

Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Using Blog-Based Reading Journals in Improving Students Reading Comprehension

Juli Rachmadani Hasibuan¹, Muhammad Natsir², Nazlah Syahaf Nasution³

{julirachma@gmail.com¹, mnatsir0@gmail.com², nazlahnasution@unimed.ac.id³}

English and Literature Department, Faculty of Arts and Languages, Universitas Negeri Medan, North Sumatera^{1,2,3}

Abstract. This study explores the perceptions of students enrolled in the English Literature Study Program at UNIMED concerning the efficacy of blog-based reading journals in enhancing their reading comprehension skills. Involving 51 participants, this research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to obtain a robust dataset. The findings reveal that a substantial majority of students view blog-based reading journals favorably, reporting notable advancements in their ability to decipher complex sentence structures and improve overall text comprehension. Furthermore, the study elucidates students' preferences and the challenges encountered during the implementation of these journals. The data suggest that the integration of blog platforms in educational settings can significantly foster independent and active learning, thereby facilitating a more integrated and immersive approach to language acquisition. These results contribute to the ongoing discourse on innovative pedagogical practices in language education, underscoring the potential of technology-enhanced learning environments to elevate literacy skills.

Keywords: Students perception, blog, reading journal strategy, and reading comprehension

1 Introduction

Reading is a crucial skill that every student learning English should possess. Language learners can master reading skills through continuous practice. The more often someone practices reading, the more proficient they become in acquiring and applying these skills. One effective method to enhance reading ability is through extensive reading. Reading is a process that involves readers combining information from the text with their background knowledge to construct meaning (Sudrajat & Hoerudin, 2021). Anderson and Nunan's definition of reading suggests that readers can derive meaning from a text only when they engage in the act of reading. To attain this meaning, readers undergo a process where they combine textual information with their own background knowledge. This indicates that textual information becomes easier to comprehend when readers have prior knowledge that aligns with the content of the text they are reading. Therefore, especially for English language learners in Indonesia, where English is a

foreign language, it is crucial to have background knowledge about the text to be read, both in terms of content and language.

Reading materials play a vital role in honing reading skills. There are various types of reading materials available, including fiction and non-fiction. Fiction includes genres such as novels, short stories, poetry, and drama, which are typically characterized by rich and complex language use and narrative structure, helping students understand the application of language in various contexts. On the other hand, non-fiction materials like news articles, essays, and research reports in the form of journal articles (Aisyah et al., 2020) offer different contexts where language is used to convey information or arguments clearly and precisely. Journal articles are scholarly publications that contain research works and literature reviews by various authors who are experts in their fields. These articles are usually peer-reviewed to ensure the quality and validity of the research. Journal articles play a critical role in the advancement of science and technology. They provide a platform for researchers to share their findings with the scientific community and the public, allowing other researchers to build upon previous research (Widyaningsih, 2021).

Reading Journals are assignments given to students that focus on the reading process, including pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading stages. In completing this task, students engage in reading activities and bring their background knowledge, whether related to the content of the text or language knowledge. This background allows readers to interact actively with the text they are reading. Reading journal assignments represent an approach to reading skills in language classes that is more oriented toward students' own perceptions of the reading process. Students' understanding as language learners is not hindered by doubts about whether their thoughts are correct or incorrect because they express themselves based on their own perceptions. Therefore, it is expected that English lecturers provide opportunities for students to express their thoughts freely. Students will not feel judged as the primary goal, reflecting on the reading process instead. In other words, reading journals aim to facilitate a deeper and more reflective understanding of the text being read by students.

English language learning as a foreign language heavily relies on the use of written texts. The main focus is on deep comprehension of texts, through comprehensive questions, text-oriented tasks, and understanding lexical meanings. Therefore, the active role of the reader in creating meaning, especially in understanding words denotatively, is crucial. This research shows the benefits of applying extensive reading to develop literacy skills. As a result, Reading Journals have emerged as a highly valuable tool for reflecting on the reading process (Mawarni & Muhtadi, 2017). From a reading perspective, Reading Journals are seen as reading resources that provide insights into what happens during the reading process and allow for the expression of personal feelings.

