

Third Year University Students' Reading Habits and Perceptions of Reading for Pleasure: A Descriptive Study

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Abstrak

The purpose of this research is to identify students' reading habits and describe their perceptions of Reading for Pleasure (RfP). This research enlisted the participation of eight third-year higher education students studying English Language Education as their major in one of the universities in Subang, West Java province. Questionnaires and interviews were employed to collect the data. The data were then analysed using thematic analysis. According to the findings, 62.5% of students read once a week, 25% read in their spare time, and 87.5% read on their phones. The benefits of RfP are well acknowledged by students, yet data indicates that reading interest among students is low. As a result, this research highlights the importance of introducing children to books early on and helping them develop an enthusiasm for reading. Based on the numerous benefits of RfP, teachers and parents must be aware of and often socialize about the benefits of RfP. Teachers in schools, as well as parents at home, must then take the initiative and creatively introduce this activity to their children in order for them to develop a love of reading.

Keywords: Children; Reading; Reading Habit; Reading Perception; Reading for Pleasure

Abstract

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi kebiasaan membaca mahasiswa dan mendeskripsikan persepsi mereka tentang Reading for Pleasure (RfP). Penelitian ini melibatkan partisipasi delapan mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris semester enam di salah satu universitas di Subang, Jawa Barat. Kuesioner dan wawancara digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data. Data yang terkumpul kemudian dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Menurut temuan, 62,5% mahasiswa membaca seminggu sekali, 25% membaca di waktu luang mereka, dan 87,5% membaca melalui ponsel mereka. Manfaat RfP diakui dengan baik oleh mahasiswa, namun data menunjukkan bahwa minat baca di kalangan mahasiswa rendah. Akibatnya, penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya memperkenalkan membaca buku pada anak-anak sejak dini dan membantu mereka mengembangkan antusiasme untuk membaca. Berdasarkan pada banyaknya manfaat dari RfP, para guru dan orangtua seharusnya lebih sadar dan sering mensosialisasikan tentang manfaat dari RfP. Para guru di sekolah, juga para orangtua di rumah, seharusnya berinisiatif dan dengan kreatif mengenalkan aktifitas ini pada anak-anak agar mereka dapat meningkatkan kecintaan terhadap membaca.

Kata Kunci: Anak-Anak; Kebiasaan Membaca; Membaca; Membaca untuk Kesenangan; Persepsi Membaca

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INTRODUCTION

Not only in the classroom but also in daily life, reading is an important skill. People who read are more likely to succeed in life. Reading is one of the ways people acquire new knowledge since it encourages learning about a wide range of topics related to human existence. Reading is one of the essential skills for learning a language, and this is particularly true when learning a foreign language.

Reading is often highlighted in the context of learning a foreign language because it helps students increase their vocabulary, develop other skills like writing and speaking by acquiring the real language use patterns, and learn fresh ideas, knowledge, as well as experiences (Jeffries & Mikulecky, 2007; Richards & Renandya, 2002; Yulianto, 2015), as cited in Putri (2022). According to Anyaegbu (2016), the absence of a functioning library might negatively impact students reading habits.

Despite the fact that reading helps students improve their ability to speak the language they are learning, they may not always understand the content they read. This might happen when students do not feel joy in the activity because they regard it as a must for learning a new language. As a result, the difficulty of reading increases with time. Reading in a foreign language provides additional challenges for students who are already struggling to enjoy the process of reading in their native tongue. As a result, students lose interest in reading English-language literature, which has a negative impact on their English skills.

Reading for Pleasure (RfP), according to Clark and Rumbold (2006), is reading done deliberately with the hope of finding enjoyment in the activity. When reading several books with the intention of comprehending the information, Krashen (2011) refers to "reading for pleasure" as free, voluntary reading. RfP allows students to independently read whatever they choose, such as magazines, newspapers, and comic books. This can take place at school, home, the library, or wherever they desire (Maharsi et al., 2019). Reading problems are commonly associated with low self-efficacy and anxiety (McArthur, 2022). This type of reading activity is essential to also be performed in the Indonesian EFL classrooms, especially in the higher education context, for it may provide the opportunity for students record the common English sentence patterns used in the authentic texts. This is relevant to what has been mentioned by Renandya and Jacobs (2002) about the advantages of RfP.

According to Renandya and Jacobs (2002), RfP has a number of benefits, including improved language learning, increased world knowledge, improved reading and writing skills, increased enjoyment of reading, a more positive attitude toward reading, and a greater likelihood of developing a reading habit. Numerous research investigating the integration of RfP in the Indonesian EFL context have been reported previously. Two of them are conducted by Hanah *et al.* (2020) and Olivia and Asfina (2022). However, after conducting a preliminary library research, it is uncovered that the studies focusing on the university students' perspectives regarding the habit of RfP are still rarely found. Therefore, this study was performed in order to investigate the higher education EFL students' reading habits and their perceptions toward RfP activity.

