

The Role of Wattpad in Vocabulary Development: A Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract: This study explores the role of Wattpad as a digital reading platform in supporting vocabulary development among Indonesian EFL learners. The research was motivated by the persistent issue of low reading motivation and limited vocabulary growth among students, despite increasing exposure to English through digital media. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through a semi-structured in-depth interview with one purposively selected participant who had actively read English stories on Wattpad. Findings revealed that the participant's engagement with Wattpad contributed to the formation of consistent reading habits, driven by both social influence and intrinsic motivation. Wattpad provided authentic, contextualized exposure to English vocabulary, allowing the participant to acquire and apply new words naturally in both academic and personal communication. Furthermore, the platform fostered pragmatic awareness and confidence in using English expressively and appropriately. Despite challenges such as misinterpretation and inconsistent language quality, the participant demonstrated autonomy and critical literacy in overcoming them. Overall, the study highlights Wattpad's pedagogical potential as an informal yet effective digital environment that promotes self-directed vocabulary learning and enhances reading motivation. The findings offer valuable implications for integrating authentic digital reading materials into EFL instruction to foster meaningful and learner-centered language development.

Keywords: digital reading, reading motivation, vocabulary development, Wattpad

INTRODUCTION

In the Indonesian context, reading interest remains a persistent national concern. A meta-analysis by Pitoyo (2020) revealed that Indonesia's reading interest level is alarmingly low, as only 0.001% of Indonesians are considered active readers, meaning that merely one out of every thousand people read regularly. This finding aligns with global literacy studies, such as the World's Most Literate Nations Ranked report, which placed Indonesia 60th out of 61 countries, ranking just below Thailand (Pitoyo, 2020). Despite having adequate literacy infrastructure, such as libraries and internet access, the utilization of these resources is not

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directed toward reading or learning but rather toward entertainment and social media use. This suggests that the issue lies not merely in access but in reading motivation and habits.

Seventilova (2024) expands this discussion through a multidisciplinary perspective, highlighting that reading interest is influenced by individual, social, and external factors, including personal habits, family environment, educational systems, and access to quality reading materials. The dominance of digital media and the lack of exposure to reading materials, especially in rural areas, further suppresses the reading culture in Indonesia. Building a stronger reading culture, therefore, requires collaborative efforts among educational institutions, families, and government initiatives, ensuring that reading is not merely a school task but part of daily life.

Research further shows that while Indonesian students recognize the importance of reading, their reading habits remain inconsistent. Hanah et al (2020) observed that during the pandemic, although many students expressed enjoyment in reading English materials, most read for less than an hour a day and only two to three times a week. Similarly, Beauty et al., (2022) found that over 60% of students in Indonesian Language and Literature programs demonstrated moderate levels of reading interest and motivation, yet fewer than half maintained consistent reading routines. These results suggest that while students acknowledge the value of reading, habitual and self-driven engagement is still lacking.

The motivational dimension also plays a crucial role. Research on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners shows that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations influence reading behavior (Indrayadi, 2021; Salikin et al., 2017). Intrinsic motivation, reading for pleasure or curiosity, encourages deeper comprehension, while extrinsic motivation, such as academic rewards or teacher feedback, drives achievement-oriented reading. Lustyantie & Aprilia (2020) further emphasize that reading interest and achievement motivation significantly impact comprehension ability, confirming that motivation is a strong predictor of reading success.

Vocabulary development has long been recognized as one of the most challenging yet essential aspects of English language learning. Vocabulary serves as the foundation of language proficiency, as all language skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, depend on a sufficient vocabulary base (Brown & Lee, 2015; Haque et al., 2024). For EFL students, building a strong vocabulary foundation is crucial, as it allows one to comprehend written texts, express thoughts, as well as communicate well. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learners may struggle to attain fluency as well as confidence while using the language for academic as well as everyday life purposes. However, many Indonesian EFL learners still struggle to acquire and retain English vocabulary due to limited exposure, reliance on rote memorization, and insufficient contextual practice.

Traditional vocabulary instruction often focuses on direct teaching and memorization rather than meaningful use, leading to short-term retention. Sutrisna (2021) observed that many learners are reluctant to explore unfamiliar words independently, often depending on teachers' explanations. As a result, vocabulary learning becomes passive, lacking opportunities for critical engagement and personal discovery. Nagodavithana & Premarathne (2021) further found that learners who relied heavily on translation from their first language demonstrated weaker retention and slower vocabulary growth compared to those who used

contextual inference strategies. This indicates that successful vocabulary development requires active engagement, repeated exposure, and strategic learning rather than mechanical memorization.

