DIGITAL TEXT IN SUPPORTING ONLINE LEARNING: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract
Implementing blended learning in 2021, Seafarers' Updating Program students must adapt to the new habit of accessing online learning resources. Digital text becomes one of the learning media during their online course. This study aims at examining students' perceptions toward the use of digital text in supporting online learning. The study employed a descriptive method and involved 40 Deck Officer Class I students of the Seafarers' Upgrading Program at Balai Besar Pendidikan Penyegaran dan Peningkatan Ilmu Pelayaran Jakarta. Questionnaires and close-ended interviews were used to collect the data. The data were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. The findings reveal that students have positive perceptions toward the use of the internet, motivation in reading digital text, and digital text reading efficacy. However, they also acknowledge difficulties in digital text reading, such as the need for teacher assistance and potential challenges with comprehension.

Keywords: digital text, online learning; students' perception; reading English

Introduction
English, as the international language and the medium of global communication, holds significance in today's era of globalization. Proficiency in reading English is crucial for active participation in academic, professional, and social environments. However, traditional teaching methods for English reading predominantly involve printed books and conventional materials, and are facing challenges in adapting to the evolving reading culture driven by information technology. As learners increasingly rely on computers, laptops, smartphones, and other electronic devices, they expect access to more effective and efficient reading resources. In online learning, the use of digital texts has become a necessity rather than an option (Shuvalova, 2021). Thus, incorporating digital texts and utilizing the advantages of information technology has become paramount in ensuring effective English reading instruction for learners in the digital era. The internet has emerged as an essential part of this change. The internet provides a new environment for book readers through digital texts (Laeli, 2020). Over the last decade, the utilization of digital texts in English language learning has increased rapidly. Information and communication technology (ICT) has changed how we engage with, consume, and comprehend textual content. The use of digital texts, such as e-books, online articles, blogs, and social media, provides greater flexibility and accessibility in learning English.

Since 2021, several Indonesian maritime education and training institutions have implemented a blended learning approach. This method is designed to provide flexibility in learning, specifically to serve the needs of seafarers to improve their competence. Employing a flipped classroom model, blended learning requires students to complete online assignments before participating in face-to-face learning on campus. To effectively implement this method, students should nurture the habituation of accessing materials online. Since they participate in an online

learning session, using digital texts in English reading fosters a new habit and broadens and deepens their knowledge and insight into the maritime industry. This study aims to investigate students' perceptions regarding the use of digital texts during online English learning sessions, particularly in the context of reading. The primary objective is to retrieve meaningful insights from the findings, which can offer substantial advantages to teachers and curriculum developers in the field of English language education. The results of this study can provide valuable information to improve learning strategies, address challenges, and strengthen the effective aspects of employing digital text for English language learning. By examining the result, practitioners can ultimately use the valuable information to optimize the use of digital texts.

Perception, as defined by Mc Donald (2011), refers to an individual's personal manifestation of how they perceive the world, shaped by various sociocultural factors. It is a subjective response that arises from the process of sensing. Impressions, which can be either positive or negative, play a crucial role in forming perception. Favourable impressions lead to positive perceptions, while unfavorable impressions result in negative perceptions. These perceptions are linked to an individual's socio-cultural elements and are formed based on their unique personal experiences. In the context of education, students' perceptions refer to the impressions they develop during the learning process. The learning environment significantly influences these perceptions, including interactions with teachers, peers, teaching strategies, and even teaching materials. Learning experiences differ due to variations in methods and materials, contributing to forming distinct perceptions.

In the global era, reading activities have evolved, taking on a slightly different form. Reading is no longer limited to traditional printed texts but encompasses digital texts found online. This change in reading practices is driven by the demands of the digital age, which require readers to process information using new patterns. Digital text, defined as online reading using the internet, enables readers to engage with hypertext information (Cho & Afflerbach, 2017). Unlike printed text, digital texts are electronically generated and multimodal, incorporating audio, video, images, and hypertext. This allows readers to explore content in a nonlinear way.

