



## Reading Beyond the Textbook through Epic!

(A Digital Platform to Engage EFL Learners)

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**Abstract.** This study explores the use of *Epic!*, a digital reading platform, as a medium to promote student engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Implemented through two cycles of Classroom Action Research (CAR), the study examined how digital reading activities could improve students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis, then analyzed thematically to trace changes across the learning cycles. The findings indicate that *Epic!* created a more dynamic and participatory learning atmosphere, encouraging students to take a more active role in reading. In the first cycle, learners displayed enthusiasm but depended largely on teacher direction. By the second cycle, they demonstrated stronger autonomy, confidence, and reflection in their reading practices. Although technical challenges such as internet instability and limited device access were encountered, the platform effectively fostered motivation and sustained participation. The study concludes that *Epic!* serves as an engaging and practical digital resource that promotes meaningful, independent, and enjoyable reading experiences for EFL learners.

**Keywords:** digital reading; EFL learners; *Epic!*; mobile-assisted language learning; reading engagement.

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi penggunaan *Epic!*, sebuah platform membaca digital, sebagai media untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (English as a Foreign Language/EFL). Penelitian ini dilaksanakan melalui dua siklus Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) yang berfokus pada peningkatan keterlibatan perilaku, emosional, dan kognitif siswa selama kegiatan membaca digital. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik untuk melihat perubahan keterlibatan siswa di setiap siklus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan *Epic!* menciptakan suasana belajar yang lebih interaktif dan partisipatif, mendorong siswa untuk berperan lebih aktif dalam kegiatan membaca. Pada siklus pertama, siswa menunjukkan antusiasme dan rasa ingin tahu yang tinggi namun masih bergantung pada bimbingan guru. Pada siklus kedua, siswa mulai menunjukkan kemandirian, kepercayaan diri, dan kemampuan reflektif yang lebih kuat. Meskipun terdapat kendala teknis seperti koneksi internet yang tidak stabil dan keterbatasan perangkat, platform ini terbukti efektif dalam menumbuhkan motivasi dan mempertahankan partisipasi siswa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa *Epic!* merupakan media digital yang menarik dan praktis untuk mendukung pengalaman membaca yang bermakna, mandiri, dan menyenangkan bagi pembelajar EFL.

**Kata kunci:** membaca digital; pembelajar EFL; keterlibatan belajar; pembelajaran berbasis mobile; *Epic!*.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A persistent challenge in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education lies not only in teaching students how to read but in motivating them to read willingly and meaningfully. Reading is widely recognized as a crucial component of language acquisition because it provides learners with extensive exposure to vocabulary, grammar, and discourse structures that support comprehension and communication (Grabe & Stoller, 2013). However, many EFL learners continue to perceive reading as a mandatory school task rather than an enjoyable or purposeful activity, resulting in low motivation and limited reading proficiency.

In connection with this issue, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reports that although students' overall reading performance has remained relatively stable, their enjoyment and motivation to read continue to decline (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2019, 2020). Within the PISA framework, reading literacy is defined as the capacity to understand, use, evaluate, and reflect on written texts to achieve personal and social purposes. This view suggests that reading proficiency extends beyond linguistic accuracy or the ability to decode words. In EFL learning context, the key challenge therefore lies not only in developing students' linguistic competence but also in fostering their intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement with texts (Lau, 2019; Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2017).

While various innovations have been introduced into language teaching, printed textbooks continue to serve as the primary instructional resource in many EFL classrooms. Their structured content and sequenced language input help teachers manage lessons effectively and ensure curriculum alignment. Nonetheless, textbook-based reading activities often prioritize comprehension exercises, vocabulary practice, and accuracy-oriented tasks, which may offer limited opportunities for learners to explore texts based on personal interests or preferred learning styles (Yuliana & Yuwono, 2020). To support both motivation and comprehension, it is therefore valuable for teachers to complement textbooks with a range of interactive and meaningful materials that stimulate curiosity and active engagement (Rahmawati & Hastuti, 2021). In this regard, Guthrie et al. (2012) and Schaffner and Schiefele (2021) conceptualize reading engagement as a multidimensional construct encompassing motivation, strategic learning, and social interaction. When reading materials are personally relevant and meaningful, learners tend to demonstrate greater persistence, deeper comprehension, and stronger motivation to read (Teng, 2022).

