

**IMPROVING THE ELEVENTH GRADERS READING  
ACHIEVEMENT OF NARRATIVE TEXT THROUGH  
READWORKS READING DIGITAL PLATFORM AT SMA  
PEMBINA PALEMBANG**

**A Thesis By**

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**TRIDINANTI UNIVERSITY PALEMBANG**

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# **Improving the Eleventh Graders' Reading Achievement of Narrative Text through ReadWorks Reading Digital Platform at SMA Pembina Palembang**

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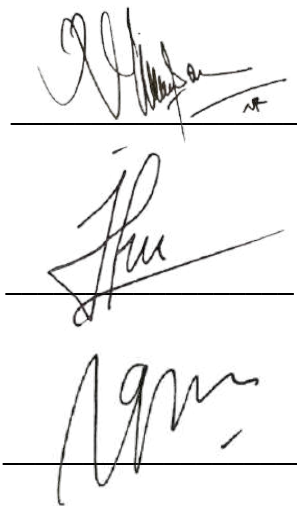
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## PERNYATAAN

Saya menyatakan dengan sebenar-benarnya bahwa seluruh data, informasi, interpretasi serta pernyataan dalam pembahasan dan kesimpulan yang disajikan dalam karya ilmiah ini, kecuali yang disebutkan sumbernya merupakan hasil pengamatan, penelitian, pengelolaan serta pemikiran saya dengan pengarahannya dari pembimbing yang ditetapkan.

Apabila ternyata didalam naskah skripsi ini dapat dibuktikan terdapat unsur-unsur jiplakan. Saya bersedia skripsi ini digugurkan dan gelar akademik yang saya peroleh (S-1) dibatalkan, serta diproses sesuai dengan peraturan perundang-undangan yang berlaku (UU) No. 20 Tahun 2003, pasal 25 ayat 2 dan pasal 70.

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of the ReadWorks digital reading platform in improving eleventh graders' reading achievement of narrative text at SMA Pembina Palembang. A quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test non-equivalent control group design was employed involving 60 students divided into an experimental group (XI IPA) and a control group (XI IPS), with 30 students of each. Data were collected through a validated 37-item of multiple-choice reading comprehension test with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.726. The experimental group received instruction via ReadWorks over eight sessions, while the control group received conventional lectures. The paired sample t-test revealed a significant improvement in the experimental group from pre-test (mean = 75.03) to post-test (mean = 84.80), with  $t = -6.333$  and  $p = 0.000$ . The independent sample t-test showed a significant difference between the experimental group (mean = 84.80) and control group (mean = 65.27), with  $t = -8.037$  and  $p = 0.000$ . These findings confirm that ReadWorks significantly improved students' narrative text reading achievement. English teachers are recommended to integrate ReadWorks as an effective digital reading tool in their instruction.

*Keywords: ReadWorks, digital reading platform, narrative text, reading achievement, EFL*

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presented the discussion of: (1) background of the research, (2) problems of research, (3) objectives of the research, and (4) significances of the research.

### **1.1 Background of the Research**

English is the most common International language in international communications, academic writing and professional growth. English as a foreign language in Indonesia is studied at the elementary, secondary and tertiary level with primary focus being on the development of four key communication competencies of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan, 2006). The Indonesian education system acknowledges the necessity of the critical role of English proficiency plays a critical role in preparing students for access to globalized academic and professional settings. Although Indonesian language is used as the national language, and in most subjects as the language of instruction, English can be considered as the gateway to foreign knowledge, scientific and scientific literature, and cross-cultural communication. The skills of speaking allow students to exchange words and ideas using their mouth, writing skills allow them to receive academic and job-related messages and electronic correspondence, listening skills enable them to comprehend the audio sources of information and verbal speech, and reading skills give them access to immense knowledge and literature reserves. Reading is one of those skills that are corner stone competencies and they provide the access to the rich information and various literature texts (Brown, 2007). Among

the students of Senior High School in Indonesia, mastery of strong reading skills in English which encompasses the ability to decode written text accurately, comprehend explicit and implicit meanings, analyze text structures, make inferences, evaluate content critically, and synthesize information from various sources is not only essential for academic success but also serves as a foundation for higher education and future professional opportunities.

