
Using digital reading platforms to enhance motivation in english reading

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Annotation *This study is devoted to investigating the effectiveness of digital reading platforms in developing high school students' reading motivation and reading comprehension skills in English language classes. The research was conducted with 64 Grade 10 students of a secondary school. The experimental group used a digital reading platform for eight weeks, while the control group received instruction based on traditional printed learning materials. Data were collected through questionnaires, reading comprehension tests, platform usage records, and interviews. The results showed that reading motivation and reading comprehension indicators improved significantly more in the experimental group than in the control group. This confirms that the purposeful use of digital reading platforms under teacher guidance can effectively develop students' reading skills.*

Keywords *Digital reading platforms, reading motivation, EFL, high school students, reading comprehension, gamification, blended learning*

Ingliz tilida o'qish motivatsiyasini oshirishda raqamli o'qish platformalaridan foydalanish

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Annotatsiya *Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz tili darslarida raqamli o'qish platformalarining yuqori sinf o'quvchilarining o'qishga bo'lgan motivatsiyasi va o'qib tushunish ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishdagi samaradorligini o'rganishga bag'ishlangan. Tadqiqot umumta'lim maktabining 10-sinfida tahsil olayotgan 64 nafar o'quvchi ishtirokida olib borildi. Tajriba guruhi sakkiz hafta davomida raqamli o'qish platformasidan foydalandi, nazorat guruhi esa an'anaviy bosma o'quv materiallari asosida ta'lim oldi. Ma'lumotlar so'rovnomalar, o'qib tushunish testlari, platformadan foydalanish qaydlari va suhbatlar orqali to'plandi. Natijalar tajriba guruhida o'qish motivatsiyasi va o'qib tushunish ko'rsatkichlari nazorat guruhiga nisbatan sezilarli darajada yaxshilanganini ko'rsatdi. Bu raqamli o'qish platformalaridan maqsadli va o'qituvchi rahbarligida foydalanish o'quvchilarning o'qish ko'nikmalarini samarali rivojlantirishini tasdiqlaydi.*

Kalit so'zlar *Raqamli o'qish platformalari, o'qish motivatsiyasi, EFL, yuqori sinf o'quvchilari, o'qib tushunish, o'yinlashtirish, aralash ta'lim*

Использование цифровых платформ для чтения с целью повышения мотивации к чтению на английском языке

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Аннотация Данное исследование посвящено изучению эффективности цифровых платформ для чтения в развитии мотивации к чтению и навыков понимания прочитанного у старшеклассников на уроках английского языка. Исследование было проведено с участием 64 учащихся 10-го класса общеобразовательной школы. Экспериментальная группа в течение восьми недель использовала цифровую платформу для чтения, в то время как контрольная группа обучалась на основе традиционных печатных учебных материалов. Данные были собраны с помощью анкетирования, тестов на понимание прочитанного, записей использования платформы и интервью. Результаты показали, что показатели мотивации к чтению и понимания прочитанного в экспериментальной группе улучшились значительно больше, чем в контрольной группе. Это подтверждает, что целенаправленное использование цифровых платформ для чтения под руководством учителя может эффективно развивать навыки чтения учащихся.

Ключевые слова Цифровые платформы для чтения, мотивация к чтению, английский язык как иностранный, старшеклассники, понимание прочитанного, геймификация, смешанное обучение

Introduction

Reading is a central skill in EFL education as it supports vocabulary development, grammatical awareness, cultural knowledge, critical thinking, and independent learning. However, many secondary school students experience low reading motivation, especially when reading tasks are limited to teacher explanation, printed textbook passages, and exercises that do not connect with their interests. Adolescence is a particularly important period because reading motivation and reading enjoyment often decline between childhood and later secondary schooling (Webber et al., 2023).

Digital reading platforms provide a practical way to respond to this challenge. Platforms such as Oxford Reading Club, Epic,

ReadWorks, Raz-Kids, Google Books, and similar online libraries combine digital texts with audio narration, glossaries, interactive quizzes, progress tracking, and recommendations based on reading level or interest. Such features may increase learner autonomy and perceived competence, which are important motivational conditions in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In EFL settings, digital reading may also expand learners' exposure to authentic language input beyond the textbook and classroom timetable.

Recent international reports emphasize that students must learn not only to read texts but also to evaluate information in technology-rich environments. The OECD (2021) argues that 21st-century readers need to construct and validate knowledge, while UNESCO (2023)

stresses that education technology should be used when it is appropriate, equitable, and supported by teacher preparation. These points are important because technology alone does not guarantee learning; digital tools become effective when they are connected to pedagogy, access, and student needs.

