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The Effect of Using Digital Interactive Fiction on the Students' Reading Comprehension Achievement at SMPN 10 Metro

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ABSTRAK

Conventional way of teaching may influence the students' results in reading comprehension. Based on the observation in SMPN 10 Metro, the students still had difficulty in comprehending the reading text. This research has aim to find out whether there is a significant difference of students' reading comprehension after being taught using digital Interactive Fiction. The researcher applied a quantitative research method using a true experimental design, specifically the control group pretest-posttest design. The research was conducted at SMPN 10 Metro in six meetings including pretest, treatment for three sessions, and posttest. The researcher took two classes as the sample randomly using lottery as experimental class and control class. The finding shows that the use of Digital Interactive Fiction had a significant effect on students' reading comprehension. It can be seen from the significance value (0.002) which is lower than 0.05. It can be concluded that it is an effective instructional tool for improving students' reading comprehension achievement. Further studies can explore digital interactive fiction on different language skills such as vocabulary acquisition.

Keywords: *Effect, Digital Interactive Fiction, Reading Comprehension Achievement, Metro*

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PENDAHULUAN

In the recently digital era, the students can read text in an easy way. They just need to open and read the text they want to read in their gadget, for example smartphone, notebook, or tablet. They can access many sources to get knowledge and information they need. They can read everywhere and every time. EFL students can do it to support their reading ability. The students have changed their reading habit from printed to digital based reading. Yılmaz (2024) found that reading as influenced by socio-cultural environment is changing around the world.

In fact, based on the observation in SMPN 10 Metro, the students still had difficulty in comprehending the reading text. Their average score in the reading test is still low (45). Many students cannot answer the questions correctly regarding to some reading comprehension abilities, such us determining main idea of long text, finding specific information of text, finding inference, and understanding unfamiliar vocabularies. It is in line with Ramadhianti & Somba (2023) in their research. They found that the most reading difficulty faced by the students are distinguishing between main ideas and supporting details, getting main idea between paragraphs, the topic of the texts from other culture, relating topic and background knowledge, understanding vocabulary and inferring the text. Putri et al. (2025) also found that the students had difficulties in reading comprehension, including determining main idea, making inference, detail information, and understanding vocabulary. Furthermore, the students' ability and conventional way of teaching may influence their test results. Putri et al. (2025) stated that students' challenges in reading comprehension are influenced by their background knowledge, the teaching techniques used by teachers, and the learning environment.

Digital interactive fiction is an alternative program that makes reading activity not monotonous. It offers reading text that contains plot of the story in a game. The research regarding

this media is also rare. By reading the text in the game, the students will follow the plot of the story. This game consists of text, audio, image, or animation. Nhu and Thu (2021:15) in their research stated that this combination can suit the students with their different learning styles. It also offers authentic learning environment that motivates the students to read more and engage in interesting stories. Wright and Weible (2024:32) found that Interactive Fiction had positive impacts on student engagement with reading material (primarily fiction). Recent research conducted by Widiastono and Hadi (2023) also found that students showed higher reading interest when interactive fiction was used as a medium in reading lessons. Based on these previous researches, the researchers focused on the students' reading interest and engagement. Thus this study focuses on the students' reading comprehension. Furthermore, other studies also seldom used interactive fiction as digital interactive media in their reading comprehension class. Daizon et al. (2025), Hasanaturro'i & Maulida (2024), and Uli & Jismulatif (2024) used digital interactive media in their research such as Power Point, Google Slides, YouTube, interactive simulation, quiz, etc. They have not used Interactive Fiction as the software program that can be used in the reading class. Interactive fiction (IF) is considered as a good and compatible learning material. Thus this research has aim to find out whether there is a significant difference of students' reading comprehension after being taught using digital Interactive Fiction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading Comprehension

To master language, the learners need to implement four language skills including reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Reading as one of fundamental skills in learning language, enables the learners to understand text or written language, build vocabulary, and communicate a message. By reading, the students will understand the text, learn new vocabularies, and communicate with the writer's ideas. The students will access knowledge and information about language and others. Reading involves the process of word recognition, comprehension, and fluency.

