

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the study's background, research questions, research purpose, hypotheses, significance, scope, conceptual framework, and previous studies.

A. Research Background

Reading is one of the most essential skills for students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Through reading, learners can develop their vocabulary, understand language structures, and gain knowledge from written texts. As stated by Setiorini et al. (2022), reading is a receptive language skill that enables learners to comprehend and interpret written texts. In EFL contexts, reading also plays an important role in supporting students' academic success by helping them access information and understand various types of English texts used in educational settings.

In the digital era, the sources of reading materials available to students have developed significantly, shifting from traditional printed media to complex, multiple-source digital texts. According to OECD (2021), this development has transformed the nature of reading, as students are now required to navigate technology-rich environments that demand higher-level strategies for constructing and validating knowledge. This evolution underscores the importance of understanding how engagement with digital resources correlates with students' overall reading comprehension achievement. Students are no longer limited to printed books, as they can now access a wide range of digital resources, including online articles, academic websites, e-books, and social media content. As defined by Nurfaizah et al. (2024), while books were once considered the primary source of knowledge, technological development has introduced electronic books and digital materials that can be accessed anytime and anywhere. These digital resources provide learners with easier access to

information and offer more opportunities to read English texts outside the classroom.

However, the shift from printed materials to digital texts also brings new challenges. Unlike printed texts, which generally encourage linear, focused reading, digital texts often enable readers to scan, browse, and quickly navigate between sources, although these features may vary depending on the format. According to Bresó-Grancha et al. (2022), this digital reading behavior often results in shallow or superficial reading patterns, a habit where we only process information on the surface rather than understanding it deeply. This is due to the nature of digital media, which tends to trigger divided attention and less kinesthetic feedback than print media. As stated by Delgado & Salmerón (2021), on-screen reading is often associated with increased mind-wandering and reduced on-task attention, especially under time pressure. As a result, readers fail to adapt their attention to task demands, leading to more superficial processing and lower reading comprehension.

Reading interest is a fundamental factor influencing students' digital reading behavior, characterized by the enjoyment, curiosity, and personal drive that encourage learners to engage with reading activities. As defined by Pambudiyatno et al. (2021), reading interest serves as the pleasure and personal drive that prompts students to interact with various reading materials, leading those with high interest to read more frequently and engage more actively with texts. Hidi & Renninger (2006), emphasize that interest is a powerful factor shaping how students navigate lengthy, complex texts; without it, reading often becomes a monotonous task rather than a genuine learning opportunity. Consequently, when students lack reading interest, they are less likely to establish consistent reading habits, making it a crucial factor in the learning process and a vital component in developing their ability to comprehend English texts.

Reading is not only the act of looking at written words; it also includes understanding the meaning of the text. Therefore, reading

comprehension becomes the central aspect of the reading process. As stated by Klingner et al. (2007), reading comprehension is the process of building meaning by integrating several complex processes, including recognizing words, using vocabulary and background knowledge, and reading fluently. In language learning, comprehension is an important indicator of students' reading achievement. Students who are actively engaged in reading generally demonstrate better comprehension. Pratama et al. (2022), also emphasize that students with greater reading interest tend to achieve better reading comprehension. Therefore, reading interest and reading comprehension are closely related factors that influence students' success in learning English.

There are some studies related to this present research. First, Pratama et al. (2022), conducted a correlational study among junior school students in North Lampung and found that students with higher reading interest scored higher on reading comprehension tests. Second, Park & Lee (2021), examined elementary EFL learners in South Korea and found that students using e-books showed greater improvement in literal (surface-level) comprehension, while those reading printed books performed better in inferential (deep) comprehension and grammatical knowledge. This suggests that digital reading may support shallow understanding, whereas printed texts are more effective for deeper comprehension. Third, Wilda & Ilma (2020), found a moderate, significant correlation between reading interest and reading comprehension among university-level English as a Foreign Language students. The regression analysis indicated that differences in students' comprehension scores were influenced by their reading interests. Four Anggia & Habók (2025), change the direction of digital reading. They analyzed the relationships among online reading level, motivation, and English reading comprehension. Using structural equation modeling, they found that intrinsic motivation, closely associated with reading interest, significantly influenced students' digital reading behavior, which, in turn, affected their reading comprehension. Although previous

studies have shown that reading interest is related to reading comprehension, many focus primarily on general reading interest. In addition, despite the increasing use of digital texts among EFL students, frequent exposure to digital reading materials does not always guarantee strong comprehension of English texts.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the correlation between EFL students' interest in reading digital texts and their reading comprehension achievement. By focusing specifically on students' interest in digital reading, this research seeks to contribute to the existing literature and to provide a clearer understanding of how this interest relates to students' reading comprehension in the current digital learning environment.

