

Students' Perceptions of Reading Digital Texts at a Private University in Indonesia

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi persepsi mahasiswa dalam membaca teks digital di sebuah universitas swasta di Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi persepsi mahasiswa saat menggunakan teks digital dalam kegiatan membaca. Kemudian, peneliti menerapkan studi kasus sebagai desain penelitian. Wawancara semi struktur dan reflective note digunakan untuk mengeksplorasi persepsi mahasiswa dalam membaca teks digital kemudian data tersebut ditelaah melalui Thematic Analysis. Selain itu, penelitian ini menyoroti persepsi mahasiswa terhadap penggunaan teks digital menurut teori filosofis persepsi, ditemukan bahwa karakteristik teks digital yaitu, fleksibilitas dan efektivitas teks digital, dimana teks digital sangat fleksibel karena dapat diakses kapan saja dan di mana saja melalui perangkat apa saja. Teks digital sangat fleksibel dari sisi aksesibilitas, mudah dibawa kemana saja dan mudah ditemukan. Teks digital memiliki fleksibilitas yang berujung pada keefektifan bagi para pembaca untuk meningkatkan minat baca. Selain itu, bahan bacaan yang tersedia dalam media elektronik, menyediakan berbagai bahan bacaan yang informasi terkini bagi mahasiswa. Penelitian ini menguatkan persepsi siswa bahwa digital text sangat flexible dan effective untuk digunakan para pembaca.

Kata kunci: teks digital, membaca, persepsi.

Abstract

This study explored students' perceptions of reading digital texts at a private university in Indonesia. This research aimed to explore students' perceptions while using digital text in reading activities. Furthermore, the researcher applied a case study as research design. Semi-structure interviews and reflective notes were used to explore students' perceptions of reading digital texts and the data obtained were analyzed with thematic analysis. In addition, this study highlights students' perceptions of the use of digital texts according to the philosophical theory of perception, hence it is found that the characteristics of digital texts namely, the flexibility and effectiveness of digital texts, digital texts are very flexible as they can be accessed anytime and anywhere through various devices. The findings indicate that digital text is very flexible from an accessibility perspective, easy to carry anywhere and easy to find. Digital text has a flexibility that contributes to their effectiveness for the readers to increase their interest in reading. Moreover, reading materials are available in electronic media, providing students with various up to date materials and the latest information. This study emphasized students' perception that digital text is very flexible and effective for readers to use.

Keywords: digital texts, reading, perceptions.

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INTRODUCTION

The advancement of human life in the modern era fully depends on technology. Recently, there has been a growing interest in integrating technology into education type of text students read, they must understand its content; one of which is the availability of digital texts. Digital text refers any text displayed in digital composition, regardless of the variation of the text: a website as a whole, an individual page, a database, or even a graphic file with a plot or an image. This means that everything in which available in digital or softcopy format, or what we call an e-book, considered as a digital text (Buccellati, 2008). Whichever types of the text students must be read it. Nowadays, many students read digital literature, which introduces them to new experiences. Because the digital texts provide a vast array of information, they also improve the reading experience. Accordingly, reading activity can be done instantly using digital text thus reading tasks can be completed more efficiently. According to Benedetto et al. (2013), digital text has advantages over traditional books. First, digital texts are hypertexts that can be taken anywhere in a small space. Second, digital texts are more environmentally friendly and offer greater text personalization options. So, digital text is more efficient for students, easier to use, and available from anywhere, especially in today's technological age. As digital text becomes increasingly prevalent, it offers both advantages and challenges compared to traditional printed text. According to Buccellati (2008), digital text is any combination of words and images displayed on a computer screen. Moreover, any digital composition may be called a "text" however much variety: a website as a whole, an individual page, a database, or even a graphic file with plots or images. There's another term for digital text is a book that is available electronically. Any digital device, such as a tablet, Smartphone, reader, desktop or laptop computer, can theoretically read it as the eBooks themselves have a wide variety of examples (Baron, 2015). Regarding to its benefit, learning through digital text earning with digital text is very important and really needed in this technological age. However, the challenge is in regard with how to read the digital text.

