

ARTICLE

## Perceptions of Parents on Raz-Kid's Role in Enhancing Students' Micro and Macro-Skills Holistically: A Study on Ishik Brayaty International Primary School in Erbil

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### ABSTRACT

Many educational institutions globally have adopted the motto of technology-enriched education. Among others, e-books have come to the forefront with technological developments. Accordingly, e-book apps have gained increasing popularity due to their numerous advantages. Although many studies have been conducted on e-book platforms' effectiveness on a global scale, Raz-Kid's influence on students' macro and micro-skill development has not been studied in the context of Iraq. Bearing this fact in mind, this study is an endeavor to explore parents' perceptions about a well-known e-reading app, Raz-Kids, in Erbil, Iraq, on students attending Ishik Brayaty International Primary School in the 2023–2024 academic year. Through convenience sampling, 100 parents uncovered their genuine opinions in a mixed-methods research design study. Data were gathered via questionnaire and interview, and analyzed by either SPSS 29 or NVivo. Findings demonstrated that Raz-Kids has the limitless potential to increase students' linguistic skills holistically. In addition, parents' and teachers' encouragement has been considered as the triggering force to increase students' reading rates. The study's findings may have certain implications for the stakeholders who plan to integrate means of technology into the curriculum in a balanced way. Thus, some rational steps can be taken to eliminate the negative impacts of technology and highlight the positive aspects via well-designed e-book reading apps and more.

**Keywords:** E-book apps; Macro-skills; Micro-skills; Raz-Kids

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## 1. Introduction

English has become a dominant global language, serving as an indispensable means of communication in multiple disciplines encompassing science, technology, trade, education, and diplomacy. The prominence of language can be attributed to its ability to adjust, expand, and transform, thereby earning global recognition (Cumaoglu, Sacici, and Torun, 2013). In this regard, being proficient in English increases individuals' potential by seizing numerous opportunities in a growing number of fields, so its impact is stark in social, academic, and professional life. For example, English serves as a lingua franca, ensuring smooth communication in social interactions, particularly among members of various nationalities whose native languages differ. Such endeavors can be held on social media or in public places such as restaurants, hotels, libraries, playgrounds, or supermarkets. Subsequently, English has an irreplaceable place at educational institutions at varying degrees according to the priorities of authorised bodies (Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021). In this respect, many institutions offer English-only or English medium instruction to teach English in context and spread its influence on other disciplines such as math, physics, chemistry, biology, and information technology. Besides covering courses in English for other disciplines, English takes up considerable time in schedules to sharpen learners' skills at the macro and micro levels. Correspondingly, the influence of English on exams is noticed unambiguously at all levels, from primary to tertiary education, which directly affects students' success. In addition, large-scale standardized tests, such as TOEFL, PTE, IELTS, and SAT, can be a reference for many esteemed institutions to admit students as freshmen (Shelburne, 2009). Apart from social and academic life, it is unimaginable to envision a professional life without exposure to English because globalization urges people to equip themselves with sharpened linguistic skills (Kara and Kucuk, 2023). Otherwise, those people are bound to encounter certain barriers in their professional lives. For instance, a waiter can easily communicate with tourists, increasing

the ability to attract more customers. Furthermore, a sales clerk can promote the products or solve minor problems easily at a bookstore if necessary to take action instantly. After that, the manager of a travel agency can persuade potential buyers quickly if s/he takes part in conversations in English. Moreover, a software engineer can be capable of figuring out codes in programming and selling software overseas with the help of English. As it is obvious, English has numerous reflections on people's lives, so they are inclined to improve it throughout their lifespans.

Employing technology in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings has received considerable attention in the field of language education in recent years; the current generation, known as digital natives, can use ICT tools efficiently and adapt to technological developments far better than previous generations (Kurudirek and Berdieva, 2024; Yudhiantara and Nasir, 2017). This integration has paved the way for exploring endless possibilities, thereby transforming the teaching and learning process substantially. This is because it allows the freedom to adopt technological tools online, offline, or in hybrid mode. This trend dovetails with the wider recognition of technology on the path to reaching digitalization in English classes, where technological advancements are implemented to tackle various educational hindrances and boost students' motivation correspondingly (Celik, 2018; Issa, 2024). The advent of artificial intelligence-enriched platforms, various software, and virtual reality have sparked the curiosity of educators to integrate them into classes in a well-established and balanced manner because they are mostly costless, dynamic, and user-friendly to tailor learners' specific needs precisely. Thus, they have the untapped potential to sharpen learners' skills through interaction, engagement, and collaboration. Technology-enriched education encompasses elements from daily life, so closing the gap between daily life and theoretical subjects can have far-fetching effects to elevate students' engagement in classes; otherwise, boredom and dissatisfaction may reverse this positive cycle. There are many apps to meet the needs of English teachers in this regard,

ranging from Kahoot to ESL Printables. They allow teachers to create, customize, and use the files for educational purposes. As it is observed, language education and technology are like the links in a chain. When one is removed, the chain is bound to turn into a useless steel pile.

