

Implementation of A Blog-Based Journal Reading Strategy to Improve the Reading Comprehension Ability of UNIMED English Literature Students

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of a blog-based reading journal strategy on improving reading comprehension among English Literature students at Universitas Negeri Medan. Conducted over six months in 2024, the research involved 60 students who documented their reflections and analyses of assigned readings on blog platforms. The methodology included qualitative and quantitative approaches, with a rubric assessing comprehension, analytical skills, reflection depth, and coherence. Results showed significant improvement in reading comprehension, with 80% of students rating the overall experience highly and 100% finding the blog content very helpful. Critical and analytical thinking skills also improved, with 60% of students rating this aspect highest. Students were comfortable using the blog platform and suggested extending session durations and incorporating more visual aids. The study concludes that the blog-based strategy effectively enhances reading comprehension, engagement, and critical thinking, supporting its continued use and exploration in educational settings.

KEYWORDS

Reading comprehension; blog-based reading journal; educational technology

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the skills that every English language student should possess. Reading proficiency can be acquired by language learners through continuous practice. The more frequently individuals engage in reading exercises, the more adept they become at acquiring and applying reading skills. One effective method to enhance reading proficiency is through extensive reading. Reading is a process where readers combine information from the text with their background knowledge to construct meaning (Anderson and Nunan, 2008). According to Anderson and Nunan, reading enables readers to derive meaning from texts through active engagement. To comprehend texts, readers undergo a process that integrates information from the text with their background knowledge. This highlights that texts become more comprehensible to readers when they possess relevant background knowledge related to the content and language of the readings, particularly for English language learners in Indonesia where English is a foreign language.

English language learners acquire meaning and absorb language through reading (Hedge, 2008). In alignment with Hedge, Hammer (2009) emphasizes that reading is an activity that facilitates language absorption. This implies that reading impacts vocabulary acquisition and grammar. By understanding words within texts, both known and new,

readers derive meaning from the texts they read. Lee and Hsu (2009) underscore that readers absorb well-written sources as they learn vocabulary, sentence structures, and text organization. Research by Yu Chen, K (2014) identifies a correlation between vocabulary knowledge, syntactic knowledge, and text comprehension among students in Taiwan. This research also demonstrates that students with higher language proficiency tend to demonstrate better literacy skills, prior knowledge, schemata, and interpretative abilities.

Reading materials play a pivotal role in honing reading skills. Various types of reading materials are available, including fiction and non-fiction. Fiction encompasses genres such as novels, short stories, poetry, and drama, characterized by rich and complex language use and narrative structures that aid students in understanding language application across different contexts. Conversely, non-fiction reading materials such as news articles, essays, and research reports in journal articles offer different contexts where language is used to convey information or arguments clearly and accurately. Journal articles are scholarly publications containing research works and literature reviews by experts in their fields. These articles are typically peer-reviewed to ensure research quality and validity, playing a crucial role in the advancement of science and technology by providing a platform for researchers to share their findings with the academic and general communities, enabling others to build upon their research.

Furthermore, the realm of digital literature and the role of technology, particularly blogs, enhance students' reading skills in education. In academic settings, blogs serve as efficient learning tools, allowing students to access various types of English texts and aiding them in understanding sentence structures, vocabulary, and language nuances (Nugroho, A, 2010).

Reading journals, or journal reading, are tasks assigned to students focusing on the reading process, including pre-, during-, and post-reading stages. In completing these tasks, students engage in reading activities, applying their background knowledge related to the text's content and language. This background enables readers to interact actively with the text they are reading. Tasks in the form of reading journals represent an approach to reading skills in language classes that are more oriented towards students' perceptions of the reading process. Students' understanding as language learners is not hindered by doubts about what they will convey, whether it is right or wrong, as they express themselves based on their own perceptions. Therefore, English language instructors are encouraged to provide opportunities for students to articulate their thoughts. Students will not feel that assessment is the primary goal, reflecting a reflection on the reading process. In other words, reading journals aim to facilitate deeper and more reflective understanding of the texts read by students.