Nisa and Helmanda (2020) states that reading is understanding the words and information contained in the text. As a result, the students will learn and get information and knowledge about language. Besides that, Lasdya et al. (2022) defines that reading is a process of understanding the context contained in a text that is read. The benefits of reading are increasing vocabulary and understanding grammar better (Kusumawardani et al., 2021). The students need to comprehend the text to get the information of the reading text. The students then can develop their vocabulary and grammar. Without comprehension, they cannot get the point of the text.

Olson and Diller (1982:42) states that reading comprehension is a term used to identify those skills needed to understand and apply information contained in a written material. According to Kennedy (1982:5), reading is the person's capacity to identify a visual form; connect the form with a sound and or meaning acquired in the cover and on the part of experience, understands, and interprets its meaning.

Nuttal (1982) states that to comprehend the text well, the students need to master five aspects in reading comprehension. They are:

Determining main idea

The main idea is the sentence or statement about the central point of what the text tells about the topic. It can found in the first or last paragraph. It sometimes can be put in the middle of the paragraph. The students need to understand where the main idea is put. They have to be aware and be common with this skill because it is the main point the text.

Locating reference

Reference is word or phrase that pronoun refers to. It is usually found before the pronoun. The students need to be familiar with pronoun referent.

Understanding Vocabulary

The students can expand their vocabulary by reading. They will find new words and look them up in the dictionary. They also can guess the meaning of new words from the context or the text surrounding the word. The context can be one sentence or more. It is better to guess the meaning of words from context because it will not disturb the reading fluency and sharpen their critical thinking.

Making inference

In making inference, the students draw a conclusion about the content or information in the text because the information is not directly stated. The students need to get the intention from the sentences in the text. They have to be cunning in their analytical thinking.

Detail information
To find detail information, the students can do scanning to be focus on the reading of the specific details being asked. By scanning, they will save time in reading process. They will be more focus on the more important information. Understanding the details means gaining the whole information.

By mastering these five aspects, the students will understand and get the information and knowledge from the reading text specifically and thoroughly. They can comprehend the language explicitly and implicitly.

Digital Interactive Fiction

Interactive fiction began with a game named adventure that is developed in 1976 for mainframe computers. They were implemented using text then they became known as text adventures. Players interact by typing commands, and the system reply with textual responses. This fundamental form of interaction is still used in interactive fiction today.

According to Hausknecht et al. (2020:7903), "interactive fiction (IF) games are software environments in which players observe textual descriptions of the simulated world, issue text actions, and receive score progress through the story. Humans bring competencies in natural language understanding, commonsense reasoning, and deduction to bear in order to infer the context and objectives of a game."
This shows that interactive fiction games are more than just stories—they are games where players read, think, and respond using text. So, it is not only fun, but also a great way to learn through reading and using natural language input.
Pereira (2013:28) states that "Interactive Fiction (IF) is a form of electronic literature, but also a digital game. It is a potential narrative – one that is shaped by the player as she explores and interacts with the game-world, and it is a series of logical puzzles within this world, which must be overcome in order for the narrative to advance." It has the following characteristics:

1) It is a text accepting and text generating computer program, and so can only be played on a digital device. It additionally understands natural language input (to an extent) and replies to this input in a meaningful way;
2) It is a simulated world, which can be explored and interacted with and the player's actions has an immediate effect on that world;
3) It is a potential narrative which is co-created by the reader, and her actions and choices will create a slightly (or sometimes completely) different narrative each time it is played through;
4) It is a game, meaning that it is played voluntarily, has a specific goal, and has rules which must be followed.

According to Pereira (2013:24), there are two ways in which digital games can be applied in language learning. They are:
1. The game contains language when it plays. Players must engage with this language by reading or listening to achieve success. The language provided may include narrative background, updates on game status, or hints that help players accomplish specific objectives.
2. The game encourages language use in discussions or tasks related to the game. In this case, the game acts as a stimulus for language practice, similar to language learning material. Teachers need to give a series of tasks before, during, and after gameplay to achieve learning goal.
It is clear that digital Interactive Fiction can be integrated in language teaching and learning. The example of this story game can be seen in the figure 1 below.



Figure 1. The Example of Digital Interactive Fiction

Digital Interactive Fiction and Reading Comprehension

Layton (1987) highlighted some reading and thinking skills that are enhanced by engaging with IF or adventure games.

