



Students' Perception on The Use of Readtheory.org at SMK Negeri 1 Suwawa (*Persepsi Siswa terhadap Penggunaan Readtheory.org di SMK Negeri 1 Suwawa*)

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Article Info	Abstract
Article history: Received: 6 August 2025 Revised: 27 August 2025 Accepted: 28 August 2025 Keywords: Students' Perception Readtheory.org Learning Motivation Reading Skill Kata Kunci: <i>Persepsi Siswa Readtheory.org Motivasi Belajar Kemampuan Membaca</i>	This research aims to explore students' perceptions on the use of ReadTheory.org and how it affects their learning motivation in developing English reading skills. The study was conducted using a descriptive qualitative method involving five tenth-grade students from SMK Negeri 1 Suwawa. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires and classroom observations during the students' use of ReadTheory.org. The results indicate that students had positive perceptions toward the platform. They found ReadTheory.org engaging and helpful in improving their reading comprehension due to its adaptive features, immediate feedback, and varied reading topics. The platform also enhanced their learning motivation, as shown by increased enthusiasm, self-confidence, and independent study habits. Students reported feeling more motivated to read, were encouraged to improve their scores, and demonstrated perseverance in overcoming learning obstacles. Furthermore, teacher support played an important role in guiding students to use the platform effectively. In conclusion, the use of ReadTheory.org positively influenced students' perceptions and motivation in reading English texts. The findings suggest that integrating digital tools like ReadTheory.org in the classroom can support technology-based reading instruction and foster students' motivation, especially in vocational school contexts. Abstrak <i>Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi persepsi siswa terhadap penggunaan ReadTheory.org dan bagaimana hal tersebut memengaruhi motivasi belajar mereka dalam mengembangkan keterampilan membaca bahasa Inggris. Studi ini dilakukan dengan metode kualitatif deskriptif yang melibatkan lima siswa kelas X dari SMK Negeri 1 Suwawa. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terbuka dan pengamatan di kelas selama siswa menggunakan ReadTheory.org. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa memiliki persepsi positif terhadap platform tersebut. Mereka menilai ReadTheory.org menarik dan bermanfaat dalam meningkatkan pemahaman membaca mereka berkat fitur adaptifnya, umpan balik instan, dan topik bacaan yang beragam. Platform ini juga meningkatkan motivasi belajar mereka, ditandai dengan peningkatan antusiasme, kepercayaan diri, dan kebiasaan belajar mandiri. Siswa melaporkan merasa lebih termotivasi untuk membaca, didorong untuk meningkatkan skor mereka, dan menunjukkan ketekunan dalam mengatasi hambatan belajar. Selain itu, dukungan guru memainkan peran penting dalam membimbing siswa untuk menggunakan platform secara efektif. Kesimpulannya, penggunaan ReadTheory.org secara positif mempengaruhi persepsi dan motivasi siswa dalam membaca teks bahasa Inggris. Temuan ini menyarankan bahwa integrasi alat digital seperti</i>

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading ability is one of the most important basic skills in language learning, especially English. Reading not only helps students understand written texts, but also plays a role in building understanding of social and cultural issues, as well as critical decision-making. However, the reading ability of Indonesian students is still relatively low. The 2022 PISA survey results show that Indonesia ranks 69th out of 80 countries in terms of reading literacy. This low level of ability highlights the need for more adaptive and contextually relevant learning strategies in the digital age.

One of the main factors influencing low reading ability is low learning motivation. Learning motivation acts as both an internal and external driving force that determines how deeply students engage in the learning process. Mustafa (in Rohani, 2020) states that reading success is not only determined by the material taught but also by students' interest and attitude toward reading activities. When students have low motivation, they tend to read only out of obligation, not personal drive. Conversely, students with high motivation will be more active in exploring reading materials and have a strong desire to develop.

This situation becomes more complex in vocational high schools (SMK), which focus more on practical skills than academic ones. The SMK curriculum, which emphasizes practice-based learning, often lacks space for the development of literacy skills such as reading. However, reading skills are crucial in the workplace, especially for understanding instructions, manuals, or technical procedures. Therefore, there needs to be an adaptive and contextual approach to learning that supports reading skills.

