

## Students' Perceptions of Using Extending Concepts Through Language Activities to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension Skill

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### Abstract

This study aimed to understand students' perceptions about the potential and benefits of improving the Extending Concept Through Language Activities (ECOLA) method as a tool for improving students' reading comprehension skills. This study used a descriptive qualitative with the subjects of 19 students in the 10th grade of Vocational High School of SMK Islam Gondanglegi. Data collection was carried out through a questionnaire based on a Likert scale and interview. In collecting data, questionnaires were made to collect information on respondents' perceptions of the ECOLA method and its impact on their reading comprehension skills. In contrast, interviews were made to obtain further information regarding students' perceptions of using the ECOLA method. Based on the analysis of the results, the researcher concluded that the ECOLA method generally has positive acceptance for improving reading comprehension skills. This is evident from the questionnaire results, which show the participants' high motivation and enthusiasm. 65% of respondents agreed that this method had improved their reading comprehension skills. Additionally, 80% of respondents agreed that ECOLA helped them understand reading material better. Likewise, in interviews, participants expressed appreciation and satisfaction with ECOLA's approach, which includes interactive discussions and enhanced learning experiences.

**Keywords:** Students' Perceptions; Extending Concept Through Language Activities (ECOLA); Reading Comprehension

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### INTRODUCTION

There has been an increased focus on improving students' reading comprehension skills in recent years due to recognizing its importance in academic and professional settings. This has led to a growing interest in developing and implementing effective teaching methods for reading comprehension (Muslaini, 2017). Teachers and educators worldwide are constantly searching for ways to improve their students' skills in this area. They are exploring a variety of approaches, such as the use of language activities, to achieve this goal.

Reading comprehension is a vital aspect of education as it enables students to utilize their various cognitive abilities to understand the texts they read. Understanding the content of the text is just as significant as the act of reading itself. The ultimate objective of reading is to comprehend the material, which allows students to retain and internalize the information they have read. The learned content is readily stored in the students' memory by helping them comprehend the material, facilitating a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Agistiasari, 2015). Moreover, there are 3 levels of reading comprehension which are literal, inferential, and critical. It is important to understand each level individually to further explain the different reading comprehension levels. Literal comprehension involves understanding the text at a surface level, including the introductory information presented. This includes identifying the main characters, setting, and plot. Inferential

comprehension goes beyond the surface level and requires the reader to connect between the information presented and their own experiences or prior knowledge. This level of comprehension involves drawing conclusions, making predictions, and interpreting the text. Finally, critical comprehension involves analyzing the text and evaluating the author's message, arguments, and use of language. It requires the reader to think deeply about the text and consider alternative perspectives (de-la-Peña & Rojas, 2021).

Despite the importance of reading comprehension in students' academic success, numerous studies have revealed that many students struggle with this fundamental skill. Through personal experience and observation, it has been noted that students often struggle with identifying the main idea and supporting details, making inferences, and evaluating the author's message and argument. Several factors contribute to these challenges, including limited vocabulary, inadequate background knowledge, lack of motivation, and insufficient instruction in effective reading strategies. The inability to comprehend the text can lead to difficulties in keeping up with the course material, which can hurt academic performance. As such, students must overcome these challenges and improve their reading comprehension skills. Students can improve their academic performance and succeed in their studies by identifying and addressing the factors contributing to reading comprehension difficulties (Satriani, 2018).

Various methods and approaches have been employed in teaching reading comprehension to overcome these challenges. For example, teacher-led instruction, independent reading, graphic organizers, and metacognitive strategies are some approaches to improving reading comprehension skills (Ambarwati, 2020). However, despite these efforts, many students still face challenges developing their reading comprehension skills, highlighting the need for more effective approaches.

This is where the Extending Concept Through Language Activities (ECOLA) approach may play an important role. ECOLA is an innovative teaching approach that emphasizes integrating language activities into teaching reading comprehension. This approach is based on the idea that language activities, such as discussion, debate, and storytelling, can extend students' knowledge and understanding of the texts they read, thereby improving their reading comprehension skills (Astuti, 2008). According to Nurhidayati and Pardimin (2021), ECOLA has gained popularity among teachers and educators as one of the most effective teaching methods for reading comprehension.

