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Students' Reading Proficiency Based on Scholastic Literacy Pro Browser-Based Program

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A B S T R A C T

Digital learning has become increasingly important in education, regardless of how much technology is integrated into the classroom, it gives students more power by encouraging them to learn more and broaden their horizons. The goals of this study were to (1) determine the reading proficiency of students in the First Language English (FLE) class at Mutiara Harapan International School, and to (2) identify reading competencies that the students need to improve. According to the findings of this study, the majority of the students achieved Advanced (A) reading proficiency level with a mean of 87.36 percent, they also performed remarkably well in eight out of ten reading comprehension skills with the mean range of 77 to 99 out of a maximum of 100 percent. This research also revealed that the learners possessed two skills that they had not yet mastered, indicating a Basic (C) proficiency level with a mean range of 69 to 71 out of a maximum of 100 percent. In this regard, teachers and other members of the school community should participate in developing intervention programs that can help students improve their performance in these areas.

A R T I C L E I N F O

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of English in today's global environment cannot be overstated, as it is the most widely spoken language on the planet. It takes a lot of time and patience to learn it (Nishanthi, 2018). English may help us adapt to the environment and work in the present and future not only as a communication tool but also as a tool for learning (Putra, 2020).

Even though there are some differences in habits, cultures, traditions, locations, and distinctive elements, the ability to communicate effectively in English is a necessary component of a successful personality. The entire world has become narrow, accessible, shareable, and familiar for all individuals living on our planet in the twenty-first century since English is used as a common language. Due to its common traits, English has been regarded as the world language by speakers of thousands of various languages (Barber & Badre, 1998; Merlan, 2005; Rao, 2019).

According to Udemy Inc. (2020), there are around 375 million people in the United States who speak English as a first language and 750 million people who speak English as a second language, with English also being recognized as an official or special language in at least 70 nations. Additionally, the market for English as a Second Language (ESL) is growing, and more people are enrolling in courses like this one to improve their accents and understand native English. Furthermore, learners choose English to build a foundation for social communication and to participate in the global economy, as per this article.

English proficiency is important for job success and growth, as well as for gaining access to economic opportunities (Rao, 2016; Bui & Nguyen, 2016; Robles, 2012). In commercial interests or business organizations, the majority of native and non-native English speakers use English as their means of communication, it is a language spoken not only by native speakers, but also by people from all over the world, making it a global language and has developed so quickly in recent years that it is now used as a first, second, and foreign language by a large number of people (Adytia, 2020).

In Indonesia, English is taught as a first foreign language, and students are expected to master it from secondary school through university. As they enter the modern era, they must be able to communicate in English. The government considers foreign languages such as English to be one of the most important things for students to acquire, which is why there are so many different English courses offered. English is a language that has a significant impact on people's lives, particularly in the areas of education, technology, and science (Kasvia, 2017).

Researches show that many Indonesian learners continue to struggle with English language learning. In the findings of Andika and Mitsalina's (2020) study, they stated that students indeed experience various difficulties such as lack of confidence and vocabulary mastery due to the fact that students do not use English as their daily language.

Considering the figures from the English Proficiency Index 2020 edition which considered test data of students who speak English as a first or second language, Indonesia ranked number 74 out of the 100 countries and regions tested and number 15 out of the 24 countries in Asia. Based on the data, Indonesia's English Proficiency Index (453) is categorized under Low Proficiency (EF English Proficiency Index, 2020).

Walden (2018) reported in his article on the results of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) examinations, which showed that Indonesian pupils performed at lower levels than the OECD average in all disciplines - science, mathematics, and reading. He went on to say that a surprising 42 percent of Indonesian students failed to reach

minimum standards in all three areas covered by the test, with pupils from Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand outperforming them.

In the article posted by Prasetyo (2019), it is stated that English is the first foreign language officially taught to Indonesian students from junior secondary school to equip them with an ability to communicate at the international level, and the objective was to teach English as a foreign language and neither a social language nor a second official language in Indonesia.

Whether or not this kind of setup of English language learning has affected the language acquisition of Indonesian learners, it is worthy to mention that to achieve excellent ability levels of Indonesian language learners, may it be in English as Foreign Language, Second Language, or First Language, rigorous curricular innovations and transformations must be put in place.

