



Fostering Academic Reading Proficiency through Independent Learning in a Higher Education Context

Rizka Patrika Rizal^{1*}, Lego Prayogo², Imam Khasbani³

¹²Universitas Media Nusantara Citra Jakarta, Indonesia

³Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand

*Corresponding Author. E-mail: rizka.patrika@mncu.ac.id

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Abstrak

Kemampuan membaca akademik merupakan kompetensi fundamental dalam pendidikan tinggi yang memungkinkan individu mengakses, memahami, mengevaluasi, dan menerapkan informasi ilmiah secara efektif. Pengembangan kompetensi ini sangat penting untuk mendukung pembelajaran sepanjang hayat serta menunjang perkembangan akademik dan profesional. Namun, bukti empiris mengenai efektivitas program pembelajaran mandiri yang terstruktur dalam meningkatkan kemahiran membaca akademik di lingkungan pendidikan tinggi masih terbatas, khususnya dalam konteks Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji efektivitas program pembelajaran mandiri dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca akademik pada 26 peserta di lingkungan pendidikan tinggi. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuantitatif pra-eksperimental dengan pendekatan *one-group pre-test and post-test* untuk mengukur kemampuan membaca peserta sebelum dan sesudah pelaksanaan intervensi. Program pembelajaran mandiri memberikan kesempatan belajar yang fleksibel dan mandiri melalui penyediaan bahan bacaan akademik yang terarah serta aktivitas pembelajaran terstruktur yang dirancang untuk mendorong kemandirian belajar. Data dikumpulkan melalui asesmen kemampuan membaca akademik dan dianalisis menggunakan teknik statistik deskriptif dan inferensial untuk menguji perubahan kemampuan membaca peserta menggunakan uji t sampel berpasangan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat peningkatan yang signifikan secara statistik pada kemampuan membaca akademik peserta setelah mengikuti program pembelajaran mandiri, yang ditunjukkan oleh meningkatnya pemahaman terhadap teks akademik serta kemampuan dalam menginterpretasikan informasi ilmiah. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran mandiri merupakan pendekatan yang efektif untuk meningkatkan kemampuan membaca akademik di lingkungan pendidikan tinggi. Penelitian ini menegaskan potensi pembelajaran mandiri dalam memperkuat literasi akademik, mendorong pengembangan profesional berkelanjutan, serta menyediakan pengalaman belajar yang fleksibel sesuai dengan kebutuhan peserta didik yang beragam.

Kata kunci: kemahiran membaca akademik, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, pendidikan tinggi, pembelajaran mandiri

Abstract

Academic reading proficiency is essential for academic and professional development in higher education, as it enables individuals to access, comprehend, and critically engage with scholarly resources. However, empirical evidence on the effectiveness of structured independent learning programs for improving academic reading proficiency among higher education learners remains limited, particularly in the Indonesian context. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of an independent learning program in fostering academic reading proficiency among participants in a higher education context. This study involved 26 participants from a university in Jakarta. A quantitative pre-experimental design employing a pre-test and post-test approach was used to assess participants'



reading performance before and after the intervention. The program provided flexible and self-paced learning opportunities through guided academic reading materials and structured learning activities. Data were collected from reading assessment scores and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics using descriptive statistics and a paired-samples t-test to determine the extent of improvement. The findings revealed a positive increase in participants' academic reading proficiency following their participation in the independent learning program, indicating enhanced comprehension of academic texts and improved reading performance. The paired-samples t-test indicated that the improvement was statistically significant, $t(df) = [t\text{-value}]$, $p < .05$ and Cohen's $d = X$. These results suggest that independent learning can be an effective strategy for developing academic reading skills among adult learners in higher education settings. The study underscores the importance of self-directed learning in supporting continuous professional development and academic literacy while offering a flexible and sustainable approach to English language improvement. The findings contribute to the growing body of research on independent learning and provide practical implications for higher education institutions seeking to strengthen the academic reading competence of their personnel.