ECOLA is an attempt to integrate 4 language skills, which are reading, writing, speaking, and listening, to develop reading skills. ECOLA aims to develop reading skills through language activities promoting active text engagement. Group discussions are one of these activities, where students discuss the text and exchange ideas to enhance their understanding. Through group discussions, students can develop critical thinking skills and broaden their perspectives on the text. Another language activity used by ECOLA is creative writing exercises, which enable students to express their understanding of the text in their own words. This activity allows students to develop their writing skills and encourages them to interpret the text creatively. By writing about the text, students can engage more deeply with its content and meaning. Together, group discussions and creative writing exercises are practical language activities that can help improve students' reading comprehension skills. By integrating these activities with reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, ECOLA provides a comprehensive approach to developing students' language abilities (Haerazi & Irawan, 2020).

By engaging with the text in such ways (group discussion and creative writing), students can better understand the material and make connections between the text and their own experiences. In addition, ECOLA emphasizes the importance of supporting students as they develop their reading skills. This support may include breaking down complex texts into smaller, more manageable parts or providing students with tools like graphic organizers to help them understand the structure and content of the text. This approach helps students interpret and monitor their understanding of the text. The ECOLA Technique involves students using all four language skills, reading, writing, speaking, and

listening, in discussion activities to exchange ideas (Nurhidayati & Pardimin, 2021). According to Tierney in Simamora (2018), this approach is based on the belief that students can improve their comprehension skills by actively engaging with the text (using creative writing exercises and group discussion) rather than passively reading it. ECOLA involves various language activities, such as group discussion and creative writing exercises, which require students to reflect on the text and think critically about its meaning (Haerazi & Irawan, 2020).

Based on the background of the study above, there are some previous related studies regarding the use of ECOLA to teach reading comprehension. One of them was written by Haerazi and Irawan (2020). This previous research aimed to determine the effectiveness of using the ECOLA technique compared to the brainstorming technique in teaching reading comprehension. A quasi-experimental research design was used, and the data were collected using a reading test and questionnaires. The findings revealed that the ECOLA technique was more effective in improving reading comprehension, and there was a significant difference in reading achievement of students who used ECOLA compared to those who used brainstorming. However, the interaction between the technique, motivation, and self-efficacy was insignificant. The main similarity between this research and the previous research is that both studies focus on the effectiveness of using the ECOLA technique to improve students' reading comprehension skills.

There is also research written by Susanto (2014) that investigated the effectiveness of the ECOLA method in improving students' biographical reading comprehension skills. The study used a quasi-experimental method and found that the students' biographical reading comprehension skills improved significantly after using the ECOLA method. The study also found a significant difference in the student's comprehension skills before and after using the ECOLA method. This result suggests that the ECOLA method is suitable for improving class XI students' ability to read and understand biographies. The similarity between the previous research and this research is that both studies investigate the effectiveness of the ECOLA method in improving students' reading comprehension skills. However, the previous study focused explicitly on biographical reading comprehension, while this research has a broader focus on extending concepts through language activities, especially on students' perception.

Another study regarding ECOLA was conducted by Putri (2015). This previous research investigated the effectiveness of using the ECOLA technique in teaching reading skills in the German language to 10th-grade students. The study used a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest control group and found that the ECOLA technique was more effective than the conventional technique in improving students' academic achievement in German reading skills. The study concluded that the ECOLA technique is a practical approach for teaching German reading skills to high school students. The similarity between this research and the previous research is that both studies investigate the ECOLA teaching method to improve students' reading comprehension skills. However, while this research focused on investigating students' perceptions, previous research focused on examining the effectiveness of the ECOLA technique in improving students' academic achievement in reading German texts.

