/2026 academic year. The population was seventh-grade students, who were considered appropriate because they were at an early stage of developing their English vocabulary. Seven students were selected purposively based on the classroom conditions described in the thesis, including relatively similar English proficiency and active participation in the target English learning activities. The final sample consisted of seven learners.

The small sample should be considered when interpreting the findings. The results are intended to describe the observed change in this classroom rather than to represent all seventh-grade EFL learners in Palu or Indonesia. Future studies should use larger samples and, where feasible, comparison or control groups.

### **Instrument**

The main instrument was a written vocabulary test administered before and after the treatment. The test contained multiple-choice and structured essay items based on English texts and assessed vocabulary-related

performance. The thesis describes the assessment as covering word meanings, pronunciation, and sentence use. The scoring rubric additionally considered word range and variety, contextual accuracy, word form and grammar, collocation and phrasing, and pronunciation/spelling. The same general structure and indicators were used in the pre-test and post-test to facilitate comparison.

Documentation was also used to support the research process. The treatment materials included short English reading passages and lesson plans based on descriptive and everyday texts. The classroom sequence encouraged students to read texts aloud, identify unfamiliar vocabulary, discuss meanings, and respond to comprehension questions. The treatment was structured over several sessions so that learners could repeatedly encounter and pronounce target words.

### Data collection procedure

First, students completed the pre-test to establish their baseline vocabulary performance. The pre-test included items related to comprehension of word meaning and use. Second, the Reading Aloud treatment was implemented through structured classroom activities. Students worked with short English texts, listened to or followed teacher modeling, read passages aloud, identified vocabulary items, and practiced using the words in context. Teacher feedback was used to support pronunciation and comprehension. Third, after the treatment sessions, students completed the post-test. The post-test was designed with the same general indicators and level of difficulty as the pre-test.

### Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize students' performance before and after the intervention. The mean was calculated by dividing the total score by the number of students. Individual gain scores were also examined to identify the direction and size of change for each learner. The raw scores reported in the thesis were retained for the re-analysis in this article.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Pre-test and post-test performance

| Student | Pre-test | Post-test | Gain  | Direction |
|---------|----------|-----------|-------|-----------|
| NM      | 65       | 75.5      | 10.5  | Increase  |
| AL      | 60       | 78.5      | 18.5  | Increase  |
| NA      | 63       | 81        | 18    | Increase  |
| H       | 33.5     | 48.5      | 15    | Increase  |
| M       | 22       | 30.5      | 8.5   | Increase  |
| AQA     | 86       | 85.5      | -0.5  | Decrease  |
| NB      | 31       | 62        | 31    | Increase  |
| Mean    | 51.5     | 65.93     | 14.43 |           |

Table 1. Students' vocabulary scores before and after the Reading Aloud treatment.

Table 1 shows a clear descriptive increase in the students' vocabulary performance. The mean score rose from 51.50 on the pre-test to 65.93 on the post-test, a gain of 14.43 points. Six of the seven students improved, while one student (AQA) decreased slightly by 0.50 points. The largest individual gain was recorded by NB, whose score increased by 31 points, from 31 to 62. The smallest positive gain was recorded by M, whose score increased by 8.50 points.

### Wilcoxon signed-rank test

| Statistic | Value |
|-----------|-------|
| N         | 7     |

|                          |              |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| Positive ranks           | 6            |
| Negative ranks           | 1            |
| Ties                     | 0            |
| Wilcoxon W               | 1            |
| Z                        | -2.197       |
| Exact two-tailed p       | 0.03125      |
| Effect size r            | 0.83         |
| Decision at $\alpha=.05$ | Reject $H_0$ |

Table 2. Wilcoxon signed-rank analysis of pre-test and post-test scores.

The Wilcoxon signed-rank analysis indicated a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores,  $Z = -2.197$ ,  $p = .031$  (exact two-tailed  $p = .03125$ ). Six students had positive ranks, one student had a negative rank, and no students had tied scores. The positive ranks therefore strongly dominated the pattern of change. The estimated effect size,  $r = .83$ , is large by conventional interpretive guidelines, suggesting that the observed pre-post difference was substantial within this small sample.

The statistical finding supports the research question by indicating that students' vocabulary scores were systematically higher after the Reading Aloud treatment. This result is broadly consistent with previous research. Shin (2023) reported vocabulary growth following reading-aloud practice in an EFL extensive-reading context, while Jang and Jang (2023) found that pairing aural input with read-aloud strategies supported vocabulary meaning and pronunciation. Research on translation reading-aloud tasks has also reported positive effects on L2 word acquisition (Eskandari et al., 2024).