Students in the English literature program in the Reading Comprehension course have generally not yet demonstrated good proficiency. Based on an analysis of 75 students who have completed this course, 65% have insufficient reading skills. Based on interviews conducted by the researcher with students, two major problems and difficulties were identified in the Reading Comprehension course: first, students struggle to understand complex and intricate sentences, such as passive sentences, compound sentences, and clauses. Second, their weak ability to comprehend individual sentences affects their overall understanding of the text. Compound sentences and clauses are complex sentences made up of combined simple sentences. In reading texts, sentences are often not just simple in structure, consisting of only a subject, predicate, and object; instead, they often include additional elements such as clauses, adverbs, and adjectives

to provide more information in the sentence. To address these issues, the researcher plans to innovate to improve students' reading skills.

Considering the importance of the Reading Comprehension course in the competence of English Literature students, as well as the challenges faced by English Literature students in a technology-based environment, the researcher plans to conduct a study titled "The Application of Blog-Based Reading Journals to Improve Reading Comprehension Skills of English Literature Students at Unimed through Blog-Based Reading Journals (RJBB)." Through RJBB, the goal is to encourage students to practice more actively and independently, leading to more consistent learning outcomes. This experience can inspire them to become more innovative and creative in learning integrated material, generating new ideas, and achieving remarkable language learning outcomes.

1.1 Research Problem Statement

Based on the background provided, the research problem for this study is formulated as follows: How are the learning outcomes in reading comprehension of English literature students whose the "Blog-Based Reading Journal" approach in their coursework at the English Literature Department of Universitas Negeri Medan?, Is there an influence of the Blog-Based Reading Journal on the reading comprehension learning outcomes of English literature students at Universitas Negeri Medan?

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

- 1) To determine the reading comprehension learning outcomes of English literature students who use the "Blog-Based Reading Journal" approach in their coursework at the English Literature Department of Universitas Negeri Medan.
- 2) To investigate whether the Blog-Based Reading Journal has an impact on the reading comprehension learning outcomes of English literature students at Universitas Negeri Medan.

1.3 Reading

Reading is the act of viewing written text, during which the brain processes and comprehends its content, whether through oral or silent reading. Ardiansyah and Rakhmawati (2013) describe reading as a motor activity where the eyes move across the text being read, with the information then processed cognitively, involving reasoning, memory, and understanding. Similarly, Karmiani (2018) suggests that reading is one of the highest functions of the human brain. Further explains that reading is a complex activity that includes physical movement (eye movement and visual acuity), mental engagement (memory), and comprehension. Effective reading requires clear vision, normal eye movement, and an understanding of both the language and its structure.

Understanding letters and phonetic symbols is crucial in the reading process, as readers can only effectively grasp the information in the text if they have a solid knowledge of vocabulary, sentences, and text organization. Additionally, a study by found a correlation between vocabulary and syntactic knowledge with reading comprehension among university students in Taiwan. Therefore, since language comprehension is fundamental to learning a language, language courses should provide as much exposure to written texts and spoken discourse as possible. Written texts are even claimed to contribute to new grammatical knowledge and the development of the reader's competence

In conclusion, the reading process is an activity guided by the text's surface structure (Cecilia and Ojeda, 2016). Readers assemble letters to form words, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs to achieve overall meaning. Assertion that reading is a process in which readers combine information from the text with their background knowledge to construct meaning. (Cecilia and

Ojeda, 2016). also state that texts serve as important tools for exchanging ideas, opening cross-cultural dialogues, and broadening readers' perspectives. When readers find connections between the stories and their own lives, everything becomes more meaningful, engaging, and significantly more interesting. In short, Cecilia and Ojeda, (2016). describe reading as an animated process that requires active participation from the reader and the development of critical interaction.