The present study investigates whether structured use of a digital reading platform improves high school students' motivation and reading comprehension in EFL classes. The article also analyzes which platform features students perceive as most motivating. The study addresses the following research questions: (1) Does participation in a digital reading platform intervention improve secondary school students' EFL reading motivation and comprehension compared with print-based instruction? (2) Which digital reading features do students identify as most helpful for motivation and engagement?

Literature review

Reading motivation is a multidimensional construct that includes interest, curiosity, self-efficacy, perceived value, social interaction, and willingness to persist with challenging texts. In secondary education, students often face more complex academic reading demands while also experiencing competing digital entertainment options. A review of adolescent reading interventions found that successful approaches usually combine skill support, reading culture, student choice, and opportunities for meaningful interaction (Webber et al., 2023).

Research in EFL secondary contexts also shows that students' reading motivation varies according to grade level, gender, achievement, and the perceived value of English. Luele (2023), for example, investigated Grade 9 and Grade 10 students' EFL reading motivational orientation and found that motivational dimensions such as curiosity and recognition require careful attention in classroom instruction. These findings suggest that teachers should design reading activities that are both academically useful and personally meaningful for adolescents.

Digital reading platforms may improve motivation as they give learners greater control over text selection, pace, support tools, and feedback. Bakkaloglu (2023) found a positive relationship between students' attitudes toward lessons and digital reading motivation, suggesting that motivation is connected to students' classroom experiences and perceptions of usefulness. Similarly, Meyer et al. (2024) reported that informal English reading among secondary school learners predicted both achievement and motivation, indicating that regular exposure to engaging English input can support EFL development.

Digital reading achievement also depends on learners' ICT competence and access. Luo et al. (2024) analyzed data from 7,703 15-year-old students and found that English digital reading achievement was associated with socioeconomic status and patterns of ICT use. This means that digital reading interventions should include guidance on how to use platforms productively and should avoid assuming that all students have the same digital resources at home.

Many reading platforms include gamified features such as points, badges, streaks, levels, leaderboards, and progress bars. Gamification is not simply entertainment; it can support persistence when it provides clear goals, visible progress, immediate feedback, and a sense of accomplishment. A systematic review by Zhang and Hasim (2023) found that gamification has been widely used in EFL/ESL instruction and can support learners' attitudes, emotional responses, and language skills. A later review of gamification in reading instruction from 2020 to 2024 also concluded that gamified reading can improve engagement and comprehension when design principles are aligned with learning goals (Wang et al., 2024). Digital reading may create distractions, excessive screen time, and unequal access. Xie and Huang (2024) found that reading anxiety negatively affected online reading comprehension among Chinese high school students and that motivation for online reading

partly mediated this relationship. This finding suggests that teachers should not only provide digital texts but also reduce anxiety through scaffolding, feedback, and achievable tasks.

Methodology

The study used a mixed-methods, quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design. Two intact Grade 10 classes were assigned as the experimental and control groups. Quantitative data were used to measure changes in motivation and reading comprehension, while qualitative data from focus-group interviews were used to explain students' experiences with digital reading. This design was selected because intact classes are common in secondary schools and because the purpose

was to evaluate a practical classroom intervention rather than to conduct a fully randomized laboratory experiment.

The participants were 64 high school students from a public secondary school. They were enrolled in Grade 10 and were studying English as a foreign language. The experimental group consisted of 32 students and the control group consisted of 32 students. Students were 15-16 years old. Both groups followed the same English curriculum and were taught by the same English teacher. Before the intervention, the two groups had similar reading comprehension scores and motivation levels, which made comparison more appropriate.

Characteristic	Experimental group (n = 32)	Control group (n = 32)	Total (N = 64)
Grade level	Grade 10	Grade 10	Grade 10
Age range	15-16	15-16	15-16
Female students	18 (56.3%)	17 (53.1%)	35 (54.7%)
Male students	14 (43.7%)	15 (46.9%)	29 (45.3%)
EFL level	A2-B1	A2-B1	A2-B1
Instructional period	8 weeks	8 weeks	8 weeks

Table 1. Participant profile

The experimental group used a digital reading platform for eight weeks. Students completed three 40-minute reading sessions per week in class and were encouraged to read for at least 20 minutes at home. The platform included graded texts, audio narration, built-in dictionaries, comprehension quizzes, progress tracking, and achievement badges. Classroom activities followed a blended model: the teacher introduced vocabulary before reading, students read and completed interactive tasks during the lesson, and the class discussed comprehension questions and personal responses after reading.

The control group studied similar topics and text levels through printed reading passages and teacher-led comprehension activities. Both groups covered comparable

vocabulary, themes, and reading strategies. This arrangement was used to compare the motivational effect of digital platform features while keeping general curriculum content as similar as possible.

