

## THE ROLE OF WATTPAD AS A SUPPORTING PLATFORM FOR ENCHANCHING EFL STUDENT READING SKILL

Muhammad Haekal Muzakky<sup>1</sup>, Eska Perdana<sup>2</sup>, M. Sahril<sup>3</sup>

English Education Study Program  
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education  
Universitas Ibn Khaldun, Bogor

[Mhmdhaekal0@gmail.com](mailto:Mhmdhaekal0@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [eska@uika-bogor.ac.id](mailto:eska@uika-bogor.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>, [msahril@uika-bogor.ac.id](mailto:msahril@uika-bogor.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>

### ABSTRAK

Membaca merupakan keterampilan dasar dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL), namun banyak mahasiswa EFL masih mengalami rendahnya motivasi membaca, keterlibatan yang terbatas, serta kurangnya paparan terhadap teks berbahasa Inggris. Dalam beberapa tahun terakhir, platform membaca digital, termasuk Wattpad, semakin banyak digunakan sebagai sumber pendukung pembelajaran membaca. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mensintesis kajian pustaka terbaru mengenai penggunaan Wattpad sebagai platform pendukung dalam pengembangan keterampilan membaca mahasiswa EFL. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain *narrative thematic literature review* dengan menganalisis lima belas artikel jurnal bereputasi yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2021 hingga 2024. Artikel-artikel tersebut dianalisis secara tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola, persamaan, dan perbedaan temuan terkait motivasi membaca, keterlibatan pembaca, frekuensi membaca, pengembangan kosakata, serta tantangan pedagogis. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa Wattpad berpotensi meningkatkan keterampilan membaca mahasiswa EFL apabila diintegrasikan dengan bimbingan pedagogis yang terstruktur. Oleh karena itu, Wattpad dapat berfungsi secara efektif sebagai platform membaca digital pendukung dalam konteks pendidikan tinggi EFL.

**Kata kunci:** Wattpad; keterampilan membaca EFL; platform membaca digital; motivasi membaca; narrative thematic literature review

### ABSTRACT

*Reading is a fundamental skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning; however, many EFL university students still experience low reading motivation, limited engagement, and insufficient exposure to English texts. Recently, digital reading platforms have gained attention as alternative resources to support reading development, including Wattpad. This study aims to synthesize recent literature on the use of Wattpad as a supporting platform for developing EFL students' reading skills. This study employed a narrative thematic literature review by analyzing fifteen peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2021 and 2024. The selected studies were thematically analyzed to identify patterns, similarities, and differences related to the use of Wattpad in EFL reading contexts, focusing on reading motivation, reader engagement, reading frequency, vocabulary development, and pedagogical challenges. The findings indicate that Wattpad has the potential to enhance students' motivation, engagement, and exposure to authentic texts when integrated with structured pedagogical guidance. However, without clear instructional objectives and supervision, its effectiveness may be limited. This review concludes that Wattpad can function effectively as a supplementary digital reading platform in EFL higher education.*

**Keyword:** Wattpad; EFL reading skills; digital reading platform; reading motivation; narrative thematic literature review

### INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the core skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it functions as a primary source of linguistic input for learners, particularly in higher education contexts where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited. However, recent studies

indicate that EFL university students continue to face challenges in developing their reading skills, especially low reading motivation, limited engagement with English texts, and restricted access to reading materials that match their interests and proficiency levels (Aini et al., 2021; Permatasari et al., 2021; Zulfikar & Putri,

2021). These issues directly affect students' reading frequency and vocabulary development.

Over the past five years, rapid advancements in digital technology have significantly transformed reading practices in language learning. Recent literature suggests that digital reading platforms enhance flexibility, learner autonomy, and reading motivation by providing more varied and easily accessible texts (Fitriani & Sunarti, 2023; Zamzami & Hidayat, 2022). Within the framework of extensive reading, digital media have also been reported to promote voluntary and sustained reading habits, which contribute to improved reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners (Djandjuri et al., 2022).

