

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

In this ever-evolving digital age, the use of technology in education has drastically changed the landscape of learning. One significant change can be seen in learning media, where printed books and e-books have become the two main choices for reading activities, especially for improving reading comprehension. In this study, the focus is specifically on printed academic books (such as textbooks, course readings, and scholarly materials) and academic e-books, which are commonly used in higher education settings to support students' academic reading and comprehension. This focus is important because the characteristics, functions, and reading purposes of academic materials are different from those of leisure or non-academic reading (Park & Lee, 2021; Price et al., 2023; Salmerón et al., 2022). The transformation of students' access to information and reading habits from traditional media (printed books) to digital media (e-books) has become a major focus. On one hand, printed books have long been the foundation of learning, offering a tactile reading experience and familiar visual comfort (Subramaniam et al., 2020). However, technological advancements have introduced e-books as a practical, easily accessible, and often more economical alternative, especially with the interactive features they offer (P. Wang & Wu, 2019). This is increasingly relevant given the widespread use of digital device such as tablets and smartphones among students, which enable easy access to various e-book formats.

To obtain a preliminary understanding of the use of reading materials in academic reading instruction, the researcher conducted an initial observation by distributing questionnaires to students of the English Education Study Program. The results of the preliminary observation indicate that students utilize various types of reading media, including printed books, digital books (e-books), and a combination of both in their academic reading activities.

Although e-books are perceived as more practical and easily accessible, some students reported experiencing difficulties in their use, such as eye strain, decreased concentration, and distractions resulting from the use of digital devices. In contrast, printed books are considered more helpful in maintaining focus, facilitating deeper comprehension of reading materials, and enabling easier note-taking and highlighting of important parts of the text. These preliminary findings indicate differences in students' reading experiences when using printed books and digital books, highlighting the importance of further investigation into students' perceptions of both reading media in English reading instruction. Although e-books offer various conveniences and innovative features, the full transition from printed books to e-books has not yet occurred uniformly or without obstacles. There are differences in preferences and perceptions among students regarding the effectiveness of these two media in enhancing reading comprehension. Some students may still feel more comfortable and focused when reading printed books due to the absence of notification distractions or the potential for eye strain from screens (Huang et al., 2021). Conversely, other students may find e-books more engaging and interactive, with search, highlighting, and integrated dictionary

features that can facilitate the comprehension process (Chen et al., 2022). The gap between the potential benefits of e-books and students' actual experiences, as well as the continued relevance of printed books, is an intriguing phenomenon worth exploring.

Previous studies have extensively discussed the comparison between printed books and e-books in an academic context. For example, a study by Kim (2020) found that students demonstrated similar levels of reading comprehension across both formats, but there were significant differences in format preferences. Similarly, research by Johnson (2021) indicated that interactive features of e-books can support comprehension, but digital distractions are also a concern. However, there are still limitations in fully understanding the factors that influence students' reading experiences with both media. Most studies tend to emphasize either quantitative measurements of effectiveness or qualitative insights in isolation, leaving a gap in comprehensively capturing both performance outcomes and students' subjective experiences. Therefore, this research adopts a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative analysis of reading comprehension performance with qualitative exploration of students' perceptions, preferences, and challenges. This integration allows for a more holistic understanding of how both printed books and e-books affect reading engagement and comprehension. This study adopts a mixed-method, in-depth approach to explore students' perceptions regarding the use of printed books and e-books in enhancing reading comprehension.

Unlike previous studies that often focus solely on quantitative comparisons, this research aims to uncover both the "what" and the "why" behind students'

preferences and experiences, including contextual factors, reading habits, and cognitive strategies they use when interacting with each medium. A mixed-method approach is suitable because it integrates quantitative measurement of reading comprehension outcomes with qualitative insights into students' personal experiences and perspectives, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2022; Nowell & Albrecht, 2024).

The study will also specifically investigate how specific features of e-books such as annotation tools, search functions, and multimedia elements or the physical characteristics of printed books such as ease of navigation and absence of distractions influence reading comprehension from students' perspectives. Prior research has shown that interactive features of e-books can enhance engagement and support comprehension if used effectively, but may also lead to distractions if not properly managed.

