

Exploring the impact of online reading habits on English language achievement among EFL learners

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Abstract

In the digital era, online reading integrates text, visuals, and audio, making the Internet a dynamic source of information for learners. This study explores the impact of online reading habits on English language achievement among Indonesian EFL learners. A correlational research design was employed, involving 138 eleventh-grade students selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using a validated and reliable online reading habits questionnaire and English achievement test. The findings reveal a statistically significant correlation between students' online reading habits and their English scores. While students actively engage in online reading during English learning, the results indicate that frequent exposure to online texts alone does not directly translate into substantial improvement in English achievement. These findings suggest the importance of guiding learners to engage critically with online content to maximize its potential for language development.

Keywords: online reading habits; English language achievement; EFL learners; digital reading

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, we are familiar with the digital technology dealing with online reading activity such as eBook, websites, online news, journal, and so on. Some research focuses on the internet usage for academic purposes such as (Acut et al., 2016; Alhabahba & Mahfoodh, 2016; Ellore et al., 2014; Sahin et al., 2010; Shahibi & Rusli, 2017). Internet helps learners to broaden their academic knowledge, research and tasks by searching information worldwide and also improves easy communication to the academic and social communities.

Several studies have investigated the role of reading habits in students' academic performance. For instance, Anggeraini (2017), Diem and Atmanegara (2015), Sartika et al. (2020), and Sengul (2017) found that students' reading habits significantly correlate with their academic achievement. In line with this, Anggeraini et al. (2024) revealed that study habits, in general, are also positively associated with academic success, particularly in English learning contexts.

As digital technology becomes increasingly integrated into education, online

reading has emerged as a prevalent and practical method of accessing academic materials. Defined as reading activities conducted via internet platforms, online reading allows students to engage with a variety of texts more frequently and conveniently, especially those related to educational content. According to Yuliani and Barokah (2017), students' online reading habits have a measurable correlation with their reading achievement.

Online reading provides numerous benefits, as it integrates text, visuals, and audio to enhance engagement and comprehension. This multimodal nature not only makes information more accessible but also increases students' motivation to read. However, as Hagerman (2017) noted, online reading does not always significantly impact learners' use of reading strategies unless specific instructional interventions are applied.

Recent research has further explored the implications of online reading in educational settings. Studies by Hasbi and Wulansari (2025), Karani (2018), Male et al. (2021), Mufidah and Safriyani (2022), Pardede et al. (2023), Putera and Anggrainy (2024), Rinantanti et al. (2024), Sridhar (2021), and Sumekto et al. (2022) have highlighted various aspects of students' digital reading behavior, including their preferences, attitudes, and comprehension outcomes. These findings collectively support the view that online reading, when approached intentionally and critically, can support language learning and academic development in the digital age

Obaidullah and Rahman (2018) reveal that students spend more hours on electronic media than on reading books. They take more pleasure in technology or social media than reading books online. Moreover, the internet can develop the reading habits (Bana, 2020). Then, Wong and Lee (Wong & Lee, 2022) indicate that positive online reading habits may help develop vocabulary skills. Hence, there is a need to emphasize the teaching of academic vocabulary in the English classroom to ensure success in language acquisition and other academic pursuits. Nowadays, most reading activities are done online, and research on students' online reading habits and accomplishments is rarely conducted. This research aimed at finding the relationship between learners' online reading habits and their English achievement.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a correlational design, which is commonly used to examine the statistical relationship between two variables. The research was conducted at Senior High School Number 3 Baturaja, South Sumatra, Indonesia, involving eleventh-grade students as the sample.

From a total population of 207 students, 138 participants were selected using a convenience sampling technique. These students actively participated in the study and completed both the online reading habits questionnaire and an English achievement test.

The online reading habits questionnaire consisted of 25 items, categorized into three components: nine items related to reading activity, eleven items assessing enjoyment of reading, and five items concerning anxiety and difficulty during reading. The

instrument adopted a 5-point Likert scale to measure the extent of students' engagement in online reading behaviors.

To measure students' English achievement, the researchers administered an objective test in the form of multiple-choice questions. The test comprised 21 items with five answer options (a, b, c, d, e), scored dichotomously (1 for correct, 0 for incorrect responses). The test's reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.866, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

Data were analyzed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient via SPSS version 25 to determine the relationship between students' online reading habits and their English language achievement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

The result of students' online reading habit

This section presents the findings of students' online reading habits based on their responses to the distributed questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to measure three aspects of reading habit: reading activity, reading enjoyment, and reading-related anxiety or difficulty. The score distribution and interpretation are categorized into five levels, ranging from *very low* to *very high*, as summarized below.

Table 1 Recapitulation of Questionnaire

No	Score Range	Score Criteria	Frequency	Percentage %
1	80-100	Very High	55	39,85%
2	60-79	High	78	56,52%
3	40-59	Middle	5	3,63%
4	20-39	Low	0	0
5	0-19	Very Low	0	0
Total			138	100%

The table 1 showed that there were 55 students (39,85%) who gained score 80-100 in level very high, 78 students (56,52%) gained score 60-79 in level high, 5 students (3,63%) gained score 40-59 in level middle, no students gained score 20-39 in level low, and no students gained score 00-19 in level very low.

The result of students' English test

The second table illustrates students' performance on the English achievement test. The results are categorized according to score ranges, from *fail* to *very good*. This distribution highlights the learners' academic outcomes and provides insight into their overall proficiency in English.