The reading proficiency is a complex cognitive process that consists of a number of interdependent elements that define academic success, especially in the eleventh-grade learners who are preparing to take the national tests and entrance to the university exams. There are several and combined aspects of an effective reading understanding of textual information, fluency in reading, learning vocabulary and advanced analytical skills (Grabe, 2009). English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners are students who study English in countries where English is not the primary language of communication, such as Indonesia, where English is learned primarily in classroom settings rather than through daily immersive exposure. The EFL learners in Indonesia are specially lacking in acquiring these reading skills because of the lack of exposure to authentic English texts and the difference between their first language and English. The differences between Indonesian and English extend beyond vocabulary and grammar to include discourse patterns the ways ideas are organized and connected in texts, such as the preference for direct versus indirect communication styles and textual construction, which refers to how sentences and paragraphs are structured, the use of cohesive devices, and the overall rhetorical organization of written materials (Ananda & Rafli, 2021). According to the study by Safitri and Melati (2023), inferential reading comprehension is one of the main

challenges of Indonesian EFL students, as it has a serious influence on their overall academic achievement and the development of reading proficiency. The issue of reading comprehension is further enhanced when the students read across cultural texts that demand background and contextual knowledge other than the immediate one. The incorporation of digital technologies in learning institutions has proved to be an effective strategy of improving reading and one that gives students new learning experiences that deal with these issues by incorporating the interactive nature, multimedia support, immediate feedback, and a personalized learning pathway.

Reading achievement refers to the measurable outcomes of a student's reading ability, encompassing not only comprehension scores but also the capacity to apply reading strategies effectively, demonstrate vocabulary growth, increase reading fluency, and engage with increasingly complex texts across various genres and disciplines (Snow, 2002). Reading achievement is particularly critical for EFL students because it serves as both an indicator of language proficiency development and a predictor of academic success across all subject areas. Strong reading achievement enables students to access content knowledge independently, develop critical thinking skills through text analysis, and build the linguistic competence necessary for advanced academic work (Grabe, 2009). In the Indonesian context, reading achievement in English is assessed through standardized tests that measure literal comprehension (understanding explicitly stated information), inferential comprehension (drawing conclusions from implicit information), and critical comprehension (evaluating and analyzing text content), making it an essential focus for instructional improvement efforts. The urgency of mastering reading skills in English for Indonesian EFL learners cannot be overstated, as it directly impacts their

academic trajectory and future opportunities. According to Perfetti and Stafura (2014), reading proficiency serves as the foundation for all academic learning, enabling students to access complex disciplinary content, engage with scholarly materials, and demonstrate their knowledge through written assessments. Furthermore, Anderson (2008) emphasizes that early mastery of reading skills is crucial because reading comprehension difficulties, if left unaddressed, compound over time and create increasingly wider achievement gaps that become progressively harder to remediate in higher grades. In the globalized educational landscape, English reading proficiency has become a gateway skill that determines students' access to international academic resources, standardized test success, university admission opportunities, and participation in the global knowledge economy (Grabe & Stoller, 2020). This makes the development of effective reading interventions, such as digital platforms, not merely beneficial but essential for ensuring equitable educational outcomes for Indonesian EFL learners

One of the reading text is narrative. Narrative texts present particularly complex reading challenges that extend beyond basic comprehension to encompass complex cognitive processes including inference-making, character analysis, plot prediction, and thematic interpretation (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). These literary works require students to engage in higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing character motivations, understanding implicit meanings, recognizing literary devices, and synthesizing thematic elements across extended passages. Indonesian EFL students often struggle with narrative comprehension due to cultural differences in storytelling conventions, unfamiliar contextual references, and complex linguistic structures that characterize literary language. The ability to comprehend narrative texts is crucial for

academic success as these texts frequently appear in standardized assessments, university entrance examinations, and advanced English courses. Furthermore, narrative comprehension skills transfer to other academic areas, supporting students' ability to analyze complex texts across disciplines and develop critical thinking capabilities essential for higher education and professional success.

The study by Loh et al. (2023) also show that digital reading platforms which are web-based or application-based educational technologies that provide interactive reading materials, multimedia support features such as embedded videos and audio pronunciations, immediate comprehension feedback, progress tracking analytics, and personalized learning pathways that adapt to individual student performance have the capability of boosting not only the motivation of students to read but also their comprehension outcomes in case the strategy is appropriately applied. It is on these platforms that differentiated learning can take place as different teachers can adjust learning and teaching depending on learning styles and proficiency levels of students in the same classroom one of them reading platform is ReadWorks.

ReadWorks is one of the most well-rounded digital reading platforms that is dedicated to generating an increase in reading comprehension at both a middle and upper-level grade and a subject-by-subject basis. It is a free of charge site providing more than 3,000 articles and stories of high-quality with numerous narrative texts that can be used in secondary education (ReadWorks Inc., 2017). Such features of the platform as leveled reading texts, vocabulary guide, comprehension questions and audio assistance will be especially helpful to EFL learners (Edwards, 2023). ReadWorks can help educators understand which students need what kind of intervention, and support them in delivering instruction in a personalized way. The

reasons behind using narrative text instruction on the platform specifically is due to the platform having carefully chosen stories spanning across cultures, time and literary styles to offer the students a wide range of perspectives and learning experiences that may not always be provided by a textbook.