The advent of technology in education has triggered stakeholders to use all possible means, one of which is e-books, an alternative to paper-based reading materials. The e-book industry has grown tremendously thanks to its advantages over traditional forms. To name a few, e-books are more portable, accessible, environmentally friendly, and affordable (Hardiyanto, 2020). Apart from other advantages, they allow users to customize font and color and take notes to highlight certain points. Having seen the untapped potential of e-books, some entrepreneurs have brainstormed about compiling many books on one digital platform. Thus, a growing number of apps have been released; one of the most renowned examples is Raz-Kids (RK hereafter). It is an online reading platform with over 800 books in a graded form since the advent of it in 2002. Its impact has spanned globally by driving students to read and push boundaries in over 170 countries. According to Li and Lin (2024), it has won over 40 awards at tech fairs because more than 10 billion books have been read through the platform. RK is one of the products of a US-based LAZEL Inc., along with Foundation A–Z, Raz Plus, Reading A–Z, Science A–Z, Vocabulary A–Z, and Writing A–Z, all of which are displayed on a common website, Learning A–Z. It has been dedicated to offering literacy-focused materials, thereby sharpening varied macro and micro skills such as reading, listening, speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary, and writing (Menggo et al., 2019; Nawe and Amin, 2020). It has also been emphasized that core 21st-century skills, including ICT literacy, responsibility, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, are fostered in RK. Certain qualities of RK distinguish it from other reading applications starkly. The books' organization appeals to readers because the degree of difficulty increases as they progress and are ready to compre-

hend the texts. Besides, all books are illustrated and read aloud to increase the readers' engagement. Additionally, it allows readers to record the books and take quizzes regarding the book. With its newly-introduced features, readers can take notes, highlight, mark certain shapes, and add emojis to the book, so its user-friendly side again comes to the forefront. It is worth noting that readers can create their word journals, which include parts of speech, definitions, example sentences, synonyms, and antonyms, thereby expanding their word power and using them to restore their memories as the need arises (Gülşen and Mede, 2017). Moreover, readers can earn stars and badges and create their avatars, so the freedom to customize avatars based on earned points motivates them to read further and explore more extensively. The platform grants the teacher various privileges, such as creating an assignment folder, urging them to read from the reading room, and activating level-up. Afterward, teachers can monitor students' progress in minute detail regarding points earned from the beginning till the last moment, time spent, and the success rate in quizzes, along with the books read, listened to, and recorded (Shelburne, 2009). Furthermore, it is in line with multilingualism with its features for reading books in French, Spanish, and English. Last but not least, it is flexible and can be taken advantage of through various devices such as tablets, PCs, laptops, mobile phones, and smart TVs. Having considered all the distinguishing qualities of RK, it can be postulated that its award-winning position in the e-book industry is not a coincidence, but the hard work and dedication of the professionals who work for the betterment of the RK app.

## **2. Literature review**

Technology-integrated language learning and teaching practices have gained enormous popularity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century thanks to electronic devices' availability, affordability, and endless potential to transform education. It is not common to envision a language class without being equipped with electronic means because enriching the classroom atmosphere with electronic tools has been on the agenda of au-

thorized bodies in education for reaping the benefits in their respective countries (Bilgin, 2024; Park and Lee, 2021). Smartboards, video streaming websites, quiz applications, and presentation-based platforms are at the forefront if educators are inclined to integrate technology into English classes. Besides the aforementioned, e-books have received increasing attention in English classes as they have numerous advantages over paper-based forms (Celik, 2023; Kucuk, 2023; Mizher and Alwreikat, 2023). For instance, they are more eye-catching, appealing, useful, and reasonable than traditional books. However, choosing a book is tough when bombarded with thousands of books. In this regard, e-book platforms have risen to alleviate this tension and increase readers' motivation in one app through which they can read, listen, and record any book conveniently according to their levels. Epic, My On, Bee Star, and RK are established e-book apps to capture readers' attention globally and exponentially increase users' satisfaction rates. Several qualities of RK distinguish it from other platforms, as many scholars cite. To name a few, Neslihan, Olgun and Elina (2020) state that educators, students, and parents appreciate the design of the books because they are graded from easy to difficult on RK. Additionally, Bijay and Bavani (2023) assert that the accessibility of RK drives students to explore incessantly because they can read by any electronic device without any restriction. Furthermore, Nurhayati (2023) highlights the fundamental advantages of RK, including having interactive tools, giving the freedom to customize, and offering detailed reports individually or as a whole class for teachers to monitor and take action in the coming weeks.

RK also shares various points with the assertions of well-known linguists and educators. For instance, Piaget's Learning Theory stresses that students take an active role in learning through observation, participation, and gathering information, which is put into practice on RK through reading books, taking relevant quizzes, and recording (Alice Chen, 2023). Thus, they can expand their learning substantially. In other words, Piaget's perspective states that discov-

ery and engagement are many examples of RK. Subsequently, Krashen's Input Hypothesis emphasizes that notions are conceptualized well if the transition between known and unknown is balanced (Kaban, 2021). Similarly, books are graded based on students' levels so they can proceed confidently without major language learning barriers. After that, Bruner's Scaffolding Theory states that students need to be supported appropriately in the initial phases so they can construct their learning and use them independently in other stages. Similarly, RK allows learners to improve their English skills gradually with well-designed books. Afterward, John Dewey's Learning Theory emphasizes hands-on activities to learn by doing, reducing the gap between real life and curriculum (Tlili et al., 2022). In this regard, RK provides ample opportunity for students to practice what they have learned and sharpen their English exponentially. Additionally, Maria Montessori's Method convenes the idea that there will be a positive learning cycle when students' curiosity is sparked to explore at their own pace (Widodo, 2024). Likewise, each book on RK is unique because it allows you to discover more about animals, countries, cultures, celebrities, success stories, etc. Besides, Lev Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory limits the level of learning through self-study and guided activities. Likewise, RK grants freedom to the teacher to arrange students' learning according to their pace through many features such as assignments, a reading room, and leveled books. Apart from other theories, Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy is applied at all levels through RK as students have the background information to grasp details before proceeding to other levels, which may be more difficult than the previous ones.

