

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the study and introduces the main aspects of the research. It covers the background of the study, research question, research objectives, significance of the study, scope of the study, conceptual framework, and previous studies. These parts provide the basic foundation of the research and help explain the direction and purpose of the study.

A. Research Background

In an era where students are highly connected to digital media, their ability to understand written texts often does not keep pace with their exposure to technology. Surrounded by visual and instant content, many learners find reading tasks less engaging and struggle to build the deeper comprehension skills needed for academic success. As Anderson (2003) explained, because reading is an active process of meaning-making, students who read well usually perform better in other language acquisition domains.

However, many Indonesian learners still struggle with reading comprehension. According to the PISA 2022 report, Indonesia's reading literacy score was 359, much lower than the OECD average of 476 and down from 371 in 2018 (OECD, 2023). Indonesia was placed 62nd out of 111 nations in the EF English Proficiency Index (2023), indicating that many students still struggle with reading. Local research confirms this issue as well. A study conducted at SMP NW Mataram found that over half of the students had poor reading comprehension, with an average score of only 4.74 (Masyudi, 2023). These findings suggest that many Indonesian junior high school students still struggle to fully understand what they read.

To help address this problem, blended learning has become an innovative and effective approach in recent years. Bonk (2006) defined blended learning as an instructional approach that merges different teaching strategies and modes of delivery by combining online learning components with conventional in-person classroom instruction. This definition is in line with

Graham (2006), who defined blended learning as the combination of computer-mediated training with in-person instruction. Similarly, Driscoll (2002) explained that blended learning brings together web-based technologies and conventional classroom activities, allowing students to experience both flexibility and interaction during the process of learning. With this method, students can study from digital resources that facilitate self-paced learning in addition to their teachers. According to research, students who participate in blended learning are typically more motivated, independent, and engaged, and they frequently perform higher in reading comprehension tests (Prihatini et al., 2023).

Although a variety of research indicates that blended learning improves reading comprehension, the majority of these studies concentrate on university or senior high school students. Studies by Wibisono (2022) and Lestari (2023), for example, showed that blended learning enhances students' engagement and reading outcomes; however, these studies did not investigate its effect on junior high school students, particularly in narrative text comprehension. Additionally, few studies have examined blended learning in schools where reading interest is low and literacy activities are still limited, such as a public junior high school in Bandung. This creates a significant research gap that must be addressed.

The purpose of this study is to look into how eighth-grade students' reading comprehension is affected by blended learning. Blended learning is anticipated to help students comprehend narrative texts more successfully while also boosting their enthusiasm and literacy abilities by fusing in-person instruction with online learning activities.

From a theoretical perspective, it is anticipated that this study will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding blended learning in lower secondary education. From a practical perspective, the findings may provide English teachers with useful ideas for developing reading instruction that is more engaging, interactive, and appropriate for learners' learning requirements in the digital age.

B. Research Questions

Considering the above background, for Indonesian junior high school students, reading comprehension remains a significant difficulty, but blended learning offers a workable alternative. By integrating classroom instruction with online resources, Students' reading comprehension can be enhanced through blended learning, which offers more adaptable, interesting, and encouraging learning opportunities.

Therefore, the goal of this study is to examine how blended learning impacts junior high school students' reading comprehension. The research is organized around the following queries in order to accomplish this goal:

1. What is the students' reading comprehension score in the class taught with blended learning?
2. What is the students' reading comprehension score in the class taught without blended learning?
3. Is there any significant difference in students' reading comprehension between the class taught with blended learning and the class taught without blended learning?

C. Research Purposes

The purpose of this study is to look into how junior high school students' reading comprehension in an Indonesian EFL setting is affected by blended learning. It focuses on examining students' reading comprehension performance before and after blended learning is implemented and determining whether Students who receive blended learning and those who receive traditional training differ significantly.

Additionally, the goal of this study is to improve knowledge of how blended learning helps students with their reading comprehension. It focuses especially on students' capacity to recognize information, comprehend meaning, and enhance their general reading comprehension skills.

D. Research Significances

Teachers, educational institutions, academics, and other people involved in English teaching are anticipated to find value in the study's conclusions. The application of blended learning to enhance students' reading comprehension may be better understood thanks to this study. The results could also be a helpful guide for creating more interesting and successful English learning exercises for junior high school students. The following is a description of this study's contributions:

1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study offers a wealth of knowledge regarding how blended learning helps students improve their reading comprehension, particularly in junior high school. This study offers fresh perspectives on how combining in-person and online education can improve EFL learners' comprehension of texts by analyzing the impact of blended learning on reading results. Future researchers who want to investigate technology-based instructional methods in English learning might also use the findings as a guide.

