



The Lecturers and Students' Voice about Digital Reading: Does It Influence the Students' Reading Skill?

Andi Tenrisanna Syam^{(1)*}, Dewi Furwana⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾ State Islamic Institute of Palopo, Indonesia

* anditenrisannasyam86@gmail.com

Abstract

This research attempts to determine whether digital reading has the same effect as traditional reading on students' reading skill and to explain the lecturers and the students' perceptions of digital reading. The writer applied mixed-method research. Sixty students participated as a research sample. Ten lecturers were also involved in this research. The instruments of this research were reading tests, questionnaires, and structured interviews. Reading tests were analyzed by using SPSS 22.0. The questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively using Microsoft Excel, and the structured interview was analyzed qualitatively. The writer found that digital and traditional reading does not affect students' reading skills. It was evidenced by the t-test value being higher than the alpha ($0.40 > 0.05$). In contrast to many lecturers' opinions, students do not prefer digital reading because they need more explanations from their lecturer. Meanwhile, the lecturers revealed that digital reading is useful for ongoing virtual learning. They also were confident in their ability to employ these digital readings. Both lecturers and students agree that the availability of technological tools is the key constraint they must deal with. This research hoped to give meaningful information to the government so that online readers can be facilitated with high-quality online reading materials based on their needs, interests, and behavior.

Keywords

digital reading, lecturers' and students' voices, virtual learning

Introduction

Reading is one of the most common learning activities, particularly among university students. 1-5 people read books to add knowledge; some assume the textbook is fundamental for reading. In contrast, for others, it is supplementary and serves as a guide or introduction to the material. Educators and learners agree that a textbook is still an important learning tool.

The nature of a textbook has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Educators should incorporate chances for students to enhance their digital reading into classes, curriculum, and services because nowadays, students have never known a world without touch displays, voice-activated search functions, screen reading, or real-time information (Ferlazzo, 2016).

Yamaç & Öztürk (2019) reveal that the nature of information and learning has changed due to digital reading. Digital reading offers readers a new way to interact with text in terms of view, font, and color. Readers have essentially had a new experience in digital reading (Manalu, 2019). Huang et al. (2014) underlined that the new reading system offers a wide range of novel and appealing digital reading applications and interprets digital reading more correctly considering the brand-new context of use. Using digital reading makes teachers feel more comfortable learning because it is more practical without using books again.

Such studies have researched the application of digital reading in the classroom. In a quasi-experimental study involving 40 female Iranian male intermediate EFL students, Saeidi & Yusefi (2012) aimed to investigate the impact of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) on reading comprehension. They found that students who read from a computer screen scored better than those who read printed pages. Huang's (2014) research, the online reading group beat the paper-based group regarding reading comprehension. Singer and Alexander (2017) found that students thought they comprehended digital texts better than printed texts. The previous studies above investigate the implication of digital reading texts on the student's achievement. This article, however, does not investigate how this media might help students enhance their English skills, such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

Some other studies focused on students' perceptions of digital reading. Islami & Warni (2020), Satin et al. (2018), Trivenita (2018), Lim & Hew (2014), and Manalu (2019) found that digital reading is more beneficial than printed reading. Despite their advantages, digital reading texts also have limitations. Some books are not available in digital format or cannot be downloaded for free (Liaw & Huang, 2016). According to Jamali et al. (2009), digital reading texts take longer to download, should be printed for the entire page, take longer to access, and read, increase users' reliance on technology, and reduce motivation to utilize libraries. Chou (2014) reported that her participants' eyes quickly became dry during reading e-books. Meanwhile, studies about teachers' perception of digital reading showed that many teachers agreed that digital reading texts should be taught alongside print reading text (Laeli et al., 2020); however, most teachers have misconceptions about what they know and how to execute reading digital text activities (Laeli et al., 2020). The

previous researchers only focused on students' and teachers' perceptions of digital reading texts. However, this recent article attempts to determine whether digital reading affects students' reading skills and to explain the lecturers' and students' perceptions of digital reading.