The following previous study is written by Supriyana et al. (2019). This previous research investigated the effectiveness of the ECOLA method on the ability of students to edit scientific articles. The study used an experimental method that exposed the experimental group to the ECOLA learning method, while the control group was taught using conventional methods. The study used a pretest-posttest control group design to determine the possibility of a causal relationship between the ECOLA method and the ability of students to edit scientific articles. The similarity between the previous research and this research is that both studies investigated using the ECOLA technique to improve students' reading comprehension ability. However, while this research focuses on the student's

perspective, the previous research investigated the effectiveness of the ECOLA method on students' ability to edit scientific articles.

Tumpu and Jumriati (2018) also investigate the effectiveness of ECOLA. This previous research aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Extending Concept Through Language Activities (ECOLA) method in improving the reading comprehension skills of Class X students in SMAN 1 Enrekang. The study used a quantitative, experimental, and quasi-experimental design approach. The independent variable was the ECOLA method, while the dependent variable was the students' reading comprehension skills. The study results showed that the ECOLA method effectively improved the students' reading comprehension skills. The similarity between the previous research and this research is that both studies investigate the effectiveness of a teaching method (ECOLA) on students' learning outcomes. The difference is that this research focuses on the experiences of individuals related to a particular phenomenon, namely students' perceptions. In contrast, this research focuses on the effectiveness of ECOLA in improving reading comprehension skills.

Based on the previous research in the paragraphs above, there is a gap in understanding students' perceptions of using the Extending Concept through Language Activities (ECOLA) method to improve their reading comprehension skills. Although previous studies have focused on the effectiveness of ECOLA in improving academic achievement, including reading comprehension skills, no research has investigated students' perceptions of this teaching method. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by exploring students' perceptions of using ECOLA to improve their reading comprehension skills. Furthermore, this study will be limited to understanding ECOLA at the reading level.

## **METHOD**

This study used a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate students' perceptions of using Extending Concept Through Language Activities (ECOLA) to improve their reading comprehension skills. Descriptive research, according to Sugiyono (2011:11), is "research conducted to determine the value of independent variables, either one or more (free) variables, without making comparisons or connecting one variable to another, which is described in words based on opinions." A descriptive qualitative research design was chosen because it allowed for an in-depth exploration and description of participants' experiences, opinions, and attitudes toward the ECOLA program.

The study subjects are 22 students in the 10th grade at Vocational High School of SMK Islam Gondanglegi. After conducting research, only 19 students filled in the questionnaire. The researcher chose this subject based on the suggestion of the English teacher at the school because the material used was based on the research objectives. The participants in this study were selected through purposive sampling; a non-probability sampling method also referred to as selective or subjective sampling.

The researcher created the research instrument in the form of a questionnaire. In the present study, the researcher intentionally crafted the questionnaire to suit the specific objectives and context of the research, incorporating both questionnaire and interview questions using open-ended formats. In this way, the questionnaire can be considered an adapted instrument designed to collect information on respondents' perceptions of the ECOLA method and its impact on reading comprehension skills. The questionnaire was utilized to gather information from respondents about the students' perception of using the ECOLA method to improve reading comprehension skills. The questionnaire was administered after a 90-minute lesson using the ECOLA method.

A semi-structured interview approach was employed. This entailed a question-and-answer process that was conducted in a free-flowing manner while remaining within the parameters established by the researcher about the research topic. The participants in this study were drawn from

10 students in the 10th grade at Vocational High School of SMK Islam Gondanglegi and taken from 10 students who participated in the study from beginning to end.

The researcher undertook the following steps to collect the data:

1. The researcher asked permission from English teachers who teach in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade to conduct research by conducting teaching practice in class using the ECOLA technique.
2. After the teaching practice using the ECOLA technique, the researcher gave the questionnaire to the 10th-grade Vocational High School of SMK Islam Gondanglegi, who participated in the teaching practice class about their perceptions regarding the ECOLA technique.
3. The researcher analyses the respondents' answers to determine their perceptions of the ECOLA technique.
4. The researcher will interview 10 students who participated in the teaching practice class about their perceptions regarding the ECOLA technique.
5. The researcher interprets the data based on respondents' answers about their perceptions regarding the ECOLA technique.
6. The researcher draws a conclusion based on the research findings.

