

The Utilization of AI as a Literacy Support Tool to Enhance English Reading Skills

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the utilization of AI as a literacy support tool to enhance English reading skills. The research employed a qualitative approach using a case study design with purposive sampling. Data collection techniques included observation and interviews involving 23 respondents from the second-semester students of the Sharia Economics program. The data analysis process consisted of data collection, data reduction, conclusion drawing, and data validation. To ensure data validity, this study applied triangulation of theories and methods. The findings revealed that the use of AI made the English learning process, particularly in reading skills, more practical and engaging, as students can ask questions at any time and receive quick responses without feeling pressured. This contributed to increased interest and motivation for independent learning. However, several challenges were also identified, such as limited internet access, misunderstandings of vocabulary, occasional inaccuracies in information, and difficulties in comprehending certain answers. Some respondents also felt that they were becoming overly dependent on ChatGPT.

Keywords: AI Technology, Literacy, Reading Skill

Abstrak

Penelitian ini adalah penelitian yang bertujuan untuk mengetahui pemanfaatan AI sebagai alat bantu literasi terhadap kemampuan membaca bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian studi kasus dengan metode purposive sampling. Teknik pengumpulan data pada penelitian ini menggunakan teknik observasi dan wawancara dengan subjek penelitian sejumlah 23 responden dari prodi Ekonomi Syariah semester 2. Analisis data terdiri dari pengumpulan data, reduksi data, penarikan kesimpulan dan keabsahan data. Keabsahan data pada penelitian ini menggunakan triangulasi teori dan metode. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pemanfaatan AI membuat proses pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris terutama pada keterampilan membaca akan terasa lebih praktis dan menarik, karena mahasiswa bisa bertanya kapan saja dan mendapatkan jawaban

dengan cepat, tanpa merasa tertekan. Ini berkontribusi pada peningkatan minat dan motivasi untuk belajar secara mandiri. Selain itu, terdapat beberapa kendala dalam teknologi ini yaitu terbatasnya akses internet, kesalahan dalam memahami kosakata dan informasi yang kadang tidak akurat, serta kesulitan dalam mengerti jawaban tertentu. Beberapa responden juga merasa seolah terlalu bergantung pada ChatGPT.

Kata Kunci: *Teknologi AI, Literasi, Keterampilan Membaca*

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A. Introduction

In the context of globalization and the rapid development of information technology, the ability to read English texts serves as a primary gateway for university students to access scientific knowledge, current information, and broaden their cross-cultural horizons. Reading in English is not only essential for academic purposes but also a crucial need in daily life and the professional world. Unfortunately, in classroom practice, reading skills often receive less emphasis compared to other language skills. Many lecturers still employ conventional methods such as translation-based reading or merely answering questions based on the text without involving students in more interactive and contextual activities. Moreover, the lack of authentic reading materials, unengaging learning media, and limited teaching method variations lead to boredom and low motivation among students to improve their reading skills. According to Harmer & Cates (2007), learning motivation is a key factor in students' success in acquiring language skills, including reading.

On the other hand, the development of digital technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), offers a significant opportunity to overcome these challenges. One notable form of AI that has gained widespread attention in education is ChatGPT, a language model based on machine learning technology developed by OpenAI. ChatGPT is capable of processing natural language and generating coherent and relevant responses to various types of user inputs or questions. In the context of English language learning, ChatGPT can be utilized as an interactive learning partner that provides instant feedback, explains vocabulary meanings, and helps students understand the structure and content of texts in greater depth (Subiyantoro et al., 2023). The presence of AI like ChatGPT also contributes to enhancing the effectiveness and accessibility of education, one of which is through the use of text-to-speech (TTS) applications (Arafah, 2023). Text-to-speech is a spoken natural language processing system that automatically

converts written language into spoken language (Mubarak & Santoso, 2023). The purpose of TTS is to transform textual input into speech output so that it can be comprehended by users. Therefore, text-to-speech functions as a medium for machines to convey information to humans. TTS applications are often referred to as speech synthesizers. In essence, text-to-speech is an AI-based system that converts written text into audio to assist individuals in understanding specific readings (Fiqhi et al., 2022).

In the digital era, the advancement of AI technology especially language models like ChatGPT presents new opportunities in the learning process. In English language learning, ChatGPT can serve as a secondary literacy resource aside from books, a question generator, and a professional material explainer. Additionally, as stated by (Sya et al., 2025) in their previous research study that ChatGPT allows students to interact with various types of reading texts, both fiction and non-fiction, and to engage in in-depth discussions about the text content. This interaction fosters the development of critical understanding, which is central to advanced reading skills. This aligns with the objectives of English learning in the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which aims to develop students with high reading literacy, critical thinking abilities, and independent information comprehension and evaluation skills.

