Pleasure Reading, Better Understanding: A Young EFL Learner's Journey in Digital Extensive Reading

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Abstract

Background: The struggle of a young English as a foreign language (EFL) learner in the midst of advanced technology to find pleasure and develop good comprehension in reading English materials necessitates the need to employ effective approaches in their reading experience.

Objective: This study investigated the implementation of digital extensive reading (DER) with a young EFL learner in Indonesia, exploring which established principles of extensive reading (ER) by Day and Bamford (1998) could be utilized in a digital context to foster reading for pleasure and comprehension.

Methods: This study employed a qualitative case study research design involving a seven-year-old young EFL learner in Indonesia. The data were obtained through multiple sources, including a learner diary, audio-recorded observations of ten DER sessions, and an interview with the learner's father. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, referencing Day and Bamford's (1998) top ten principles of ER.

Findings: The findings revealed that eight ER principles could be effectively implemented in the young EFL learner's DER experience, showcasing the learner's positive attitudes towards reading and enhanced reading comprehension.

Conclusion: Considering the result, the study recommends future studies to dig deeper into the effectiveness of DER across diverse learners by taking into account factors such as different ages, language proficiencies, learning styles, and technology access.

Keywords: extensive reading; reading for pleasure; young EFL learner

Introduction

Reading is a language skill that is popular for being a bridge to achieve many skills. In the area of foreign language learning, reading brings forward benefits for learners where learners are claimed to improve their vocabulary, develop other skills such as writing and speaking, and even discover new insights and experiences (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2007; Richards & Renandya, 2002). Nonetheless, reading, especially for young learners, is still seen as a difficult act to teach by many. When it comes to teaching reading to young learners, teachers are expected to utilize engaging techniques such as involving stories, games, and drama in order to capture young learners' interests (Mardasari, 2020; Romdanih & Yuningsih, 2021). Yet, reading in the classroom commonly still focuses on the technical accomplishment of a learner rather than maximizing the pleasure of reading itself (Wagner, 2020). This leads to learners' poor understanding of the whole reading materials they read as they are only taking parts of the information they are looking for (Kepe & Weagle, 2020; Neisi et al., 2019). Eventually, it may also lead to less or even no other skill achieved. Reading then becomes an unenjoyable task for learners to do both inside and outside of a classroom as it serves uneasy feelings towards learning a language through reading (Muchtar, 2019; Neisi et al., 2019). Thus, to highlight pleasure in reading to learn a foreign language, extensive reading (ER) appeals as an approach that offers that aspect.

To this day, ER has lured much attention for bringing pleasure to learners' reading activities. Referring to Day and Bamford's (1998) top ten principles, many successful ER practices emerge throughout the year (Macalister, 2015). Yet, implementing ER, particularly for young learners in a foreign language learning context, is still considered challenging, especially digitally. Digital extensive reading (DER) leverages digital tools to support learners in reading a wide range of self-selected reading materials for pleasure (Bala, 2022; Lestari, 2022). ER, the pedagogical approach upon which DER is based, is widely acknowledged for its positive impact on learners' reading motivation, reading fluency, and vocabulary acquisition (Day & Bamford, 2002; Janah et al., 2022; Saefatu et al., 2023). However, the implementation of ER with its established principles within digital environments, specifically with young EFL learners, requires careful consideration.

Several aspects affect the effectiveness of DER for young learners, which are learners' engagement, access to necessary digital resources, and the alignment of digital tools with established ER principles. A young learner possesses an imaginative mind, which teachers can maximize by relating what the learner reads with what is really happening in the learner's environment (Vygotsky, 1978). To satisfy a young learner's needs more, the selection of reading materials in the ER activity needs to vary and at the same time meet the proper level of the learner's language proficiency (Birketveit & Rimmereide, 2017; Sheridan & Condon, 2020). Involving digital resources through technology allows teachers to give more diverse reading material selections with mixed genres and levels (Bala, 2022). Young learners then benefit from guided support in exploring digital reading materials and curating them (Wagner, 2020). Furthermore, the role of teacher mediation and parent involvement in DER implementation plays a huge role in producing effective DER implementation, pursuing reading for pleasure. Teachers and parents need to take into account the unique characteristics of a young learner who usually depends on the five senses in interacting with the world around them to develop a language (Brewster et al., 2007; Harmer, 2007; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; Scott & Ytreberg, 1995). Regardless of the familiarity with young learners' characteristics and how those characteristics may suit the ER implementation, less attention has been given to how digital tools may align with established ER principles for young EFL learners.

In the area of foreign language learning, several previous studies have unfolded how ER practices may enhance one's foreign language acquisition by offering pleasure through reading a lot of easy reading materials that are self-chosen which eventually can develop a good reading habit (Bui & Macalister, 2021; Martina et al., 2020; Nakamura, 2018; Park, 2020; Ramonda, 2020; Yılmaz et al., 2020). Learners' positive attitudes then lead to the improvement of learners' reading comprehension of a certain topic that they read (R. Day & Bamford, 2002; Forster & Poulshock, 2021; Muravev, 2023; Nkomo, 2021). The implementation of ER has further evolved through the use of technology such as XReading, which was proven to be beneficial in helping learners acquire new vocabulary (Harimurti et al., 2021). The positive results of the technology involvement have also been widely discussed in the implementation of ER for young learners (Pirih, 2019; Promluan & Sukying, 2021; Song, 2020). However,

these positive results of ER implementation on learners' reading for pleasure and comprehension tend to emerge as results from comparing one learner to another in an equal situation, overlooking the difference in learners' English proficiency and learning styles while applying all the ER established principles. The application of established ER principles by Day and Bamford (1998) within digital environments, particularly with young EFL learners, remains unexplored. The in-depth process of how a young EFL learner experiences DER with ER principles applied becomes the present study's focus. Therefore, the current study aims to answer a research question: How is DER implemented in a young EFL learner's reading activity further to support the learner's pleasure reading and comprehension?

