

## ONLINE READING COMMUNITY IN INSTAGRAM: DOES IT AFFECT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' READING ABILITIES?

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### Abstract

This research investigated the effect of online reading communities on students' English reading abilities through Instagram platform. This research study was conducted to examine how interaction within an online reading community was able to influence the improvement of students' reading abilities in English. The research used quantitative descriptive method in which the data were collected through a 5-Likert-scale questionnaire, consisting of 26 statements; 13 statements were related to variable X and 13 other statements were about reading abilities. The sample of this research comprised grade 1 until grade 3 high school students involved in online reading communities on Instagram. A total of 50 students of several public senior high schools in the area of Pesanggrahan, selected through purposive sampling technique. The analysis data showed that interactions in online reading communities could improve students' abilities in reading. This was proven by statistical analysis of the significance value of  $0.000 < 0.05$  and based on the value of  $t_{count}$ ; 4.566 which was higher than  $t_{table}$  of 2.011. Thus, this study concluded that Online Reading Community a(X) affected Students' Reading Abilities (Y). Besides, on the regression test, that effect percentage was 30.3%.

**Keywords:** *reading skills, online reading community, Instagram.*

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini menginvestigasi pengaruh dari komunitas baca dalam jaringan terhadap keterampilan membaca bahasa Inggris siswa Sekolah Menengah Atas melalui platform Instagram. Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengukur bagaimana interaksi didalam komunitas membaca dalam jaringan tersebut dapat mempengaruhi peningkatan keterampilan membaca bahasa Inggris siswa. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kuantitatif deskriptif dimana data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan angket skala 5 yang berisi 26 pernyataan; 13 terkait variabel X (komunitas membaca online) dan 13 tentang kemampuan membaca siswa. Sampel dalam penelitian ini adalah siswa sekolah menengah atas kelas 1 sampai 3 yang tergabung dalam komunitas membaca dalam jaringan di Instagram. Sejumlah 50 orang siswa SMA dari beberapa sekolah menengah Negeri di daerah Pesanggrahan, terpilih untuk menjadi sampel melalui teknik sampel bertujuan (purposive sampling technique). Hasil analisis data menunjukkan bahwa interaksi dalam komunitas baca dalam jaringan dapat meningkatkan kemampuan dan motivasi siswa dalam membaca. Hal ini dibuktikan dari analisis statistika pada nilai signifikan  $0.000 < 0.05$  dan berdasarkan nilai  $t$ -hitung yang lebih besar dari  $t$ -tabel, yaitu  $4,566 > 2,011$ . Dengan demikian, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa komunitas membaca dalam jaringan sebagai variabel X berpengaruh terhadap kemampuan membaca siswa sebagai variabel Y. Selain itu, hasil uji regresi menunjukkan bahwa pengaruh tersebut adalah sebesar 30,3%.

**Kata Kunci:** *keterampilan membaca, komunitas baca dalam jaringan, Instagram*

## 1. Introduction

It is unarguable that reading plays major role in students' process of learning, as well as in English. The students gain better opportunities in their future academic and professional pursuits when they are fluency in reading English. English ability is very pivotal also for high school students since it makes them able to access huge number of information and knowledge available in the internet; most of which written in English (Rao, 2021). Students who are proficient in reading in English will have no barriers to deal with e-books, scientific articles, international journals, and others. Thus, this proficiency involves reading fluency and ability to comprehend and criticize what they are reading (Petrie, 2018; Idayani, 2019; Noviarini, 2021; Oueini, et al., 2008). In responding to that idea, students who are only able to read but cannot understand the text will face problems not only in identifying the main ideas and the details, but also in generating inferences. As Kendeou, et.al. (2014) opined that poor inference skills of the readers will certainly make them fail to comprehend the most basic lines as the relationships among sentences provide coherence. At this stage, the students are required to be proficient in their English reading skills, hence, their reading purposes will be well-achieved and the message conveyed by the writers in reading texts will be correctly understood.

