

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the research context, focus, objectives, significance, scope and limitation, and definition of key terms.

1.1 Research Context

English has emerged as the predominant global language, permeating various aspects of modern life. Mastering English as an international language is crucial for cross-cultural communication and collaboration (Raja et al., 2022). Its widespread presence makes English an unavoidable part of our daily experiences. Students worldwide study English as both a communication medium and instructional language, which can enhance their opportunities in education, professional careers, and international social interactions (Situmorang et al., 2021).

The importance of English as an international language has driven its status as a mandatory subject in Indonesia since the introduction of educational reforms in the Development of English teaching and learning Teaching in the Ministry of Education issued Ministerial Decree Education and Culture Decree No. 096/1967 on December 12, 1967.1967 (Zein et al., 2020). This policy underscores the critical role of English in equipping students with the skills needed to navigate global communication, access international resources, and enhance career prospects. The Indonesian education system emphasizes mastering four language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing each contributing uniquely to comprehensive

language acquisition (Yuliana, 2016; Ismayiah & Fadhilawati, 2022). Reading is the foundation of intellectual development, opening the door to a vast knowledge base. Reading serves as the primary means of accessing essential information and skills that enable mastery of almost every academic subject. When we develop strong reading skills, we gain the ability to independently explore complex ideas, critically evaluate information, and continually expand our understanding of the world (Ruzin, 2019).

Besides, it is needed to acquire knowledge across various fields and contexts; reading is pivotal for expanding students' vocabulary, developing their critical thinking skills, engaging them in diverse perspectives, and staying informed in various academic, personal, and professional contexts (Ismail et al., 2017). Supporting this view, Putri highlighted that reading enhances students' English proficiency, cognitive abilities, and vocabulary while enabling them to access new information and experiences efficiently (Putri, 2022).

Moreover, there are several key benefits of reading: First, regular reading exposes learners to diverse language structures, including grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, which improves their overall language use. Second, reading encourages active engagement, helping learners analyze, interpret, and evaluate information, which aids in forming opinions and arguments. Third, reading enhances vocabulary acquisition by presenting new words in context. Finally, reading provides access to a broad spectrum of facts, information, and experiences, expanding knowledge. (Hardiyanto et al., 2016; Kaya, 2015; Septia et al., 2022).

Despite previous researchers' importance and benefits of reading, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Indonesia struggle with reading comprehension. Students often face challenges in understanding text organization and connections between sentences, leaving them discouraged and unable to concentrate. They frequently focus solely on decoding the text without grasping its meaning, struggle with synonyms for complex words, and encounter difficulties identifying the main ideas in passages (Puspita et al., 2023). Additionally, vocabulary limitations pose significant barriers to understanding text content (Bahrudin et al., 2020; Fadhilawati, 2016).

To understand the challenges students face in learning reading, a preliminary study was conducted at SMAN 1 Blitar on 4 Desember and 6 December 2024, it was intended to know the preliminary challenges in learning reading and explore the teachers' strategies to address these issues. The researcher used interviews to gather insights from both teachers and students. Based on information provided by Mrs. OAS., an experienced English teacher, students encounter significant difficulties in mastering English reading comprehension. These challenges include identifying main ideas, finding synonyms and antonyms, interpreting implicit statements, and drawing logical conclusions from passages. Despite these difficulties, Mrs. OAS. observed that her students demonstrate strengths in interpreting reference words, selecting suitable topics based on the provided and the reading material, and determining the purpose of the text. And to tackle this problem, the teacher tried to apply various technologies specifically for teaching reading, as outlined as follows

"The most challenging skill faced by my students in my class is reading English passages; they struggle especially to identify main ideas, extract detailed information, draw logical conclusions from passages, and find the most suitable synonym or antonym. However, they are good enough to understand familiar word meanings in context and select suitable topics based on the reading material. Interpret reference words. Further lack of motivation and sleep in the middle of the lesson often happened. Then, after a month of searching and learning, I tried to practice techniques that I learned from YouTube and friends from Sekolah Penggerak with my students."