The present finding is also consistent with research conducted in Indonesia. Kaharuddin et al. (2023) found that reading aloud and vocabulary enrichment were significantly related to English speaking performance. Wahyuni (2022) reported positive effects of reading aloud on pronunciation, and Badawi et al. (2021) highlighted teachers' perceptions of the strategy as a means of linking written forms and sounds. Together, these studies provide a plausible pedagogical explanation for the present pre-post improvement: repeated oral engagement may help learners notice, rehearse, and retrieve lexical items.

### How Reading Aloud may support vocabulary development

First, Reading Aloud provides repeated exposure to word forms. Vocabulary learning requires repeated encounters and opportunities to process lexical information. In the present treatment, students did not encounter target words only once. They saw them in texts, heard them modeled or discussed, pronounced them, and encountered them again while answering questions. This repeated processing may have helped stabilize word-form and word-meaning connections. The finding aligns with research showing that repeated or enriched exposure can contribute to vocabulary development (Chang & Renandya, 2021; Lee & Choi, 2022).

Second, oral production creates a sound-based route to vocabulary learning. Students who only see an unfamiliar word may not know how it is pronounced. Reading aloud makes pronunciation an explicit part of the learning episode. This feature is especially relevant in English because spelling-to-sound relationships can be inconsistent. Research on Indonesian students' pronunciation has documented difficulties with stress, intonation, and other suprasegmental features (Suciati & Diyanti, 2021). By reading aloud and receiving teacher feedback, students have an opportunity to connect orthographic forms with spoken forms.

Third, the activity can increase active participation. The thesis records indicated that students were initially relatively passive and hesitant but became more engaged during the treatment. Although these observations were not collected as a separate quantitative engagement measure, they provide useful pedagogical context for interpreting the score changes. Active participation can create additional opportunities for retrieval and

contextual use. Research on vocabulary strategies similarly suggests that active, cognitive, and metacognitive processing is associated with vocabulary mastery (Zuhairi & Mistar, 2023; Utami & Daulay, 2024).

Fourth, contextualized reading may support meaning. The treatment materials used short texts rather than isolated lists of words. This is important because learners need to understand how words function in sentences and discourse. Studies of reading and vocabulary have consistently demonstrated the close relationship between lexical knowledge and comprehension (Dong et al., 2020; Taladngoen et al., 2022). The Reading Aloud Method can therefore be seen as a bridge between reading comprehension and vocabulary practice: students read for meaning while simultaneously attending to new lexical forms.

Finally, teacher scaffolding is likely to matter. Reading aloud is not automatically effective simply because students vocalize a text. The teacher needs to select an appropriate text, model pronunciation, explain unfamiliar words, correct errors sensitively, and provide opportunities for repeated practice. Lapp and Wolsey (2021) emphasize teacher clarity and scaffolding in read-aloud instruction. The present treatment similarly incorporated guided reading, questioning, vocabulary identification, and feedback. Thus, the pedagogical value may lie in the combination of oral reading and instructional support rather than in the technique considered in isolation.

## Comparison with previous studies

### Pedagogical implications

#### Limitations

Three limitations should be emphasized. First, the sample consisted of only seven students. Although the Wilcoxon test indicated a significant difference and a large effect-size estimate, the result should not be generalized to a wider population without replication. Second, the one-group pre-test-post-test design does not control for maturation, testing effects, or other classroom influences. Third, the study measured vocabulary through a researcher-administered test and did not include a delayed post-test. Consequently, it is not possible to determine whether the observed gains represented durable vocabulary retention.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated the change in English vocabulary performance of seventh-grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Palu following the implementation of the Reading Aloud Method. The students' mean score increased from 51.50 on the pre-test to 65.93 on the post-test, producing a mean gain of 14.43 points. Six of the seven students improved, while one student showed a very small decrease. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated a statistically significant pre-post difference,  $Z = -2.197$ ,  $p = .031$ , with a large estimated effect size ( $r = .83$ ).

The findings suggest that Reading Aloud can be a useful classroom strategy for supporting vocabulary development when it is implemented through repeated exposure, oral production, contextualized practice, and teacher scaffolding. The strategy may be particularly practical in EFL settings where teachers need low-cost methods for connecting written words, pronunciation, and meaning. Nevertheless, the findings are limited to a very small, purposively selected group and a one-group design. The result should therefore be understood as promising classroom evidence rather than definitive causal proof.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to thank the English Education Study Program of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palu, and the participating school, teacher, and students for

their support and participation in the research. The authors also acknowledge the guidance provided during the completion of the thesis from Andi Naniwarsih and Sari Wulandari.

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