

EFL Students' Perceptions of Digital Extensive Reading Program in Junior High School Level

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Students' Perception;
Digital Extensive Reading;
Let's Read Application

Article history:

Received 2023-04-10

Revised 2023-06-02

Accepted 2023-07-05

ABSTRACT

The digital extensive reading have important thing in studying English for junior high school. In this study investigated the students' perceptions of digital extensive reading. The participants are the students of seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Soe which consists of 29 students. This study applied qualitative research method. The researcher collected the data through observing and interview. The media used Let's Read application as digital media. The results of students' perceptions of digital extensive reading are students feel happy, fun, exciting and good. The strength of digital extensive reading, so many variety stories, have pictures, the text are simple sentences, and can translate directly. The weaknesses of digital extensive reading are eye damage and need internet connection. The impact that students get after using digital extensive reading are they rich new vocabularies, improve reading fluency, improve reading skill, read a lot of stories, and increase knowledge.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The basic skills that students should have in learning English are listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Reading is one of the most essential skills in language and other areas (Umam, 2013) (Umam, 2013). EFL students need to read effectively because by reading students are exposed some information which they probably have never known before. When the students get the information, their language learning will be more accessible, more meaningful, and more successful.

Lindawati (2021) found that reading becomes a habit when EFL students practice reading as the main course activity. A good reading habit for an EFL student means reading different types of English reading material that becomes EFL student's daily activity on a regular and intentional basis. On the other hand, in Indonesia, EFL students' lack of interest in reading is still high enough. Based on the PISA score at 2018 70% Indonesian students have low reading skills. The students cannot even

find the main idea or the important information in a short text. Based on UNESCO data, reading interest in Indonesia is only 0.001% and Indonesia's literacy level is realized at number 62 out of 70 countries. As a result, the learning process and comprehension of the material can be hindered. Thus, teachers should use techniques that support the process of teaching reading (Umar, Perdana, & Ristati, 2021).

According (Lindawati, 2021b), extensive reading is one of the most effective reading strategies that an English teacher should use in the classroom on a daily basis. By using an extensive reading strategy potentially facilitates more pronounced influencing effects on the target language, learning mood, behavior, and engagement in EFL learners. With so much research, reading is very important in teaching and learning EFL learners. Because reading is the approaches to foreign language reading that aims to use reading as a pleasure so that students can learn while enjoying reading (Martina, Syafryadin, & Utama, 2020).

Students currently grown up with digital technology which is they are accessed it for daily life not only for school but also access the media social like Facebook, instagram, twitter, or online games, while technology can be accessed for studying. So many platforms or sources that students prefer to use for reading in their computer or mobile phone. With technological advances in language teaching, EFL teachers need to monitor technological advances and make the best use of them as a means to support successful language teaching and learning and classroom innovation in this digital age (Janah, Retnaningdyah, & Mustofa, 2022). The combination of technology in language learning has made the teaching and learning process more interactive (Amelia & Abidin, 2018), and technological advances are helping to streamline learning activities and achieve learning goals (Khusniyah, 2021). In this case, the delivery of teaching materials has become higher available, allowing students to access teaching materials via technology devices. Therefore, the necessity for extensive reading materials must be adapted to the needs of students and the current digital age.

Digital textbook are increasingly common for the teaching English and other language and across educational contexts. They are also commonly accessed through mobile digital devices such as smartphones. The multimodal digital environments are programmed to allow students opportunities to refine their reading skills (Suttrisno, 2023). Digital textbooks have many advantages over traditional printed book because it can provide more extensive functions such as browsing, text searchers, animation, and multimedia environments (Huang, 2013). The implementation of extensive reading, EFL students and teachers utilize digital materials or tools through various applications or online platforms in implementing the extensive reading. The advances in technology have also built creativity e-readers applications that can be used classroom. The platform also can be accessed by the students in everywhere.

There are many discussions that concerned on behavior and attitudes of digital reading text in previous study. Some researchers have found the finding of their research about EFL learning process applied digital text. (Bikowski & Casal, 2018) found that all students satisfying and motivated students to learn English through digital text. (Lin, 2014) found that learning in mobile-assisted extensive reading can achieve the students' reading skills. (Ermerawati, 2019) researched about the extensive reading in classroom by using Let's read application, and she found that by using lets read application can achieve the students language development, develop a reading habit, and support students' motivation in reading. (Gilbert, 2017) Students using digital extensive reading have been found to enhance their digital literacy and ability to read online by developing digital skills that improve their understanding of web texts.