(INT/ET/OFF/RCATU/ MRS.OAS/4 DESEMBER 2024)

Then, the researcher wants to know more about what kind of technologies were applied by teachers for teaching reading in SMAN I Blitar.

She told the researcher that she had implemented some technologies for teaching reading, informed in the following statement:

"I used digital technologies such as Let's Read Asia, Newsela, & CommonLit. My students love Let's Read Asia more than 3 other books Because it focuses more on literacy introduction. We use online reading platforms, digital quizzes, and interactive e-books to support reading lessons. The advantage of this platform is that it provides a diverse collection and digital books, and we can use it for free of course the students are more motivated to take apart in the lesson, they did not get bored at the last period of the class, however I cannot say now about the impact quantitatively because we are still in the progress of applying it,

(INT/ET/OFF/ DTUBT/ MRS. OAS/4 DESEMBER 2024)

Following this, the researcher interviewed four students whose responses aligned with the challenges highlighted by MRS. OAS. After introducing these technologies, the students began to see improvements in their reading experience. Their responses revealed how these tools helped them overcome previous challenges. For example, ST1 shared: afternoon, further diminishing their interest in the task as expressed by the first Students (ST1) as follows:

“First, I do not like reading because it is boring and feels like a solo activity. When we learn to speak, we can interact with others and share ideas, and we also learn to speak with native speakers directly. However, after my teacher started to use various technologies, I started to love reading because my teacher applied various interesting technologies, such as Let’s Read Asia. Recently, I have been able to engage with the material more interactively, like watching videos or using apps to support my understanding .”

(INT/STD1.OFF/BATOTITR/6 DESEMBER 2024)

This response highlights how the introduction of technology, specifically the use of Let’s Read Asia, Newsela & and CommonLit. made reading more engaging for the student, transforming a previously boring activity into something more interactive and enjoyable.

Furthermore, ST 2 added.

“Firstly, when my teacher only used textbooks and worksheets, I felt so bored in learning Reading, it made me uneasy, especially during the last period of the day. Focusing is hard, and I would rather practice speaking, which is more fun. However, recently, my teacher practised some technologies. If I am not wrong, it is named Let's Read Asia. The apps and online quizzes help me focus, and it’s more fun than just reading from a textbook.”

(INT/STD2.OFF/SP/INT/BATOFITR/6DESEMBER 2024)

The student referred to online reading platforms that offer interactive digital storybooks such as Let's Read Asia, Newsela & and CommonLit. In addition, teachers also use quizzes such as Mentimeter and Padlet to support student comprehension and engagement during reading lessons.

That statement highlights how scheduling can influence students’ engagement, with afternoon sessions amplifying their disinterest in reading. Other students described reading as overly mechanical, lacking the creative and expressive opportunities found in speaking activities, ST3. However, after the use of technologies, ST3 also noted a significant improvement in their ability to tackle reading challenges, as reported as follows:

“Before using technology, I had a hard time understanding the text's main idea. I would get confused, and it felt like I was missing something. But now, with tools like Let’s Read Asia or Newsela and CommonLit, I can practice identifying main ideas and understanding texts more clearly. The interactive exercises help me connect the dots. Better.

(INT/STD3.OFF/BATOFITR/6 DESEMBER 2024)

This comment reveals a desire for reading lessons to move beyond routine tasks and incorporate elements that foster interaction and critical thinking. Finally, students expressed frustration with the lack of interactivity in reading, suggesting that it felt more like a chore than an enjoyable learning activity. In addition to helping with comprehension, the digital tools also made reading feel less like a chore, as seen in ST4’s comment as expressed by ST 4 as follows:

"Reading used to feel like a boring, repetitive task. I would rather do something interactive like speaking. However, after we started using digital technologies, reading became more dynamic. It’s still hard sometimes, but it’s more interesting now, and I feel like I can learn more."

