

READABLE APPLICATION IN ENHANCING JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' READING SKILLS: A NARRATIVE THEMATIC LITERATURE

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji peran readable applications dalam pengembangan keterampilan membaca siswa sekolah menengah pertama pada konteks English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode narrative thematic literature review dengan menganalisis artikel jurnal dan sumber akademik yang relevan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa aplikasi readable berkontribusi dalam meningkatkan pemahaman membaca, penguasaan kosakata, dan motivasi membaca siswa melalui penyediaan teks bertingkat, dukungan kosakata, dan fitur interaktif. Simpulan penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa aplikasi readable dapat menjadi solusi alternatif dalam mengatasi tantangan pembelajaran membaca. Implikasinya, guru bahasa Inggris disarankan untuk mengintegrasikan readable applications dalam pembelajaran membaca berbasis teknologi.

Kata kunci: reading skills, readable applications, EFL learning

ABSTRACT

This article examines the role of readable application in developing junior high school students' reading skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. A narrative thematic literature review was employed by analyzing relevant journal articles and academic sources. The findings indicate that readable application enhance reading comprehension, vocabulary mastery, and students' reading motivation through leveled texts, vocabulary support, and interactive features. This review concludes that readable applications can serve as an alternative solution to challenges in EFL reading instruction. The implications suggest that English teachers integrate readable applications into technology-assisted reading instruction.

Keyword: reading skills, readable application, EFL learning

INTRODUCTION

Reading Skills in EFL Contexts

Reading skills play a crucial role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, particularly at the junior high school level where students begin to encounter more complex academic texts. Reading is not merely the ability to decode written symbols, but a fundamental process that involves understanding meaning and interpreting written text, which supports students' academic success across disciplines (Marpaung & Sihombing, 2021). However, many EFL learners still experience difficulties in reading comprehension and vocabulary development, which often hinder their overall language learning progress.

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed educational practices worldwide and has created new opportunities to

enhance student learning (Mdhlalose & Mlambo, 2023). In the context of English language teaching, especially reading instruction, technology integration has become increasingly important in addressing persistent challenges faced by junior high school students. Reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition remain major obstacles that can affect students' academic performance in various subjects (Nailon et al., 2023). As a result, exploring innovative technological solutions in reading instruction has become a relevant area of research.

Readable Application in EFL Learning

Digital reading applications, particularly readable app, have emerged as a promising technological intervention to support students' reading development. These application are designed to

provide more accessible and engaging reading experiences by incorporating features such as adjustable difficulty levels, text-to-speech functions, embedded dictionaries, and personalized reading recommendations. The use of such technology-enhanced learning tools aligns with contemporary educational approaches that emphasize individualized, interactive, and multimodal learning environments (Islam Sarker et al., 2019). Studies focusing on students' perceptions toward digital learning tools commonly employ qualitative approaches to capture learners' experiences and perspectives in depth (Djamdjuri, 2021).

Junior high school represents a critical transitional stage in which students are required to engage with increasingly complex academic texts. At this level, the development of effective reading skills is essential for academic success (Nailon et al., 2023). However, traditional reading instruction methods may not fully address the diverse learning needs and preferences of students who are accustomed to digital environments. This gap between conventional pedagogical approaches and students' expectations highlights the potential role of digital reading tools in bridging instructional challenges.

Despite the growing interest in digital reading applications, there are still unresolved questions regarding the specific impact of readable app on junior high school students' reading development. Previous studies have largely focused on senior high school students or broader language learning contexts, leaving limited evidence that specifically addresses the needs of junior high school learners (Mhlongo et al., 2023). Furthermore, although earlier research has demonstrated the general effectiveness of digital reading tools, less attention has been paid to the processes through which readable apps enhance reading comprehension and vocabulary development among younger learners.

In addition, the Indonesian educational context presents unique challenges related to technological infrastructure, teacher readiness, and curriculum alignment, which may differ from contexts examined in previous studies (Alqahtani, 2020). These contextual factors suggest that findings from other settings may not be directly applicable to Indonesian junior high schools. Therefore, a more focused synthesis of existing studies is needed to

understand how readable applications can be effectively utilized in this specific context.

Based on these considerations, this article employs a narrative thematic literature review to synthesize previous studies on reading skills, digital reading, and the use of readable applications in EFL learning. The review aims to organize relevant literature into key themes in order to identify common findings, differences, and research gaps. By focusing on junior high school students within the EFL context, this review seeks to provide insights into the potential role of readable apps in enhancing reading skills and to offer directions for future research and instructional practices.