As explain above, when teacher using digital extensive reading to teach reading skill, the students can improve vocabularies, reading fluency, built reading habit. Based on the reason above, the researchers conducted a qualitative study by using Let's Read application to improve their reading skills one of junior high school at Soe, NTT. This study had three research questions: 1) what are the students' perceptions of digital extensive reading? 2) What are the students' perceptions of the strength and weaknesses of the digital extensive reading? 3) What impact do students get when using digital extensive reading?

2. METHOD

Design and Participants

This study will utilize a qualitative design and a content analysis method in a digital extensive reading, specifically students' reading skill. According Ary et al. (2010), instead of using numerical data, qualitative design seeks to offer a comprehensive image and in-depth knowledge through interpretation and description. The participant is seventh grade students that consist of 29 students. The participants are the students of SMP Negeri 2 Soe. The extensive reading program will be carried out for one month. Students freely choose every story from the application Let's Read, the students strongly suggested choosing their reading materials based on the level given by researcher.

Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

Two techniques will be applied to obtain the data are observation and interviews. Ali et al. (2010) found observations, interviews, document analysis, and questionnaires to be the most common data collection techniques in qualitative research design. During data collection, researchers help students select topics through extensive reading. While observing, the researcher will use notes to support the researcher in collecting the reading activities. The researcher will organize the session for the participants once they feel comfortable in reading. The researcher will observe the students far behind them. The researcher also looks at the notes of the reading activities close to the students.

Interviews will be checked as part of the member-checking process to maintain validity and enhance the credibility of the research. The form of an interview conducted is a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions. Semi-structured interview questions can be customized by the interviewer during the interview process although the questions are pre-formatted. The interview will be carried out on the last day (week 8) to find out learners' opinions on all aspects of learning. Researchers will ask participants about their experiences with digital extensive reading activities. Interviews are conducted to obtain more information and explanations from the participants.

All data will analysis manually before researcher will send for analyzing use the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) by using NVivo softweree. The data is systematically organized and undergoes a data reduction process (a process of reducing unnecessary and unimportant data) before coding the data by topic, which mainly arises from literature research and new topics. Prior to coding the data according to themes derived mainly from the literature review and emerging themes, the data were systematically organized and went through the data reduction process – a process which reduces unwanted and insignificant data.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The three main points in this section come from the research questions.

Students Perceptions' of Digital Extensive Reading

From the interview, the students explained regarding on students' perception about the use of digital reading in extensive reading activity, all participants gave the positive responses. The students felt happy, fun, exciting and good by using digital reading. They students said that digital extensive reading **made** them reading using their mobile phone and researcher allowed them to choose the texts based on their level and interest of the stories. This finding is in line with the statement of (Bamford & Day, 2004) that if extensive reading is established by providing attractive reading materials and meeting with the students' level, students will encounter reading for enjoyment and bring in the language learning rewards. Students will take pleasure in extensive reading program because they can choose what they want to read. In extensive reading students can access language in their comfort zone at their own pace. This activity allows them to consolidate their knowledge and how language works (Bell, 2001).

Data collected from the observation learning sessions also yielded similar finding with the data collected from the interview sessions. The students exciting with the texts because the stories have pictures, the text are simple so they easy to understand.



Figure 1. Students’ perceptions of digital extensive reading

“Digital extensive reading is so good because digital extensive reading has pictures”.

....

“I am happy using digital extensive reading because has beautiful pictures and there are questions so I can more understand the story”.

....

“I think digital extensive reading is so good because the texts are clear and the stories are completed by pictures so I easy to understand”.

....

I think that digital extensive reading so exciting because I can translate directly if I don’t know the new vocabularies

....

“I think digital extensive reading is fun because have many stories and have pictures so it makes me easy to understand the texts”.

The diagram shows that almost the students enjoy using digital extensive reading. One of the purposes of reading is reading for pleasure. Reading can be used as an entertainment so when the students felt happy, exciting, fun, and good it means they are felt pleasure. (Azkia, Srisudarso, & Sumarta, 2021) stated that extensive reading involves pleasure reading without any additional activity of comprehension measurement and it leads the student to feel free to select their reading material. In the line of (Day & Bamford, 2002), in extensive reading practice, the students must enjoy what they read. Besides that extensive reading could be beneficial when students understanding the texts.