Once published studies on RK have been examined thoroughly, it has been observed that most of them culminated in a positive link between reading books and elevating linguistic skills, albeit with few studies with disappointing results. For instance, Marchand (2015) conducted a study in the USA on primary school students to measure RK's effectiveness in improving reading skills and overall fluency. Upon completing the intervention, it was revealed

that students enhanced their reading performance and spoke more fluently. Another notable study was carried out in Singapore by Bijan and Bavani (2023) on kindergarten students whose listening skills were far better after reading RK books for a certain period in a guided format. Additionally, Winans Amanda (2016) found that RK is a beneficial tool for pronouncing words accurately in a study initiated and finalised with US students in elementary school. Subsequently, White and Mulder (2016) focused on Japanese students at the tertiary level, which unearthed that RK can expand students' word power and fix spelling problems in writing because essential words are repeated in many types through guided writing activities while summarising the books concisely. Her study also uncovered that certain grammar topics are grasped subconsciously on RK because sharpening grammar is another sub-set of the RK app. After that, Gülşen and Mede (2017) mirrored the perspectives of high school students in Turkey, where students took advantage of e-books on RK, changed their overall attitude towards learning English, and boosted their motivation considerably. Furthermore, some noteworthy studies were released in Iraq about gauging the role of RK on students' performance, one of which was conducted by Bala (2020) on primary school students. His study hinted that RK yields better results, such as increased literacy, enhanced speaking performance, and stimulated creative thinking skills after exposure to many graded books. Similarly, Nawe and Amin's study (2020) revealed that RK has far-fetched effects on increasing students' motivation at preparatory schools in Iraq because they notice positive effects and gain more self-confidence through RK. However, few studies have uncovered some weaknesses of RK that need to be eliminated. For instance, Ho and Smrekar's (2020) study hinted that teachers should prioritize monitoring students' reading pace periodically and balancing the number of books; otherwise, the appealing sides of RK fade gradually. Likewise, Kaynar, Sadik, and Boichuk's (2020) study demonstrated that quiz questions should be re-designed to increase the effectiveness of RK because some books

are challenging to demotivate the readers.

## **2.1 Significance of the study**

The scope of e-books has expanded rapidly in line with the compulsory transition from traditional education to offering online courses or assignments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Besides, the influence of e-books on students' literacy has been proven in many studies with well-established statistics. However, urging students to read e-books through online libraries may not be intriguing enough to capture their attention among millions of books. Reading books in the illustrated format, accompanied by audio versions, offering extra rewards, grading based on students' levels, and an easily trackable interface for parents and teachers have been expressed as game-changer initiatives to change attitudes towards e-books substantially. On the other hand, offering a well-reputed e-book platform does not necessarily mean that students will benefit from it regardless of the effect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. In this regard, this study will pave the way for bridging the gap between parents and teachers to boost students' enthusiasm throughout the academic year. In other words, exchanging information about using RK effectively can help considerably fulfill educational goals and increase students' competencies, including reading and critical thinking. In addition, the researchers' ultimate goal is to inspire educators globally to implement e-book-based education by considering its countless benefits in the Iraq context.

## **2.2 Purpose of the study and research questions**

This study's primary goal is to holistically examine RK's role in students' linguistic development through the lens of parents. More specifically, this study is an attempt to shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of RK by focusing on parents whose kids are studying at an international primary school in Erbil, Iraq. Furthermore, this study aims to recommend effective strategies to hold RK sessions more effectively by determining possible issues and offering practical solutions. In this regard, research ques-

tions are formulated as follows in a methodological framework:

- What are parents' perceptions towards Raz-Kids?
- What is the influence of Raz-Kids in improving students' macro-skills?
- What is the role of Raz-Kids in developing students' micro-skills?
- What are some positive and negative aspects of the Raz-Kids app?

### 3. Materials and methods

#### 3.1 The study

A mixed-method research design study was adopted as the research design to gather, analyze, and correspondingly come to reliable interpretations. It is feasible to figure out parents' perceptions of the Raz-Kids platform with pros and cons in the context of primary school. Mixed-method research design has been used widely in social studies to gain in-depth knowledge about focused phenomena through surveys, primarily questionnaires and interviews in the form of opinions and statistical analysis (Savin-Baden and Major, 2023).