One solution that can be used is the utilization of digital learning platforms such as ReadTheory.org. ReadTheory.org is an online platform that provides adaptive reading exercises tailored to students' skill levels, complete with immediate feedback and a variety of reading topics. Several studies, such as those conducted by Yulianti (2021), show that the use of ReadTheory.org can significantly improve students' reading comprehension. Additionally, this platform can enhance students' learning motivation as they can track their progress and practice independently at their own pace.

However, there are still limited studies exploring students' perceptions of using ReadTheory.org and its impact on learning motivation, particularly in the context of vocational schools and in non-urban areas. Students' perceptions are an important element as they determine their attitudes and engagement in learning. Slameto (2010) states that students' perceptions are influenced by their previous learning experiences, emotional conditions, and the learning environment they face.

Therefore, this study aims to examine students' perceptions of the use of ReadTheory.org in English reading instruction and its relationship with students' learning motivation at SMK Negeri 1 Suwawa. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how students experience and evaluate the use of this platform. The unit of analysis in this study is the 10th-grade students at SMK Negeri 1 Suwawa, with a focus on the dimensions of perception, motivation, and student interaction with digital media in the reading learning process.

This article will discuss the background and urgency of using digital media in reading literacy, examine theories related to perception, learning motivation, and reading skills, and present findings from the field based on qualitative data. Thus, this article is expected to contribute to the development of technology-based learning strategies that are in line with the needs of vocational high school students.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to explore students' perceptions of the use of the ReadTheory.org platform in developing English reading skills and its relationship with students' learning motivation. A qualitative descriptive design was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of

students' subjective experiences, contextual factors, and social dynamics surrounding the use of digital learning tools (Creswell, 2012).

2.2. Participants and Research Setting

The research was conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Suwawa, Bone Bolango Regency, Gorontalo Province, during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. This school was selected because it has integrated ReadTheory.org into English reading instruction.

The participants were five tenth-grade students who had actively used ReadTheory.org for at least one week prior to the study. A purposive sampling technique was applied, as recommended by Spradley (1980), where participants are deliberately selected based on specific criteria that align with the research objectives.

2.3. Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study consisted of open-ended questionnaires and observation sheets designed to explore students' perceptions and learning motivation when using the ReadTheory.org platform. The open-ended questionnaires contained ten items based on the indicators of perception and learning motivation proposed by Sardiman (2011). These questions were intended to elicit students' personal experiences, responses to platform features, and the impact of using ReadTheory.org on their interest, confidence, and independent learning habits. Meanwhile, the observation sheets were developed to capture students' non-verbal behaviors, classroom interactions, and levels of engagement during the learning process. The observation guidelines focused on eight aspects, including task persistence, feature usage, problem-solving strategies, and overall participation in digital reading activities. The combination of these instruments allowed the researchers to gather both verbal and behavioral data to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences.

2.4. Techniques of Collecting Data

Data collection in this study was carried out using two primary techniques, namely open-ended questionnaires and classroom observations. The questionnaires were distributed to participants after they had used ReadTheory.org for at least one week to ensure that students had sufficient exposure to the platform. Students' written responses provided insights into their personal perceptions and motivational changes. In addition, classroom observations were conducted twice to examine students' engagement, persistence, and strategies for overcoming challenges while using the platform. During observations, researchers recorded field notes focusing on body language, verbal interactions, and overall participation. To ensure data validity and reliability, triangulation was applied by comparing questionnaire responses with observation findings. This combination provided a richer and more accurate representation of students' experiences in using ReadTheory.org for developing English reading skills.

2.5. Techniques of Analysing Data

The data were analyzed using the Interactive Model of Data Analysis developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which involves three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data reduction stage, students' responses and observation notes were coded and categorized into relevant themes such as *positive perceptions*, *intrinsic motivation*, *barriers to platform use*, and *strategies for overcoming challenges*. The data display stage involved presenting organized findings in the form of descriptive narratives and direct quotations to represent students' voices authentically. Finally, the conclusion drawing and verification stage focused on identifying patterns, relationships, and emerging insights, followed by cross-checking them against the original data to ensure accuracy and consistency. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation was employed by comparing multiple data sources, which strengthened the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research results.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Open Questionnaire Results

Based on the analysis of students' responses to the open-ended questionnaire, seven main themes were identified, corresponding to indicators of learning motivation proposed by Sardiman (2011), namely learning interest, motivation to learn, self-confidence, independent learning initiative, teacher support, learning barriers, and future expectations.