Students’ Perceptions of the Strength and Weaknesses of the Digital Extensive Reading

From the observation and interview, researcher found out the strength and the weakness of the digital extensive reading.

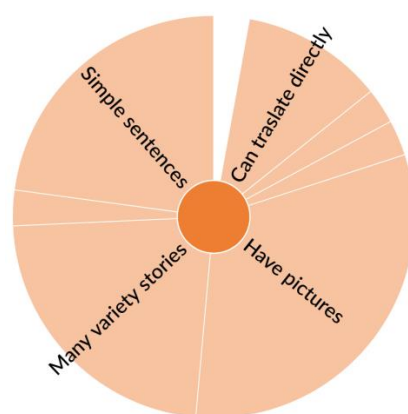


Figure 2. the strength of using digital extensive reading

"Have many stories and varieties, suitable with my level so I can understand the text and also the digital reading is leveled so I can choose the text based on my level".

....

"The stories are so fun, there are many stories so I can choose what I want to read and it completed with picture so it so fun to read".

....

"The texts are simple so I easy to understand the texts".

....

"It can be translated directly and has interesting pictures".

....

"There are so many stories that I can choose based on my interesting".

Figure 2 shows that according the students the strength of using digital extensive reading in the stories of the Let's Read application are have simple sentences, have many variety stories, every story have pictures, and it can be translated directly. Based on the students' perceptions, it can be conclude that to make students love reading or build students reading habit teacher should prepare many variety stories, has pictures, they can translate directly and the stories using simple sentences to they are easy to understand.

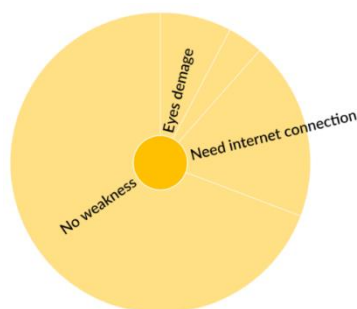


Figure 3. the weaknesses of digital extensive reading

"It makes eye damage from having to face the phone screen, it needs internet connection and if the phone low battery I can't read the stories".

....

"If my mobile phone battery is run out I will stop reading".

....

"There's no internet connection or my internet quota ran out I cannot access the stories".

....

The figure shows that by using Let's Read application as digital extensive reading most of students said that there is no weakness but some of the students said that internet connection and eyes damage are the weakness. The internet connection is the weakness because in Soe, the students should buy internet data packets or at school connect the wifi than they can read digitally. Besides that the weather in Soe is always rain so sometime if raining the internet connection is going trouble.

The Impact of the Students When Using Digital Extensive Reading

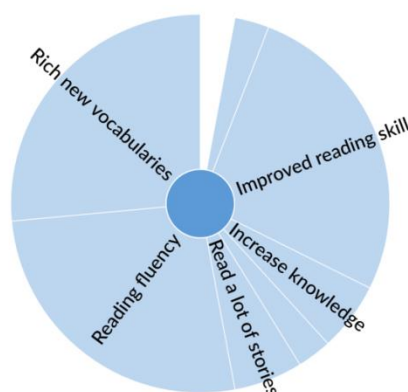


Figure 4. The Impacts of the Digital Extensive Reading

“The impacts for me are I started to love reading and I used my phone not only for access social media but for reading”.

“With digital extensive reading my reading skill was improved, I like to read every day even just 3 stories”.

“The impacts for me are I got some vocabularies and I like to read because I can read everywhere”.

“I can read well with a fluency and good pronunciation”

“Add my knowledge and I can understand the English texts”

Figure 4 shows that the impact that students got are they are get rich new vocabularies, the reading fluency is better, improve reading skill, increase their knowledge, and they read a lot of stories because the stories are interesting.

Discussion

There are three major scopes of findings which are addressed namely students' perceptions towards digital extensive reading, the strength and weaknesses of digital extensive reading and the impact of using digital extensive reading. The finding shows that the learners have positive perceptions on the effect of using Let's Read application as digital extensive reading in their language learning that includes the students feel exciting, good, happy, and fun, beside that students also get many vocabularies, improve their reading fluency and comprehension, their pronunciation, and understand the texts. Related to the extensive reading practice, the students can read any texts based on their interest from the Let's Read application. It is made students have reading habits because they find out the pleasant while reading book. The students claimed that the digital extensive reading allowed them to learn new vocabularies, pronunciation, comprehension, and significantly enjoy reading the texts.