Learning English as a foreign language heavily relies on the use of written texts. The primary focus is on deep text comprehension through comprehensive questions, text-oriented tasks, and lexical meaning comprehension. Therefore, the active role of readers in creating meaning, particularly in understanding words denotatively, is crucial. This research demonstrates the benefits of extensive reading implementation in developing literacy skills. Consequently, reading journals have emerged as highly beneficial tools for demonstrating perceptions of the reading process (Jiménez, J & Cecilia, R., 2004). From a reading perspective, reading journals are seen as reading sources that provide clues about what happens in the reading process and allow for personal expression.

Therefore, the goal of implementing "Reading Journal Based on Blogs" is to encourage students to practice more actively and independently, thereby achieving more consistent learning outcomes. This experience can motivate them to be more innovative and creative

in studying more integrated materials, generating new ideas, and achieving outstanding language learning outcomes.

Considering the important position and role of the Reading Comprehension course in the competencies of English Literature students, without neglecting other courses, and the challenges faced by English Literature students in technology-based learning, researchers plan to conduct a study titled "Implementation of Reading Journal Based on Blogs Strategy to Improve Reading Comprehension Skills of English Literature Students at Universitas Negeri Medan". This effort aims to enhance student learning outcomes in the Reading Comprehension course.

RESEARCH METHODS

This journal article adopts an experimental research design to investigate the effectiveness of the "Reading Journal Based on Blogs" strategy for enhancing reading comprehension skills among English Literature students at the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Medan State University. Following the guidelines outlined by Leedy and Ormrod (2015), the experimental research design was chosen for its ability to establish cause-and-effect relationships by manipulating an independent variable (the blog-based journal strategy) and observing its effect on a dependent variable (reading comprehension skills). The research was conducted during the even semester of 2024, spanning a period of six months. A total of 60 English Literature students participated in the study. The selection of participants was based on their enrollment in the Reading Comprehension course during the research period. Participants were recruited through voluntary participation, ensuring a diverse representation of students within the department. The study was designed with both a control group and an experimental group. The experimental group consisted of 30 students who utilized the "Reading Journal Based on Blogs" strategy, while the control group consisted of 30 students who followed traditional reading comprehension methods. The intervention for the experimental group involved guiding students to maintain reading journals on blogs, where they documented their reflections, analyses, and interpretations of assigned readings. This process encouraged active engagement with texts and facilitated the development of critical reading skills. Data collection methods included both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gather comprehensive insights into the effectiveness of the "Reading Journal Based on Blogs" strategy. Qualitative methods such as interviews and focus group discussions were employed to explore students' perceptions and experiences with the intervention. Quantitative methods involved the use of a rubric to assess the outcomes of the intervention. This rubric included criteria such as comprehension of main ideas, ability to analyze and synthesize information, depth of reflection, and coherence of written responses in the reading journals. Each criterion was evaluated on a scale to provide structured feedback and measure the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing reading comprehension skills. Additionally, pre-tests and post-tests were administered to both groups to quantitatively measure the improvement in reading comprehension skills. The pre-tests were conducted before the intervention, and the post-tests were conducted after the six-month period. The difference in scores provided a clear indication of the impact of the blog-based reading journal strategy compared to traditional methods. The methodology ensured that both qualitative and quantitative data were collected systematically, allowing for a thorough evaluation of the intervention's effectiveness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the blog-based reading journal strategy in improving the reading comprehension skills of English Literature students at Universitas Negeri Medan (UNIMED). The research was conducted over six months during the even semester of 2024 and involved 60 students enrolled in the Reading Comprehension course. The data collected from student feedback and performance provided insights into the impact of this innovative approach.

The majority of students rated their overall experience with the blog-based reading journal activity very highly. Specifically, 80% of students rated the activity as a 5, and 20% rated it as a 4 on a scale of 1 to 5. This indicates that students found the activity engaging and beneficial. Providing journal materials as readings on the blog platform encouraged active engagement and facilitated a deeper understanding of the assigned readings.

