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Animated Videos and Reading Engagement in EFL Classrooms: Insights from an Islamic Senior High School Context

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Abstract

Utilizing a qualitative case study design, this research investigated the strategic implementation, cognitive affordances, and systemic challenges of utilizing Animated Videos (AV) in reading instruction. The study engaged an English teacher and five eleventh-grade students, selected via purposive sampling. Data gathered through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's framework (data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing), with validity maintained through source and method triangulation. The findings reveal that a structured three-tier framework (pre-, whilst-, and post-viewing) transforms AV from mere entertainment into a vital cognitive tool. Rather than just increasing passive motivation, the visual-linguistic integration of AV enhanced language intelligence by reducing cognitive load, allowing learners to anchor abstract textual concepts in concrete situational contexts. Pedagogically, this shifted the instructional dynamic from lecture-heavy decoding to advanced guided questioning. However, systemic challenges persist in optimizing video-text alignment and managing cognitive drift during transitions. Ultimately, this study extends discussions on socio-cognitive development in language education by demonstrating how multimodal scaffolding can systematically cultivate sustained textual engagement and comprehension.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is widely recognized as the foundational pillar of academic success and lifelong literacy across global educational landscapes, serving as the primary vehicle for vocabulary acquisition, critical thinking, and advanced epistemological access (Grabe & Stoller, 2020). Within contemporary applied linguistics, reading is no longer conceptualized as a passive, linear reception of printed symbols. Rather, from a socio-cognitive perspective, reading is defined as a highly dynamic, non-linear process of meaning-making and negotiation, wherein a learner's internal cognitive architecture continually interacts with external textual cues, semiotic resources, and the immediate socio-cultural environment to construct coherence (Sari, 2021). This process demands the simultaneous orchestration of lower-order cognitive mechanisms, such as automatic word recognition and syntactic parsing, alongside higher-order processes, including inferencing, situational modelling, and critical evaluation (Blume, 2020). Consequently, developing reading comprehension is a cumulative, socially situated endeavour that requires sustained cognitive engagement and strategic pedagogical scaffolding.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), navigating this socio-cognitive matrix presents formidable challenges for language learners. In Indonesia, secondary and undergraduate students frequently encounter severe cognitive bottlenecks during reading tasks due to limited lexical thresholds, complex target-language syntax, and a lack of meta-cognitive reading strategies (Matondang, 2017; Prihatini, 2021; Hidayati, 2022). When learners are forced to expend excessive mental energy on basic word-level decoding, their working memory becomes saturated, resulting in cognitive overload, diminished comprehension, and acute foreign language reading anxiety. This systemic strain frequently causes students to view reading as a tedious, sterile mechanics-driven task, severely damaging their intrinsic reading motivation and leading to widespread disengagement from textual materials. To mitigate these challenges, educational researchers emphasize the urgent need for innovative instructional media that can bridge the gap between abstract linguistic forms and student comprehension.

In response to this need, multimedia interventions—specifically Animated Videos (AV)—have emerged as a prominent tool to reshape EFL literacy instruction by providing rich, multimodal learning environments. This approach is theoretically anchored in Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML), which posits that human working memory processes information through dual channels: visual/pictorial and auditory/verbal (Mayer, 2020). By presenting synchronized visual imagery alongside spoken and written text, AV acts as a vital tool that scaffolds comprehension by allowing learners to construct

mental representations across both channels simultaneously, thereby optimizing cognitive load and enhancing dual-code retention (Dahar, 1999). A nascent body of domestic research has begun to document the utility of AV within the Indonesian EFL landscape.

However, a critical review of these existing studies reveals significant methodological and conceptual limitations that leave a glaring knowledge gap. The current literature remains heavily product-oriented and predominantly quantitative, focusing almost exclusively on proving that AV enhances test performance rather than analyzing how the visual-linguistic interplay actually unfolds in the classroom. Previous research has largely treated the integration of AV as a black box, leaving several critical dimensions unexplored: the real-time, step-by-step pedagogical scaffolding required by teachers to transition students from visual viewing to textual reading; the specific visual literacy skills students utilize to decode multi-sensory inputs; and the exact socio-cognitive meaning-making processes learners undergo when mapping visual context onto printed text. Without examining these fluid, process-oriented mechanisms, the actual cognitive affordances and systemic classroom boundaries of multimedia-supported reading remain poorly understood.