(INT/STD4/OFF/BATOTITR/6 DESEMBER 2024)

In the preliminary stages of this study, initial information was gathered from SMAN 1 Blitar, which revealed that the school had begun implementing various digital technologies to enhance English language learning, particularly in reading instruction. Integrating these technologies, such as online reading platforms, digital quizzes, and interactive e-books, aimed to engage students more effectively and improve their reading comprehension skills. However, the results have not been as profound or transformative as expected. While there is a noticeable shift in students' interest in reading activities, the depth of impact remains limited, and challenges persist, especially with skills such as identifying main ideas and drawing logical conclusions from the texts.

Furthermore, before the use of digital technologies, some students reported significant challenges in key reading skills, such as finding main ideas and finding synonyms or antonyms. These difficulties contributed to their dislike of reading. ST1 shared the following Some students also admitted to struggling with key reading skills such as identifying main ideas and finding synonyms or antonyms, which further contributes to their aversion to reading. ST1 argued as follows;

"I have challenges in finding the main idea in the text. Sometimes, it feels like the more I read, the more confused I get. It's hard to understand what the text is really about. Finding synonyms and antonyms is tricky for me. Even if I know the meaning of a word, I can't always tell which one is similar or opposite. However, after digital technologies were incorporated into the reading instruction, I began to show improvement. Platforms such as Let's Read Asia, Newsela & CommonLit which provide interactive and engaging materials, helped clarify the process of identifying main ideas and understanding word meanings. I really love it

(INT/STD2.OFF/BATOFITR/6 DESEMBER 2024)

Furthermore, this statement highlights students' critical challenges in grasping the material's central themes or arguments have been reduced by applying digital technologies. Furthermore, some students also admitted to struggling with key reading skills, such as drawing conclusions from the text, which further contributes to their aversion to reading. ST3 shared: furthermore, some students also admitted to struggling with finding implicit meaning of the text and drawing conclusion can be reduced by learning reading with technology as stated as follows:

"I always get stuck when I have to find the implicit meaning in the text. The main idea isn't always clear, and I feel I'm supposed to figure it out without enough clues. sometimes, I don't know what to focus on. I also struggle to conclude the whole meaning of the text. confuses me to start with. I dont have much vocabulary finding the main idea in the text. Sometimes, it feels like the more I read, the more confused I get. It's hard to understand what the text is really about. However, after I learned reading with Let;s Read i have a strong motivation to learn because iam happy to learn it"

(INT/STD1.OFF/BATOFITR/6 DESEMBER 2024)

This statement highlights students' critical challenge in grasping the material's central themes or arguments. Digital technologies, such as comprehension tools or online summarization aids, could help students identify key ideas and support their understanding.

Digital technology was chosen because it provides an interactive, adaptive, and student centered learning environment that transforms a passive reading task into a dynamic and engaging learning experience. Meanwhile, reading is emphasized because it serves as a foundational language skill that not only promotes academic achievement across the sciences, but also develops critical thinking, expands vocabulary, and strengthens students' ability to understand and communicate effectively in both academic and real-world environments.

In short, we can say that the results of the preliminary study highlights that the teachers in SMAN 1 Kota Blitar has applied digital tools in reading instruction, and from the result of the interview, students gave positive responses regarding the use of digital technologies. Technology based tools can significantly enhance students' interest and involvement in reading activities. They provide an interactive platform for students to practice and improve their reading skills while making learning more enjoyable.

Digital technology has fundamentally transformed education and numerous aspects of human life in the modern era (Julita, 2022). It has become an integral component of modern education, serving as an effective tool for information access and knowledge acquisition (Dwanda Putra et al., 2023). emphasize that digital technology integration has significant potential to accelerate learning skill

acquisition and enhance students' life skills while enabling teachers to develop more accessible learning materials.