Literature Review

The Concept of Reading for Pleasure

Reading for Pleasure (RfP) offers fresh benefits for learners to enjoy learning a language through reading. The term RfP itself is popularly used in England (Kucirkova & Cremin, 2020) but is also known by many other titles such as *Free Voluntary Reading* or *Sustained Silent Reading* in the US (Krashen, 2004). Its practice is closely aimed at highlighting benefits for the learners' reading engagement (Collins et al., 2022). It is the act of reading where learners are able to carry general knowledge from the texts read while improving their reading ability and giving pleasure without pressure (Burnett & Merchant, 2018; Kucirkova & Cremin, 2020; Savitri et al., 2024). In language learning, nonetheless, reading does not always produce pleasure. Centering reading in giving pleasure might sound like an easy concept, yet in implementing it, learners need to have reading ability in the first place, positive attitudes towards the activity, and a suitable selection of books (Nell, 1988). The practice of RfP is often related to the benefits for learners in the area of literacy and motivation (Collins et al., 2022). It is a practice that is conceptualized as how learners' attitudes towards reading become positive, resulting in an increasing frequency of reading practice and skills (Becker et al., 2010; Collins et al., 2022; Petscher, 2010). Thus, when one enjoys what is read, the reading material is not only read but also understood well. Focusing on RfP then bridges learners to achieve better reading comprehension.

The Concept of Reading Comprehension

Besides enjoying reading, reading comprehension becomes another crucial aspect to consider when it comes to teaching reading. While reading and comprehension may appear to be distinct, they actually go hand in hand to enhance one's language skills (Özdemir & Akyol, 2019). Reading comprehension is defined as an active process where readers actively engage with a text to simultaneously and effectively extract meanings from it (Meniado, 2016; Sari Dewi et al., 2020). The responses of this process in reading comprehension are divided into aesthetic and efferent responses (Rosenblatt, 1982). Aesthetic responses are reflected through how learners connect their feelings to what they read in the text whereas efferent responses are reflected through how facts and concepts is drawn from the reading activity (Hayik, 2015; Rosenblatt, 1982). This process requires learners to combine ideas, make inferences, and understand the purpose of the author, which mainly becomes an ultimate goal for reading (Romina et al., 2024; Sideridis et al., 2013). The responses of this process in reading comprehension are further divided into aesthetic and efferent responses (Rosenblatt, 1982). Aesthetic responses are reflected through how learners connect their feelings to what they read in the text, whereas efferent responses are reflected through how facts and concepts are drawn from the reading activity (Hayik, 2015; Rosenblatt, 1982). The two responses thus support a comprehensive understanding of a text.

Reading comprehension is a multifaceted process that relies on various cognitive skills involving background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, and grammatical understanding (Hu et al., 2022; Ostojić, 2023; Zheng et al., 2023). Metacognitive awareness is also required to maximize reading comprehension, which showcases learners' ability to serve their understanding and apply suitable strategies in breaking down the comprehension (Anggia & Habók, 2024; Britania & Acosta, 2024; Sianturi et al., 2024). To determine learners' reading comprehension skills, several aspects should be taken into consideration. Nuttall (2005) unfolded five aspects that are crucial in assessing one's reading comprehension skills, including generating the main idea, exploring the inference, recognizing the reference, discovering detailed information, and grasping the vocabulary. These aspects are then categorized into three basic questions, which are literal, inferential, and evaluative questions (Escudero et al., 2018). Learners' background knowledge can be reflected through the inferential and evaluative questions, while learners'

vocabulary knowledge can be reflected through the literal questions. These aspects of reading comprehension are considered crucial when implementing effective reading programs. One such approach that has showcased positive results in reading comprehension while maintaining reading for pleasure is extensive reading (ER).

Extensive Reading and Its Principles

ER has been widely acknowledged as a reading approach that contributes to enhanced enjoyment in reading. First popularized by Harold Palmer in foreign language teaching (Day, 2015). ER is defined as a reading activity that is quick, self-chosen, enjoyable, in a large amount, and easily understood to further generate general information (Day & Bamford, 2002). It leads learners to focus on reading not for their technical reading achievement but rather for their own pleasure which further helps them develop a good reading habit that involves general understanding (Day & Bamford, 2002; Day, 2015; Yılmaz et al., 2020). The practice of ER is further developed into three directions which are supervised ER, independent ER, as well as blended ER and intensive reading (IR). Supervised ER is a situation where participants are accompanied by a supervisor in interacting with the reading materials during the reading activity (Day, 2015). It is different from independent ER which does not require a supervisor and is most of the time non-instructed (R. R. Day, 2015; Leung, 2002). On the other hand, the blended ER and IR situation takes place in teaching reading strategies and ER (Day, 2015; Day & Harsch, 2008).

