

High School Students' Perceptions of Wattpad-Based Extensive Reading for Reading Skill Development

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Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui persepsi siswa sekolah menengah atas terhadap penggunaan novel digital, khususnya Wattpad, dalam kegiatan membaca yang luas dan keuntungan yang diperoleh dari meningkatkan kemampuan membaca mereka. Dari sisi persepsi, novel digital dianggap sebagai media yang menyenangkan, mudah diakses, dan memotivasi karena siswa dapat memilih apa yang mereka sukai untuk dibaca, yang membuat mereka memiliki kebebasan untuk memilih apa yang mereka sukai untuk dibaca. Studi ini melihat 38 siswa dari kegiatan ekstrakurikuler English Conversation Club (ECC) di salah satu SMA Negeri di Gresik, yang dipilih berdasarkan seberapa aktif mereka berpartisipasi dalam program. Penelitian ini menggunakan angket skala Likert untuk mengumpulkan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Wattpad membuat siswa lebih suka membaca dan membuat mereka merasa lebih baik dalam membaca. Ini menunjukkan bahwa membaca digital dapat menjadi cara yang bagus dan menyenangkan untuk belajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing.

Kata kunci: *extensive reading*, novel digital, Wattpad, keterampilan membaca, persepsi siswa, manfaat

Abstract

This study investigates how high school students feel about reading extensively from digital books, especially Wattpad, and the advantages they see in terms of their reading abilities. Because they gave them more freedom to select engaging material and reduced the sense that reading was a chore, students usually regarded digital novels to be entertaining, approachable, and inspiring. In terms of the advantages, students stated that reading on digital platforms enhanced their comprehension of English literature, increased their vocabulary, and improved their reading fluency. Based on their active participation in the English Conversation Club (ECC) at one of public high school in Gresik, 38 students were chosen as participants. A Likert-scale questionnaire was used in this study's descriptive quantitative methodology to collect data. According to the findings, students not only had a favorable opinion of extensive reading on Wattpad but also saw a discernible improvement in their reading skills, indicating that digital extensive reading can be both entertaining and useful in EFL settings.

Keywords: extensive reading, digital novels, Wattpad, reading skills, students' perceptions, benefits

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

A key component of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is reading, particularly in Indonesia, where students frequently face difficulties with motivation and reading comprehension (Robb & Ewert, 2024). Indonesian schoolchildren routinely score poorly on national and international reading examinations. Only 0.001% of Indonesian adolescents are claimed to be interested in reading, according to the 2022 PISA assessment and UNESCO data, which also show poor comprehension.

Limited access to interesting reading materials and an educational system that prioritizes academic books over student-centered resources are frequently the causes of this lack of engagement. Furthermore, students in Indonesia rarely have the freedom to select reading materials according to their interests because textbook-centered learning predominates in classrooms there. This further demotivates students and reduces their access to worthwhile reading experiences. (Renandya & Jacobs, n.d.) assert that reading for enjoyment fosters the development of positive reading habits over time, which are essential for language learners in EFL situations, in addition to supporting language acquisition.

To address these issues, extensive reading (ER) has been suggested. In contrast to intensive reading, ER places a strong emphasis on reading a lot of easily understood, self-selected materials for enjoyment and general comprehension (Day & Bamford, 2002). ER has been demonstrated to enhance reading confidence, vocabulary, fluency, and grammatical awareness (Jeon & Richard Day, 2016; Renandya & Jacobs, n.d.; Suk, 2017a)

Platforms like Wattpad are being used more and more for ER in the digital age. Digital novels make reading more flexible and interesting by providing students with immediate access to a variety of content catered to their interests (Barzillai & Thomson, 2018; Park et al., 2020a). In particular, Wattpad fosters a social reading environment that increases motivation and reading persistence by enabling users to engage with stories, authors, and other readers (Pianzola et al., 2020a).

Many kids still have little opportunities for ER in the classroom, which is still centered on teacher-centric, test-based reading, even though they are accustomed to digital content. Digital ER settings have been shown to improve student motivation, fluency, and engagement (Spjeldnæs & Karlsen, 2024a). Nonetheless, a large portion of the work concentrates on general ESL populations or college students. Research on Indonesian high school students' opinions and experiences using digital ER platforms, especially Wattpad, is lacking.

