

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

Language serves as a fundamental means of communication, enabling the exchange of ideas and thoughts through dialogue in a mutually comprehensible language (Rabiah, 2018). English is recognized globally and incorporates vital skills like listening, writing, speaking, and reading (Ilyosovna, 2020), with this study primarily concentrating on reading. Reading involves an active engagement where the individual connects with the content to derive meaning, establishing it as a crucial ability for acquiring English and extracting insights from written works (Sari et al., 2018; Kamaria, 2018). Those who achieve proficiency in reading can read with fluency, accurately interpret written language, and develop a more profound comprehension of new ideas and vocabulary. Successful reading has always been characterized by the capacity to fully understand a text (Mahayanti et al., 2017).

Despite the importance of reading skills, literacy rates remain low in some areas. For example, the OECD's 2022 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which included participants from 81 countries, revealed that Indonesia ranked 71st in reading. Similarly, UNESCO reported that only 0.001% of Indonesians, or one out of every 1,000 people, are genuinely interested in reading. These alarming statistics highlight the critical need to address Indonesia's low literacy rate and promote a stronger reading culture.

Indonesia's low literacy rates are largely driven by students' lack of interest and motivation to read. One major reason is the limited access to quality reading materials – while well-stocked books are easy to find in big cities, many other areas rely on outdated and limited reading resources, making reading less interesting (Mujtahid et al., 2021). In this digital era, digital media has also played a role, the students now prefer quick access to information online rather than engaging with printed books. On top of that, the lack of a strong reading culture, combined with minimal support from schools and families, further hampers students from developing reading habits. These challenges are reflected in studies

like PIRLS and PISA, which consistently show low literacy levels in Indonesia. Without proper efforts to boost students' interest and motivation in reading, improving literacy will remain a tough challenge (Mujtahid et al., 2021).

An individual's environment greatly influences their reading interest. Growing up in a setting without a strong reading culture often leads to low literacy rates, especially in Indonesia (Naz, 2022). Parents and teachers play key roles in fostering reading habits. Teachers can use positive reinforcement strategies, such as reward-based systems, to boost students' enthusiasm (Arisandi et al., 2018). Selecting effective strategies, including integrating reading and writing, can further enhance comprehension and literacy skills (Dewi et al., 2018).

Another key factor contributing to low reading interest in Indonesia is the inappropriate use of gadgets, which hampers students' vocabulary development. With increased smartphone and digital device usage, students spend more time on social media and entertainment than on educational content, limiting their exposure to complex language structures. This weakens their ability to understand and interpret texts effectively. Moreover, excessive gadget use fosters passive information consumption, reducing cognitive engagement in learning. As a result, students' interest in reading declines, further worsening literacy challenges (Basrah et al., 2025).

Based on the factors mentioned above, the lack of vocabulary mastery is one of the key effects that can hinder students' reading comprehension. The significance of vocabulary in language acquisition is paramount, as it is intricately linked to the comprehension of written texts. Individuals with an extensive vocabulary can readily understand word meanings across various contexts without often having to reference unfamiliar terms. In contrast, limited vocabulary restricts their ability to identify main ideas, analyze information, and interpret deeper meanings within a text. Additionally, a well-developed vocabulary enhances reading fluency and comprehension of complex sentence structures. The more words students master, the better they can understand texts, ultimately improving overall literacy. Research indicates that vocabulary knowledge works alongside inference skills in interpreting sentence meaning (Sidek & Rahim, 2015; LervAag

et al., 2018). Accurately identifying word meanings is essential for efficient word retrieval, which serves as a foundation for comprehending more complex text structures (Cain et al., 2005).

To support vocabulary development, digital flashcards are a potent tool. They utilize various multimedia elements like images, audio, and quizzes, which engage students actively and help them retain vocabulary more effectively. By offering repetitive practice, flashcards can reinforce word recognition and meaning identification, providing students with a strong vocabulary foundation that enhances reading comprehension. Digital flashcards, such as those available on apps like Quizlet, offer a flexible, interactive approach that aligns with students' familiarity with technology. This tool can help bridge the gap between vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension, enabling students to better understand complex texts and excel in higher-level reading tasks.

