

Training on Strategies for Reading Printed and Digital Texts for Students of MTs Mahdaliyah Jambi City

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Abstract

This community service activity aimed to provide training on reading strategies for print and digital texts to increase students' interest in reading. Based on the findings of a study conducted by the community service team in the previous year, different strategies were identified for reading these two types of texts. Therefore, the findings were considered important to disseminate to the intended users, particularly junior secondary school students. Increasing students' interest in reading useful and meaningful texts is important, as reading activities are increasingly challenged by the widespread use of smartphones, which provide access to various forms of entertainment, including games, social media, and other digital content. During the activity, the community service team provided materials on the importance of reading, reasons why students should read more, useful types of reading materials in both digital and print formats, and other supporting activities. At the end of the training, students reported a better understanding and mastery of reading techniques appropriate to the medium being used. They also indicated that they were better able to maximize the use of their mobile phones for learning purposes.

Keywords: Digital Texts, Jambi, Print Texts, Reading Strategies, Training

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is an activity through which individuals obtain information by viewing, understanding, and interpreting written texts (Hirvela, 2004; Sabila, 2025). Reading is essential in everyday life and is considered a fundamental language skill. Reading ability also plays an important role in helping students understand and acquire knowledge across various areas of learning (van der Sande et al., 2023). The use of appropriate reading strategies is also closely associated with students' ability to comprehend textual content (Sun et al., 2021). There is a common saying that "reading is a window to the world." This expression reflects the idea that reading enables individuals to

broaden their imagination and explore the world beyond their immediate surroundings, thereby providing a wide range of benefits. Several benefits of reading have been identified based on various sources (Hawari & Yonatan, 2022).

One of the benefits of reading is that it helps develop the imagination, as described above. By exercising the imagination, individuals engage their cognitive abilities to visualize and describe things. This can have positive effects on brain development, as the brain is stimulated to actively process information. This differs from children who are accustomed to watching television, as visual images are already presented to them, providing less opportunity for their imagination to be actively engaged. Greater screen-media use has also been associated with lower mental imagery abilities in children (Suggate & Martzog, 2022). By developing strong imaginative abilities, children may also develop better cognitive capacities for learning.

Another benefit of reading is that it can serve as a means of relieving fatigue and mental exhaustion. There are many ways to overcome fatigue or boredom after a full day of studying or working, such as using smartphones or playing online games, while reading is often considered a less preferred option. However, reading can be an effective way to unwind, particularly after engaging in various learning activities. Reading as a recreational activity can help reduce stress levels and provide an opportunity for relaxation (Viqar et al., 2022). To make reading a more enjoyable and relaxing activity, students can choose reading materials that match their interests and find a comfortable place and atmosphere in which to read.

When considered in an academic context, reading offers even greater benefits. In education, reading is a central activity because it provides students with valuable information that supports their studies (Sohail, 2016). In addition, reading can promote the development of thinking skills, improve clarity of thought, increase knowledge, and enhance memory (Lubis, 2020). Reading can also expand students' vocabulary and provide them with a wider range of words and expressions for communicating ideas (Ahmadi, 2017). As a result, students can communicate their ideas more appropriately, both orally and in writing, because they develop stronger language skills through reading. Certainly, there are many other benefits of reading beyond those described above.

In today's world, reading from both print and digital sources has become a common part of everyday life. People can still visit libraries or bookstores to read or purchase printed books, while many also access online books and portals to read digital texts. These two forms of reading require different strategies to read more effectively and efficiently (Lim & Toh, 2020). Instruction in various reading strategies has also been shown to support improvements in students' reading comprehension (Yapp et al., 2021). Differences in reading media can affect reading comprehension outcomes; therefore, the characteristics of the text and the purpose of reading should be considered when selecting a medium (Hare et al., 2024). Moreover, these two forms of reading can complement each other, as each has distinct characteristics and benefits depending on readers' needs and the context of use (Peras et al., 2023).

For example, when students have difficulty understanding a concept in a textbook, they can consult various online sources available on the internet to find alternative explanations of the concept. Thus, reading print texts and digital texts can complement each other in supporting students' academic achievement. Neugebauer et

al. (2022) explain that online reading may provide a different comprehension experience because it involves reading characteristics and processes that are not entirely the same as those involved in reading print texts.

Unfortunately, despite the well-documented benefits of reading, reading literacy among students in Indonesia remains a challenge. The results of the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) showed that Indonesian students' reading performance remained below the OECD average (OECD, 2023). This challenge is also evident in Jambi Province, where data from the Center for Education Policy Research and Culture (Solihin et al., 2019) indicated that Jambi Province was among the provinces with relatively low levels of reading literacy.