Recognizing and recalling important details

This involves identifying important information presented in the game (such as characters, locations, or clues including details in 5W1H information) and remembering them for future use. Players must pay attention to the order of the text to understand the plot and move on to the next stage. It often needs to recall specific details to solve puzzles or problems in the story of the game.

Drawing inferences

Players often need to understand information that is implied but not directly stated. For example, a character's emotions or intentions might be suggested through dialogue or context, requiring the player to infer meaning and make decisions based on it.

Recognizing and understanding figurative language

Games may use expressions like metaphors, idioms, and other figurative language to enrich storytelling. Understanding this language is important for interpreting clues, understanding plot development, or understanding humor or mood.

Skimming and scanning

Skimming involves quickly reading through text to get the general idea, while scanning is about looking for specific details (like a character's name or location). Players use both skills to understand the whole text efficiently and use relevant details quickly during gameplay.

Generalizing from facts

It involves finding specific information in the game and drawing general conclusion. For example, after observing repeated patterns or facts, a player might form a general rule that help them solve problems or tasks.

Learning specific vocabulary

Games may use words related to a specific topic (like history, legend, or fantasy). Players learn these new words as they find them in context and are motivated to understand them to continue playing in the game.

Understanding synonyms

Players need to recognize commands or responses in the game that can be phrased differently but mean the same thing. Understanding synonyms helps in understanding and interpreting text and choosing effective commands or dialogue options.

It is in lined with Nuttal (1982) who states that there are five aspects in reading comprehension including identifying main idea, finding specific information, determining reference, making inference, and understanding vocabulary.

It is clear that actively comprehending the text is essential for improving reading comprehension skills when playing interactive fiction. To move forward in the game, the player needs to comprehend the text and give a suitable response where progress in the game depends entirely on the player's understanding of the written content. This dynamic interaction between reading and responding helps reinforce comprehension skills in a natural and meaningful way.

METHOD

The researcher applied a quantitative research method using a true experimental design, specifically the control group pretest-posttest design since this research aims to find out whether there is a significant difference of students' reading comprehension achievement after being taught through interactive fiction. The design of the control group pretest-posttest design is as follows:

K1 (random) T1 X T2
K2 (random) T1 0 T2

The research was conducted at SMPN 10 Metro in six meetings including pretest, treatment for three sessions, and posttest. The population of this research was the second grade students. The researcher took two classes as the sample randomly using lottery as experimental class and control class. Each class consisted of 25 students.

The procedure involved the pretest administered in both classes to measure students' initial ability in their reading comprehension, the treatment including Interactive Fiction applied in experimental class and conventional model applied in control class in three meetings, and the posttest administered to measure students' reading comprehension ability after receiving the treatment.

The researcher conducted reading fiction as the topic of material that is suitable for college level. The reading test relied on the reading comprehension skills highlighted by Nuttal (1982) including identifying main idea, finding specific information, determining reference, making inference, and understanding vocabulary. The tests were in the form of multiple choices with 50 questions.

The results of pretest and posttest on both classes were analyzed using IBM SPSS version 23. The researcher used paired sample t-test and independent group t-test to determine whether there was a significant difference in the students' reading comprehension achievement after treatment.

RESULT

The result of the pretest showed that both classes had fairly same initial ability in reading comprehension. The experimental class had a mean score of 49.92 and the control class had a mean score of 48.80. The pretest scores are shown briefly in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Result of Pretest in Experimental Class and Control Class

Statistics	Score	
	Experimental Class	Control Class
Total score	1248	1220
Mean	49.92	48.80
Highest Score	72	70
Lowest Score	36	38
Standard Deviation	10.76	8.98

Based on the table 1 above, the two classes had a small difference (1.12 points) in mean score. It suggests that both groups had almost the same initial ability especially in reading comprehension. The highest score in the experimental class was 72 while that in the control class was 70. Meanwhile, the lowest score was 36 for the experimental class and 38 for the control class. It shows a slight variation in the score range between the two groups. The highest and lowest scores in both classes were also close. The standard deviation values were 10.76 for the experimental class and 8.98 for the control class. It indicated that the standard deviation in the experimental class was slightly higher than that in the control class. In conclusion, both classes had fairly similar abilities before the class conducted the treatments. It ensures a fair comparison for the next analysis.