Furthermore, this knowledge gap is deeply pronounced when evaluating how multimedia tools intersect with the specialized cultural, ethical, and philosophical dimensions of Islamic educational institutions, such as Islamic Senior High Schools (Madrasah Aliyah). In Islamic educational philosophy, the act of reading holds profound spiritual and intellectual weight, fundamentally rooted in the concept of *Iqra'* derived from the first revelation of the Quran (QS. Al-'Alaq: 1-5). Far from mechanical decoding, *Iqra'* demands a holistic, reflective, and deeply cognitive approach to literacy—it is an imperative to read, analyze, contemplate, and synthesize both written texts and situational, worldly signs to achieve deep understanding and enlightenment. Therefore, within a madrasah setting, reading instruction carries an ethical responsibility to foster high levels of "language intelligence"—the capacity to critically manipulate, comprehend, and generate meaning from complex linguistic systems.

Despite the rich theoretical alignment between the holistic nature of *Iqra'* and the multi-sensory affordances of multimedia learning, a stark pedagogical disconnect was observed during a preliminary study at MAN 2 Situbondo. Classroom practices were dominated by monotonous, text-heavy instructional strategies that failed to stimulate students' language intelligence, causing reading to be perceived as a sterile task devoid of its intrinsic intellectual value. While the English teacher attempted to rectify this by incorporating animated videos into reading modules, how this digital, visual intervention actively supports the socio-

cognitive dimensions of reading within an Islamic educational framework has not yet been critically investigated.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach utilizing an interpretive, single-site case study design to investigate the procedural scaffolding and socio-cognitive dynamics of integrating Animated Videos (AV) in reading instruction. A qualitative case study is uniquely suited for this inquiry as it facilitates an intensive, holistic exploration of a bounded contemporary phenomenon within its real-world, naturalistic setting (Yin, 2018). Rather than seeking statistical generalization, this design prioritizes deep contextual understanding of classroom interactions, instructional behaviors, and student meaning-making processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research was conducted at MAN 2 Situbondo, an Islamic Senior High School in East Java, Indonesia. This site was strategically selected based on purposive parameters: the institution represents a typical Indonesian Islamic secondary school transitioning into digital-multimodal curricula, the administration granted open research access, and importantly, the targeted English teacher was actively implementing AV specifically to address reading comprehension bottlenecks.

Next, participants were selected using purposive sampling, specifically focusing on key informants who could provide information-rich data regarding the phenomenon under study. The participants included one English teacher and five eleventh-grade students from class XI-1. While class XI-1 consisted of 18 students, the student sample size was restricted to five focal participants (pseudonyms: ZR, LF, HL, RF, and ND). This small sample size is theoretically justified by the qualitative principle of data saturation rather than statistical representativeness. In case study research, depth of information is prioritized over breadth. These five students were selected to represent varied reading proficiency levels (high, medium, low) within the class to capture a comprehensive spectrum of socio-cognitive responses. Data collection was concluded after the third round of interviews when data saturation was reached—meaning subsequent narratives and classroom observations yielded redundant information, and no new conceptual codes or themes emerged regarding the benefits, challenges, or steps of AV implementation.

To uphold strict ethical research standards, official institutional approval was secured from the headmaster of MAN 2 Situbondo prior to data collection. The research strictly adhered to the principles of informed consent, autonomy, and confidentiality. Written informed consent was obtained from the participating

teacher, and parental consent alongside student assent forms were secured for all minor student participants. Participants were explicitly informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without academic or personal penalty. To safeguard privacy, all identifiable data were completely anonymized using alphanumeric pseudonyms, and all raw data (audio recordings, field notes, transcripts) were encrypted and stored securely on a password-protected cloud drive accessible only to the primary researcher.