Students generally felt comfortable using the blog platform, with 60% rating their comfort level as 5 and 40% as 4. This suggests that students were able to navigate the technical aspects of the blog platform effectively, which is crucial for the successful implementation of digital strategies. Comfort with this platform indicates that digital literacy was effectively integrated into the learning process, making students more proficient in using technology for educational purposes.

Comparison with Traditional Methods

This study also involved a control group using traditional reading comprehension methods to compare the effectiveness of the blog-based reading journal strategy. The experimental group consisted of 30 students using the blog-based journals, while the control group consisted of 30 students using traditional methods.

The results showed that the experimental group using the blog-based reading journal strategy had a more significant improvement in reading comprehension skills compared to the control group. Students in the experimental group demonstrated better abilities in analyzing and interpreting texts and had a deeper understanding of the assigned readings.

- **Improvement in Comprehension Skills:** Students in the experimental group recorded an average improvement of 20% in their reading comprehension skills, while the control group only showed a 10% improvement.
- **Engagement and Interest:** 85% of students in the experimental group reported increased engagement and interest in reading activities, compared to only 60% in the control group.
- **Analytical Skills:** Students in the experimental group also showed significant improvement in their ability to analyze and synthesize information, with 70% rating this skill at the highest level, compared to 50% in the control group.

These differences indicate that the blog-based reading journal strategy is superior in enhancing reading comprehension skills and student engagement compared to traditional reading methods. This highlights the potential of blog-based strategies as an effective tool for more interactive and in-depth education.

The implementation of the blog-based reading journal strategy resulted in a notable improvement in students' reading comprehension skills. A significant number of students reported feeling more confident in their ability to analyze and interpret texts after engaging with the blog-based reading journals. The structured approach of maintaining reading journals on a blog platform facilitated a deeper understanding of the assigned readings. This method provided students with an organized and interactive way to document their

thoughts, reflections, and analyses, which contributed to a more comprehensive grasp of the material.

Feedback from students highlighted several areas for potential enhancement. Some students suggested extending the duration of the sessions to allow for more in-depth discussions and interactions related to the readings. They felt that longer sessions would provide additional time to explore complex literary themes and engage more thoroughly with the content. Additionally, a few students recommended incorporating more visual aids during presentations to further enhance comprehension and engagement. Visual aids could help clarify difficult concepts and make the sessions more interactive and visually stimulating.

Overall, student feedback regarding the blog-based journal reading strategy was overwhelmingly positive, with minimal suggestions for improvement. The majority of students expressed satisfaction with how this approach positively contributed to their learning experience and academic development in English language and literature. The practical application of creating and managing blogs not only improved their reading comprehension skills but also fostered critical thinking, digital literacy, and self-expression. This feedback underscores the potential of blog-based strategies to enhance educational outcomes and student engagement in literature courses. The findings support the continued use and further exploration of blog-based strategies in educational settings to enhance reading comprehension and engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the blog-based reading journal strategy in improving the reading comprehension skills of English Literature students at Universitas Negeri Medan (UNIMED). The research results indicate that this strategy has a significant positive impact on students' reading comprehension skills. The majority of students rated their overall experience with the blog-based reading journal activity very highly, with 80% giving it a rating of 5 and 20% giving it a rating of 4 on a scale of 1 to 5. This shows that students found the activity engaging and beneficial. A comparison between the experimental group using the blog-based reading journal strategy and the control group using traditional methods shows that the blog-based strategy is superior in several aspects. Students in the experimental group recorded an average improvement of 20% in their reading comprehension skills, while the control group only showed a 10% improvement. Additionally, 85% of students in the experimental group reported increased engagement and interest in reading activities, compared to only 60% in the control group. The ability to analyze and synthesize information also improved more in the experimental group, with 70% of students rating this skill at the highest level, compared to 50% in the control group. This indicates that the blog-based reading journal strategy not only enhances reading comprehension but also improves critical analysis skills and student engagement in the learning process. In conclusion, the blog-based reading journal learning model is expected to help students gain a better understanding of the texts they read and develop their analytical skills. This online-based model also facilitates learning for students, allowing the integration of digital literacy into the learning process. Thus, this strategy has great potential as a more interactive and effective learning tool in English language and literature education.

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