

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Since reading enables students to comprehend, interpret, and analyze written texts, it is considered one of the most essential skills in learning English. Reading comprehension plays a crucial role in students' academic achievement across various subjects and disciplines. However, many students still experience difficulties in understanding English texts due to limited vocabulary, low reading motivation, and the use of less engaging learning media.

Along with the rapid advancement of technology, digital learning media such as e-books have become increasingly popular and widely implemented in classroom instruction. Unlike traditional printed books, e-books offer interactive features such as note-taking, highlighting, built-in dictionaries, audio narration, and visual support. These features provide multimodal assistance that can facilitate comprehension, increase student engagement, and promote independent learning in reading activities.

The integration of e-books in classroom instruction reflects a shift from traditional teacher-centered approaches toward more flexible and student-centered learning environments. Despite their potential benefits, the use of e-

book features in English reading instruction remains underexplored, particularly in Islamic secondary schools. This gap highlights the need for research that examines how e-book features are utilized in authentic classroom contexts, as well as the benefits and challenges experienced by students.

In this context, Al Mazaya Islamic School implements digital learning through the use of *English for Nusantara*, a government-provided digital English textbook designed for junior secondary students. This e-book serves as the primary learning material in English reading instruction and is regularly accessed by students during classroom activities. *English for Nusantara* is equipped with interactive features, including audio narration, built-in dictionaries, interactive images, highlighting tools, and comprehension quizzes, which are designed to support students' engagement and understanding of English texts. Its consistent use in reading lessons makes this e-book a relevant medium for examining how specific e-book features contribute to students' reading comprehension development.

From an Islamic perspective, reading and the pursuit of knowledge hold a central and fundamental position. The importance of knowledge and understanding is emphasized in the Qur'an, as stated in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:269):

إِلَّا يَذَّكَّرُ وَمَا كَثِيرًا خَيْرًا أُوتِيَ فَقَدْ الْحِكْمَةَ يُؤْتِ وَمَنْ يَشَاءَ مِنَ الْحِكْمَةِ يُؤْتِي
 ٣٦٩ ﴿٣٦٩﴾ الْأَلْبَابِ أُولُوا

This verse highlights that wisdom and understanding are valuable gifts from Allah, granted to those who seek knowledge and reflect deeply. It encourages learners to continuously pursue understanding through various means, including the use of contemporary educational tools.

Furthermore, the Qur'an distinguishes clearly between those who possess knowledge and those who do not, as stated in Surah Az-Zumar (39:9):

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُوا رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ
قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ
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This verse emphasizes the importance of knowledge as a distinguishing characteristic of meaningful learning and intellectual awareness. It reminds educators and learners alike of the need to adopt effective and adaptive approaches in the learning process.

Most importantly, the concept of reading is explicitly emphasized in the first revelation of the Qur'an, Surah Al-'Alaq (96:1–5), which begins with the command “*Iqra*” (Read):

وَرَبُّكَ إِقْرَأْ ١ عَلَّمَ مِنَ الْإِنْسَانِ خَلَقَ ٢ خَلَقَ الَّذِي رَبِّكَ بِاسْمِ إِقْرَأْ
يَعْلَمُ لَمْ مَا الْإِنْسَانِ عَلَّمَ ٤ بِالْقَلَمِ عَلَّمَ الَّذِي ٣ الْأَكْرَمُ

This command signifies that reading is not merely an academic activity but a divine instruction that forms the foundation of learning, intellectual development, and human advancement. In the context of English language

learning, reading comprehension becomes an essential means for students to access knowledge, interpret information, and develop critical thinking skills.

Several studies have emphasized the potential of digital reading media in improving reading comprehension. Sunarti et al., (2021) found that e-reader applications improved students' ability to identify main ideas, increased motivation, and supported comprehension development. Similarly, Rinantanti et al., (2024) reported that online reading tools promoted strategic reading behavior and improved comprehension through digital features. However, these studies mainly focused on general perceptions and strategies rather than examining specific e-book features and their contribution to reading comprehension, particularly in Islamic educational contexts.