Moreover, data were generated concurrently over an intensive instructional cycle through two qualitative methods: non-participant classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. Non-Participant Observation: The researcher conducted three sessions of non-participant observation during reading modules where AV was utilized. Sitting at the back of the classroom to minimize observer impact, the researcher kept highly detailed field notes focusing on the teacher's structural scaffolding phases, behavioral indicators of student cognitive load, and visual-to-textual meaning-making transitions. Semi-Structured Interviews: Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted in Indonesian with the teacher and the five focal students to uncover their lived experiences, cognitive processing, and perceived challenges. Each interview lasted approximately 25–30 minutes and was guided by a flexible protocol. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Further, the qualitative data were analyzed systematically using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which operates through three concurrent flows: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification:

1. First-Cycle Coding (Data Condensation): The researcher read through the transcripts multiple times to immerse themselves in the data. Initial *In Vivo* codes (using participants' exact words) and *Descriptive codes* were applied line-by-line to categorize explicit statements. For example, student statements about "understanding words faster through pictures" were initially coded as *[visual lexical bridging]*.
2. Second-Cycle Coding (Thematic Development): The initial codes were clustered, compared, and abstracted into broader conceptual categories. These categories were systematically mapped onto the core theoretical framework (e.g., grouping *[visual lexical bridging]* and *[dual-channel processing]* under the overarching theme of *Socio-cognitive Scaffolding of Reading Comprehension*).
3. Data Display: The finalized themes were organized into thematic matrices and conceptual networks to systematically analyze cross-case patterns between teacher instructional steps and student cognitive outcomes.

Finally, to establish methodological rigor, the study employed multiple trustworthiness criteria extending beyond simple data triangulation (Miles et al., 2014):

1. Triangulation: Credibility was enhanced through *methodological triangulation* (cross-verifying interview transcripts against observation field notes) and *source triangulation* (comparing student perspectives with the teacher's reflections).
2. Member Checking: To eliminate misinterpretation, transcribed interviews and draft findings were returned to the participants. The teacher and students reviewed the summaries to confirm that the interpretations accurately reflected their actual experiences and views.
3. Audit Trail: Transferability and dependability were supported by maintaining a strict audit trail. This included keeping chronological records of raw data, coding logs, and reflective notes documenting every analytical decision made during the study.
4. Reflexivity: The researcher actively practiced reflexivity throughout the process, acknowledging that as an EFL researcher, there was an inherent bias toward expecting digital media to be effective. To minimize this bias and prevent subjective filtering, the researcher strictly anchored all findings in concrete empirical indicators from observation notes and direct participant quotes, ensuring that negative cases (e.g., student distraction or breakdown in multimedia alignment) were reported with equal weight.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The systemic qualitative analysis of data gathered from non-participant classroom observations and individual semi-structured interviews yielded four primary themes. These themes map out the dynamic relationship between multimedia intervention, teacher mediation, and student cognitive processing within the unique educational environment of an Islamic Senior High School (Madrasah Aliyah). Rather than presenting a descriptive timeline of classroom activities, the findings highlight how Animated Videos (AV) function as an active scaffolding mechanism for meaning-making and language intelligence.

To provide a clear, comprehensive overview of the empirical findings, Table 1 maps out the relationships between the teacher's procedural actions, the students' socio-cognitive responses, and the classroom constraints observed throughout the instructional cycle.

Table 1. Socio-cognitive Matrix of AV Implementation, Affordances, and Systemic Constraints

Primary Analytical Focus	Empirical Classroom Manifestations and Themes	Underlying Socio-cognitive and Pedagogical Processes
Procedural Scaffolding Configurations	**Pre-viewing Stage**: Dual-image apperception and technical preparation of LCD hardware. **Whilst-viewing Stage**: Active notation of abstract vocabulary across two 6-minute contextual video streams. **Post-viewing Stage**: Textual detail synthesis via cause-and-effect matrices and collaborative reflection.	• Primes existing cognitive schemata using targeted pre-textual visual cues. • Controls working memory load by distributing inputs across separate sensory channels. • Prioritizes macro-level textual analysis and evaluation over low-level word decoding.
Cognitive and Affective Affordances	• Livelier classroom environment marked by vocal repetition, forward posture, and visual focus. • Enhanced semantic recall and clear visualization of complex real-world concepts. • Accelerated decoding phases, expanding time available for targeted teacher guidance.	• Multimodal inputs reduce language anxiety and text-bound hesitation. • Continuous visual context turns abstract syntax into concrete mental models. • Optimizes the teaching cycle by shifting the instructor's role to targeted, responsive intervention.
Operational and Behavioral Constraints	• Significant initial time commitment required for meticulous text-to-video alignment. • Intermittent cognitive drift and behavioral off-task chatter during prolonged or repetitive video clips.	• Demands skilled, proactive digital lesson curation prior to classroom instruction. • Highlights that multimedia tools require continuous, active teacher mediation to prevent passive distraction.