However, it is found that in Indonesia, the urgency of having reading skills is not supported by literacy levels of the nations in which the world's Most Literate Nations Ranking published by Central Connecticut State University on March 2016 reported that one of the countries with low literacy is Indonesia. Based on the data, Indonesia placed rank 60th out of 61 countries. According to Miller & McKenna (2016) that there are six main indicators of literacy among its citizens, namely: booksellers, educational attainment, internet resources, library sources, newspaper circulation, and periodical publication sources. Interestingly, despite the fact that interest in reading is low, Indonesian government's official website stated that Indonesian people spent approximately 9 hours per day as of in January 2017, in staring gadgets screen. Additionally, Indonesia is on the fifth rank in the world in terms of gadget ownership and the number of active users is expected to continue growing beyond 100 million.

The data revealed that most of Indonesian people have higher interest in interacting online through their devices. This fact could be positively grabbed to build reading interest of school students as they are future generations of the country. Reading activities that involve gadgets can be created in such a way in order to promote students' reading skills, particularly in English. The social aspects of reading are more visible and clearer by online social networks (Weber, 2021). In line with this, Driscoll & Rehberd (2019) added that online discussions are likely to be more focused on the books and questions than face to face discussions. Bauer-Kealey & Mather (2019) who investigated the influence of online communities on college students' basic reading skills found that 6 participants involved in this study were affected by the effectiveness of these online communities in some aspects. Meanwhile, the ineffectiveness of other several aspects including word identification, sentence reading fluency, spelling, and lack of motivation needed to be researched further. Since this study was carried out in 6 weeks, the researchers suggested further research to be held in longer period of time with more participants.

Few years before, another study was also conducted by Foasberg (2013) explored social dynamics of online social reading events by involving 476 book bloggers as participants. This research reported that online reading challenges had positive impacts on improving reading ability, providing opportunities for discussion, forming bonds with other readers, and receiving reading recommendations. The researcher recommended the use of virtual book clubs with book blogs as the focus. Those two prior studies showed that further investigated on online reading community to promote students' reading skills needs to be taken into account. Perry, et.al. (2021) explained that an online reading community inhabits other non-centralized social media platforms, most notably YouTube (Book Tube), Instagram (Bookstagram) and Twitter (Book Twitter). This platform offers a democratic space where anyone can publish and engage with published works. This community members influence and support each other; sharing recommendations, creating a mutually beneficial dependency, discussing books and also providing feedback. Worrall (2019) states that readers communicate their personal experiences, perspectives, and discovered meanings of books, and this is discussed and mediated by other users, encouraging an exchange of information, and in turn the production of new information. Flanagin et al. (2014) asserted that collaboration and frequent self-presentation can strengthen social identity, as readers feel connected to others who share the same interests, or have comparable experiences, such as reading the same book, regardless of their differing opinions.

## 2. Method

As the method, this research applied quantitative descriptive with survey approach. Quantitative descriptive research is a method to summarize and describe numerical data (Creswell, 2014). The data were taken from sample's responses to a-5 Likert-scale questionnaire about reading ability as the main instrument in data collection as suggested by Wenzel & Babbie (2015). There were 26 statement-items that the students had to respond to the scale ranging from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree', composing 13 statements about 'online reading community' and the other 13 about 'reading ability'. There were 44 students involved as the sample. These students were registered in grade 1, 2, 3 at several public senior high schools in Pesanggrahan area, South Jakarta, selected through purposive sampling. The results of data analysis were reported in the form of numbers and then these numbers were descriptively described.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Referring to the steps in analyzing the data as described above, the results of this quantitative descriptive data analysis were reported and discussed quantitatively and qualitatively. The analysis of students' responses to 26 items in the questionnaire indicates that online reading community had a significant impact on high school students' reading abilities. As it is known that in modifying or designing the statements for a questionnaire, both positive and negative statement should exist, most common said as 'favorable' and 'unfavorable'. Among all the statements, statement number 12 was dominated by the response of 'Strongly Disagree' in which this response implied positive meaning since the statement itself was negative, i.e. "I feel that online discussion about books does not provide significant benefits for improving my reading

ability". Another example was in statement number 25 that was "Interaction with members of the online reading community had no effect on my ability to understand and analyze texts." Most of the students (64%) strongly disagreed with this statement and this contained positive meaning.

After getting the data of all the responses, statistical of simple linear regression test was taken and revealed the results presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Simple Linear Regression Analysis

<b>Model Summary</b>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.550 <sup>a</sup>	.303	.288	4.37053

a. Predictors: (Constant), Online Reading Community

The table above explained the magnitude of the correlation/relationship (R) value of 0.550. From the output, a determination coefficient (R Square) of 0.303 was obtained, which implied that the influence of the independent variable (Online Reading Community) on the dependent variable (Reading Ability) was 30.3%.