Regardless of the different directions taken in its implementation, ER is often expected to serve consistent success, creating a significant challenge for educators and researchers (Aydawati et al., 2025; Bolhan & Ismail, 2024; Fergina et al., 2024; Luthfaturrohmah, 2024; Thongsan & Waring, 2024). One main aspect of conducting a successful ER practice is to rely effectively on established ER principles (Basri & Basikin, 2024; Savitri et al., 2024). Previously, in implementing a successful ER session, Day & Bamford (2002) presented ten principles that become the center of conducting ER practices. Macalister (2015) further categorized them into four large categories.

Table 1. Principles of ER in four categories

Reading nature	The teacher's responsibilities
- Generating general comprehension - Being its own reward - Being preferred to be in a faster speed - Being done individually and silently - Being easy - Being served in a wide range of topics	- Guiding the learner's reading activity - Becoming the role model of a reader - Being free to choose any reading materials - Being engaged to read as much as possible

The top ten ER principles by Day and Bamford (1998) have been widely adopted and adapted in various ER contexts to ensure successful practices (Yulia, 2018). A study by Day (2015) established an ER continuum displaying one that uses all ten principles (pure ER), up to eight principles (modified ER), up to four principles (ER light), and no principles at all (fringe ER). Several studies have discussed how the ER principles should not be seen as a strict rule but rather as a guide that emphasizes its original purpose, which is to entertain learners while generating general information (Hidayati et al., 2022; Macalister, 2015; Renandya et al., 2021; Waring & Mclean, 2015). Moreover, these principles also highlight the importance of learner autonomy and a supportive learning environment (Aydawati et al., 2025; Fatimah, 2019; Nakayama & Dickinson, 2023; Savitri et al., 2024). Other studies further expand upon these principles by highlighting the importance of collecting accessible and engaging materials, having a classroom value that emphasizes good reading habits, and the teacher's role in guiding the learners' choices and progress in reading activities (Apriliyanti & Ahmad Munir, 2024; Fergina et al., 2024; Rosmayanti & Yahrif, 2023).

While these principles serve as a valuable framework, their implementation may vary depending on the context and the number of learners (Waring & Mclean, 2015; Yılmaz et al., 2020). Strategies employed while using the principles to maximize the implementation of ER may differ when working with younger learners. For instance, young learners tend to be attracted to visually appealing texts as they work on their imaginative minds while being guided to carefully choose reading materials and do activities afterward that express their pleasure and comprehension, such as through storytelling or drawing (Hermini et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2019). This adaptation of ER principles becomes relevant in the context of digital reading as young EFL

learners dynamically interact with the reading materials they encounter. Thus, the following section will explore the implementation of DER for young EFL learners, exploring how the established principles of ER are adapted within this digitalized era.

The Implementation of Digital Extensive Reading for Young EFL Learners

The emergence of DER may act as a promising approach to enhancing reading for pleasure and reading comprehension, specifically for young EFL learners. The involvement of digital technology in DER strengthens ER practices in general by offering learners a wider range of reading materials which learners can interact with better (Ermerawati, 2019). DER accommodates the sharp shift into technology integration in education, emphasizing the potential of digital tools to support learners' reading experiences (Fazzi et al., 2024; Lailiyah & Fitriana, 2024; Tosun & Gönen, 2024). Moreover, the use of technology may help educators nurture young EFL learners' reading identities in ER implementation (Wagner, 2020).

The existence of DER may also overcome practical obstacles that appear in traditional ER. Regardless of the implementation of ER's popularity among teachers (Firda et al., 2018; Savitri et al., 2024; Wulyani et al., 2022), the implementation was still seen as difficult due to limitations in preparing a wide range of reading materials that suit each learner's personalized liking, followed by suitable assignments afterward (Lestari, 2022; Ng et al., 2019; Yulia, 2018). Digital platforms further answer this issue by providing a widely accessible library of digital reading materials through different paid to free websites that feature multimedia and interactive elements (Bala, 2022). Learners can even access the materials themselves without borrowing them from their teachers after being introduced to the platforms such as Let's Read!, Xreading, and Webtoon (Ermerawati, 2019; Harimurti et al., 2021; Istiqlal et al., 2021; Janah et al., 2022; Prihartono et al., 2021). As they choose a reading material with a topic they are genuinely interested in, they may bring forward their prior knowledge and eventually connect it with new knowledge they acquire from the reading material. This helps them deeply foster enjoyment and a sense of accomplishment (Wagner, 2020).