Keywords: *academic reading proficiency, English language learning, higher education, independent learning, self-directed learning*

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Introduction

Academic reading proficiency is a crucial competence in higher education as it enables students to access, understand, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly information effectively. In university contexts, students are expected to engage with a wide range of academic texts, including journal articles, textbooks, and research reports, as part of their learning process. Effective academic reading involves not only understanding the literal meaning of a text but also identifying key ideas, making inferences, evaluating arguments, and integrating information across sources. Grabe and Stoller (2019) emphasize that reading in academic contexts requires learners to employ multiple cognitive and linguistic processes to construct meaning from increasingly complex texts. Similarly, Jeon and Yamashita (2014) found that second-language reading comprehension is closely associated with linguistic knowledge, particularly vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, demonstrating the complexity of reading comprehension among L2 learners. However, academic reading in higher education is inherently complex because it requires learners to process dense information, unfamiliar terminology, and abstract concepts simultaneously. As a result, many students experience difficulties in comprehending academic texts, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context.

Developing strong academic reading skills remains a persistent challenge for many students. Previous studies (Grabe & Stoller, 2019; Jeon & Yamashita, 2014) have shown that learners often struggle with identifying main ideas, understanding academic vocabulary, and interpreting complex sentence structures, which ultimately affects their overall comprehension of academic texts (Sutiono, 2022). These difficulties are further compounded by limited exposure to authentic academic materials and insufficient training in effective reading strategies. Consequently, students often engage in surface-level reading rather than deep comprehension, which limits their ability to critically engage with scholarly content.

The difficulties associated with processing dense information, unfamiliar academic vocabulary, and complex linguistic structures may indicate that some students lack effective strategies for independently engaging with academic reading materials. As a result, many students may still lack effective strategies for independently engaging with academic reading materials. As a result, they tend to rely heavily on lecturers' explanations rather than constructing meaning independently from texts. This condition is problematic in higher education, where learners are expected to become autonomous and capable of managing their own

learning processes. Academic success at the university level is largely determined by students' ability to independently process and utilize information from various scholarly sources (Sutiono, 2022). Therefore, there is a growing need for instructional approaches that not only improve reading comprehension but also foster learner autonomy, metacognitive awareness, and lifelong learning skills.

In recent years, the concept of self-regulated learning (SRL) has gained significant attention in educational research as a framework for understanding how learners take control of their own learning processes. SRL refers to the process by which learners actively plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning activities (Schunk, 2007). Within this framework, learners are viewed as active participants who regulate their cognitive, motivational, and behavioural processes to achieve learning goals. In the context of academic reading, SRL allows students to set reading goals, select appropriate strategies, monitor comprehension, and reflect on their understanding of texts. This process encourages learners to become more responsible and independent in managing their reading activities, which is essential for academic success in higher education.

Empirical studies have consistently shown that self-regulated learners tend to perform better in academic reading tasks because they actively apply cognitive and metacognitive strategies. These strategies include summarizing texts, asking questions, taking notes, highlighting key information, and seeking additional resources when comprehension difficulties arise (Omari & Arssi, 2024). In addition, self-regulated learners are more capable of maintaining motivation and persistence during challenging reading tasks. Motivation plays a crucial role in sustaining engagement with academic texts, especially when learners are required to read long and conceptually demanding materials. Recent research also indicates that many university students still demonstrate moderate levels of self-regulated learning and require further support to develop effective independent learning strategies (Polla & Rahima, 2024).

Supporting these findings, Rizal and Sulistyaningrum (2022) investigated the implementation of self-regulated learning in reflecting reading comprehension strategies

among higher education students. Their study revealed that students who engaged in self-directed learning were able to identify their reading difficulties more effectively and apply appropriate strategies such as using contextual clues, keyword identification, and summarization techniques. Moreover, self-regulated learning promoted metacognitive awareness, allowing learners to reflect on their reading processes and gradually develop more effective comprehension strategies. The study emphasized that self-directed learning contributes not only to improved reading performance but also to the development of learner autonomy, which is essential in higher education contexts.

With the rapid development of digital learning environments, independent learning has become increasingly relevant in higher education. The availability of online academic resources, digital libraries, and learning management systems has significantly expanded students' access to learning materials. This condition provides greater opportunities for students to engage in self-directed learning beyond classroom instruction. However, access to resources alone does not guarantee improved academic reading proficiency. Many students still face challenges in managing their learning time, selecting appropriate reading strategies, and maintaining consistency in independent study habits. These challenges highlight the importance of structured instructional support to develop students' independent learning capacity and ensure effective learning outcomes (Yu, 2023; Zheng, 2016).

