

Using Digital Reading Books to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension at Junior High School

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Abstract

Comprehension and explores students' interest in using digital reading books as learning media. The research employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental one-group pre-test–post-test design, complemented by a descriptive quantitative method through a questionnaire. The participants were 31 ninth-grade students of SMP Handayani Gowata, selected using cluster sampling. Data were collected through a reading comprehension test and a Likert-scale questionnaire. The results revealed a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension after the implementation of digital reading books. The paired-sample t-test showed a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating a statistically significant effect. The mean score increased from 42.74 in the pre-test to 66.45 in the post-test, with an N-Gain score of 0.40, categorized as moderate. Questionnaire findings indicated that 77.42% of students were interested, 16.13% were very interested, and 6.45% were moderately interested in using digital reading books. The findings conclude that digital reading books are effective in enhancing students' reading comprehension and positively influence their interest in reading activities.

Keywords: *Digital reading books, reading comprehension, students' interest.*

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill that plays a crucial role in students' academic success, particularly in learning English as a foreign language. Reading involves not only decoding written symbols but also understanding, interpreting, and constructing meaning from texts. Many junior high school students still experience difficulties in reading comprehension, such as identifying main ideas, understanding vocabulary, and extracting specific information from texts.

In Indonesian junior high schools, students' low reading interest and limited access to varied reading materials contribute to weak reading comprehension. Traditional printed textbooks are often perceived as less engaging, causing students to feel bored during reading activities. Consequently, students' motivation and comprehension remain low.

The rapid development of technology offers new opportunities to improve learning quality. One potential solution is the use of digital reading books. Digital reading books provide interactive features, multimedia elements, and easy accessibility, allowing students to read anytime and anywhere. These features can enhance students' motivation, engagement, and comprehension.

Several previous studies have reported positive effects of digital reading materials on students' reading comprehension. However, limited research has focused on junior high school students while simultaneously examining learning outcomes and students' interest. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of digital reading books in improving students' reading comprehension and to describe students' interest in using digital reading books as learning media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading comprehension refers to the ability to understand, interpret, and derive meaning from written texts. Ambarita, Wulan, and Wahyudin (2021) define reading comprehension as an activity in which readers understand the content of a text by answering questions related to what, why, and how, and drawing conclusions based on the information presented. Similarly, Mona, Sinaga, and Nisa (2022) state that reading comprehension involves the reader's ability to connect textual information with prior knowledge and experiences to gain meaningful understanding.

Furthermore, Gunarwati, Maula, and Nurasiah (2021) emphasize that reading comprehension requires readers to understand the context, the author's intention, and the relationship between ideas within the text. Laily (2014) adds that reading comprehension includes the ability to interpret both explicit and implicit meanings by utilizing prior knowledge and analytical skills. Based on these definitions, reading comprehension can be concluded as an active and complex cognitive process that goes beyond word recognition.

According to Burns, Roe, and Ross (1996), reading comprehension consists of several levels, including literal, inferential, evaluative, and creative comprehension. Literal comprehension involves understanding information that is explicitly stated in the text, such as facts and details. Inferential comprehension refers to the ability to infer meanings and draw conclusions based on implicit information. Evaluative comprehension involves making judgments about the content, while creative comprehension allows readers to express personal responses and ideas related to the text.

Digital reading books are electronic texts that can be accessed through digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, and computers. Marshall (2009) explains that digital books combine traditional reading content with technological features, including hyperlinks, audio, images, and animations. Melenteva (2019) states that digital reading supports flexible learning and provides opportunities for interactive engagement with texts.

Several studies have reported positive effects of digital reading books on students' reading comprehension. Yee and Zainuddin (2018) found that the use of e-books significantly improved students' reading comprehension by increasing engagement and motivation. Similarly, Muhammad, Rahadian, and Safitri (2017) revealed that digital books enhanced students' reading skills and learning motivation.

Interest plays an important role in learning outcomes, particularly in reading activities. According to Hidi and Renninger (2006), interest influences students' attention, persistence, and

engagement in learning tasks. Fitriyani (2022) reported that students with higher reading interest tend to demonstrate better reading comprehension performance. Therefore, the use of engaging media such as digital reading books is expected to increase students' reading interest and contribute positively to their reading comprehension achievement.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental one-group pre-test–post-test design to examine the effectiveness of digital reading books in improving students' reading comprehension. In addition, a descriptive quantitative method was used to analyze students' interest in using digital reading books. The research was conducted at SMP Handayani Gowata, involving 31 ninth-grade students selected through cluster sampling, as the class represented the average academic level of the population.