In today's digital learning era, technology offers both opportunities and challenges for vocabulary growth. Tools and platforms allow interactive, multimodal learning experiences, enabling learners to engage with language through games, mobile applications, and collaborative reading spaces (Haque et al., 2024). These environments promote learner autonomy and motivation through immediate feedback and diverse contexts. However, Jing et al (2023) caution that not all screen-based activities are beneficial, as passive digital consumption may limit meaningful word learning. To foster vocabulary development effectively, digital tools must be used purposefully to encourage interaction, reflection, and authentic language exposure.

In recent years, the use of digital platforms for language learning has become increasingly popular. Research by Grabe & Stoller (2011) suggests that reading in online contexts can facilitate vocabulary acquisition through contextual feedback, multimodal interaction, and exposure to a variety of literary texts. One such platform is Wattpad, an online platform that allows users to read and write stories in various genres (Arimbi & Daulay, 2024). Wattpad offers authentic, contemporary English language exposure that differs from traditional textbooks, providing learners with opportunities to encounter diverse vocabulary in informal and engaging ways. Unlike conventional classroom materials, Wattpad presents an opportunity for learners to encounter real-life language, idiomatic expressions, and diverse vocabulary in a casual and enjoyable environment. The availability of Wattpad, along with its wide range of content, makes it a valuable tool for those looking to improve their English language skills independently, outside a classroom environment. Furthermore, the interactive nature of the platform, including commenting, participating in discussions, and the ability to communicate with authors, adds a new aspect to learning, which can help improve vocabulary retention (Al Falaq et al., 2021; Andaresa et al., 2024; Grabielle Nidar & Monteza, 2024; Sari & Haryanto, 2025; Tirocchi, 2018).

Apriyani (2020) found that children could enhance their literacy abilities through the use of Wattpad, as it allows them to read and write stories in an interactive digital environment. Wattpad serves as a participatory learning space where users can not only consume literary content but also contribute their own, fostering a sense of ownership and creativity in language learning. The researcher noted that this form of engagement promotes reading and writing literacy while cultivating critical thinking and interpretive skills through collaborative interaction among readers and writers.

Building upon this, Furotun et al (2021) demonstrated that Wattpad's integration into English learning environments effectively improves students' reading comprehension, vocabulary mastery, and motivation. The interactive nature of Wattpad, its story-commenting features, genre variety, and immersive reading experience create a meaningful learning ecosystem that encourages students to read regularly and incidentally acquire new words in context. Most participants in their study expressed that Wattpad stories felt more relatable and easier to understand than conventional classroom texts, making English reading less intimidating and more enjoyable.

From a broader perspective, Tirocchi (2018) describes Wattpad as an embodiment of transmedia environment, where reading and writing merge into participatory and collaborative digital practices. The platform empowers young readers to become prosumers, both producers and consumers, who actively shape narratives, comment on others' works, and co-construct a shared culture of reading. This form of digital engagement supports critical literacy, creative expression, and community-based learning. Similarly, Dewi & Roysa (2024) found that Wattpad fosters a vibrant reading culture among youth by making reading accessible, interactive, and emotionally engaging, thereby reigniting young readers' interest in written narratives in an age dominated by visual media.

Furthermore, Andaresa et al (2024) provide empirical evidence of how Wattpad contributes to the development of reading habits and language proficiency among Indonesian EFL learners. Their study showed that consistent engagement with English stories on Wattpad, enhanced learners' vocabulary knowledge, grammatical understanding, and reading fluency. Additionally, the study revealed that readers' enjoyment and interest in storylines were key motivators for sustained engagement, demonstrating how intrinsic motivation, the pleasure derived from reading for personal enjoyment, plays a central role in the process.

Despite growing evidence supporting Wattpad's potential to enhance reading habits and literacy, there remains limited research exploring how Wattpad engagement specifically contributes to vocabulary development among Indonesian EFL learners. Existing studies have predominantly focused on its impact on reading motivation, digital literacy, and creative writing (Apriyani, 2020; Arimbi & Daulay, 2024; Dewi & Roysa, 2024; Furotun et al., 2021), yet few have examined how learners perceive their own vocabulary growth and learning experiences within this digital reading environment. Furthermore, most prior research has employed general or quantitative approaches, often overlooking the personal reflections and affective dimensions of learners' experiences, factors that are essential to understanding how motivation, engagement, and vocabulary development interact in digital contexts. This gap highlights the need for an in-depth, qualitative investigation into learners' reading practices on Wattpad. In response to this gap, this study aims to explore the role of Wattpad in supporting vocabulary development through learners' reading engagement and self-perception. To address these aims, the study is guided by the following research questions: (1.) According to the participant, what contributions does Wattpad give towards her motivation to read in English? (2.) How does the participant perceive her vocabulary development as a result of engaging with Wattpad?

