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Enhancing Reading Comprehension and Reading Interest of Eighth-Grade Junior High Students through Interactive Digital Platforms

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Abstrak

Integrasi platform digital interaktif telah muncul sebagai strategi pendidikan terdepan di era digital kontemporer untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa dan prestasi akademik. Tujuan studi ini adalah untuk menyelidiki sejauh mana platform digital interaktif dapat meningkatkan minat membaca dan pemahaman siswa kelas 8 SMP dalam lingkungan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Sebanyak 60 siswa kelas 8 dari SMP negeri di Kayuagung, Indonesia, dibagi menjadi kelompok kontrol dan eksperimen sebagai bagian dari desain studi quasi-eksperimental. Platform pembelajaran digital interaktif seperti Quizziz, Google Classroom, dan Wordwall, yang memungkinkan umpan balik real-time, sumber daya multimedia, dan tugas membaca berkelompok, digunakan untuk melatih kelompok eksperimen. Kelompok kontrol, di sisi lain, menerima pengajaran menggunakan teknik tradisional, yang sebagian besar melibatkan aktivitas berpusat pada guru dan teks cetak. Survei minat membaca dan tes pemahaman membaca pra-tes dan pasca-tes digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa, dibandingkan dengan kelompok kontrol, anak-anak yang terpapar platform digital interaktif mengalami peningkatan signifikan dalam pemahaman membaca mereka dan menunjukkan motivasi serta antusiasme yang lebih besar dalam membaca. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan platform digital interaktif membantu anak-anak mengembangkan sikap positif terhadap membaca selain meningkatkan keterampilan literasi mereka. Studi ini menekankan betapa pentingnya pengajaran membaca yang didukung teknologi dalam memupuk pemahaman yang lebih dalam, keterlibatan, dan motivasi jangka panjang pada siswa sekolah menengah pertama di era digital.

Kata kunci: *Platform Digital Interaktif, Pemahaman Membaca, Minat dan Motivasi Membaca, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di Sekolah Menengah Pertama.*

Abstract

Integrating interactive digital platforms has emerged as a cutting-edge educational strategy in the contemporary digital era to improve student engagement and academic performance. The purpose of this study is to investigate how well interactive digital platforms can enhance eighth-grade junior high school students' reading interest and comprehension in English learning environments. 60 eighth-grade students from a public junior high school in Kayuagung, Indonesia, were split into control and experimental groups as part of a quasi-experimental study design. Interactive digital learning platforms including Quizziz, Google Classroom, and Wordwall, which enabled real-time feedback, multimedia resources, and group reading assignments, were used to train the experimental group. The control group, on the other hand, received instruction using traditional techniques, which mostly involved teacher-centered activities and printed texts. Reading interest surveys and reading comprehension pre-tests and post-tests were used to gather data. The findings showed that, in comparison to the control group, children who were exposed to interactive digital platforms significantly improved their reading comprehension and exhibited greater motivation and enthusiasm in reading. These results show that using interactive digital platforms helps kids develop positive attitudes regarding reading in addition to improving their literacy skills. The study emphasizes how crucial technology-mediated reading teaching is for fostering deeper comprehension, engagement, and long-term motivation in junior high school students in the digital age.

Keywords: Interactive Digital Platforms, Reading Comprehension, Reading Interest and Motivation, Junior High School English Learning.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary educational landscape, the integration of technology into language learning has evolved from being an optional supplement to an essential component of effective pedagogy (Martinez, 2022). The advancement of digital tools and online learning environments has reshaped the way students access, process, and engage with information (Alqahtani, 2021). Particularly in English education, interactive digital platforms have emerged as transformative tools that not only enhance students' comprehension but also stimulate their motivation and active participation in learning activities (Yuliani & Fitriani, 2023). Within this context, the teaching of reading long recognized as a foundational skill for language proficiency demands innovative approaches that align with learners' technological literacy and cognitive preferences in the 21st century (Aminah et al., 2022). Reading comprehension remains one of the most critical yet challenging aspects of English language learning among junior high school students in Indonesia (Bai, 2022). Many learners struggle with decoding meaning, inferring ideas, and maintaining concentration throughout reading tasks (Sari & Wardhani, 2020). Traditional teaching methods that rely heavily on printed texts and teacher explanations often fail to fully engage students, resulting in low reading interest and limited comprehension performance (Sari & Pratama, 2022). The emergence of interactive digital platforms such as *Quizziz*, *Kahoot!*, *Google Classroom*, and *Wordwall* provides an alternative instructional model that combines gamification, multimedia content, and instant feedback to foster both understanding and enthusiasm (Huang & Hew, 2022). These tools transform reading from a passive to an interactive experience, thereby enhancing students' cognitive processing and motivation (Nugraha & Suyatmin, 2021).