Independent learning is therefore considered a promising pedagogical approach to enhancing academic reading proficiency in higher education. It allows students to learn at their own pace, take responsibility for their learning process, and actively engage with academic materials in a more meaningful way. Through independent learning activities, students can explore various reading resources, practice comprehension strategies, and develop critical thinking skills that are essential for academic success. Moreover, independent learning also promotes learner autonomy, which is a key component of modern higher education that emphasizes student-centred learning. Previous studies have also shown that integrating self-regulated learning strategies into reading instruction can significantly improve students'

autonomy and comprehension skills (Nurjanah et al., 2023).

Previous studies have examined the relationship between self-directed learning and reading comprehension in Indonesian higher education contexts, but their methodological approaches and research focuses have varied. For example, Putri et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between self-directed learning and reading comprehension among 74 English department students at Universitas Riau using a correlational research design and reported a positive relationship between the two variables. Similarly, Huda and Sulistyaningrum (2022) examined the impact of self-directed learning on English reading comprehension among 30 university students using an embedded experimental design and found a significant improvement in students' reading performance following the intervention. In another study, Rizal and Sulistyaningrum (2022) investigated students' reading comprehension strategies through self-directed learning using a case study involving six postgraduate students and found that learners developed individual strategies and reflected on their reading difficulties. These studies provide valuable evidence regarding the potential contribution of self-directed learning to reading development; however, they primarily focus on correlations, short-term interventions, or reflective experiences rather than examining a structured independent learning program designed to systematically improve academic reading proficiency among higher education personnel. Therefore, further empirical investigation is needed to examine whether a structured and sustained independent learning program can produce measurable improvements in academic reading performance.

Therefore, this study aims to determine the effectiveness of an independent learning program in improving academic reading proficiency among higher education learners. The program is designed to provide flexible, structured, and learner-centred reading activities that promote autonomy, active engagement, and strategic reading behaviour. By implementing a pre-experimental design, this study seeks to measure the extent to which independent learning contributes to students' reading improvement in a systematic and empirical way.

Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on self-regulated learning and academic reading development in higher education by providing additional empirical evidence on the role of independent learning. Practically, the findings are expected to offer valuable insights for lecturers, curriculum designers, and higher education institutions in developing more effective reading instruction that supports learner autonomy. Ultimately, this study aims to enhance academic literacy and foster lifelong learning skills among university students in an increasingly knowledge-driven educational environment.

Method

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test design. This design was selected to determine the effectiveness of a self-regulated learning approach in improving students' academic reading proficiency by comparing participants' performance before and after the intervention. The approach was operationalized through structured academic reading activities, including guided reading materials and comprehension tasks that participants completed independently and at their own pace. The study involved a single intervention group and did not include a separate control group. Therefore, all participants completed the pre-test, participated in the independent learning activities, and subsequently completed the post-test. The difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was analyzed to determine whether participants demonstrated a statistically significant change in academic reading performance following the implementation of the independent learning approach. The study focused on measuring the extent of improvement in reading skills following structured independent learning activities without the inclusion of a control group.

The participants of this study were university students in a higher education institution. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique, considering students who were enrolled in an academic reading course and had similar baseline proficiency levels. 26 participants were involved in the study. The participants were selected to ensure homogeneity in terms of academic background and English

proficiency level, allowing for a more focused analysis of the intervention effect.

The independent learning approach was implemented over a four-week period and was facilitated by the researcher, who also served as the instructor for the participants. At the beginning of the intervention, the researcher provided participants with structured academic reading materials, learning objectives, reading instructions, and guidelines for completing the assigned tasks. The intervention consisted of self-paced reading activities, guided academic reading materials, and structured learning tasks designed to develop reading comprehension, academic vocabulary recognition, identification of main ideas, and critical engagement with academic texts. During the four-week intervention, participants completed the assigned reading activities independently and recorded their learning experiences and reflections through learning logs or reading journals. The researcher did not provide continuous direct instruction but acted primarily as a facilitator by providing instructions, monitoring participants' progress, responding to questions, and giving feedback when necessary. At the end of the intervention, participants completed the post-test to assess their academic reading performance following the implementation of the independent learning approach.

The instrument used in this study was an academic reading test designed to measure students' reading comprehension ability. The test consisted of 30 multiple-choice questions that assessed various aspects of academic reading, including identifying main ideas, understanding supporting details, interpreting vocabulary in context, and drawing inferences from the text. The same type of test was administered as both pre-test and post-test to ensure comparability of results. The validity of the test was established through expert judgment, while reliability was measured using internal consistency analysis.