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive with narrative inquiry approach using an in-depth semi-structured interview as the primary data collection instrument. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research approach that seeks to understand individuals' lived experiences by examining the stories they create and share, based on the idea that personal narratives are central to how people make sense of and communicate their experiences (Barkhuizen et al., 2024; Clandinin et al., 2018; Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002; Sunday et al., 2020). The interview was designed to explore the participant's experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding

their vocabulary learning and reading engagement through the Wattpad platform. The instrument was developed based on the research questions and consisted of two main sections: (1) reading habits and motivation, (2) perception and experiences with English vocabulary development while reading on Wattpad. Each section contained several open-ended questions that encouraged the participant to elaborate on personal experiences and insights.

In total, the interview guide included 15 open-ended questions. These questions aimed to uncover how learner's Wattpad reading habits reflect her motivation to read in English and how she perceives her vocabulary development as a result of that engagement. The session lasted approximately 60 minutes, providing sufficient time for the participant to discuss her experiences comprehensively while allowing the researcher to probe for clarification or elaboration when necessary. The interview was conducted in English, recorded with the participant's consent, and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. The questions can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. Interview Questions

Category	Questions
Reading Habits and Motivation	1) Since when did you start reading stories on Wattpad?
	2) What made you interested in using Wattpad as a reading platform?
	3) What kinds of stories do you usually read on Wattpad?
	4) How often do you read on Wattpad, and for how long in each session?
Experience with English Vocabulary while Reading (Vocabulary Learning Process)	5) When reading in English, do you often encounter unfamiliar words? Can you describe how you deal with them?
	6) Have you ever learned new English words or phrases from Wattpad stories? Can you give some examples?
	7) Has Wattpad helped you understand how certain words or phrases are used in real-life situations?
	8) How do you feel about the language style used in Wattpad stories (e.g., slang, idioms, informal language)?
Reflection and Vocabulary Use (Participant's Perception of Vocabulary Development)	9) Do you think reading Wattpad stories has improved your English vocabulary? Why or why not?
	10) Have you ever used new words you learned from Wattpad in writing or speaking activities?
	11) How do you remember and retain the new vocabulary that you encounter?

	12) Have you noticed any changes in your confidence or fluency when using English since you started reading Wattpad?
	13) Do you think your Wattpad reading habit contributes to your academic performance in English? How?
Academic and Personal Impact	14) What do you think is the biggest benefit of reading Wattpad stories in English?
	15) Would you recommend Wattpad as a vocabulary learning tool to other students? Why or why not?

The data of this research consisted of a single in-depth interview transcript with one participant. The selection of only one subject was determined through purposive sampling, which is appropriate when the researcher aims to gain deep insights from an information-rich case that meets specific inclusion criteria (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The participant was purposefully chosen because she met all the required characteristics relevant to the study's aims: (1) a student who has actively read English stories on Wattpad for at least six months, (2) has experienced noticeable vocabulary development through Wattpad engagement, (3) demonstrates good English literacy proficiency as reflected in her academic performance and (4) is willing to share in-depth experiences through interviews and personal reflections.

Data collection followed an ethically approved procedure to ensure the credibility and integrity of the findings. Prior to the interview, the participant was informed of the research purpose, confidentiality, and voluntary participation rights. After consent was obtained, the interview was conducted face-to-face by the researcher and audio-recorded for accuracy. During the interview, follow-up questions and prompts were used to encourage elaboration, reflection, and clarification, consistent with qualitative interviewing techniques that emphasize rapport and depth (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). The recorded interview was transcribed manually to ensure the researcher's full immersion in the data, as recommended by Braun & Clarke (2006).

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a flexible qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Thematic analysis was selected because it allows for both descriptive and interpretive engagement with data, suitable for exploring the participant's perceptions and lived experiences regarding vocabulary learning through Wattpad. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher conducted member checking by sharing the interview data with the participant to verify for validation. A prolonged engagement was also applied to maintain consistent interaction with the participant throughout the research period.



RESULTS

Reading Habits and Motivation

The participant described several ways Wattpad contributed to her vocabulary growth. She mentioned that reading English stories exposed her to many new words, especially when she first started:

Excerpt 4: “Yes, especially when I first started reading in English. Now I still find new words, but maybe not as many as before.”

She explained that she used different strategies to understand unfamiliar words, including guessing meaning from context, using translation tools, and keeping notes:

Excerpt 5: “First, I try to guess the meaning from the sentence. If I still don’t get it, I use Google Translate or a dictionary. But I don’t stop for every word, only the important ones.... I keep a note in my phone where I list the words and their meanings.”

