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AN EXPLORATION OF WEST SUMBA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' READING INTERESTS, HABITS, AND DIFFICULTIES

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Abstract
Reading is important for students to enrich knowledge and collect important information useful not only for their academic life but also for their social, economic, and civic life. A good reading habit can be initiated by engaging students with reading materials which arouse their interests. Even if students have good interests and habits in reading, they may face difficulties in reading which may decrease their reading interests and habits. In rural areas in Indonesia, there are many obstacles affecting students' reading interests and habits. The objective of this study is to investigate English reading interests, habits, and difficulties of West Sumba senior high school students. This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach with a survey design. The results of this study showed that the students have a good interest in reading Indonesian and English texts, and they have a quite good reading habit even though the texts that they read on a daily basis in Indonesian language cannot be categorized as appropriate reading materials. The common difficulties faced by the students in their reading activities are unsupportive parents and teachers, lack of English reading sources, and their preference to watch TV or play with their gadgets rather than to read.

Keywords: habit, interest, reading difficulty, rural school

Introduction

One way to get information from written texts is through reading. There are a variety of reasons for people to read, and one of them is for informational purposes. However, in fact, people read for so many different reasons like for relaxation, to get inspiration, to experience adventures in an imagination world, such as intrigues, romance, or excitement. For students, the first and foremost reason for them to read texts in English is for their careers, their studies, or just for fun (Harmer, 2007). According to Ameyaw and Anto (2018), it is well-known that reading is a fundamental skill that leads individuals to their personal and mental growth, and to get access to social, economic, and civic life. Reading improves one's ability to concentrate, recall information, show empathy, and communicate more effectively. It can also prolong life, reduce stress, and improve mental health. Reading can also help people learn new abilities that will help them in their

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profession and interpersonal relationships. Because reading may teach knowledge and insight while also developing a person's whole personality, it makes man a more complete human. It is therefore indisputable that reading books can help one develop a broader view on people and topics.

One of the most crucial language-learning skills for students to acquire is reading. Without developing that skill, students would find it difficult to learn new languages. Furthermore, for the purpose of reading more critically at the tertiary level, Indonesian senior high school students need to master the basic reading skills. However, instead of reading, students these days would rather play on their mobile gadgets or watch TV. Therefore, they develop poor reading habits, and they only read the books that their teachers assign them to read. This situation is in line with the findings of a study conducted by Balan et al. (2019) where they found out that there was a surprising decline in the number of students who read for enjoyment outside the class which was caused by the negative attitudes that many of them had toward academic reading or reading activities that they had inside the class. Thus, teachers need to arouse students' interest in reading in order for them to acquire excellent reading abilities and eventually build a substantial library of relevant content for both their academic and everyday lives.

Some factors give contributions to reading difficulties in Indonesia. Students' English reading habits (Chairanissa & Wirza, 2019; Wiranatha & Santosa, 2024) and students' reading motivation (Esteria, 2016; Salikin et al., 2017) are two of those factors. In addition to these two factors, the inequality of infrastructure between the developed and underdeveloped areas in Indonesia becomes another issue that contributes to the reading difficulties in Indonesia. Equal access to education, especially in rural areas, becomes a challenge of for Indonesian government (Leasa et al., 2024). There are extremely few resources available for students in rural areas to help them in their academic endeavors which make students in remote areas frequently grumble and feel hopeless due to a lack of educational resources. This situation could develop into one of the reading challenges that students in rural areas encounter, which could lower their reading interests and eventually lead to decline their reading habits as well.

Studies on reading interests, habits, and difficulties have been carried out extensively in Indonesia's more developed areas (Agustine et al., 2023; Aspar et al., 2020; Dafit et al., 2020; Indrayadi, 2021; Pitoyo, 2020; Putri & Rati, 2022; Shintia et al., 2021; Tahmidaten & Krismanto, 2020). Very few of those researches, nevertheless, were carried out in underdeveloped or rural areas, such as West Sumba. Thus, the purpose of this study is to look into the reading interests, habits, and difficulties of senior high school students studying at a senior high school in West Sumba. The results of this study are expected to be helpful for anyone who works with students to get to know how to arouse students' reading interests by knowing the reading difficulties that the students face, so the reading interest can be fostered into a good reading habit. In particular, this research aims to seek for answers for the following question: *What reading interest, habits, and difficulties do senior high school students at West Sumba have?*