Building on this perspective, engagement is a key factor in sustaining learners' motivation and shaping meaningful reading experiences. It is commonly viewed as a multidimensional construct comprising behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions that together influence learning outcomes (Fredricks et al., 2019). Behavioral engagement reflects effort and participation, emotional engagement involves interest and enjoyment, and cognitive engagement relates to strategy use and self-regulation (Skinner et al., 2022). The principles of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) further explain that intrinsic motivation develops when learners' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met. In reading instruction, these needs can be supported through meaningful text choices, scaffolded guidance, and opportunities for independent exploration (Chen et al., 2019; Schunk & Greene,

2018). When such conditions are present, reading becomes a purposeful and intrinsically rewarding process that promotes sustained engagement.

With the increasing integration of digital technology into education, EFL classrooms now have greater opportunities to build more engaging and student-centered reading environments. Digital reading platforms combine text, visuals, and audio into multimodal formats that can enrich comprehension and sustain learners' attention (Naumann, 2021; Choi & Yi, 2022). Such environments also cultivate higher-order literacy skills, including evaluating, synthesizing, and navigating information, which strengthen learners' metacognitive awareness and critical reading abilities (Leu et al., 2019; Walsh, 2016). Moreover, digital literacy practices have been shown to enhance students' motivation, autonomy, and confidence by allowing them to select materials aligned with their interests and to learn at their own pace (Castek & Beach, 2023; Afflerbach et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2022).

Among the available tools, Epic has gained recognition as an accessible and engaging digital reading platform that supports literacy growth among young learners. It offers an extensive library of leveled books, illustrated stories, and audiobooks that accommodate different proficiency levels and preferences (Epic, n.d.). Features such as audio narration, colorful visuals, and interactive comprehension tasks provide a stimulating learning experience that encourages reading frequency and enjoyment (Commonsense Education, 2025; Liu & Zhang, 2021). By enabling learners to choose materials based on personal interests, Epic promotes autonomy and intrinsic motivation, which are essential elements of engagement and self-regulated learning (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Schunk & Greene, 2018).

Although research in various contexts has demonstrated the positive impact of digital reading on EFL learners' motivation, engagement, and comprehension (Pasaribu, 2020; Sjölander, 2021; Lin & Lan, 2019), studies in the Indonesian context have yet to explore the use of Epic in depth. Recognizing this gap, the present study seeks to investigate how Epic can be integrated into EFL classrooms to enhance behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement. It aims to show that digital reading platforms can nurture autonomy, enjoyment, and sustained engagement and encouraging learners to read not merely as an academic requirement but as a personally meaningful and rewarding experience.

## 2. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in the concept of reading engagement, which serves as the central theoretical foundation for understanding how learners interact with digital texts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The framework explains not only what students do while

reading but also how they think and feel during the process. Engagement is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions that together determine the quality of learners' participation and academic outcomes (Fredricks et al., 2019; Schunk & Greene, 2018). Within the context of EFL learning, reading engagement is considered a bridge between motivation and comprehension, promoting meaningful and sustained learning experiences.

### **Reading Engagement in EFL Learning**

In language education, reading engagement represents the intersection of motivation, attention, and comprehension, highlighting the importance of active participation in constructing meaning rather than passively receiving information. Grabe and Stoller (2018) emphasize that developing engaged readers requires systematic exposure to meaningful, varied, and contextually rich texts. This notion aligns closely with digital reading environments, where multimodal content—integrating text, visuals, and audio—stimulates curiosity and supports comprehension through diverse learning channels. Studies in EFL settings confirm that engagement is a strong predictor of reading achievement, persistence, and self-regulation (Teng, 2022; Naumann, 2021).

#### ***Behavioral Engagement***

Behavioral engagement refers to the observable effort, attention, and persistence learners demonstrate during reading activities. In EFL classrooms, this dimension manifests through students' active participation in navigating digital texts, following instructions, and collaborating with peers. Learners who are behaviorally engaged tend to complete tasks conscientiously and remain focused on achieving reading goals, which contributes to improved fluency and performance (Skinner et al., 2022).