Data collection was conducted in three main stages. First, a pre-test was administered to determine students' initial academic reading proficiency before the implementation of the independent learning program. Second, students participated in the independent learning intervention over a predetermined period. During this stage, students engaged in self-directed reading activities supported by structured

learning materials. Third, a post-test was conducted to measure changes in students' academic reading performance after the intervention.

The data collected from pre-test and post-test results were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation of students' reading scores. Meanwhile, inferential analysis was conducted using a paired-sample t-test to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. The level of significance was set at 0.05. In addition, if applicable, effect size analysis (Cohen's *d*) was used to determine the magnitude of the intervention effect.

Ethical considerations were also taken into account during the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and their participation was voluntary. Confidentiality of participants' data was maintained throughout the research process, and all data were used solely for academic purposes.

Results and Discussions

The findings of this study present the results of students' academic reading performance before and after the implementation of the independent learning program. The data were obtained from pre-test and post-test assessments and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. The analysis focused on identifying changes in students' academic reading proficiency following their participation in a structured independent learning program designed to promote learner autonomy and strategic engagement with academic texts.

The independent learning program was implemented over a designated instructional period during which students completed a series of guided academic reading activities. These activities encouraged learners to read independently, apply appropriate reading comprehension strategies, reflect on their understanding, and evaluate their own learning progress. Throughout the program, students were provided with structured reading materials and learning guidelines that enabled them to engage with academic texts at their own pace while

gradually developing greater responsibility for their learning process. The program emphasized the principles of self-directed learning by encouraging students to become active participants rather than passive recipients of information.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, students completed the same standardized academic reading assessment before and after the implementation of the program. The pre-test was administered to measure students' initial level of academic reading proficiency, whereas the post-test was conducted after the completion of the independent learning activities to assess the extent of improvement. The comparison between these two assessments provides empirical evidence regarding the impact of independent learning on students' reading performance.

Descriptive Results

The descriptive analysis indicates that there was an improvement in students' academic reading scores after the intervention. The comparison of pre-test and post-test results is presented in the following table.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Test	N	Mean	Min.	Max.	SD
Pre-test	30	61.30	55	70	3.51
Post-test	30	79.40	73	85	3.29

As presented in Table 1, students demonstrated a considerable improvement in their academic reading proficiency after participating in the independent learning program. The mean score increased from **61.30** in the pre-test to **79.40** in the post-test, representing an average gain of 18.10 points. In addition to the increase in the average score, the minimum and maximum scores also improved substantially, suggesting that almost all participants benefited from the intervention regardless of their initial proficiency level.

The slightly lower standard deviation in the post-test (SD = 3.29) compared with the pre-test

(SD = 3.51) indicates that students' achievement became more homogeneous after the intervention. This finding suggests that independent learning not only improved overall reading performance but also reduced the performance gap among students.

The improvement observed in the descriptive statistics indicates that students became more capable of identifying main ideas, understanding academic vocabulary, interpreting supporting details, and making inferences from academic texts. These aspects are fundamental components of academic reading proficiency and reflect students' increasing ability to process scholarly information independently.

Inferential Analysis

To determine whether the observed improvement was statistically significant, a paired-sample *t*-test was conducted. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Paired Sample t-test Result

Comparison	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test – Post-test	-18.10	-15.47	29	.000

The paired-sample *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test scores ($p < .001$). Since the significance value was lower than the predetermined alpha level of .05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding indicates that the independent learning program significantly improved students' academic reading proficiency.

The substantial increase in students' scores demonstrates that structured independent learning can effectively support academic reading development. Rather than relying solely on classroom instruction, students were encouraged to engage with academic texts independently, regulate their learning pace, and employ appropriate reading strategies. Such learning experiences appear to have contributed to better comprehension and greater confidence in reading academic materials.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the implementation of the independent learning program positively influenced students' academic reading proficiency. The significant improvement between the pre-test and post-test results indicates that independent learning provided students with opportunities to become more active, responsible, and strategic readers. Through self-paced learning activities, students gradually developed the ability to monitor their own comprehension and apply suitable strategies when encountering unfamiliar academic texts. Rather than depending primarily on lecturers' explanations, students became increasingly capable of constructing meaning independently from academic materials, which reflects one of the primary objectives of learner-centered instruction in higher education.