In addition, a homogeneity test was conducted to make sure the score differences between the two groups were not significant, which is an important prerequisite for conducting parametric statistical analysis. The result of homogeneity test is shown in the table 2 below.

Table 2. Result of Homogeneity Test

Test of Homogeneity of Variance					
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Pretest	Based on Mean	.387	1	48	.537
	Based on Median	.413	1	48	.524
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.413	1	47.378	.524
	Based on trimmed mean	.414	1	48	.523

Based on the result of Levene's Test, the significance value obtained was 0.537 which is higher than 0.05. This indicates that the distribution score in both the experimental and control group was statistically homogeneous. Therefore the data could be analyzed further.

Meanwhile, the result of posttest in the experimental and control classes are presented in the table 3.

Table 3. Result of Posttest in Experimental Class and Control Class

Statistics	Score	
	Experimental Class	Control Class
Total score	2002	1824
Mean	80.08	72.96
Highest Score	96	92
Lowest Score	64	60
Standard Deviation	8.17	7.4

The data show that the experimental class achieved a higher mean score (80.08) compared to the control class (72.96). It indicates that the experimental class had a better achievement in reading comprehension. The highest score in the experimental group was 96 while that in the control group was 92. The experimental class reached a higher maximum score. Similarly, the lowest score in the experimental class (64) was slightly higher than that of the control class (60). The total score in the experimental class (2002) was higher than the total score in control class (1824). In terms of score variability, the standard deviation of the experimental class (8.17) was slightly higher than that of the control class (7.4). It shows a slightly wider spread of scores. Overall, these results indicate that the students in the experimental class performed better than those in the control class, supporting the effectiveness of the use of Digital Interactive Fiction.

Normality test is other requirement for the researchers before they conduct parametric analysis. Normality test was done to check if the pretest and posttest scores from the experimental and control groups were normally distributed. The result of normality test is shown in the table 4 below.

Table 4. Result of Normality Test

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest_Experimental_Class	.137	25	.200*	.925	25	.065
Posttest_Experimental_Class	.091	25	.200*	.983	25	.943

Pretest_Control_Class	.143	25	.197	.922	25	.056
Posttest_Control _Class	.152	25	.141	.944	25	.180
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.						
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

The significance values (Sig.) of the Shapiro-Wilk test for the pretest and posttest scores in both the experimental and control class were all above 0.05. The pretest and posttest scores in the experimental class showed significance values of 0.065 and 0.943. Similarly, the control class had significance values of 0.056 for the pretest and 0.180 for the posttest. These results indicate that all data sets are normally distributed. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data are normally distributed and suitable for further analysis using parametric tests like the t-test.

After confirming that the data were normally distributed, A Paired Sample t-Test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in students' scores after being taught using Interactive Fiction. This test compares the preset and posttest scores. The result of paired samples test is presented in the table 5.

Table 5. The Result of Paired Samples Test

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-30.16000	10.80000	2.16000	-34.61802	-25.70198	-13.963	24	.000

The results showed that students' scores improved after using Interactive Fiction. The significance value (2-tailed) was 0.000. It is lower than 0.05 so that there was a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores. The degree of freedom was 24 and the t-table value was 1.711. The t-value shown in the table was 13.963, which is higher than the t-table. In short, the Interactive Fiction was effective in improving students' reading comprehension.

To examine further the difference between the experimental and control class after the treatment, an Independent Sample t-Test was conducted. The results are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Independent Sample T-Test Result

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	.773	.384	3.229	48	.002	7.120	2.205	2.687	11.553

	Equal variances not assumed			3.229	47.527	.002	7.120	2.205	2.686	11.554

As shown in Table 6, it indicates a significant difference in posttest scores between the experimental class, which was taught using Interactive Fiction, and the control class, which was taught using conventional model. The significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.002, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05. This suggests that the difference in students' reading comprehension scores between the two groups is statistically significant. The mean difference between the groups is 7.120. It means that the experimental class gained 12.37 score, higher than control class in posttest. Additionally, the t-ratio value (3.229) was higher than the t-table value (1.67722). Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of Interactive Fiction had a significant effect on students' reading comprehension compared to the conventional model.