One unique phenomenon in integrating technology into teaching reading in English at the high school level is the use of interactive platforms such as Let's Read Asia, Newsela, and CommonLit. These tools gamify the reading experience, transforming traditional comprehension exercises into engaging activities that motivate students through immediate feedback and competition. Research has shown that gamification can increase student engagement and improve learning outcomes, particularly in language acquisition (Hamari et al., 2016). By combining reading tasks with digital interactivity, students not only enhance their reading skills but also develop critical digital literacy competencies.

These findings highlight the critical need to adopt alternative teaching strategies, particularly those that leverage technology, to improve reading comprehension outcomes at SMAN 1 Blitar. Interactive digital tools may not only help bridge the proficiency gap but also foster a more engaging learning environment for students.

In the context of English learning processes, the use of digital technologies offers diverse opportunities to enhance language acquisition, foster cross cultural communication, and improve learners' engagement and motivation as highlighted by (Raja et al., 2022). the use of digital tools in English learning can bridge cultural boundaries, ensuring effective communication in a globalized world. Similarly R. P. Situmorang et al., (2024) note that incorporating digital technologies in English education not only strengthens language competence but also prepares students to seize opportunities in education, the workplace, and society globally.

As stated by Mualif et al., (2023) technology serves as both a learning medium and resource, facilitating enhanced communication between teachers and students. This technological integration helps prevent student disengagement while supporting teachers in achieving their pedagogical objectives (Fälth & Selenius, 2024). In addition, teachers' attitudes toward digital technology implementation in primary education are significantly influenced by their confidence, beliefs, and self efficacy, with school culture playing a crucial role in this relationship (Spiteri & Chang Rundgren, 2020).

However, the development of technologies and digitalization has changed the way people behave, communicate, think, and work. In the world of education, the advent of Technologies in the 21st century has brought about changes in the world of education. (Demissie et al., 2022). Globally, digital transformation has brought significant changes to education, especially in curriculum development and teaching methods. In the teaching learning environment, Technologies provide opportunities for teachers and students to adjust to the globalized digital era.

This study shows the potential of digital technology in teaching reading. The research conducted by Haqiqiyah, (2020) Examines the relationship between Indonesian reading ability, English knowledge, and English reading ability. However, most of these studies only focus on one or two phenomena of technology and education, such as classroom cases or the technical capabilities of teachers and students (Ilomäki & Lakkala, 2018).

Reading skills, particularly in secondary education, involve the complex ability to transform written symbols into meaningful comprehension (Hatiningsih & Adriatic, 2019). demonstrate that reading not only reinforces vocabulary acquisition

but also enhances learners' ability to use both familiar and new words effectively. This relationship between reading and vocabulary development becomes increasingly important in the digital age (Styati & Khasanah, 2022).

From the interviews results that have been conducted with English teacher and students at SMAN 1 Blitar 4-6 December 2024, it can be summarized that English teacher has implemented 4 digital technologies in teaching reading, however, the digital technology that the students really love is Let' Read Asia because it provides a diverse collection of digital books, while Newsela offers interactive reading exercises with immediate feedback features. Teachers report that these platforms are preferred by students due to the simple and efficient interface. The use of these digital technologies has reduced student boredom and helped teachers optimize learning time through integrated analytics and progress tracking features.

Previous studies have been conducted, especially in using technology for teaching reading, for example the use of Padlet was effective in improving students reading achievement in teaching reading at SMK Pemuda Kesamben Blitar (Puspita et al., 2023). Carolina Widiyanto et al., (2024) Research shows that Quizalizes was effective in enhancing the students' reading achievement in Senior High School. Prapelia & Fadhilawati, (2024) Revealed that the use of Wordwall was effective to boost the students' reading learning outcomes, Most of the previous studies used experimental research, the use of Let's Read Asia application remain rare in senior high school in Blitar, especially by applying a case study method, therefore the researcher wants to conduct a study under the title "The Implementation of Digital Technologies in Reading Instruction: A Case Study in SMAN 1 Blitar".

