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STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES ON PROMOTING READING INTEREST THROUGH *WATTPAD* PLATFORM

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Abstract
This study investigates students' perspectives toward Wattpad on promoting reading and what reading components are affected by Wattpad. A descriptive qualitative method was applied in this study in which questionnaire and interview were employed as the instruments for data collection. This research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Langsa, Aceh, where the second-grade students were chosen as the participants of this study. The result of the questionnaire showed that all of the students felt that Wattpad was able to promote their reading interest and they also agreed that activities on the platform helped them learn about literature and increased their reading skill. Meanwhile, findings indicated that from interview revealed that vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension are the components of reading that were most affected the students by reading. The students' vocabulary is increased significantly since they can learn new words from the stories they have read on Wattpad.

Keywords: *Reading Components, Wattpad, Students' Perspectives*

INTRODUCTION

Reading involves more than decoding written symbols; it requires readers to actively construct meaning through cognitive engagement. In educational settings, reading plays a crusial role in helping learners access information, interpret ideas critically and support broader language development. This cognitive activity according to Alfassi (2004) will be essential for effective functioning and information gathering in modern society. The growth of digital technology has transformed reading practice, allowing learners to engage with a wide range of online platforms that provide accessible literally material. Digital reading applications have consequently become alternative spaces for supporting students' reading engagement such as *Webtoon*, *Bloggers*, *Wordpress* and *Wattpad*, to name a few. One of the most popular online reading applications used by public today is *Wattpad*.

Wattpad is an online reading application allowing users to read and/or compose stories by the authors themselves, which then can be read by people all over the world. In *Wattpad*, people can find multitude literary works with various genres, such as fictional stories, short stories, science fiction stories, poetries and others. In other words, *Wattpad* is the largest global community as well as social platform for finding and sharing stories. Interestingly, it is a brand-new kind of entertainment that connects readers and authors together through the storytelling, and it is completely free. Thousands of new stories are uploaded every day for reader community which are available and ready to be accessed and read through computers, phones,

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or tablets. In addition, *Wattpad* is an application that provides amazing mobile reading experiences for readers.

As a learning media, *Wattpad* has many advantages in promoting reader-response theory to EFL college students (Davies, 2017). Moreover, there are numerous studies using *Wattpad* as a media to learn literature. Rahman and Iwan (2019) found that *Wattpad* platform can be used to publish literary works students in the form of prose to further obtain constructive peer to peer feedback. Similar to Rahman and Iwan, Sari (2016) found that students were more interested in using the media and actively giving comments to express their feelings or ideas after reading stories there, which means that *Wattpad* helps students in learning literary works.

Based on the description above, this research was conducted to find out students' perspectives and experiences toward *Wattpad* platform on promoting their reading competency in SMAN 1 Langsa, Aceh. Using *Wattpad* as the object for this study is due to the fact that students are practically able to access any sort of books they want and find interesting to read. Additionally, students do not need to buy, borrow, or pay anything to use *Wattpad* since all they need is a mobile phone, which basically everyone now possesses. Wattpad allows students to develop their literacy skills since Wattpad has wide range of texts in the form of stories. The stories can help students' reading comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, phonics, and phonemic awareness.

Definition of Reading

Reading is one of the most important language skills. Reading gives students access to information and knowledge, encourages them to think critically and develop their communication skills. As Hacker (2009) states that reading is a complicated mental activity involving several interactions such as information processing, thinking, and learning. Reading is not only the process of seeing letters and words, it requires comprehension and interpretation. Promoting reading interest is highly important since it can help students build their vocabulary, improve their reading skills, and support their language skills.

Reading Components

Reading activity consists of several components. The National Reading Pane (2000) states that there are 5 essential components needed to make up the process of reading skill, including fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, phonemic awareness, and phonics.

Fluency

Recent scholarship has consistently emphasized that vocabulary knowledge, fluency and comprehension operate interdependently in reading development (Paige, 2020; O'Toole,2023)

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the smallest unit of language. The sentences that are brought to others to express feelings, thoughts, and needs are basically a sequence of phrases which has meaning. It is going to be difficult if people no longer have enough vocabulary. They will be no longer capable of delivering their messages, thoughts, feelings, and needs to others (Sevelntilofa, 2021).

Comprehension

Tarigan as cited in Miranda (2019) states that comprehension skills include the following aspects, i.e. (a) understanding easy understanding (lexical, grammatical, rhetorical); (b) understanding the significance or meaning (the author's rationale and purpose, the relevance or state of the culture, and readers' reactions); (c) evaluation or assessment (inclusive of content material and form), and (d) Flexible reading speed, that is without problems adjusted to best

circumstances.