Reading is something very important that students must learn and master in education, reading is the process of interpreting and understanding written or printed symbols, such as letters, words, and sentences. Reading will open up opportunities for students to absorb a lot of vocabulary knowledge Sari et al. (2020). Furthermore, Anggraini et al. (2019) stressed reading can be seen as a process to obtain information. Reading is a tool for thinking and problem-solving. In addition, Harmer (2007), reading is a human activity that involves eyes and brain function. The eye looks at the text specially to get the information from the text. Reading strategies are not just scan and skim, but also include SQ3R, As mentioned by (Mulyanah & Ishak, 2023) reading by applying SQ3R can help students understand the reading text more quickly. Due to the advancement of the technology nowadays students must be accustomed to read digital text.

Several of studies related to reading digital text were found through a variety of findings. According to Hargreaves et al. (2022) investigated the perspectives and methods of students in regard to digital reading. The study showed that almost all of students' reading activities involve reading texts digitally, with cost, accessibility, simplicity of use, and environmental factors all playing a role in this decision and, in certain situations, outweighing the benefits of reading printed materials. Regarding the widespread popularity of digital reading, students placed a high importance on several characteristics of print reading, specifically the ability to focus for longer periods of time, read in detail, and enjoy the experience. Depending on why they were reading,

students had different approaches to digital texts, but overall, they had mastered a variety of strategies to make sense of the digital reading environment. Furthermore, Hargreaves et al. (2022) explored students' perspectives and practices in relation to digital reading. The finding revealed that reading texts digitally does indeed form the bulk of students' reading activity, with ease and speed of accessibility, cost, and environmental considerations influencing this choice, and in some cases, precluding reading in print. However, despite the prominence of digital reading, some aspects of print reading in particular the scope for more sustained focus, detailed reading and enjoyment of the experience were highly valued by the students. Students' approaches to reading digital texts varied depending on reading purpose, but in general students had developed a range of techniques to help them navigate digital reading.

Regarding to the reading problem, based on pre observation done by the researcher; low reading interest among students can be caused by various challenges, including a lack of engagement with printed texts formats that may seem unappealing. The lack of interest in reading printed texts often poses a challenge in the world of education and student life, especially with the widespread use of technology, due to several factors that contribute to the low interest in reading printed texts. Correspondingly, many teachers provide digital texts that are easily accessible through each student's gadgets and practical digital texts that can be taken anywhere, but they do not pay proper attention to the reading needs of the students. As a result, many universities or educational institutions have generalized the use of digital texts. It is a study or a task, the lecturer often gives a journal or a book in the form of PDF format to the students in order to make it easier for students to access digital text. Since digital text can be accessed through gadgets without have to provide a physical book, some students are accustomed to read digital text.

The amount challenges above were described and solved by students' perception in regard with reading digital text through several previous study. The first study conducted by Nisak & Yunus (2020). The aim of this study is to investigate the advanced students of English education department perceptions at University of Islam Malang toward the use of digital reading on reading comprehension. The results revealed that there were positive responds from the participants in regard with digital reading text. They are interested using digital reading for assisting reading comprehension activity. Digital reading benefits were found as a flexible, motivational, and practical tool for assisting reading comprehension. Hence, introducing the role of technology for reading comprehension could be recommended as the participants stated the implementation of the method assist students in reading comprehension process. The second study conducted by Kesson (2020) in which aim is to find out how students use digital texts, particularly in learning and to challenge existing myths about young people's proximity to digital tools by investigating the factors that condition or limit the way students interact with and respond to web-based digital texts. This study showed that for students to see digital textual resources as significant, they must be guided to engage with their features. Classroom routines, the tools used in teaching and learning to read and the beliefs students have about their school-based reading can limit students' uptake of digital features of digital texts. Instruction should be adapted to include teaching about digital texts. The third study conducted by Syarqawi (2022) by his research aim to know the students' perceptions toward online reading materials on Schoology at the Study Program of English Language Education of UIN Mataram. The finding showed that online reading materials on Schoology emerge positive effect on students' reading comprehension and achievements in learning