1.2 Research Focus

Based on the background above, the main focus of the study is how are the digital technologies in teaching reading at SMAN 1 Blitar is implemented. Further, the focuses of the study are elaborated in detail as follows:

1. Planning Reading Instruction by Applying Digital Technologies

The sub focus of the study is to describe how English teacher plan reading instruction by applying digital technologies at SMAN I Blitar as captured by the Question; How does English teacher plan reading instruction by applying digital technologies at SMAN 1 Bitar?

2. The Implementation of Reading Instruction by Applying Digital Technologies

The sub focus of the study is to describe how the English teacher implements reading instruction by applying digital technologies at SMAN I Blitar as captured by the Question; How does the English teacher implement reading instruction by applying digital technologies at SMAN 1 Blitar?

3. The Evaluation of Reading Instruction by Applying Digital Technologies

The sub focus of the study is to describe how the English evaluate Reading Instruction by Applying Digital Technologies at SMAN 1 Blitar as captured by the Question; How does the English teacher evaluate reading instruction by applying digital technologies at SMAN 1 Blitar?

4. Challenge and Propose Solution in Applying Digital Technologies

The sub focus of the study is to describe the challenges faced by English Teacher in implementing reading instruction by Applying Digital

Technologies and solutions toward the challenges as captured by the Question; What are the challenges faced by the English teacher in implementing reading instruction by applying Digital Technologies at SMAN 1 Blitar?

1.3 Research Objective

Based on the research focuses above, the research objectives are formulated as follows:

1. Planning Reading Instruction by Applying Digital Technologies

To describe how the English teacher plans reading instruction by applying digital technologies at SMAN 1 Blitar

2. The Implementation of Reading Instruction by Applying Digital Technologies

To describe how the English teacher implements reading instruction by applying digital technologies at SMAN 1 Blitar

3. The Evaluation of Reading Instruction by Applying Digital Technologies

To describe how the English teacher evaluates reading instruction by applying digital technologies at SMAN 1 Blitar

4. Challenge and Propose Solution in Applying Digital Technologies

To describe the challenges faced by English teacher in implementing reading instruction by applying digital technologies and the solution to solve the challenges at SMAN 1 Blitar

1.4 Research Significances

This research on "The Implementation of Digital Technologies in Reading Instruction: A Case Study in SMAN 1 Blitar" holds significant theoretical and practical contributions for both teachers and students, as well as for the broader educational community.

Theoretical Significance:

Contributes to Educational Technologies Literature: Theoretically, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on reading skill development by referring to the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), which explains that effective reading comprehension stems from the integration of decoding and language comprehension. Furthermore, Schema Theory (Anderson, 1984) supports the notion that learners' background knowledge plays a vital role in understanding texts. Digital reading platforms utilized in this study may help activate and build schemata, thus enhancing reading comprehension. Additionally, grounded in Cognitive Information Processing Theory, this research highlights how digital tools can support memory, attention, and comprehension processes during reading instruction.

Expands Understanding of Pedagogical Approaches: By exploring the implementation of digital technologies in teaching reading, this theory emphasizes that learning is a social process, and the use of technology can enrich interactions between students and teachers. In reading instruction, digital platforms such as Let's Read Asia, Newsela, and CommonLit enable collaborative interactions and improved reading comprehension through multimodal and interactive texts (Vygotsky, 1978). This research will contribute to the understanding of how

technologies can be incorporated into traditional teaching methods, offering a new perspective on pedagogical innovation and the use of platform digital platforms in reading instruction.

Practical Significance:

For Teachers: This research provides valuable insights for English teachers at SMAN 1 Blitar and other similar schools. Offers actionable strategies and examples for effectively incorporating platform digital into reading instruction, making lessons more engaging and impactful.

For Students: The findings from this study will help teachers better understand students' perceptions of digital technologies in learning to read. By considering student feedback, teachers can adapt their teaching strategies to make learning more engaging and effective, which could enhance students' reading skills and overall academic performance.