The use of digital text offers numerous advantages. Teachers are no longer limited to using traditional print technology alone but can utilize a variety of multimodal texts. By introducing the use of the Internet to access digital texts, teachers can provide students with a wide range of resources (Ahmad, 2021). The digital text has also proven beneficial in language learning for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. It contributes to the improvement of vocabulary and writing skills, making it an integral part of EFL education (Pardede, 2018). Reading itself is a fundamental activity that serves specific purposes. It allows individuals to quickly understand the content of a text, integrate information, and comprehend the text thoroughly (Gabe & Stoller, 2002). In the context of education, reading plays a crucial role, as almost all learning activities involve reading skills (Bana, 2020). By engaging in reading activities, students can broaden their insights and develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others.

Several studies have been conducted by Seok & DaCosta (2016); Satin (2018); Manalu (2019); Nisrina et al. (2020); Sulaiman, et al. (2021) to investigate student perceptions of the use of digital text. Satin (2018) found that students responded positively to using digital text, considering it simpler and offering a different learning experience than printed paper. They were motivated by the clear and attractive images accompanying digital text. Similarly, Manalu (2019) observed that technology-savvy students were more inclined to use digital text due to their familiarity with handling it. In a more specific study on e-books, Nisrina et al. (2020) found that students perceived e-books positively, primarily due to their flexibility. Students believed that

digital text could enhance their literacy skills. On the other hand, Seok and DaCosta's study revealed that students often chose digital text for entertainment purposes or when seeking specific reading content, while they preferred printed text for learning and acquiring an in-depth understanding of a subject.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive design, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods, to investigate students' perceptions of the Seafarers' Upgrading program regarding the use of digital text in online reading sessions. The descriptive design served as an initial study for a broader study focusing on the implementation of online learning for the Seafarers' Upgrading Program. The quantitative method was used to assess the students' perceptions of various aspects related to the use of digital text, while the qualitative method aimed to gather deeper insights into it.

The study involved 40 level-one students from the Seafarers' Upgrading Program at Balai Besar Pendidikan Penyegaran dan Peningkatan Ilmu Pelayaran Jakarta. The participants were seafarers with experience in both Near Coastal Voyage (40%) and Ocean Going (60%). Their ages ranged from 30 to over 50, with the following distribution: 30-35 years old (22.5%), 36-40 years old (25%), 41-45 years old (25%), 46-50 years old (25%), and over 50 (2.5%). Purposive random sampling was employed to select the participants.

In the quantitative phase, a ten-statement questionnaire was utilized, employing a Likert scale with four options: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The students' perceptions questionnaire was adapted from previous studies (Manalu, 2019; Ambarwati, 2021) and modified to suit the objectives of this study. Open-ended interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's perceptions. Descriptive analysis techniques were employed to analyze the quantitative data from the questionnaire, which was then complemented by qualitative data obtained from the interviews.

Findings and Discussions

Students' perception toward the use of the internet

Table 1 shows that respondents agree (42,5%) that it is enjoyable to learn English at home utilizing the internet. They give positive responses to online learning. In the same result, they also provide answers " strongly agree" (42,5%) and "agree" (40%) that online facilities are available surrounding them. It means they have no difficulties or barriers in joining the class online. They believe that they quickly have access to the internet.

Table 1. Students' perception toward the use of the internet

No	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	M
1.	It's enjoyable to learn English at home utilizing the internet.	14 (35%)	17 (42,5%)	6 (15%)	3 (7,5%)	3,05
2.	All facilities that support online learning are available.	17 (42,5%)	16 (40%)	4 (10%)	3 (7,5%)	3,18
∑f		31	33	10	6	T : 80
∑%		(38,7%)	(41,3%)	(12,5%)	(10,8%)	M : 3,12

Both statements show that the majority of the respondents responded positively toward the use of the internet in learning English. This finding was similar to the study by Nurhasanah et al. (2020), which investigated students' perceptions of the use of the internet for reading classrooms. It was found that students tended to use the internet as media for learning.

Before taking the course, the respondents had already known that the course would be conducted in a blended context employing flipped classroom. The finding showed that they were ready to have online learning. This is clarified by the interviewees.