Reading interests

Reading is frequently regarded as an activity that can broaden human's perspective on the world around them or far from them. Some compare reading to

opening a window to view the world. A person's worldview may be shaped by their reading habits, which affect how they see the world. Ameyaw and Anto (2018) stated that reading can promote mental and personal growth as well as give access to social, economic, and civic life. In this age of globalization and modernity, it is hard to overlook information that is spread through printed and digital media. This reality shows that reading skill is seen as a critical ability to acquire. Furthermore, such skill may affect a person's early performance in other subject areas, like science and humanities, as well as their academic success much later on (Abbott et al., 2017).

In the field of education, reading assignments and activities are inevitable. This is because reading is linked to almost every kind of learning, and reading activities make up the majority of students' information literacy. The reader, the text, fluent reading, and strategic reading are the four interactive elements of this activity (Al-Ghazo, 2015). A reader must be involved in this fruitful activity as an interpreter, analyst, and book predictor in order to understand communications, interpret, assess, and predict the meaning of a text. Reading is about comprehending written texts by trying to make sense of words, phrases, and related text (Day & Bamford, 1998). So, in reading comprehension, both perception and thinking are involved. Good readers will employ grammatical and vocabulary knowledge with prior knowledge that they have, and use certain strategies to help them understand the reading texts. From this definition, we can say that reading is a dialogue between the author and the reader. Therefore, having interests and motivation to read is the first step towards being a good reader, as these two factors may influence one's reading success.

Prior to reading, one must have a reading interest and must be interested in what they are reading. The activity of arousing students' interests has a purpose of investigating or stimulating students' interest in the chosen reading material by asking the students to apply their prior knowledge of the world and by gathering their thoughts on the topic. Thus, reading interest can be defined as the acceptance of a relationship between oneself and the reading material. The closer or stronger the relationship, the greater the interest. Therefore, readers need to be engaged with the materials they are reading in order to have strong reading motivation. Khairuddin (2013) claims that in addition to an individual's desire and attitude toward reading, there are personal (from within) and institutional (from the outside) factors that influence the development of an individual's interest in reading. A person's age, gender, intelligence, reading ability, attitude, and physiological needs are the examples of the personal factors. On the other hand, the quantity and variety of books available, one's social status, economic background, ethnicity, age-related peers, and the influence of parents and teachers are the examples of the institutional factors.

Reading habits

Bashir and Mattoo (2012) as cited in Khan (2016) define reading habits as well-thought-out, intentional study patterns that have helped students become more consistent in their comprehension of academic material and in passing tests. Student' reading habits have a significant impact on their academic performance. In other words, students' academic success and their reading habits are interrelated and dependent on each other. From this definition, we can draw a conclusion that

the activity of reading is considered as a habit when it is done on a regular basis. Wagner (2002) as cited in Nguyen (2022) stated that reading habits are frequently measured in terms of the quantity of reading materials being read, the frequency of reading, and the average amount of time spent on reading. According to Palani (2012), successful reading habits are necessary for academic achievement because reading is a key component of efficient learning and is connected to the entire educational process. However, building a good reading habit takes time, it cannot be formed quickly.

There are several factors that may affect the habit formation, such as motivation, interests, and environment. Because of their integration, these factors are inseparable. Ujiie and Krashen (1996) believed that these interests and habits could be fostered from a young age. Additionally, Davidovitch et al. (2016) stated that developing a reading habit was a lifelong process that can be begun at the early stages with encouragement of learning letters, words, phrases, sentences, and entire texts. These concepts proposed by Krashen and Davidovitch et al. (2016) has been widely accepted. Greene (2001) as cited in Ameyaw and Anto (2018) believed that it is best to start reading at a young age in order for it to become a lifelong habit. Moreover, readers will read willingly and enjoyably if they have developed a positive attitude to reading, read more than five times a week, and have a preference for reading books with different genres (Sakinah, 2018).

