

## Highlighting Characteristics of CEFR-Based Digital Expository Reading Resource Needs

Alviyah Nurushofi<sup>1✉</sup>, Hendi Hidayat<sup>2</sup>, Siti Luruh Ayu Noerjanah<sup>3</sup>

UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon

[alviyahn1113@mail.syekhnurjati.ac.id](mailto:alviyahn1113@mail.syekhnurjati.ac.id)

[hendihidayat@syekhnurjati.ac.id](mailto:hendihidayat@syekhnurjati.ac.id)

[luruhayu@syekhnurjati.ac.id](mailto:luruhayu@syekhnurjati.ac.id)

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### Abstract

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For most students, learning to read exposition text is not easy. When reading expository material, students often struggle to understand the purpose of reading, identify key concepts, and locate specific details in the text. These problems cause EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners to find reading expository texts a challenging task. Since almost all students have difficulty understanding expository texts, teachers need strategies to facilitate their comprehension of such texts. One potential strategy is to incorporate CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)-based digital reading resources into the EFL classroom. The use of these digital reading resources provides an opportunity for students to improve their English language skills and critical thinking. This study aims to identify the characteristics of CEFR-based expository digital reading resources in the EFL classroom. This study used an R&D (research and development) design with a qualitative approach. A needs analysis was conducted through interviews with two teachers who provided insights into what students need when learning using the internet. The results showed that digital resources are needed to help students learn expositional texts. These digital resources not only help in understanding expository texts but also play an important role in the development of students' overall English language skills and critical thinking skills.

✉ Correspondence Address (author1): Indonesia

E-mail (author 1): [alviyahn1113@mail.syekhnurjati.ac.id](mailto:alviyahn1113@mail.syekhnurjati.ac.id)

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### INTRODUCTION

English is used to express scientific, technological and academic information around the world (Apuke & Iyendo, 2018). Because of its significance, English has been mandated as a topic for EFL/ESL students everywhere, even in Indonesia. Therefore, reading, speaking,

listening, and writing are the four skills that students must master in order to become proficient in English. But reading comprehension is the main topic of this essay. Being able to understand written material is a critical English proficiency since it allows students to read more and learn new things.

Reading, Siregar et al., 2019, is the process of deciphering words, phrases, and related content to make sense of information provided in written form. Reading is also a necessary ability for future academic success. It is a life skill that will support and have an impact on a child's academic success in the future (Leahy & Fitzpatrick, 2017). To put it briefly, reading is a gateway that enables kids to learn new material, acquire knowledge, hone critical thinking abilities, recollect previously learned material, and comprehend subjects with ease.

In general, it is important for pupils to learn about many kinds of texts. The reason the research's author selected expository texts as reading materials is because they can offer students useful information. Nonfiction text and informational text are two terms used to describe items that provide explication. The text defines expository writing as a type of writing that tries to give readers interesting and instructive information. However, learning to read expositions is a difficult skill for most pupils.

It can be challenging to comprehend the reading goal when reading expository material. Nery & Novia (2022) stated that pupils have trouble picking out important ideas and specific details in the text. To put it simply, these issues make it difficult for EFL students to read expository literature. Teachers require ways to help students understand expository texts because almost all students find them challenging to understand.

The widespread adoption of digital resources has significantly altered reading habits and behaviors, as more people spend more time reading online. Since 2004, Google has collaborated with major universities and other libraries to digitize printed books from their collections. Given the importance of reading, even small changes can have substantial impacts. Online digital texts represent a major shift in human learning and communication, far beyond a minor development. Bolter (1991, as cited in Liu, 2012)) argued that the transition from print to digital media does not signify the end of literacy, but rather the end of print literacy, as electronic technologies introduce new forms of books and new methods of writing and reading. Some research, such as Green et al.