Based on the current world condition, the Covid-19 pandemic has hit, requiring all public and private colleges and schools from early childhood to high school to study using the Internet. Students take advantage of the internet facilities, and teachers use it to convey their knowledge and give assignments to each student. Even in tertiary institutions, all activities are carried out online; this is done to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The lecturers and students at IAIN Palopo have implemented learning from home by utilizing digital reading.

Regarding the explanation above, the writer formulated the research questions as follows: (1) "Does digital reading have the same effect as traditional reading on students' reading skills?" (2) "What are the lecturer's and students' opinions about online learning?" and (3) "How do the lecturers and students perceive the use of digital reading in the learning process?"

Method

The writer applied mixed-method research. The third-semester students of the English language department in IAIN Palopo were chosen as research participants. There were 60 students divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group taught using digital reading; meanwhile, the control group taught using traditional reading. The students had taken a class where they had to use digital reading. The writer chose them by using systematic random sampling. The students in both groups answered the initial test and final tests. The students were asked to read a text and answer questions related to the text. The writer assessed four reading components: comprehension, phonics, phonological awareness, and vocabulary. Then, the writer calculated their average scores, standard deviation, and t-test value.

The writer gave questionnaires and conducted interviews to get data about the lecturer's and students' perceptions of digital reading. The writer chosen 10 lecturers. The lecturers consented to participate after being contacted; both males and females were included. The participants were informed of the research's go before the data collecting phase, and written consent was obtained for using the interview data. Permission to do research with the lecturers was granted. Six lecturers answered the questionnaire, and four were interviewed via WhatsApp call.

Questionnaires were disseminated through Google Forms to students and lecturers. The structured interview consisted of ten questions. Five questions about virtual learning during this pandemic and five about digital learning. The lecturer's and students' opinions were calculated using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Meanwhile, the participants were asked to read each statement and place it ✓ next to the one that best reflects their feelings regarding digital reading. It contained both positive and negative perceptions that students and lecturers might feel.

The questionnaire was written in Bahasa Indonesia to avoid any misunderstanding among participants. In this research, the data were collected and processed with Excel software and tabulated. Then, the results were classified and analyzed. The interview was analyzed by following Miles & Huberman (1994) and consisted of three main stages data display, data reduction, and conclusion.

Results

The Results of Students' Tests in the Experimental Group

The results of student's scores in the experimental group are presented below:

Table 1. The frequency of students' scores

Range Score	Category	Initial Test	Final test
90-100	Excellent	-	-
80-89	Good	-	2
70-79	Adequate	4	6
60-69	Inadequate	24	9
Below 60	Failing	2	13
Total		30	30

Table 1 shows that no one got an excellent score. 2 students got 81 which was a good score on the initial test. In both initial and final tests, four students got an adequate score on the initial test; however, only six got an adequate score on the final score. Twenty-four students got inadequate scores on the initial test; on the final test, nine students got inadequate scores. Two students on the initial test and thirteen on the final test failed to get a score above 60. The average score for the initial test of the experimental group was 48.13, and the final test average score was 58.70.

Some students failed to read the text because their smartphone batteries ran out. Their eyes become fatigued, itchy, and burnt because they should read a long text.

The Results of Students' Tests in the Control Group

The results of student's scores in the control group are presented below:

Table 2. The frequency of students' scores

Range Score	Category	Initial Test	Final test
90-100	Excellent	-	1
80-89	Good	1	3
70-79	Adequate	1	11
60-69	Inadequate	15	8
Below 60	Failing	13	7
Total		30	30

Table 2 shows that one student scored excellently on the final test. One student got 81; it was classified as a good score. However, three students got good scores in the final

score. 11 got adequate scores on the initial test, and 11 got inadequate scores on the final test. Fifteen students got inadequate scores on the initial test, and eight got inadequate scores on the final test. 13 students failed to get scores above 60 on the initial test, and seven students also achieved scores below 60 on the final test. The average score for the initial test of the experimental group was 40, and the final test average score was 64.47.

The t-test Value for the Initial Test of Both Groups

The t-test value for the initial test of both groups is 0.01. The T-test value was lower than alpha ($0.01 < 0.05$). It means there is a significant difference in the initial test of both groups.