First, in terms of learning interest and curiosity, the findings indicate that students were highly engaged with the ReadTheory.org platform because of its diverse range of reading topics and challenging question formats. Compared to conventional textbooks, students reported that the platform was more enjoyable, stimulating, and encouraged deeper involvement in the learning process. As one student expressed, "*Each reading has a different topic, and the questions make me think*" (P1). This result aligns with Anderson (2010), who emphasizes that varied and contextually relevant reading materials increase students' engagement and activate their critical thinking skills. Similarly, Ahmad et al. (2019) found that ReadTheory.org promotes greater reading engagement due to its adaptive features and topic diversity, which makes reading tasks more dynamic and less monotonous.

Second, regarding motivation to learn, students reported that the scoring feature and instant feedback significantly enhanced their enthusiasm for reading activities. The immediate availability of performance results encouraged students to improve their scores and persist in practice. One participant stated, *"I am more enthusiastic because I immediately know my score and want to improve my results"* (P4). This finding is consistent with the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which argues that timely feedback strengthens learners' sense of competence, thereby increasing intrinsic motivation. Supporting this, Setiawan and Anam (2021) demonstrated that adaptive platforms like ReadTheory.org improve students' motivation by providing clear progress indicators and personalized feedback, which enhance learners' self-awareness and persistence in reading practice.

Third, the questionnaire results indicate that using ReadTheory.org contributed positively to students' self-confidence in understanding English texts. By being able to track their score progress independently, students developed stronger self-efficacy and a positive perception of their ability to comprehend reading passages. This supports the findings of Sari and Nugroho (2020), who argue that increased self-confidence in reading tasks directly correlates with better comprehension outcomes. Similarly, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997) explains that consistent mastery experiences, such as achieving higher scores over time, enhance learners' self-efficacy, which in turn encourages greater academic persistence and risk-taking in learning.

Fourth, the use of ReadTheory.org fostered students' independent learning initiative. Several students reported voluntarily accessing the platform outside classroom hours to practice reading on their own, demonstrating a shift from teacher-directed to self-directed learning. For example, one participant noted, *"I usually use it 2-3 times a week because I want to improve my score"* (P1). This aligns with findings from Al-Jarf (2020), who found that technology-based reading platforms increase learner autonomy by enabling students to manage their own progress, choose their practice schedules, and receive individualized feedback. Furthermore, Pintrich and Schunk (2002) highlight that opportunities for self-regulated learning encourage students to set personal goals and develop persistence, which are key attributes for lifelong learning.

In addition, teacher support emerged as an important factor influencing students' engagement. Teachers provided clear instructions, practice schedules, and score targets, which helped students stay disciplined and structured in their learning. One respondent stated, *"The teacher gives schedules and score targets, so I don't just do it randomly"* (P4). This finding reflects Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which suggests that teacher scaffolding plays a vital role in guiding students during the initial stages of learning. By offering structured support, teachers enable students to gradually achieve autonomy in utilizing technology-based platforms effectively.

Despite these positive findings, students also faced challenges while using ReadTheory.org, primarily unfamiliar vocabulary and unstable internet access. However, they demonstrated resilience by employing adaptive strategies such as using online dictionaries or asking teachers for clarification. This reflects the concept of learning resilience described by Zimmerman (2002), where self-regulated learners adopt problem-solving strategies to overcome barriers and maintain motivation in challenging learning situations.

Finally, students shared several future expectations for improving their learning experience with ReadTheory.org. They suggested that the platform be used more regularly and combined with group-based activities to make the learning process more interactive and collaborative. This recommendation resonates with findings by Setiawan and Amelia (2022), who reported that integrating collaborative learning alongside individual practice on adaptive platforms enhances students' motivation and social engagement, making the reading experience more meaningful and enjoyable.