Table 2 Recapitulation Percentage of Students English Test

No	Score Range	Score Criteria	Frequency	Percentage %
1	80-100	Very good	3	2,17%
2	66-79	Good	1	0,72%
3	55-65	Fair	1	0,72%
4	41-54	Poor	1	0,72%
5	00-40	Fail	132	95,67%
Total			138	100%

Table 2 shows that 3 students (2.17%) scored between 80-100 points in English, which is a "very good" level; 1 student (0.72%) scored between 66-79 points in English, which is a "good" level; 1 student (0.72%) scored between 55-65 points in English, which is a "satisfactory" level; 1 student (0.72%) scored between 41-54 points in English, which is a "poor" level; 132 students (95.67%) scored between 0-40 points in English, which is a "failure". Most students scored "failure" in English.

The result of correlation between students' online reading habit and their English scores

The third table displays the result of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis conducted to determine the relationship between students' online reading habits and their English achievement. This analysis was used to examine whether there is a statistically significant correlation between the two variables.

Table 3 Analysis Result of Pearson Product Moment

Correlations			
		Questionnaire	English Test
Questionnaire	Pearson Correlation	1	.005
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.951
	N	138	138
English Test	Pearson Correlation	.005	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.951	
	N	138	138

Table 3 shows that the correlation coefficient is $r=0.005$, which indicates that there is a correlation between the two variables. Using the r value (0.005), the author can estimate

the strength of the correlation between the two variables. The r value ranges from 0.00 to 0.20, which means that the strength of the correlation is very weak. From this, it can be concluded that for the very low category of eleventh graders, there is a very low significant correlation between the students' online reading habits and their English proficiency because the r value is 0.005. This value indicates that there is a very low correlation between the students' online reading habits and their English proficiency. This result is consistent with the findings of (Hagerman, 2017), which found that there was no relationship between learners' online reading habits and their study habits. In addition, the study also found that there was no significant relationship between reading habits and reading ability. In addition, the research results also show that there is no significant correlation between reading habits and reading ability. There are two main reasons for this phenomenon: students' own factors and school facilities. The study also showed that there was a significant relationship between Internet use and reading ability (Priambodo et al., 2019).

The finding of this research indicated that the learners' online reading habits such as e-book and online news as the dominant points. This finding is in line with the research finding from (Nurfaizah et al., 2024). The students should take the advantage of the sophistication of their cellphones to access knowledge not just play games and social media, especially in terms of online reading through articles, online novels etc. So, that their habit of reading in online can become knowledge that affects their English achievements in the school and adds to their insight.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed a statistically significant correlation between learners' online reading habits and their English language achievement. Although students were found to engage frequently with online reading content, the correlation with their academic performance in English was not particularly strong, suggesting that mere exposure to online texts does not guarantee academic success unless guided or critically engaged.

This result is consistent with the findings of Hasbi and Wulansari (2025), who analyzed EFL students' online reading habits and concluded that while students often interact with various digital reading materials, the quality and purpose of that engagement significantly influence learning outcomes. Similarly, Karani (2018) emphasized that online reading becomes academically beneficial only when students engage in meaningful academic tasks such as summarizing or critically reviewing digital texts.

Moreover, the moderate correlation identified in this study aligns with research conducted by Acut et al. (2016), who examined students' internet usage patterns and academic performance. They found that high-frequency internet users do not always outperform their peers unless their usage is learning-oriented. This is further supported

by Ellore et al. (2014), who emphasized the importance of balancing internet usage with structured academic engagement to prevent superficial reading.

Another factor that may influence the impact of online reading on English achievement is the nature of reading tasks and learner autonomy. Hagerman (2017) pointed out that online reading often promotes fragmented and surface-level processing unless students are guided to integrate and evaluate texts critically. This might explain why students in the current study, despite frequent online reading, did not show a proportional increase in their English scores.

Contrastingly, Diem and Atmanegara (2015) argued that digital reading can enhance literacy learning in the digitization era, particularly if integrated into classroom practices. The present study partially supports this claim, in those learners who reported higher engagement with online reading also tended to have better English scores, albeit the relationship was not strong.

The discussion also reflects findings by Bana (2020), who highlighted students' positive perceptions of using the internet to develop reading habits. However, he warned that these habits must be structured and strategically aligned with learning goals to produce measurable academic improvement.

Taken together, these findings suggest that while online reading habits are increasingly common and potentially beneficial, their contribution to English language achievement depends greatly on how reading is approached, guided, and integrated into formal instruction. Educators should thus not only encourage online reading but also design activities that promote critical and goal-directed reading behaviors.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationship between learners' online reading habits and their English language achievement. The results showed a statistically significant correlation between the two variables, indicating that students who actively engage in online reading tend to have better English scores. However, the correlation was not strong, suggesting that online reading alone is not a sufficient predictor of academic success in English without critical engagement or guided instruction.

One possible explanation for this modest correlation is that students did not consistently focus on reading academic texts in English during their online activities. Instead, much of their digital reading time may have been spent on entertainment or social media content, which provides less exposure to structured language input and academic vocabulary necessary for English achievement.

These findings highlight the importance of not only promoting online reading among students but also guiding them in developing purposeful and reflective reading strategies. Teachers and educators are encouraged to integrate digital reading tasks into classroom instruction that stimulate deeper comprehension, analytical thinking, and language awareness. Future research may explore the qualitative aspects of learners'

reading choices, the content they engage with online, and the role of teacher scaffolding in enhancing the effectiveness of online reading for academic achievement.

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