#### ***Emotional Engagement***

Emotional engagement encompasses learners' affective responses—such as enjoyment, curiosity, and enthusiasm—toward reading tasks. It reflects students' emotional investment and sense of connection with the material. When reading materials are perceived as relevant and visually appealing, students experience higher motivation and reduced anxiety (Naumann, 2021). In digital contexts, features such as colorful visuals and interactive storytelling foster positive emotions and make reading more enjoyable and less intimidating (Huang et al., 2022).

#### ***Cognitive Engagement***

Cognitive engagement involves the mental strategies and effort students use to interpret, analyze, and evaluate texts. It includes higher-order thinking processes such as summarizing, inferring, and synthesizing meaning. Grabe and Stoller (2018) and Castek and Beach (2023)

highlight that cognitively engaged readers apply metacognitive strategies like predicting or questioning to achieve deeper understanding. In digital platforms, multimodal features such as vocabulary pop-ups, audio narration, and illustrations promote critical engagement and autonomy in reading.

Empirical studies support the significant role of engagement in improving EFL reading outcomes. Teng (2022) found that highly engaged learners achieve better comprehension and vocabulary retention, while Huang et al. (2022) reported that mobile-assisted environments enhance both emotional and cognitive involvement. Lin and Lan (2019) further noted that digital learning contexts foster learner autonomy and self-regulation key components of sustained engagement. These findings reinforce the theoretical assumption that engagement mediates the relationship between technology use, motivation, and comprehension.

In summary, this framework establishes reading engagement as the conceptual core of the present study, linking motivation, comprehension, and digital learning in EFL contexts. Grounded in the multidimensional model of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Fredricks et al., 2019; Schunk & Greene, 2018), this study investigates how *Epic!*, a multimodal Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) platform, can enhance students' curiosity, participation, and comprehension in reading English texts.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Classroom Action Research (CAR) was applied in this study to examine how *Epic!* enhances students' reading engagement in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The research followed two cycles consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting as suggested by Burns (2010). Each cycle aimed to identify and improve students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement based on the framework of Fredricks et al. (2019) and Schunk and Greene (2018). The participants were tenth-grade students selected purposively according to their level of reading motivation. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted using an engagement checklist and field notes to record students' participation and attitudes during *Epic!* reading activities. Interviews were carried out to gather students' reflections and responses to learning with the platform, meanwhile, document analysis was carried out to examine students' reading results and reflection sheets in order to identify changes in their engagement and comprehension across cycles. All data were analyzed descriptively and thematically following Creswell and Poth (2018) to capture the improvement and patterns of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement throughout the cycles.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

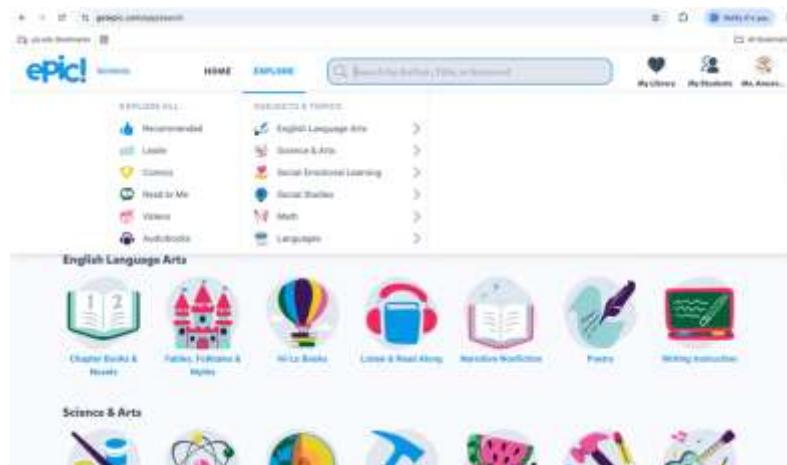
The results of this study are divided into three sections: (1) students' reading engagement identified during the first cycle of Classroom Action Research (CAR), (2) improvements in engagement observed during the second cycle, and (3) challenges encountered during the implementation of *Epic!* and possible solutions offered. The analysis of the data is framed within Engagement Theory proposed by Fredricks et al. (2019) and Schunk and Greene (2018), which defines engagement as a multidimensional construct involving behavioral, emotional, and cognitive components that work together to shape learning outcomes. These three dimensions were used as the analytical lens to interpret how *Epic!* influenced students' participation, feelings, and thinking processes during reading lessons.