Overall, the results of the questionnaire highlight that ReadTheory.org positively influences students' perceptions of English reading by improving engagement, strengthening motivation, boosting confidence, fostering autonomy, and encouraging collaborative aspirations. These findings are consistent with previous research and theoretical frameworks emphasizing the role of adaptive technologies and teacher scaffolding in promoting both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

3.2. Observation Results

The classroom observations were conducted in two separate sessions and focused on eight key aspects of students' engagement while using ReadTheory.org. The results revealed a gradual but significant improvement in students' focus, persistence, and attitudes toward English reading activities between the first and second sessions.

In terms of active engagement and duration, students appeared passive during the initial observation session, showing limited interaction with the platform and minimal enthusiasm in completing the tasks. However, by the second session, a notable improvement was observed. Students became more focused, displayed higher levels of interest, and engaged actively with the reading activities. On average, students spent approximately 20 minutes per session completing the exercises, indicating an increase in sustained attention and self-regulation. This finding is consistent with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theory of flow, which suggests that learners are more engaged when tasks provide an optimal balance between challenge and skill level.

Similarly, Setiawan and Anam (2021) found that adaptive reading platforms like ReadTheory.org promote higher learner persistence by providing materials that adjust to students' proficiency levels.

Regarding responses to questions and difficulties, students in the second session demonstrated greater determination in answering comprehension questions carefully and accurately. Many participants adopted proactive strategies to overcome challenges, such as taking notes on unfamiliar vocabulary, using online dictionaries, and reviewing feedback provided by the platform. This behavior reflects the characteristics of self-regulated learning as described by Zimmerman (2002), where learners develop adaptive strategies to manage obstacles, monitor progress, and remain motivated during complex learning tasks. Similarly, Al-Jarf (2020) emphasizes that technology-assisted reading environments encourage students to experiment with problem-solving approaches, leading to better comprehension outcomes.

In terms of attitude during learning and interaction, students' overall attitudes showed considerable improvement in the second session. Initially, several students were hesitant and less engaged; however, as they became familiar with ReadTheory.org, their confidence and participation increased. They appeared more curious and attentive, demonstrating a growing willingness to engage deeply with the reading materials. Additionally, interactions between teachers and students were positive and constructive, particularly when students encountered difficulties with task instructions or comprehension. This dynamic illustrates the concept of scaffolding within Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which highlights the role of teacher support in guiding students through challenging learning experiences until they can operate independently.

Finally, observations of feature utilization and body language revealed that students actively explored the platform's functionalities, including monitoring their scores, reviewing exercise reports, and analyzing feedback after each task. Their facial expressions and gestures indicated curiosity, satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment upon completing exercises. This aligns with the Technology Acceptance Model by Davis (1989), which explains that learners are more likely to embrace technology when they perceive it as both useful (improving performance) and easy to use. Furthermore, positive affective responses, such as visible enjoyment and confidence, are strongly correlated with sustained motivation and long-term learning success (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Overall, the observation results demonstrate that students' engagement, persistence, and attitudes toward reading activities significantly improved when using ReadTheory.org. The combination of adaptive materials, instant feedback, and teacher support contributed to fostering students' self-confidence and intrinsic motivation. These findings reinforce prior studies (Ahmad et al., 2019; Setiawan & Anam, 2021; Al-Jarf, 2020), which consistently report that integrating technology-based platforms into EFL instruction enhances both cognitive and affective learning outcomes.

3.3. Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong support for Sardiman's (2011) theory of learning motivation, which posits that both internal and external motivational factors are essential in driving students' engagement in learning activities. The results from both the open-ended questionnaires and classroom observations indicate that ReadTheory.org promotes intrinsic motivation by fostering interest, curiosity, and self-confidence while also enhancing extrinsic motivation through adaptive exercises, instant feedback, and visible performance tracking. These features stimulate students' cognitive engagement by encouraging active participation and problem-solving and enhance affective engagement by promoting enjoyment and satisfaction with learning tasks.