METHODS

This research implemented a qualitative descriptive method, which enables researchers to analyze and comprehend students' reading habits and perceptions based on their personal experiences (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The eight third-year students studying English Education as their major in one private universities in Subang were randomly selected as the participants of this research. The eight participants consist of four male and four female students ranging from 19 to 21 years old. Considering the ethical issues, the names of all eight participants are displayed in the pseudonyms. The data collected from them using close-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire items and interview questions were created by considering the theoretical frameworks and research purposes. The questionnaires were distributed at the initial stage of research using online platforms. Additionally, at the next stage, the interviews were performed face to face. In order to pursue the trustworthiness of the research, several activities were carried out. The whole research process was conducted in the second semester of the 2023/2024 academic year.

Before being used to collect the data, both instruments were consulted to the experts in the field of English literacy and education. The two experts were also involved in the process of data analysis to avoid the potential researchers' bias. However, before being analyzed, the collected questionnaire and interview data were triangulated. Additionally, the data were also checked and confirmed by the participants during the member-checking process. The data analysis was carried out by performing thematic analysis starting with transcription, coding, categorizing, interpreting, comparing, and concluding based upon the theoretical framework and research questions.

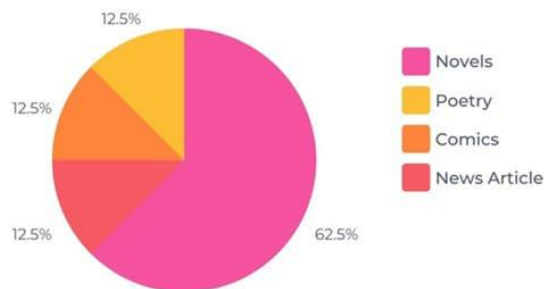
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section provides and discusses the discoveries about the participants' reading habits and their perceptions on the RfP activity unearthed in the study. It is organized based on the instruments used to collect the data starting from questionnaire and followed by the interviews. Each displayed data in this section is elaborated, interpreted, and discussed by comparing it with the related theories and previous research reports.

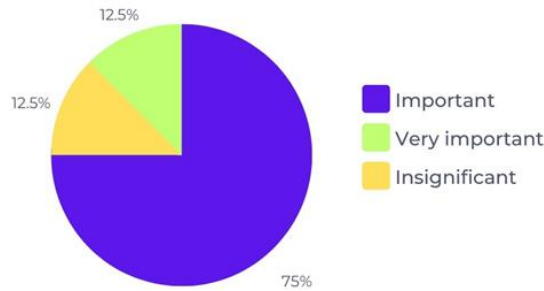
It is evident that regarding the participants' preferred text genres, as indicated in the following upcoming Figure 1 that 62.5% of students read novels. Additionally, 12,5%, 12,5%, 12,5% of the students read different types of literature as well as news articles, poetry, and comics. It may mean that more than half of participating students like to read long fiction works compared to three other text genres.

Figure 1. The Type of Literature That Students Read in Their Free Time



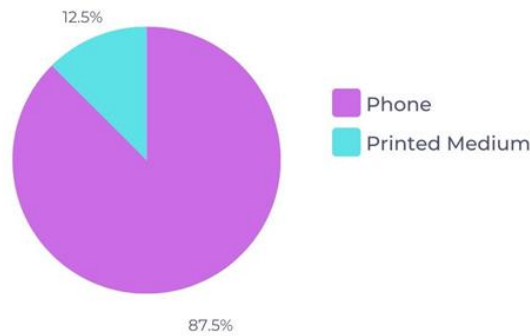
The second questionnaire item analyzes students' desire to read English-language literature in their free time. When students were asked what they preferred to do in their leisure time, just 25% answered reading, while the majority (75%) answered watching. Majority (75%) of the participating students believe that reading English literature in their leisure time is essential, 12.5% believe it is extremely essential, and just 12.5% believe it is insignificant. This is in accordance with the statements from experts and scholars that reading, especially RfP, improves students' reading and writing skills, knowledge, and attitudes toward reading, these are just a few benefits of RfP in addition to the development of positive reading attitudes and English vocabulary (Jacobs & Renandya, 2014; Soltani, 2011; Leung, 2002). RfP is a crucial first step in helping students develop a love of literature, it might be said. Thus, it is anticipated that the enjoyment of reading will help students develop a reading habit (Maharsi et al., 2019).

Figure 2. The Importance of Reading English Novels in Students' Leisure Time



Additionally, it is uncovered from the questionnaire data, as displayed in the upcoming Figure 3, almost all (87.5%) of the participating students preferred to read on their phones, while only 12.5% of them preferred to read printed materials.

Figure 3. The Type of Medium Students Usually Read



When students have leisure time, 46% read once a week, 25% read every day, and the remaining 12.5% only read once a month. It is also discovered that regarding the time they spend for reading during their leisure time, 50% of the students answered they read for 30 minutes to an hour in their spare time, 25% said they read for less than 15 minutes, and 25% said they read only for 15 minutes. A lot of students who devote less than one hour per week to reading are thought to lack reading interest or to be incapable of improving their English language abilities.