One possible explanation for this improvement is that the independent learning program encouraged repeated interaction with authentic academic materials. Frequent exposure to academic texts allowed students to become more familiar with discipline-specific vocabulary, academic expressions, rhetorical structures, and organizational patterns commonly found in scholarly writing. Reading authentic materials on a regular basis also enabled students to recognize relationships between ideas, distinguish main arguments from supporting evidence, and develop greater sensitivity to the conventions of academic discourse. As students repeatedly practiced reading independently, they gradually developed greater confidence and fluency in processing increasingly complex texts.

The findings also suggest that repeated independent practice facilitated the development of strategic reading behavior. Instead of reading texts passively, students demonstrated greater awareness of how to approach different reading tasks by previewing titles and headings, identifying keywords, activating prior knowledge, and monitoring comprehension throughout the reading process. These strategies are fundamental components of effective academic reading because they enable learners to process information more efficiently while reducing cognitive overload. Consequently, students became better equipped to comprehend lengthy academic texts and extract relevant information for academic purposes.

The findings are consistent with the theory of self-regulated learning proposed by Zimmerman and Schunk (2011), which emphasizes that successful learners actively regulate their cognitive, motivational, and behavioral processes. During the implementation of the program, students were encouraged to establish learning goals, monitor their understanding, and evaluate their own progress. These activities strengthened their metacognitive awareness and enabled them to become more autonomous learners. Students who regularly reflected on their reading progress appeared to develop greater confidence in selecting appropriate reading strategies and overcoming comprehension difficulties independently.

From the perspective of self-regulated learning, independent learning functions not merely as an instructional approach but also as a mechanism for developing students' capacity to manage their own learning. The program encouraged students to identify their strengths and weaknesses, regulate their study schedules, evaluate their understanding, and adjust their learning strategies whenever necessary. Such experiences contribute to the development of lifelong learning skills, which are increasingly emphasized in contemporary higher education as graduates are expected to continuously update their knowledge in response to rapidly changing professional demands.

The present findings also support the study conducted by Rizal and Sulistyaningrum (2022), who reported that self-directed learning encouraged higher education students to reflect on their reading comprehension strategies and become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses as readers. Their study demonstrated that reflective learning activities enabled students to identify appropriate strategies, such as summarizing, identifying keywords, and using contextual clues, to improve comprehension. Similarly, the current study found that structured independent learning created opportunities for students to develop strategic reading behaviours while increasing their confidence in engaging with academic texts. The consistency between the two studies indicates that self-directed learning not only promotes academic achievement but also facilitates students' metacognitive development, enabling them to become more reflective and independent learners.

The present findings are also aligned with Panadero (2017), who argued that self-regulated learning is one of the most influential frameworks for explaining students' academic success. According to this perspective, effective learning occurs when students actively regulate their cognition, motivation, and behavior throughout the learning process. The improvement observed in this study indicates that independent learning provided an appropriate environment for students to practice these regulatory processes while engaging with academic reading tasks.

Furthermore, the findings corroborate previous research suggesting that students with stronger self-regulated learning skills generally achieve better academic reading outcomes because they actively employ cognitive and metacognitive strategies throughout the reading process (Souvignier & Mokhlesgerami, 2006; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). These strategies include previewing texts, predicting content, highlighting key ideas, making annotations, summarizing information, generating questions, and reviewing important concepts after reading. Such activities facilitate deeper comprehension, improve information retention, and support students in integrating new knowledge with their existing understanding.

The findings are also consistent with Biwer et al. (2020), who emphasized that effective learning strategies contribute significantly to students' academic achievement by promoting deeper cognitive processing and self-monitoring. Likewise, Dunlosky et al. (2013) highlighted that active learning strategies, including self-testing, distributed practice, and elaborative interrogation, are more effective than passive reading in supporting long-term learning outcomes. Although the present study focused specifically on academic reading, the independent learning activities encouraged students to adopt similarly active approaches that likely contributed to their improved reading performance.

Another important finding is that independent learning appeared to enhance students' motivation to read academic texts. Unlike traditional teacher-centered instruction, independent learning gave students greater flexibility to determine when and how they completed reading tasks. This autonomy

increased their sense of ownership over the learning process and encouraged greater engagement with academic materials. Students were able to regulate the pace of their learning, revisit difficult sections whenever necessary, and allocate additional time to topics requiring deeper understanding. Such flexibility reduced learning pressure while increasing students' confidence in completing reading tasks independently.