Students in Sekolah Mutiara Harapan, from kindergarten to senior high school, are required to communicate with their peers and teachers in English on a daily basis. Subjects in the Cambridge international curriculum employ English as the primary language of instruction in some cases. Cambridge English encourages learners to increase their confidence, creativity, and intellectual engagement through an inquiry-based approach. In everyday circumstances and in school, students gain English skills that they may use for a variety of purposes and audiences to be able to speak confidently and effectively, as well as develop critical skills for comprehending and enjoying a variety of information, media, and texts (Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2017).

English is so important in this international school that it is not just a required language but also a key language in many facets of students' academic and social lives. Every day, all students face the challenge of communicating effectively with persons of various cultural backgrounds and ethnicities. The academic aspect, on the other hand, presents the greatest challenge for pupils, as they must comprehend subject concepts in full English and because our students at Sekolah Mutiara Harapan will be expected to take at least two international standardized tests before graduating high school, they must have excellent reading foundations.

According to Rachmat (2020), reading literacy is one of the most important types of literacy since people must be able to read before they can learn anything else. Reading literacy can relate to a variety of things other than written text, such as situations. Reading has a wide range of benefits for people, but regrettably, the average Indonesian citizen's interest in reading is very low.

Reading Proficiency

Reading proficiency is a critical skill for academic success, particularly after the third grade (Ellen, 2019; Oakhill, Cain, & Elbro, 2019; Kim, Petscher, Schatschneider, & Foorman, 2010). Reading instruction time is reduced or removed in favor of other disciplines because students are expected to be readers by the end of third grade. She believes that reading proficiency is the key to learning and academic achievement. She also added that the best method to describe reading ability is to consider it in the context of the other two standards. Students with rudimentary reading skills, for example, may access material, make simple inferences, and recognize details. Similarly, students with strong reading skills can discover information, make simple inferences, and recognize details. They may, however, combine and interpret texts, as well as use their knowledge of the material to draw conclusions and make

judgments. Advanced readers can also form sophisticated inferences, create and defend their understanding, and make and support a judgment.

Reading comprehension is essential on a fundamental level, according to Friedman (2019), because it is required for many everyday activities such as shopping, eating, driving, working, requesting assistance, learning how to care for yourself, applying for jobs, and so on. As a result, students with strong reading comprehension skills are significantly more likely to succeed in their daily lives. Students who struggle with reading comprehension, on the other hand, are more likely to struggle academically and have fewer career options.

According to Nyarko, et al. (2018), the effects of reading proficiency on academic achievement are not limited to primary or elementary schools, but may also be shown in secondary schools. They went on to say that the relevance of reading proficiency's favorable spillover cannot be overstated, because skilled readers perform well not only on English exams but also on broad tests that apply to all disciplines of study.

Text comprehension at school, at home during homework, and at work has recently become based on an increasing number of digital reading devices (computers and laptops, e-books, and tablet devices) that can become fundamental support to improve traditional reading comprehension and learning skills, thanks to the widespread adoption of technology in many aspects of daily life (Capodieci, et. al., 2020).

Bee Choo, et al. (2018) stated that adopting an E-book to improve students' reading comprehension is an effective method. This practice is in stark contrast to traditional teaching methods such as "chalk and talk." The students have a variety of learning environments in which they can concentrate on the lesson by looking at the E-book. Because the students are in a 21st-century learning environment, they prefer to learn through technology.

In a research conducted by Hamdy (2017) he inferred that digital storytelling had a substantial impact on students' reading and listening comprehension

To summarize, a student's capacity to grasp what they read has a significant impact on their academic advancement; hence, kids who are unable to comprehend what they are reading are unlikely to develop the abilities required to operate in the twenty-first century (Amor, 2018).

Conceptual and Analytical Framework

Reading may appear to be competing for children's time and attention with technology use at times, but this does not have to be the case. Using technology in conjunction with reading can encourage students to pick up a book. Because young people are constantly speaking digitally, using these platforms to assist kids to communicate with one another about reading is a great method to promote pleasant and constructive virtual communication. Combining digital resources with reading is a smart method to engage children to read at school and at home in a world that is increasingly focused on technology. Incorporating technology into reading activities at school or home can boost motivation, particularly for reluctant or struggling readers (Buell, 2018).