## RESULT

### Students' Perceptions of the Extending Concept Through Language Activities (ECOLA)

*Table 1 Tabulation Data of Questionnaire*

No	Questionnaire	1	2	3	4
1	I am motivated to use the ECOLA method to improve my reading comprehension skills	6	13	-	-
2	I will use the ECOLA method in the future to improve my reading comprehension skills	1	18	-	-
3	The ECOLA method makes me more enthusiastic about improving my reading skills	7	12	-	-
4	So far, the ECOLA method has improved my reading comprehension skills	6	13	-	-
5	ECOLA method helps me understand reading material better	8	11	-	-
6	I find it easier to understand complex concepts or ideas when using the ECOLA method	1	18	-	-
7	The ECOLA method has clear advantages in improving my reading comprehension skills.		18	1	-
8	The ECOLA method excelled in helping me improve my reading comprehension	3	16	-	-
9	The ECOLA method provided practical strategies to improve my reading comprehension skills	3	16	-	-
10	I feel challenged or have difficulty adapting to the ECOLA method.	-	10	6	3
11	The ECOLA method has less influence on my reading comprehension	1	10	4	4

12	I am not sure that the ECOLA method will improve my reading comprehension skills	1	7	9	2
13	I rate my overall experience with the ECOLA method for improving reading comprehension as good	5	14	-	-
14	I would recommend the ECOLA method to others who want to improve their reading comprehension skills	5	14	-	-
15	I believe the ECOLA method is a valuable tool for improving reading comprehension	1	18	-	-

Note: 1: Strongly agree, 2: Agree, 3: Disagree, 4: Strongly Disagree

Total Responden : 19 Responden

From Table 1, it can be seen that a significant portion of participants demonstrated an inclination towards the ECOLA method. Their agreement or strong agreement with statements revealed a high motivation to use this method to improve reading comprehension skills. It was shown in questionnaire number 1, "I am motivated to use the ECOLA method to improve my reading comprehension skills," that there were 6 participants who answered strongly agree and 13 answered agree. This positive attitude is crucial, as motivation is often considered a key factor in the effectiveness of learning interventions.

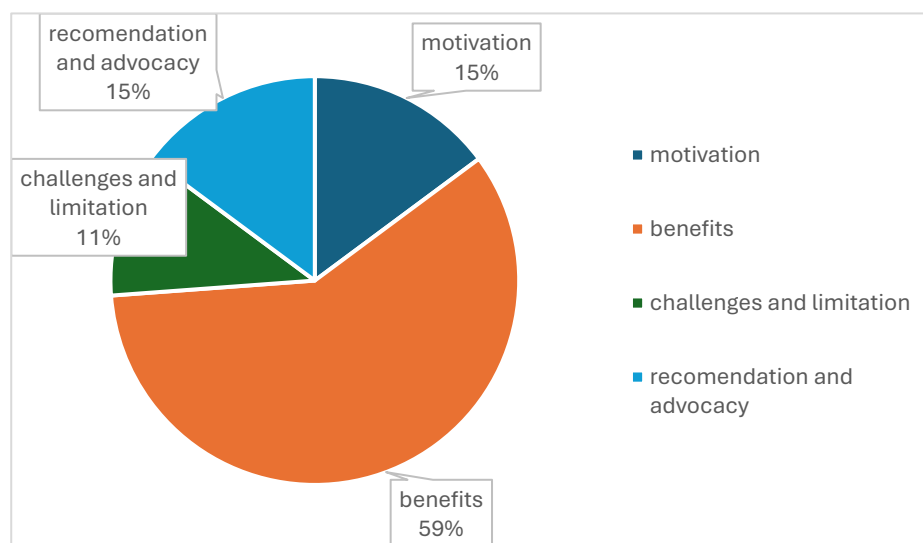
Based on the answers to the questionnaire, 90% of respondents agreed that the ECOLA method makes them more enthusiastic about improving their reading skills. This high enthusiasm indicates that students find the activities associated with ECOLA engaging and stimulating. Participants also expressed enthusiasm, as shown in questionnaire number 3, which stated, "The ECOLA method makes me more enthusiastic about improving my reading skills," indicating that the ECOLA method motivated them and sparked a genuine interest in enhancing their reading skills. The positive impact on enthusiasm suggests that the method addresses the academic aspect of reading comprehension and contributes to a positive and motivating learning experience. This enthusiasm bodes well for the sustained engagement of students with the method. Moreover, the perceived improvement in reading comprehension skills was a recurring theme among positive responses. Participants felt that the ECOLA method contributed positively to their understanding of reading material and made it easier to grasp complex concepts or ideas. This can be seen from the prevalence of the 'Agree' answers in questionnaire 6: "I find it easier to understand complex concepts or ideas when using the ECOLA method."