Young learners who possess imaginative minds are attracted better to knowledge that is relevant to their surroundings with the help of proficient others before conquering the knowledge by themselves (Vygotsky, 1978). The knowledge served in reading materials then needs to be

supported with a wide range of reading materials that are more contextual, which may benefit them in learning languages at their optimal age (Cahyati & Madya, 2019; Kusmaryati, 2020). One way to collect a wider range of reading materials is to make use of technology, specifically through DER. Research has previously shown how DER is beneficial for young learners who are often attracted to the interactive and engaging nature of digital media (Abdul Rahman & Mohamad, 2023; Astutik, 2022; Hoblidar, 2022). DER can also enhance young learners' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and reading engagement (Pirih, 2019; Promluan & Sukying, 2021; Song, 2020). To foster learners' reading for pleasure and reading comprehension, DER helps ensure access to technology to support both teachers and learners in the reading process, which previously was an issue in traditional ER (Wulyani et al., 2022). The role of technology in DER serves as friendly and easy companions that allow teachers and learners to search for reading materials by images, title, author, genre, and reading level, suiting one's language proficiency (Bala, 2022). Some even have a feature where teachers can monitor their learners' progress in terms of how much in a book learners have read, how many books learners have finished, and even learners' comprehension reflected in their reading log (Huang, 2015; Saefatu et al., 2023). Through the utilization of DER, teachers may step up the game in implementing ER to not only support young learners in enjoying their reading activity but also develop their reading comprehension.

Method

The current study employed a qualitative case study to investigate the in-depth reading experience of a young EFL learner engaged in DER. With this research design, a deeply intricate social phenomenon can be investigated in the context of real-life experiences (Yin, 2008). This design is aligned with the purpose of the study, which is to explore the implementation of DER and how its support to a young EFL learner's reading enjoyment and comprehension.

Research Participant

The main participant in this study was Putra (pseudonym), a seven-year-old Indonesian EFL learner. At the time of the study, he was a first grader in a primary school in Cimahi, where English had not yet started to be taught in his grade. He was learning English as an extracurricular

at home under his parents' supervision. He was already good at speaking but was not as good at writing skills. The current study had a young learner as the participant due to the belief that this age group represents the best period for developing a language (Cahyati & Madya, 2019; Chen et al., 2022; Hopp et al., 2019; Jia, 2022). Moreover, focusing only on one young learner as the primary unit of analysis allowed the researcher to eliminate any potential confounding factors related to differences in prior language knowledge and equip age-appropriate and engaging digital reading materials' selection that aligns with the learner's topic of interest and English proficiency level.

Data Collection

Data for the present study were collected over a four-week period, covering ten DER sessions. To address a comprehensive observation of Putra's DER sessions, multiple data sources were utilized. A learner diary was employed after each DER session as a medium for Putra to express his thoughts, feelings, and understanding of the stories he read. This diary was specifically used to record his enhanced comprehension and engagement with the materials he read. The next data collection method was through real-time observations that were audio-recorded to capture Putra's reading behaviors, natural interactions both with the digital texts and the researcher as a teacher, and verbal expressions related to the stories. These audio recordings were beneficial in providing valuable insights into his reading engagement and comprehension, highlighting the process of DER, which the results recorded in the diary might lack. At the end of the four-week period, with one meeting per week, a semi-structured interview was conducted with Putra's father. This interview served as an insight on Putra's engagement with DER through his father's perspective, emphasizing any observed changes in Putra's reading attitudes towards EFL and his overall progress in reading comprehension. This triangulation method was involved in overcoming the subjectivity of the study's result, where the researcher relied on the learner's diary, observation results, as well as an interview with the learner's father as the secondary participant to strengthen and maintain the consistency of the findings in Putra's reading activities.

Research Procedure

To address the stated research purpose, the research procedure was carefully made to introduce Putra to DER, guide Putra in engaging with the digital reading materials, and collect data based on his experiences. The procedure of how the research was conducted is served as follows:
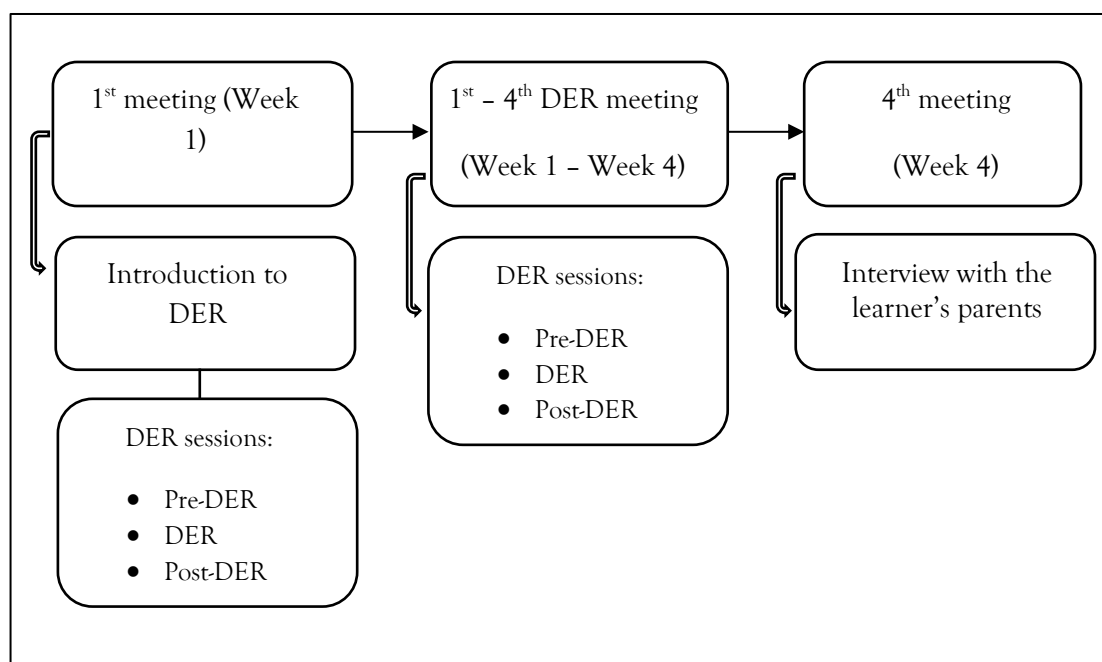