Friedman (2019) used Piaget's theory that children begin the process of learning to read and talk by first acquiring sensory and motor information. This is data on how something feels, tastes smells, and appears. How they move and manage items in space is called motor information. This is most common between the birth of a child and the age of two. The baby will learn that reading is important by using soft books and board books, as well as having books about all the time. The child is in the concrete operations stage of her cognitive development between the ages of seven and twelve. At this age, the child begins to develop

the ability to think both logically and abstractly. These abilities lay the groundwork for reading comprehension. The child must be able to read and comprehend what he or she is reading. This is why reading aloud to youngsters improves understanding so dramatically. Adults may assist their children to get on the fast track to language acquisition and reading comprehension by emphasizing the necessity of literacy and the usefulness of reading at a young age, according to Friedman. This is an excellent approach for parents to give their children a leg up in life.

There have been numerous studies on students' reading comprehension skills, categorizing them into different levels of English reading proficiency, as well as research on the use of reading platforms to improve reading competencies, such as Puspitasari (2017)'s study on the use of Webtoon in improving students' reading comprehension, Siti Reski Nanda (2018)'s study on the use of Quizziz, and Korkmaz, S., and Z, H.'s study on the use of Kahoot (2021). However, research on using the Scholastic Literacy Pro Browser-Based Program to identify and analyze students' reading comprehension skills using the test competencies supplied in this digital platform is lacking.

The most generally used measure of reading aptitude and text difficulty is the Lexile scale, which is based on over 30 years of research. Lexile measurements assist educators and learners in selecting books that will challenge them - but not to the point of being frustrating, but challenging enough to stimulate reading improvement. The LitPro Comprehension Skills Test provides the means to understand and assess students' proficiency and progress in critical reading comprehension skills at each grade in a set of 3 tests with 10 critical reading skills.

Figure 1 shows the reading abilities assessed by Litpro's comprehension skills test and how these will be used to identify the least mastered competencies of the students to propose for intervention programs to help improve their reading literacy.
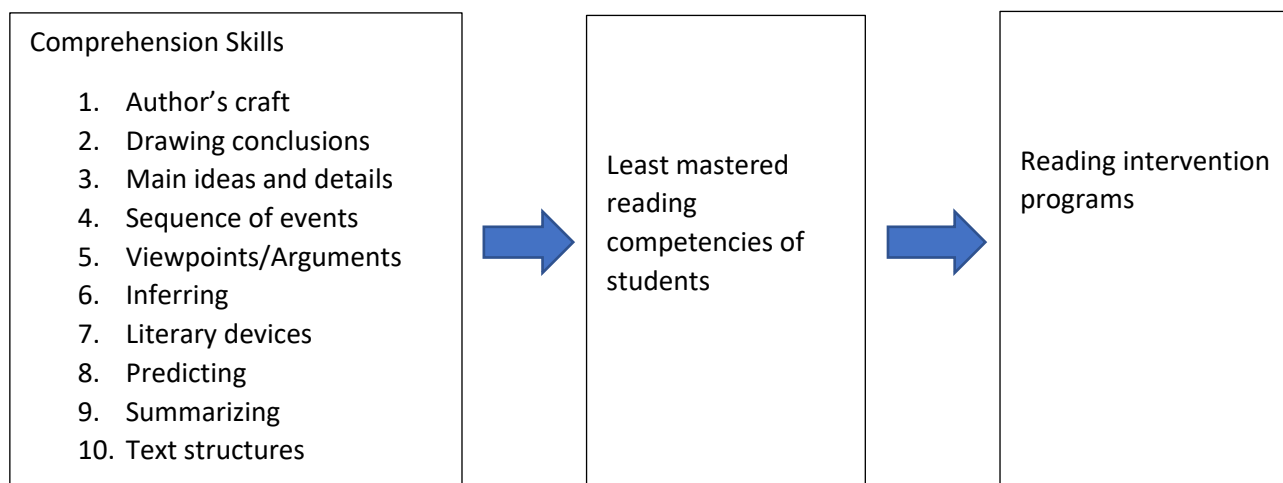

Figure 1. *Research paradigm of the study on comprehension skills of the students*

The purpose of this research is to find solutions to the following problems: (1) What is the reading proficiency level of FLE students in Mutiara Harapan International School? (2) What reading competencies do the students need to improve? (3) What instructional materials and institutional programs should be developed to enhance the learners' reading competencies?