Research Context and Objective

The English Conversation Club (ECC) at one of the high schools in Gresik was the site of this study, which involved 38 students. Wattpad is one of the most widely used platforms for reading English digital novels, which these kids regularly do. The aim of this study is to investigate how students view reading a lot of digital novels, especially those on Wattpad, and what advantages they see in terms of their English reading abilities. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are high school students' perceptions in using digital novels for extensive reading activities for improving students' reading skills?
2. What benefits do the high school students obtain by reading digital novels for extensive reading activities?

Theoretical Framework

Long-term language development requires exposure to understandable input, autonomy, and enjoyment, all of which are fostered by extensive reading (Day & Bamford, 2014; Jeon & Richard Day, 2016). By providing individualized, on-demand content and eliminating conventional obstacles like textbook restrictions or physical book access, digital environments improve this

process (Park et al., 2020b). In addition to being a digital archive, Wattpad is a collaborative platform that allows students to improve their vocabulary, fluency, and reading confidence in a social setting (Pianzola et al., 2020b).

Previous Research and Literature Gap

The majority of studies have concentrated on university students or adult learners, even though prior research has confirmed the effectiveness of ER in enhancing EFL learners' reading comprehension and motivation (Suk, 2017b) and other studies examine the impact of digital reading (Ahmed & Roche, 2021; Meinawati et al., 2022; Spjeldnæs & Karlsen, 2024a) did not address digital media, although they did demonstrate that reading literary texts improved comprehension. Additionally, (Nurfaizah et al., 2024) examined reading habits and how they affect academic achievement, but they did not conduct any empirical research that was unique to Wattpad or similar sites.

This study fills these gaps by concentrating on high school students in Indonesia and utilizing Wattpad, a digital platform, as an immersive ER environment in addition to a reading access tool. In contrast to previous research, this study examines students' self-reported benefits and direct perceptions in an organized extracurricular environment.

METHODS

In order to find out how high school students felt about reading a lot of digital books, especially on the Wattpad site, and the advantages they thought it would have for their reading abilities, this study used a quantitative descriptive approach. A single-site instance with a particular group of pupils actively participating in extracurricular English reading activities was the focus of the investigation. A Likert-scale survey using a structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. Since the goal of the study was to use numerical data to explain current attitudes and experiences, there was no manipulation or control over variables.

The data used in this study came from 38 students who were active participants in the English Conversation Club (ECC) extracurricular program at one of the high school in Gresik. These pupils were chosen through purposive sampling since they were accustomed to utilizing Wattpad as part of their reading routines and were frequently exposed to both traditional and digital reading materials. They were from three distinct grade levels: Grade X (28 students), Grade XI (9 students), and Grade XII (1 student). Due to their participation in ECC, they were guaranteed to possess pertinent information and experience with substantial digital reading activities,

which allowed them to provide insightful answers that complemented the goals of the study.

A Google Forms-distributed online survey was used to gather the data. There were 20 closed-ended questions in the survey, 12 of which evaluated students' opinions and 8 of which gauged perceived advantages. A 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," was used to structure each topic. To guarantee clarity and relevance, the questionnaire was piloted among a small group of students and examined for face validity by the thesis supervisor before to distribution. Working together with the ECC organizers made the distribution easier, and all 38 students filled out the survey, yielding a 100% response rate. To ensure that no information was left blank, responses were automatically gathered in a spreadsheet format.

SPSS version 22 was used for statistical testing in order to guarantee the validity and reliability of the instrument. Item validity was assessed using the Corrected Item-Total Correlation approach, and all items scored higher than the 0.30 minimal requirement. High reliability was indicated for both sets of items by the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which was computed for both variables and came out to be 0.875 for the perception scale and 0.842 for the benefit scale.

In order to summarize student replies and find broad trends, the data were examined using descriptive statistical techniques, including mean, percentage, and standard deviation. Since the study's goal was exploratory, neither inferential statistics nor hypothesis testing were used. Students' perceptions of Wattpad use and the degree to which they claimed improvements in vocabulary, reading fluency, and comprehension were clearly depicted by the statistical analysis. The findings additionally aided in determining if digital extensive reading improved the affective components of reading, such as motivation and enjoyment.