Phonemic awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to manage and organize individual phonemes (consonant or vowel sounds) to form words. Although this may appear to be similar to phonics, there is a distinction between them. Phonemic awareness refers to sound–word knowledge, whereas phonics is concerned with letter–sound knowledge. As a result, phonemic awareness focuses on listening comprehension rather than reading words on a page. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the relationship between letters and phonemes in order to master the alphabetic principle (O'toole, 2023). Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate individual sounds in words. For example, the word am has two phonemes, /a/ /m/ while the word, look has three, /l/ /oo/ /k/. Phonemic awareness activities are totally auditory. Pictures can be used to represent the word, but print is never present. Students listen for the number of sounds, identify the first, middle, and last sounds in words, and manipulate sounds to make new words.

Phonics

According to Sarwono (2013), phonics is a way of teaching children how to read and write. It helps children hear, identify and use different sounds that distinguish one word form another in English language. Phonics is the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (the sound of spoken language) and graphemes (the letters and spellings that present those sounds in written language). In other words, based on the method that the students study reading comprehension about the relationship between letters and sounds, this method can help them how to read word of English well.

Wattpad

The popularity of internet entertainment is growing, with the majority of viewers being teenagers or students. It is undeniably true that it does not always have a positive impact on individuals. Nowadays, the advancement of technology has enabled students to do many activities online. Additionally, the presence of internet connection allows learners to gain access to an enormous amount of authentic materials to make English learning more enjoyable (Dang, 2011).

The transformation of the conventional book industry into digital seems to make conventional books increasingly abandoned due to the electronic book (e-book) that has engaged the reader's need for books. In addition, for practical and economical reasons, it does not need to think of heavy book weight, unworry about the risk of damaged books such as torn or wet and it can also be downloaded easily even some are free. A wide selection of application is present for those who love to read. From the newspapers, comics, magazines, novels, and even scriptures can be read. There are quite many onlilne reading platforms which are available on internet such as *Wattpad*, *Google Books*, *Glose*, *Tumblr*, *Goodreads*, and so forth. These platforms enable their users to read extensively online (Rahman and Amir, 2019).

METHODS

Research Design

The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore how student perceive the use of Wattpad in fostering reading interest. The approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to capture participants' viewpoints and experiences rather than measure causal relationship. Descriptive research can be either quantitative or qualitative. Therefore, this study employed two main instruments for collecting data, i.e. questionnaire and interview. According to Nassaji (2015), a qualitative descriptive method is a method of

researching an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought to make a description, a systematic, factual and accurate description of the facts, properties, and relationships between the phenomena investigated.

In this research, twenty students who actively used Wattpad were purposively selected as participants. Purposive sampling was adopted to ensure that all respondents had direct experience with the platform being investigated. for the main reason for choosing this school as the research location is that owing to the fact the school is one of the leading schools in Langsa and it has prominent academic achievement in English subject, which meets the need with this study since it is expected that the students from the school might have avid interest in reading *Wattpad* as their English learning medium.

Data were gathered through two complementary instruments, namely a close-ended questionnaire and semi-structure interviews. The questionnaire was intended to identify general response patterns and modified from Anggitasari et al (2020). According to Griffe (2012), the purpose of including closed-ended item is to provide quantifiable data about the construct of interest, a closed-ended item either asks the questionnaire-taker, called a respondent, to make choice between two options or ask respondent to choose an option that some way produces a number. As a result, close-ended items are often easier and faster to answer. For this study, there were fifteen questions in the questionnaire about their perceptions and experiences when using *Wattpad* in relation to their reading interest needed to be answered by the respondents. for the second instrument, interview provided deeper explanations of students' experience that could not be capture quantitatively. Sugiyono (2017) defines a semi-structured interview as a data collection technique in conducting a study to identify problems that need to be investigated, in addition to finding out more in-depth information from fewer respondents. The interview questions were adapted from Miranda (2019) consisting of five questions. All the interview sessions were audiotaped.