Based on these circumstances, Universitas Jambi, through the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education's community service program, sought to contribute to improving the quality of education in Jambi Province. Therefore, this community service activity aimed to provide orientation and mentoring for students at a Madrasah Tsanawiyah (Islamic junior secondary school) to foster better reading habits in both print and digital formats. The school had identified a similar issue, as students tended to spend more time using their gadgets and had not yet developed strong reading habits. The involvement of the Universitas Jambi community service team was also expected to provide a new learning atmosphere that could encourage both students and teachers to become more motivated and enthusiastic in their teaching and learning activities.

The partner school for this community service project is Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) Mahdaliyah Jambi City. Based on discussions conducted at the target school, the principal identified an urgent need for an initiative to enhance students' reading interest, particularly regarding academic reading. This urgency stems from several key factors: first, school literacy activities were severely disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic; second, students require exposure to new insights on reading habits, encompassing both online/digital reading and physical books/magazines. Furthermore, the school expressed the need for assistance in stimulating student activity within the library, such as fostering discussions and reading habits. Through these efforts, students are expected to cultivate a passion for reading and develop improved reading strategies.

Approximately 75% of the students at MTs Mahdaliyah come from low-income families, with a significant number residing in a nearby orphanage. The school operates with only one class per grade level. The intervention of the community service team from Universitas Jambi is expected to further motivate these students to learn—particularly in reading and deliver a tangible contribution to the partner school.

METHODS

Program Implementation

The partner school for this community service program is Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) Mahdaliyah, Jambi City. Based on discussions with the school, the principal expressed the need for a program that could increase students' interest in and habits of reading, particularly reading to support their academic and learning needs at school.

This need is motivated by several issues. First, literacy activities at the school have not been carried out optimally, particularly due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, students need to gain new knowledge and information regarding effective reading habits and strategies, both for reading digital/online texts and printed materials such as books and magazines. The school also expects assistance in increasing students' activities in the library, including reading and discussion activities.

Through this program, students are expected to develop and strengthen their interest and enthusiasm for reading while also improving their reading strategies. Consequently, students' ability to comprehend and obtain information from various reading sources, both printed and digital, can be enhanced.

Participant Background

Most students at MTs Mahdaliyah come from economically disadvantaged family backgrounds. Approximately 75% of the students come from low-income families, while some others reside in orphanages located near the school. In addition, the school has only one class at each grade level. These conditions demonstrate the importance of providing support and assistance to help motivate students to learn, particularly in developing their reading habits and skills. The involvement of the Community Service Team from Universitas Jambi is therefore expected to provide additional motivation for the students and make a meaningful contribution to the partner school.

Program Implementation

The community service activities were carried out offline over two days, on August 3 and 5, 2022, at the partner school. The following details the activities conducted during the two-day program.

First Day: Reading Habits and Strategies for Printed Texts

The first day of implementation, August 3, 2022, commenced with opening remarks from the school principal, followed by an introductory session with eighth-grade students of MTs Mahdaliyah Jambi City. Subsequently, the first presentation was delivered by a team member.

The first presentation comprised two main topics: building reading habits and addressing "*Reading vs. Gadget*." The objective was to reintroduce reading to the students, acknowledging that reading often poses a challenge for them. This was closely tied to the second topic, which addressed how device usage frequently distracts students from their reading obligations. Consequently, students were encouraged to manage their time effectively between device usage and academic reading. Due to the students' young age and initial shyness, no questions were raised from the beginning of the event through the second presentation, nor by the conclusion of the first day. Nevertheless, their overall enthusiasm throughout the two-day program was highly commendable.

The second presentation focused on reading strategies for printed texts. The team introduced strategies such as the SIMBA method, which assists students in comprehending texts more effectively, particularly in locating detailed information through key terms. Following the presentation, practical exercises were administered to reinforce the acquired knowledge.

Interactive Reading Activity

Between the first and second presentations, an interactive reading-related game was conducted, facilitated by two university students. The game required participants to arrange events in chronological order based on a provided text. This activity was designed to develop students' ability to identify both general and detailed information while promoting teamwork through group tasks. The text utilized was a printed passage on the history of the Tugu Keris monument in Jambi City. Winning groups were rewarded with notebooks and pens.

Second Day: Reading Strategies for Digital Texts

The second day of implementation took place on August 5, 2022. This session focused on a single topic: reading strategies for digital texts. Students were introduced to various reading websites and guided on how to access open-access textbooks. Additionally, students received hands-on training in creating simple digital annotations and saving them online. This combination of instruction and practical application heightened students' awareness of the productive uses of digital devices. The students demonstrated high engagement and satisfaction when successfully downloading and storing a digital textbook online, after which they practiced creating digital notes.