By managing correspondence with the ECC program and making sure that students were aware of the study's objectives and the confidentiality of their answers, the researcher was present during the entire data collection procedure. The study was conducted at one of the high school in Gresik, and data was gathered over the course of a week in the first quarter of 2025. Since this study was quantitative in nature, no interviews or direct observation were carried out, and the design did not incorporate any qualitative elements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study looked at how students felt about reading a lot on Wattpad and the advantages they saw in using digital reading resources in an EFL setting. The purpose of the study was to ascertain whether the popular mobile reading

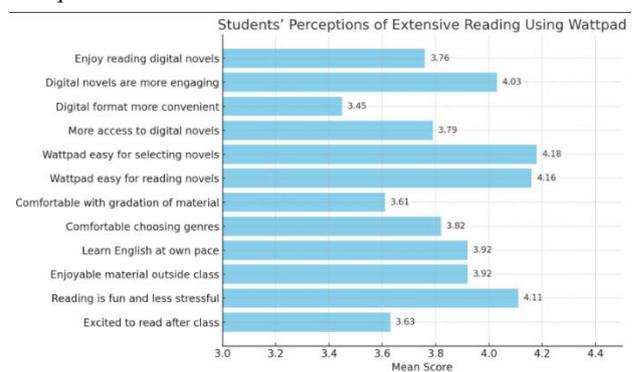
software Wattpad could promote extensive reading in senior high school settings. 38 students from one of the high school in Gresik who were involved in the English Conversation Club and had previously used Wattpad to read English books provided the data. The survey had two parts: (1) opinions on Wattpad as a place to read a lot, and (2) opinions about its advantages for improving English reading abilities.

Students' Perceptions of Extensive Reading Using Wattpad

It's also important to remember that students' positive experiences could be connected to their sense of identity and ownership in digital environments. In addition to reading, Wattpad allows users to provide comments, engage with authors, and occasionally even create original content. These affordances help create a participatory culture that is lacking in traditional reading methodologies, even if they are not the primary focus of this study. Involving readers in this way encourages agency and gives them a sense of belonging to a larger learning community, both of which are known to boost motivation and maintain interest.

The findings showed that opinions of Wattpad as a platform for lengthy reading were overwhelmingly favorable. The majority of students either agreed or strongly agreed with the favorable statements about Wattpad's usability, enjoyability, and learning value, according to their responses to the 12 perception items, as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Students' Perceptions of Extensive Reading Using Wattpad



The statements that received the highest mean scores were "Wattpad is easy to use for choosing and reading English novels" ($M = 4.34$) and "Wattpad is enjoyable to read" ($M = 4.26$). This demonstrates that students thought Wattpad was a useful, approachable, and easy-to-use platform. With digital resources like Wattpad, students have greater freedom to select literature that suits their

interests and reading abilities than with traditional reading methods that rely on printed textbooks and set curricula.

These results corroborate the extensive reading concepts presented by (Day & Bamford, 2014), who highlighted that accessible, engaging, and learner-selected materials are necessary for successful extensive reading. Students' motivation and reading frequency frequently rise when they are given the freedom to select books they like. Students in this study reported that Wattpad made reading less tedious, suggesting that self-selected digital content helped challenge the widespread belief that reading is a tedious and required chore.

The platform's effect on student motivation is demonstrated by the view that "reading with Wattpad makes me more interested in reading in English" (M = 3.89). This supports the findings of (Renandya & Jacobs, n.d.), who contend that reading widely increases student motivation, especially when it involves engaging literature and little guidance from the teacher. Teenage readers are particularly drawn to Wattpad's wide range of genres, which include romance and fanfiction.

The freedom and flexibility that pupils gained from digital reading was another important consideration. For example, the item with the mean score of 3.92 was "I can read and learn English at my own pace through Wattpad." One of the main components of extended reading is independent learning, which is fostered by this self-paced reading environment. Extensive reading settings that ease pressure and promote ongoing involvement are beneficial to students, according to (Suk, 2017a).

Furthermore, students reported reading outside of class due to their fascination with Wattpad stories (M = 3.63). This shows that Wattpad can help students develop self-directed and intrinsic reading habits instead of extrinsically motivated, assignment-driven reading. Similar trends were seen in digital reading environments by (Park et al., 2020a), who discovered that learners were more inclined to read willingly when the content was accessible and relatable.