One of the central findings of this study is the significant role of adaptive technology in improving students' reading motivation. The platform's ability to adjust the difficulty of reading materials to each learner's level contributed to increased persistence and better comprehension outcomes. This aligns with the findings of Ahmad et al. (2019), who demonstrated that ReadTheory.org improves students' reading comprehension and motivation through personalized learning pathways and varied topics. Similarly, Setiawan and Anam (2021) found that adaptive reading platforms positively impact students' willingness to engage with complex texts because learners are neither overwhelmed by excessive difficulty nor disengaged by overly simple materials.

Furthermore, instant feedback provided by ReadTheory.org was a critical factor in supporting student engagement. According to Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985), timely and constructive feedback satisfies learners' psychological need for competence, thereby increasing their intrinsic motivation to persist in learning tasks. Students in this study expressed excitement at being able to track their progress and improve their scores independently, which strengthened their sense of achievement and self-efficacy. This finding also resonates with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997), which argues that mastery experiences, achieving higher performance through practice, are the most powerful source of self-confidence.

The results also highlight the importance of teacher support in the effective use of digital learning tools. Teachers in this study played an essential scaffolding role by providing structured schedules, clear instructions, and performance targets, enabling students to engage with ReadTheory.org more effectively. This

finding supports Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of scaffolding in helping learners progress from guided learning to independent mastery. Teacher guidance ensured that students maximized the benefits of the platform while gradually developing their autonomy.

Another significant outcome of this study is the evidence that using ReadTheory.org fosters self-regulated learning. Students were observed practicing independently, setting personal goals, and adopting strategies to overcome challenges such as unfamiliar vocabulary or limited internet access. These behaviors align with the views of Pintrich and Schunk (2002), who state that self-regulated learners actively monitor, evaluate, and adapt their learning strategies to achieve better outcomes. Similarly, Zimmerman (2002) asserts that technology-based environments provide an ideal space for developing self-regulation because learners are given greater control over their learning pace and performance evaluation.

These findings are also consistent with Yulianti (2021), who reported that ReadTheory.org improves students' comprehension and supports differentiated instruction by offering texts tailored to individual skill levels. In addition, the results correspond with Rahmawati (2019), who highlighted that positive student perceptions of digital media strongly influence motivation and lead to greater academic persistence. The combination of adaptive features, teacher scaffolding, and opportunities for self-directed practice illustrates how technology can effectively complement pedagogical strategies to enhance both cognitive and affective learning outcomes.

From a broader pedagogical perspective, this study demonstrates that integrating ReadTheory.org into English reading instruction can benefit vocational school contexts, where students often require more adaptive and engaging approaches to develop literacy skills. The platform's adaptive exercises provide differentiated learning experiences, while teacher support ensures guided learning transitions. Moreover, the opportunity for students to practice independently fosters deeper ownership of their learning, bridging the gap between classroom instruction and autonomous study.

In summary, this study reinforces the idea that positive student perceptions of technology-based learning platforms significantly enhance both reading motivation and comprehension skills. The integration of ReadTheory.org supports a balanced learning ecosystem where adaptive technology, teacher guidance, and learner autonomy collectively improve students' engagement and performance.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that ReadTheory.org is a valuable tool for English reading instruction. Students hold a positive perception of the platform, describing it as engaging, challenging, and user-friendly. The integration of this digital tool appears to significantly boost student motivation, encompassing both intrinsic factors like interest and self-confidence, and extrinsic factors such as the desire to achieve higher academic results. The platform's adaptive features and immediate feedback play a crucial role in promoting active, independent learning among students. Furthermore, the data indicates that teacher support is essential for leveraging the platform's full potential, as it strengthens student engagement and promotes a disciplined learning environment.

4.2 Suggestions/Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, several recommendations are proposed for key stakeholders. For teachers, it's advisable to regularly incorporate ReadTheory.org into reading lessons. To ensure a balanced learning experience, this digital component should be integrated with collaborative group activities to preserve social interaction and prevent isolation. Schools should prioritize providing the necessary digital infrastructure and resources, and invest in professional development to equip teachers with the skills to effectively implement technology-based learning. Lastly, for future researchers, it is recommended that subsequent studies utilize a larger and more diverse sample size. Additionally, a mixed-methods approach, combining the qualitative insights of this study with a quantitative analysis, could more precisely measure the direct impact of ReadTheory.org on students' academic performance.

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