Integrating innovative media through digital media offers a dynamic and modern approach to improving reading motivation and fostering consistent reading habits among students (Priyanti et al., 2019). Using digital media with the dialogic reading strategy is more effective than relying on printed media for teaching (Ratminingsih & Budasi, 2020). Tools like digital flashcards effectively combine visual, textual, and interactive elements such as quizzes and audio, making vocabulary learning and comprehension more engaging. These resources transform reading into an interactive activity that encourages active participation and exploration of texts. Research, including Shabilah et al. (2024), emphasizes the success of collaborative digital tools in boosting student engagement. By leveraging students' familiarity with technology, these tools integrate reading seamlessly into daily life, promoting skill development and enhancing accessibility to educational resources.

To improve the significance of reading habits and expand vocabulary, the implementation of digital flashcards can be integrated into the learning process. Studies indicate that platforms such as Quizlet can greatly enhance students' vocabulary retention, subsequently leading to improved reading comprehension. Utilizing flashcards for practicing high-frequency words allows students to enhance



their vocabulary knowledge dynamically and interactively. For instance, Lestari's (2023) study revealed that students who utilized online Quizlet flashcards to learn high-frequency words demonstrated notable improvements in their reading comprehension skills. Similarly, Waluyo (2021) found that gamified vocabulary learning through Quizlet helped low-proficiency students retain vocabulary more effectively, thus improving their reading abilities. These findings support the use of digital flashcards as a tool to strengthen vocabulary and consequently reading comprehension.

Understanding word meanings and contextual usage is essential for accurate reading comprehension. However, many students struggle with vocabulary mastery, which hinders their ability to interpret texts effectively. One approach to addressing this issue is through digital flashcards, which provide an interactive and engaging method for vocabulary acquisition. This study investigates whether digital flashcards can enhance students' reading comprehension by improving their vocabulary retention. Students will be divided into two groups: one will receive instruction using digital flashcards, while the other will continue learning with traditional reading strategies. The effectiveness of digital flashcards will be assessed by comparing the reading comprehension performance of both groups at the end of the study.

By examining the role of digital flashcards as a vocabulary-learning tool, this research seeks to provide empirical evidence on how technology-enhanced instruction influences students' reading abilities. The findings will contribute to the growing body of literature on digital learning in language education and offer practical recommendations for educators on integrating digital media into reading instruction. Additionally, this study will help determine whether interactive and multimedia-based learning tools can foster better reading comprehension outcomes among high school students. As English proficiency becomes increasingly important in academic and professional settings, improving students' reading comprehension through effective and engaging learning strategies is essential. By strengthening students' ability to comprehend texts, this research aims to support their overall academic performance and better prepare them for future educational and career opportunities.

## **1.2 Problem Identification**

A pre-survey at SMA Negeri 1 Singaraja identified significant challenges in students' vocabulary mastery, which directly impacts their reading comprehension. Many students struggle to differentiate between similar word choices in multiple-choice questions, suggesting difficulties in understanding word meanings and contextual usage. This issue indicates the need for more effective vocabulary-building strategies to support reading comprehension development.

While digital flashcards have been recognized as a useful tool for enhancing vocabulary acquisition, their use in school remains limited. Teachers primarily rely on traditional textbooks, and factors such as limited access to technology and varying levels of student digital literacy further restrict their integration. Given the potential of digital flashcards to facilitate vocabulary learning, this study investigates their effectiveness in improving students' reading comprehension by comparing their impact with conventional reading instruction. The findings will provide insights into the benefits and challenges of implementing digital flashcards as a learning tool in classroom settings.