Data were collected using two instruments: a reading comprehension test and a questionnaire. The reading comprehension test was administered as a pre-test and a post-test to measure students' comprehension before and after the treatment. The test assessed students' ability to identify topics, main ideas, specific information, and vocabulary understanding, with scores converted to a scale of 0–100. The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale to measure students' interest in digital reading books, focusing on attention, enjoyment, concentration, and willingness to engage in reading activities.

The research procedure consisted of administering the pre-test, implementing the treatment using digital reading books over several meetings, and administering the post-test followed by the questionnaire. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics to calculate mean scores and percentages, while inferential analysis employed a paired-sample t-test with a significance level of 0.05 to determine differences between pre-test and post-test scores. The effectiveness of the treatment was further measured using the N-Gain score, while questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively to determine students' level of interest.

FINDINGS

The use of digital reading books improving students' reading comprehension

The reading test findings included the frequency % and level, t-test value, hypothesis testing, N-Gain score, and students' pre-test (x_1) and post-test (x_2) scores. This study aimed to determine whether students' reading comprehension at SMP Handayani Gowata significantly improved after using Digital Reading Books. The findings allowed for the following classification:

Frequency and Percentage of Pre-Test and Post-Test

Data gathered from students' reading comprehension pre- and post-test results is shown in this section. The pre-test was conducted to measure students' reading comprehension, while the post-test was conducted after the using of Digital Reading Books to assess the effectiveness. The comparison of these two scores allows the researcher to evaluate the improvement of students' reading comprehension after treatment. After students completed both questions, the researcher used the score categorization table to group the results into several levels. The following table presents the findings of the classification result:

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of Pre-test and Post-test

No.	Classification	Scores	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
			F	P	F	P
1.	Very Good	81-100	0	0	6	19
2.	Good	61-80	5	16.1	16	52
3.	Fair	41-60	7	22.6	6	19
4.	Poor	21-40	14	45.2	3	10
5.	Very Poor	1-20	5	16.1	0	0
Total			31	100	31	100

The table 1 shows significant changes students' achievement. In the pre-test, no students achieved the very good category (0%), but in the post-test, 6 student (19%) managed to score in this category. For the good category, there is a considerable increase from 5 students (16.1%) in the pre-test to 16 students (52%) in the post test. In the fair category, there is a decrease in the number of students from 7 (22.6%) in the pre-test to 6 students (19%) in the post-test. for the poor category, there is considerable increase from 14 (45.2%) in the pre-test to only 3 (10%) in the post-test. This shows that most students who were previously in the poor category have moved to a good category (good). Meanwhile, the very poor category decreased from 5 students (16.1%) to 0 (0%).

Overall, the post-test results showed a clear improvement over the pre-test, with the majority of students now in the good category (60%) and only a few in the poor and very poor categories. Based on this data, it can be concluded that the learning intervention between the pre-test and post-test successfully improved students' reading comprehension. the significant shift from poor to good indicates that the digital reading books used were effective in helping students achieve a better level of reading comprehension.

Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Pre-test and Post-test

Table 2. Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Pre-test and Post-test

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PreTest	42.74	31	19.615	3.523
	PostTest	66.45	31	17.944	3.223

Based on the table 2 shows a notable rise in mean scores, where the pre-test mean score of 42.74 (Fair) increased to 66.45 (Good) in the post-test, reflecting a learning progress of 24 points (55%) after the learning intervention. The pre-test had a standard deviation of 19.615, which indicated a relatively high variation in scores before the intervention. Meanwhile, the post-test had a standard deviation of 17.944, which showed a slightly lower variation in scores after the intervention. This decrease meant that the students' scores after the treatment were more uniform and less dispersed.

This standard error values pre-test: 3.52; post-test: 3.22. These values indicated the level of precision of the mean estimation. The smaller the value, the more representative the mean was of the population. which meant that the post-test mean was more stable compared to the pre-test mean. further prove that the sample means represent the population parameters.