Previous research by Sele et al. (2024) found that several factors influence reading and writing literacy, which can be categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors include student intelligence, learning interest, and motivation. External factors include limited parental attention, the influence of media such as television and gadgets, peer influence, teacher competency, and lack of infrastructure. Other studies have shown that the use of AI in language learning can improve students' motivation and engagement. According to Becker et al. (2023), the use of AI-based chatbots in foreign language learning has been proven to create more personalized and adaptive learning experiences tailored to students' needs. ChatGPT, with its ability to understand context and provide explanations adjusted to the user's level of understanding, offers a much more flexible learning experience compared to traditional methods. Students are no longer limited to face-to-face schedules or specific textbooks; they can study independently anytime and anywhere according to their needs.

English is a universal language, and learning it is crucial (Mika & Mardiana (2023)). English is studied by people around the world, and there are several essential skills that an English teacher must master. English has become a necessary subject in today's globalization era (Utami et al., 2022). The four primary English language skills are speaking, writing, listening, and reading (Agung et al., 2022). This study focuses on the reading skill. Success in learning to read is supported in part by

reading interest. Students are considered ready to read when they are able to identify or understand the meaning of a word even if they cannot yet spell the name of the object (Khoirumansholeh et al., 2020). However, in reality, many students struggle to understand the meaning of English words accurately. This indicates that many students face difficulties in English learning, particularly in reading skills. Some students experience reading difficulties due to various factors such as delayed language development, lack of stimulus, or specific learning disorders like dyslexia. Other contributing factors can be categorized into internal and external aspects. Internal factors include low intelligence, low motivation, and limited reading interest. Meanwhile, external factors include the family environment and parents' economic status (Zuliani et al., 2023). Bagus et al. (2022) stated that causes of students' reading difficulties include low interest in reading, lack of parental support for learning activities at home, lack of student enthusiasm, insufficient facilities, limited teacher strategies and media use, and health problems. Additionally, students with poor English skills often lack the confidence to use English due to fear of making mistakes or feelings of embarrassment, which also contributes to reading difficulties (Yayah Huliantunnisa, 2022). One reason for these difficulties is the lack of knowledge regarding proper pronunciation, which hinders word recognition and sentence comprehension. English reading skills emphasize pronunciation, structure, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Yayah Huliantunnisa, 2022). Vocabulary plays a critical role in language proficiency. Vocabulary acquisition enhances one's language knowledge. Wulandari (2024), in her study on reading difficulties among third-grade Islamic elementary students (MI), found that one key factor was difficulty recognizing English letters—particularly pronunciation. Transitioning from manual to digital technology can increase validity and accessibility. Thus, English in the digital era is not only a tool for measuring proficiency but also a gateway to numerous opportunities in a technologically interconnected world (Permatasari, 2024). However, the integration of AI into English language learning raises various ethical and pedagogical concerns. Some educators have expressed concern over issues such as plagiarism and a decline in critical thinking skills due to overreliance on technology (Darwin et al., 2024). Therefore, it is essential to cultivate a wise and balanced approach to AI use so that it serves as a supporting tool rather than a replacement for the learning process itself (Farrokhnia et al., 2024).

This study aims to explore how students from the Sharia Economics department utilize ChatGPT as a literacy support tool to enhance their English reading skills, and to what extent this technology offers practical and effective contributions to their learning process (Hidayatullah, 2024). In addition, it is

expected that AI integration will positively impact students' reading proficiency as suggested by (Nada et al., 2025)

B. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. According to (Moleong, 2011), qualitative research aims to understand the experiences of research subjects holistically and descriptively in the form of words and language within a specific context. The researcher chose the case study method because the research focuses on a real phenomenon experienced by a particular group in this case, students struggling with reading English texts.

Data collection was conducted through observation and interviews to gather information on the use of AI as a literacy support tool for reading comprehension. The research instruments consisted of observation sheets and interview guides. This study also used purposive sampling, as the subjects were selected based on specific criteria deemed most relevant and representative for the research objectives.

The subjects of this study were 23 second-semester students from the Sharia Economics program, who were currently enrolled in the English 1 course during the even semester. This course primarily focuses on English for General Purposes (EGP), which emphasizes basic English language skills. The data collected consisted of primary data from observations and interviews, and secondary data from previous research and supporting documentation on AI utilization. The stages of data analysis included data collection, data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and data validation. Data validation in this study was conducted using triangulation of theories and methods.