B. Research Questions

Based on the research background, the research questions of this study are formulated as follows:

1. What is EFL students' interest in reading digital texts?
2. What is EFL students' reading comprehension achievement?
3. Is there any correlation between EFL students' interest in reading digital texts and their achievement in reading comprehension?

C. Research Purposes

Based on the research questions, the purpose of this study is formulated as follows:

1. To find out EFL students' interest in reading digital texts.
2. To find out EFL students' reading achievement in reading comprehension.
3. To find out the correlation between EFL students' interest in digital text and their reading comprehension achievement.

D. Research Significances

It is expected that the study to provide both theoretical and practical contributions:

1. Theoretically, this study provides information about the correlation between the interest of students in digital reading and their comprehension of the texts. It explores how students' interest in reading digital texts affects their comprehension skills in academic settings. Moreover, the findings of this research should complement the current body of knowledge on digital reading as a source of information, a reference point, or a basis for comparison in future research on digital literacy and reading comprehension in EFL classrooms.
2. Practically, this study is expected to be helpful for both teachers and students. For teachers, the findings may help them design practical reading activities that integrate digital texts to increase students' motivation and comprehension. It can also help teachers develop strategies to guide students in reading online materials critically and effectively. For students, this study may encourage them to improve their reading comprehension by increasing their interest in and engagement with digital reading materials.

E. Research Scope

The study is limited to examining the correlation between students' interest in reading digital texts and their reading comprehension achievement. The respondents are fourth-semester students in the English Education Department at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung who have completed several reading courses, including Intensive Reading, Interpretive Reading, Critical Academic Reading, and Extensive Reading. These students are deemed appropriate respondents because they have

already met the requirements of the required reading course.

Two instruments were used to collect data: a questionnaire to assess students' interest in reading digital texts and a test to determine their reading comprehension. Other factors, such as vocabulary knowledge, grammar skills, reading techniques, or the learning environment, are not considered in this research and may influence reading comprehension. Consequently, the research findings apply only to the group and setting investigated, not to other groups or settings.

F. Conceptual Framework

This study aims to examine the relationship between students' interest in reading digital texts and their reading comprehension achievement. Student interest in reading digital texts and reading comprehension constitutes the theoretical framework of the study.

In the learning process, students' interest plays a crucial role in encouraging engagement with reading activities. Interest can serve as an internal motivator, driving students to read actively and continuously. When students develop an interest in reading, they are more likely to spend time exploring texts and understanding the content deeply. As explained by Lestari et al. (2024), interest serves as a driving force that keeps learners engaged and attentive, enabling them to enjoy reading and pursue it independently.

From a theoretical perspective, students' interest in reading can be explained through Self-Determination Theory (SDT). According to Ryan & Deci (2000), SDT states that individuals tend to develop intrinsic motivation when three basic psychological needs are fulfilled: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When learners feel autonomous in choosing reading materials, competent in understanding texts, and connected to meaningful learning contexts, their intrinsic motivation to read increases. Consequently, this intrinsic motivation can lead to greater engagement and better learning outcomes, including reading comprehension.

Reading itself is widely recognized as a process of constructing meaning from written texts. Cline et al. (2006), describe reading as a meaning-making process that involves not only decoding words but also interpreting the ideas conveyed in the text. Similarly, Kirby (2007), cited in Cueva et al. (2022), it emphasizes that reading comprehension is a complex cognitive activity that requires readers to integrate prior knowledge, vocabulary, and an understanding of text structures to interpret written information effectively. According to Balantekin (2025), reading and comprehension are essential not only for students' academic achievement but also as lifelong skills they will continue to rely on. Furthermore, strong reading and comprehension abilities are vital for social success, making the development of these skills a key responsibility of education.

Because reading comprehension requires active cognitive engagement, students' interest in reading becomes an important factor in their ability to understand texts. Reading interest refers to an individual's willingness and motivation to engage in reading activities voluntarily. Purnama et al. (2023), explains that reading interest occurs when students allocate time to read even outside formal learning environments such as classrooms or schools. Students with a strong interest in reading tend to read more frequently and engage more deeply with the material, which may contribute to better comprehension.

In recent years, reading practices have increasingly shifted toward digital environments. As stated by Liu (2005), cited in Nariratri et al. (2024), digital texts are accessed on devices such as smartphones, tablets, computers, and other digital platforms. Unlike printed texts, digital texts may offer interactive and multimedia features, although not all digital texts necessarily include these elements. These features can create a more engaging and dynamic reading experience for students.

