

## STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF DIGITAL AND PRINTED TEXTBOOKS

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**Abstract:** The introduction of technology has changed how students perceive and prefer learning and knowledge acquisition, specifically in choosing types of textbooks. In addition to the printed textbook, many textbooks are now also available in digital formats. The purposes of this study were, firstly, to determine how students perceived digital and printed textbooks and secondly to know their reading preference. Using purposive random sampling, qualitative data was obtained through interviews with six students from three different semesters of the English Education Study Program of Sriwijaya University Palembang, selected on the basis of their English ability level. The findings were analysed in terms of the frequency of students' use of digital and printed textbook, the advantages and disadvantages, and students' preferences of reading digital and printed textbooks. The findings indicated that the students perceived the importance of reading both paper and digital textbooks equally for their learning activities. Furthermore, students preferred to read both printed and digital textbooks. None of the students rated one format better than the other.

**Keywords:** *digital textbook, printed textbook, reading preference*

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading, one of the four English skills, is viewed as crucial skill to master by English language learners. Lack of inputs from daily interactions could be best addressed through reading. Then, according to Mullis et al. (2009), reading contributed significantly to an individual's personal and intellectual development, further education, job success, career advancement, and adaptability to change. Next, literacy skills improve a language learner's proficiency in other areas (Anderson, 2003). In addition, Noor (2011) claims that reading is the key to numerous experiences that bring people together in ways that go beyond space and time. Reading gives someone experience that allows them to broaden their perspectives, live out their passions, deepen their understanding of themselves, others, and the

world, among other things. Textbooks have been utilized in schools as teaching tools. Textbook, a particular book that is primarily determined by its role, gives a core learning resource and is targeted at a clearly defined audience, for a given level of education, age group, and area of study (Ivic, 2019)

As the primary learning resource still used in the learning and teaching process, textbooks continue to play a significant role in several educational institutions, from the primary level of instruction to higher education. As a result, textbooks continue to be an integral part of the learning process that occurs in a variety of educational institutions (Prastowo, 2011)

Language education presents with new opportunities, challenges, and, in addition, a sense of risk and uncertainty to those who find themselves in the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language. The adoption of ICT in education has a significant impact on those advancements on the worldwide status of English language (EFL). The English language and information technology are seen by students learning English as a second language today as tools for "reading the world" and making an impact on it, rather than as ends in themselves (Warschauer, 2004).

For centuries, printed texts have been the primary tool for teaching and learning to read. However, the pervasiveness of technology has given rise to digital texts, and the accelerating influx of digital texts necessitates the development of new comprehension skills and strategies. Since ICT is used in educational settings, there is a growing variety of reading materials available, including digital textbooks, which are becoming more and more common. A digital textbook is often an electronic version of a printed book, however occasionally a book is exclusively released in digital form without a printed edition, according to Agustiana (2021). For usage in addition to paper reading materials, there exist digital textbooks. Digital textbooks are increasingly taking the place of printed ones in the academic setting. The educational establishment is also urged to switch to paperless instruction and away from the usage of digital reading devices (Giebelhausen, 2015)

A study by Pardede (2019) stated that studies comparing the efficacy of perusing printed texts versus digital texts have not yet reached a consensus. Numerous previous studies tended to demonstrate that reading printed text was preferable to reading digital text in terms of reading speed, accuracy, and comprehension, whereas other studies revealed insignificant differences. However, the majority of studies conducted tended to demonstrate the superiority of digital reading, while a smaller number of studies demonstrated the superiority of printed reading or found no discernible difference in the influence of the two formats on comprehension. Among the most likely causes of this discrepancy is the advanced level of digital reading perception. In terms of perception, the reviewed studies revealed that young students, technologically proficient users, have generally more favorable attitudes towards digital reading. To influence their perception of digital reading, however, students' experiences and knowledge of digital text should be related to their age. Another study conducted by Prawira et al. (2020) reported that university students' interest towards online readings and their current mood at the moment will affect their performance in evaluating online sources.

Educational institutions are still emphasizing online teaching and learning activities because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The dominance of digital textbooks then increases as more teaching and learning activities are conducted online. Students are compelled or encouraged to use both physical and digital textbooks in

this uncertain environment, which may not be to their taste. Students who use only one reading device tend to be more dominant when applying both printed and digital materials. However, not all students are able to manage both printed and digital textbooks. They view the employment of both textbooks from various angles and have distinct preferences.