2. METHODS

This is a descriptive research that also involves an analysis of quantitative data in the form of test scores. It employs web-based software to assess students' reading comprehension and ability. A series of reading comprehension examinations, ranging from level 5 to level 8, were given to 14 students. These students are in the English First Language class and they were chosen as the participants of this study because the syllabus used in their class exclusively assesses reading and writing abilities. They also need a high level of reading proficiency in order to pass their Cambridge international assessment.

This study was carried out according to the necessary procedures starting with the content and purpose of the information distributed to the participants, collaboration with school authorities and teachers on testing logistics, and deliberation of the reading test instructions to students prior to their examination day.

The method for determining students' reading ability combines a reading assessment that creates Lexile® scores with a reading management tool that evaluates independent reading (Scholastic Literacy Pro User Guide, 2018).

Students were given two months to practice on the reading platform before being given their reading comprehension test. They were provided three books to read, all of which were appropriate for their grade level. To practice and enhance their reading comprehension skills, several students began reading unassigned books. According to McBride (2017), who collected data from 32 students to see if students' comprehension levels were higher when they were given the option of choosing their own books versus reading assigned books, the results showed that students had higher comprehension levels when they were given the option of choosing their own books. The participants in this study were given the flexibility to choose books to read based on their interests to prepare for the reading exam, using McBride's research findings as a reference.

The LitPro Comprehension Skills Test provides the means to understand and assess students' proficiency and progress in critical reading comprehension skills at each grade in a set of 3 tests with these 10 critical reading skills: understanding text structures and organizational patterns, predicting, identifying main ideas and key details, identifying the sequence of events, inferring, drawing conclusions, summarizing and synthesizing, literary devices, author's craft, identifying viewpoints and arguments (Scholastic Incorporated, 2021).

To analyze and interpret the data gathered, descriptive statistics were used to present the outcomes of the LitPro Comprehension Skills Test shown in the results of the Scholastic Literacy Pro Browser-Based Program.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Scholastic Literacy Pro Browser-Based Program

Digital readers are prevalent, and they may be found in our lives in the guise of androids, tablets, iPhones, iPads, iPod touches, personal computers, Macs, information monitors, and kindles, among other gadgets. You can't even get away from them when traveling by plane, rail, or bus. Our digital world reality, combined with our current reliance on digital gadgets, suggests that digital reading will continue to be an important part of our lives (Bhatia, 2016).

In a post by Kelly and Siefert (2017), they wrote that English learners benefit from realistic literacy experiences and digital technologies that allow them to collaborate and communicate with their peers while practicing key language and literacy skills in both

traditional and digital settings. In addition, teachers can employ technology to help English learners reach their specific competency levels, improve language development and content area learning, and give performance-based assessments.

According to Paquet-Bélanger (2017), reading activates several distinct processes at the same time. A reader must decode words, grasp what they mean, understand how words are connected in phrases, understand the usage of pronouns, build mental pictures, make inferences, summarize information, and so on for students who struggle with reading, the correct technology tools can make a big difference. Readers in the twenty-first century must be able to interpret a wide variety of texts, including comic strips, fairy tales, news, informational papers, and more. The majority of digital texts have elements that aid pupils in comprehending the texts. Many websites, for example, feature a menu or table of contents that remain visible on the screen, which aids readers in understanding the text's structure and primary concepts.

Scholastic, a global company headquartered in New York, is the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books and educational materials with $1.6 billion in annual revenue. Having a global reach of employing more than 8,400 employees and serving customers in more than 165 countries in 45 languages, Scholastic operates around the world with original publishing of trade books and educational materials, distribution through Book Clubs and Book Fairs, and instructional materials for schools (Scholastic Incorporated, 2021).

Scholastic Literacy Pro is a web-based software that evaluates pupils' reading comprehension and competence. It combines a reading assessment that calculates pupils' Lexile® scores with a reading management tool with hundreds of tests to assess independent reading. The reading assessment is an adaptive test that changes based on the replies of the students. When students begin the test, the difficulty level of the questions changes in response to their performance. The test comes to a halt when the computer has gathered enough data to determine a Lexile score (Scholastic Literacy Pro User Guide, 2018).