##### **Students' Reading Engagement in the First Cycle**

The first cycle was conducted over several meetings and aimed to introduce students to reading through *Epic!* as a digital platform that promotes engagement through multimodal input. The process followed the main stages of Classroom Action Research (CAR), such as planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, while maintaining the structure of pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities. The analysis of findings was guided by Engagement Theory (Fredricks et al., 2019; Schunk & Greene, 2018), which conceptualizes engagement as a combination of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions that work together to enhance learning outcomes.

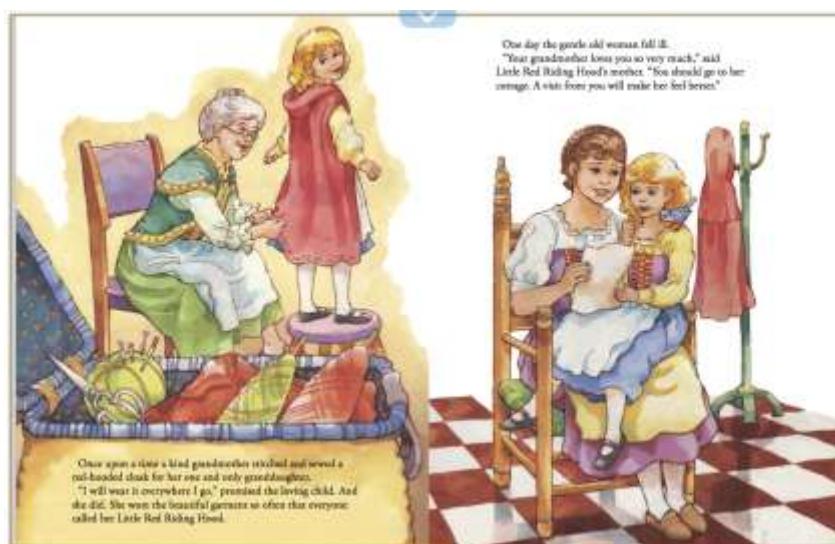
During the pre-reading stage, the teacher began by activating students' prior knowledge and introducing *Epic!* for the first time. Since most students had never used a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) platform before, they showed curiosity and excitement when exploring the app. Observation notes revealed that students were actively looking at the screen, sharing their reactions with classmates, and commenting on the colorful design of the interface. This initial exposure already sparked enthusiasm, as many students perceived *Epic!* as more enjoyable than traditional printed materials.

The *Explore Page* allowed students to browse categories such as English Language Arts, Science & Arts, and Social-Emotional Learning. The clear icons and bright color schemes caught students' attention and helped them independently select stories that matched their interests. This browsing process supported the pre-reading phase by stimulating curiosity and providing learners with autonomy in choosing reading materials, two crucial aspects of engagement (Fredricks et al., 2019).



**Figure 1.** The Explore Page Interface of the Epic!

In addition, the use of illustrated storybooks such as *Little Red Riding Hood* provided visual stimulation that supported comprehension and emotional involvement. The combination of pictures and short texts helped students grasp meaning through contextual clues, aligning with Grabe and Stoller's (2018) view that multimodal materials promote deeper understanding and sustained attention. The vivid illustrations also encouraged curiosity, with students pointing to images and discussing characters before reading the full text.



**Figure 2.** Colorful Illustration of Story "Little Red Riding Hood".

In terms of behavioral engagement, students showed active participation throughout the lessons. They followed instructions carefully, joined classroom discussions, and volunteered to read aloud during the guided reading sessions. Although they displayed enthusiasm, many still relied heavily on the teacher's guidance to navigate the platform and comprehend the texts. Their engagement was more reactive than autonomous, as they tended to wait for the teacher's prompts before continuing to the next task. Nevertheless, their willingness to participate and respond marked a positive shift in classroom dynamics compared to previous reading sessions.

### **Excerpt 1**

S1: When I first used Epic, I felt curious and wanted to know more about how it works. It's different from reading books because there are pictures and sounds.

For emotional engagement, students responded very positively to *Epic!*'s interactive features and visual appeal. The classroom atmosphere became noticeably livelier and more relaxed. Students were observed smiling and interacting with one another while reading, indicating enjoyment and comfort. During interviews, several students expressed their excitement about using *Epic!* for the first time.