Table 1 demonstrates that the steps of AV implementation are directly linked to the cognitive benefits and constraints experienced in the classroom. Each pedagogical action taken by the teacher triggers a corresponding socio-cognitive response in the learner, while simultaneously revealing specific operational challenges that require immediate teacher mediation to keep the lesson focused and productive.

Multimodal Scaffolding and Visual-Linguistic Bridging in Pre-Textual Reading Stages

The first theme addresses the procedural transformation of reading modules from static text decoding into an interactive, multimodal learning space. Data from classroom observations indicated that the English teacher implemented

a deliberate three-tier scaffolding protocol: pre-viewing, whilst-viewing, and post-viewing. In the pre-viewing phase, instead of introducing abstract grammar formulas or vocabulary lists in isolation, the instructor deployed targeted visual apperception to prime students' cognitive schemata. On February 26, 2025, the researcher observed the teacher projecting contrasting imagery of severe environmental degradation—such as highly arid, cracked terrain alongside a balanced, thriving tropical forest ecosystem—to establish a visual context for a cause-and-effect language module.

During her interview, the English teacher (IS) detailed the strategic intent behind this pre-textual priming method:

> *"During the lesson, I don't immediately say, 'today, we are learning this.' Instead, I stimulate them by giving a reminder about previous study and a general idea of the topic usually using pictures. To connect the pictures with the new topic, I will ask the students to compare it. For instance, the topic is about cause and effect and the theme is natural disaster. I will ask them to compare between pictures of dry land and tropical land. Then, align it with the new material."*

The empirical data confirmed that this visual apperception successfully bridged the gap between raw sensory input and active textual interpretation. Students did not approach the subsequent reading tasks coldly; instead, they anchored new linguistic structures within the visual context established during the introduction. A student participant, ZR, described how this procedural step reoriented her reading readiness:

> *"Consistently, the teacher starts by reviewing the previous lesson, then she gives a brief overview of the new topic by showing us images. She usually asks us to distinguish the images which guide us to the material we're going to discuss."*

This perspective was further supported by another student informant, LF, who noted during an interview:

> *"First, before playing the video, the teacher asks us about the previous lesson and gives pictures that are related to the new topics. It occurs when we can compare between two pictures and guess the main topic."*

The provided interview data demonstrates that using visual aids—such as images and videos—during the introductory phase of a lesson significantly enhances students' reading readiness and comprehension. By introducing relevant visuals immediately after a review of prior knowledge, the teacher establishes a concrete framework that transforms abstract linguistic structures into accessible concepts. Student testimonies from ZR and LF highlight that tasks requiring them to distinguish or compare images serve as active cognitive guides. Rather than

entering a reading task without context, students utilize these visual prompts to hypothesize about the upcoming material, successfully bridging the gap between raw sensory observation and active textual analysis.

Dual-Channel Cognitive Processing and Real-Time Lexical Acquisition

The second theme focuses on the real-time cognitive mechanisms activated when students process dual streams of audio-visual input. Traditional text-only materials at MAN 2 Situbondo frequently caused cognitive bottlenecks, forcing students to expend heavy mental energy decoding individual vocabulary items, which led to working memory saturation and reading fatigue. The integration of AV directly mitigated this issue by splitting information across separate sensory channels: the visual animation provided immediate situational context, while the auditory narration supplied the formal language label.

During the whilst-viewing phase, the teacher instructed students to maintain a running log of unfamiliar terminology. Rather than breaking the flow of comprehension to look up words in a dictionary, students utilized the moving graphics to infer meaning contextually. Student HL highlighted this interactive vocabulary mapping process during her individual interview. He mentioned that before watching the videos, the teacher had told them to list difficult words. They explained that they usually wrote those words in their book and then searched for them using Google Translate or, if they felt too lazy to do that, they simply asked the teacher.

Further, student ZR explained how this multi-sensory integration systematically prevented decoding breakdowns, making complex target-language text more accessible:

> *"Before playing it, she asks us to try to understand the content. If we encounter any difficult words, we are told to note them down first and look them up later or ask her directly. Sometimes, if the word is really difficult, we ask her, and she explains it to us... I can understand better because I can see the pictures and hear how it's said."*

This cross-channel coordination was further supported by student LF, who noted that the teacher encourages them to actively note down any challenging vocabulary or unfamiliar words they encounter while watching the videos. They added that they then use those notes during the subsequent exercise session to ensure they fully understand the material.