Furthermore, as provided by M et al. (2024), digital reading environments may enhance students' interest and engagement in reading activities. The integration of multimedia and interactive features can help

learners maintain attention and understand information more effectively. As a result, students who show greater interest in reading digital texts may be more actively engaged in reading activities, thereby positively influencing their reading comprehension.

Students' interest in reading digital texts is measured with a questionnaire comprising four indicators: pleasure, willingness, awareness, and attention. These indicators are derived from the theory of interest development proposed by Hidi & Renninger (2006), which conceptualizes interest as a multidimensional construct involving affective, cognitive, and motivational components. In addition, this study is supported by Fitria (2019), who emphasizes that reading interest can be reflected through students' enjoyment, willingness, awareness, and engagement in reading activities. Therefore, pleasure represents the affective aspect, willingness reflects motivation, while consciousness and attention indicate cognitive awareness and engagement in reading.

The reading comprehension test in this study is from TOEFL reading materials as presented in Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL Test by Phillips (2001). This test measures several essential reading skills, including identifying main ideas, understanding explicit and implicit information, recognizing references, and interpreting vocabulary in context. According to Alderson (2000), reading assessment should evaluate learners' ability to identify main ideas, understand detailed information, make inferences, and interpret vocabulary in context. Therefore, TOEFL-based reading tests are appropriate, as they assess key components of reading comprehension in a structured, standardized manner.

Based on these perspectives, this study investigates whether there is a correlation between students' interest in reading digital texts and their reading comprehension achievement. In this research, two variables are examined: the variable (X), students' interest in reading digital texts, and the variable (Y), students' reading comprehension achievement.

The conceptual framework of this research is illustrated in the diagram below.

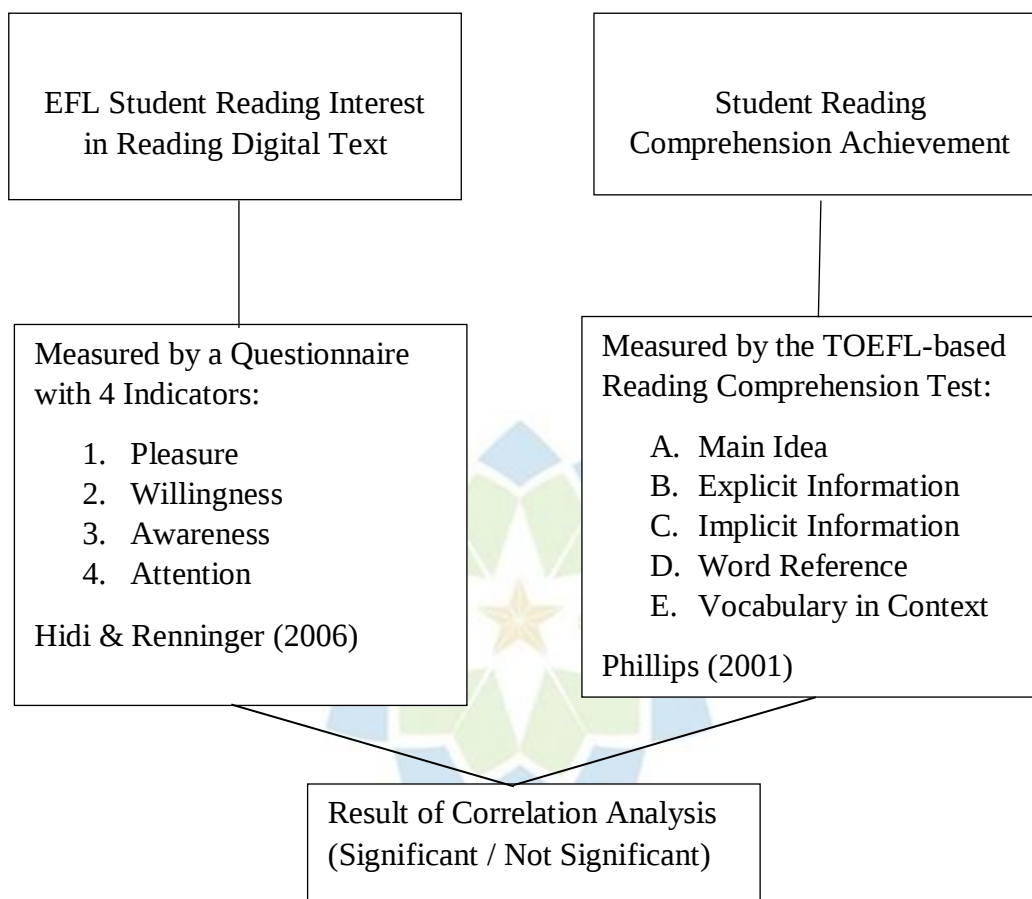


Figure 1. 1 The Framework Thoughts Schematic

The figure illustrates the correlation between students' interest in reading digital texts and reading comprehension. Reading interest functions as an internal drive that encourages students to be more active, focused, and engaged in reading activities, leading them to interact with texts more frequently. Meanwhile, reading comprehension is understood as the process of constructing and interpreting meaning from texts, which, in this study, is measured by assessing aspects such as identifying main ideas, understanding explicit and implicit information, recognizing references, and interpreting vocabulary in context. Therefore, the framework suggests that the higher students' interest in reading digital texts, the greater their potential to achieve better reading comprehension.