In order to confirm how significance was the effect of variable X (online reading community) towards variable Y (students' reading abilities), the data analysis were conducted by computing the data through regression coefficient statistical analysis. The results of regression coefficient statistical analysis showed a constant of 18.165 which indicated that the consistent value of the 'Reading Ability' variable was 18.165. Besides, the regression coefficient X of 0.649 could be defined that for every 1% change in 'Online Reading Community' value as variable X, Reading Ability value increased by 0.649. This regression coefficient was positive. In other words, it could be said that the direction of the influence of variable X on Y was positive. In terms of significance value, from the Coefficients table, a significance value of  $0.000 < 0.05$  was obtained, thus, it was concluded that Online Reading Community (X) variable affected Reading Ability (Y) variable. Then,- in terms of the t value: it was known that the tcount value was  $4.566 > ttable 2.011$ , thus, it was concluded that Online Reading Community as variable X had an effect on Reading Ability as variable Y.

The students' enjoyment of reading was strongly influenced by the new reading networks and relationships that developed. Students who initially identified as reluctant, disinterested and disengaged readers became interested in reading; their perceptions of their abilities as readers and their confidence increased and their talk about reading and texts became more spontaneous, informed and extended (Cubukcu, F. 2007; Hussein, 2012; Ince, 2014, Kistner, et al., 2015). These transformations appear to be related to their teachers' improved subject knowledge and enriched pedagogical practices; they are also closely related to their teachers' reading identities and nuanced practices as Reading Teachers. Students' attainment also showed above-average improvement throughout the year and students' commitment to and interest in reading also changed; they showed increased enjoyment in reading and began to read more regularly and more independently, which contributed to the building of a vibrant reading culture and classroom

community of engaged readers (Tahrini, et al., 2015). The newly built reading community that developed in the classroom fostered a sense of belonging and shared commitment and increased interaction (Yang, et al., 2012; Cremin, et al., 2014). The project revealed that reading for pleasure is a highly social process and that young readers are nurtured through their involvement in a community of readers rich in reciprocity.

The newly built reading community that developed in the virtual classroom fostered a sense of shared belonging and commitment and increased interaction. The project revealed that reading for pleasure is a highly social process and that young readers are nurtured through their involvement in a community of readers rich in reciprocity. Teaching reading in a virtual classroom is not a natural process. It takes hard work and intensive practice for students to acquire phonemic awareness (hearing individual sounds in words), the ability to understand the alphabetic principle (knowing that letters represent sounds), and systematically taught phonics, opportunities to build fluency, and practice mastering comprehension techniques (Saglam, et al., 2012; Smitd, et al., 2014; Nassim, 2018). If all these essential skills and abilities are acquired in the right environment, students will learn to read.

Multi-sensory instruction (simultaneous use of multiple senses) has been shown to help students learn to read effectively. Online reading teachers use their webcams to demonstrate and guide finger stretching word sounds and syllable tapping. Students use their whiteboard tools to draw letter and sound tiles and demonstrate their proficiency in many other reading techniques. Students can hear and see others reading in their small groups, and they work together on reading comprehension activities.

The most significant benefit of teaching reading online (in a virtual environment) is the amount of time saved because less transition time is required. The teachers do not need to walk down the hall, or go to another building to work with students like what commonly done by the teachers in a physical school environment. In less than 30 seconds, the teachers can be in another teacher's classroom or the students can come to my classroom for instruction. The students can keep up with the learning each week with this time-saving reality. In addition, they do not have the stigma that often comes with having to go to a specific room or being grouped with students from other classes. The other students in their class do not know who is getting extra reading help.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The most students agreed that online reading community positively affected their reading abilities. To further confirm this initial conclusion, simple linear regression was used to see the effect of variable X towards variable Y. The analysis explained that R value was 0.550, while a determination coefficient (R Square) was 0.303, hence these results confirmed that there was an influence of variable X on variable Y. The results of this research can contribute more to both theories and practice in TEFL, particularly in terms of reading abilities if more various samples were involved. Online reading has super benefits and great disadvantages. However, it all comes down to how the teachers approach it. While reading for hours on end regularly can have negative effects, online reading is great if you have time constraints or need flexibility.

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