### **Excerpt 2**

S2: I never use any MALL, especially Epic. It is so fun and interesting. I feel more excited and braver to read in English.

These reflections show how *Epic!* helped reduce anxiety and fostered emotional engagement. Students described feeling “braver” and more confident when reading in English, suggesting that the platform turned a previously demanding task into an enjoyable experience. Regarding cognitive engagement, students showed developing comprehension skills and increasing effort in understanding the main ideas and details of the texts. They practiced basic reading strategies such as identifying key information and summarizing paragraphs, though their comprehension remained at a literal level. During the observation, most students were able to recall specific facts or vocabulary but struggled to interpret implied meanings or provide personal reflections about the texts.

### **Excerpt 3**

S3: It's hard for me to understand new words that I don't know the meaning of. Sometimes I read again or open the dictionary to check.

In addition, the use of *Epic!*'s Vocabulary Pop-Up Feature (see *Figure 3*) further supported students' cognitive engagement. When students tapped a difficult word such as “*exclaimed*” the application displayed its pronunciation, part of speech, and definition in a pop-up window. This feature allowed learners to access vocabulary meaning in real time without disrupting their reading flow. Observation notes indicated that students often paused to explore unfamiliar words and even discussed meanings with peers, which stimulated curiosity and independent learning. The multimodal combination of text, audio, and visuals encouraged self-regulated vocabulary learning and helped students sustain focus and comprehension during reading activities.



**Figure 3.** Vocabulary Pop-Up Feature in the *Epic!*

In summary, the first cycle demonstrated that *Epic!* successfully captured students' attention and increased their willingness to participate in reading activities. The digital format and multimodal features created an engaging atmosphere that encouraged students to explore English texts with greater confidence. However, engagement was still at an early stage that the students were enthusiastic but dependent, interested but have not been the independent readers. These findings were used to refine the instructional approach for the next cycle, with greater emphasis on independent reading, comprehension quizzes, and open-ended tasks to promote deeper engagement and understanding.

### **Students Reading Engagement in the Second Cycle**

Based on the reflection from the first cycle, the second cycle was designed to promote greater student autonomy, deeper comprehension, and more balanced engagement. The lessons were restructured to encourage students to read independently using *Epic!* complete comprehension quizzes, and participate in open-ended discussions that required reflection and interpretation. This phase continued to follow the pre-, while-, and post-reading structure and was analyzed using Engagement Theory (Fredricks et al., 2019; Schunk & Greene, 2018).

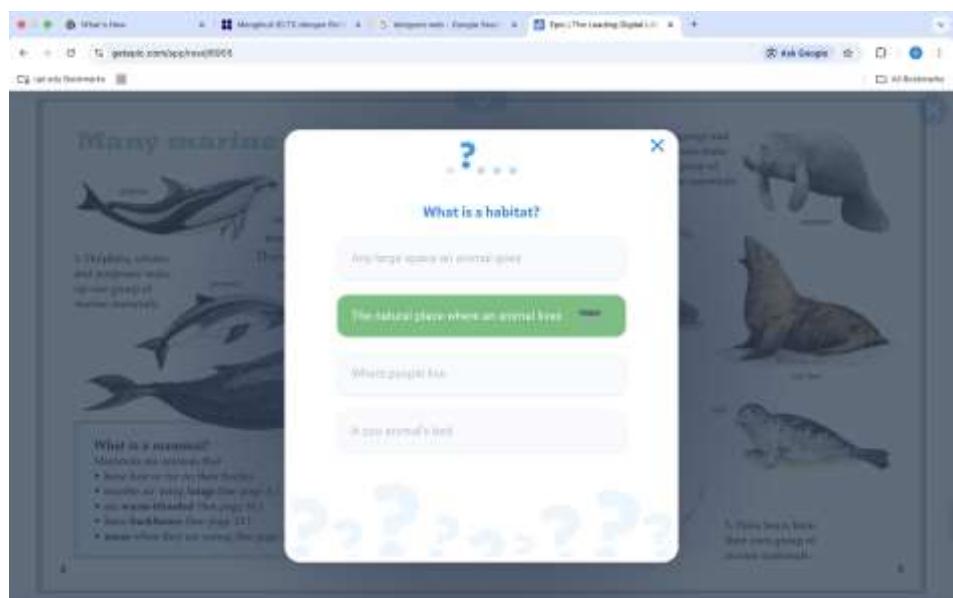
During the pre-reading stage, students were encouraged to navigate the *Epic!* platform independently to select informational texts relevant to the learning objectives. They successfully logged in, browsed the reading library, and previewed text illustrations without teacher intervention. This autonomy signaled an improvement in behavioral engagement, as students displayed initiative and confidence in managing their learning process. Observation notes recorded that students actively explored different reading genres, previewed visual cues, and shared opinions about which texts appeared most interesting or challenging.