Hypothesis Testing

In order to ascertain whether the reading comprehension scores of the pupils on the pre-test and post-test differ significantly, the researcher used SPSS to conduct a paired sample t-test. The research topic on the Digital Reading Books in improving students' reading comprehension during the English language learning process was analyzed using the t-test result. The following is a summary of the t test findings obtained.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	PreTest - PostTest	-23.710	15.651	2.811	-29.450	-17.969	-8.435	30	.000

The table 3 indicated a significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores. The Sig. (2-tailed) value was 0.000, which was lower than the significance level of 0.05. This result showed that the treatment had a statistically significant impact on students' reading comprehension performance.

The mean score increased by 24 points (55%), demonstrating a noticeable improvement after the intervention. The standard deviation of the score difference was 15.651, indicating that there was variation in the amount of improvement among students. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranged from -29.450 to -17.969, and since the interval did not include zero, the difference was confirmed to be statistically significant.

Based on the mean comparison between the pre-test ($M = 42.74$) and post-test scores ($M = 66.45$), students' performance improved after receiving the treatment. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted. This finding confirmed that the treatment had a positive and significant effect on students' reading comprehension.

N-Gain

The N-Gain score is used to determine the effectiveness or increase in reading comprehension of students who use the digital reading books as a treatment after the post-test. The test results are classified based in the criteria proposed by Hake (1998), namely, if $N\text{-Gain} > 0.30$ is categorized as low, $N\text{-Gain} > 0.70$ is categorized as medium and $N\text{-Gain} > 1.00$ is categorized as high.

Table 4. N-Gain Score

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ngain_score	31	.00	.79	.4006	.23100
Ngain_persen	31	.00	78.57	40.0615	23.09993
Valid N (listwise)	31				

The table 4 showed that the learning treatment had a moderate level of effectiveness in improving students' performance. Based on the descriptive statistics, the mean N-Gain score was 0.4006 (40.06%), indicating a moderate improvement category. The standard deviation of 0.23100 suggested that there was a noticeable variation in students' improvement levels. The minimum N-Gain score was 0.00, meaning that at least one student did not experience any measurable improvement. In contrast, the maximum score reached 0.79 (78.57%), showing that some students achieved a high level of improvement after the treatment.

These findings indicated that although the learning strategy was generally effective, the level of improvement varied among students. Therefore, further evaluation and refinement of the instructional approach may be needed to ensure more consistent improvements across all learners.

The level of students' interest in using digital reading books

Frequency and Percentage of Questionnaire

At the final meeting, the researcher administered a questionnaire to the students to determine their level of interest after being given the treatment, which involved the use of digital reading books during the reading instruction process. After the students completed the questionnaire, the researcher calculated and converted their response scores into the predetermined interest-level categories. The results of the score classification was presented in the table below:

Table 5. Frequency and Percentage of Questionnaire

No.	Categories	Range Score	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Very Interested	61-75	5	16.13
2.	Interested	46-60	24	77.42
3.	Moderately Interested	31-45	2	6.45
4.	Less Interested	16-30	0	0
5.	Not Interested	1-15	0	0
Total			31	100

Based on Table 5 regarding the classification of students' questionnaire scores, it was shown that 5 students (representing 16.13%) were categorized as Very Interested with scores ranging from 61-75. Meanwhile, 24 students (representing 77.42%) were categorized as Interested with scores ranging from 46-60. Furthermore, 2 students (representing 6.45%) were categorized as Moderately Interested with scores ranging from 31-45. Lastly, no students were classified as Less Interested or Not Interested, as indicated by the 0% in both categories.

These results indicated that the majority of students demonstrated a high level of interest after using digital reading books during the learning process. Most of them fell into the

“Interested” and “Very Interested” categories, showing positive engagement during reading activities. Only a small percentage of students were at the moderately interested level, and none were categorized as less or not interested.

Therefore, based on the data presented, it can be concluded that the use of digital reading books contributed to generating a high level of learning interest among students. This demonstrates that students responded positively to the implementation of digital reading books in reading instruction.

Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Questionnaire

Table 6. Mean Score and Standard Deviation

Mean	54,67741935
Standard Error	1,064972206
Median	55
Mode	51
Standard Deviation	5,929514296

Based on the statistical results shown in the table, all 31 students provided complete responses to the questionnaire items, with no missing data. Each item (P01–P15) displayed a calculated mean and standard deviation, which represented the students’ response tendencies after learning through digital reading books.