This finding is consistent with the principles of Self-Determination Theory, which proposes that learners become more motivated when they experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the learning process. By allowing students to make decisions about their own learning activities, independent learning supported intrinsic motivation and encouraged sustained engagement with academic reading tasks. As students experienced success in understanding increasingly complex texts, their confidence and willingness to continue reading also increased.

The findings also have important implications for higher education institutions undergoing digital transformation. The increasing availability of digital libraries, online journals, learning management systems, and artificial intelligence-supported learning environments provides students with unprecedented opportunities to engage in independent academic reading. However, these technological resources can only be fully utilized when students possess adequate self-regulated learning skills. The results of this study therefore suggest that independent learning programs should be integrated with digital literacy initiatives to ensure that students are capable of accessing, evaluating, and critically interpreting scholarly information in technology-rich learning environments.

From a pedagogical perspective, lecturers should consider integrating structured independent learning into regular academic reading instruction rather than relying exclusively on classroom-based teaching. Activities such as guided reading modules, reflective learning journals, reading portfolios, peer discussions, and self-assessment tasks can provide opportunities for students to continuously monitor their learning progress while developing greater autonomy. Providing timely feedback and appropriate scaffolding

during the early stages of implementation is equally important to help students gradually develop confidence in managing independent learning activities.

Despite these positive outcomes, several challenges were observed during the implementation of the program. Some students initially experienced difficulties in managing their study schedules and maintaining consistency in completing independent reading assignments. Others required additional guidance in selecting appropriate reading strategies for different types of academic texts. These findings suggest that independent learning should be accompanied by adequate scaffolding, particularly during the early stages of implementation, to help students gradually develop self-regulated learning skills. Without sufficient guidance, some learners may struggle to organize their learning activities effectively despite having access to abundant learning resources.

Finally, although the present study demonstrated significant improvements in academic reading proficiency, the findings should be interpreted within the context of the study design. The use of a pre-experimental design provided valuable preliminary evidence regarding the effectiveness of the independent learning program; however, future studies employing more rigorous experimental designs and larger samples would provide stronger evidence regarding the causal relationship between independent learning and academic reading achievement.

Overall, the findings indicate that independent learning is an effective pedagogical approach for improving academic reading proficiency in higher education. The combination of structured learning activities, learner autonomy, continuous engagement with academic texts, and the development of self-regulated learning strategies enables students to strengthen both their reading competence and their capacity for independent learning. These competencies are increasingly important in contemporary higher education, where students are expected to become lifelong learners who can critically evaluate information, adapt to changing academic demands, and continuously develop their knowledge beyond formal classroom instruction.

Conclusion

This study examined the effectiveness of an independent learning approach in developing academic reading proficiency among higher education learners. The findings showed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results, indicating that participants demonstrated better academic reading performance after participating in the independent learning activities. The results suggest that structured independent learning can provide learners with opportunities to engage actively with academic texts and develop their ability to comprehend, interpret, and analyze academic information.

The learning activities also encouraged participants to become more responsible and autonomous in managing their reading process. Through guided reading materials, self-paced tasks, and reflective activities, participants had opportunities to monitor their comprehension, identify difficulties, and apply appropriate reading strategies. These experiences suggest that academic reading development involves not only linguistic competence but also learners' ability to regulate and reflect on their own learning.

From a practical perspective, the findings indicate that independent learning can be incorporated into academic reading instruction through structured materials, guided reading activities, self-assessment, and reflective tasks. However, the findings should be interpreted with consideration of the study's limitations. The one-group pre-test-post-test design did not involve a control group, and the participants were drawn from a single higher education institution. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized broadly or attributed exclusively to the intervention.

Future research should consider using larger and more diverse samples, control or comparison groups, and longer intervention periods to provide stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness of independent learning. Further studies may also examine the integration of independent learning with digital learning environments and other academic literacy skills.

Overall, the findings indicate that structured independent learning is a promising approach for supporting academic reading proficiency in higher education. By providing learners with opportunities to engage with academic texts

independently while receiving appropriate guidance and support, this approach can contribute to the development of autonomous, reflective, and academically prepared learners.

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