Overall, this study will bridge the gap between theory and practice in digital education, offering tangible benefits for teachers, students, and educational institutions striving to integrate Technologies into their teaching and learning environments.

1.5 Research Scope and Limitation

The scope of this research focuses on the implementation of digital technologies in reading instruction at SMAN 1 Blitar. It investigates the various digital platforms utilized by teachers, such as e-books, reading apps, and interactive platforms like Let's Read Asia, Newsela, and CommonLit, to enhance students' reading comprehension. The study explores how these technologies are integrated into the

teaching process, particularly in the context of English reading instruction. Furthermore, it examines the pedagogical strategies employed by teachers to maximize the benefits of digital technologies in improving students' reading skills. This research also aims to understand the perspectives of students and teachers on the effectiveness, engagement, and usability of digital tools in fostering reading comprehension and interest.

This study was limited to SMAN 1 Blitar, and due to differences in infrastructure, teacher preparation, and use of technologies, the results may not be fully indicative of other schools. Reading education was the main focus, with little attention given to other language skills such as speaking, writing or listening. that may limit how broadly these findings can be applied. The usability of digital tools may be affected by external technological issues, such as internet connectivity, device availability, or the technical expertise of participants, all of which were not thoroughly examined in this study. The aforementioned limitations are acknowledged to contextualize the results and draw attention to the prospect of additional studies in broader or diverse educational contexts.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1.6.1 Reading Instruction

Reading instruction refers to the methods, strategies, and practices used by teachers to develop students' reading skills, including comprehension, fluency, and critical thinking (Sutiyono et al., 2021). In this study, reading instruction involves integrating digital technologies to facilitate and enhance the teaching and learning process.

Reading instruction in the curriculum is an approach designed in a structured and systematic manner to develop students' literacy skills, in accordance with national education standards. In the Merdeka Curriculum, reading activities are not only focused on the ability to understand text, but are also directed to foster critical thinking skills, enrich vocabulary, and deepen students' understanding through various types of texts and multimodal learning resources. This curriculum places reading as a basic skill that supports successful learning in all subjects, with literacy objectives integrated into thematic learning. In English language learning in particular, reading instruction includes the use of narrative texts tailored to students' ability levels, as well as the application of a learner centered approach. In addition, teachers also utilize various digital platforms such as Let's Read Asia, Newsela and CommonLit to support the reading learning process in a more engaging and interactive way, all designed to be aligned CP (Capaian Pembelajaran) and ATP (Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran).

1.6.2 Digital Technologies

Digital technologies refer to tools, platforms, and resources that utilize digital systems to support educational activities (Alakrash & Razak, 2021). This study focuses on technologies such as e-books, interactive applications, and other digital platforms used to assist and improve reading instruction at SMAN 1 Blitar.

In this study digital technologies refers to understanding the definition and forms of digital technologies, this research can more accurately assess how platforms like Let's Read Asia, Newsela, and CommonLit influence the process

of reading instruction. These tools are central to the investigation, as they represent the primary medium through which innovation in reading pedagogy is being implemented.

Specifically, in the context of English language teaching, digital technologies are used to improve reading skills, different reading levels, and comprehension support tools such as quizzes, and multimedia features. These digital reading platforms help engage students more actively, support vocabulary development, and facilitate a deeper understanding of English texts in a more dynamic and student-centered learning environment.

1.6.3 Case Study

According to Yin (2018), a case study is an empirical research method that utilizes multiple data sources to explore a phenomenon in a real context. This approach aims to gain a deep and thorough understanding, especially when it is necessary to analyze complex relationships in a particular situation in order to maintain the validity and accuracy of the research findings.

In this case study refers to the use of a case study method enables the researcher to gain an understanding of the practical application of digital technologies in real classroom settings at SMAN 1 Blitar. It allows the study to present contextualized insights that can inform future practices in similar educational environments.