#### 3.2 Setting and participants

This study was conducted at Ishik Brayaty International Primary School (IBIPS hereafter), run by Stirling Education Company, which offers top-notch education with 42 schools and 2 university campuses throughout Iraq. Apart from Iraq, the company has leading educational initiatives in the UK, Spain, and Southern Europe. IBIPS is known as a forward-thinking institution with a digital curriculum supported by qualified teaching staff, administrators, and the latest technology in Erbil. Its motto is sticking to the premise of a supportive, collaborative, and dynamic community of learners. Besides, its exclusive educational services encompass home-room teaching systems, academic briefing reports,

after-school fun time, brain games, robotics, drama, art, sports, family academy, counseling, mind-blowing competitions, and particular themes in character development. The school offers English Medium Instruction; however, certain courses integrate Kurdish and Arabic into the curriculum. Additionally, it has proven academic success in globally recognized Olympiads such as Hippo and Kangaroo, and its moral development record distinguishes it from other institutions. It is worth mentioning that the former is a wide-scale competition to measure students' English skills; whereas the latter is organized to gauge students' math skills. Besides, Stirling Talks have been organized annually to increase students' public speaking skills and grant them the right to express their ideas for the betterment of society in general. Subsequently, students' efforts are highly appreciated to join global math competitions, including the International Math Challenge, so that they can have ample opportunity to foster their learning in math and sharpen their time management skills. In this regard, IBIPS has been accredited by ASIC and City Guilds, renowned British accreditation organizations, to ensure all standards are met successfully to be eligible as an international school. Align with the latest technological developments, IBIPS has implemented e-book-enriched education through Raz-Kids for over 10 years. This reading app has been used extensively in all grades ranging from one to six as an in-class or extra-curricular activity according to the preferences of the educators. School administration and classroom teachers invite all students and parents in the first month of each academic year to get detailed workshops about the usage, effectiveness, and annual study plan for Raz-Kids with hands-on examples. Those features make this school a central hub for collecting parents' opinions about the effectiveness of Raz-Kids in this study. Subsequently, the convenience sampling method was employed to choose the participants and reap the advantages because it allowed the researchers to reach participants instantly. Further details about the demographic qualities of the respondents are given in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Demographic information of the sampling.

Variables		F	%
Gender	Female	56	56
	Male	44	44
Age	16-25	0	0
	26-35	60	60
	36-45	25	25
	45>	15	15
Highest education level	Primary	4	4
	Secondary	5	5
	High	7	7
	Bachelor	45	45
	Master	25	25
	Doctorate	12	12
The student's grade	Prefer not to say	2	2
	1	25	25
	2	14	14
	3	20	20
	4	16	16
	5	12	12
	6	13	13

As shown in **Table 1**, female respondents (56%) exceeded the male ones (44%). In addition, more than half of the respondents were between 26 and 35 years old compared to other categories, which were 36–45 (25%) and 45> (15%). Subsequently, the holders of bachelor's (45%), master's (25%), and doctorate's (12%) degrees were much higher than other stages of education. After that, the number of parents whose kids were in Grade one (25%), three (20%), and four (16%) exceeded other grades.

### 3.3 Instruments and data collection

Surveys are used to collect data and analyze them by using relevant tools in the second semester of the 2023–2024 academic year; the researchers chose the last month in the semester because they planned to get more comprehensive feedback from the parents when they used it with their kids through the year. More specifically, a questionnaire and an interview were the backbones of the study. All research instruments were composed multilingually, including English, Arabic, and Kurdish. The rationale for creating the instruments in three languages was that re-

spondents could express their ideas freely using the most feasible language. There were 16 items in the questionnaire, which included several types such as multiple choice, open, demographic, drop-down, rating, closed, and Likert scale. The questionnaire was created online and paper-based, so all respondents could take it conveniently according to their preferences. It is of the greatest importance to emphasize that ELT experts created items in the questionnaire with solid experience conducting large-scale surveys. Additionally, precious opinions of teachers covering Raz-Kids enriched education were inserted into the questionnaire to avoid missing significant points. Before conducting the questionnaire, it was directed to other parents whose kids have recently received Raz-Kids enriched education. According to preliminary results, some changes were made to increase the intelligibility of the items. Besides, the Cronbach Alpha index was recorded as 0.92, reliable enough to meet internal consistency criteria based on principles set by Atabek (2020). It can be asserted that the validity and reliability of the figures and reports were satisfactory enough to initiate the study in terms of the questionnaire.

The second research instrument was the interview, designed in a semi-structured mode with the contributions of ELT experts and classroom teachers so that they could be composed relevantly. The interview questions were concise in addressing research questions because giving sincere opinions reduces when the duration is expanded with further questions, as Thorsteinson (2018) elucidates. Interviews were held face-to-face or online according to respondents' availability. Respondents willingly signed consent forms to reveal their ideas and let the researchers publicize significant points. Anonymity was kept in mind before, during, and after the study, so each participant expressed their ideas without hesitation. The precise description of the interview questions was as follows:

- What are some strengths of Raz-Kids for the sake of improving English skills?
- What drawbacks does the Raz-Kids app have?

### 3.4 Data analysis

The latest versions of SPSS and NVivo were used to insert data and make accurate scientific interpretations. Descriptive statistics was used to compare data in the questionnaire; whereas thematic analysis provided insights and inferences by eliciting themes that arose in the interview. More specifically, the interviewer recorded the interviewees' expressions. Later, two researchers assisted in creating an environment where the reliability of the analysis was ensured without leaving any room for doubt. Namely, they helped to transcribe, create codes, and make interpretations based on certain themes. The member-checking technique also increased the study's accuracy, credibility, and validity.