Figure 1. Research Procedure

In the first meeting, Putra was introduced to DER. The researcher explained that Putra would have to read stories on an *iPad* and choose any reading materials that interested him. The introduction focused on showing how he would do his reading activity, emphasizing enjoyable and engaging experiences rather than directly defining DER. In the first meeting until the third meeting, the learner finished two books, while in the fourth meeting, four books were read. Each meeting included a 5-minute pre-DER session in which the learner was asked to predict the story from the cover, a 20-minute DER session, and a 10–15-minute post-DER session in which the learner filled out the diary. The main DER session lasted 20 minutes as this length was said to be a good length for keeping the learner's attention and maximizing the learner's brain, resulting in a stronger vocabulary acquisition (Hague, 2020). The researcher also conducted an interview

in the fourth meeting with the learner's father. Reading materials for the learner used in the current study were obtained from a variety of websites. These sources were chosen for their practicality in terms of the ease of obtaining free publication of a wide variety of reading materials in various online platforms, as well as their usability in terms of topics that are relevant to the learner and how they suited his English language proficiency. There were 12 reading materials provided, but the learner was asked to choose ten books only to read to suit the number of meetings conducted. Almost all he interactions between the researcher and both the learner and the learner's parent were conducted in English with only a very little use of Indonesian to clarify difficult words or terms with the learner.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the learner diary, audio-recorded observations, and a parent interview were further analyzed using thematic analysis, following Cresswell & Poth's (2018) framework outline, namely the data analysis spiral. This specific framework was used as it assisted the researcher in maintaining the coherence of the data collected while also keeping the researcher on track in terms of the current study's objective. Simply put, the researcher scanned and transcribed all of the audio recordings of the observations and a parent interview collected, reading and re-reading the transcripts and the diary entries to obtain a comprehensive understanding of Putra's experiences, assigned codes to meaningful data units which focused on Putra's reading attitudes and comprehension, transformed the codes into themes, and interpreted the themes in relation to the research question addressed while also correlating them with relevant literature to provide context and meaning to the results. Throughout the data analysis stage, each principle of the top 10 ER principles by Day and Bamford (2002) was equipped and applied as a guide to observe and interpret Putra's DER experiences. Using this framework, the analysis focused on identifying how ER principles reflected in Putra's reading attitudes, engagement with digital reading materials, and overall reading enjoyment and comprehension.
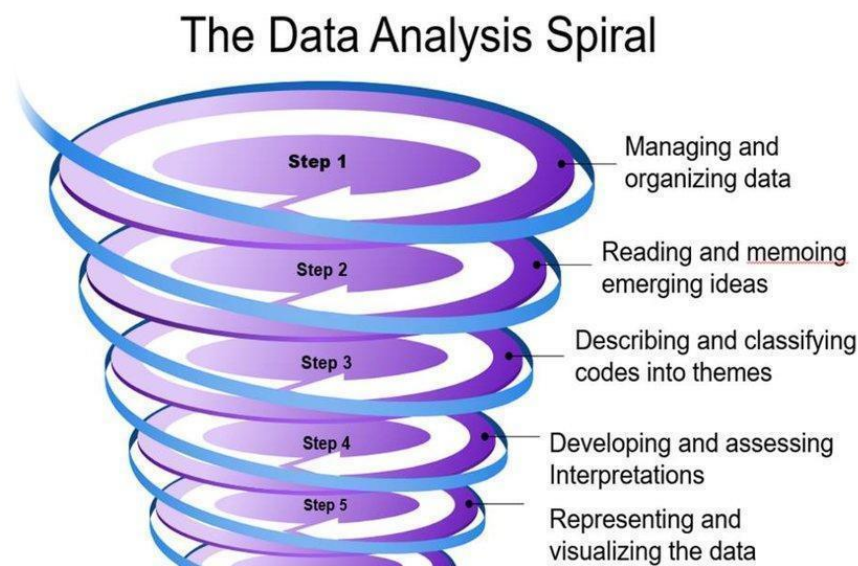
Figure 2. Data Analysis Framework

Findings

The current study explored the implementation of DER with a young EFL learner, examining how existing ER principles were reflected and adapted within a digital context to further support the learner's pleasure reading and reading comprehension. The top 10 ER principles by Day and Bamford (2002) acted as a guide in observing Putra's DER experiences. Instead of applying all 10 principles strictly, the present study aimed to investigate how these established principles of ER worked within a naturalistic DER setting, focusing on their alignment with the learner's pleasure and comprehension of digital reading materials.