(2010), found no clear differences in comprehension between print-based and electronic texts, while Norman & Furnes (2016) also found no difference in metacognitive learning settings between the two formats. Similarly Chen et al. (2014) discovered no significant differences in deep-level comprehension across paper, tablet, and computer platforms. Studies comparing test scores and cognitive learning outcomes between students using print-based textbooks and those using electronic books, such as those by Murray & Perez (2011) also showed no significant differences. However, the latter study suggested that features like feedback through the annotation function in e-texts could enhance higher-order learning.

In the context of English language teaching, which increasingly utilizes the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for curriculum design, testing, and student evaluation, the importance of literature in improving English proficiency is crucial (Christian Jones, 2012). These reading resources include descriptors that outline the reading skills students need to achieve proficiency according to CEFR learning outcomes. Teachers at all levels are encouraged to use these resources as effective language learning tools to meet CEFR objectives. Despite the potential of digital expository reading resources to enhance English proficiency and critical thinking, their incorporation into EFL classrooms is not widespread. Christian Jones (2012) noted that many language classes prioritize reading comprehension over texts that stimulate imaginative writing. Much research has focused on using the CEFR to assess linguistic competence and gather perspectives from teachers and students about integrating the CEFR into educational settings. Consequently, there has been limited attention to the relationship between reading literature and the CEFR in the context of developing critical thinking skills in EFL teaching.

The purpose of this research is to highlight the characteristics and needs of CEFR-based digital expository reading resources to improve students' reading comprehension. This study aims to provide insights into the specific

requirements for effective digital reading resources and to support object- and media-centered learning. By aligning these resources with the internationally recognized CEFR standards, the research seeks to enhance the quality and efficacy of digital expository reading materials in the EFL classroom.

The use of digital learning resources in English language learning presents several challenges. A major issue is the scarcity of CEFR-aligned digital expository reading materials, which limits students' ability to understand these texts. Additionally, students often avoid reading due to comprehension difficulties and unengaging materials focused solely on grammar. Technical issues, such as accessibility errors on web-based platforms, further complicate the use of digital resources. Addressing these challenges and developing relevant CEFR-based digital resources is crucial for improving students' comprehension of expository texts and facilitating a smoother transition to digital learning.

## METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a research and development (R&D) design to highlight the characteristics of the needs of CEFR-based expository digital reading resources. R&D is a research design that aims to produce certain products and test the effectiveness of these products (Sugiyono, 2016). Putra (2015) stated that this method is carried out deliberately and systematically to find, improve, develop, or test the effectiveness of new products, models, methods, strategies, or ways that are superior, effective, efficient, productive, and meaningful. In this research and development, there are two main objectives: developing products and testing their effectiveness (Gell et al., 2003, cited in Angraini et al., 2015). The research stage (collecting the types of texts used in high schools, conducting CEFR diagnostic tests, aligning expository texts with students' CEFR levels, conducting observations of product trials, conducting interviews, and so on) and the development stage (creating products using Google sites, designing and editing products, including expository texts that are equivalent to

CEFR as digital reading resources in the product, checking the product, making improvements to the product, and so on).

This research utilized two data sources: primary data and secondary data. Secondary data was employed to gather information about expository texts from books, websites, journals, and other sources. Secondary data refers to data that has been previously discovered or created by other researchers (Mesly, 2015). Additionally, the researchers collected primary data directly through interviews with informants. Primary data is data that is directly found or created by the researchers. In this study, the collected data includes the types of texts used in schools, particularly expository texts and their variations. Expository texts are studied by 11th-grade students in the second semester of high school. This research focuses on obtaining qualitative data. This qualitative data was derived from interviews conducted with teachers who will be the users of the developed product. The interview results are presented in the form of words or verbal descriptions. The types of data in this research include interview transcripts and similar materials.