1.4 Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension differs significantly from ordinary reading. It requires a higher level of focus and ability compared to regular reading (Sulistyo, 2017). Wahyuni (2016) and M. Nur Hakim et al. (2023) describes reading comprehension as a process of examining the information within a text, which is layered, interactive, and involves the formation and testing of hypotheses. who defines reading comprehension as a complex intellectual process that involves various skills. These skills include understanding word meanings and verbal reasoning, as without these, comprehension cannot occur; without reading comprehension, reading itself is incomplete. Therefore, to engage in reading comprehension, one must have an understanding of how to read. Reading and comprehension are inseparable activities.

When engaging in reading comprehension, readers often have specific goals they aim to achieve. Explain that the objectives of reading comprehension include identifying the main ideas of sentences, paragraphs, and discourses within the text; selecting key points; determining the organization of the text; drawing conclusions; inferring meanings and predicting impacts; summarizing the content; distinguishing between facts and opinions; and obtaining information from various sources, including books, encyclopedias, atlases, maps, and others.

1.7 Reading Journal Strategy

Reading journals offer a way for readers to express their personal feelings during the reading process. This aligns with Karmiani (2018) who state that readers should be given opportunities to voice their thoughts without feeling that judgment is the primary goal, allowing them to reflect on their reading process. Through reading journals, readers are viewed as active participants in the interpretation of a text's meaning, requiring an interactive exchange between their background knowledge and the text itself.

According to Cecilia and Ojeda (2016) there are four stages in the application of reading journals:

- 1) Contextual Stage: This initial stage aims to refresh the reader and immerse them in the actual reading environment. Here, students can retrieve important information and reactivate previously formed schemata. This stage comprises three perspectives: time and place, the reader's mindset, and bibliographic references.
- 2) Pre-Textual Stage: The purpose of this stage is to capture the reader's attention, specifically to engage students with the content of the text. Students will explicitly focus on what they will develop after completing the reading journal. This process is also beneficial for activating prior knowledge by highlighting the formal aspects of the text. This stage emphasizes the reader as a subject who can convey knowledge, experiences, thoughts, and frameworks within the text.
- 3) Textual Stage: This is the most complex stage of reading journals. The text serves as a framework for the reader's focus, cultural context, and the scope of background knowledge. The primary focus is on constructing the text's meaning in a way that aligns with the reader's cognitive patterns. This stage addresses formal challenges (grammatical, pragmatic, morphological, semantic), conceptual obstacles, application, experience, and operational meaning, as well as interpretation. The interpretation of a story at this stage is an essential document for appreciating the reader's development through various life stages. During rereading, interpretations may be influenced by modifications or enriched by new experiences.

4) Post-Textual Stage: In this final stage, readers express what they have discovered from the text. They discuss whether the story's content aligns with their expectations. Thus, readers undergo four processes in applying reading journals: recognizing the context of the story, identifying their own expectations for the text, understanding the reading process, and solidifying or discovering new insights from the reading. This process helps determine whether students have met their expectations from the text they have read. The experience of reading a story in accordance with the steps of reading journals will be reflected in the attention given to the text and the comprehension of the reading material.

1.8 Blog

A blog (short for "web log") is a web application that allows users to upload content in the form of written posts on a webpage. A web application is a software tool within a computer or internet system designed to assist users in operating the website. As noted by Widyaningsih (2021), a web application is an information system on the internet that enables users to interact through a web-based interface. In essence, a web application is software that runs on various web browsers like Internet Explorer, Mozilla, Chrome, Opera, and others (Pratama & Shomedran, 2023). A blog is one such web application that can be used on these browsers.

who broke the word "weblog" into the phrase "we blog" on his blog page in 1999 (Tasya et al., 2023). According to Susantyo et al. (2023), a blog exists on a website and is more than just a list of links; it is not merely a reflective online journal. The 2004 Computer Glossary defines a blog as a list of journal entries posted on a webpage. Anyone who knows how to create and publish a webpage can publish their own blog. Several web hosts have simplified this process by creating interfaces where users simply type in their text entries and press "publish" to upload their blog.