One digital reading platform that has experienced increased use in EFL contexts is Wattpad. Wattpad offers millions of English stories across diverse genres and incorporates interactive features that allow readers to engage through comments and online discussions. Recent studies demonstrate that Wattpad has the potential to enhance EFL students' reading motivation, reader engagement, and text comprehension by providing a more authentic and enjoyable reading experience (Andriani et al., 2023; Wahyuni et al., 2024; Anggitasari et al., 2023). Furthermore, exposure to authentic texts on Wattpad supports incidental vocabulary development within extensive reading activities (Paringja & Fatriana, 2024).

Despite these reported benefits, the existing literature reveals several research gaps. Most previous studies have focused on small-scale empirical investigations that examine students' perceptions or isolated learning outcomes, such as motivation or reading comprehension, without offering a comprehensive synthesis of Wattpad's role as a supporting platform for EFL reading skills. In addition, some studies highlight challenges associated with Wattpad use, including distraction, inconsistent text quality, and limited pedagogical control, which have not been systematically discussed within a unified literature framework (Permatasari et al., 2021; Samosir et al., 2024).

In response to these gaps, this narrative thematic literature review aims to critically synthesize recent studies on the use of Wattpad in developing EFL students' reading skills. This review is expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits by offering a more comprehensive understanding of the potential, limitations, and pedagogical implications of integrating Wattpad as a supporting reading platform in EFL contexts.

Drawing on the focus of the author's undergraduate thesis, this literature review is grounded in the hypothesis that the use of Wattpad as a supporting platform for reading instruction contributes positively to the development of EFL students' reading skills—particularly reading motivation, reader engagement, reading frequency, and vocabulary acquisition—when it is integrated with structured pedagogical guidance. Accordingly, this review seeks to bridge the identified research gaps and to offer a meaningful contribution to the existing body of literature on digital reading practices in EFL higher education.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a narrative thematic literature review design to synthesize and critically examine existing research on the use of Wattpad as a supporting platform for developing EFL students' reading skills. This design was selected because it enables an in-depth interpretation of previous studies by identifying recurring patterns, themes, similarities, and differences across findings rather than focusing on causal measurement. The data sources consisted of fifteen peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2021 and 2024, retrieved from reputable academic databases such as Google Scholar and ERIC. The search process used keywords including "Wattpad," "EFL reading skills," "digital reading platform," "extensive reading," and "student perceptions." Only full-text articles written in English or Indonesian were included in this review.

The article selection followed specific inclusion criteria: the studies involved EFL

learners at secondary or tertiary levels, focused on reading skills or related aspects such as motivation, engagement, reading frequency, or vocabulary development, and examined the use of Wattpad or similar digital reading platforms in an EFL context. The data were analyzed through a thematic synthesis procedure, beginning with a thorough reading of each article to identify key findings, followed by grouping studies into major themes, namely reading motivation, reader engagement and interaction, reading frequency and vocabulary development, and challenges in using Wattpad for EFL reading. Similarities and differences across studies were then compared and interpreted to clarify Wattpad's role as a supporting platform for EFL reading development. Finally, the synthesized findings were critically discussed to identify research gaps—particularly the limited focus on college students—and to highlight pedagogical implications relevant to EFL reading instruction.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Wattpad and Reading Motivation

A dominant theme emerging from the reviewed studies is the role of Wattpad in enhancing EFL students' reading motivation. Several studies report that the availability of diverse genres and student-selected reading materials on Wattpad encourages learners to read voluntarily and more frequently (Aini et al., 2021; Andaresa et al., 2024; Paringja & Fatriana, 2024). These findings suggest that Wattpad aligns well with the principles of extensive reading, where learner autonomy and interest play a crucial role in sustaining motivation. Similarly, Zulfikar and Putri (2021) argue that digital storytelling platforms foster intrinsic motivation by creating enjoyable and low-anxiety reading environments.