DISCUSSION

The finding of this research shows that the use of Digital Interactive Fiction had a significant effect on students' reading comprehension. Initially, the results of the pretest revealed that both the experimental and control classes had relatively similar reading comprehension ability. The mean scores were of 49.92 (experimental class) and 48.80 (control class). The slight difference in mean scores and the results of the homogeneity test (Sig. = 0.537) confirmed that the two groups were statistically similar before the treatment was done.

In the experimental class, by using IF, the students as players must pay attention to characters, events, places, and other information mentioned in the dialogue or narration in the game. These details are important to answer questions in the game or to follow the plot of the story. This trains the students to identify main ideas and supporting details in texts as the skills needed in reading comprehension. Dialogue or narration in the story of IF sometimes contains some intentions that are not directly stated. The students tried to draw inferences from it so that they can understand the story completely. It avoided wrong answer for the questions in the game. It is in line with Layton (1987) who states that Interactive Fiction involves recognizing and recalling important details and drawing inferences.

Besides that, IF used figurative language like idioms or metaphors. By reading it, they learn to understand meaning beyond literal words. IF helps students practice skimming and scanning. They tried to quickly find key information or get the main idea of a scene to continue the game. IF also introduced specific vocabulary related to the story's theme (like fairy tale or folktale). It made students learn new words naturally through context in the game. Finally, students found synonyms or different ways to express similar ideas. This builds their understanding of word meaning. It is in line with Layton (1987) who states that Interactive Fiction also involves understanding figurative language, skimming and scanning, Learning specific vocabulary and understanding synonyms.

In the control class, the teaching process followed a conventional model. Students were assigned to read fiction such as folktale or fairy tale from printed sources. Some students read the text in turns and the rest read silently. After that, they answered comprehension questions provided by the teacher, such as identifying main ideas, finding supporting details, and understanding vocabulary. Then the answers were corrected and discussed in the class. Since students were only asked to read and answer, many of them may have read just to complete the task, not to understand the story deeply. Students not actively explored stories and they had fewer opportunities to build deeper comprehension.

After following the treatment, the posttest results showed an improvement in the experimental class. The experimental class obtained a higher mean score (80.08) than the control class (72.96). The increase in the experimental class's total score and the slightly wider range of scores (standard deviation of 8.17 vs. 7.4) supports the improvement in the experimental class.

The normality tests confirmed that the pretest and posttest data in both groups were normally distributed (Sig. > 0.05). A paired sample t-test found a statistically significant increase in students'

scores after the use of Interactive Fiction (Sig. = 0.000, t = 13.963). This finding suggests that the treatment had a strong impact on improving students' reading comprehension.

Moreover, the independent sample t-test comparing the posttest scores of the experimental and control groups had a significance value of 0.002 ($p < 0.05$). It means that the difference in the students' reading comprehension between the two groups was statistically significant. The mean difference of 7.12 points emphasizes the effectiveness of the digital interactive fiction.

These results are in line with previous studies that emphasize the role of digital media and interactive learning in enhancing language skills. Interactive Fiction provides engaging contexts, promotes critical thinking, and allows learners to be actively involved in the learning process. It aligns with the constructivist theory, which posits that students learn best when they are actively constructing knowledge through meaningful experiences.

In summary, the data strongly suggest that Interactive Fiction is an effective instructional tool for improving students' reading comprehension. It not only supports students' engagement but also fosters deeper understanding through interactive and immersive experiences, making it a valuable alternative to traditional reading instruction methods.

CONCLUSION

Fiction had a significant effect on students' reading comprehension It supports reading comprehension by involving students in a contextual reading experience in the story game. It helps them build reading comprehension skills in a fun and the use of Digital Interactive effective way.

The researcher suggests for teachers to integrate digital interactive fiction into reading activities as a supplementary tool to enhance students' comprehension skills in an engaging way. For Curriculum Developers: Curriculum designers should consider including interactive fiction-based materials in reading courses, as they provide both contextual learning and enjoyment. For Future Research: Further studies can explore digital interactive fiction on different language skills such as vocabulary acquisition. For Students: Students are recommended to utilize interactive fiction games as an alternative reading practice to develop comprehension skills while enjoying the narrative experience.

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