Classroom observations during the screening of the 6-minute modules on climate change and flooding documented this high level of engagement. Students leaned forward, focused intensely on the screen, verbally repeated on-screen dialogue, and actively noted unfamiliar terms. By shifting basic lexical processing

to the visual-auditory track, the students preserved vital cognitive capacity for higher-level reading tasks.

Structural Transitions and Active Teacher Mediation in Digital Environments

The third theme highlights a clear shift in classroom roles and teaching efficiency. The use of AV changed the instructor's role from a source of rote text translation into an active facilitator of language intelligence. Because the animated stories effectively established the baseline narrative and vocabulary context, the teacher could quickly move past surface-level reading and transition straight into higher-order analysis during the post-viewing phase.

During her interview, the teacher (IS) discussed this optimization of class time:

> *"In my personal opinion, as the English teacher, one of the main benefits is that I don't have to explain the material in too much detail, since the animated videos already help convey the content effectively. So, I could do another thing like arrange the exercises."*

This pedagogical adjustment directly accelerated the students' independent learning cycle. Student HL observed that the visual delivery minimized repetitive lecturing, noting that using videos made the process faster since the teacher did not have to read or explain everything individually, allowing the students to grasp the main ideas quickly. Student LF reinforced this point, explaining that the videos reduced the need for excessive teacher explanation because the students could already understand the core content, meaning the teacher only had to provide a brief follow-up explanation.

As a result, the post-viewing activities—including structured cause-and-effect matrices and individual reading tasks—became analytical exercises rather than simple mechanical copy-pasting. The instructor focused class time on targeted checks for understanding, guiding synthesis, and facilitating a collaborative reflection session to wrap up the lesson.

Mitigating Affective Vulnerabilities, Attention Fragmentation, and Cognitive Drift

The final theme reveals that while multimedia scaffolding offers significant cognitive benefits, it also introduces specific classroom vulnerabilities, such as attention fragmentation and cognitive drift, which require responsive teacher management. Observation records revealed a clear contrast in student behavior between the first and second video viewings. While the first segment on global warming successfully sustained absolute attention, the onset of the second

segment on flooding triggered visible cognitive fatigue, off-task side conversations, and localized behavioral disruptions.

To maintain a productive learning space, the instructor had to actively intervene with corrective classroom management. The teacher (IS) described her intervention protocol:

> *"Sometimes the class became noisy during the video. When that happened, I paused it and spoke to the students. I told them that if they were not willing to focus, they could leave the class. Then, I gave them a short stimulus or an ice-breaking activity to help them refocus before continuing the lesson."*

Student descriptions of these transitions confirmed that technology requires active human supervision to remain effective. Student RF explained how the teacher managed attention drift:

> *"There are times when some friends had a chat or a joke during the video, especially when the topic is not too interesting. To overcome it, the teacher will pause the video and remind the noisy students. Sometimes, she gave us an ice-breaking activity to regain our focus before continuing."*

Moreover, Student HL also noted the direct impact of those classroom distractions on her own reading focus, sharing that she enjoyed watching the videos when the class was quiet. However, she explained that noise made it difficult to focus, causing her to miss parts of the video. To resolve those issues, she mentioned that the teacher would sometimes pause the video to scold the distracted students or even introduce an ice-breaking activity to help them maintain their focus.

This evidence highlights that digital tools lack standalone educational permanence. Without ongoing teacher monitoring and responsive strategies like ice-breaking activities, multi-sensory inputs can quickly lead to cognitive drift and behavioral disengagement.

Discussion

The Socio-Cognitive Architecture of Multimodal Parallel Processing

The findings of this research move beyond product-oriented assumptions to uncover the exact socio-cognitive mechanisms that occur when EFL learners navigate dual streams of audio-visual input. Standard text-bound pedagogy often strains the working memory of secondary language learners, as navigating written language requires the tight coordination of word recognition and comprehension (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). In typical Indonesian EFL environments, this processing is hindered because students encounter severe hurdles, including a lack of baseline motivation, ineffective comprehension strategies, and acute vocabulary deficits (Erlidawati, 2018; Hidayati, 2018; Matondang, 2020; Prihatini, 2020). When learners

spend excessive mental energy on word-by-word decoding, their working memory capacity saturates, which destroys deep text parsing and triggers reading anxiety (Klingner et al., 2007).