During the initial DER sessions, it became evident that applying all 10 ER principles was not always appropriate for this study's young EFL learner. To best support the young EFL learner's pleasure reading and reading comprehension development, the current study found that eight out of the 10 ER principles were effectively adapted within the learner's digital reading experiences. When it comes to implementing ER by relying on the ten principles of ER by Day and Bamford (2002), the young learner's language learning situation, as well as language proficiency, should be taken into account. For instance, the principle of "reading to be done individually and silently" became challenging as when Putra was asked to read both smaller and bigger parts of the reading, he struggled a lot since he still found it difficult to read in English,

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even leading to a rejection to read more. The learner was also not familiar with the websites used to do his reading, which led him to reject the idea of reading by himself more.

Table 2. Asking the preferable way to read

Meeting	Subject	Transcription
1 (Book 1)	R	Do you want to read it by yourself or...?
	P	I don't know
2 (Book 2)	R	Do you want to read the title?
	P	No.

Note: R (Researcher), P (Putra, the young EFL learner)

When the reading was tried to be done individually and silently, Putra was demotivated to continue the reading activity since he was still struggling to read in English fluently by himself. He got frustrated since he felt like he learned to read instead of reading to learn, leading to a rejection of reading other books. If he did not enjoy the reading itself in the first place, reading might not come up as its own reward.

Table 3. Demotivation to read

Meeting	Subject	Transcription
2 (Book 1)	R	Do you want to read it by yourself or do you want me to read it for you?
	P	Let's just both.
	R	Okay. Here. It's the first part.
	P	Today, we...
	R	We...
	P	We... leyarned...
	R	Learned
	P	Learned... eil... el... Today, we learned all...
	R	All... abour... about... Earth... day. Yes, today we learned all about Earth Day. Okay,
	P	next.
	R	Hmmm...
	P	Do you want me to read it? I don't know...

To address the challenge, the researcher supported Putra's DER experience by offering to read aloud the story to the learner, which modeled reading strategies and provided guidance for Putra to keep on reading. This approach aligns with two other ER principles, which are "the teacher becomes the role model of a reader" and "the teacher guides the learner". This demonstrated how these ER principles could be manifested in a DER context, supporting the learner not only to read in EFL but also to interact with the platforms used to do the DER activity. Furthermore, as Putra's confidence grew throughout each reading material read, he demonstrated learner autonomy reflected in another principle of ER, which is "the learner is engaged in reading as much as possible". Even though the researcher was initially worried if reading was conducted continuously Putra would be bored and turn the practice into failure, Putra was surprisingly interested to keep reading. The wider range of availability of diverse digital resources through websites such as *Let's Read, epic!,* and *Monkey Pen* helped the researcher collect different kinds of genres and a suitable EFL level of reading materials and helped Putra interact with the story and read better as the materials were easy. The ability to swipe from one page to another, showing interactive and colorful high-definition images, helped Putra to easily choose what he wanted to read better. Thus, the principles 'the learner is engaged to read as much as possible', 'the reading material is easy', 'there are many topics of reading materials to choose from', and 'the learner can read whatever they like' could be implemented in the current study.

The learner's increasing positive attitude towards DER was also evident in his reading speed. As Putra became more comfortable with the DER experience, his reading speed increased, which was reflected in one of the ER principles "reading is preferred to be at a faster speed". For a comparison, from all the audio recordings made throughout the observations, the first book read was done for 28:49 minutes from pre-ER to post-ER session, whereas for the tenth book, it was done for only 17:22 minutes. Even though the variation of the length of the stories might also contribute to the time taken, this increased reading speed reflected growing reading fluency as Putra enjoyed the stories he read better.

While most ER principles were reflected in the learner's DER experience, some principles necessitated adaptation or were not directly observed. For instance, the ER principle "reading is merely for its own reward" was not precisely implemented in Putra's DER activities in this study as he was adjusted to more structured learning activities. The present study used a

diary as a reading log after each DER session as a tool to understand the story better and seek for general understanding that he might relate to his surroundings while also enjoying the process of the reading. In this case, the principle 'Reading is done with enjoyment while seeking general understanding' could instead be implemented. Alongside two other principles which were having the teacher be the role model of a reader and to guide the learner, Putra became more confident in expressing his comprehension verbally towards the stories he read. In the first meeting, he was uncertain of his comprehension but after being guided throughout the DER session, he could then come up with guesses, give reasons, and get more curious about words he was not familiar with that he encountered during the reading activity.

Table 4: The learner's reading comprehension improvement during the DER sessions

Meeting	Subject	Transcription	Gloss
1	R	From the cover, can you guess what the story is going to be about?	
	P	I don't know.	
3	R	What will make the trash cloud came back?	
	P	I don't know. Littering?	
4	R	Okay. What do you want to make from log?	
	P	This hiking stick?	
	R	Oh, yeah. Why do you think we should take care of Earth?	
	P	Because the Earth will be happy.	
4	R	This plastic can be used to make all kinds of things, including clothes.	
	P	Clothes itu apa?	What are clothes?
	R	This is clothes (pointing at Putra's clothes). It can be made from plastic. Can you believe it?	
	P	Even if... see? Look at this! (pointing at a book's picture)	

Putra's curiosity in EFL reading and improved comprehension were also confirmed by Putra's father. Even though Putra did not really talk about what he read and learned during the ER sessions to his parents, he showed It directly through his actions daily. Putra was said to be more curious about the meaning of words in English he found during his daily reading and how to pronounce it and even managed to use it in his sentences later on.