The efficacy of digital reading platforms has been proved in previous studies where some of the studies have shown evidence of the advantages of technology-enhanced reading instruction. Lutfia and Sunarti (2023) carried out a quasi-experimental study to investigate the efficacy of digital reading platforms in reading comprehension building among the high school students in Indonesia. They conducted their study with 60 eleventh-grade students (the experimental and control groups of 30 students each) who used various digital reading tools such as ReadWorks and those in the control group were taught using traditional methods. The pre-test and post-test scores on the standardized reading comprehension measures revealed that there was an improvement in the experimental group ( $p < 0.05$ ) with the effect sizes of 0.67 in overall reading comprehension and 0.74 inferential comprehension skills.

On the same note, Dinda et al. (2022) were involved in a quasi-experimental study model to examine the effects of using digital reading platforms on reading comprehension in EFL students. They engaged 90 students of the university taking courses in English language, randomly placed in experimental and control groups. The experimental group was involved in digital reading materials through 12 weeks compared to the control group who were taught using text books. The statistical results showed a significant difference between groups ( $p < 0.01$ ) where the experimental group performed better in literal comprehension (Cohen's  $d = 0.82$ ),



inferential comprehension (Cohen's  $d = 0.91$ ) and critical comprehension (Cohen's  $d = 0.78$ ).

Moreover, Rahayu et al. (2025) were concerned with the efficiency of the ReadWorks online reading tool when it comes to developing reading comprehension skills in junior high school students in Indonesia. The narrative and informational text 10 week intervention, through the use of ReadWorks, entailed a sample population of 90 students. Quantitative data revealed that, there was a great positive difference in measures of reading comprehension (73.2 to 85.6,  $p < 0.001$ ) with vocabulary knowledge and main idea identification contributing the most. Based on the results of qualitative analysis, participants were identified to be more motivated to read, learn more digital literacy and were in possession of positive technological learning attitudes depending on the quality of the results.

In addition, Dinda, Noni, Munir, and Tahir (2025) carried out a quasi-experimental study to examine the effect of the ReadWorks platform on the reading comprehension of eleventh-grade EFL students in Indonesia. The study involved 64 students who were divided equally into an experimental group and a control group, with the experimental group receiving instruction through ReadWorks while the control group received conventional instruction. Although the pre-test scores of the two groups were relatively similar, the post-test results showed that the experimental group achieved a considerably higher mean score than the control group. The independent samples t-test confirmed that this difference was statistically significant ( $p = 0.008$ ), indicating that students taught using the ReadWorks platform performed significantly better than those who were not. This finding lends direct support to the assumption that there is a significant difference in narrative text reading achievement

between students taught through ReadWorks and those taught conventionally.

Zhang and Liu (2023) examined the impact of digital reading with multimedia on the level of comprehension and the level of motivation among EFL learners. The experiment of the research comprised 120 Chinese university students and it was founded on the digital platforms which offered varying degrees of multimedia assistance. Results indicated that the text, audio and visual mixed senses provided superior results of comprehension in comparison to the textual digital materials ( $F(2,117) = 8.94, p < 0.001$ ). The comparison of multimedia integration with less multimedia integration showed that the former was particularly effective with lower initial-proficiency students in the difference of effectiveness in terms of learner characteristics.

Kumar (2023) examined the effectiveness of online reading tools to develop the reading comprehension abilities in engineering students. They used pre-experimental research in which 45 students were studied by reading technical material in 8 weeks using a technical reading algorithm on online platforms. The results registered significant differences in comprehension scores ( $t(44) = 7.23, p < 0.001$ ) and reading speed ( $t(44) = 5.67, p < 0.001$ ). The research marked the characteristics of digital support and scaffold teaching of technical vocabulary.

However, the lack of adequate reading skills poses serious consequences for EFL students' academic development and future opportunities. According to Nation (2001), students with insufficient reading proficiency experience limited vocabulary growth, reduced access to content knowledge across disciplines, and diminished academic confidence that can create a cycle of disengagement from learning.

Furthermore, Grabe and Stoller (2020) found that students who struggle with reading often develop negative attitudes toward learning, decreased motivation for academic tasks, and reduced educational aspirations, which ultimately affects their overall academic performance and future career prospects. These cumulative disadvantages highlight the urgent need for effective interventions, such as digital reading platforms, to address reading achievement gaps before they become entrenched barriers to student success.

Moreover, it is stated in the national curriculum of Indonesia curriculum merdeka that importance is paid to development of critical thinking, ability to work with digital literacy, as well as to acquire it, and the development of these abilities may be promoted by means of the strategic employment of digital reading platforms (Kemendikbud, 2013). As ReadWorks is included in instruction of the narrative text it fits the curriculum objectives as well as offers students real-life experiences in reading that go beyond the book type of reading experiences.