A noteworthy 100% of respondents agreed to use the ECOLA method to enhance their reading comprehension skills further. This unanimous agreement is shown in questionnaire number 2: "I will use the ECOLA method in the future to improve my reading comprehension skills." It suggests a high level of confidence among the students in the long-term effectiveness of the ECOLA method. The strong commitment to utilizing ECOLA in the future implies that students perceive it as a valuable and sustainable tool for continuous improvement in their reading abilities.

When evaluating the perceived impact of the ECOLA method on reading comprehension skills, 65% of respondents agreed that the method has improved their reading comprehension skills. This can be seen in questionnaire number 4. Additionally, questionnaire number 5 states that the ECOLA method helps them understand reading material better. This was agreed by 80% of respondents. These findings suggest that, while a majority acknowledges positive changes in their comprehension, there is room for further enhancement. The dual acknowledgment of improvement and increased understanding indicates that the ECOLA method positively contributes to students' reading abilities.

Furthermore, when asked about the specific aspects of the ECOLA method that they found most beneficial, participants consistently highlighted the interactive nature of the language activities. Incorporating diverse language exercises, such as group discussions, role-playing, and multimedia presentations, was cited as particularly effective in capturing their attention and fostering a deeper understanding of the reading material. The interactive components of ECOLA make the learning process enjoyable and provide a platform for students to actively participate and collaborate with their peers.

*Figure 1 Summary based on grid questionnaire*



The figure above shows the questionnaire results according to the question grid in Appendix 1, which shows that the benefits obtained by students are more significant, namely, 59% in learning using the ECOLA method. The exact value is also seen, namely 15% in motivation and recommendation advocacy, which states that students are motivated by learning using the ECOLA method, so students also want to recommend the learning method. The challenges and limitations point is 11%, which means that there are still some students who feel challenged or feel they have not adapted to the ECOLA method.

The qualitative data obtained from interviews further supported the survey findings, shedding light on the emotional impact of the ECOLA method. Students expressed a sense of accomplishment and increased self-confidence in comprehending complex texts. Many attributed this boost in confidence to the supportive and inclusive learning environment created by the ECOLA activities. Interestingly, the use of terms such as "*menyenangkan*" (fun), "*seru*" (exciting), and "*nyaman*" (comfortable) emerged consistently in the interviews, mirroring the sentiments revealed in the survey responses.

Following are the statements given "*menyenangkan*" (fun) by the respondents:

*"It fun ma'am, because we discuss together." (Respondent 1)*

*"I think its fun." (Respondent 5)*

*"Fun and can better understand what we learn with this method." (Respondent 10)*

Following are the statements given "*seru*" (exciting) by the respondents:

*"Exciting, ma'am." (Respondent 7)*

*"Very understanding and very exciting." (Respondent 8)*

Following are the statements given *"nyaman"* (comfortable) by the respondents:

*"Comfortable and fun, ma'am." (Respondent 2)*

Participants described their experiences with ECOLA as educational, enjoyable, and emotionally fulfilling. This emotional engagement is critical in sustaining long-term interest and commitment to the learning process, as seen in some of the interview answers below.