### 3.5 Ethical considerations

The researchers adhered to scientific principles throughout the study. Required permissions from the university research center and school were gathered in advance. The committee members examined all points and decided to conduct the study. It is worth mentioning that both bodies monitored the study from time to time, whether the researchers stuck to ethical considerations or not. In addition, participants signed the consent forms and were granted the freedom to leave at any time upon their request. After that, respondents were informed about anonymity and termination of all files once data insertion was

completed.

## 4. Findings

This section was split into two sub-categories, a questionnaire and an interview, to classify data clearly and apply triangulation in the final phase to determine whether the findings are consistent.

### 4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to obtain in-depth feedback from the parents about the duration of Raz-Kids per week, favorite features, the way of conduct, motivational elements, and noticed linguistic gains.

#### Duration

Figure 1 illustrates the number of hours spent on Raz-Kids on a weekly basis.

As displayed in Figure 1, approximately half of the students use Raz-Kids between one and two hours (43%), followed by 30 minutes and one hour (30%), more than two hours (17%), and up to 30 minutes (10%) consecutively.

#### Favorite features

Figure 2 depicts students' favorite features to take advantage of Raz-Kids more efficiently.

As visualized in Figure 2 starkly, the level-up (40%) feature is the most appealing one over others, which are the reading room (14%), assignments (26%), and all (19%) and none (1%) options.

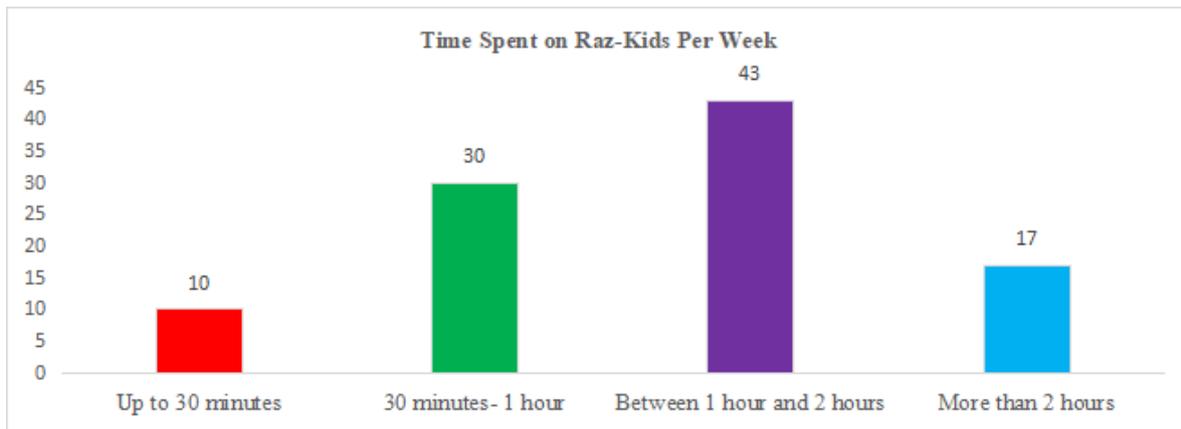


Figure 1. Average time spent on Raz-Kids per week.

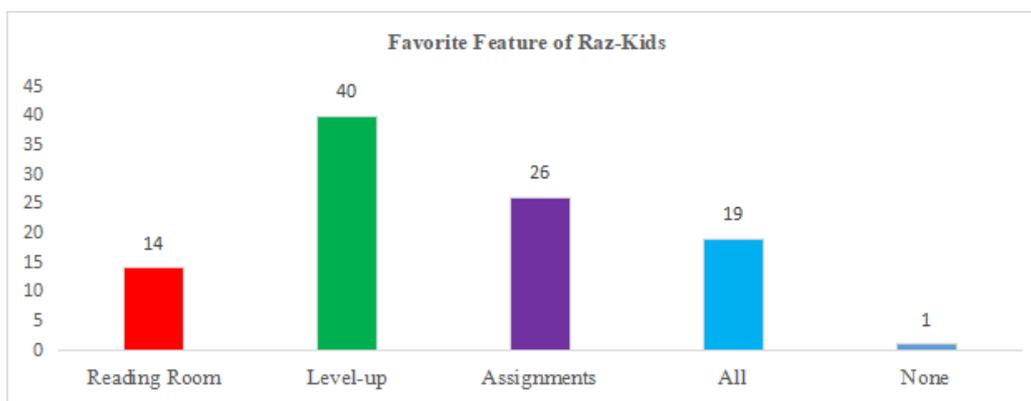


Figure 2. Favorite features of Raz-Kids.

### Inclinations

Figure 3 draws attention to students' conduct in using Raz-Kids among the activities which are listening, reading, recording or all.

As demonstrated in Figure 3, listening, reading, and recording (45%) in a roll were prioritized over others, which were listening (8%), reading (12%), and merging both listening and reading (35%).

### Motivational sources

Figure 4 focuses on the sources to boost students' motivation to read and discover further.

As shown in Figure 4, teacher guidance and encouragement (30%) were considered the best motivators, followed by parents' role (22%), expanding knowledge (14%), stars (12%), certificates (12%) and various gifts (10%).