The mean scores indicated the average level of agreement for each statement. The mean values ranged from 3.13 to 5.00, showing that most students tended to respond between the agree and strongly agree levels, with several items consistently falling into the strongly agree category. The highest mean score was found in item P01 ($M = 5.00$), meaning that students strongly agreed with the statement, while the lowest mean score was observed in item P14 ($M = 3.13$), indicating a lower but still positive response toward the item. The overall mean total score was 54.67, which supported the earlier classification that most students demonstrated an interest level after using digital reading books.

The standard deviation values showed how widely the student responses varied from the calculated mean. The standard deviation ranged from .47 to 1.90, indicating that student responses varied from low to moderately high. Items with lower standard deviation values, such as P11 ($SD = .47$), suggested that students’ opinions were relatively similar or consistent. Meanwhile, the highest standard deviation value was found in P14 ($SD = 1.90$), showing that responses differed more widely among students for that particular item. The total standard deviation score of 5.92 indicated a measurable variation in overall student responses, confirming that not all students shared the exact same perception or level of interest.

Based on the results, it can be inferred that, the mean values suggested that students generally showed a positive attitude and strong level of interest toward digital reading books, while the standard deviation values showed that although most responses aligned, there were still differences in how strongly students felt about certain statements.

DISCUSSIONS

This discussion focuses on how digital reading books improve students' reading comprehension at SMP Handayani Gowata. The discussion is divided into two main sections: (1) the use of digital reading books in reading comprehension activities, and (2) the level of students' interest in using digital reading books.

The use of digital reading books improving students' reading comprehension

Based on the findings, it can be seen that there is a significant increase in the average score of students reading comprehension after being treated digital reading books. Before the treatment, some students scored low, but after the treatment, there was a significant increase. In the pre-test, students' scores ranged from a minimum of 20 to a maximum of 60, while in the post-test, the scores ranged from a minimum of 40 to a maximum of 100. This indicates that the digital reading books improved students' reading comprehension.

The findings are consistent with the study conducted by Hidayah and Aurelia (2025), who reported that digital reading books significantly improved students' learning outcomes and were effective in enhancing academic performance, particularly in reading comprehension. The improvement observed in this study supports their conclusion that digital reading materials provide meaningful learning support through interactive content and accessible reading features. Furthermore, the results of this research align with the findings of Gligorea et al. (2023), who emphasized that the use of e-books in classroom instruction increased students' access to diverse reading materials that could be adjusted to students' interests and proficiency levels. This flexibility allowed students to engage more actively in reading activities, which contributed to better comprehension. Similarly, in this study, the digital reading books exposed students to various texts and themes, enabling them to read more frequently and with greater motivation.

The use of digital reading books had a positive impact on students in English learning, particularly in increasing their reading motivation. This improvement was influenced by interactive features such as audio support, illustrative images, and colorful layouts, which made reading activities more engaging and enjoyable for students. This finding is in line with the expert opinion of Ardianti and Wanabuliandari (2021), who stated that reading materials supported by illustrations and engaging activities significantly enhance students' interest in reading.

Moreover, digital reading books enabled students to learn independently at their own pace by allowing them to reread certain sections and access additional learning resources when needed. In line with this, Mushfufah et al. (2019) explained that digital books in the context of distance learning contain interactive elements that support self-directed learning through the integration of multimodal components such as text, audio, animation, and video. This flexibility fostered students' confidence, engagement, and active participation during reading activities.

The positive findings of this study indicate that the use of digital reading books not only improved students' reading comprehension but also contributed to a more effective and student-centered learning environment. The improvement in students' scores, motivation, and engagement suggests that digital reading books can serve as an alternative instructional medium to support English learning, especially in reading activities. By integrating interactive and flexible learning features, digital reading books encouraged students to take a more active role in their learning process, develop greater confidence, and become more independent learners.

Therefore, these findings imply that the implementation of digital reading books has strong potential to enhance the quality of English instruction and support sustainable learning outcomes in the classroom.

Although the use of the digital reading books provided many positive impacts, there were also several challenges encountered during the treatment. One of them was time management. Since learning using digital reading books involves several stages, such as reading time, material explanation, group discussion, and quiz sessions, the time available in one meeting feels quite limited. Therefore, during the treatment, the researcher managed the duration of each activity to ensure the entire learning sequence could proceed as planned.