The t-test Value for the Final Test of Both Groups

The t-test value is higher than alpha (α) ($0.40 > 0.05$). It means no significant difference after treatment in the control and experimental groups. It indicated that both traditional and digital reading has the same effect on students' reading skills.

The Student's Answers to the Questionnaire

The students' answers about their perception of digital reading are presented below:

Table 3. The students' perceptions of digital reading

No	Category	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I feel enthusiastic about reading digitally	5%	7.5%	2.5%	57.5%	27.5%
2	Digital reading can increase the speed of understanding the materials.	17,5%	-	17,5%	47.5%	17.5%
3	I like to read articles on computer/smartphone screens.	7.5%	7.5%	12,5%	35%	37.5%
4	Learning through digital reading is more efficient because it can save my time in studying.	2,5%	5%	20%	55%	17.5%
5	Digital reading is more beneficial than learning face-to-face with the lecturer.	-	2,5%	5%	35%	57.5%
6	Digital reading is easier to understand than printed books.	10%	2,5%	20%	25%	42.5%
7	The lecturers' direct explanation makes reading a text digitally easier to understand.	52.5%	27.5%	5%	10%	5%
8	Digital reading is useless because it needs internet quotas.	35%	37,5%	12,5%	12,5%	2.5%
9	Digital reading is tedious because I must use a cell phone/laptop.	40%	42.5%	5%	7.5%	5%
10	Reading a text digitally cannot increase the student's knowledge.	5%	42.5%	27,5%	10%	15%
11	I would be very happy if digital reading is used as a learning medium.	2.5%	7.5%	10%	35%	45%
12	Digital reading does not make me free to express my ideas.	55%	25%	--	10%	10%
13	Digital reading motivates me to learn actively.	2.5%	15%	5%	35%	42.5%
14	I need ideas for learning through digital reading.	37.5%	25%	10%	12.5%	15%

Table 3 shows that 57.5% of students must be more enthusiastic about reading digitally. 47.5 % of students disagree that digital reading can increase the speed of understanding the learning materials. 35% of students strongly disagree that they like to read articles or books on a computer/smartphone screen. 57.5% of students also strongly disagreed that digital reading was more beneficial than face-to-face learning.

42.5% of students favored traditional reading over digital reading. 52.5% of students strongly agree that learning with a direct explanation from the lecturer is easier to understand the text content. 47.5% of students also strongly agree that digital reading is useless because it needs internet quotas; however, some students hesitate and disagree with the statement (Neutral = 12.5%, disagree = 12.5%). 42.5% of students strongly agree that reading digital text is boring. 42.5% of students agree that digital reading cannot increase their knowledge. 45% of students are happy if digital reading is used as a learning medium. 42.5% of students strongly disagree that digital reading motivates them to learn actively. 55% of students agree that digital reading does not allow them to express their ideas. 37.5% of students needed more ideas in learning through digital reading.

The Lecturer's Answers to the Questionnaire

The lecturers' answers about their perception of digital reading are presented below:

Table 4. The lecturers' perceptions of digital reading

No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Digital reading eases me to deliver the material.	16,7%	50%	-	33,3%	-
2	Digital reading is valuable tool for lecturers	16,7%	83,3%	-	-	-
3	I am competent in using digital reading.	16,7%	50%	33,3%	-	-
4	Digital reading can be used; since students like it.	50%	16,7%	33,3%	-	-
5	Digital reading can increase students' achievement.	16,7%	16,7%	33,3%	33,3%	-
6	Digital reading is useless because it needs internet quotas to download.	-	16,7%	-	50,0%	33,3%
7	Digital-based teaching material is not conducive to learning because it is not easy to use	16,7%	16,7%	16,7%	50,0%	-
8	Digital reading increases the level of the students' laziness in learning.	16,7%	16,7%	16,7%	-	50%
9	Digital reading cannot be used because it needs a stable internet connection.	16,7%	16,7%	16,7%	33,3%	16,7%
10	The lecturers do not entirely recommend students to learn digital reading because they cannot add insight to students.	-	33,3%	-	66,7%	-