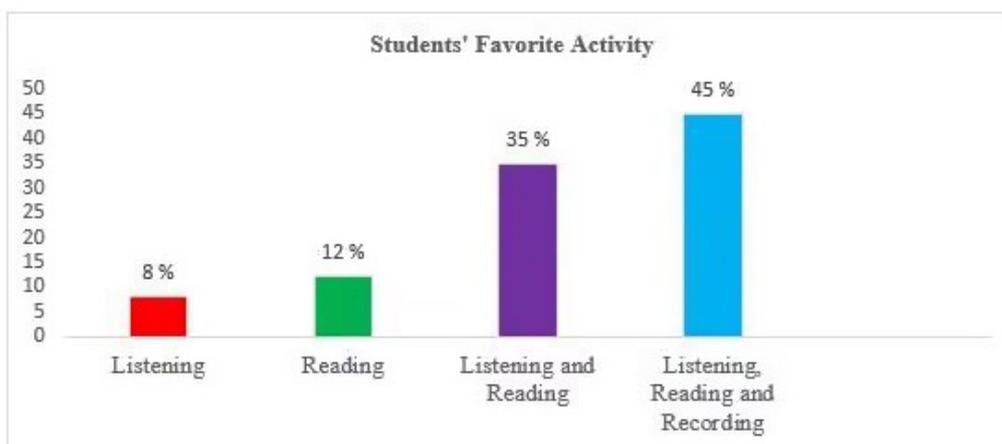


Figure 3. Students' favorite activity on Raz-Kids.

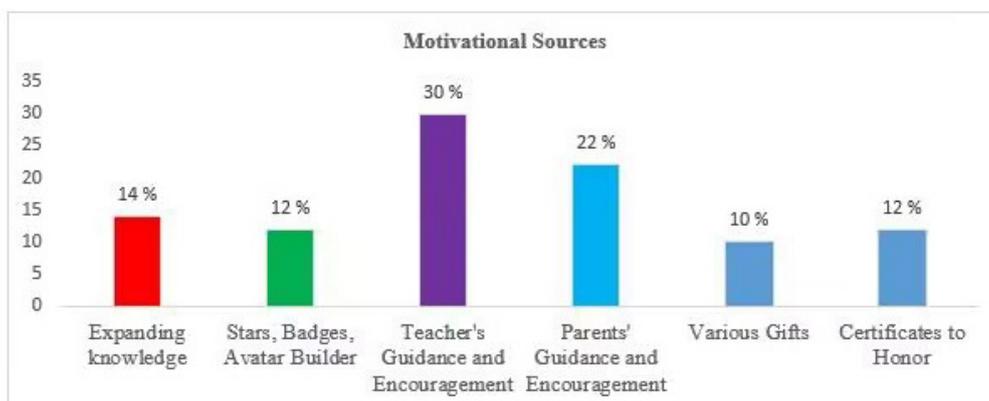


Figure 4. Motivational sources.

### Development of macro and micro-skills

In the final phase of the questionnaire, parents' opinions were sought to gather information on whether they observed significant gains in their kids' macro and micro-skills after being exposed to Raz-Kids enriched education. Parents are privileged to check students' progress in all skills throughout the year via Jupiter, a well-known learning management system. Thus, parents' perceptions were validated by their marks in the system as well. The precise details are depicted in **Table 2** through descriptive statistics.

Once parents' feedback was examined thoroughly, Raz-Kids yielded promising results in terms of developing all macro and micro skills to varying degrees, as shown in **Table 2**. For instance, expanding vocabulary (m = 4.92), enhancing pronunciation (m = 4.89), sharpening reading (m = 4.86), and developing listening skills (m=4.84) received more satisfactory remarks than grammar (m = 4.18), spelling (m = 4.31), and speaking skills (m = 4.58). Considering all figures, it can be argued that Raz-Kids have far-fetching effects in substantially elevating students' overall performance.

**Table 2.** Influence of Raz-Kids on improving macro and micro-skills.

Item No.	Item	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Variance
1.	Raz-Kids improved reading skills.	3	5	4.86	0.472	0.223
2.	Raz-Kids developed listening skills.	2	5	4.84	0.784	0.237
3.	Razkids enhanced speaking skills.	2	5	4.58	0.855	0.731
4.	Raz-Kids expanded vocabulary knowledge.	2	5	4.92	0.911	0.275
5.	Raz-Kids sharpened grammatical competence.	1	5	4.18	0.339	0.115
6.	Raz-Kids enhanced pronunciation skills.	3	5	4.89	0.139	0.373
7.	Raz-Kids improved spelling skills.	1	5	4.31	1.28	1.65

### 4.2 Interview

After applying thematic analysis, notable positive sides and minor weaknesses of the Raz-Kids app were classified in **Table 3** and **4**, respectively.

**Table 3.** Advantages of Raz-Kids.

Positive Sides of Raz-Kids	Frequency	Percentage
Convenient	14	14
Affordable	16	16
E-friendly	18	18
Visually Stimulating	17	17
Portable	9	9
Engaging	12	12
User-friendly	14	14

Based on the data in **Table 3**, reading books with various mobile devices conveniently (n = 14), accessing the books at a reasonable price (n = 16), being exempt from cutting trees to produce paper (n = 18), illustrating the stories with eye-catching images (n = 17), taking the books to any location

freely (n=9), having stimulating stories (n = 12) and customizing (n = 14) were appreciated by the respondents. On the other hand, having a plethora of advantages does not necessarily mean that Raz-Kids is flawless. Respondents underlined some weaknesses in **Table 4** to be eliminated so that they could get much more pleasure while using the platform.