2 Method

2.1 Research Methodology

This study employs an experimental technique to observe the cause-and-effect relationship between different variables. The process began with formulating the research problem, identifying low reading comprehension skills among English literature students at Universitas Negeri Medan, and defining the objectives to explore the potential of blog-based reading journals in addressing this issue. Subsequently, the study proceeded to formulate hypotheses, proposing that the integration of blog-based reading journals into the Reading Comprehension course would positively impact students' ability to understand complex sentence structures and enhance their overall text comprehension.

Following this, the intervention was implemented as part of the experimental technique, involving two groups: a treatment group using blog-based reading journals and a control group employing traditional reading practices. The intervention lasted six months, during which the treatment group completed assignments designed to foster reflective and active reading habits. To test the hypothesis, pre-test and post-test assessments were conducted, comparing the performance of the two groups. Quantitative data were analyzed using paired t-tests, while qualitative data from questionnaires and interviews were thematically analyzed to capture students' perceptions and experiences. The findings were then used to draw conclusions, demonstrating the effectiveness of the blog-based reading journals in significantly improving students' reading comprehension skills, thereby supporting the hypothesis. The results were documented in a research report, including discussions on the methodology, findings, and

recommendations for future studies. This systematic and cyclical approach ensured a comprehensive exploration of the research problem and contributed valuable insights to the discourse on technology-enhanced learning in language education.

2.2 Research Location and Time

The research will be conducted at the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Medan. The research will take place during the even semester of 2024, with a duration of 6 months.

2.3 Research Subjects

The subjects of this research will be students enrolled in the Reading Comprehension course from the English Literature Study Program at Universitas Negeri Medan. A total of 60 students will participate in the effectiveness test; they will be divided into two groups: the treatment group (30 students) and the control group (30 students). This division allows for a comparative analysis between the treatment and control groups, providing a more comprehensive perspective on the effectiveness of the evaluated product.

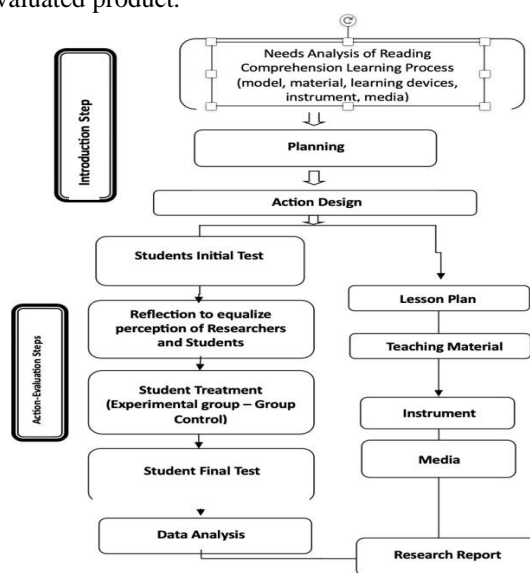


Figure 1. Research Procedure

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2.4 Research Design

This study utilizes a one-group pre-test and post-test design. According to Arikunto (2009), this research design involves administering a pre-test before the treatment and a post-test after the treatment. This combination of designs is chosen to examine how students in the English Literature Study Program can improve their reading comprehension skills through blog-based reading journals. The implementation of the effectiveness test in this research is visualized as follows:

Table 1. Research Design

Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
O1	X1	O2

Explanation:

- O1: Initial Test Before Treatment
- O2: Final Test After Treatment
- X1: Treatment Process

2.5 Research Instruments

Several data collection instruments will be used in this study. During the learning process, student behavior will be observed closely. Respondents will receive questionnaires to gather their opinions on the blog-based reading journal approach. Additionally, interviews will be conducted to explore students' understanding and perspectives more deeply. To assess students' proficiency in reading comprehension, multiple-choice tests will be employed. The use of these various instruments aims to provide comprehensive and detailed data, allowing for a more thorough analysis of the impact of the blog-based reading journals technique on students' reading comprehension.

2.6 Data Collection Techniques

- Data will be collected from observations and field notes during needs analysis, expert validation, and both limited and comprehensive product testing.
- Subjects with expertise in media and content will be assessed using questionnaires.
- Data on writing performance will be collected using validated process instruments. Pre-tests and post-tests will be employed to gather this data.