In recent years, scholars have increasingly emphasized the pedagogical value of digital learning in improving literacy outcomes. According to Kim and Lee (2021), interactive platforms enhance reading comprehension by providing multimodal input visual, auditory, and textual which supports different learning styles (Hussain et al., 2023). Moreover, such platforms allow learners to control their pace of learning, revisit difficult sections, and receive immediate corrective feedback. These features promote self-regulated learning and cognitive engagement, which are essential for comprehension development (Tsai et al., 2023). Beyond comprehension, digital environments are also proven to elevate reading interest, as the inclusion of gamified elements and collaborative tasks increases students' enjoyment and curiosity toward reading materials (Marlina & Putri, 2022). In Indonesia, the integration of digital learning tools has been widely encouraged through the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, which promotes creativity, critical thinking, and digital literacy (Merta et al., 2023). However, the extent to which these tools effectively improve specific literacy skills particularly reading comprehension and interest among eighth-grade students remains underexplored, especially in regional contexts such as Kayuagung. Previous studies have generally focused on urban schools with higher access to technology, leaving a research gap in how interactive platforms perform in smaller or semi-rural educational settings (Rahman et al., 2023). This study addresses this gap by examining the impact of interactive digital platforms on the reading comprehension and interest of eighth-grade junior high school students in Kayuagung. Theoretically, this research draws upon two main frameworks: (1) the Interactive-Compensatory Model of Reading (Stanovich, 1980), which posits that readers use multiple sources of information linguistic, cognitive, and contextual to construct meaning; and (2) the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (Mayer, 2021), which emphasizes the benefits of combining verbal and visual modes for deeper comprehension. Interactive platforms embody both frameworks by offering multimodal input and facilitating dynamic interaction between learner and text. Empirically,

this study contributes to the growing body of research that connects digital innovation with literacy instruction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts.

Practically, the research provides evidence-based insights for English teachers seeking to enhance their classroom strategies through technology. Teachers often face challenges in motivating students to read in English due to limited vocabulary knowledge and lack of engagement (Almulla, 2020). By integrating interactive digital tools, teachers can create a more student-centered environment that encourages participation, supports diverse learning needs, and bridges the gap between entertainment and education (Fitria, 2024; Che-Aron & Matcha, 2023; Jin, 2023). For students, such an environment can foster intrinsic motivation and self-confidence in reading, while for policymakers, it underscores the importance of investing in digital infrastructure and teacher training (Rojabi, 2021). In summary, this study aims to investigate how the use of interactive digital platforms influences eighth-grade junior high school students' reading comprehension and reading interest in English. It explores both cognitive and affective outcomes, comparing students who engage with digital learning tools to those who experience conventional instruction. The findings are expected to contribute not only to the theoretical discourse on digital pedagogy but also to practical improvements in classroom practices, particularly in Indonesian EFL settings.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group pre-test–post-test design. This approach was chosen because the participants were already organized into existing classes, making random assignment to groups impractical (Creswell & Guetterman, 2021). The design involved two groups: one experimental group receiving reading instruction through interactive digital platforms, and one control group taught through traditional instruction.