2. Practical Significance

First, the results of this study can guide English teachers in implementing blended learning strategies that make reading lessons more engaging, interactive, and supportive of students' independent learning. Blended learning provides students with access to various digital resources, which can help them understand texts more easily and build stronger reading habits.

Next, this study can serve as an innovative model for junior high schools seeking to integrate technology into English instruction. By combining classroom interaction with online learning, blended learning can improve students' motivation, confidence, and overall literacy engagement.

Future researchers who want to investigate blended learning in diverse skills, like vocabulary, writing, or speaking, or assess its efficacy in different

grade scores or educational environments, may find this study to be a helpful resource.

E. Research Scope

During the first semester of the 2026–2027 school year, eighth-grade students from a public junior high school in Bandung participated in this study. 64 students were chosen as the research sample from a total of 252 students. The study's main goal is to investigate how blended learning affects students' reading comprehension in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting. Pre-tests and post-tests are used to measure students' reading comprehension using a quantitative research methodology. Reading comprehension is the dependent variable in this study, and blended learning is the independent variable.

This study only examines how blended learning affects reading comprehension; it ignores other language abilities like speaking, listening, and writing. Furthermore, the study is limited to the junior high school level, specifically focusing on eighth-grade students, to obtain a more focused understanding of how blended learning affects learners' ability to comprehend written texts in this educational setting. The reading comprehension measured in this study is further limited to narrative texts, as the pre-test and post-test instruments and treatment materials used throughout the research were entirely narrative in genre. Other text types, such as descriptive, recount, or expository texts, are beyond the scope of this study.

F. Conceptual Framework

"Blended learning" is an educational approach that blends traditional classroom instruction with online learning activities, enabling students to utilize a range of digital resources while continuing to receive direct guidance and support from the teacher (Bonk, 2004; Driscoll, 2002). Through this model, students can watch learning videos, read online materials, complete digital tasks, and then strengthen their understanding during classroom discussions. This approach is connected to Connectivism Theory (Siemens, 2005), which explains that in the digital age, students learn by connecting with information,

technology, and other learners. Blended learning supports this process by giving students opportunities to explore online sources and collaborate more actively during learning. Barrett's Taxonomy, which includes literal, reorganization, inferential, assessment, and appreciation scores, is used in this study to assess kids' reading comprehension. Through blended learning, students engage in online and offline reading activities, comprehension questions, and guided discussions. Supported by Connectivism Theory and Barrett's Taxonomy, blended learning is expected to improve eighth-grade students' reading comprehension as well as their self-assurance and reading independence.

In this study, Pre-tests and post-tests are used in a quasi-experimental research method to investigate how blended learning affects reading comprehension. The conceptual framework is grounded in one learning theories that explain how combining online and personal instruction can improve students' reading abilities. Within this framework, blended learning is positioned as the independent variable. However, the dependent variable is determined to be reading comprehension.