The introduction of Animated Videos (AV) shifts this balance. Grounded in Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, human working memory processes incoming information through separate verbal/auditory and visual/pictorial channels (Mayer, 2001). Rather than overwhelming a single processing pathway, AV spreads the cognitive load (Schnotz & Lowe, 2014). The graphic animation serves as an immediate, moving situational model that simplifies abstract text, while the synchronized narration directly supplies the linguistic label (Martin & Betrus, 2019). This division of labor actively minimizes extraneous cognitive load and lets the mind select, organize, and synthesize incoming information effectively (Mayer, 2001).

The empirical evidence from class XI-1 confirms that this parallel dual-coding changes how text meaning is built. When student participants like ZR and RF noted that they could visualize the material clearly to grasp cause-and-effect patterns, they were demonstrating how multi-sensory tools make information digestible (Brown, Lewis, and Harcleroad, 1977). This process matches the core premise that animation functions as a dynamic visual tool to illustrate continuous change and complex transformations (Harrison & Hummell, 2010; Schnotz & Lowe, 2014). By allowing students to decipher contextual clues directly from moving pictures, the media serves as a visual bridge for structural interpretation (Abarca, 2021). Consequently, lower-order vocabulary blocks are handled by the visual track, allowing students to dedicate their cognitive processing to macro-level skills, such as tracking structural relationships, scanning for specific details, context-driven inferencing, and identifying main ideas (Brown, 2003; Grellet, 1981).

Critical Teacher Mediation and the Operational Constraints of Digital Tools

While multimedia scaffolding offers substantial cognitive benefits, a critical analysis of the data counters the view that technology serves as an automatic standalone solution for student engagement. As shown in the findings, when class focus deteriorated during the transition to the second video clip, it became clear that digital tools lack independent educational permanence without active classroom management. This attention drift highlights why systematic teacher mediation remains indispensable (Harmer, 1998). The procedural scaffolding phases implemented by the instructor—pre-viewing, whilst-viewing, and post-viewing—form an essential roadmap to transition students from passive viewing to deep reading comprehension (Burt, 1999).

This sequential framework matches established qualitative methodologies regarding video-based instruction. In the pre-viewing phase, the teacher must actively prime student readiness, build background knowledge, and spark baseline interest before delivering the multimedia content (Burt, 1999; Chalifatun et al., 2014). During the whilst-viewing tier, the teacher's role is to monitor student reactions, evaluate comprehension hurdles, and provide strategic pauses to guide prediction (Burt, 1999; Chalifatun et al., 2014). Finally, the post-viewing stage requires active mediation to clarify complex concepts, facilitate group discussions, and design follow-up tasks to solidify learning (Burt, 1999).

Furthermore, the data highlights that using AV introduces significant practical challenges for the instructor, demanding careful planning and decision-making before entering the classroom (Gail McCutcheon, 1980). The teacher must critically preview online content to ensure that the vocabulary tier, pacing, and situational themes perfectly match the current text modules and suit the reading proficiency of the class (Burt, 1999). Authentic videos are rarely engineered for explicit EFL instruction, meaning their language structures can require additional clarification.

Additionally, as noted during observations, prolonged video exposure without a task can cause behavioral distractions, noise, or boredom (Chalifatun et al., 2014; Khalidiyah, 2015). This proves that digital media cannot replace foundational pedagogy (Brown, 2001). Instead, technology requires an active teacher who can implement targeted interventions, provide clear instructions, and deploy real-time management strategies like ice-breaking activities to sustain focus and keep the learning environment organized (Harmer, 1998; Howard, 2006).

Epistemological Alignment with the Imperative of Iqra' in the Islamic Context

The most significant original contribution of this study lies in how digital multimodal literacy intersects with the specific cultural and philosophical dimensions of Islamic educational institutions (Madrasah Aliyah). In Islamic educational philosophy, the act of reading holds deep intellectual and spiritual significance (Al Hilali & Khan, 1998). It is fundamentally rooted in the absolute imperative of *Iqra'*, derived from the first revelation of the Quran (QS. Al-'Alaq: 1), which establishes reading as a foundational religious and intellectual duty for Muslim learners. Within this philosophical framework, reading cannot be reduced to mechanical text decoding or surface sentence parsing (Johnson, 2008). Rather, *Iqra'* demands a holistic approach to literacy—a mandate to analyze, contemplate,

and actively synthesize both written text (*ayat qauliyah*) and situational, real-world signs (*ayat kauniyah*) to build deep knowledge (Al Hilali & Khan, 1998).