A game session focused on digital reading competencies was again integrated into the program. In this session, the student team members utilized the Kahoot! platform to facilitate online vocabulary learning. Additionally, practical advice was provided on expanding vocabulary using conventional printed dictionaries.

Program Completion

The two-day community service program was executed successfully. The materials were effectively delivered, and the students demonstrated high engagement throughout the sessions. The school administration expressed strong appreciation for the initiative, noting that this was the first time the school had hosted a community service intervention from Universitas Jambi.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service program titled *"Training on Printed and Digital Text Reading Strategies to Enhance Reading Habits of MTs Mahdaliyah Students, Jambi City"* was executed successfully and smoothly. The training provided to the students is expected to offer new insights into cultivating reading habits for both printed and digital texts. At the end of the program, students were asked to provide reflections regarding the knowledge they acquired and their follow-up plans based on the material provided. The activities are shown in the following figures.



Figure 1. The Community Service Team Delivering Material on the First Day of the Activity



Figure 2. Students Participating in a Reading Practice Session



Figure 3. Presentation of the Second-Day Topic Regarding Digital Text Reading Strategies

According to Chang (2019), reflection is essential as it involves reviewing what has been learned to support learning improvement. Reflection also serves as a tool for students to independently evaluate their learning

experiences and processes (Yan et al., 2022). In addition to reflection, students were given the opportunity to provide feedback to confirm their acquired knowledge and to assist the team in evaluating the program. Feedback helps participants understand their learning achievements and identify areas needing further improvement (Wisniewski et al., 2020).

The reflection was conducted via Google Forms, incorporating several questions to assess students' comprehension of the material and their expectations following the completion of the training. These questions inquired about how they described the learning activities, their objectives in learning printed and digital reading strategies, whether today's learning activities were effective, which activities were considered challenging, what was learned from the activities, and what actionable steps they planned to take as a follow-up.

For the first question, the majority of students responded that the day's activities consisted of an opening session, a presentation on digital texts, educational games, reflection, and a closing session. This question aimed to determine the extent to which students paid attention to the activities conducted. Their responses indicated that they clearly understood the overall structure of the program.

1. Briefly describe the learning activities conducted today.

10 responses

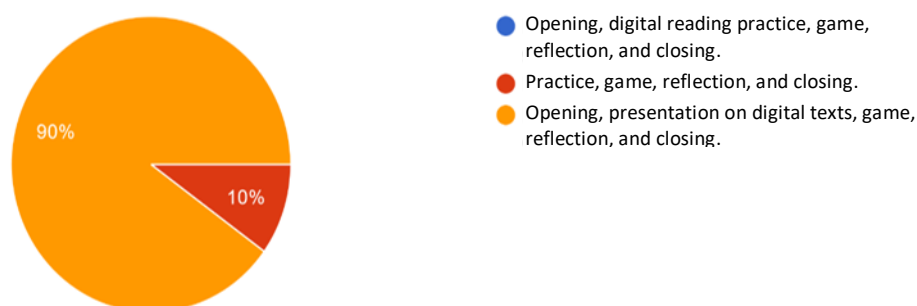


Figure 4. Participations' Responses Regarding the Learning Activity

Regarding the second question concerning their learning objectives, student responses varied. A portion of the students stated that they aimed to improve their digital text reading skills. This serves as a positive indicator that the primary objective of the community service program was well understood by the participants. Additionally, a small number of students noted that their goal was to learn through interactive games. This response likely stemmed from the integration of educational game sessions following the presentation of the main materials, during which the students demonstrated high engagement and enjoyment.

For the subsequent question, all students evaluated the day's activities positively, stating that the program successfully enriched their knowledge. This response directly correlates with the feedback from the second question, indicating that the strategy-based training provided students with new insights and enhanced their understanding of both printed and digital text reading.

3. Was today's learning activity good or bad for you? Why?

10 responses



Figure 5. Participants' Perceptions of Whether the Learning Activity Was Beneficial or Not

Regarding the fourth question on which aspects of the training were considered challenging, student responses varied. They identified the reading texts, practical exercises, and instructional delivery as the primary challenges. This perception may stem from the instructional delivery by university lecturers, which differed from the teaching styles students typically experience. Similarly, the reading materials and exercises presented novel text genres to the students during practice sessions, requiring tailored guidance to ensure comprehensive text comprehension.

For the fifth question concerning lessons learned, students provided several insightful conclusions, noting that digital texts were accessible to comprehend, reading could be an enjoyable activity, and learning could be effectively combined with educational games.