Due to technological ubiquity in all life sectors, digital texts are unavoidable. The best option is to use them to supplement or replace resources that instructors already possess. Due to the fact that digital texts are a relatively new phenomenon in education in general and in EFL learning and instruction in particular, there are few reliable foundational concepts of digital reading. Regarding the problems stated-, this study is expected to investigate students' perceptions and preferences of the use of digital and printed textbook in English language learning that both formats to some extent will increase students' eagerness in reading English textbooks.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study utilized some interview questions to know students' perceptions and preferences towards the use of digital and printed textbooks. A case study was appropriate for this study because it helped the researcher gathered detailed information and insight into students' perceptions and preferences toward digital and printed textbook. The study was held at English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sriwijaya University. Some factors contributed to the selection of the research location. First, this university has already introduced the students with various reading sources, for instance, digital and printed textbooks. To facilitate the student with printed textbooks, this university establishes library with relevant references and conducive reading circumstance. Also, the library provides computers with internet access and free Wi-Fi connections for the students in order that they can access some relevant reading sources. Furthermore, the university has already applied technology as a learning tool and the students are motivated to do so.

In collecting the data, interview questions were designed on the basis of the objectives of the study. There were three core questions under the themes of the frequency of using printed and digital textbooks, advantages, and disadvantages of the use of printed and digital textbooks, and students' preferences of the two kinds of textbooks. The gained data were then analyzed qualitatively. According to Creswell (2012) and Mukminin et al. (2017), the steps of data analysis included organizing and preparing the data, reading through the data, coding the data into categories, developing themes, representing, and reporting the findings, and interpreting the data. In addition, member checking was performed to affirm the credibility and control of biases by returning the transcribed interview text to the participants and requesting their confirmation of its accuracy.

### **Subjects**

The subjects of the study consisted of six undergraduate students of English Education Sriwijaya University. Participants were chosen based on simple random sampling because each member of the population had an equal chance of being selected. The population of the study were the second, fourth, and sixth-semester students in the English Department of English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sriwijaya University. The researcher used

purposive random sampling to choose two students of the three academic year levels, so the total of interviewees was six students.

### Data Collection and Data Analysis

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the data were collected through interview. Semi-structured interview was used to investigate students' perceptions students' perception towards the use of digital and printed reading textbooks also their reading preference. During the interview, the students were free to answer in English or their mother tongue in order to convey their ideas freely without language barriers. The interview with each student was video-taped, transcribed, and translated into English.

The collected data were analysed qualitatively, namely a case study. The steps of analysing the data followed the procedure described by Creswell (2012) and Mukminin et.al (2017) by preparing the data to be analysed, learning and understanding the information obtained, categorizing the processed data into codes (coding), building themes, displaying the result into the form of narrative descriptions or qualitative reports, and interpreting the data.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Findings

The researcher described the data regarding how students felt about printed and digital textbooks. The interviews were given the numbers S1, S2, and so forth. The following five points were discussed: (1) frequency of reading digital and printed textbooks; (2) benefits and drawbacks of using digital and printed textbooks; and (3) preferences for printed or digital learning materials in reading course.

### *Student's perceptions of the use of digital and printed textbook*

#### *Frequency of the use of digital and printed textbook*

Table 1 below displays the frequency of the use of digital and printed textbook.

Digital Textbooks	Printed Textbooks
"I use digital textbooks <u>almost every day</u> ." (S1)	" <u>Very often</u> . Even every day." (S1)
"Not very often, maybe only <u>a few times a week</u> ." (S2)	"I read it <u>every day</u> because it's a necessity." (S2)
" <u>Every day</u> . I even made it my daily routine." (S3)	"I <u>often</u> read both." (S3)
" <u>Sometimes</u> , I read both kind of textbook by turn." (S4)	"of course <u>every day</u> for learning purposes." (S4)
"Because learning is now online so I read it <u>almost every day</u> " (S5)	"sometimes, it can <u>be 3 or 4 times a week</u> ." (S5)
"Maybe <u>a few times a week</u> , I'm not too sure." (S6)	"emmm.. actually I <u>rarely</u> read." (S6)

From the data above, six students mentioned that they spent their time much on digitally reading activity while five students on the other one. One student, in contrast, was exposed to read printed ones even rarely.