English. Based on the interview and questionnaire, 61% students chose to “agree” on their responses to the questions. It meant that online reading materials on Schoology had a good impact on them in the learning process. Therefore, online reading materials can be an alternative way in the teaching and learning process, especially in reading terms and other subjects. In addition to study from Hargreaves et al. (2022), he revealed that reading texts digitally does indeed form the bulk of students’ reading activity, with ease and speed of accessibility, cost, and environmental considerations influencing this choice, and in some cases, precluding reading in print. However, despite the prominence of digital reading, some aspects of print reading in particular the scope for more sustained focus, detailed reading and enjoyment of the experience were highly valued by the students. As it also proposed by Suhartini & Ulfa (2024) who mentioned that participants had a favorable opinion about reading digital material because digital text was more attractive and inspiring, and followed standard reading formats.

As described above, most of the studies revealed students’ perception in regard with digital text, as it is known perception has an important psychological role in our lives. Understanding others’ perspectives allows us to grow as individuals. Everyone perceives a thing differently. This perspective may be good or negative. According to Goldstein & Brockmole, (2017, p. 4), perception is something you constantly encounter, so understanding how it functions is fascinating in and of it. Furthermore, Fish (2021) stated that perception is the way a person acquires direct knowledge about the world through the senses and is an experience that has phenomenology or something that can be felt when perceiving. Due to general perception in regard with digital text above has already discussed, no one has explored philosophical perception in regard with flexibility of digital texts and the effectiveness of reading digital texts, hence this study aimed to explore more detail about philosophical perception that make this digital text rings a bell as the flexible and affective to be used by students as reading resources in reading activities.

The theoretical framework of this research is visualized and elaborated below, as follows:

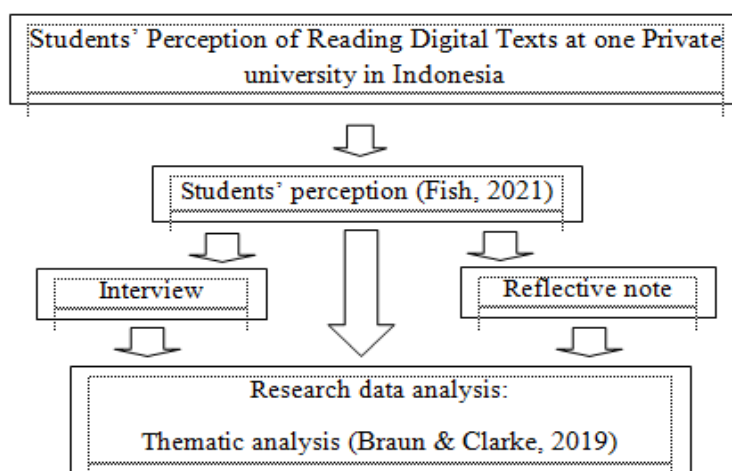


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Figure 1 shows the theoretical framework of this research study. First, it was necessary to conduct an investigation into students' perceptions regarding the chosen topic. In this context, the researcher explored students' perceptions of reading digital

texts related to the theory by (Fish, 2021). This research conducted at a private university in Indonesia. The researcher interviewed 10 Students from a private university would be asked 10 questions. A semi-structured interview would be conducted by offline. Students' reflective notes were used to study their perceptions of reading digital materials in academic reading classes. Next, the data were analyzed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019), which was a technique for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data that would be used in this research. Therefore, the findings from the data analysis of this study revealed students' perceptions of reading digital texts.