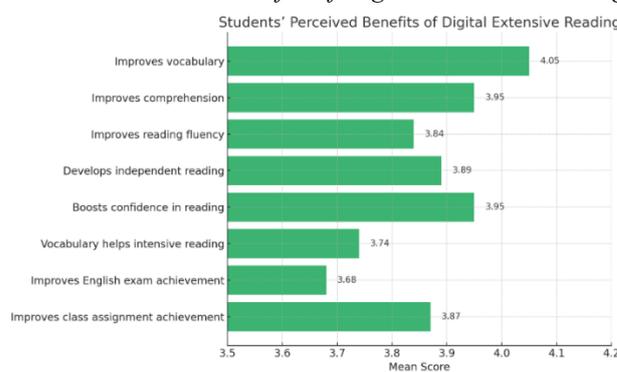
Another element that surfaced from the data was reading confidence. According to the item "I feel more confident reading English texts after using Wattpad" (M = 3.95), pupils felt more capable of reading in English. This is important because students who feel confident are more likely to interact with texts more often and take on increasingly difficult assignments. Additionally, students' agreement that Wattpad accelerated their reading (M = 3.84) demonstrated improvement in reading fluency, which is a known advantage of consistent exposure to information in lengthy reading contexts (Renandya & Jacobs, n.d.)

Students' Perceived Benefits from Wattpad-Based Extensive Reading

The survey's second section evaluated the perceived advantages of students using Wattpad for prolonged reading. Improvements in academic performance, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension were measured using eight tasks. These results are summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Students' Perceived Benefits of Digital Extensive Reading



The item that received the highest mean score was "My English vocabulary is enhanced by reading on Wattpad" (M = 4.05). The assertion made by (Suk, 2017b) that one of the most important results of intensive reading is vocabulary development is supported by this. Students pick up vocabulary more organically through frequent exposure to new terms in relevant settings than through formal instruction or memorization.

This was closely followed by "Wattpad helps me develop my independent reading habit" (M = 3.89) and "Reading Wattpad increases my confidence in reading English texts" (M = 3.95). These answers demonstrate that students not only improved their language skills but also acquired favorable reading habits and emotional reactions to English-language literature.

Additionally, students reported improved comprehension and fluency. Items like "Wattpad helps me understand longer English texts" (M = 3.84) and "Wattpad helps me read more fluently" (M = 3.95) demonstrate how lengthy reading can enhance comprehension and processing speed without the stress of assessments or instructor evaluation. This study applies the findings of (et al., 2022) that literary lengthy reading enhances learners' comprehension to the context of digital reading.

The statements "Wattpad helps me complete English class assignments better" (M = 3.87) and "Reading Wattpad helps me improve my English exam results" (M = 3.68) showed moderate agreement, despite some students' uncertainty about whether Wattpad directly benefited their academic performance. This implies that Wattpad indirectly promotes academic English

competence even if it may not be directly in line with classroom goals. Academic achievement and digital reading habits were likewise linked by (Nurfaizah et al., 2024), however they concentrated on general ESL situations rather than Wattpad-specific sites.

Interpretating the Finding

The results of this study are in line with earlier investigations into the advantages of prolonged reading. According to (Renandya & Jacobs, n.d.) reading a lot promotes motivation, reading fluency, and vocabulary growth. All of these categories were recognized by the students in the current study as results of their digital reading experience. Additionally, (Suk, 2017a) demonstrated that reading widely enhances vocabulary retention and student engagement, which was supported by the participants' answers.

By emphasizing Wattpad's function as a modern digital platform that facilitates EFL reading habits outside of official classroom contexts, this study advances the subject. Students can freely and independently access genuine, youth-oriented information on Wattpad, in contrast to carefully curated institutional e-libraries. According to (Pianzola et al., 2020b), Wattpad's interactive elements—like commenting and story following—increase students' sense of engagement and enjoyment, two things that are crucial for maintaining reading motivation.

According to (Park et al., 2020b), students who read on mobile devices demonstrated greater engagement and comprehension than those who used traditional materials, which further supports the usage of digital fiction platforms. Because of Wattpad's personalization and accessibility, students can read regularly without the practical constraints of print-based reading.