The research data will be obtained both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data will be based on sentences, while quantitative data will consist of scores/numbers. To test the differences in means between the control group and the experimental group, a t-test statistical analysis will be used. The SPSS 22 software will be utilized for statistical computation procedures.

3 Results and Discussion

This section provides a detailed analysis of the findings from the study and discusses their implications for the effectiveness of blog-based reading journals in improving students' reading comprehension skills.

3.1 Quantitative Findings from the Questionnaire

- Overall Perception of Blog-Based Reading Journals:
 - Satisfaction Level: The majority of students (80%) expressed high satisfaction with the blog-based reading journals. They valued the interactive and reflective nature of the journals, which contributed to increased engagement with the reading material. This positive perception aligns with previous research suggesting that interactive tools can enhance student engagement and motivation (Widyarningsih, 2021).
 - Ease of Use: 75% of students found the blog platform user-friendly. However, 15% faced technical difficulties, which impacted their use of the platform. The technical issues reported are consistent with findings from other studies highlighting the challenges of integrating technology in educational settings (Pratama & Shomedran, 2023).
 - Frequency of Use: While 70% of students used the blogs consistently, 20% faced challenges due to time constraints or technical issues. This variation suggests a need for strategies to support consistent usage, such as flexible deadlines or additional technical support.
- Impact on Reading Comprehension:

- Improvement in Understanding Complex Sentences: 65% of students felt that the blog-based reading journals helped them better understand complex sentence structures. The reflective practice of writing journal entries enabled students to clarify and solidify their understanding, which supports the idea that writing and reflection can enhance comprehension (Mawarni & Muhtadi, 2017).
 - Enhanced Comprehension Skills: 60% of students reported improved overall reading comprehension. The use of blogs encouraged deeper engagement with texts, aligning with research that emphasizes the benefits of interactive reading strategies for comprehension Karmiani (2018)
 - Increased Motivation: 55% of students felt more motivated to read due to the interactive nature of the journals. This finding is consistent with studies indicating that engaging and interactive tools can boost motivation and active learning (Aisyah et al., 2020).
- 3) Challenges and Areas for Improvement:
- Technical Difficulties: The technical issues faced by 15% of students, such as login problems and formatting issues, highlight the need for improved technical support. Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring that all students can fully benefit from the blog-based journals.
 - Time Management: The struggle with time management reported by 20% of students suggests that balancing blog entries with other academic responsibilities can be challenging. Adjusting deadlines or providing additional support could help alleviate this issue.
 - Initial Adjustment Period: The difficulty faced by 10% of students in adapting to the blog-based journals indicates a need for clearer guidance and initial support. Providing structured instructions and examples could facilitate a smoother transition.

4 Conclusion

The findings indicate that the blog-based reading journals had a generally positive impact on students' reading comprehension skills. The majority of students reported satisfaction with the approach, improvements in their comprehension skills, and increased motivation. However, challenges such as technical difficulties and time management issues need to be addressed to maximize the effectiveness of the intervention. The positive outcomes observed support the use of blog-based reading journals as an effective tool for enhancing reading comprehension. The reflective and interactive nature of the journals promotes deeper engagement with texts and facilitates independent learning. Addressing the identified challenges and incorporating suggested improvements can further enhance the effectiveness of this approach.

Overall, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse on innovative pedagogical practices in language education and highlights the potential of technology-enhanced learning environments to elevate literacy skills. In light of the findings presented, several recommendations are offered to address the issues identified and to improve future outcomes:

- Technical Support: Students suggested that providing more robust technical support and troubleshooting resources could address the technical difficulties they encountered. Implementing these suggestions could improve the overall user experience and effectiveness of the blog-based journals.
- Guidance and Structure: Offering more structured guidelines and examples for writing journal entries was recommended to help students better understand how to use the platform and structure their reflections. This additional support could enhance the quality and effectiveness of the journal entries.
- Peer Interaction: Increasing opportunities for peer reviews and collaborative discussions within the blog platform could foster a more interactive learning environment. Enhancing

peer interaction can further enrich students' learning experiences and provide valuable feedback.

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