Figure 4. Descriptive Text “Many Marine Mammals” from Epic!

The nonfiction text *Many Marine Mammals* (Figure 4) served as one of the main instructional materials during Cycle 2. Its labeled illustrations and factual explanations facilitated comprehension by combining textual and visual information. The multimodal representation allowed students to categorize marine animals, identify main ideas, and infer conceptual relationships. Such integration of imagery and text enhanced cognitive engagement, as students were prompted to analyze, synthesize, and interpret the content rather than rely on rote memorization. This finding aligns with Naumann (2015) and Al-Seghayer (2023), who assert that multimodal reading environments foster critical comprehension by activating multiple cognitive processes.

In terms of behavioral engagement, learners exhibited sustained focus and independence throughout the reading sessions. They volunteered to read aloud, highlighted key ideas, and cooperated in identifying vocabulary and factual details. The reduction in teacher prompting observed in this cycle signified a transition from compliance-based engagement to self-regulated learning. Students demonstrated persistence and initiative, consistent with Fredricks et al. (2019), who identify self-management and sustained effort as indicators of advanced behavioral engagement.



**Figure 5. Comprehension Quiz Feature in Epic!**

For emotional engagement, students continued to show enthusiasm and motivation. They expressed excitement about using *Epic!* during reading and quiz sessions, and the digital environment helped sustain their interest throughout the lessons. The inclusion of comprehension quizzes as *Figure 5* made learning more dynamic and competitive, creating a sense of achievement that further encouraged participation. The students' interview responses confirmed this improvement. One student shared,

**Excerpt 4**

S4: I like using mobile learning because it's easier and more interesting. It makes me more excited to learn because it's not boring.

This comment exemplifies the shift toward intrinsic motivation and enjoyment in digital reading contexts. Students also expressed satisfaction upon completing comprehension quizzes, describing feelings of pride and accomplishment. Such emotional responses reinforce the role of positive affect in sustaining motivation and engagement during literacy tasks (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Concerning cognitive engagement, students demonstrated a stronger ability to apply reading strategies and engage with higher-order thinking skills. They were able to infer meanings, summarize paragraphs, and answer open-ended questions with more confidence. The integration of quizzes helped reinforce comprehension and vocabulary recall, while reflective discussions prompted them to analyze the text critically. Observation and post-test data revealed clear progress in their reading comprehension, with students performing better on inference and reasoning tasks. Their answers were more detailed and coherent, reflecting deeper understanding and increased self-regulation in learning. One student described this experience as follows:

### **Excerpt 5**

S5: There are many differences, Miss. I understand better, it's more fun. It can be translated easily, easier to understand, so I can read English better.

This reflection highlights students' growing confidence in independent reading and their awareness of cognitive progress. The findings align with Naumann (2015) and Al-Seghayer (2023), who emphasize that multimodal literacy platforms enhance comprehension by encouraging learners to integrate textual and visual data critically. Comparing the two cycles, the improvement was evident across all engagement dimensions. In the first cycle, students were in the adjustment phase, motivated but still reliant on the teacher. By the second cycle, they had become more confident, independent, and reflective readers. *Epic!* provided the multimodal and flexible learning environment that supported this development, while the inclusion of quizzes and open-ended tasks encouraged deeper processing and critical thinking.

In conclusion, both cycles show that *Epic!* successfully fostered behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in reading among EFL students. The platform motivated learners to participate actively, enjoy the learning process, and think more critically about the texts they read. By the end of the second cycle, students not only demonstrated improved comprehension and vocabulary mastery but also showed genuine interest and confidence in reading English. These findings indicate that *Epic!* can serve as an effective MALL-based platform to promote sustained engagement and reading proficiency in EFL contexts.