***Advantages and disadvantages of digital and printed textbook***

Students argued a few benefits of using digital and physical textbooks. Some of them discussed similar benefits and drawbacks of paper and digital textbooks. Below are the themes and sub-themes of the result of the interview.

Table 2. Advantages and disadvantages of digital textbooks and printed textbooks

Themes	Sub-themes	
	Digital textbooks	Printed textbooks
Advantages	Ease to use	No additional device
	Flexibility	No notification interference
	Less space consuming	No internet connection
	Sources of information	
Disadvantages	Distractions	Heavy thing
	Insufficient satisfaction	Dirtiness
	Poor internet connection	
	Eye health problem	

The findings indicated that they believed digital textbooks to be less weight and storage-friendly. After that, it contains a function that makes it simple for students to note mistakes and remove them back, as well as to change the font. Additionally, according to students, it was affordable or may be free to access, offered comprehensive and recent information, and consumed less paper. The printed textbooks, on the other hand, needed time or space to read and did not require a special computer or internet connection. The second benefit was that it was simple to borrow from the library, safe for eye health, and had little interference or distraction. Additionally, it was more fascinating because it was simple to take notes straight on and could ensure to suit learning needs.

***Reading Preferences***

Question 9 focuses on the student’s preferences toward the display of the textbook, whether the textbook will be printed out or left it digital. According to the interview, the majority of them preferred printing out the textbook for a variety of reasons.

- S1: *"It's depend on how many pages,..... if the page is more than 50 pages I prefer to read it directly to save the budget....."*
- S2: *"I chose to print it, because it's make learning more comfortable so that learning became more effective, faster to understand."*
- S3: *"I prefer to print it, ..... I just need to read aloud the writing since there is no need to record it anymore."*
- S5: *"I chose to just print it because I was more comfortable using printed textbooks while studying."*

According to the research, S2, S3, and S5 were more at ease reading printed textbooks and thought they were more efficient and quicker to read than digital ones. The first student (S1) said that the choice between print and digital formats relied on how many pages the educational materials included.

Even though majority of students chose printed textbook, the choice of digital textbook also gives the same preference.

S1: *"It's depend on how many pages,..... if the page is more than 50 pages I prefer to read it directly to save the budget."*

### **Discussion**

The research findings show that students valued both paper and digital textbooks equally for their education. Students preferred to read from both physical and digital textbooks, despite some reading digital textbooks more frequently than printed textbooks. They both reported a comparable number of aspects of reading textbooks on paper and digitally. None of the students rated one format as better than the other. Students therefore saw the value of using digital textbooks in addition to traditional ones. It was consistent with the Taylor (2011) study's finding that students could read and learn from both digital and paper textbooks. In their study, Hasby and Mohammed (2021) concluded that print and digital textbooks work in concert to provide the optimum learning synergy.

In response to the last interview question, most students also concurred traditional textbooks provided them with more information than digital ones did since they were easier for them to understand. Tseng (2010) provided evidence to support the claim that e-books had less placemarks than traditional books, particularly for pages that run consecutively down without a page number, which is perplexing and may be unlimited. Printed books gave pupils concrete points of reference and made it simple for the brain to retain how much had been read. According to Zambarbieri and Carniglia (2012), the influence on readers is lessened by the size of the reading screen. More information may be retained by kids the more expansive the medium employed. A printed book was easier to read accurately than a phone. Students preferred reading physical textbooks over digital ones because of this.

Based on the findings, most of students enjoyed reading from both digital and paper textbooks. Both the digital and printed versions are used, and each one has advantages and disadvantages of its own. They both reported a comparable number of aspects of reading textbooks on paper and digitally. None of the students rated one better than the other. Students, therefore, saw the value of using digital textbooks in addition to printed ones.

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

This research summarizes how students felt about using digital and paper textbooks and which format they preferred. The results suggest that students viewed both digital and traditional textbooks to be equally important because each type of textbook had advantages and disadvantages.

However, the majority of students were keen on reading that was printed rather than digital. The reason was that reading paper books rather than computerized ones made it simpler and quicker to retain information. Additionally, students had just recently begun learning about digital reading and still required time to adjust in order to benefit fully from digital features, one of which was text that could be read digitally.

Regardless these findings, this study has some limitations. First, the results cannot be generalized as this is small scale study. Then, this study needs further

investigation to get deeper discussion and information. Despite these limitations, it is expected that further study will be conducted in a wide range subjects and discussions.

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