One student enthusiastically shared, *"Seneng banget karena enjoy,"* which translates to "I am thrilled because it is enjoyable." This sentiment captures the essence of students' positive emotional connection towards the ECOLA method. The use of terms like *"seneng"* (happy) and *"enjoy"* indicates that the method goes beyond being a mere academic exercise; it has successfully integrated elements of enjoyment and satisfaction into the learning experience. Another participant expressed, *"saya senang sekali bisa mengenal metode ECOLA ini,"* translating to "I am thrilled to be able to get to know the ECOLA method." This highlights the profound impact of ECOLA on academic progress and the student's personal growth and overall well-being.

In summary, the findings reveal a strong positive perception of the Extending Concept Through Language Activities (ECOLA) method among students. Most participants expressed agreement and enthusiasm regarding the method's effectiveness in improving reading comprehension. The interactive nature of ECOLA, coupled with diverse language activities, was highlighted as a key factor in capturing students' attention and fostering a deeper understanding of the reading material. Additionally, the emotional impact of the method, as reflected in terms like *"seneng"* (happy) and *"enjoy,"* underscores the importance of creating a positive and enjoyable learning environment.

### **Benefits and Limitations of Using the ECOLA Method to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension Skills**

The positive responses related to motivation and enthusiasm suggest that students recognize the potential benefits of the ECOLA method and are open to incorporating it into their learning routines. The agreement from questionnaire number 9, "The ECOLA method provided practical strategies to improve my reading comprehension skills," indicates that students appreciate the method conceptually and practical utility in improving their reading comprehension skills.

The benefits of the ECOLA method are seen in its ability to facilitate learning through collaborative discussions. Students appreciate the opportunity to share ideas with classmates, making the learning experience more interactive and participatory. This can be seen from the statement given by the respondent to the question, "In your opinion, what are the benefits of ECOLA methods?". The following are the statements given by the respondents:

*"In my opinion, the advantages can understand and make it easier to understand reading because it can be discussed with friends too." (Respondent 5)*

*"In my opinion, the advantage is that we can more easily understand the reading because we discuss with friends." (Respondent 6)*

*"The advantage is to relieve us, ma'am. If the ECOLA method can discuss with my friends, so not all themselves." (Respondent 9)*

Based on these responses, it is evident that students find the collaborative nature of the ECOLA method to be a significant advantage. Discussions with peers enhance their understanding of the material and provide support and camaraderie. This social aspect of learning is crucial, as it fosters a positive and encouraging environment for students to thrive. Furthermore, respondents highlighted the practicality of the ECOLA method in easing the comprehension process. As respondents 5, 6, and 9 mentioned, exchanging ideas during discussions contributes to a deeper understanding of the

reading materials. This aspect of the method goes beyond individual comprehension, emphasizing the group's collective effort to enhance overall learning outcomes. Notably, several respondents emphasized the relief and ease brought about by the collaborative nature of the ECOLA method. The idea that students do not feel isolated in their learning process and can rely on the support of their peers is a testament to the positive social dynamics fostered by this method.

However, despite the positive feedback, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of the ECOLA method, as some students have reported. One student expressed, "*Sebenarnya enak bisa berdiskusi dengan teman, tetapi di sisi lain juga ada yang tidak aktif menyuarakan pendapatnya*" (Actually, it's nice to be able to discuss with friends, but on the other hand, there are also those who are not active in expressing their opinions). This observation raises concerns about the potential for uneven participation within the group. While some students may benefit from collaborative discussions, others struggle to contribute actively, hindering everyone involved's effectiveness.

Another student remarked, "*Jadi ada perbedaan pendapat dengan teman*" (There are differences of opinion with friends). This highlights a challenge in managing diverse perspectives within a group. While diversity of thought can be enriching, it may also lead to disagreements that could disrupt the learning process. Balancing the benefits of collaborative discussions with the potential for conflicting opinions is essential for educators implementing the ECOLA method. Additionally, a student mentioned, "*Susah memahami bacaannya banyak*" (It is difficult to understand the readings because there are many). This points to a possible limitation in the volume or complexity of the reading materials used in conjunction with the ECOLA method. If the texts are too challenging or extensive, some students may find it overwhelming, potentially impeding their ability to engage in meaningful discussions actively. Striking a balance between challenging content and ensuring accessibility for all students is crucial for the success of the ECOLA method.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that when asked about the limitations and challenges of the ECOLA method, many students tended to respond with phrases like "none" or "tidak ada" (there are none). This could be attributed to the positive atmosphere created by the method's collaborative nature, where students may focus on the benefits rather than dwell on potential drawbacks.