Figure 4. Frequency of Reading for Pleasure in English

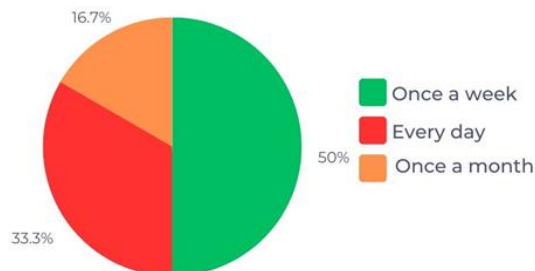
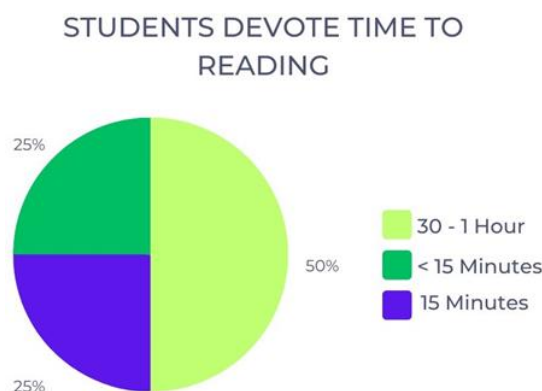


Figure 5. Students Devote Time to Reading



It can be interpreted from the findings of the questionnaires that students' reading habits need to be developed. It is evident, as elaborated previously, that reading has not yet become a habit for them, and their reading time is limited. When reading materials are appealing, however, students are more motivated to read. This is consistent with the findings of four students' interviews. Reading habit serves as the foundation for someone who wants to read for pleasure, if not encouraged early on, it may be difficult to love reading, even for enjoyment, and the act of RfP during spare time requires habituation; hence, it appears that reading habit and enjoyment are related (Maharsi et al., 2019). Therefore, before reading turns into a hobby for the individual, this habit should be established earlier in the students' lives. The interviews with students then prove this.

Discussion

During the one of the interview sessions, responding to the question, “How do you believe someone can develop a reading habit?”, Eka said: “Since I didn't grow up reading books, I believe that in order to create a habit of reading, it must be introduced from an early age and enforced at first, just like it did for me when I was in Junior High School. Over time, reading became a habit for me.” The other student, Nina, agreed with Eka that reading habits should be forced in order to make someone love reading: “We should be forced to read for a lengthy period of time so that we can grow used to it and make it a habit.”

Responding to the question, “Is it vital to read books in our lives? What do you believe is the cause?” In the group interview on June 10, two of the students, Indi and Cika, agreed that reading is important. Chika stated, “Because I am fully aware of the numerous benefits of reading in all aspects of our lives.”

Students in the interview viewed reading as a need, therefore, someone should be made to enjoy it. They consider it an activity that may provide them with several rewards. Because all of the students understood the value of reading, they all agreed that it should be encouraged at first. However, they are unable to make themselves like reading. This suggests that parents, society, governments, and educational institutions should be more concerned about establishing a sustainable literacy program in early childhood education across the country. The initiative must be supported by all components and parties in order to become a national movement to enhance citizen literacy. According to Baba & Faiza (2020) a shortage of reading resources in the school library impacts students' reading habits.

Encouragement to read books and other literature from an early age can help children grow to like reading. Reading activities—which begin as reading for pleasure—are thought to be directly related to children's reading success, according to McKenna and Kear (1990). Reading may eventually turn into a necessity for the person, an integral part of their existence, and the development of reading

habits. Chettri (2013) asserts that developing a reading habit might help children become better readers. This reframe serves as a reminder to educators that they must acknowledge and support young people's emerging identities as readers, their reading behaviors, preferences, and practices, as well as their desire and ability to discuss texts they choose to read. This goes beyond the frequently limited, assessed notions of decoding and comprehension that are so common in national tests and policies (Cremin, 2020). If children are encouraged to read from a young age, they will benefit from reading in the future.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Considering the aforementioned discussions, it can be concluded that the majority of the participants preferred watching than reading. Moreover, it is evident that while most of the participants agreed that reading is beneficial, more than half of them read only once a week. Another conclusion that can also be drawn from this research that RfP is an essential alternative to reading that must be developed from an early age. Based on the numerous benefits of RfP, teachers and parents must be aware of and often socialize about the benefits of RfP. Teachers in schools, as well as parents at home, must then take the initiative and creatively introduce this activity to their children in order for them to develop a love of reading.

This study had a small sample size and was constrained by the availability of its data sources and participants. The findings of this study can thus be applied to future studies as long as they remain relevant to the same contexts. This study might be used as a starting point for learning about extensive reading programs. The results can be more persuasive and thorough if there are more participants and data collected.

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