" *I know that I will have online learning before coming to the campus to have a practical session, so I prepare the connection to support my study.*" (interviewee A)

"*I like to have online learning for English and, so far, prefer online learning than face-to-face. I enjoy it and find no difficulties dealing with internet access.*" (interviewee B)

Students' perceptions towards the motivation in reading digital text

Table 2 shows that respondents agree (42,4%) that they felt more comfortable when studying reading using digital text. They also felt motivated when they used digital text in reading activities. 15 of 40 respondents agree that digital text gives excellent motivation to them. In the same vein, the study on students' motivation in reading e-books by Nisrina et al. (2023) found that most students agreed and attained a positive perception of motivation and interest in reading e-books.

Table 2. Students' perceptions towards the motivation in reading digital text

No	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	M
1.	I feel more comfortable when studying Reading using digital text.	13 (32,5%)	17 (42,5%)	5 (12,5%)	5 (12,5%)	2,96
2.	Reading using digital text is motivating.	14 (35%)	15 (37,5%)	7 (17,5%)	4 (10%)	2,98
∑f		27	32	12	9	T : 80
∑%		(33.8%)	(40%)	(15%)	(11,2%)	M : 2,97

Most respondents give positive responses by choosing "strongly agree" and "agree" in both statements of motivation in reading digital text. This is clarified by some interviewees.

" *I feel that reading digital text gives the new atmosphere in learning English. We usually use printed books for study before.*" (Interviewee A)

" *It (learning reading online) is enjoyable because I can access the materials (text) anywhere.*" (Interviewee B)

"*Digital text can be accessed anytime. When I feel bored, I can take a rest, and then when I am ready, I can continue to study. It is more flexible. I can manage my study (reading) time.* " (Interviewee C)

"*It is more relaxing when reading digital text or online resources. I can bring it inside my cell phone.*" (interviewee D)

Students' perceptions toward the difficulty in digital text reading

Table 3 shows the difficulty in digital text reading. 35% of respondents strongly agree, and 32,5% agree that they find it difficult to understand the text by themselves without teachers' assistance. In responding to the statement related to laboriousness, 18 respondents disagree that they will become tired when they have to use a smartphone or computer to read digital text, but 13 respondents feel tired of reading digital text on a smartphone or computer. Concerning

internet use in accessing digital text, 15 of 40 respondents disagree that digital text wastes money. However, 14 respondents agree that they must spend money to deal with internet access for digital text.

Table 3. Students' perceptions toward the difficulty in digital text reading

No	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	M
1.	It is difficult to understand a digital text without a teacher's explanation.	14 (35%)	13 (32,5%)	11 (27,5%)	2 (5%)	3,00
2.	It is pretty laborious since I must use a smartphone or computer to read digital text.	7 (17,5%)	13 (32,5%)	18 (45%)	2 (5%)	2,38
3.	Digital text wastes money because it spends many internet quotas.	4 (10%)	14 (35%)	15 (37,5%)	7 (17,5%)	2,38
∑f		25	40	34	11	T : 110
∑%		(22,7%)	(36,3%)	(31%)	(10%)	M : 2.59

Although the respondents believed they had difficulty comprehending text without teachers' explanation, they did not feel doing this activity was tiring and wasting money. This is clarified by the interviewees.

" *My eyes feel tired when I have to see the (smartphone) screen to read the text, but I think it is just about an adaptation for a new thing.*" (Interviewee E)

"*I feel difficult to understand the meaning. When the teacher gives the text without explaining. It is challenging when I have to read a text and then answer the questions directly.*" (Interviewee F)

" *I don't have any problem with the internet quota, but since I live far away from the city, the connection sometimes is not stable.* " (Interviewee C)

Students' Perceptions of digital text reading efficacy
Table 4 shows that 47,5 % of respondents agree that digital text is practical for learning reading, and 45% can easily comprehend digital text rather than printed text. This is in line with the study by Ambarwati (2021)found that students felt that digital reading emerged positive experience, and they often learned and did assignments using digital resources. However, only 45% believe digital text can increase their reading achievement, and the rest (55%) do not believe that.