To collect data, the researchers utilized interviews, a critical literature review, and documentation, with the researcher herself serving as the primary instrument. Interviews were chosen to directly engage with teachers involved in the study, ensuring the collection of specific and detailed data. Interviews offer researchers flexibility in using verbal and non-verbal communication channels to gather information comprehensively. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with two English teachers, following a research protocol to document findings. The critical literature review involved analyzing books, research theses, magazines, and reports relevant to the study, focusing on evaluating existing literature as described by Jesson and Laccey (2006, as cited in Nashruddin & Mustaqimah, 2020). Documentation was selected to systematically record and integrate data from various sources, including written, physical, and visual materials, as defined by (Ary et al., 2010). These documents were gathered from observations,

interviews, and field notes to provide a holistic understanding of teaching practices and issues impacting students' reading comprehension. Data synthesis involved combining insights from these sources, detailed further in the appendix describing the research instruments used.

Interview data in this study underwent analysis using Huberman (2014) flow model, which includes stages such as data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction involves selecting, focusing on, and summarizing raw data from interviews or documents Huberman (2014). The next stage, data display, aims to help researchers understand the presented data and determine the subsequent actions. In this research, interview data were presented in narrative form to facilitate comprehension.

Following data display, conclusions were drawn based on the research questions. Additionally, this study utilized a critical literature review to inform the development of effective digital reading resources. To ensure data validity, interviews were supplemented with documentation. This documentation included digital reading sources aimed at enhancing high school students' comprehension of expository texts. Subsequently, based on the interview findings, the researcher developed digital reading resources aligned with website-based CEFR standards.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Creating effective digital expository reading resources in English requires a meticulous and detailed approach to ensure they not only meet but exceed desired standards and fulfill specific educational needs. This involves conducting a thorough analysis that focuses on understanding the nuanced requirements identified through a comprehensive teacher needs assessment. By engaging in interviews with two eleventh-grade high school teachers, valuable insights are gathered to inform this needs analysis for developing digital learning resources. Each characteristic identified during this process is carefully evaluated and integrated into the development of these digital reading materials. This method ensures that the resources are tailored to effectively support

learning objectives and enhance students' proficiency in expository reading.

### The Use of CEFR in Developing Reading Skills

Reading skills are fundamental in language learning, facilitating comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and writing proficiency through text analysis. Students with lower reading proficiency may encounter challenges in their academic pursuits and may struggle to integrate into their educational environment. Therefore, educators equipped with strong grammar and vocabulary knowledge are pivotal in guiding effective learning experiences. Teaching reading is crucial for nurturing students' understanding and mastery of textual content (Sinaga, 2022).

These insights are substantiated by interview findings emphasizing the role of CEFR in enhancing reading skills. According to interviews, CEFR significantly contributes to refining students' reading abilities. The framework supports vocabulary expansion, thereby strengthening reading comprehension. Its tailors' vocabulary acquisition according to students' proficiency levels, ensuring methodical and progressive skill development. Consequently, integrating CEFR into reading instruction not only enriches students' lexical repertoire but also customizes learning materials to their individual capacities, enhancing learning efficacy and purposefulness. This highlights CEFR's dual function as an assessment tool and a strategic guide for enhancing overall language competencies, particularly in reading.

### Enhancing Engagement and Motivation Through Digital Learning Resources

In interviews, teachers expressed a desire for digital learning resources that could activate and motivate students, thereby enhancing their engagement with the material. The use of these resources aims to improve students' attention, participation, and overall positive attitude towards learning. According to one teacher, "We select reading themes/topics that can motivate and excite them, based on the children's needs." Integrating a variety of interactive and innovative resources enables

students to grasp subject matter more effectively by making learning engaging and relevant to their daily lives. Furthermore, offering diverse resources accommodates different learning styles, allowing students to access information in ways that suit them best. This approach not only heightens their engagement but also fosters deeper and more meaningful learning experiences.

### **Enhancing Learning with Digital Glossaries**

One common challenge students face when reading English texts is unfamiliarity with vocabulary, which can hinder their comprehension and dampen their motivation to learn. This issue was highlighted by a teacher in an interview: "The main obstacle students face when reading English texts is limited knowledge and understanding of vocabulary. Reading requires understanding various elements of language such as pronunciation, grammar, and of course vocabulary. Vocabulary is a key component in understanding texts; the more vocabulary students know, the easier it is for them to understand the texts they read."