> "He doesn't really talk about what we learn, but he starts to ask me about how to read this, in English, of course, and when he sees something in movie like, how is this read, daddy? Like what it means, some kind like that." (Meeting 4, Putra's father)

Putra's improved comprehension could also be seen in his diary-making. In early meetings, he relied heavily on the researcher to start writing what he understood. He only made short phrases or sentences as he was still struggling to grasp the concept of ER. However, later on, he could write sentences by himself and even managed to make longer phrases and sentences.
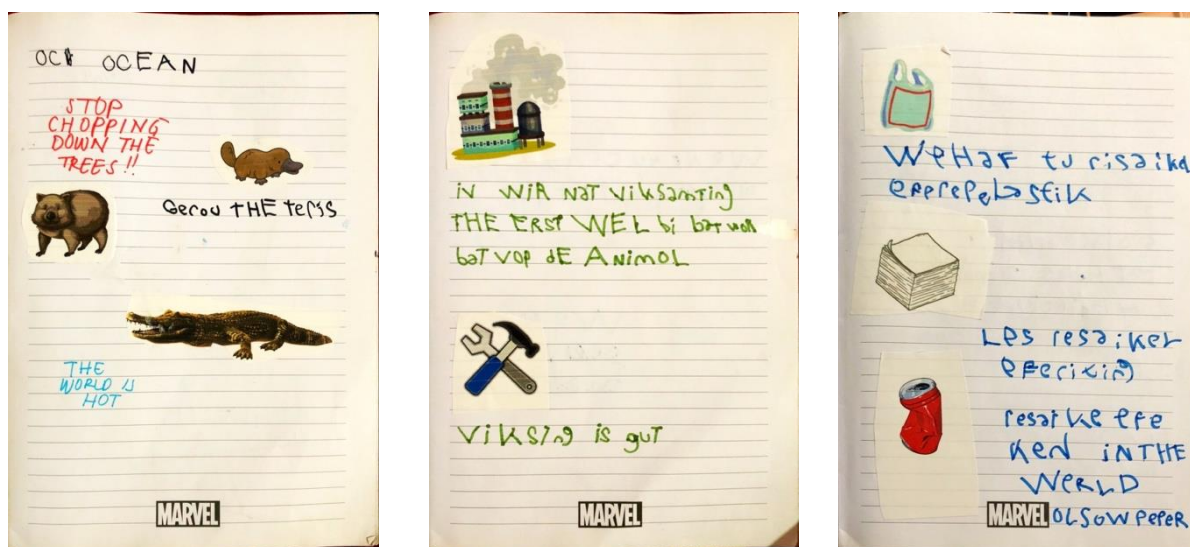

Figure 3. The improvement of Putra's reading comprehension in the diary

By the end of the 10 DER sessions, it was found that eight out of 10 principles of ER were effectively integrated and adapted within the learner's DER experience, which best supported the learner's reading for pleasure as well as better reading comprehension. Thus, the findings emphasized the importance of flexibility and adaptation in utilizing ER principles as a

guide, particularly in digital contexts and with young EFL learners. The focus should be shifted to creating an interactive and engaging reading experience that supports young EFL learner's enjoyment and comprehension rather than strictly following principles viewed as a set of rules. The digital environment in DER contexts allowed the young EFL learner in this study to maximize enjoyment and comprehension by providing a wider range of digital reading materials with diverse topics that suited the learner's language proficiency while also equipping them with better autonomy and personalized learning experiences.

Discussions

The findings of the current study demonstrated a successful implementation of DER by revealing that eight of the 10 principles of ER were effectively integrated into the young EFL learner's DER experiences, which resulted in the young EFL learner's enhanced reading for pleasure and reading comprehension. Throughout the data collection and analysis, the top 10 ER principles by Day and Bamford (2002) worked as a framework for exploring the young EFL learner's experiences within the DER context. Pure ER, which utilized all 10 principles of ER (Day, 2015), could not precisely be implemented in the young EFL learner's DER activities as they led more to disruption than support to better pleasure and comprehension in reading. It should be noted regardless that not implementing all principles of ER did not change the nature of ER at all since these principles should be seen as a guide rather than a strict rule (Macalister, 2015; Ng et al., 2019; Renandya et al., 2021; Waring & Mclean, 2015). Moreover, the success of an ER practice does not necessarily depend on how many principles are followed but rather on how the principles implemented can suit the young EFL learner's language learning context, which in the present study was DER, in order to obtain the best result. Thus, applying all ER principles, which in this case is the implementation of pure ER, does not always ensure the success of an ER practice (Renandya et al., 2021), particularly in delving into a DER experience. This finding is also in line with the broader study of ER implementation, which recommends more flexibility and adaptation to more successful outcomes across diverse learning contexts (Waring & Mclean, 2015).