Since this study employed a qualitative descriptive method, the data analysis follows the procedure suggested by Miles (2014) in which the process includes collecting data, condensation of data, displaying data and drawing the conclusion. After collecting data from twenty students who were users or readers of *Wattpad*, through a set of close-ended questionnaire for each respondent and interview, the researcher condenses the data by selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data from the written-up field notes or the audio transcriptions. Then, the irrelevant, redundant, and overlapped data were reduced. In displaying the data from questionnaire and interview to illustrate the findings, they were written in the form of tables and narration. The final step for data analysis in this study is drawing the conclusion. At this phase, the researcher rechecked the data analysis in order to avoid the mistakes made in previous stages during the analysis.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings indicate that students associated Wattpad enjoyable and self-directed reading practice. Easy access to diverse genres appeared to contribute to reading engagement, while interactive features such as comments and feedback strengthened students' involvement with texts. These results suggest that digital reading environment may support motivational dimensions of literacy development.

Table 1: The Percentage Of Students' Responses

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QUESTION	SD		D		N		A		SA		TOTAL		average
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Q1	0	0.00	2	10.00	11	55.00	7	35.00	0	0.00	20	100.00	3.25
Q2	0	0.00	5	25.00	5	25.00	9	45.00	1	5.00	20	100.00	3.3
Q3	0	0.00	0	0.00	7	35.00	10	50.00	3	15.00	20	100.00	3.8
Q4	0	0.00	0	0.00	5	25.00	7	35.00	8	40.00	20	100.00	4.15
Q5	0	0.00	4	20.00	9	45.00	5	25.00	2	10.00	20	100.00	3.25
Q6	1	5.00	15	75.00	3	15.00	1	5.00	0	0.00	20	100.00	2.2
Q7	0	0.00	2	10.00	7	35.00	10	50.00	1	5.00	20	100.00	3.5
Q8	0	0.00	2	10.00	7	35.00	10	50.00	1	5.00	20	100.00	3.5
Q9	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	20.00	13	65.00	3	15.00	20	100.00	3.95
Q10	0	0.00	1	5.00	2	10.00	15	75.00	2	10.00	20	100.00	3.9
Q11	0	0.00	11	55.00	4	20.00	5	25.00	0	0.00	20	100.00	2.7
Q12	0	0.00	1	5.00	5	25.00	14	70.00	0	0.00	20	100.00	3.65
Q13	0	0.00	14	70.00	4	20.00	2	10.00	0	0.00	20	100.00	2.4
Q14	0	0.00	0	0.00	8	40.00	10	50.00	2	10.00	20	100.00	3.7
Q15	0	0.00	0	0.00	7	35.00	11	55.00	2	10.00	20	100.00	3.75

The Affected Reading Components

Based on the data from the interview, it was found that among five reading components such as phonemic awareness, phonic, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension, a large number of the respondents chose vocabulary, fluency and comprehension as the reading components affected them most when reading stories through *Wattpad*. They realized that vocabulary is one of the most effective reading components in improving reading skills because it increases their knowledge of new vocabulary. Sinatra, Zygouris, & Dasinger (2011) also confirm this finding that knowledge of vocabulary meaning affects children's abilities to understand and use words appropriately during the language acts of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The respondents also agreed that *Wattpad* has helped them a great deal improve their vocabulary building because of the choice of vocabulary or diction used by the author. Moreover, the students chose fluency because they realized fluency is important since it is believed that many people read while reciting what they read in enhancing their pronunciation skills for a word or sentence and the speed at which one can read connected text. It is in accordance with what Paige (2020) suggests that reading fluency has been through multiple conceptualizations. These include the rapid reading of individual words, reading words correcty, the speed at which one can read connected text, and reading with expression.

Discussion

Students Perspective Toward Wattpad in Promoting Reading Skill

As previously mentioned on the findings, the students perceived reading on *Wattpad* as a fun and enjoyable activity since it provided them enormous reading materials in various genres that they could select based on their personal interests. In an effective component, the students felt happy doing the activity on the platform with all the features it provides. This result is consistent with Anjani & Fathurrahman (2025) finding that students' interest in reading are enhanced by Wattpad since it provides easy access to a great amount of stories in diverse genres and allows them to interact with other readers through comment and voting feature.

Moreover, the students revealed that they discovered the platform and encouraged themselves to use it for reading activity. Looking deeper towards their perceptions reading on *Wattpad*, the result of this study is similar with the previous study conducted by Rahayu (2019),

in which all of the respondents felt that Wattpad promoted their reading interest, which means that Wattpad can encourage someone's reading. The respondents also agreed that the activity on the platform helped the students to learn about literature and can increase their reading skill.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the findings support the pedagogical potential of Wattpad as a supplementary digital literacy resource in EFL contexts. Students perceived the platform as contributing positively to reading interest while supporting vocabulary enrichment, fluency development and comprehension growth. Future studies may extend this work by comparing multiple online reading platform or examining measurable impacts on reading performance.

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