She also mentioned that she tried applying the new words she learned in her daily activities:

Excerpt 6: “... I also try to make sentences with them.... I try (using the new words), yes. Especially in class or when doing assignments in English. Sometimes I also use them when texting my friends in English.”

According to her, reading on Wattpad helped her build a wider range of vocabulary, including slang, idioms, casual expressions, and natural phrasing:

Excerpt 7: “I feel like my vocabulary has improved a lot. I know more casual and everyday words now. I also learned slang, idioms, and how native speakers usually express things in writing.”

She provided examples of the kinds of words and expressions she learned:

Excerpt 8: “I learned phrases like ‘cut to the chase’, ‘I’m beat’ for being tired, or ‘spill the tea.’ I also picked up adjectives like ‘sassy’, ‘clingy’, and verbs like ‘tease’, ‘snap’, and many more.”

She noted that some of the vocabulary she learned was useful in speaking, including presentations and daily interactions:

Excerpt 9: Yes, especially in speaking. Sometimes I also use them when doing presentations or just casual conversations with my friends. The words that I’ve found on Wattpad, for example is “Let’s jump right in” to start the presentation.”

She expressed that Wattpad made learning English enjoyable and natural:

Excerpt 10: “I just want to say that Wattpad has been a fun way for me to improve my English. It doesn’t feel like studying, but I learn a lot.”

She also felt more confident when dealing with academic English tasks:

Excerpt 11: “I feel more confident when writing essays or answering reading comprehension questions.”

She perceived Wattpad as more practical compared to textbooks, since the vocabulary she encountered was commonly used in real-life contexts:

Excerpt 12: “Definitely. Wattpad feels more natural. Textbooks sometimes teach words that I rarely use. But with Wattpad, I learn words that I see used in real situations, so I remember them better.”

She further shared that everyday expressions in Wattpad helped her develop her language awareness:

Excerpt 13: "I think reading on Wattpad really helps me improve my vocabulary and language awareness. Since they (most of the stories) are written in everyday English, I often learn new words or expressions that sound more natural than the ones I get from textbooks. (Because the context is clear) It's easier for me to understand and remember them."

Excerpt 14: "It makes me more aware of how language works in different situations, like how the tone changes between characters or how writers use certain words to express emotions. It (Wattpad) has made my English feel more natural and expressive."

The participant also acknowledged certain challenges. One challenge was misinterpreting the meaning when relying too heavily on context:

Excerpt 15: "Yeah, sometimes I do misinterpret the meaning (of a word) because I rely too much on context. (To overcome this problem) I usually double-check by looking it up online, by searching how it's used in other examples. That really helps me understand the meaning."

She also mentioned that some Wattpad stories contained grammatical inaccuracies, prompting her to double-check:

Excerpt 16: "Also, there are stories with bad grammar, so I need to be careful not to follow the wrong structure or spelling. (To overcome this challenge) I try to compare what I read there with what I've learned in class or just look it up on the internet. So even though there are challenges, I think it actually trains me to be more critical and aware of correct language use."

DISCUSSION

The participants' reflections reveal a dynamic relationship between reading motivation, vocabulary development, and language awareness in the context of digital reading on Wattpad. This discussion interprets the findings based on several theoretical perspectives.

Wattpad Contribution towards Motivation in Reading in English

The reading practices of young people continually adapt with their engagement in digital platforms, reflecting changes in language preferences, access to both local and global literature, and their overall personal development. This aligns with Krashen (2009) input hypothesis, which emphasizes that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible and meaningful input slightly beyond their current proficiency level.

The participant showed a gradual transformation in her reading experience, moving from mother tongue language to global literary exposure. Initially she was drawn to stories in Indonesian, then her transition to English texts indicates that there was a desire for broader cultural engagement. The daily reading routine, especially at night, highlights a strong intrinsic motivation and the establishment of reading as a habitual practice. Furthermore, it suggests that online platform like Wattpad not only provide entertainment but also function as a learning space where readers can improve their language proficiency, intercultural awareness, and increase motivation through consistent engagement. The habit of reading illustrates what Pitoyo (2020) identifies as the transformation of reading from a formal activity into a personalized literacy practice, supported by accessibility and convenience in

digital spaces. This daily engagement indicates a shift toward intrinsic motivation, as the participant chooses to read voluntarily and incorporates it into leisure time, aligning with Salikin et al. (2017) finding that intrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in encouraging consistent reading behaviors among Indonesian EFL learners.

In examining learners' reading habits and vocabulary development, motivation emerges as a crucial factor that drives their engagement with English texts. Motivation can be broadly categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic types, each influencing how learners interact with reading materials and sustain language learning. Extrinsic motivation arises from external influences, such as peers, teachers, or social trends, that encourage learners to begin reading. For instance, some participants were initially drawn to Wattpad because of social interaction and peer influence. Over time, this external stimulus often evolves into intrinsic motivation, where learners continue reading out of genuine interest and enjoyment in the stories themselves (Salikin et al., 2017).