**Table 4.** Drawbacks of Raz-Kids.

Positive Sides of Raz-Kids	Frequency	Percentage
Eye strain and Screen Fatigue	7	7
Unable to Print	6	6
Network Failures	8	8
Lack of ICT Skills	3	3
Challenging Quizzes	2	2

As displayed starkly in **Table 4**, having some health issues due to being exposed to the screen so much (n = 7), inability to copy the books (n = 6), unable to use in an offline mode (n = 8), lack of ICT skills (n = 3) and challenging quizzes (n = 2) were expressed as the drawbacks of Raz-Kids. Apart from

thematic analysis, noteworthy ideas in the interview were given below:

For instance, the teacher's orientation, promotion, encouragement and monitoring were appreciated.

*Parent 7: Thanks to the teacher's encouragement, my son, who studies in Grade 1, has read more than 300 books this year. The teacher has invited us to promote Raz-Kids. We learned how to log in, use, and increase our stars. When my son became familiar with the platform, he became a bookworm. Various books from different fields inspired him to read more and explore. Additionally, stars, badges, and avatars increased his enthusiasm for reading.*

In addition, developing numerous skills with visually stimulating features was expressed as motivational sources.

*Parent 38: My daughter, who is in Grade 2, has taken advantage of Raz-Kids in many ways. For example, she has sharpened her reading skills. She started speaking more fluently after expanding her vocabulary knowledge. In addition, her pronunciation mistakes reduced sharply because she listened to the books a few times before recording her voice. Finally, the teacher's simple gifts to honor students boosted her motivation to read more than her peers.*

Besides, a well-established assignment routine and parent-teacher collaboration paid off.

*Parent 45: My daughter is in Grade 3 and was ambitious about reading books through Raz-Kids frequently. Her teacher assigned some books to be completed by the deadline. The teacher also informed us about upcoming assignments through Jupiter's learning management system. In addition, the teacher chose one book daily to discuss in the class collaboratively. Those activities changed my kid's attitude toward reading significantly.*

Moreover, sharpening some 21st-century skills and reading books simultaneously fostered students' learning.

*My son is in Grade 4, and she liked reading from the level-up feature of Raz-Kids. He liked carrying on reading books from a wide array of topics. Besides, reading more books and taking quizzes helped him improve his critical thinking skills because the*

*quiz questions were mostly about eliciting information rather than finding the answer in the book. (P53)*

Afterwards, reading from a wide array of topics and using dictation contributed to students' progress substantially.

*Parent 62: My daughter is in Grade 5, and the reading room was her favourite feature on Raz-Kids. Reading books with different letters inspired her to read more extensively, and recording books helped her develop pronunciation. Moreover, books were engaging enough to capture her attention because topics varied from celebrity success stories to historical events. Subsequently, her teacher used dictation to improve her spelling by choosing essential words in given books.*

After that, using the platform conveniently from any mobile device increased students' enthusiasm to read further.

*Parent 88: Raz-Kids is an awesome platform for taking a constructive approach to reading because the books are visually stimulating, engaging, and leveled to capture any student's attention without hindrance. Additionally, using Raz-Kids on any mobile device is a great option for using it flexibly. Besides, the teacher's role to assign, monitor, highlight, and reward is indispensable to reap the benefits of Raz-Kids.*

## 5. Discussion

The effects of an e-book reading platform, Raz-Kids, on students' macro and micro-skill development were sought thoroughly in this mixed-method research design study via questionnaire and interview through the lens of parents. Quantitative findings documented that Raz-Kids is a promising platform for developing macro and micro-skills. More specifically, Raz-Kids was considered effective in developing reading, listening, speaking, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, which dovetails with previous studies of Bates et al. (2017) and Ikpeze (2018), who pointed out that e-book platforms ensure many linguistic gains including reading, listening, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Similarly, Abdulrahman and Kara (2023) attest-

ed that e-book reading platforms pave the way for extensive reading, increasing the ambition to read more frequently and engagingly. Likewise, Nawe and Amin (2020) asserted that Raz-Kids allow the reader to subconsciously improve pronunciation skills, because a wide range of phonetic principles is studied subconsciously. Quantitative data also unearthed that teachers' guidance and encouragement are fundamental points to developing regular habits towards Raz-Kids, which is consistent with Celik (2018), who stated that students' motivation increases dramatically when they are guided clearly by their teachers about choosing the right books e-book platforms. In addition, parents' irreplaceable role in increasing students' willingness to read books was emphasized in the questionnaire, which aligns with Yildiz (2020), who pointed out that parents' collaboration with the teacher pays off when the keys to the student's success are contemplated. After that, simple gifts and certificates to honor the students have received compliments from the parents in the questionnaire, which is in line with Bowman (2011), who convened the idea that offering some small gifts and issuing certificates have endless potential to keep students' enthusiasm active in academic settings, so they become more eager to be the most suitable candidate for the next cycle.