During the initial DER sessions, it became evident that strictly applying all 10 ER principles uniformly was not always appropriate for the present study's young EFL learner within

the digital environment. For instance, the principle of "learners read individually and silently" was difficult to apply as the learner struggled with reading independently in EFL and interacted with the platforms used to read. As highlighted previously, it was important to adapt to the ER principle, which served flexibility in maximizing the benefit aimed (Waring & Husna, 2019; Waring & Mclean, 2015), specifically with the young EFL learner engaged in DER. To address this obstacle, the teacher holds an essential role in order to lure positive impacts better. Putra could show improvement regarding his vocabulary knowledge as well as his comprehension after being guided by the teacher and putting the teacher as the role model of a reader. As Wagner (2020) suggests, it is crucial to nurture young learners' reading identities in ER implementation through the help of the teacher, which is reflected within the DER context. This was in line with the theory of young learner's language development by Vygotsky (1978), where help from a proficient adult plays a huge role in supporting a young learner's language learning journey before the learner eventually does it independently. The findings also further agreed on how a young learner is fast in acquiring other skills during the EFL reading as the learner is at an optimal age to learn a foreign language (Cahyati & Madya, 2019; Kusmaryati, 2020).

The positive impact that DER served was not only in terms of skills improvement but also the showcase of enjoyment towards the practice. Advancing from the usual ER practices, making use of digital platforms to help Putra choose any reading materials and read them supported him to be more engaged with the reading materials. Besides serving them with different kinds of genres and levels of reading materials, the images served as well as how the learner interacted with the digital tool lured the learner's reading interest more. As mentioned in a study by Bala (2022), reading with digital tools such as websites helps assist young learners' interactions with the text better. Digital tools offer a great resource that provides interactive features to enhance young learners' engagement with reading (Harimurti et al., 2021; Istiqlal et al., 2021; Janah et al., 2022; Prihartono et al., 2021). Moreover, an enjoyable reading experience is important in fostering reading comprehension (Krashen, 2004). In this study, reading was no longer done merely for its own reward, as reflected in one of Day and Bamford's (2002) ER principles, but could be followed by various follow-up activities, which in this study was diary-making. By making a diary, the learner was given a chance to comprehend what he read better and express it in a platform where he could rely on his lively, imaginative, and enthusiastic traits

(Brewster et al., 2007; Harmer, 2007; Mutiah et al., 2020; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; Pirih, 2019). Both his feelings and understandings were reflected in two different forms of responses which are aesthetic and efferent responses (Hayik, 2015; Rosenblatt, 1982). Putra's diary entries provided valuable insights into his attitudes towards the stories, reflected in his aesthetic responses, and his understanding of the facts and concepts introduced in the stories, reflected in his efferent responses.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of previous related studies (Birketveit et al., 2018; Endris, 2018; Promluan & Sukying, 2021; Song, 2020; Yulia, 2018). The implementation of DER brought positive impacts on the reading activity of a young EFL learner. Yet, the process of fusing ER was different from one study to another. These differences emerged due to different language proficiency as well as language learning contexts of the learners studied. Thus, it led to different modifications in terms of applying suitable ER principles that best suited the context. To illustrate, a study by Birketveit et al. (2018) only implemented three principles of ER and focused on the young learners' attitudes toward the practice. The improvement in reading comprehension skills regardless emerged unintentionally. On the other hand, a study by Endris (2018) focused on the young learners' improvement of reading comprehension skills but the positive attitudes towards it also emerged unexpectedly throughout the study. These successful positive impacts were also shown in a study by Song (2020) which did not mention any use of ER principles and a study by Promluan & Sukying (2021) that implemented all ER principles. Regardless of the number of ER principles implemented that reflected better pleasure reading and reading comprehension for young learners, numerous issues of implementation to consider in conducting ER could be further solved in digital contexts, particularly through DER (Janah et al., 2022; Renandya et al., 2021).

Noticing how the previous related studies were conducted on many young learners and compared the results from one learner to another, the present study appears to contribute to presenting the in-depth process of implementing DER to one young learner and how each established principle of ER could be integrated into the digital context. This study did not only present the positive impacts but also the negative ones that might be hindered in previous studies. Thus, the employment of established ER principles by Day and Bamford (2002) should be modified to further generate the best principles to use that suit the language learning context

and language proficiency of the learners. It was proven that by applying eight principles of ER and with the help of digital tools to conduct DER practices, the young EFL learner in this study could maximize reading for pleasure and develop better reading comprehension.

Conclusion and Implication

This study examined how DER could help a young EFL learner read for enjoyment and improve comprehension. Not all ER principles were utilized, but eight were, improving reading pleasure and comprehension. Digital technologies also let the young EFL learner engage with stories and interact during ER practice, demonstrating his reading comprehension. This highlights the necessity of using digital technologies and understanding young EFL learners' requirements when doing ER online, or DER. This study suggested that ER principles may be appropriate for diverse young learners and circumstances. This study used successful ideas, but they may not work as well in other studies with various young learners and circumstances, especially online. In practice, this research may help educators and researchers incorporate DER into young EFL learners' reading practices inside and outside the classroom. The findings imply that attentive and flexible DER implementation can help young EFL learners enjoy and understand reading. The study also emphasises the importance of teachers in leading and promoting successful DER experiences, especially for younger learners. This study gives useful insights for future research, but a restricted quantity of relevant free reading resources matched the learner's English language competence and limited screen time may have influenced the outcomes. This study's strength is its attention on the in-depth process of how DER was implemented to improve reading enjoyment and comprehension rather than just the results. Future research might explore ER principles' effectiveness with a broader sample of young EFL learners' individual features and learning situations. Further research could examine the long-term impacts of DER on reading habits and language development utilizing different digital platforms and tools to improve DER implementation.

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