## **1.3 Limitations Of The Study**

The study focuses on using digital flashcards to teach reading comprehension to tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Singaraja. It was specifically used a digital flashcard developed from an online platform. The research assessed the effectiveness of this tool to ensure it improves students' reading comprehension. By introducing digital flashcards, this study aims to provide a practical and engaging learning resource that supports students in their language learning journey.

## **1.4 Research Question**

Based on the problem identification, the research questions are defined as follows:

Is there any significant difference in reading comprehension of the 10th-grade students between those who were taught using digital flashcards, and those who were taught without using digital flashcards?

### **1.5 The Objective of The Study**

Regarding the research question stated above, the objective of this research is as follows:

To analyze the implementation of learning media in digital flashcards showed a significant difference in the students' reading comprehension before and after the digital flashcards were implemented for tenth-grade students of SMA Negeri 1 Singaraja.

### **1.6 Significance of The Study**

This research was anticipated to provide multiple contributions with both theoretical and practical value for students, teachers, schools, and other researchers.

#### **1.6.1 Theoretical Significance**

This study aims to validate existing theories on teaching reading with Digital Flashcards by providing empirical evidence of their effectiveness. Grounded in cognitive learning theories, Digital Flashcards enhance comprehension and retention. The findings reinforced these theoretical perspectives and offered insights into their practical application in reading instruction.

#### **1.6.2 Practical Significance**

##### **1.6.2.1 For Students**

This study helps students improve their reading comprehension by using digital flashcards as a learning tool. Digital flashcards make studying more interactive and engaging, allowing students to review vocabulary, key ideas, and reading materials more easily. This method helps them understand texts better, recognize words faster, and retain information more effectively.

##### **1.6.2.2 For Teacher**

The results of this study can help teachers improve their reading lessons by incorporating digital flashcards into their teaching strategies. Flashcards make lessons more interactive, keeping students engaged and motivated. This approach can help students build stronger reading skills, making it easier for them to understand and retain information.

### **1.6.2.3. For Schools**

This research provides useful feedback for schools to improve their curriculum and teaching methods. Integrating digital flashcards into reading lessons introduces a modern, technology-based approach that can make learning more effective. By using digital tools, schools can enhance the quality of English instruction and create a more engaging learning environment for students.

### **1.6.2.4. For Other Researchers**

This study can serve as a reference for future research on reading instruction and digital learning tools. The findings offer insights into how digital flashcards can improve reading comprehension, encouraging further studies on the use of technology in education. Researchers can build on this study to explore new ways to enhance reading skills in high school students.

## **1.7 Definition Of Key Terms**

### **1.7.1 Conceptual Definition**

- a. Learning Media: Tools, resources, or technologies used to support the instructional process and facilitate student learning. Learning media can range from traditional tools like books and blackboards to digital tools like videos, apps, or interactive platforms.
- b. Digital Flashcards: Flashcards that are presented in a digital format, typically on smartphones, tablets, or computers. These flashcards can include multimedia elements such as images, audio, and video to enhance learning and engagement.
- c. Reading Comprehension: The capacity to analyze text, grasp its significance, and synthesize that comprehension with existing information. It encompasses multiple competencies, including as decoding, fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and the capacity to discern primary concepts and draw inferences.

### **1.7.2 Operational Definition**

- a. Learning Media: In this study, learning media refers to digital flashcards that were used in the classroom for teaching reading comprehension. These media were delivered through a digital platform that students access via their devices during the learning sessions.



- b. Digital Flashcards: Operationally, digital flashcards are defined as interactive cards created using a digital platform (e.g., Quizlet or Anki), which contain reading comprehension prompts, vocabulary, and questions. The flashcards were used during reading lessons and used by students to reinforce their understanding of texts.
- c. Reading Comprehension: For this research, reading comprehension was measured by students' performance on standardized tests that assess their understanding of texts. These tests evaluated their ability to comprehend key ideas, infer meaning, and apply vocabulary in context before and after implementing digital flashcards.