Table 4 shows that 50% of lecturers agree that digital reading makes it easier to convey material because it can save time and be a learning tool for students at home. 83.3% of teachers agree that digital reading is valuable for lecturers because they can search and download the teaching materials directly. In this regard, in contrast to much of the literature that claims language educators lack experience and competence in the use of technical tools (e.g., Cure & Ozdener, 2008; Hockly, 2012), the lecturers primarily stated that they had the necessary skills for using digital resources in their practice, as well as

the ability to guide students in their use. 50% of teachers strongly agree that digital reading can be used since students like it. However, the lecturers hesitate and disagree that digital reading can increase students' achievement because most students do not understand learning by reading digitally.

33.3% of lecturers strongly disagree that digital reading is useless because buying an internet quota requires much money. 50% of lecturers disagree that digital reading is not conducive to learning because it is not easy to use (Sari et al., 2017). 50% of lecturers strongly disagree that digital reading increases students' laziness because digital reading makes students more educated at home, especially during a pandemic like this. 33.3% of lecturers argued that they disagree that digital reading cannot be applied because it needs a stable internet connection since the internet network is now easier to reach in certain areas. 66.7% of lecturers disagree if they do not fully advise students to learn using digital reading because it cannot add insight to students.

The Result of the Interview with the Students

Nature of learning on the internet

Based on the results of the writer's interviews with students, the students stated that the virtual learning they must experience has a positive and negative impact on them. Most students stated they could learn everywhere during this pandemic; however, virtual learning makes students lazy and less understanding of what they learn from virtual lectures. Besides, there is no student self-development, and virtual learning decreases their enthusiasm for lectures. The students do not understand the lecturers' explanations during online lectures; the lecturer's voice is unclear because of a poor network. So they understand the lecturers' explanations better at face-to-face meetings. They used the internet to learn, play games, and sign in to social media. They submit their assignments through WhatsApp group, Gmail, and Google Classroom. Their problems during virtual learning are unstable internet connection; sometimes, the internet quota suddenly runs out in the middle of an online class. Sometimes they suddenly lose their network, making them join and leave the online class several times. The e-learning video cannot be accessed due to network disturbances.

Nature of learning by using digital reading

The students stated that digital reading has positive impacts; they can learn independently without assistance from the teacher, facilitate teaching and learning between lecturers and students, save money, and easily share materials with others. Most students download digital reading in PDF (portable data format), and a student also downloads AZW (amazon word) e-book format. According to them, the functions of digital reading are (1) to make it easier for writers and readers to receive and convey information both in the form of text, images, and audio, (2) digital book is more practical and efficient than using a paper book, (3) it is easy to access by anyone who wants it, (4) safe from virus attacks that damage the device, simple, and not complicated, and (4) we can adjust the font and screen sizes by zooming in or zooming out them as stated by Leah (2020), digital reading may be purchased from anywhere with an internet

connection, and shipping and availability are not an issue. It is also less expensive than physical books, which may inspire people to read more. Another lesser-known advantage of reading e-books is that we may customize the font size and line spacing in the text to your liking, making it easier for persons with disabilities to read. Pressing a button is also easier for those with motor difficulties than turning a page. Some e-books can even be converted into audiobooks with extra software.

In choosing digital reading, the students consider digital reading that can support print quality, can be re-edited by converting into other formats without reducing the digital quality, and pdf size are small. The weaknesses of digital reading are (1) it makes the eyes tired, sleepy, and irritated, (2) it requires a device such as a laptop, computer, tablet, or smartphone, (3) if our smartphone or laptop turns off surely we can no longer read digital books, and (4) internet access must be sufficient to read digitally. The lack of appropriate computing resources is a widespread concern in developing nations (Du Plessis & Webb, 2012). The students' perception of digital reading is presented below:

Student A: Digital reading contains digital information, which can also be text or images. Digital reading can facilitate teaching and learning between lecturers and students; it saves money because we do not need to print books, and it is easier to share materials wherever we are. Unfortunately, digital reading makes the eyes tired, sleepy, and irritated. It requires a device. Internet access must be sufficient to read digitally. If our cell phones or laptops turn off, we can no longer read digital books. I usually download digital reading materials in the form of a PDF.