This research was conducted at SMA Pembina Palembang. SMA Pembina Palembang is characterized by unique obstacles and opportunities regarding the delivery of the digital reading instruction. SMA Pembina Palembang, recognized as one of South Sumatra's premier secondary institutions, serves a diverse student population with varying English proficiency levels. Initial observations and interviews with English teachers revealed that eleventh-grade students frequently encounter difficulties processing narrative texts, particularly in grasping implicit meanings, understanding character motivations, and identifying thematic elements. Traditional instructional approaches, which primarily focus on direct knowledge transmission, provide limited opportunities to accommodate diverse learning styles

and fail to address individual student needs for meaningful reading experiences. Students at this institution demonstrate insufficient background knowledge activation when encountering narrative texts, struggle with vocabulary comprehension in literary contexts, and exhibit limited strategic reading skills necessary for independent text analysis. The school's recent investment in digital infrastructure and availability of necessary technological tools presented an optimal opportunity to implement innovative reading instruction methods that can better support student learning needs (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010). ReadWorks offers solutions to these challenges by providing structured vocabulary support that builds students' background knowledge, implementing strategic reading skill development through guided practice, and promoting independent reading through engaging, culturally diverse narrative content that motivates student engagement and supports comprehension development (ReadWorks Inc., 2017; Beck et al., 2002).

Therefore, based on the explanation above, the writer conducted this research entitled **"Improving the Eleventh Graders' Reading Achievement of Narrative Text through ReadWorks Reading Digital Platform at SMA Pembina Palembang"**.

## **1.2 The Problems of Research**

### **1.2.1 Limitation of the Problem**

Based on the background above, this research is limited to explore the application of ReadWorks digital reading platform to improve students' reading achievement of narrative text at SMA Pembina Palembang.

### **1.2.2 The Formulation of the Problem**

Formulation of the Problems are formulated as follows:

1. Was it significant to use ReadWorks Reading Digital Platform to improve the eleventh graders' reading achievement of narrative text at SMA Pembina Palembang?
2. Was there any significant difference between the students who are taught using ReadWorks Reading Digital Platform in narrative text achievement and those who are not at SMA Pembina Palembang?

### **1.3 The Objectives of the Research**

The research objectives were developed based on the research problems as follows:

1. To find out whether it was significant to use ReadWorks Reading Digital Platform to improve the eleventh graders' reading achievement of narrative text at SMA Pembina Palembang or not.
2. To find out whether or not there was any significant difference between the students who were taught using ReadWorks Reading Digital Platform in narrative text achievement and those who were not at SMA Pembina Palembang.

### **1.4 The Significances of the Research**

The results of this research were expected to contribute significant benefits for the following groups:

## 1. For the Students

The study had the potential to improve the reading attainment and learning motivation of reading narrative texts by the interactive and attractive characteristics of ReadWorks platform. The students had the opportunity of individual learning paths, instant feedback as well as various narrative contents that marry their learning levels and interest to each individual. Through the digital platform, the students were not only taught some skills related to reading comprehension but also gained some digital literacy skills that are crucial in the 21st-century learning. Moreover, the multimedia support and vocabulary assistance available at ReadWorks could be useful to the students so that they could bypass the language barrier and make improvements in their general English prowess.

## 2. For the Teachers

The study gave English teacher statistical data on the quality of digital reading resources in teaching narrative texts. The teachers could acquire knowledge on new principles of pedagogy that incorporate the use of technology in a reading course without losing sight of instructional goals. The results could help teachers to make informed decisions regarding the implementation of digital tools and the decision to create a combined approach to learning that combines both the traditional and technology-enhanced training approaches. Also, the teachers were able to understand how they can use ReadWorks to measure the student progress, which allows them to give more efficient and specific feedback to their students.

### 3. For the Researcher

The researcher believed that she would be in a better position to increase her knowledge of digital pedagogy, research methodology, and the integration of technology and language learning. The undertaking of the research was an experience that would help in the designing and implementation of the approach to conduct a quasi-experiment research and the analysis of quantitative data, and the contribution to the academic literature of studying the topic of the present research into the teaching of reading English. In addition, the researcher obtained concerted practical knowledge of the challenges and possibilities of the educational technology implementation in Indonesian secondary education settings.

### 4. For Other Researcher

This research added to the mounting evidence-base on digital reading platforms and how effective they are in the EFL scenarios, especially in Indonesian educational systems. The findings could be utilized to inform and ground future studies that would explore the various areas concerning technology-enhanced reading instruction, e.g., their effects on long-term retention, effects on the text, effects between different levels of education and so on. Other researcher were able to extend this study in terms of its methodology and implications to address similar questions concerning digital literacy and engagement in the language learning process and innovative pedagogy.

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