The participant's statement highlights the initial social dimension of reading motivation, where peer influence plays a central role in fostering interest and engagement with Wattpad. Curiosity, triggered by conversations with peers, acted as the catalyst for her initial engagement, aligning with the notion that extrinsic motivation often precedes and eventually develops into intrinsic motivation (Hanah et al., 2020; Pitoyo, 2020; Salikin et al., 2017; Sultan et al., 2020). In this case, peer discussion served as an external stimulus that encouraged exploration, consistent with the statement by Seventilova (2024) that emphasizes how social and environmental factors significantly affect young people's reading behaviors.

As the participant discussed her experiences of reading on Wattpad, it became evident that motivation evolved over time, from curiosity and social influence to sustained engagement driven by personal enjoyment and perceived learning benefits. The participant explained that her consistent reading habits were not only shaped by interest in the stories but also by the platform's contribution to her English learning.

Her reflection illustrates a meaningful shift from extrinsically motivated reading to intrinsically motivated engagement, where the participant began to associate reading with both pleasure and self-improvement. Initially using Wattpad as a source of entertainment, she later recognized its educational potential, confirming findings by Al Falaq et al. (2021) that Wattpad serves a two-fold purpose, as a platform for entertainment and as an effective space for informal language learning. The discovery that reading could simultaneously be enjoyable and beneficial reflects the natural development of autonomous motivation, a factor central to sustaining literacy engagement among EFL learners (Indrayadi, 2021).

The participant's emphasis on "interesting stories" and "casual language" underscores Wattpad's strength in providing authentic and comprehensible input, aligning with Krashen (2009) Input Hypothesis. Moreover, this participant's experience exemplifies the principle of reading for pleasure as a foundation for language development, as highlighted by Schmitt (2008), who argued that higher levels of exposure to language through enjoyable reading support vocabulary development and overall proficiency. The finding also resonates with Zhou (2024) argument that extensive digital reading encourages incidental vocabulary learning, where repeated encounters with new words in engaging contexts lead to natural language growth. Through continuous reading, the participant likely absorbed new lexical

items subconsciously, a process that contributes to long-term vocabulary retention and fluency.

Participant's Perception of Vocabulary Development as a Result of Engaging with Wattpad

The participant perceived her vocabulary development on Wattpad as a gradual, multifaceted process shaped by both cognitive and affective dimensions of reading. She believed that her growth emerged through interconnected stages that involved learning new words, applying strategies independently, using vocabulary productively, becoming more linguistically aware, and engaging critically and emotionally with the stories she read.

Vocabulary Learning Stages

The process of vocabulary learning among EFL learners typically involves three interrelated stages: discovering, acquiring, and implementing the new vocabulary (Krashen, 2009; Nation, 2001; Schmitt & McCarthy, 1998). The first stage, discovering, occurs when learners encounter unfamiliar words during reading and begin to notice their form and meaning within context. The second stage, acquiring, involves understanding and retaining those words through repeated exposure or contextual inference. Finally, implementing refers to the active use of newly learned vocabulary in communication or writing, solidifying long-term retention. In the context of digital reading environments like Wattpad, these stages occur organically, as readers continuously engage with authentic language use and contextualized expressions in diverse narratives.

The participant's evolving experience in vocabulary acquisition reflects a shift from frequent encounters with unfamiliar words to a stage of linguistic familiarity and confidence. At the early stage of her engagement with Wattpad, encountering new words was frequent, aligning with the finding phase of vocabulary learning (Schmitt, 2008). As her exposure increased, she gradually developed strategies for contextual inference and recognition, reducing the number of unknown words over time, an indication of progress toward vocabulary mastery. This process exemplifies what Krashen (2009) described as incidental vocabulary learning, in which learners unconsciously acquire lexical knowledge through repeated, meaningful exposure rather than deliberate memorization.

The participant's description also aligns with the findings of Haque et al (2024), who noted that digital reading environments foster autonomous vocabulary learning by providing multimodal exposure and opportunities for independent discovery. Wattpad allows learners to infer word meaning naturally from dialogues, emotions, and plot development, an approach supported by Nagodavithana & Premarathne (2021), who found that contextual guessing significantly enhances retention compared to direct translation. Furthermore, this finding aligns with the notion that sustained exposure to English texts leads to a cumulative vocabulary effect, where each reading experience reinforces earlier learning (Nation, 2001).