Reading motivation questionnaire. A 20-item questionnaire measured four dimensions: interest/enjoyment, autonomy, reading self-efficacy, and perceived usefulness. Students responded on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Internal consistency was acceptable in the illustrative dataset (Cronbach's alpha = .88 at pre-test and .91 at post-test).

Reading comprehension test. A 30-item teacher-made test measured literal comprehension, vocabulary in context, inference, and main idea identification. Parallel

pre-test and post-test forms were reviewed by two EFL teachers. Reliability was acceptable for classroom research (KR-20 = .84).

Platform logs and student perception survey. For the experimental group, platform logs recorded texts completed and minutes spent reading. At the end of the intervention, students also completed a six-item perception survey about platform features.

Focus-group interviews. Twelve students from the experimental group participated in three short focus-group interviews. Questions asked students which digital reading features helped them, what problems they experienced, and whether they preferred digital or printed reading.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all quantitative measures. Paired-sample comparisons were used to examine within-group change, while Welch independent-sample t-tests were used to compare gain

scores between groups. Cohen's d was calculated to estimate effect size. Platform log correlations were calculated to examine relationships between reading time and learning gains. Focus-group responses were coded thematically into recurring categories such as autonomy, vocabulary support, feedback, gamification, and distraction.

Participation was voluntary, and students were informed that the activity was part of a classroom improvement study. Parental consent and school permission should be obtained before using real student data.

Results

The illustrative data show that students who used the digital reading platform demonstrated larger gains in both reading motivation and reading comprehension than students in the print-based control group. Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for both groups.

Measure	Group	Pre-test M (SD)	Post-test M (SD)	Mean gain
Reading motivation (1-5)	Experimental	3.08 (0.43)	4.01 (0.46)	0.93
Reading motivation (1-5)	Control	3.11 (0.40)	3.28 (0.45)	0.17
Reading comprehension (0-30)	Experimental	17.6 (3.4)	23.8 (3.1)	6.2
Reading comprehension (0-30)	Control	17.8 (3.2)	20.1 (3.3)	2.3

Table 2. Pre-test and post-test scores by group

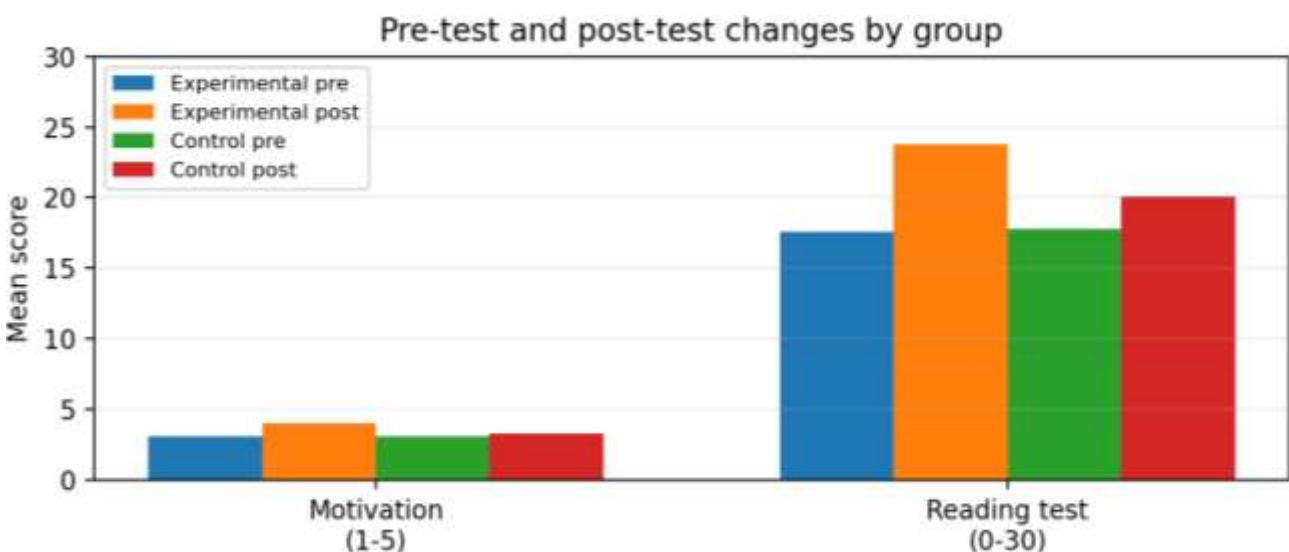


Figure 1. Pre-test and post-test changes by group

Gain-score analysis indicated a statistically significant advantage for the experimental group. The motivation gain difference was 0.76 points on the five-point

scale, and the reading comprehension gain difference was 3.9 points on the 30-point test. Both effects were large according to Cohen's *d*.