In addition, another challenge is related to students' levels of digital literacy and access to learning facilities. Not all students possess the same level of digital literacy, which may affect the effectiveness of digital reading book implementation. In addition, limited access to digital devices and unstable internet connectivity can hinder the smooth implementation of learning activities and reduce students' opportunities to engage optimally with digital reading books. Therefore, the researcher continuously monitored and ensured that students' internet connections remained stable during the learning process.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that digital reading books are highly effective in improving students' reading comprehension. The significant improvement in students' pre-test and post-test scores indicates that digital reading books contributed positively to learning outcomes. Through engaging and interactive learning activities, digital reading books not only supported reading comprehension development but also fostered active participation, increased students' confidence in using English, and enhanced their interest in utilizing digital materials as learning resources.

The level of students' interest in using digital reading books

The second research question explored students' interest in using digital reading books in reading comprehension, and the results indicated a positive level of interest among the participants. Based on the questionnaire findings, the majority of students provided favorable evaluations regarding the use of digital books in the reading learning process. The descriptive statistical analysis showed that the mean score reached 54.67 out of a maximum score of 75, indicating a high level of interest. The score range of 43 to 71 further showed that most students fell into the positive interest category, with only a few categorized as low. The standard deviation value of 5.29 also reflects that students' responses were relatively consistent.

This positive perception corresponds with the findings of Fajri et al., (2022) the results showed that most students stated that by using mobile phones, they would prefer digital books as a tool for reading. Similarly, research by Wirdiyana, Sunaengsih, and Syahid (2024) showed that the application and utilization of digital books, often referred to as e-books, provide a platform for students to increase their interest in reading. The results of the present study showed a comparable pattern, where students at SMP Handayani Gowata perceived digital reading books not only as a learning tool but also as a more enjoyable and accessible reading medium. Features such as visual layout, ease of access, and the ability to reread challenging content were identified as factors that helped sustain attention and support comprehension. Therefore, affective factors such as interest, enjoyment, and motivation played an essential role in shaping students' positive perceptions toward the use of digital reading books in reading comprehension activities.

In contrast to the findings of Fitriyani (2022) showed that students' interest in reading had declined and was categorized as low. This decline was caused by several factors, including students' lack of willingness to read, the influence of gadget use, the unappealing nature of text types or reading materials, and students' limited leisure time. However, the findings of this study indicate that the use of digital reading books has a positive impact on students' reading interest. This improvement is attributed to the more diverse and engaging presentation of materials, as well as the ease of access, which eliminates time constraints since digital reading books can be used anytime and anywhere in accordance with students' needs and characteristics. Therefore, digital reading books not only function as alternative learning resources but also effectively enhance students' interest and active engagement in reading activities.

Overall, the results of this study show that the use of digital reading books had a positive influence on students' learning experiences. Students demonstrated improved engagement and expressed favorable attitudes toward the digital format, supported by a high mean score and consistent responses in the questionnaire. Features such as accessibility, flexibility, and interactive content contributed to increased motivation and comfort in reading. Therefore, digital reading books can be considered an effective learning resource that supports both reading comprehension and students' interest in reading activities.

CONCLUSIONS

The use of digital reading books improving students' reading comprehension at SMP Handayani Gowata

The use of digital reading books is able to improve the reading comprehension skills of students in class X.1 at SMP Handayani Gowata. This improvement is reflected in the increase in the mean score from 42.74 in the pre-test, which was categorized as fair, to 66.45 in the post-test, which fell into the good category. These results indicate a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension through the use of digital reading books. Therefore, this medium can be considered effective and appropriate as an engaging instructional tool to enhance reading comprehension in English learning.

The level of students' interest in using digital reading books

The level of students' interest in using digital reading books can be categorized as high. This is indicated by the descriptive classification results showing that the majority of students, amounting to 72.42%, were classified as interested, which suggests that students generally hold a positive attitude toward the use of digital reading books in the learning process. These findings indicate that digital reading books are able to attract students' attention and encourage their active involvement in reading activities. In addition, the relatively small data dispersion value shows that students' responses tend to be consistent, indicating that most students experienced similar benefits from the use of this medium. Therefore, it can be concluded that digital reading books are effective not only in increasing students' interest in reading but also in positively contributing to their engagement and learning motivation during the instructional process.

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