Teachers emphasized during interviews that effective digital learning resources should include a glossary. This feature is not merely an add-on but a crucial component that greatly supports students' learning processes. By offering readily accessible definitions and translations, glossaries aid students in expanding their vocabulary, enhancing text comprehension, and facilitating the application of new words in both spoken and written contexts. Consequently, glossaries foster independent learning and heighten students' motivation and engagement in their educational journey. Thus, incorporating glossaries is pivotal in creating comprehensive and effective digital learning resources.

### **Enhancing Engagement with Visual and Interactive Digital Learning Resources**

Based on interviews, it's evident that engaging digital learning resources can significantly boost students' motivation to learn. The integration of vibrant colors, interactive elements, high-quality graphics, and appealing aesthetics captivates students and enhances their interest in learning. This approach not only

enhances visual appeal but also fosters a positive and conducive learning environment, promoting student engagement and enthusiasm throughout the learning process. A teacher emphasized in an interview: "In learning, children's favorite is audio-visual because they can see and hear. Because it feels easier and children are more enthusiastic to understand."

This statement underscores the preference for audio-visual media among students, as it allows them to perceive information both visually and audibly, making the learning experience dynamic and enjoyable. Audio-visual presentations enable complex concepts to be conveyed in a simplified and comprehensible manner. Moreover, these multimedia formats engage multiple senses simultaneously, facilitating better retention and comprehension of information. Students tend to be more motivated and enthusiastic when learning through such interactive media, as it combines entertainment with education, creating a more stimulating and effective learning experience.

### **Adapting Digital Learning Resources to Children's Interests**

In the development of digital learning resources, adapting to children's interests plays a pivotal role in enhancing their engagement with educational content. Creating materials that resonate with their interests can significantly boost their involvement in the learning process. A teacher highlighted in an interview: "Because they understand when we give/package the material according to them. Making it easy for them to understand and linking it to topics that the children like and have experienced a lot."

This approach involves gaining insights into children's preferences through direct observation and interaction. By aligning educational content with subjects that appeal to their interests and experiences, students are more likely to feel connected and motivated to learn. This personalized and contextualized approach not only enhances comprehension but also cultivates critical thinking abilities and the capacity to apply knowledge in diverse real-world scenarios. Thus, adapting digital learning resources to children's interests not only



enhances engagement but also fosters meaningful learning experiences.

## CONCLUSION

The integration of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) into the development of digital learning resources marks a significant advancement in language education. This framework serves as a structured guide, delineating language proficiency levels from foundational to advanced stages, ensuring that educational materials are tailored to meet learners' specific needs and abilities. By adopting the CEFR, educators gain a robust tool for accurately assessing students' language skills and facilitating systematic language development.

Incorporating digital technology into CEFR-based learning resources enhances student engagement and motivation. Interactive features and multimedia elements foster active participation, making educational content more dynamic and appealing. Research underscores the transformative impact of digital literacy tools in boosting student motivation and improving learning outcomes, highlighting their pivotal role in creating accessible and stimulating learning environments. Furthermore, optimizing the visual and interactive aspects of digital resources such as using vibrant colors, high-quality graphics, and aesthetically pleasing designs, enhances the overall learning experience. Attention to aesthetic appeal not only enhances visual engagement but also facilitates better information retention and comprehension among learners. By skillfully integrating these elements, digital learning resources evolve beyond mere instructional tools to become immersive environments that support effective learning strategies, encouraging students to explore and engage deeply with educational content.

In conclusion, CEFR-based digital learning resources represent a transformative approach to language education, leveraging technology to personalize learning experiences and cater to diverse learning styles and interests. Embracing these advancements enables educators to foster a more efficient and enjoyable language learning journey, equipping

students with essential communication skills in English and empowering them for academic success and lifelong learning.

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