In conclusion, while the ECOLA method offers notable benefits in enhancing students' reading comprehension skills through collaborative discussions, it is essential to address the identified limitations. Educators should carefully consider and address unnecessary participation, potential conflicts of opinion, and challenges related to the complexity of readings when implementing the ECOLA method in the classroom. Understanding these limitations can inform adjustments and improvements to ensure a more inclusive and practical learning experience for all students.

## DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Students' Perceptions of the Extending Concept Through Language Activities (ECOLA)

The study's positive reception of ECOLA is consistent with the theoretical underpinnings highlighting the integration of various language skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The study corroborates the idea that ECOLA's emphasis on group discussions and creative writing exercises contributes to active engagement with the text, aligning with the theoretical framework that posits these activities as effective in enhancing comprehension and critical thinking skills (Haerazi & Irawan, 2020).

The integration of the Extending Concept Through Language Activities (ECOLA) method, as advocated by researchers such as Astuti (2008), Nurhidayati and Pardimin (2021), and Haerazi & Irawan (2020), not only aligns with theoretical frameworks emphasizing language activity integration in reading comprehension but also addresses the vital role of motivation in successful learning experiences, as discussed by Smith-Burke (1982). The study's exploration of students' perceptions sheds light on the positive impact of ECOLA on reading comprehension development, in line with

theoretical underpinnings, and underscores the method's ability to sustain motivation and foster active engagement as essential components for effective educational interventions.

Motivation is crucial for successful learning, encouraging students to participate actively in their education. This is in line with what was stated by Smith-Burke (1982), which states that most students will feel bored and lose motivation if they perceive learning using the ECOLA method as too complex and mundane. In this study, ECOLA was successfully implemented for students effectively and without causing boredom, thus allowing reading comprehension learning to proceed very well.

Motivation, widely acknowledged as a framework for successful learning interventions, is a potent driving force that propels students toward active engagement with educational content. In this context, the positive attitudes observed among the participants signify a willingness to embrace the ECOLA method and suggest a keen awareness of its potential benefits (Smith-Burke, 1982).

Building upon the investigation into students' perceptions of the Extending Concept Through Language Activities (ECOLA) method and its alignment with theoretical frameworks, the study uncovers a pivotal dimension—the perceived relevance of ECOLA activities in bridging the gap between theoretical concepts and practical application. This revelation resonates strongly with the theoretical underpinning articulated by Nurhidayati and Pardimin (2021), emphasizing the transformative impact of connecting academic content to students' personal experiences for a more meaningful learning experience. The study highlights that ECOLA is a potent bridge, effectively linking theoretical concepts from texts to their practical application in students' lives. This alignment substantiates the theoretical premise that learning is heightened when grounded in real-world experiences and underscores ECOLA's role in fostering a more profound understanding. Beyond mere absorption of information, the study suggests that ECOLA encourages active integration of knowledge into students' existing frameworks, demonstrating a transfer of skills from the academic realm to practical utility. In emphasizing the practical implications of ECOLA's perceived relevance, the study emphasizes the importance of contextualizing learning experiences, urging teachers to design instructional approaches that resonate with students' everyday lives.

The students' perceptions of the Extending Concept Through Language Activities (ECOLA) method reveal a spectrum of responses that underscore its positive impact on reading comprehension. Aligned with theoretical frameworks, the findings emphasize ECOLA's effectiveness in fostering motivation, active engagement, and bridging theoretical concepts with practical application.