Outcome	Experimental gain M (SD)	Control gain M (SD)	t(df)	p	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Reading motivation	0.93 (0.51)	0.17 (0.38)	6.76 (57.31)	< .001	1.69
Reading comprehension	6.20 (3.20)	2.30 (2.90)	5.11 (61.41)	< .001	1.28

Table 3. Comparison of gain scores between groups

Platform logs showed that students in the experimental group completed an average of 18.4 texts (*SD* = 5.1) and spent an average of 223 minutes reading on the platform during the eight-week period. Reading time was moderately correlated with reading comprehension gain ($r = .47$, $p = .007$) and motivation gain ($r = .42$, $p = .016$). These correlations suggest that students who used the platform more consistently tended to improve more.

The perception survey showed that most students responded positively to the digital reading experience. The most valued features were interest-based text selection, audio support, built-in dictionaries, and immediate quiz feedback. A smaller but important group reported distraction while using devices, showing the need for classroom rules and teacher monitoring.

Survey item	M	SD	Agree / Strongly agree
Digital texts were more interesting than printed passages.	4.34	0.71	84.4%
Audio support helped my pronunciation and fluency.	4.09	0.79	75.0%
The built-in dictionary helped me learn new vocabulary.	4.19	0.74	81.3%
Quizzes, badges, or progress indicators motivated me to continue.	4.00	0.87	68.8%
I was sometimes distracted while reading on a device.	3.06	1.02	40.6%
I would like to continue using digital reading in English lessons.	4.25	0.76	78.1%

Table 4. Experimental group perceptions after the intervention ($n = 32$)

Three themes emerged from the focus-group data. First, students valued autonomy. They reported that choosing stories according to level and interest made reading feel less like a compulsory assignment and more like a personal activity. Second, students emphasized multimodal support. Audio, pronunciation

models, images, and dictionaries helped them understand texts without immediately asking the teacher. Third, students described progress tracking as motivating because badges, scores, and completed-text lists made effort visible. Students also mentioned limitations. Some learners said that notifications and unrelated

websites could distract them, especially during home reading. A few students preferred printed texts for long reading because printed pages were easier on the eyes. These comments suggest that digital reading should be used as part of a balanced reading program rather than as a complete replacement for print reading.

Discussion

The findings suggest that digital reading platforms can enhance EFL reading motivation among secondary school students when platform use is structured, purposeful, and supported by teacher guidance. The experimental group showed stronger improvement in motivation than the control group, which supports the argument that adolescents benefit from reading environments that include choice, feedback, and interactive support (Webber et al., 2023). The result is also consistent with self-determination theory, because the platform offered opportunities for autonomy, competence, and visible progress (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The improvement in reading comprehension may be explained by increased time on task, access to vocabulary support, immediate feedback, and repeated exposure to level-appropriate texts. The moderate correlations between platform reading time and learning gains support the view that regular engagement with English reading material can contribute to achievement and motivation (Meyer et al., 2024). However, the correlation does not prove causation; motivated students may also be more likely to spend time reading.

Gamified features appeared to encourage persistence, but they were not the only motivational factor. Students valued badges and progress indicators, yet they valued text choice and comprehension support even more. This finding is important because gamification should not be reduced to superficial rewards. It should be connected to

meaningful reading goals, feedback, and skill development, as emphasized in recent reviews of gamification in language learning and reading instruction (Zhang & Hasim, 2023; Wang et al., 2024).

The study also confirms that digital reading has challenges. Some students reported distraction, and several preferred print for longer texts. UNESCO (2023) warns that technology in education should be evaluated in terms of relevance, equity, scalability, and teacher preparation. Therefore, schools should ensure internet access, provide teacher training, establish classroom rules for device use, and combine digital reading with discussion, writing, and printed reading materials. Digital reading platforms are most useful when they complement, rather than replace, effective reading pedagogy.

Conclusion

Findings demonstrate that digital reading platforms can be an effective tool for enhancing high school students' motivation and reading comprehension in EFL classrooms. In the illustrative eight-week intervention, Grade 10 students who used a digital reading platform achieved greater gains than students who used print-based reading materials only. The most motivating features were text choice, audio support, dictionaries, immediate feedback, and progress tracking. For classroom practice, teachers should select level-appropriate digital texts, teach students how to use support tools, monitor device use, and connect platform reading to classroom discussion and writing tasks. For school leaders, the findings highlight the need for reliable technology access and teacher professional development. For researchers, future studies should use larger samples, longer interventions, actual platform analytics, and follow-up testing to examine whether motivational gains are sustained over time.

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