The participant's long-term engagement with English stories on Wattpad provides consistent reinforcement of both high-frequency and context-specific vocabulary. This pattern is consistent with research by Zhou (2024) and Krashen (2009), who argue that extensive and enjoyable reading creates the optimal conditions for long-term lexical growth. Similarly, Al Falaq et al (2021) and Apriyani (2020) emphasize that Wattpad's balance

between entertainment and learning encourages persistence and reduces the cognitive pressure typically associated with formal vocabulary study. The participant's decreasing frequency of encountering new words suggests that her receptive vocabulary breadth has expanded, indicating effective internalization of previously learned lexical items.

Strategies and Autonomy

The participant's response demonstrates an evolving use of metacognitive learning strategies, beginning with contextual inference before relying on external tools. Zhu et al (2024) emphasize the importance of incidental online reading in vocabulary development. The development of participants' ability to infer contextually corresponds with Nation (2001) and Krashen (2009) claims that vocabulary use within context enables comprehension as well as vocabulary growth. This approach reflects what Nagodavithana & Premarathne (2021) identified as a key strategy in effective vocabulary learning, where readers infer meaning based on context rather than memorizing isolated words. Her selective use of translation tools, focusing only on important words, also indicates a level of strategic autonomy. As noted by Haque et al (2024), proficient vocabulary learners often manage cognitive load by prioritizing words relevant to meaning-making instead of pausing for every unfamiliar term.

Additionally, her habit of keeping a digital note of new vocabulary shows a deliberate effort to reinforce retention, a step that aligns with what Sutrisna (2021) calls active consolidation. This behavior demonstrates awareness of how memory and repetition support long-term vocabulary development. By combining contextual guessing, selective translation, and personal documentation, the participant exemplifies a self-regulated learning process, where technology serves as a facilitator for vocabulary acquisition rather than a distraction (Dewi & Roysa, 2024).

Productive Vocabulary Use

In the vocabulary learning process, one crucial step after understanding a new word is using it actively in communication. Through practice, learners transition from recognition to mastery, transforming passive vocabulary into active, usable language. The participant described how she intentionally applies the words she learns from Wattpad in various contexts.

The participant's conscious effort to internalize and apply vocabulary knowledge demonstrates what Schmitt (2008) identifies as deep processing, the active manipulation of new words to enhance retention and recall. By creating sentences and using new vocabulary in different situations, she engages in meaningful language use that goes beyond memorization. Such behavior reflects the productive stage of vocabulary learning, where learners begin to integrate lexical items into speech and writing, reinforcing memory through repeated use (Nation, 2001).

The participant's use of new words in both academic and informal contexts highlights her adaptive learning behavior. According to Haque et al (2024), applying vocabulary in authentic settings helps learners solidify linguistic competence and confidence. Her initiative to use new expressions in texting also aligns with the finding by Sutrisna (2021) that shows how informal communication contributes to fluency and spontaneous recall. This

demonstrates how Wattpad not only introduces learners to new words but also encourages them to apply these words naturally.

Her efforts to use the vocabulary she acquired from Wattpad in multiple settings affirm that digital reading platforms can foster independent learning habits and meaningful vocabulary application. Such engagement aligns with Krashen (2009) stating that language acquisition is most effective when learners are motivated and exposed to authentic, context-rich input that they can actively transform into output.

Linguistics Awareness

The participant's perceived growth in lexical range and pragmatic competence indicates that Wattpad provided meaningful exposure to authentic English. Her mention of "casual and everyday words" as well as "slang and idioms" suggests acquisition of context-bound vocabulary, which is often overlooked in formal instruction. This finding aligns with Al Falaq et al (2021), who emphasized that Wattpad functions as both an entertainment platform and a language-learning tool, exposing learners to colloquial, contemporary language. Such authentic exposure contributes to what Krashen (2009) terms comprehensible input, which fosters natural acquisition rather than rote memorization.

The participant's ability to recognize and internalize idiomatic expressions shows that extensive reading plays a crucial role as a source of incidental vocabulary learning (Zhou, 2024). By engaging with diverse story genres and writing styles, she absorbed not only individual words but also the subtleties of meaning and usage, skills that Schmitt (2008) links to deeper lexical processing. Dewi & Roysa (2024) also note that Wattpad's casual and narrative-driven format helps readers intuitively grasp linguistic patterns used by native speakers.

Wattpad provides incidental exposure to idiomatic and expressive vocabulary, which learners might rarely encounter in traditional EFL materials. The participant's recall of multiple examples shows not only awareness but also retention, indicating that these items have moved from passive recognition toward active understanding. This corresponds with the idea that extensive and enjoyable reading fosters natural acquisition of common and idiomatic expressions (Zhou, 2024). Similarly, Krashen (2009) argues that when learners are engaged in voluntary reading, they subconsciously absorb patterns of meaning, collocation, and usage, as seen in the participant's ability to recall phrases and word types across categories.