Both student and teacher software are included in Scholastic Literacy Pro. Students can use the student software to create a Recommended Reading List, take the LitPro Test, take book comprehension quizzes, as well as track their progress. Teachers can examine quizzes, track student progress, and generate reports for their students and courses using the teacher program. Administrator software helps school administrators to access data and track student development across the board (Scholastic Literacy Pro User Guide, 2018).

This browser-based reading program was launched by Sekolah Mutiara Harapan in July 2021 to help students enhance their reading literacy and create a love of reading by providing a variety of resources through a digital platform as this research-based, blended literacy program also supports schools' literacy goals by encouraging students to read texts matched to their abilities, allowing them to gain valuable reading practice and build comprehension skills (Scholastic Incorporated, 2021).

An article released by PRweb dated November 27, 2021, posted a study about Whooo's Reading Platform which helped elementary students significantly improve reading proficiency and comprehension after one year. According to the findings of the data that came from more than 2,700 students who used the platform during the 2014-15 school year, after a year of using the Whooo's Reading online platform, the elementary students at all grade levels read books with significantly higher text complexity, as determined by Lexile measures, than at the start of that year.

This study's first goal was to determine the reading levels of Grade 10 students in the First Language English class in Sekolah Mutiara Harapan School using the Scholastic Literacy Pro Browser-Based Program. However, the Reading Comprehension Skills Test does not

provide corresponding descriptions for the test results except for the scores in percentage that is why the evaluation description was based on Litpro's Benchmark Proficiency Bands. The letter grades on the other hand were based on the school's assessment criterion for determining the grades of the students. The following is the assessment criterion:

- 86% – 100% = A (Advanced letter grade)
- 73% – 85% = B (Proficient letter grade)
- 60% – 72% = C (Basic letter grade)
- 01% – 59% = D (Below Basic letter grade)

Table 1. *Students Reading Proficiency Level*

Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percent	Description
1-59	0	0	D (Below Basic)
60-72	1	7.14	C (Basic)
73-85	3	21.43	B (Proficient)
86-100	10	71.43	A (Advanced)
	MEAN	87.36	A (Advanced)

Table 1 shows that students in the First Language English class had advanced reading competency, with an average of 87.36 percent. Ten of the fourteen students received an exceptional grade (A), three students received a proficient grade (B), and one student received a basic grade (C). This class had no students who received below basic grade (D).

The findings are consistent with the Cambridge FLE program's expectations and standards where students taking this qualification should be able to achieve and manifest excellent abilities in various competencies which are: understanding explicit meanings, understanding implicit meanings and attitudes, analyzing, evaluating, and developing facts, ideas, and opinions, using appropriate support from the text, understanding of how writers achieve effects and influence readers, select and use the information for specific purposes (Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2017).

Learners in the FLE program are also encouraged to read widely, both for their own enjoyment and to further their awareness of how English can be used. They should as well develop more general analysis and communication skills such as inference, and the ability to order facts and present opinions effectively (Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2021).

This finding is also in line with the expectations of the First Language English Program, which calls for students to master English in order to appreciate literature and analyze and respond to a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts studied during the course (Short, 2015).

It was reflected that after almost three years of studying in the FLE program, the students were able to acquire the necessary skills in reading comprehension used in various contexts as required by the program's syllabus. Although not all students achieved advanced reading proficiency, only one student performed in the basic category, and none in the below basic category, implying that all students have gained the fundamental reading skills required for their course.

Table 2. *Students Skills Test Report*

Reading skills	N	MEAN	Description
Author's Craft	14	69	Basic
Drawing Conclusions	14	71	Basic
Identifying Main Ideas and Details	14	86	Advanced
Identifying Sequence of Events	14	97	Advanced
Identifying Viewpoints or Arguments	14	96	Advanced
Inferring	14	93	Advanced
Literary Devices	14	99	Advanced
Predicting	14	93	Advanced
Summarizing and Synthesizing	14	77	Proficient
Understanding Text Structures and Organizational Patterns	14	99	Advanced

The table above shows that the author's craft and drawing conclusions are the least mastered reading comprehension skills among students. The results revealed that the learners' performance in these areas is still rudimentary, with a mean of just 69 percent and 71 percent out of a maximum of 100 percent, respectively. On the contrary, students achieved advanced proficiency levels in seven out of the ten competencies measured in the Reading Comprehension Skills Test.