However, not all studies report uniformly positive outcomes. Permatasari et al. (2021) found that students' motivation tended to decline when they were not guided in selecting appropriate texts or setting clear reading goals. This difference indicates that while Wattpad has strong motivational potential, its

effectiveness largely depends on pedagogical guidance. Overall, the reviewed studies demonstrate that Wattpad can enhance reading motivation, but the impact is conditional rather than automatic.

### Reader Engagement and Interactive Features

Another recurring theme concerns reader engagement facilitated by Wattpad's interactive features. Research shows that comment sections and online discussions allow students to share interpretations, respond to peers, and reflect on story content, thereby increasing engagement during reading activities (Anggitasari et al., 2023; Nurfaizah, 2024). Samosir et al. (2024) further highlight that peer interaction on Wattpad helps students develop confidence and persistence in reading English texts.

Despite these benefits, some studies emphasize potential drawbacks. Wahyuni et al. (2024) report that excessive focus on comments and social interaction may distract learners from deep comprehension if instructional boundaries are not clearly defined. This contrast among findings indicates that Wattpad's interactive features can either support or hinder engagement depending on how they are managed. Therefore, engagement through Wattpad should be structured to support reading objectives rather than purely social interaction.

### Reading Frequency and Vocabulary Development

Several studies link the use of Wattpad to increased reading frequency and vocabulary development among EFL learners. Regular exposure to authentic texts through Wattpad encourages students to read more frequently, which in turn supports incidental vocabulary acquisition (Fitriani & Sunarti, 2023; Zamzami & Hidayat, 2022). Andriani et al. (2023) and Asir et al. (2024) report improvements in reading comprehension when Wattpad is integrated into classroom or independent reading activities.

Nevertheless, the degree of improvement varies across studies. Djamdjuri et al. (2022) note that vocabulary and comprehension gains are more evident when students receive explicit reading strategies and follow-up activities. This variation suggests that Wattpad alone does not guarantee language development; rather, its effectiveness is enhanced when combined with instructional support. These findings reinforce the view of Wattpad as a supporting platform rather than a standalone instructional tool.

### Challenges and Pedagogical Implications

In addition to its benefits, the reviewed literature identifies several challenges associated with the use of Wattpad in EFL reading contexts. Common issues include distraction, inconsistent text quality, and limited academic control over reading materials (Permatasari et al., 2021; Samosir et al., 2024). These challenges explain why some studies report mixed or limited learning outcomes.

Despite these limitations, recent studies emphasize that the challenges can be addressed through appropriate pedagogical strategies. Nurfaizah and Hakim (2024) suggest that teachers play a crucial role in curating reading materials, setting clear objectives, and guiding reflective reading activities. When integrated with structured guidance, Wattpad can function effectively as a supplementary platform that supports motivation, engagement, and reading development. Collectively, the findings discussed in this section directly respond to the issues outlined in the Introduction and support the hypothesis that Wattpad contributes positively to EFL students' reading skills when pedagogically guided.

### CONCLUSION

This narrative thematic literature review concludes that Wattpad has significant potential as a supporting platform for developing EFL students' reading skills when integrated with appropriate pedagogical guidance. The synthesis of studies published between 2021 and 2024 indicates that Wattpad contributes positively to key aspects of reading development, including reading motivation,

reader engagement, reading frequency, and vocabulary acquisition. Its flexible access, wide range of genres, and interactive features encourage learners to engage more actively and voluntarily with English texts, making reading a more meaningful and sustained activity for EFL learners.

Nevertheless, the findings also demonstrate that the effectiveness of Wattpad is not automatic. Several studies reveal that without structured guidance, clear learning objectives, and adequate teacher supervision, the platform may lead to distraction, superficial reading practices, or inconsistent learning outcomes. These variations explain why some studies report conditional or mixed results rather than uniformly positive effects. Overall, this review supports the view that Wattpad is most effective when used as a supplementary tool rather than a standalone instructional medium. By synthesizing existing research, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of digital reading practices in EFL higher education and highlights the need for future research employing systematic instructional models and longitudinal designs to examine the long-term impact of digital reading platforms on EFL reading development.

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