Table 4. Students' Perceptions of digital text reading efficacy

No	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	M
1.	Learning English (reading) with digital text is compelling.	13 (32,5%)	19 (47,5%)	4 (10%)	4 (10%)	3,02
2.	I can easily comprehend digital text rather than printed text.	12 (30%)	18 (45%)	8 (20%)	2 (5%)	3,00
3.	The use of digital text increases reading achievement	9 (22,5%)	9 (22,5%)	17 (42,5%)	5 (12,5%)	2,45
∑f		34	46	29	11	T : 120
∑%		(28,3%)	(38,3%)	(24.2%)	(9,2%)	M : 2.82

Overall, students have positive perceptions of digital text reading efficacy. The higher response can see in two statements. However, they believe digital text couldn't distribute to their reading achievement since they have to solve their problems related to comprehending the text by themselves and the need for some applications.

" *Reading is about understanding a text. I think the digital text is less effective for reading activities since there is no assistance for comprehending the meaning.*" (Interviewee C)

" *I think it is effective and efficient since I can save more time when I read digital text. I can directly open google translator when I find difficult words.*" (Interviewee A)

" *Short explanation before reading text will make digital text effective for reading activities .*" (Interviewee B)

"*It is not effective because there is no interaction with teachers. I prefer to use digital text and have discussions with the teachers.*" (Interviewee F)

"*I think I am good at reading so that it is not a big deal whether it uses digital or printed text, I am not good at listening.*" (Interviewee D)

Students' Perceptions of digital text

Comparing four indicators in students' perceptions of digital text, the highest contribution is from internet use. 80% of respondents positively responded "agree" and "strongly agree" on their perspective on using the internet for learning English. The second level is the motivation to read digital text. At least 70% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they were comfortable and motivated to read digital text. Digital text reading efficacy contributes to the third level with a Mean of 2.82. It showed that 66% of respondents agree and strongly agree digital text is effective for learning English, and they can comprehend that. The last indicator is difficulty in digital text reading. 59% of respondents agree and strongly agree that they found difficulties mentioned in indicator 3, such as wasting money, laboriousness, and hard to understand.

Table 5. Students' Perceptions of digital text

No	Indicators	SA	A	D	SD	M
1.	*use of internet*	38,7%	41,3%	12,5%	10,8%	3,12
2.	*motivation in reading digital text*	33.8%	40%	15%	11,2%	2,97
3.	*difficulty in digital text reading*	22,7%	36,3%	31%	10%	2.59
4.	*digital text reading efficacy*	28,3%	38,3%	24.2%	9,2%	2.82

These findings showed that most students positively perceived the use of digital text in learning English, particularly reading in an online learning context. They responded positively towards the use of the internet, the motivation in reading digitally, and the digital text reading efficacy indicators. Despite that positive response, the indicator of difficulty in the digital text was also responded positively by students, which meant they still found that they met some problems using digital text for reading activities. This is in line with Kesson (2020), who proved students deserve to have more time and more teaching on reading digital text in order to comprehend digital text efficiently and, in turn, write digital text.

Conclusion

English is the international language of communication, playing a crucial role in academic, professional, and social environments in today's globalized era. However, traditional teaching methods for English reading face challenges in adapting to the evolving reading culture driven by information technology. As learners increasingly rely on digital devices, incorporating digital texts and leveraging the advantages of information technology has become essential for effective English reading instruction. The internet provides a new environment for accessing digital texts, offering greater flexibility and accessibility in learning English.

Recently, Indonesian maritime education and training institutions have implemented a blended learning approach, combining online assignments with face-to-face sessions. To successfully implement this method, students must develop the habit of accessing materials online, mainly digital texts, for English reading. This study explores students' perceptions of using digital texts during online English learning sessions, explicitly focusing on reading. By understanding students' perspectives, teachers and curriculum developers can enhance learning strategies, address challenges, and optimize the use of digital texts for English language learning.

The findings reveal that students generally have a positive perception of using the internet for learning English and find digital texts enjoyable. They feel motivated and comfortable studying reading using digital texts, appreciating the flexibility and accessibility they provide. However, some students also struggle to comprehend texts without teacher assistance and mention issues like eye strain and the cost of internet access. Overall, students perceive digital texts as effective for learning reading but emphasize the need for support and guidance in understanding the content. These insights can inform educators in designing more effective online English reading instruction and improving students' digital reading skills.

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