G. Hypothesis

The hypotheses of this research are formulated as follows:

1. H_0 : There is no statistically significant correlation between students' interest in reading digital texts and their reading comprehension achievement.
2. H_a : There is a statistically significant correlation between students' interest in reading digital texts and their reading comprehension achievement.

H. Previous Study

Several previous studies have examined the correlation between reading interest and reading comprehension:

In a previous study, Pratama et al. (2022), conducted a quantitative correlational study at MTsN 1 Lampung Utara to examine the relationship between students' interest in reading and their interest in comprehension. The sample comprised 191 9th-grade students, of whom 29 were selected using proportional random sampling. The study employed a correlational research design, and data were collected using a reading-interest questionnaire and a multiple-choice reading-comprehension test. The data were analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation. The hypothesis was that there was a significant relationship between interest in reading and reading comprehension. The results exceeded the t-table value (2.045), indicating a significant positive correlation and thus supporting the proposed hypothesis.

Similarly, Park & Lee (2021) conducted a quantitative experimental study in South Korea with 97 elementary EFL students to compare the effects of tablet-based e-books and printed books on reading comprehension and grammatical knowledge. The participants were divided into three groups: a tablet-based extensive reading group, a print-based reading group, and a control group. The data were collected through reading

comprehension tests and grammar assessments over 11 weeks. The findings revealed that students who used tablets showed greater improvement in literal (surface-level) reading comprehension, while those who read printed books performed better in inferential (deep-level) comprehension and grammatical knowledge. This suggests that while digital reading supports basic understanding, printed texts may be more effective for deeper comprehension.

Furthermore, Wilda & Ilma (2020), conducted a correlational study with 54 undergraduate EFL students from the English Education Study Program at Tridianti University, Palembang, to examine the relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension. An overall sampling method was employed, and the measurement tools were a multiple-choice reading test, a 50-item reading test, and a 20-item reading interest scale. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and regression analysis were used to analyze the data. These findings indicate a positive correlation between reading interest and reading comprehension ($r = 0.477$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting a moderate relationship. Furthermore, reading interest accounted for 18.6% of the variance in students' reading comprehension performance ($R^2 = 0.186$). These findings imply that students with higher reading interest tend to achieve better reading comprehension.

At the undergraduate level, Alfatihah & Tyas (2022), conducted a quantitative correlational study at Universitas Brawijaya in Malang. The research involved 41 fourth-semester EFL students selected through simple random sampling. Instruments included a reading interest questionnaire (28 items; 26 valid) and a reading comprehension test (35 questions; 25 valid). The analysis employed Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient. The hypothesis stated that reading interest is significantly correlated with comprehension. The result showed a weak but significant positive correlation ($r = 0.356$, $\text{sig.} = 0.022$), which supported the hypothesis.

In another study, Anggia & Habók (2025) examined the effects of intensive online reading on English-language reading comprehension

among university students and the correlations among self-efficacy, motivation, and reading behavior. The researchers used online reading platforms to compare two groups with a traditional offline reading group on their use of TOEFL reading tests and questionnaires. The study revealed that online groups outperformed the control group, demonstrating that extensive online reading can enhance reading comprehension. It was also found that self-efficacy strongly influenced students' intrinsic motivation and reading behavior. Nevertheless, neither motivation nor reading behavior showed a direct relationship with reading comprehension, and these affective variables seem to enhance reading habits but do not guarantee higher scores. In general, the research paper emphasizes the efficacy of extensive online reading, and intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy have facilitative yet indirect effects on students' reading performance.

These previous studies reveal several important gaps. First, most previous studies focus on general reading interest without specifically addressing reading interest in digital contexts, despite the increasing dominance of digital texts in students' daily learning. Second, studies on digital reading tend to emphasize reading outcomes or media effects rather than examine how students' interest in digital reading relates to their comprehension.

Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by investigating the correlation between students' interest in reading digital texts and their reading comprehension achievement. This research is expected to provide a more precise understanding of how interest in digital reading contributes to comprehension in the current learning context.