The findings revealed that the participant's ability to deconstruct the author's craft is still basic. The author's craft is what the author is attempting to accomplish. The author may be trying to persuade, inform, or entertain the reader (Definitions and Translations, 2021). Students can better comprehend how word choice, imagery, themes, and sentence structure inform the work by deconstructing the author's craft and motivations for writing. Students learn that different words have distinct meanings, which alter the text's meaning and tone, by focusing on word choice. Students with a stronger comprehension of the content can help peers who are struggling, and all students are exposed to ideas they may not have considered (Minero, 2019).

Another skill that students need to practice is drawing conclusions, this is a reading approach that involves using written or visual clues after you've finished reading to figure out something that isn't explicitly stated in the text (etools4Education, 2021). Drawing conclusions is an important skill for readers to learn because it encourages them to pay attention to what they're reading, apply what they've learned from their own life experiences, and use the details and facts in the text as clues to help them draw conclusions about what's being implied but not explicitly stated (Rehabilitation Robotics, 2021).

In the study by Beltran (2014), using structural analysis, finding the main idea and supporting details, classifying and organizing facts, following directions, and using parts of a book were all areas in which fourth-year Manobo high school students excelled in reading. In the categories of vocabulary building: idioms and figurative language, inferring meaning and drawing conclusions, and using dictionaries and Encyclopedia and other Reference Books, they performed averagely in reading.

Both this study and Beltran's found that pupils examined excelled in the reading competency of identifying the main ideas and details in a text, whereas the reading competency of drawing conclusions needs to be improved.

Similarly, Imam, et. al. (2014), research findings revealed that the level of performance in reading comprehension skills of student-respondents from 18 identified public and private

high schools in the Division of Cotabato City, Central Mindanao, Philippines., particularly understanding vocabulary in context, noting details, predicting outcomes, and drawing conclusions showed weak results which is why they suggested that measures need to be put in place to enhance students' level of proficiency in these areas.

In light of the outcomes of this study, it is proposed that learners be provided with more resources to aid them to acquire skills in deconstructing authorial craft and making conclusions. Both of these abilities are necessary since the Cambridge FLE curriculum considers them to be valuable skills needed to fulfill the students' IGCSE exams. Teachers could also assist students in understanding ways for drawing conclusions and deconstructing the author's craft by giving discussions and exercises from various resources ideal for developing these abilities using a tailored module or guidebook. To instill a passion for reading among students, the school can organize unique reading programs or events such as reading quiz competitions, reading outreach programs, reading-sharing sessions and reading exhibition programs. The author of this study is convinced that by having the support of teachers and the entire school community, students will be able to develop their reading abilities efficiently and in an enjoyable way. It was revealed in the study of Dehghanpour & Hashemian (2015), Efficiency of Using a Web-Based Approach to Teach Reading Strategies to Iranian EFL Learners, that after participating in the reading strategy program, the participants' frequent use of each reading strategy increased dramatically, and as a result, they performed better on reading tasks in both Web-based and traditional settings.

4. CONCLUSION

Using the Scholastic Literacy Pro Browser-Based Program, this study determined the reading competency level of students in Sekolah Mutiara Harapan's First Language English class. The findings revealed that the students need to enhance two of the ten reading competencies because they have only reached the basic reading competence level in these two areas. Thus, developing reading intervention programs is an essential step to assist students to improve their least mastered reading skills. Few published studies have lately described the effectiveness of interventions and support programs for English learners, according to Gersten & Baker, 2000; Klingner, Artiles, & Barletta, 2006, as referenced by Richard-Tutor (2015). Even though not all of the students scored at the same advanced level, the majority of them scored proficient and advanced in eight of the ten reading competencies, indicating that they have mastered the Litpro-required reading comprehension skills. The examination into whether using the Scholastic Literacy Pro Browser-Based Program enhances students' reading comprehension skills can be developed as the following point of this research. Finally, in order to get a more conclusive outcome, a bigger sample of students should be considered as participants.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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