Student B: I am interested in using digital reading because it is more practical and can be accessed anywhere and whenever we want. Digital reading makes it easier for writers and readers to receive and convey information through text, images, and audio. Moreover, if this digital book is more practical and efficient than paper, its reach is certainly wide. In considering learning digital books, I need electronic devices such as cell phones and computers to use digital books. Digital reading requires electrical power because electronic devices must be on the charger. Moreover, you must maintain eye health because reading too long in front of a screen or a cellphone will interfere with irritated eyes.

Student C: I use digital reading to add insight, and it is an alternative to a book. Types of digital reading that I read are AZW and PDF. Digital reading is simpler or more practical than paper books because some digital readings are free downloads. I can adjust font and screen sizes to smaller or bigger. However, some people cannot access it because not everyone has a computer, smartphone, or internet.

The Results of the Interview with the Lecturers

Nature of teaching on the internet

Based on the results of the writer's interviews with lecturers, the lecturers stated that the virtual learning they must experience has a positive and negative impact on them. They stated that virtual learning is efficient, and they do not rush to come to the campus to attend lectures. Unfortunately, virtual learning is also less effective because the materials explained were difficult to be understood by students. The lecturers used the internet facilities to search teaching materials, play a game, read online news, and sign in to social

media. They held virtual learning through Google Classroom, Google Meeting, Lentera application, Sipakatau application, and WhatsApp group. The obstacles faced in virtual learning are (1) unstable internet networking, especially for some students who are in places that lack internet access, and (2) irritated eyes because of laptop and cellphone radiation.

Lecturer A: I do not spend much time to go campus because I teach from home. I asked the students to submit their assignments through WhatsApp group, Gmail, and Google Classroom. I always use Google Meetings because it does not limit the time and number of participants. Zoom is used when there is a meeting with colleagues. In the ongoing lecture, not all students are facilitated with internet data, so many students do not join virtual learning because they need much money to buy internet credit".

Lecturer B: Virtual learning is flexible. Sometimes the students' video is offline, so I do not know whether the students are "active" in online classes. I use the Lentera website to upload learning materials and students' assignments. I asked them, "Do you understand the materials I explained?" They answered, "Yes, of course." However, when I asked to re-explain the materials, they were speechless.

Many digital teaching platforms have been built, diversified digital teaching materials have been produced, and campuses have actively adopted various digital teaching platforms to improve students' learning outcomes (Lin et al., 2017). The staff at the State Islamic Institute of Palopo developed a teaching platform called sipakatau, where the lecturers can upload learning materials and students' attendance lists. Meanwhile, in the Islamic State University of Makassar, it is called Lentera.

Nature of teaching by using digital reading

Digital reading has a positive side: it can ease teachers' material delivery, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, requiring working from home. This research aligns with Lam et al. (2015), who found that digital reading is simple. The lecturers can access e-books at any time and from any location. However, digital reading also has a negative side: it requires a good internet connection and can interfere with your vision if you have to stare at gadgets for longer. More lecturers' perceptions of digital reading are presented below:

Lecturer C: Digital reading is more attractive to students. It can be done anywhere (working from home), but the downside is wasteful (because it requires a good internet network) and can damage eyesight because of staring at the phone screen for too long".

Lecturer D: Digital reading can be beneficial because the reader can adjust the font size to suit his needs. On the other hand, the increased font size will reduce the amount of text visible to the reader. This makes it more difficult to connect the information in one area to the information in other areas. As a result, the reader's ability to follow a logical chain of thought will be impaired.