#### **4.2 Benefits and Limitations of Using the ECOLA Method to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension Skills**

The study's findings reveal the benefits and limitations of using the Extending Concept through Language Activities (ECOLA) method to improve students' reading comprehension skills. The positive inclination towards the ECOLA method is evident among many participants. Their agreement and strong agreement with statements indicate a high level of motivation, which is crucial for the effectiveness of learning interventions. The enthusiasm expressed by participants suggests motivation and a genuine interest in enhancing reading skills. The perceived improvement in reading comprehension skills is a recurring theme among positive responses, indicating the method's positive impact on understanding complex concepts.

Moreover, the agreement on practical utility, as indicated by questionnaire number 9, highlights that students appreciate the ECOLA method not only conceptually but also for its practical strategies to improve reading comprehension skills. The study's findings align with Supriyana et al.'s (2019) research, supporting the ECOLA technique's overall effectiveness in improving students' reading comprehension skills.

Additionally, there are some negative responses, albeit less prevalent. The negative responses center around challenges and adaptability, with some students reporting feeling challenged or having

difficulty adapting to the ECOLA method. Questions about the method's influence on reading comprehension also raised concerns among some participants. This aligns with what Smith-Burke (1982) said: that ECOLA has several disadvantages, including being time-consuming, limited, and lacking student motivation. Despite these challenges and concerns, it is crucial to acknowledge that the negative responses represent a minority of participants.

The interview component of the study provides deeper insights into students' perceptions of the ECOLA method. Positive sentiments are expressed, with students finding the method enjoyable, engaging, and impactful in understanding reading materials. The collaborative nature of the ECOLA method, fostering discussions and sharing among peers, emerges as a prominent benefit. Terms such as "fun," "exciting," and "comfortable" frequently characterize students' encounters with the method, indicating emotional engagement and satisfaction, which emphasizes the importance of positive emotions in the learning process. According to Pratama et al. (2022), when students experience enjoyment and excitement in their learning activities, it can enhance their motivation and cognitive engagement, leading to more effective learning outcomes.

In addition to the positive emotional and collaborative aspects, students note the impact of the ECOLA method on their understanding of reading materials. Many express that the method has helped them delve deeper into the content, grasp complex concepts, and develop critical thinking skills. This finding resonates with the study by Simamore et al. (2018), which demonstrated that collaborative learning environments contribute to improved comprehension and higher-order thinking skills among students.

Despite overwhelmingly positive feedback, a few challenges are mentioned, such as uneven participation in a group, differences of opinions, and the complexity of reading materials. However, these challenges are not perceived as significant drawbacks, and many students respond with "none" when prompted to identify drawbacks, suggesting an overall positive perception of the ECOLA method. This aligns with Tumpu and Jumriati (2018), who found that the ECOLA method effectively improved the student's reading comprehension skills. Furthermore, the study also revealed a notable increase in students' engagement and enthusiasm for learning, affirming the ECOLA method's impact beyond mere academic improvements. As educators continue to refine and adapt this innovative approach, its promising outcomes highlight its potential to transform language skills and the overall educational experience for students.

While comparisons with other teaching methods are limited, the ECOLA method emerges as a preferred and effective teaching strategy among the interviewed students. The study emphasizes the importance of addressing specific concerns highlighted by neutral and negative responses to refine the method and ensure its success in improving reading comprehension skills.

## CONCLUSION

The research findings highlight a generally positive reception of the Extending Concept through Language Activities (ECOLA) method among tenth-grade accounting students for improving reading comprehension skills. The questionnaire results reveal a high level of motivation and enthusiasm among participants, indicating a genuine interest in enhancing their reading abilities. Positive responses underscore the practical utility of the ECOLA method in improving comprehension, with students acknowledging its value in providing practical strategies. However, neutral and negative responses emphasize the need for a nuanced approach to implementing the method, addressing some students' concerns and challenges. The interview component provides deeper insights, showcasing students' enjoyment and satisfaction with the ECOLA method and emphasizing its positive impact on understanding and collaborative learning. While a few challenges were mentioned, the overall sentiment suggests that the benefits, such as interactive discussions and enhanced learning experiences, outweigh any perceived drawbacks. The uniformity in positive responses indicates a

consistent and favorable perception of the ECOLA method, positioning it as a preferred and effective teaching strategy among the interviewed students.

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