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This research is of great importance given the ongoing debate about the role of digital media in education. As digital technologies increasingly permeate educational contexts, understanding how students perceive and utilize different reading media is crucial for informed pedagogical decision- making (Delgado & Salmerón, 2022). By gaining a deep understanding of students' perceptions, the findings of this study can provide valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in designing more effective and adaptive learning environments. The results of this study will inform pedagogical decisions to help teachers and educational institutions select the most appropriate learning media for students' needs and preferences to improve reading comprehension.

Additionally, these findings can support the development of more effective learning materials by providing constructive input for both e- book developers and print book publishers to design products that better accommodate students' needs

and reading behaviors (Baron & Mangen, 2021; Delgado & Salmerón, 2022). In particular, strengthening students' digital literacy is crucial so that they can optimally utilize the strengths of each reading medium to improve their comprehension in an increasingly digital educational environment (Hakemulder & Mangen, 2023). Considering these ongoing shifts in reading practices and the persistent debate regarding the effectiveness of printed books and e-books, this study focuses on exploring students' perceptions of using printed books versus e-books in enhancing their reading comprehension.

1.2 Identification of Problems

Based on the problems mentioned in the background, this study identifies the problems as follows:

1. There are inconsistencies in students' experiences when using printed books and e-books to understand academic texts.
2. Students show diverse perceptions regarding the effectiveness of both media in enhancing reading comprehension.
3. The digital features in e-books have not been utilized optimally by some students.
4. Each medium has limitations that may hinder reading comprehension.
5. There is still a limited understanding of the reasons behind students' preferences for the two media.

1.3 Limitation of Problem

This study is limited to exploring students' perceptions of using printed books versus e-books for supporting English reading comprehension at Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji. The scope does not include other language skills, nor does it examine specific digital platforms or tools. As a mix-method study, the findings emphasize depth rather than generalization and rely solely on students' self-reported experiences. Broader institutional or policy-related factors are not covered in this research.

1.4 Research Question

Based on the research background above, the research question will be formulated as:

1. What are students' perceptions of using printed books versus e-books to enhance their reading comprehension?

1.5 Purpose of Study

This study aims to gain a clearer understanding of how students perceive the use of printed books versus e-books in supporting their reading comprehension. To achieve this goal, the study focuses on the following objectives:

1. To explore students' perceptions of using printed books versus e-books in enhancing their reading comprehension.

1.6 Significant of the Study

This study is important because both printed books and e-books are widely used by students for academic reading. Understanding how students perceive these two media helps explain how each one supports their reading comprehension. The

significance of this research can be seen from theoretical and practical perspectives, as described below.

1. Theoretically, this research provides meaningful contributions to the field of educational technology and reading comprehension. It helps deepen the understanding of how students perceive printed books and e-books in enhancing their reading comprehension, especially in the context of higher education and digital learning environments.

2. Practically

a. For the Teachers

This research is useful for lecturers and educators as it provides insights into students' preferences and perceived effectiveness of printed books and e-books. It can help teachers select appropriate reading materials that support students' comprehension and learning comfort, especially in academic reading tasks.

b. For the Students

This study can help students reflect on their own reading preferences and strategies. It may guide them to choose the reading medium that best enhances their understanding, focus, and motivation in reading academic texts.

c. For the Other Researchers

This research can benefit other researchers who are interested in exploring students' media preferences, digital reading behavior, or reading comprehension from different perspectives or in different educational contexts. It can also serve as a reference for future studies that aim to investigate related topics using various research methods.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

To ensure clarity and a common understanding, the following key terms are defined operationally for this research:

1. **Students' Perceptions**

Refers to students' subjective views, interpretations, and personal experiences regarding how printed books and e-books support their reading comprehension. In this study, perceptions are expressed through their responses in Likert-scale questionnaires and in-depth interviews.

2. **Printed Books**

Refers to physical, paper-based academic reading materials (such as textbooks and course readings) used by students in university learning. In this study, printed books are examined based on how students perceive their role in supporting reading comprehension.

3. **E-books (Electronic Books)**

Refers to digital academic reading materials accessed through electronic devices such as smartphones, tablets, or laptops. In this study, e-books are discussed in relation to the features and reading experiences that students perceive as influencing their comprehension.

4. Reading Comprehension

Refers not to the measurement of students' reading ability, but to students' perceptions of how each reading medium (printed books and e-books) helps them understand academic texts. This includes perceived focus, retention, clarity, and understanding during reading.