This viewpoint is further supported by the research of (Spjeldnæs & Karlsen, 2024b), which demonstrates how digital reading changes reading habits and fosters interests-based reading behaviors. The results are relevant to understanding how high school students interact with user-driven platforms such as Wattpad, despite their concentration on broad readers.

However, this study offers a new perspective by focusing on combines ER theory with modern digital media, with a particular emphasis on Wattpad as a useful resource for improving EFL reading abilities. It makes a special contribution to the field by focusing on Indonesian high school EFL students, examining student opinions in addition to quantifiable advantages, and highlighting the use of Wattpad, a user-driven platform, for independent reading.

Therefore, by employing digital resources, the study provides pedagogical and technological insights for enhancing reading habits in EFL environments.

Limitation and Implication

Notwithstanding the encouraging outcomes, this study includes a number of drawbacks. The sample may not be representative of the entire student body because it was restricted to a certain subset of students who had previously shown an interest in English. Furthermore, the study used self-reported data without cross-referencing it with information from reading logs, interviews, or measures of academic achievement.

However, the results indicate that digital extensive reading platforms such as Wattpad can be useful tools for improving EFL learning, particularly in situations where students have little interest in reading and limited access to printed resources. Since these technologies are more in line with students' digital interests and habits, educators and curriculum planners should think about incorporating them into extracurricular or supplemental reading programs.

CONCLUSION

This study looked into how senior high school students felt about reading a lot on Wattpad and the advantages they thought digital novels offered in an EFL setting. It specifically sought to investigate how students felt about utilizing Wattpad as a comprehensive reading platform and how this activity aided in the development of their English reading skills.

The findings showed that students had favorable opinions toward lengthy reading on Wattpad. They said the platform was fun, easy to use, and compatible with their preferred reading styles. An enjoyable reading experience was facilitated by elements including the app's user-friendly layout, wide range of genres, and simplicity of use. These results provide credence to the idea put forth by (Day & Bamford, 2014) that students gain more when they are allowed freedom and have access to engaging, self-selected reading materials. Wattpad's accessibility prompted students to read outside of the classroom, fostering reading as a fun and habitual activity rather than a required academic assignment.

In addition to increased independent reading habits, students reported a variety of linguistic and affective advantages, such as enhanced vocabulary, reading fluency, comprehension, and confidence. These results support the assertions made by (Renandya & Jacobs, n.d.; Suk, 2017a), who highlighted that regular and voluntary extensive reading fosters the development of language proficiency and learner motivation. Students' positive emotional involvement with Wattpad reading further

supports the idea that extensive digital reading can improve attitudes about reading in English in general. A more individualized reading experience is also supported by digital platforms like Wattpad, which is crucial for long-term reading development in language acquisition.

In order to close the gap between students' everyday digital habits and their academic literacy requirements, the study also suggests that informal digital platforms can be successfully included into formal language training. As demonstrated in this study, Wattpad provided students with a platform to boost their confidence and cultivate an interest in English texts in addition to providing reading input. The effectiveness of school-based extensive reading treatments may be increased by integrating such platforms into extracurricular activities or independent reading assignments, especially in EFL contexts like Indonesia where print-based resources are frequently few or uninteresting.

The study had several limitations despite its insights. The sample may not accurately reflect the larger population of Indonesian EFL learners because it was limited to 38 students from a single school. Furthermore, the breadth of interpretation regarding pupils' true reading behavior and language development is limited by the use of solely quantitative self-reported data. Although survey results offer a useful summary of attitudes and experiences, they fall short of capturing the entire spectrum of learning dynamics that could surface during extended digital reading.

A more representative knowledge of the effects of digital reading platforms on EFL learners would be provided by future study using a larger and more varied sample from various geographical locations and school types. To give a more comprehensive, triangulated picture of children' reading development, mixed-method approaches that incorporate surveys, interviews, and direct reading performance assessments are advised. To help guide policy and practice, it would also be helpful to investigate how educators view the incorporation of digital platforms such as Wattpad into their instruction and to identify any potential barriers or support networks. The long-term effects of heavy digital reading on students' academic performance and reading habits might also be better understood through longitudinal research.

To sum up, Wattpad has shown promise as a useful resource for encouraging lengthy reading in EFL classes for senior high school students. Its ability to involve pupils in self-directed, digital reading experiences can be a useful addition to conventional language learning methods and could encourage students to read for the rest of their lives.

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