Qualitative data gathered through interviews unleashed noteworthy points to be examined meticulously as well. For instance, the parents highly praised the eco-friendly structure of e-Raz-Kids, which dovetails with Kara's (2023) assertions about switching to e-books rather than paper-based ones to prevent catastrophic environmental consequences. In addition, reading books conveniently from any mobile device received positive comments from the parents. In this regard, Andries and Posumah (2023) stated that having the freedom to read e-books from many devices encourages readers to be bookworms. Afterward, user-friendly practices of e-books are appreciated highly by parents, which is in line with Yudhiantara and Nasir (2017), who underlined that mobile devices are feasible for reading e-books, taking notes, highlighting and answering relevant

quizzes, so they can potentially transform nature of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Subsequently, visually stimulating illustrations were favored by parents because they were found engaging and consistent with the text. In this respect, Bates et al. (2017) asserted that picture-enriched texts in e-book apps are more engaging for students because students can find the correlation easily and spark their curiosity. However, some weaknesses of Raz-Kids are cited by parents to examine and eliminate so that it can build a more dynamic user experience to meet readers' needs completely. To name a few, eye strain and screen fatigue were implications of reading e-books in excessive amounts. According to Shelburne (2009), spending many hours on e-books can cause serious health issues ranging from poor vision to chronic headaches. Additionally, being unable to print the books was expressed as another weakness of Raz-Kids, which aligns with Al Rawashdeh et al.'s (2021) perspectives, which hinted that most e-book platforms do not allow the users to disseminate in a paper-based form. Moreover, the requirement for a stable network and basic background knowledge of ICT skills was pointed out as a hindrance to Raz-Kids. According to Cumaoglu, Sacici, and Torun (2013), uninterrupted internet connection and developing ICT skills are prerequisites for reaping the fruits of e-book platforms. Furthermore, questions from the books were found challenging, especially for students whose levels are not satisfactory enough to answer inference questions accurately, which is in line with Blummer and Kenton (2020), who stated that quiz questions in reading platforms should be modified to tailor the needs of learners based on their capabilities; otherwise, the rate of skipping quizzes increases, which reduces educational benefits sharply.

A further discussion of the findings can be attributed to adopting technology-enriched education at IBIPS. The school has been known for its inclination to provide the latest technology in classes where students can multiply their learning rates exponentially. The latest 4K smartboards, e-materials of coursebooks, e-assessment tools, game-based practice sessions, and video-enriched lessons are stan-

dard forms of education. Additionally, project-based, inquiry-based, and content-based learning is applied to foster students' 21st-century skills in learning, literacy, and life skills. To name a few, critical thinking, collaboration, information literacy, leadership, and flexibility are key considerations. Correspondingly, the e-book reading platform Raz-Kids promotes students' numerous skills, including reading. In this regard, Arulanand, Babu, and Rajesh (2020) contended that technology-enriched education paves the way for more concentration, so learners look forward to taking advantage of all opportunities to express their ideas in communicative acts. Likewise, Qin and Wei (2021) stated that forms of e-learning are irreplaceable in this century if educators have the ambition to increase positive learning outcomes substantially.

## 6. Conclusions

This research purported to explore the impacts of Raz-Kids in improving primary school students' macro and micro-skills by receiving parents' opinions in surveys. Findings revealed that Raz-Kids, which have over 800 books from A to Z in a graded format, has enormous potential to increase students' linguistic skills, including reading, listening, speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary, and writing. In addition, its role in increasing self-confidence was substantiated by the interview. Moreover, 21st-century skills such as creativity, collaboration, and information literacy have been triggered by following the activities under the teacher's guidance. Furthermore, various motivational sources such as encouragement from parents or teachers, small gifts, stars, and certificates are beneficial. However, some minuses of Raz-Kids were postulated about the need to have a constant network, the impossibility of printing, and having rather challenging quiz questions. It can be argued that complementary qualitative findings dovetailed with quantitative ones without raising doubts.

Based on the findings of the study, some pedagogical implications are reflected. To begin with, educational institutions interested in raising students' English levels through e-platforms should

not underestimate the value of Raz-Kids in increasing students' skills with a well-established plan. In addition, wide-scale workshops should be held to improve students', teachers', and parents' awareness of the effectiveness of Raz-Kids in many ways. Subsequently, discussing certain themes in the books during classes should be considered to promote Raz-Kids and increase its reputation in the eyes of the students with practical reflections on their lives. Besides, further workshops can be organized to train students and parents, thereby fixing any technical issues regarding ICT literacy. After that, some reading competitions can be integrated into the curriculum so that students' enthusiasm grows throughout the year and they can be placed in prestigious positions during such endeavors. Finally, institution-based requests can be directed to the creators of Raz-Kids to reduce the degree of difficulty in quiz questions.

Concerning the study's limitations, many suggestions are put forward for further study. Firstly, the scope of this study was limited to a private school in Erbil, which can be expanded to other schools in the region. Additionally, only parents' ideas were valued, which can be expanded to include students and teachers. Moreover, only surveys were used in this study, which can be merged with exam results for more in-depth analysis. Finally, items were translated into three languages, which can be increased with other popular languages in the region considering the cosmopolitan nature of Erbil, where different nationalities can live peacefully for long years.

## Author Contributions

All authors contributed equally to the article from the beginning till the end of the process.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Data Availability Statement

The author confirms that the data supporting the findings in this article are available within the article.

Raw data that support the findings are also available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

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