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher used a qualitative approach in this study. The goal of this study was to understand how students perceive reading digital text at a private university in Indonesia. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018, p. 41), qualitative research is an approach to exploring, knowing and understanding the meaning of an individual or group of social or human problems. In this study the researcher used a case study as the research design. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), a case study is a type of inquiry used in many domains, including evaluation, wherein a researcher analyzes a case typically a program, event, activity, process, or one or more people in-depth.

This study was conducted on students of the English Language Education study program at a private university in Indonesia. The participants in the study were students from 5th and 7th semester private university who had taken academic reading course in the previous semester. The data were collected through interviews with 10 students consisting of 5 male and 5 female students; their average age was 19-23 years. Furthermore, the researcher conducted reflective note by 10 students toward reading texts on digital devices.

In this study, the researcher collected the data through two instruments; semi-structured interviews and reflective note. Furthermore, the researcher taken into a depth description, explanation, and interpretation of students' perceptions toward reading digital text. The researcher used thematic analysis procedure to analyze the data. Thematic analysis, which "basically does not depend on theory and epistemology," is a technique for found, evaluated, and reported patterns or themes in the data. According to Braun & Clarke (2019), thematic analysis is a technique for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) in data. Accordingly, the data obtained from students' semi-structured interviews and reflective note were further analyzed through the Thematic Analysis Procedure.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, there were 10 students selected to share their perceptions about reading digital texts. During the interviews with the students, there were 10 questions proposed in the semi structure interview. The results of the interviews conducted by the researcher revealed several themes including its sub-themes. Besides, the result of student's reflective note reported several theme and sub-theme as well. In the aspect of representational and intentional, there were two themes found; the flexibility of digital text and the effectiveness in reading digital texts. In this mater, these themes, along with their sub-themes, will be further discussed below:

1. The Flexibility of Digital Texts

The result of data analysis obtained from students' semi-structured interviews and reflective note revealed the first theme was the flexibility of digital text. In this theme, flexibility refers to the characteristics of digital text in which elaborated by the students that are easy to carry, accessible, and compact. Accordingly, these characteristics will be explained below:

a) Easy to carry

In this characteristic, in terms of its flexibility, digital texts are easy to carry anywhere because digital texts do not need too much space or weight, making them practical, easy to carry around and read anywhere. As stated by a student in the interview:

*Yes, digital text is very flexible in my opinion, it can be taken anywhere, **it's not heavy to carry**, and it's very practical.*(Interview with S1-A-EC-7)

Also, this statement further emphasized on students' reflective notes:

*I am interested when using digital text, **it's just because flexible to carrying everywhere**, and when we use digital text we just scroll the page, digital text is provided many the topic rather than visual book.*
(Reflective notes S6-A-EC)

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that digital text is lighter compared to conventional books, making it easier to carry anywhere since it can be stored in one device, yet covers various topics. This is different from conventional books, which tend to be heavy when carried around. According to Makdis (2020), the process of transferring knowledge from reading will be easier when there are dozens or hundreds of digital texts on a Smartphone that can be taken anywhere. Furthermore, Wadi et al. (2022) stated that digital texts may exist as electronic books, newspapers, and journals, which may be rapidly accessed at any time and from anywhere. So, digital text has the advantage of its flexibility, meaning easy to carry and can be read anywhere, thus makes digital text more flexible compared to conventional books.

b) Accessible

Another significant characteristic of digital text is accessibility. In terms of accessibility, digital text is very easy to access, easy to find, and easy to use on any devices. Accordingly, it is affirmed by student 10 and 3:

*I think what distinguishes digital text from conventional books is that digital text is very easy to find; **just search on the website and you will find many topics.***(Interview with S10-RF-A-4)

*Yes, in my opinion, digital text is more flexible compared to printed text because **it is easy to access through communication media without having to search for it first**, like going to the library.* (Interview with S3-IH-A)

Also, this statement further emphasized on students' reflective note:

*My preferences are online articles and apps. The reason why I use **digital text in reading is because it is easily accessible on a Smartphone or laptop** and can also help me find out the latest news by reading online articles. Then also, it helps me look up vocabulary that I don't know using applications such as the U-Dictionary application or websites such as DeepL.* (Reflective notes S5-AN-A)

Based on the statements, digital text is very easy to access just by using any devices without having to go to the library to search for books, and it is very easy to find just by searching for the keywords intended on the internet. According to Nisrina et al. (2023), digital text is very flexible and accessible as it allows students to read on any devices such as mobile phones, tablets, or computers anytime and anywhere. So, it can be concluded that digital text also has flexibility in the accessibility, which makes it easy to find and also easy to access.

c) Compact

In terms of flexibility, digital text is compact for its content and its form. Likewise, the content is organized concisely, densely, and efficiently. Digital text is very simple because it only contains important or core information without excessive details, making it easier and quicker for readers to understand and also digital texts not complicated, and can be accessed through all devices. Correspondingly, it is stated by student 5 and 6:

*In my opinion, digital text is better than conventional books because it's practical and **can be carried with just one device**, not heavy like carrying books.* (Interview with S5-AN-C-3)

*If it were up to me, I would definitely prefer reading digital texts because they are simpler, not complicated, and **can be accessed through all communication media**.* (Interview with S6-ADAK-C-4)

In addition, this statement further emphasized on students' reflective note:

*I prefer digital text for several reasons. First, the convenience of having multiple books and articles **accessible on one device** is a game-changer; I can easily switch between texts without carrying physical copies.* (Reflective notes S2-IAR-C)

Referring to the statements above, the compactness of digital text is very concise, dense, and efficient. According to Makdis (2020), digital text has many advantages, both in terms of efficiency and compactness since it is very simple to carry anywhere. Therefore, it can be concluded that digital text is also something very compact in terms of simplicity and efficiency. Accordingly, digital text can be accessed with one device and contains many topics within it.

2. The Effectiveness in Reading Digital Texts

The second theme obtained from result of semi structure interview and reflective note was the effectiveness in reading digital texts. In this theme, effectiveness refers to a characteristic of increasing reading interest, and providing various topics. Accordingly, the characteristics will be explained below:

a) Increasing reading interest

In the effectiveness, digital texts can increase students' interest in reading. Additionally, the advanced features of digital text, the ease of access, and

flexibility of digital texts lead to the effectiveness in reading. Appropriately, it is stated by student 7:

*In my opinion, **the effectiveness of this digital text can increase reading interest because of its sophisticated appearance.*** (Interview with S7-IAR-IRI-5)

Moreover, this statement forward emphasized on students' reflective note:

*.....because of its light reading nature and easy-to-understand word choices. Of course, it is easier to access anytime and anywhere. So far, I feel that **digital text can increase my interest in reading.*** (Reflective notes S4-IH-IRI)

Considering the aforementioned interview and reflective note result, reading using digital texts can increase students' interest in reading. According to Sajidah et al. (2023), the use of digital text can help students to increase their interest in reading because there are a lot of factors that influence students' interest, that make them more interested in using digital text. In this matter, reading digitally can also increase students' interest in reading for many reasons. First, digital texts have sophisticated displays or advanced features. Additionally, the flexibility of digital formats offers benefits hence many students interested in reading digital texts.

b) Various topics

Digital texts cover a wide range of topics that are very broad and unlimited. In one device, digital text includes various different topics unlike conventional books where one book can only discuss one topic, causing readers need many books. Likewise, digital text provides various topics that can support students with variety of reading materials, as it is elaborated by student 1:

*In my opinion, more flexible digital text, **because digital text does not have limited topics like conventional books.*** (Interview with S1-A-VT-8)

Additionally, this statement further emphasized on students' reflective note:

*In my opinion using digital text support more **information about knowledge or news update** that maybe we can't find of conventional text, so using **digital text help us to find more information** and valuable for our real life to feed our brain find new information and important thing. Digital text also becomes one of important part especially in modern era. We definitely use the technology to find another reference, another topic that we want to know it, and we need it.* (Reflective notes S6-A-VT)

Regarding the previously statements above, most of students choose to read digital texts because digital has unlimited topics hence students can get a lot of information with just one device. Conversely, unlike conventional books which require many books if students want to cover many topics. According to Wadi et al. (2022), reading materials that are available in electronic media, providing students with various up to date materials and the latest information. It can be concluded that digital text does not have limited topics like conventional books. Also, it can provide various topics as references with just one device.

As the finding obtained from semi structured interview and reflective note revealed five themes hence this section will be further discussed the findings in depth. First, digital texts are very flexible as they can be accessed anytime and anywhere through any devices. Digital text is very flexible from an accessibility perspective, easy to carry anywhere and easy to find. In terms of accessibility, digital texts can be accessed from anywhere and on any device. Conversely, it takes a long time to find the information you need in traditional textbooks. Using digital resources and searching for the needed information in traditional textbooks can take a long time, unlike digital texts where accessing information through quick searches can provide information quickly (Ahmad, 2023), in this matter, digital text is lightweight and readily available; it offers a great deal of flexibility. In conclusion, text in digital format makes it easier for students to read at any time and from anywhere seen it can be access on a variety of devices, including laptops, tablets, and phones.

Second, digital text has a flexibility that led to the effectiveness for the readers to increase their interest in reading. In this case, the use of digital text can help students to increase their interest in reading since there are a lot of factors that influence students' interest thus make the students more interested in using digital text (Sajidah et al., 2023). Besides, reading materials are available in electronic media, providing students with various up to date materials and the latest information. Likewise, digital text also has effectiveness when implemented to increasing students' interest in reading and make students have a lot of knowledge since it has unlimited topics (Wadi et al., 2022). Furthermore, digital text also has various topics without limits; this also makes digital text more effective. The effectiveness of digital text is not only can increase interest in reading and has unlimited topics but also can improve reading skills, improve critical thinking and also provide a memorable reading experience. As stated by Präkel (2021), digital media use may have a significant impact on reading comprehension because of our ability to adjust to the limitations of the device. So, digital text can increase students reading interest and ability.

The result of students' semi-structured interview and reflective notes revealed that all the students perceive digital text is very flexible. In terms of flexibility of digital text, almost all the students agreed that digital text is indeed very flexible since digital texts can be taken anywhere, it is not heavy to carry, and it is very practical. Furthermore, the students also emphasized that digital text is very effective in increasing their interest in reading also can improve their reading skills.

CONCLUSION

This study captures the importance of exploring students' perceptions of reading digital text. This study has also highlighted the significant benefits of digital texts in reading activity. Furthermore, this study covered the essential aspect of representational and intentional theories refer to flexibility and effectiveness of digital texts. The aspect stressed those digital texts that are easily accessible and easy to carry and also discuss digital texts that can increase students' interest in reading with digital texts. Generally, this study emphasized the benefits of digital texts in terms of flexibility and advanced features that can enhance student motivation and interest in reading. Accordingly, the students reading interests will lead to make reading be come interesting and meaningful. In this matter, digital text has a flexibility that contributes to their effectiveness for the readers to increase their interest in reading. Besides, reading materials are available in electronic media, providing students with various up to date materials and the latest information. As a result many students to present the

perception that digital text are very flexible and effective for readers to use. Therefore, this study stressed the notable advantages and the convenience of using of digital text not only for reading activity but also for students overall literacy skill development. The findings of this research can be used as a reference for other researchers around reading topics especially in the context of the use of technology in reading courses; integrating digital text for students. Additionally, for the researcher can also delve deeper into how digital text enhances students' reading abilities using unique reading strategies, and also investigates how digital text improves students' critical thinking.

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