METHOD

Research Method and Data Analysis

This article employs a narrative thematic literature review (Baumeister & Leary, 1997) as the research method to examine the role of readable application in enhancing junior high school students' reading skills in EFL contexts. A narrative literature review allows researchers to synthesize existing studies and present an integrated understanding of a research topic through critical interpretation rather than statistical aggregation. The reviewed literature consists of 11 research articles published between 2019 and 2024, which were selected to ensure the relevance and currency of the discussion. This time limitation was applied to capture recent developments in digital reading applications and EFL reading instruction. This approach is particularly suitable for exploring educational phenomena and theoretical developments in language learning contexts.

The data sources for this review consist of journal articles and academic books that focus on reading skills, digital reading, and the use of technology in EFL instruction. The selected literature includes studies discussing reading comprehension, vocabulary development, reading motivation, and mobile or digital applications used to support reading instruction. Academic sources were prioritized to ensure the credibility and relevance of the reviewed studies, as recommended in qualitative and literature-based educational research (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The literature selection process involved identifying studies that were relevant to EFL reading instruction and digital learning

environments. Articles were included if they addressed reading skills development or the use of digital tools in educational contexts, particularly at the secondary school level. Studies that did not focus on reading or were conducted outside formal educational settings were excluded to maintain thematic coherence and relevance of the review, in line with established qualitative research practices (Arifin et al., 2020).

The analysis was conducted using a thematic approach, in which the selected studies were carefully read and grouped into major themes related to the research focus. These themes include reading skills in EFL learning, digital reading and technology integration, characteristics of readable applications, and the impact of readable apps on students' reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and motivation. Thematic analysis enables researchers to identify patterns and relationships across studies and to provide meaningful interpretations of existing findings (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The analysis of problem-solving in this review is presented through an objective synthesis of how readable applications are discussed in previous studies as a potential solution to challenges in EFL reading instruction. Rather than evaluating a single instructional intervention, this article integrates evidence from multiple studies to explain how readable apps may support reading development among junior high school students. This narrative synthesis approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of both the potential benefits and limitations of readable application in educational contexts (Nassaji, 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

EFL Reading Development

The reviewed studies indicate that reading skills in EFL learning are shaped by a complex interaction between cognitive processes, instructional strategies, and learning environments. Reading is not a passive activity but an active process that requires learners to construct meaning by integrating textual information with prior knowledge. Research on reading instruction emphasizes that effective reading development depends on learners' ability to apply appropriate strategies and engage meaningfully with texts, particularly in secondary school contexts where text complexity increases (Anderson, 2019).

In relation to digital reading environments, previous literature highlights that technology integration has changed how students interact with texts. Digital reading provides learners with flexible access to materials and supports comprehension through interactive features. Studies on digital reading suggest that multimodal input, such as the combination of text, audio, and visual elements, can enhance students' understanding and reduce cognitive load, especially for EFL learners who face linguistic challenges (Liu & Zhang, 2021).

Readable Applications as a Solution in EFL Reading

The findings of this review are consistent with previous research indicating that students tend to have positive perceptions toward the use of digital applications in language learning, particularly in enhancing vocabulary mastery and learning motivation (Djamdjuri et al., 2023). Readable application emerge in the literature as a specific form of digital reading tools designed to support reading development through adaptive and learner-centered features. These applications typically offer level-based texts, instant vocabulary support, and audio assistance, allowing learners to read at an appropriate level while maintaining comprehension. Research on digital assessment and reading tools indicates that such features help learners focus on meaning rather than decoding difficulties, which is particularly beneficial for junior high school students in EFL contexts (Khalifa & Weir, 2022).

Several empirical studies reviewed in this article report positive impacts of readable application on students' reading comprehension. For example, studies conducted in secondary school settings show that students who use readable apps demonstrate improved understanding of main ideas, supporting details, and text structure. These improvements are attributed to consistent exposure to comprehensible texts and immediate support provided by application features, which facilitate deeper engagement with reading materials (Yanuar et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

This article concludes that readable application has strong potential to support the development of

reading skills among junior high school EFL learners. Based on the thematic analysis of previous studies, readable apps contribute to improving reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and students' engagement with English texts. By providing level-appropriate materials, vocabulary assistance, and interactive features, readable applications help address common challenges faced by EFL learners, particularly difficulties in understanding texts and maintaining reading motivation.

The findings of this review suggest that readable applications function not only as supplementary learning tools but also as effective solutions to limitations found in traditional reading instruction. Their flexible and learner-centered design allows students to engage with texts more independently and confidently. As an implication, English teachers are encouraged to integrate readable applications into reading instruction as part of blended or technology-assisted learning to create more meaningful and motivating reading experiences.

Future research is recommended to explore the implementation of readable application in diverse classroom settings and to examine how teachers' instructional strategies interact with digital reading tools. Further studies may also investigate long-term effects of readable app use on reading proficiency and learners' autonomy. Such research will contribute to a deeper understanding of how digital reading applications can be optimally utilized in EFL education.

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