Therefore, the integration of e-book features in English reading instruction aligns not only with pedagogical objectives but also with Islamic values that emphasize literacy, knowledge acquisition, and continuous learning. In response to this rationale, the present study aims to explore how students at Al Mazaya Islamic School utilize specific e-book features in learning English reading comprehension, as well as to identify the benefits and challenges encountered during their implementation within an Islamic secondary school context.

B. Definition of Key Terms

1. E-Book

In English learning, e-books are often used as reading media that help students understand stories, texts, or passages interactively. In this study, the term *e-book* refers to the digital reading medium used by students at Al Mazaya Islamic School for English learning, namely *English for Nusantara*. This e-book serves as the primary instructional and reading material in the classroom and provides various interactive features to support students' comprehension of English texts. Access to *English for Nusantara* is limited to the school and its students, as the e-book is officially provided and utilized exclusively within the learning system of Al Mazaya Islamic School.

2. E-Book Features

E-book Features in this research contain any digital tool or function provided in an e-book to help students interact with the text and understand the content comprehensively. In addition, the features are limited to those that are observed during the lesson, based on the observation sheets and interview instruments. The features observed are stated as below:

- a. Text highlighting.
- b. Dictionary or word search.

- c. Audio or voice narration.
- d. Interactive quizzes.
- e. Bookmarking.
- f. Digital notes or annotation.
- g. Glossary or interactive images.

3. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension refers on how students at Al Mazaya Islamic School understand and interpret English texts. Through the use of e-book features, it covers their ability to identify main ideas, clarify supporting details, and find the meanings from digital texts with the help of interactive tools. Following Grabe in (2008), comprehension here is viewed not merely as linguistic decoding but as a digital mediated process for the students to employ features in E-book. This definition aligns with the study's focus on examining how e-book features facilitate students' comprehension processes and overcome difficulties in reading English texts.

C. Research Questions

The research questions of this research are designed to explore how students use e-book features in learning English reading comprehension. The questions are as follows:

1. How do students explore and utilize e-book features in learning English reading comprehension at Al Mazaya Islamic School?
2. What benefits students get from utilizing e-book features to enhance their reading comprehension?
3. What challenges do students face when using e-book features in reading activities?

D. Objectives of Study

The objectives of this research are formulated based on the research questions above. The objectives are:

1. To describe how students explore and utilize e-book features in learning English reading comprehension at Al Mazaya Islamic School.
2. To identify benefit the students get from utilizing e-book features to enhance their reading comprehension.
3. To identify the challenges students face when using e-book features in reading activities.

E. Significance of Study

The significance of this study is categorized into two main aspects: theoretical significance and practical significance.

- a. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this research contributes to the field of English language education by enriching existing literature on the integration of digital learning media, particularly e-books, in reading comprehension instruction. This study provides empirical insights into how specific e-book features, such as audio narration, digital dictionaries, highlighting tools, and interactive quizzes, support students' reading comprehension processes.

Furthermore, the findings of this study strengthen theoretical perspectives related to technology-enhanced learning, digital literacy, and multimodal reading comprehension. By examining e-book usage within an authentic classroom context, especially in an Islamic secondary school setting, this research extends previous studies and offers a contextualized understanding of how digital tools function in EFL reading instruction. Thus, this study may serve as a theoretical reference for future research related to digital reading, instructional media, and language learning theories.

b. Practical Significance

Practically, this research provides valuable benefits for various educational stakeholders:

1. For English Teachers, the findings offer practical insights into how students utilize e-book features during reading activities. By understanding students' interaction with e-book tools, teachers can

identify learning difficulties, design more effective reading strategies, and optimize the use of digital media to enhance students' reading comprehension.

2. For Schools and Educational Institutions, particularly those interested in implementing digital learning, this study provides useful references regarding the benefits and challenges of using e-books in English reading instruction. The findings can support schools in making informed decisions about adopting e-books and improving digital-based learning environments.
3. For Future Researchers, this study can serve as a reference and supporting material for conducting similar research on digital learning media, reading comprehension, or technology-enhanced language learning. It may also inspire further studies exploring the use of other digital tools in different English language skills such as listening, speaking, and writing.