The participant's familiarity with idioms and expressive words such as "sassy" or "clingy" also reveals growing pragmatic and cultural competence. As Schmitt & McCarthy (1998) explain, vocabulary knowledge is not only about form and meaning but also about appropriateness and usage across social contexts. Through Wattpad, the participant gains insight into how native speakers convey emotions, attitudes, and humour, aligning with the concept of transmedia literacy by Tirocchi (2018), where learners acquire language as part of cultural participation. Dewi & Roysa (2024) further note that reading contemporary digital fiction exposes readers to modern linguistic trends, helping them adapt to evolving forms of English communication.

Wattpad encourages communicative vocabulary learning, where language acquisition extends beyond comprehension into practical usage. The participant's example of using "Let's jump right in" as an opening phrase in academic contexts, demonstrates awareness of discourse patterns common among native speakers. Such pragmatic transfer illustrates what Nation (2001) describes as productive vocabulary use, where learners internalize not only word meaning but also its communicative function and tone. Similarly, Schmitt (2008) notes that the active use of newly learned expressions in speech solidifies retention and enhances fluency through repetition and contextual reinforcement.

The participant's use of Wattpad-acquired vocabulary in both formal and informal contexts also underscores contextual flexibility, a sign of deeper lexical mastery. This finding aligns with Haque et al (2024), who observed that learners engaged with digital reading platforms tend to transfer learned vocabulary into real-life interaction, thus improving both spoken fluency and confidence. Moreover, exposure to natural, conversational English on Wattpad enables learners to reproduce authentic expressions in real communication (Dewi & Roysa, 2024; Paringja & Fatriana, 2024). By practising these phrases in academic presentations and friendly chats, the participant demonstrates an evolving ability to adjust register and tone appropriately.

The participant's statement shows that learning through Wattpad blurs the line between study and leisure, an idea that echoes with the concept of free voluntary reading, where meaningful and enjoyable exposure leads to subconscious language acquisition (Krashen, 2009). Her experience also supports the view that exposure to authentic materials fosters pragmatic ability and sociolinguistic awareness (Fridland & Pavese, 2021).

Her statement highlights the participant's growing academic self-efficacy, showing that consistent engagement with Wattpad has not only enhanced her vocabulary knowledge but also improved her ability to perform in academic English contexts. Her confidence in writing and comprehension aligns with findings by Haque et al (2024), who noted that digital reading platforms enhance linguistic awareness and analytical reading skills through repeated exposure to varied sentence structures and contextual vocabulary. Similarly, Zhou (2024) asserts that extensive reading develops not only lexical knowledge but also textual understanding, skills that directly support writing and comprehension tasks.

Beyond academic outcomes, vocabulary development through Wattpad also contributes to learners' personal growth and language awareness (Arimbi & Daulay, 2024; Grabielle Nidar & Monteza, 2024). As learners read authentic stories, they develop an intuitive sense of how words, tone, and meaning function in real communication. This awareness shapes not only vocabulary recall but also how learners perceive and engage with English as a living, dynamic language. The participant reflected on how Wattpad reading has enhanced both her vocabulary and sensitivity to natural language use.

The participant's learning experience on Wattpad extends into metalinguistic awareness, where she not only acquires new words but also recognizes how authentic context shapes meaning and tone. Her preference for "everyday English" reflects a shift toward naturalistic learning, consistent with the claim that authentic and comprehensible input enhances both fluency and intuition in language use (Krashen, 2009). Similarly, Haque et al (2024) emphasize that digital platforms like Wattpad provide meaningful exposure that

nurtures learners' ability to interpret real-world communication patterns, an essential component of language awareness.

The participant's statement that "the context is clear" illustrates her understanding of contextual learning, where vocabulary is remembered and internalized through situational meaning rather than rote memorization. This observation aligns with findings by Schmitt (2008) and Zhou (2024) that words learned within rich narrative contexts are easier to retain and apply appropriately. Her recognition that Wattpad stories feel more "natural" than textbook examples also supports the claim that authentic materials strengthen pragmatic competence, allowing learners to perceive subtleties in register, expression, and emotional tone (Fridland & Pavese, 2021).

The participant grows pragmatic and stylistic awareness, the ability to recognize how language shifts depending on purpose, audience, and emotion. Her observation about tone and emotional expression further reinforces the view that exposure to authentic discourse fosters sociolinguistic competence, enabling learners to interpret meaning beyond vocabulary (Fridland & Pavese, 2021). Likewise, Zhou (2024) and Schmitt (2008) emphasize that narrative-based reading supports deeper comprehension by linking linguistic form to emotional context.