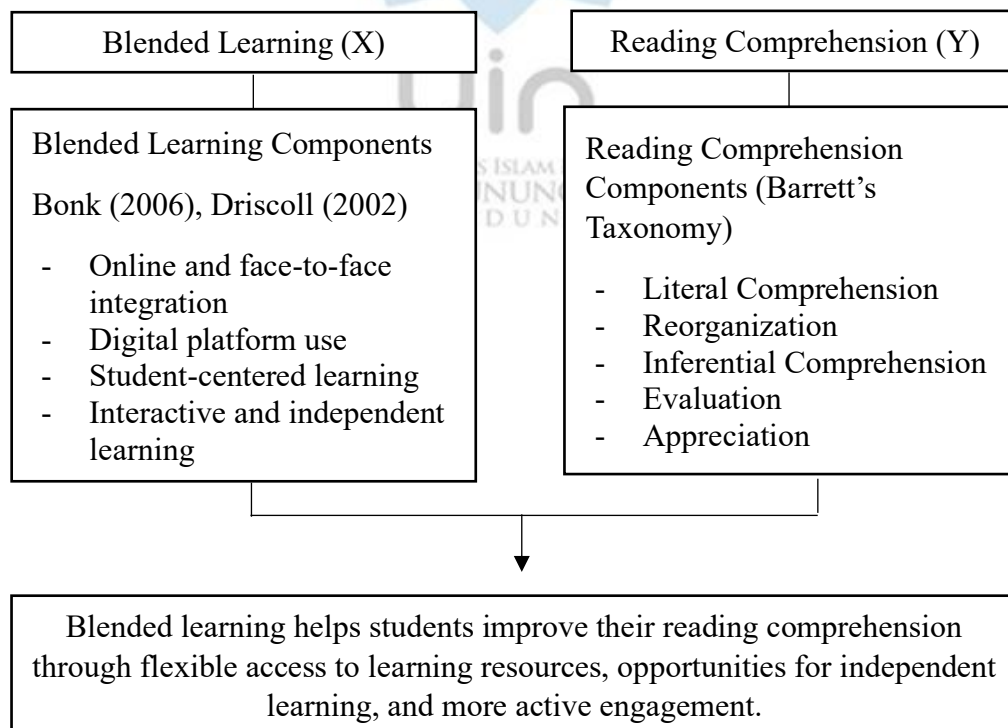


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

G. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are developed for this study based on the research objectives and the quasi-experimental design that compares the experimental and control groups:

- **Ha (Alternative Hypothesis)**

There is a significant effect of blended learning on the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 34 Bandung in the 2026/2027 academic year.

- **Ho (Null Hypothesis)**

There is no significant difference in the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 34 Bandung who are taught using blended learning and those who are taught through conventional face-to-face instruction in the 2026/2027 academic year.

H. Previous Study

Tesfaye, Mulu, and Elias (2023) looked into the impact of blended learning on students' motivation and reading comprehension at Hawassa University. In order to compare students who got standard classroom education with those who learnt through a combination of in-person and online activities, the study used a quasi-experimental approach. According to the results, Students in the mixed learning group outperformed those in the conventional learning group in terms of progress and engagement. The researchers came to the conclusion that students' comprehension of written texts improved and a more flexible learning environment was created by combining online and in-person instruction.

The application of blended learning to enhance students' reading comprehension was also investigated by Prihatini et al. (2023). An experimental group and a control group were used in a quasi-experimental design. Students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group on reading comprehension following the intervention. The two groups differed significantly, according to the statistical findings. Thus, the study discovered

that combining online exercises with in-person instruction could help students improve their reading comprehension abilities.

Rosalita (2021) examined the use of blended learning as a strategy to improve senior high school EFL students' reading abilities in accordance with these findings. Her study showed that the integration of digital materials and teacher guidance increased students' motivation and improved their ability to understand vocabulary, identify main ideas, and draw conclusions. These results highlight the consistent benefits of blended learning across various scores of education and support the relevance of the present study, which aims to enhance reading comprehension through a blended learning approach.

Harianti, Amumpuni, and Kurniawan (2023) investigated the implementation of blended learning in teaching reading comprehension at a senior high school in Indonesia. Using a descriptive qualitative approach with observation, interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques, the study examined the procedures, outcomes, and advantages and disadvantages of applying blended learning in the reading classroom. The findings revealed that blended learning was implemented through three procedures, namely pre-activity, whilst-activity, and post-activity, and that students' reading achievement improved as a result. However, the study also identified several disadvantages, such as unstable internet signal and students' limited ability to operate computer applications, which affected the smoothness of the learning process.

AlManafi, Osman, Magableh, and Alghatani (2023) examined the effect of blended learning on the reading comprehension achievement of primary-stage EFL students in Libya. The study employed a quasi-experimental two-way between-group factorial design involving 120 respondents from four different schools, who were divided into an experimental group receiving blended learning materials and a control group receiving conventional classroom instruction. Both groups were assessed before and after the intervention using an achievement test, and the results, analyzed through independent-samples t-test, paired-samples t-test, and factorial ANCOVA,

showed that blended learning had a statistically significant positive effect on improving students' reading comprehension, with no significant interaction effect found between teaching modality and gender.

Prior research on the use of blended learning to enhance students' reading comprehension has usually shown promising outcomes. The results indicated that integrating online and in-person instruction could enhance students' engagement, motivation, and comprehension of texts in various learning environments. Nonetheless, a large number of these studies were carried out with college or senior high school students. Because of this, there was still a dearth of studies on junior high school students' usage of blended learning. The current study investigated whether blended learning could enhance eighth-grade students' reading comprehension in order to close this gap. Thus, it was anticipated that the study would offer more proof on the application of blended learning in junior high school.