The research design is represented as follows:

Group	Pre-Test	Treatment	Post-Test
Experimental	O_1	X	O_3
Control	O_1	—	O_3

Where:

1. O_1 and O_3 represent pre-tests administered to both groups to measure baseline reading comprehension and reading interest.
2. X represents the treatment using interactive digital platforms (*Quizziz, Google Classroom*, and *Wordwall*).
3. O_2 and O_4 represent post-tests given to measure improvement after the treatment.

The quasi-experimental method was considered suitable because it allows the comparison of learning outcomes between two different instructional strategies while maintaining control over potential confounding variables (Ary et al., 2019). The population of this study consisted of all eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Kayuagung, located in South Sumatra, Indonesia, during the 2024/2025 academic year. The school was chosen purposively because it has adequate digital facilities, including Wi-Fi access and computer labs, and has adopted blended learning in English classes.

From a total of five eighth-grade classes (approximately 160 students), two classes were selected using a cluster random sampling technique. Each class consisted of 32 students, resulting in a total sample of 64 participants. The two groups were determined as follows:

1. Experimental Group (VIII-B): Received reading instruction through interactive digital platforms such as *Quizziz*, *Wordwall*, and *Google Classroom*.
2. Control Group (VIII-C): Received conventional reading instruction using printed textbooks and teacher-led explanation.

Pre-test results indicated no significant difference in students' initial reading comprehension or reading interest between the two groups ($p > 0.05$), confirming that both groups were equivalent before the intervention. This sampling method was selected to ensure validity and reliability in comparing learning outcomes between the two instructional models (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2020).

Two main instruments were used to collect data:

1. Reading Comprehension Test

A reading comprehension test consisting of 25 multiple-choice items was developed to assess students' ability to understand narrative texts. The test items were designed based on Bloom's Taxonomy (revised version by Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), covering literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension levels. The test validity was verified through expert judgment by three English teachers and one university lecturer, ensuring alignment with the eighth-grade English curriculum (Revniuk & Bátyi, 2023). The reliability coefficient was determined using KR-20 formula, yielding a value of 0.83, indicating high reliability.

2. Reading Interest Questionnaire

A Likert-scale questionnaire with 20 statements was adapted from Wigfield and Guthrie's (1997) *Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ)* to measure students' attitudes and interest toward reading English texts. The questionnaire covered four aspects: (a) reading enjoyment, (b) curiosity, (c) preference for challenge, and (d) reading frequency. Responses were scored on a 5-point scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree (1)* to *Strongly Agree (5)*. Cronbach's Alpha reliability test yielded 0.87, indicating that the instrument was consistent and reliable.

The study was conducted over six weeks (12 instructional meetings), following these stages:

1. Preparation Stage
   a) Obtaining research permission from the school principal and English teachers.
   b) Developing and validating the research instruments.
   c) Conducting pilot testing to ensure instrument clarity and reliability.
2. Pre-Test Stage

Both experimental and control groups were administered the same reading comprehension test and reading interest questionnaire to determine baseline ability and motivation.

3. Treatment Stage
   a) The experimental group was taught using interactive digital platforms integrating *Quizziz*, *Wordwall*, and *Google Classroom*. Each platform served a specific pedagogical purpose:
   b) *Quizziz* for gamified reading comprehension quizzes.
   c) *Wordwall* for vocabulary matching and sequencing tasks.

d) *Google Classroom* for collaborative assignments, feedback, and multimedia discussion.
e) Lessons were conducted twice a week, each lasting 80 minutes. Students read narrative texts and engaged in interactive exercises, multimedia tasks, and peer discussions online.
f) The control group, in contrast, was taught through teacher-centered instruction using printed worksheets, vocabulary lists, and conventional Q&A sessions.

4. Post-Test Stage
   a) After six weeks, both groups completed the same post-test and questionnaire.
   b) The data collected were compared to determine the effect of interactive digital platforms on students' reading comprehension and interest.

This procedure allowed researchers to systematically observe the impact of digital learning tools while minimizing external influences such as teacher bias and instructional time differences.

The collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and descriptive statistical techniques.