C. Result and Discussion

In this study, the use of AI technology specifically ChatGPT as a literacy support tool for enhancing students' English reading skills was analysed, and the data collected revealed the following:

1. *The Use of ChatGPT in Reading Skills*

The analysis indicates that ChatGPT helped improve reading abilities, with most respondents specifically highlighting its advantages in enhancing reading comprehension. Based on the collected data, all respondents stated that ChatGPT had a positive impact on their ability to understand English texts. The reasons provided by the respondents include:

- a) Respondents mentioned that ChatGPT provided clear and detailed examples of pronunciation, which motivated them to pronounce English vocabulary more carefully and correctly.
- b) ChatGPT was considered very helpful in explaining unfamiliar vocabulary or phrases. It often provided definitions along with example sentences, which enriched students' vocabulary knowledge.
- c) Several respondents stated that the text to speech feature significantly supported their reading skills, making them more confident when reading and understanding foreign texts.
- d) ChatGPT was viewed as a flexible and readily available learning resource, allowing students to study anytime they needed.

From these findings, it can be concluded that the active use of ChatGPT in the learning process particularly as a literacy tool for reading helped students better understand vocabulary pronunciation, expand their vocabulary range, and train their accuracy and independence in reading. These results align with Subiyantoro et al. (2023), who stated that AI can serve as an interactive learning partner by providing instant feedback, explaining vocabulary meanings, and assisting students in understanding text structures and content in depth. Moreover, the text-to-speech feature was also seen as helpful in vocabulary pronunciation, as mentioned by Fiqhi et al. (2022), who described TTS as a system that converts written text into audio to help users understand specific readings. These findings indicate that AI technology, particularly ChatGPT, can serve as an effective literacy support tool in language learning, especially for reading skills. As Hidayatullah (2024) emphasized, AI can have a practical and effective impact on students' learning processes.

2. Challenges and Difficulties in Using AI

Although the majority of respondents stated that ChatGPT helped improve their English reading skills, they also acknowledged that using this technology comes with technical, cognitive, and psychological challenges. Each respondent had different experiences in dealing with these obstacles. Based on the data analysis, the most frequently reported challenges included:

a) Internet Access

ChatGPT relies heavily on a stable internet connection. Students with poor network access experienced disruptions in their learning. One respondent noted: *"When the internet is slow, I can't open ChatGPT. I wanted to know the meaning of a sentence I was reading, but this became my main obstacle."*

This shows that digital infrastructure limitations remain a significant challenge, especially for students studying independently from home.

b) Misinterpretation of Vocabulary

Some respondents found it difficult to understand ChatGPT's answers due to unfamiliar vocabulary. Even when they asked for definitions, misinterpretations could still occur if the context was not fully explained. This highlights the importance of specific and clear prompts when using AI tools.

c) Inaccurate Responses

Respondents reported that not all ChatGPT answers were correct or relevant. While ChatGPT often produces confident-sounding responses, some students felt the need to verify the information. One respondent stated:

"Sometimes the answers vary unless I ask again. Some seem off-topic or random, so I have to double-check, just to be sure."

This underscores the need for users to have strong information literacy and critical thinking when using AI-generated content.

d) Difficult to Understand

Several respondents mentioned that ChatGPT's responses were sometimes too long, technical, or complex. One said:

"ChatGPT's answers are too long, and I get confused. I have to reread them several times to understand."

This indicates that not all outputs are appropriate for students' comprehension levels, particularly if they are unfamiliar with formal or complex English structures.

e) Overdependence on ChatGPT

Some respondents admitted to becoming overly reliant on ChatGPT. One said:

"I ask ChatGPT too often. Sometimes I wonder if I can even answer on my own without its help."

This shows a risk of reduced independent learning initiative and critical thinking if students use ChatGPT excessively without self-reflection and control. Darwin et al. (2024) stated that students' critical thinking skills may decline if they rely too much on technology. also emphasized the importance of viewing AI as a complement, not a replacement, in the learning process.

From these findings, it can be concluded that while students greatly appreciated the flexibility and ease of use offered by ChatGPT, challenges still existed particularly in vocabulary interpretation, internet access, and understanding AI-generated responses. The key benefit of ChatGPT lies in its high flexibility and ease of use, which support independent English learning, particularly in reading. However, its effectiveness depends on critical use, information verification, and complementary guidance from teachers or trusted learning resources.

D. Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion regarding the use of ChatGPT, this technology has shown a positive impact on the English learning process, particularly as a literacy support tool to enhance students' reading skills. The majority of respondents stated that ChatGPT facilitated their understanding of vocabulary pronunciation and text comprehension, provided accurate vocabulary explanations, and served as a flexible and responsive self-learning tool. They also noted that using ChatGPT made the English learning process especially in reading more practical and engaging, as students could ask questions at any time and receive quick responses without feeling pressured. This contributed to increased interest and motivation for independent learning.

However, the study also identified several challenges experienced by both students and instructors, such as limited internet access, misunderstandings of vocabulary, occasionally inaccurate information, and difficulties in understanding certain responses. Some respondents also felt they had become overly dependent on ChatGPT, while others still preferred traditional learning methods and did not feel fully supported by the technology.

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