5. In conclusion, what did you learn from today's activity?

10 responses

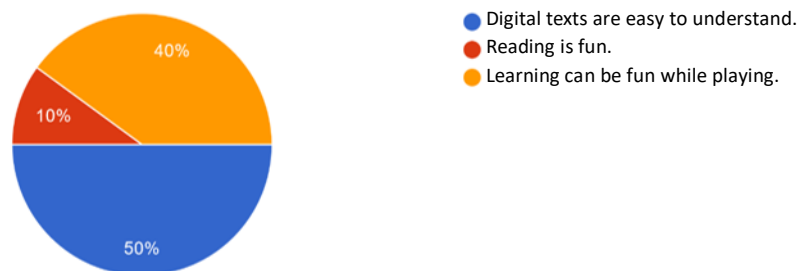
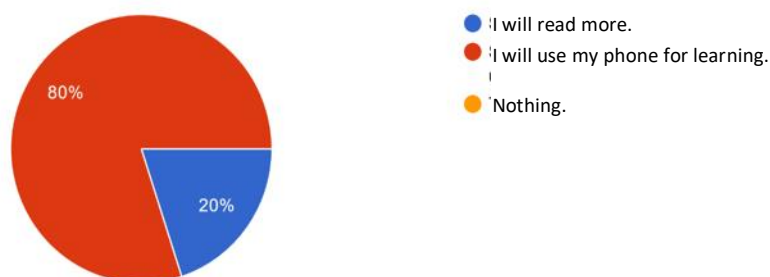


Figure 6. Participants' Conclusions Regarding the Learning Activity

Regarding the final question on post-training action plans, students indicated that they intended to read more frequently and maximize the use of their mobile phones for educational purposes.

6. What will you do as a follow-up to today's activity?

10 responses

**Figure 7.** Participants' Responses Regarding Follow-up Activities

Fostering students' awareness of the importance of reading continues to present significant challenges in the field. This aligns with findings indicating that reading motivation and engagement tend to decline during adolescence (Webber et al., 2023). Students exhibited a strong preference for mobile gaming, which became particularly evident on the second day of the program when participants were instructed to bring their personal devices. At the end of the first day, the team advised students who owned smartphones to bring them for the upcoming session. Upon entering the classroom on the second day, the team observed clusters of students engaged in mobile games during instructional time. Excessive smartphone usage during academic hours has been shown to potentially disrupt the learning process (Amez & Baert, 2021). While this phenomenon is largely inevitable, the critical challenge lies in helping students balance recreational device use and academic priorities. Theoretically, as reflected in their post-activity evaluations, the students demonstrated a solid understanding of reading strategies for both printed and digital texts; however, practical application remains a hurdle. This difficulty stems not from a lack of access or infrastructure, but rather from the compelling distraction of recreational gaming. Consequently, the reading strategies introduced during the workshop require continuous practice and regular integration into school routines to foster competent readers. Targeted interventions specifically designed to boost reading motivation can yield positive effects on student engagement and reading achievement (McBreen & Savage, 2021).

Furthermore, when accessing online content, students inevitably face a choice between leisure reading (such as digital comics and novels) and academic reading. Distinct behavioral patterns separate these two reading modes, as synthesized by Isakson et al. (2016). For instance, students naturally tend to prefer recreational texts over academic textbooks. Providing reading choices tailored to adolescent characteristics and preferences serves as an effective strategy to sustain reading motivation (Mac Iver et al., 2024), as reading for pleasure acts as a form of intrinsic motivation that drives engagement (Sari et al., 2023). This preference arises because recreational content offers entertainment, whereas academic reading is associated with formal study and is often perceived as less engaging. Additionally, students encounter a far wider variety of choices in recreational texts than in academic materials.

A third key distinction is that academic reading demands a higher degree of commitment than reading for entertainment. Reading motivation is closely linked to the deployment of learning strategies, making motivation a crucial determinant of student engagement in academic reading tasks (Li et al., 2024). Equipping students with explicit reading strategies enables them to maximize their application and achieve intended reading goals, particularly when engaging with academic materials. Ultimately, students are expected to develop better self-regulation regarding their device usage, establishing a balanced allocation of time among mobile gaming, recreational reading, and academic study.

CONCLUSION

Based on the execution of this community service program, the team concludes that the initiative was successfully implemented and achieved its intended objectives. Feedback gathered during brief post-training discussions indicated that participants found the acquired knowledge highly beneficial for their personal development. Given the positive impact of this program on boosting student learning motivation, similar initiatives should be conducted on a regular basis. Furthermore, as the partner school predominantly serves orphans and students from low-income families, the school administration and students expressed strong appreciation for external support and educational interventions. It is hoped that the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) team at Universitas Jambi will continue to collaborate with schools across Jambi Province, sharing expertise and experience to foster continuous improvements in the learning process.

DECLARATIONS

- Author Contribution : M: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft
 RM: Investigation, Formal Analysis
 NTS: Validation, Writing – Review & Editing
 NA: Methodology, Investigation
 DV: Formal Analysis, Writing – Review & Editing
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