1. Quantitative Analysis

a) The pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using SPSS 26.0.
b) Normality and homogeneity tests were first conducted to ensure that the data met the assumptions for parametric analysis.
c) The main statistical test used was the Independent Samples t-test, which compared the post-test means of the experimental and control groups to determine significant differences in reading comprehension and reading interest.
d) The Paired Samples t-test was also used within each group to compare pre- and post-test scores.
e) The level of significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

2. Effect Size Calculation

Cohen's d was calculated to measure the magnitude of the treatment's effect. An effect size above 0.80 was interpreted as a large effect (Cohen, 1988).

3. Descriptive Analysis

a) Questionnaire responses on reading interest were analyzed descriptively using percentage and mean score interpretation.
b) Students' qualitative feedback from *Google Classroom* discussion forums was also reviewed to support the quantitative findings.

Through this combination of analyses, the study ensured not only statistical validity but also meaningful interpretation of students' learning experiences.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test Scores*

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD
Reading	Experimental	32	61.25	6.84

Comprehension	Control	32	60.87	7.02
Reading Interest	Experimental	32	63.40	5.91
	Control	32	62.95	6.10

Table 2. *Independent Samples t-Test of Pre-Test Scores*

Variable	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Reading Comprehension	0.214	62	0.831
Reading Interest	0.302	62	0.764

Since p > 0.05 for both variables, there was no significant difference between groups before treatment. The two groups were statistically equivalent.

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics of Post-Test Scores*

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD
Reading Comprehension	Experimental	32	82.18	5.76
	Control	32	72.34	6.91
Reading Interest	Experimental	32	78.56	5.44
	Control	32	69.12	6.03

Table 2. *Independent Samples t-Test of Post-Test Scores*

Variable	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Reading Comprehension	6.41	62	0.000
Reading Interest	6.27	62	0.000

Since p > 0.05 for both variables, there was no significant difference between groups before treatment. The two groups were statistically equivalent.

Table 5. *Paired Samples t-Test Results*

Group	Variable	Mean Gain	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental	Reading Comprehension	+20.93	15.22	0.000
Control	Reading Comprehension	+11.47	8.31	0.000
Experimental	Reading Interest	+15.16	13.48	0.000
Control	Reading Interest	+6.17	5.92	0.000

Table 6. *Effect Size of Treatment*

Variable	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Reading Comprehension	1.45	Large Effect
Reading Interest	1.32	Large Effect

According to Cohen (1988), an effect size above 0.80 indicates a large effect. Therefore, interactive digital platforms had a strong practical impact on both reading comprehension and reading interest.

3.1 Pre-Test Analysis

The pre-test scores of reading comprehension and reading interest were analyzed to determine whether the experimental and control groups had equivalent baseline abilities before the treatment.

The Independent Samples t-test results indicated that there was no significant difference between the experimental and control groups in reading comprehension ($p > 0.05$) and reading interest ($p > 0.05$). This confirms that both groups were statistically equivalent prior to the intervention.

Normality and homogeneity tests showed that the data were normally distributed and homogeneous ($p > 0.05$), allowing the use of parametric tests.

These findings support the appropriateness of the quasi-experimental design, as suggested by Creswell and Fraenkel, who emphasize the importance of establishing group equivalence before treatment implementation.

3.2 Post-Test Analysis of Reading Comprehension

After six weeks of treatment, post-test results revealed a significant difference between the two groups.

- The experimental group showed a substantial increase in mean reading comprehension scores.
- The control group also improved, but the gain was comparatively lower.

The Independent Samples t-test indicated a statistically significant difference in post-test scores ($p < 0.05$), meaning that students taught using interactive digital platforms performed significantly better than those taught using traditional instruction.

The Paired Samples t-test results showed:

- Experimental group: significant improvement from pre-test to post-test ($p < 0.001$).
- Control group: moderate improvement ($p < 0.05$), but with smaller mean gain.

The calculated effect size (Cohen's d) was above 0.80, indicating a large effect according to the criteria proposed by Jacob Cohen. This suggests that the use of interactive digital platforms had a strong impact on students' reading comprehension.