### **Challenges and Limitation identified**

While the integration of *Epic!* enhanced students' enthusiasm and participation in reading, several challenges emerged during the implementation. These included technical, platform-related, and pedagogical issues commonly encountered in digital and mobile-assisted language learning contexts. As recent studies emphasize, the success of MALL depends not only on technological access but also on teacher readiness, classroom management, and institutional support (Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Godwin-Jones, 2017).

#### ***Technical and Infrastructural Constraints***

Limited internet connectivity was the most frequently reported obstacle. The unstable connection occasionally delayed the loading of storybooks and comprehension quizzes, disrupting students' reading flow and concentration. To maintain learning continuity, the teacher prepared offline reading materials and encouraged pair or group work so that students could support one another during network interruptions. These adaptive strategies reflect the need for collaborative problem-solving in digital learning environments (Kukulska-Hulme, 2020). Another issue related to device availability. Since most students relied on their smartphones, small screen sizes and short battery

life sometimes caused discomfort or reduced focus. Nonetheless, students showed resilience and cooperation by sharing devices and managing the learning process together, which helped maintain engagement despite technological limitations.

### ***Platform-Related Limitations***

The second major challenge arose from the platform itself. The free version of Epic! provided only limited access to reading materials and features, restricting students' opportunities to explore a broader range of stories. Some students expressed interest in continuing to read outside class but could not do so due to subscription restrictions. Similar concerns about accessibility and equity in mobile learning have been raised in prior research (Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Comas-Quinn & Mardomingo, 2016). To ensure fairness, the teacher selected free-access books that matched the lesson objectives. In addition, the platform offered limited flexibility for content adaptation. Teachers could not modify text difficulty or customize comprehension questions, which limited differentiated instruction and constrained pedagogical creativity (Godwin-Jones, 2017).

### ***Pedagogical and Logistical Challenges***

The integration of digital tools also presented time management and pedagogical challenges. Logging in, navigating the platform, and explaining new features often required additional time, sometimes extending beyond the scheduled lesson. Such organizational issues are common in technology-based classrooms, particularly when students and teachers are still in the adaptation phase (Grabe & Stoller, 2018). Despite these constraints, students maintained high motivation, as the digital reading experience offered novelty and enjoyment. However, teacher readiness remained an important concern. Effective integration of MALL requires familiarity with the tools and the ability to align digital resources with instructional goals (Godwin-Jones, 2017; Kukulska-Hulme, 2020). Teachers need sustained institutional support and ongoing professional development to manage these challenges effectively.

In summary, the challenges identified in this study include unstable internet connection, limited device access, platform restrictions, and time management issues. Nonetheless, these obstacles did not overshadow the positive influence of Epic! on students' reading engagement. Instead, they highlighted the importance of flexible planning, digital competence, and equitable infrastructure. Ensuring stable connectivity, expanding access to devices, and supporting teachers through regular training can maximize the benefits of MALL-based reading instruction (Comas-Quinn & Mardomingo, 2016; Kukulska-Hulme, 2020). By addressing

these factors, schools can create sustainable digital ecosystems that support both engagement and literacy development in EFL classrooms.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that the integration of *Epic!*, a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) platform, effectively enhanced students' reading engagement in EFL classrooms. Through two cycles of Classroom Action Research, students demonstrated notable improvement across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of engagement. Initially, learners showed curiosity and enthusiasm but remained dependent on teacher guidance; however, in subsequent lessons, they became more autonomous, confident, and reflective readers. The multimodal design of *Epic!* featuring visuals, audio, and interactive tasks successfully increased motivation, comprehension, and active participation. Although challenges such as unstable internet connections, limited device availability, and restricted free access were encountered, these were mitigated through teacher scaffolding and adaptive classroom strategies. To sum up, the findings suggest that with thoughtful instructional planning and adequate technological support, *Epic!* can serve as an effective tool for fostering interactive, autonomous, and meaningful reading experiences beyond textbook-based instruction. Future research is recommended to examine the long-term effects of digital reading engagement, while educational institutions are encouraged to strengthen infrastructure and teacher training to optimize the implementation of MALL-based reading practices.

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