Lecturer E: I use digital reading because limited printed books are available in the library. I usually download digital reading in PDF (Portable document format. I search teaching materials from online postings such as e-journals, blog posts, etc. One of the functions of digital reading for me is that it can be used anytime and is suitable for distance learning. I

chose a digital reading that can be downloaded for free, and the capacity of a digital book is small. The weaknesses of digital books in online learning are (1) sometimes I forget the last material in learning, (2) the handphone power must be full of charge, (3) the font is too small, (4) sometimes files are accidentally deleted, and (5) harm to eye health.

Discussion

Based on research results, digital reading, and traditional reading do not affect the students' reading skills. The students think digital reading is difficult because they must study without a detailed explanation from the lecturer. When the students read a textbook, they need to read the entire content to acquire the full viewpoint and comprehension (and they may have to reread it several times) before coming to a decision or getting the overall notion about what the author said accurately. The reader must be entirely focused on what they are reading (material-centrist), and reading the entire book is required to have a deeper grasp of what they are reading. This pastime is unquestionably time-and-energy-consuming, not to mention physically taxing, since it necessitates enabling conditions, such as a quiet room, a comfortable location with adequate lighting, and so on (Erwin & Maryanti, 2017).

In this case, the students can use the internet as their learning tool because it is proven that they use WhatsApp, Gmail, and Google Classroom applications to collect assignments. In using the Internet, students cannot use it properly because they do not use it to read digitally, so they think that digital reading cannot add insight. For students, reading digitally also costs money because students must have a good internet connection to read digitally. In other words, digital reading is less effective for them. The research results were systemic to previous research on students' perceptions of digital reading, such as Yen & Wang (2002); Mungen et al. (2013); Tuncer & Bahadır (2014) favored printed books over digital reading. Jeong (2012) researched 56 sixth-year public schools in Korea and found that printed books allow higher reading comprehension than electronic books. Students had much more eye tiredness after reading electronic books than printed books. Students liked the e-book, but they preferred paper books. Students who enjoy reading digital texts did not perform better on reading comprehension examinations (Kazazoğlu, 2020). Abdullah & Gibb in Pardede (2019) stated that users still prefer reading paper books for various reasons, including a preference for the feel of genuine books, a dislike for reading on a screen, or the difficulty of obtaining the necessary technology.

This research result is in line with Sariyatun et al. (2018); Laeli et al. (2020); Çelik & Aytin (2014); Lau et al. (2018); Osakwe et al. (2017) statement, the lecturers argue that digital reading helps them deliver material because it can save time and can be used in a pandemic like this, so it requires a learning process carried out from home. For the lecturers, digital reading can also add insight to students; however, it all depends on each student whether they can take advantage of digital reading to increase knowledge. Sadaf & Johnson (2017) reveal that the teachers' positive attitudes toward employing technology are crucial to their classroom integration success. Teacher attitudes toward digital reading may determine whether they desire to utilize it in their classrooms or limit their efforts to use it effectively. However, this research is contradictory to Solak's

research (2014) which found that teachers preferred printed books to digital reading texts.

Other studies have found no variations in how texts are read depending on the medium. No differences in reading time or comprehension were identified between the groups who read printed texts and those who read digital texts in research by Noyes and Garland (2003); Rockinson-Szapkiw et al. (2013).

Several researchers have reported that digital reading has negative sides; namely, we have vision problems because we must deal with digital devices such as laptops or cellphones as stated by Ferlazzo (2016) argued that reading on a screen generates more eye fatigue than reading on paper. Reading on a glossy screen for an extended period can induce eyestrain, impaired vision, and headaches. Moreover, in line with Çelik and Aytin's (2014) statement, those teachers were frequently unable to use digital media in their classrooms due to a lack of access to computers and the Internet.

Conclusion

The writer concluded that the students do not favor digital reading. On the other hand, the lecturers favor digital reading as a learning tool. The findings of this study highlight the importance of assisting lecturers in their work and the use of digital reading and other digitalized resources. It would be crucial to consider how universities as organizations may support lecturers' actions individually and cooperatively. If this project is funded, it can affect the teaching process, encourage students to utilize digital reading, and increase students' outcomes. In addition, the amount to which students participate in reading positively or adversely is determined by their attitude toward reading. A positive attitude is critical to successful learning, especially for youngsters in the digital information era.

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