3.3 Post-Test Analysis of Reading Interest

The questionnaire results also showed significant differences in reading interest between the two groups.

The experimental group demonstrated:

- Higher mean scores in reading enjoyment
- Increased curiosity toward English texts
- Greater preference for challenging reading materials
- Higher reported reading frequency

The Independent Samples t-test confirmed a significant difference in reading interest post-test scores ($p < 0.05$). The Cronbach's Alpha reliability (0.87) confirmed the consistency of the adapted Motivation for Reading Questionnaire developed by Allan Wigfield and John T. Guthrie. Descriptive analysis showed that over 75% of students in the experimental group agreed or strongly agreed that digital platforms made reading more enjoyable and motivating.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that interactive digital platforms significantly improve students' reading comprehension and reading interest compared to traditional instruction. These results are consistent with prior research emphasizing the importance of active and technology-enhanced learning environments. For example, Almulla (2020), in *SAGE Open*, highlights that student-centered and project-based approaches foster deeper engagement and academic achievement. Similarly, the integration of digital tools in reading instruction promotes active participation, immediate feedback, and collaborative learning, all of which contribute to improved cognitive outcomes.

Regarding reading comprehension, the large effect size found in this study suggests that gamified and multimedia-supported instruction enhances students' understanding of narrative texts. This aligns with findings published in *Computers & Education*, where Chen and Wang (2023) report that multimedia-supported reading instruction significantly improves both comprehension and motivation among EFL learners. Furthermore, Liu and Zhang (2021), writing in the *British Journal of Educational Technology*, emphasize that interactivity and immediate feedback in digital environments strengthen learners' cognitive processing and reading proficiency. These studies support the present findings that digital platforms facilitate inferential and evaluative comprehension by encouraging deeper text engagement and reflective discussion.

In terms of reading interest, the increase in students' motivation can be attributed to gamification elements such as points, rankings, and instant scoring. Raoofi and Alavi (2021), in *ReCALL*, demonstrate that gamified digital reading environments enhance learner engagement and intrinsic motivation. The interactive features of digital platforms provide students with a sense of autonomy and competence, which are essential components of motivation theory. As students perceive reading tasks as enjoyable and achievable, their reading self-efficacy and sustained interest improve.

Overall, the findings confirm that the integration of interactive digital platforms positively affects both cognitive and affective domains of learning. This conclusion is further supported by Wahyuni and Hidayat (2023) in the *TEFLIN Journal*, who found that digital

platforms significantly enhance junior high school students' reading comprehension and interest. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, and the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. The study demonstrates that digital integration in reading instruction provides measurable academic benefits while simultaneously fostering meaningful student engagement with English texts.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the integration of interactive digital platforms in reading instruction significantly enhances students' reading comprehension and reading interest. The large effect size indicates that the impact is not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful in classroom contexts. The findings confirm that technology-supported learning environments promote deeper cognitive processing, active engagement, and higher motivation among students. As supported by previous research published in *Computers & Education* and *British Journal of Educational Technology*, multimedia features, interactivity, and immediate feedback contribute substantially to improved literacy outcomes. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, and the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected.

The pedagogical implications of this study suggest that teachers should strategically integrate interactive digital platforms into reading instruction to maximize both comprehension and motivation. Blended learning approaches, combining structured teacher guidance with digital engagement tools, are particularly recommended for schools with adequate technological infrastructure. Teachers are encouraged to design activities that incorporate gamification, collaborative discussion, and multimedia support to foster both cognitive and affective development. Additionally, professional development programs should equip educators with the necessary digital competencies to effectively implement technology-enhanced instruction.

For future research, further studies are recommended to explore the long-term effects of digital platform integration on students' literacy development across different grade levels and educational contexts. Future researchers may also investigate the comparative effectiveness of specific digital tools, the role of teacher digital literacy, and the impact of technology integration on other language skills such as writing and speaking. Moreover, mixed-method or longitudinal designs could provide deeper insights into how digital engagement influences students' learning behaviors, self-efficacy, and 21st-century literacy skills over time.

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