By using Let's Read application as digital reading students very excited to read because have many interesting short stories. (Rodríguez Sua, 2021) said that short stories in English are considered a meaningful and powerful teacher to encourages EFL students to learn new vocabularies and improved their reading comprehension. In Let's Read application students can choose stories according to their interest and level. Also short stories in this application used simple sentences for students easy to understand the texts. This is relevant with the principles of extensive reading as proposed by (Day & Bamford, 2002). The integration of audio make students can use the audio to practice the pronunciation. The students agree that Let's Read application is a good platform to do extensive reading materials in different genres which can support their extensive reading activities, especially reading for pleasure outside the classroom.

In the term of effective component, all the students enjoy that extensive reading in Let's Read application is a fun experience that make reading more fun and less stressful of the difficulty of sentences. The students also have positive perception toward the practically of the platform to use for

extensive reading. It is also revealed that the extensive reading activities the application gives the students a better reading habit. (Arifuddin, 2018) found that extensive reading increases students' interest in increasing their reading as well as builds students awareness in reading either in class or beyond classroom until it turns into their habits to read more and improve their reading level. Students also said that by using the Let's Read application for extensive reading is more saving-money.

Apart from the students' perceptions about digital extensive reading, students also explained about strength and weaknesses of digital extensive reading. The strength by using digital extensive reading; has many variety stories, having pictures, the texts using simple sentences, the text can translate directly. The majority of the participants indeed enjoyed digital extensive reading and asserted that digital extensive reading was helpful, and they were comfortable with texts. (Mudra, 2020) said that the students are directly motivated with digital reading materials that are designed with dull-color images and animated texts. Colorful reading texts have a positive impact on students' reading skill. With so many stories and varieties, there are no boundaries for students to choose any stories they want to read. It helps them to build their mood and imagination.

There are some inconveniences that that influence the students' behavioral changes towards extensive reading on Let's Read application such as reading digitally for a certain amount of hours could potentially lead to eyes damage and need internet connection to read digitally but some of the students who really enjoyed the digital reading as a new thing for them, they said there is no weakness when they read digitally.

The last questions investigated the students' perceptions of the impact that students got by using the digital extensive reading are student get many vocabularies, improved their reading fluency, reading skill, increase their knowledge and they loved reading. The most commonly reason extensive reading positively was the provision of varied, easy materials. Providing the participants with a large array of different graded readers with various titles and genres, with the freedom to self-select the materials that interest them could explain the reading fluency and vocabulary growth and their positive perceptions of this impact (Ateek, 2021). The findings from the present study suggest that extensive reading can help students enter a cycle of growth, through providing large amounts of self-selected reading material at or slightly below the level of proficiency with a wide variety of genres. When the exposure to the texts, letter combinations, structures and same lexical items is consistent and more frequent, the probability for automaticity in reading to occur becomes higher (Suttriso, 2020). Finally, the students' reading fluency could also have been positively affected by the increased vocabulary knowledge. This, however, could also be interpreted in a complementary, parallel way: when students started to read faster, their vocabulary increased (Suttriso, 2021).

Titandanus & Suryaman (2022) found that the use of digital texts can help a variety of learning activities. Apart from printed texts, digital texts have a unique viewpoint, color, feature, font, and so on, which draws the students' in. with the help these features, digital texts encourage students to pursue their education on their own initiative. The finding also indicates that the digital extensive reading helps the students to read more fluently. To attain this primary objective, language teachers need to employ two beneficial strategies to preserve students' reading fluency and interests as proposed by (Lindawati, 2021a), namely; (a) practicing reading faster is believed to improve the amounts of reading done by students and enable them to obtain interests toward what they have read; (b) the students are allowed to avail dictionary with the rules, it does not interrupt their reading processes.

4. CONCLUSION

Technology is increasingly developing so that in the world of education also uses technology. Technology makes students more eager to learn because there are many applications and websites that present learning media. The study investigated the students' perceptions of digital extensive reading in EFL classroom. The participants of this research were the students of seventh grade students who learned English in the classroom. The result shows that all students enjoy, fun, happy

and excited using Let's Read application as digital extensive reading because it have varieties story, interesting pictures and using simple sentences. The students got some impact from using Let's Read application, those are rich new vocabularies, reading a lot of stories, improve reading fluency, improve reading skill and increase knowledge. Besides that by using digital extensive reading also have weakness, like make eye damage and need internet connection.

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