



***READ+* vs. *READ*: Investigating Extensive Reading and Vocabulary Knowledge Development Among Malaysian Remedial ESL Learners**

Debbita Tan Ai Lin

Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Ambigapathy Pandian

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia

Paramaswari Jaganathan

Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Research supports extensive reading (ER), which draws on incidental learning, as a primary tool for second/foreign language vocabulary knowledge development. However, while it is deemed useful for vocabulary learning, the claim that ER on its own is sufficient for learners to experience significant lexical gains has been challenged. Instead, a more fitting measure appears to be a combination of incidental and intentional vocabulary learning, with ER followed by explicit vocabulary study. Given the issue of Malaysian tertiary students lacking English vocabulary knowledge, this quasi-experimental study implemented a method incorporating ER using graded readers and explicit vocabulary study (*READ+*) to observe its effectiveness for receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge development, as compared against another method (*READ*) in which only ER was utilised. The study was conducted in a Malaysian public university employing two groups of participants. Each group comprised 14 Malaysian undergraduates of the MUET Band 1 to Band 3 cohort undergoing a preparatory English language course at the university. Pre-, post- and delayed post-testings were carried out using the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale. Results from statistical analyses indicate that the *READ+* group performed significantly better than the *READ* group for both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge recall and retention.

Keywords: vocabulary development, extensive reading, explicit vocabulary study, *READ+*, tertiary

Introduction and Rationale

Over the years, reading has been postulated as a productive approach to improving word power, with researchers frequently advocating the inclusion of extensive reading programmes as part of language course structures. According to Hunt and Beglar (2005), who emphasised the essentiality of extensive reading, reading is the primary means by which we can immerse learners in a word-rich environment that can potentially result in receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge development. Receptive vocabulary knowledge fundamentally consists of words that we know when we see or hear them, whereas words that we use appropriately when we speak or write constitute productive vocabulary knowledge.

There are several reasons why extensive reading is deemed extremely fitting for language learning. For