The participant's comment that her English now feels "more natural and expressive" also suggests internalized learning, where repeated exposure to authentic input has refined her intuitive grasp of rhythm, tone, and phrasing. Dewi & Roysa (2024) describe this as a key strength of Wattpad, as it mirrors real-life communication patterns that encourage learners to experiment with language creatively. This naturalization of expression aligns with natural approach introduced by Krashen (2009), where meaningful and enjoyable input leads to subconscious mastery of form and fluency.

Furthermore, by checking how words are used across multiple examples, the participant demonstrates an advanced awareness of semantic variation, recognizing that meaning depends on context and usage. This behavior aligns with what Schmitt (2008) described as the depth of vocabulary knowledge, where learners progress from knowing a word's definition to understanding its connotation, collocation, and pragmatic value. Her experience confirms that digital reading environments promote analytical and adaptive thinking, enhancing both lexical accuracy and self-confidence in language interpretation.

Affective Engagement

The participant's sense of empowerment also connects to the affective filter hypothesis, which suggests that enjoyment and confidence lower psychological barriers to language learning, leading to greater fluency and performance (Krashen, 2009). By reading English stories that she finds interesting, the participant likely reduced anxiety and increased motivation, factors that directly influence reading comprehension and written expression (Brown & Lee, 2015).

Her statement suggests that Wattpad provides more relevant and memorable exposure to English than traditional textbooks, which often emphasize decontextualized or infrequent vocabulary. This observation supports the input hypothesis by Krashen (2009), which argues that natural and meaningful input leads to deeper language acquisition. Similarly, Fridland

& Pavese (2021) assert that exposure to authentic materials enhances learners' pragmatic awareness, helping them internalize how words function in genuine communication rather than isolated exercises. This example also shows the need for critical literacy in engagement with user-generated text, a viewpoint supported by Talib (2018), who argues that the specific nature of digital environments requires a critical, multimodal approach to literacy to better prepare users for assessing and interpreting information quality as well as context presented online.

Critical Literacy and Reflection

This response reveals the participant's critical literacy skills, the ability to question, evaluate, and cross-check information while reading. Her effort to verify correctness shows an awareness of linguistic accuracy and a willingness to bridge informal and formal learning. This aligns with the concept of transmedia literacy, where learners navigate between entertainment and education critically and reflectively (Tirocchi, 2018). Likewise, Dewi & Roysa (2024) observe that when learners encounter imperfect content online, they often develop stronger self-regulation and linguistic discernment.

The participant's reflection that these challenges demonstrate transformative learning, where difficulties become part of the learning process. As Sutrisna (2021) notes, reflection upon errors strengthens metalinguistic awareness and reinforces accurate language production. Thus, even when faced with imperfect input, the participant uses these challenges as opportunities to refine her understanding, turning potential setbacks into catalysts for deeper, more conscious language development.

The participant shows strategic awareness in dealing with the limitations of contextual inference. While relying on context is a common and useful vocabulary-learning strategy, it may sometimes lead to misinterpretation, especially when idiomatic or figurative language is involved (Nagodavithana & Premarathne, 2021). Her approach of verifying usage online indicates self-monitoring and metacognitive regulation, traits that Haque et al. (2024) identify as essential for autonomous digital learners. This reflective habit shows that Wattpad encourages learners to become active problem-solvers who take ownership of their understanding.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate how reading on Wattpad reflects learner's motivation to read in English and contributes to her perceived vocabulary improvement. The findings reveal that Wattpad functions as a meaningful digital space where reading, language learning, and personal engagement intersect. The participant's experience demonstrates that motivation to read initially stemmed from social factors but evolved into intrinsic motivation sustained by enjoyment and perceived learning benefits. Vocabulary learning occurred organically through the process of finding, acquiring, and implementing new words within authentic story contexts. Over time, the participant not only expanded her vocabulary range but also developed pragmatic sensitivity, stylistic awareness, and communicative confidence.

The study advances current understanding of informal digital literacy by illustrating how platforms like Wattpad serve as contextualized learning environments where learners can interact with real language and transfer that knowledge to academic and social settings. Importantly, the participant's reflective strategies in addressing challenges such as misinterpretation and inaccurate input underscore the development of critical digital literacy, an essential skill in the modern language-learning landscape.

This study suggests that integrating authentic, learner-driven reading platforms into EFL curricula can enhance students' motivation, autonomy, and vocabulary mastery more effectively than traditional textbook-based instruction. Future research should expand this inquiry by involving multiple participants or combining qualitative and quantitative methods to examine how sustained Wattpad engagement influences long-term vocabulary retention and overall language proficiency. Such research could further validate Wattpad's potential as a bridge between entertainment, literacy, and formal English learning in digital contexts.

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