The preliminary data from MAN 2 Situbondo highlighted a sharp pedagogical disconnect: text-heavy delivery and monotonous teaching strategies reduced this deep spiritual and intellectual obligation into a boring, dry task. The strategic integration of animated videos on natural disasters effectively bridged this gap. By presenting complex real-world phenomena like global warming through dual visual and verbal channels, the AV allowed students to analyze practical, real-world signs while simultaneously mastering target language structures. Consequently, multimedia tools in this setting transcend generic instructional utility (Mulyana, 2003). They serve as a key pedagogical tool that honors the spirit of *Iqra'*, moving reading comprehension beyond passive recognition and elevating it into a meaningful act of deep intellectual and socio-cognitive meaning-making. This provides a localized, culturally responsive contribution to EFL literature that general multimedia studies completely overlook.

Triangulation of Practical and Empirical Outcomes

The practical outcomes of this research align with and extend contemporary domestic literature on media-supported language acquisition. By shifting the classroom dynamic from lecture-heavy text translation to guided questioning, the teacher optimized classroom interaction (Brown, 2001). This shift matches the finding that structured multimedia tools improve instructional efficiency by streamlining content delivery and reducing the need for repetitive, line-by-line translation (Fuadah, 2023). The lively room environment, increased attention spans, and improved recall observed at MAN 2 Situbondo match recent empirical findings across other Indonesian educational contexts (Hari Kurniawan, 2015). For example, local studies confirm that well-structured animated videos significantly improve student comprehension and generate positive responses across narrative text and descriptive text modules (Anggraini, 2021). Similarly, experimental data indicates that AV works effectively as an instructional tool because it provides an enjoyable learning experience that directly supports students' reading interests (Fuadah, 2023; Sari, 2021).

However, by employing a qualitative case study design (Creswell, 2009, 2012), this research avoids the limitations of purely product-oriented quantitative studies. Instead of treating the classroom as a black box that only measures post-test scores, this study applies a continuous framework to map the interactions between raw data, descriptive patterns, and deep thematic synthesis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). It shows that while animated videos are a highly

effective tool to reduce reading anxiety, build context, and enrich vocabulary (Soekartiwi, 1996), their pedagogical value depends entirely on the teacher's ability to align the visual content with the lesson goals, manage attention drift, and fulfil the holistic literacy expectations of the madrasah setting.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative case study establishes that integrating Animated Videos (AV) via a structured three-stage framework—comprising pre-viewing apperception, whilst-viewing lexical tracking, and post-viewing thematic synthesis—fundamentally optimizes the cognitive architecture of EFL reading. Grounded in Cognitive Load Theory, the research confirms that AV transforms abstract textual parsing into dual-channel mapping by balancing visual-pictorial and auditory-verbal inputs. This visual anchoring dramatically reduces extraneous cognitive load, freeing limited working memory capacity so that students can shift away from low-level decoding and redirect their focus toward higher-order macro-skills like structural inferencing, conceptual scanning, and text hierarchy evaluation.

Furthermore, this research reveals that within the specialized environment of an Islamic senior high school, this digital scaffolding serves a profound epistemological purpose. The implementation of multimedia learning directly actualizes the holistic spiritual and intellectual mandate of *Iqra'* (to read/reflect). By using animated narratives to bridge the gap between abstract written signs (*ayat qauliyah*) and concrete, real-world situational signs (*ayat kauniyah*), the intervention transitions reading comprehension from a passive classroom requirement into a deeply reflective, contextualized act of active meaning-making.

This study suggests that while multimedia tools are powerful, they possess no independent instructional permanence; educational success depends entirely on proactive, responsive teacher mediation. Operational constraints such as time-heavy curation demands and localized classroom distractions underscore that technology cannot replace the instructor. Ultimately, when an active educator dynamically manages behavior, curates alignment, and provides guided feedback, animated videos serve as a vital pedagogical catalyst that alleviates reading anxiety, sustains textual engagement, and structurally elevates language intelligence.

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