Reading difficulties

Any student who has significant barriers to achieving their academic objectives is considered to be in difficulty. Parnawi (2020) defines difficulty as a state in which a learner is unable to learn naturally because of threats, obstacles, or distractions in their learning. A number of factors such as internal and external factors give contributions to learning difficulties. According to Westwood and Westwood (2008), internal factors are affective factors such as motivation, self-confidence, self-esteem, and attitudes while external factors are factors that come from socio-cultural elements such as teachers, learning resources, and classroom cultures. Furthermore, according to Hamalik (2017), there are four factors that give contributions to learning difficulties. The first factor is internal factors which refer to factors that originate from the students themselves and include things like lack of interest, lack of learning goals, health issues, inability to follow instructions, learning habits, and a lack of language proficiency. The second ones are factors that come from the educational setting such as the teaching-learning process, lack of reading materials, lack of media, learning resources which are not appropriate to students' language proficiency level and implementation of lessons. The third are factors that come from the students' family environment, including the state of the economy, family issues, homesickness (especially for students coming from out of the area), visiting and receiving guests, and a lack of parental supervision. The last factors come from the community environment which includes friend interference, working while studying, participating in organizations, being unable to plan leisure and free time, and lack of friends to study together.

The gap of these difficulties is greater when the schools are located in rural areas of Indonesia. Schools in the urban areas of Indonesia are superior compared to those in the rural areas because they have more teachers and easier access to resources for education (Hargreaves & Kvalsund, 2009). Teachers in urban schools

have more access to educational resources than those in rural regions, who often lack the teaching and learning materials necessary to support their instruction in the classroom. This situation leads to a boring teaching and learning environment.

Additionally, there is a difference in the quality of teachers' teaching skills between Indonesian schools in rural and urban areas. According to 2015 assessments from the Asian Development Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (henceforth, OECD/Asian Development Bank), Indonesian schools in rural and remote areas "often lack qualified teachers" (p. 271). The majority of rural teachers still spend most of their time teaching and have tight control over the classroom (Kingsford-Smith et al., 2023). Class time can occasionally be monopolized by teachers, giving pupils little chance to raise questions or express their ideas.

According to OECD/Asian Development Bank (2015), Indonesia ranks 74th out of 79 nations in terms of the literacy level of its pupils. This is a result of Indonesian students' low reading interest. According to a UNESCO survey cited by Kurniasih (2016), just 0.01 percent of Indonesian schoolchildren enjoy reading. Furthermore, according to the data from the National Library in 2015, just 10% of Indonesian students older than ten years old are interested in reading (Kurniasih, 2016). Several reasons give contributions to the students' low interest in reading. For students living in rural areas, lack of access to books and lack of community support to build a good reading habit are two of the many factors that contribute to students' low interest in reading. Their lack of access to printed books is inevitable due to Indonesia's unique geographical condition, which makes it very difficult to have equal book distribution. This leads to students living in rural areas being left behind. Teachers who focus solely on textbook reading because they lack teaching time and do not promote a reading culture may be the reason why the community does not support reading habits. Besides the teacher factor, parents may not encourage their children's reading habits because they do not view reading as a productive pastime.

Method

The research was conducted in one private senior high school in Waikabubak, the capital of West Sumba Regency in the form of a survey study using a questionnaire as the instrument of its data collection. This method was considered appropriate in terms of time and place effectiveness since the data could be collected in a short period of time and could reach students who lived far away from the researcher. Before the questionnaire was distributed, all of the students in that school were asked for their willingness to participate in this study. If they were not willing to be the respondents of the study, they were allowed not to fill in the questionnaire. After the questionnaire was distributed, there were as many as 379 students of Grade X, XI, and XII who filled in the questionnaire with the distribution as can be seen in the two figures below:

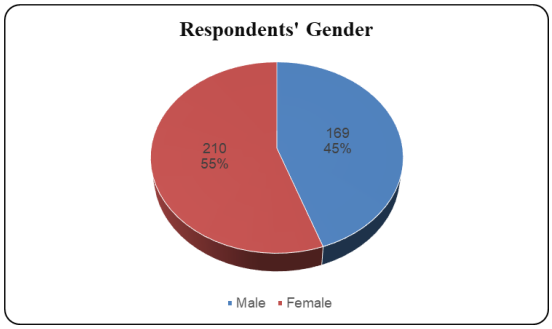


Figure 1. Students' gender

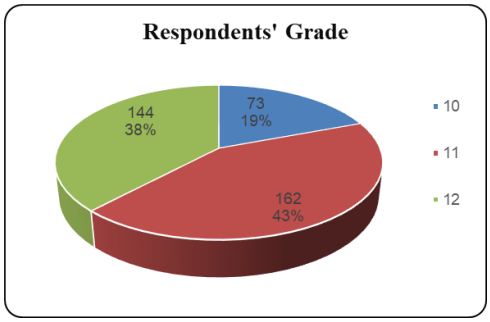


Figure 2. Students' grade

From Figure 1, it can be seen that from the total number of 379 respondents who filled in the questionnaire, there were 210 female students (55%) and 169 male students (45%). The distribution of female and male respondents is quite balanced with a difference of only 10% more female students than male students (or 41 more students who were female). Figure 2 above shows that almost half of the respondents are students of grade 11 with the total number of 162 students (43%), followed by students of grade 12 with the total number of 144 students (38%), and the 10^{th} grade students with the total number of 73 students (19%). Ethical consideration has been given prior to the data gathering process. All participants have agreed to participate voluntarily, and all data are kept confidential and used for research purposes only.

The questionnaire used to collect data was developed by the researcher herself containing closed and open-ended questions to ask the respondents about their reading interests, habits, and difficulties faced in reading. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part was used to collect the respondents' background information. The second part consisted of 6 close-ended items used to get to know the respondents' interests of reading in Indonesian and English language, and the types of texts and the frequency of reading those texts of in Indonesian and English language. The third part consisted of one open-ended question asking about the respondents' difficulties in reading English texts. All of the items in the questionnaire were written in Indonesian language and in simple sentences to make sure that the participants could understand all items clearly. After the questionnaire was typed and printed, it was first piloted to 15 students of Grade 10, 11, and 12 in another private school located in Waikabubak to remove unclear items and revise ambiguous items. Then the revised questionnaire was printed and distributed to the respondents of the study at the end of their English class through the English teachers. They were asked to fill in the questionnaire honestly and based their answers on their real experiences. The filled in questionnaire papers were then collected and sent to the researcher.

After the filled-in questionnaire papers were collected, the students' answers were then counted and analysed using Microsoft Excel. The answers of all of the closed-ended items were counted and converted into charts or graphs to discuss. On the other hand, the answers for the open-ended item were classified to later be put under the emerging categories from the classification process. The answers under the emerging categories were also counted and then converted into charts or graphs to be discussed in detail in the findings section.

Findings and Discussion

Students' reading interests

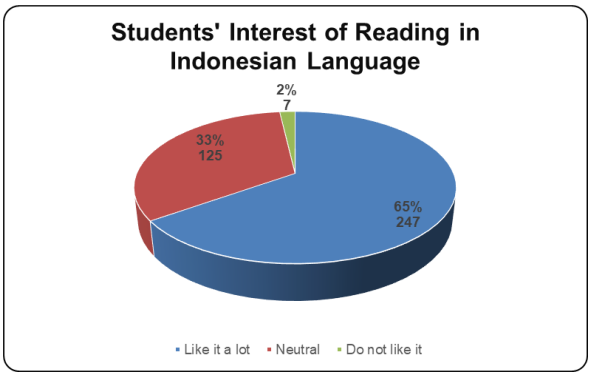


Figure 3. Students' interests of reading in indonesian language

When the students were asked about their interests of reading in Indonesian language, the majority of them (247 students out of 379 students or as much as 65% of them) said that they liked it a lot as can be seen from Figure 3 above. Additionally, 33% (125 students out of 379 students) chose the option of 'Neutral' and only 2% (7 students) who said that they did not like reading in Indonesian language. This finding is almost similar to the finding of Kurniati et al.'s (2023) study where in their study, they found out that the reading interests of the senior high school students who became the participants of their study are at the middle level with 45.16% of them stated that they had a neutral interest in reading and 32.26% stated that they had a high reading interest.

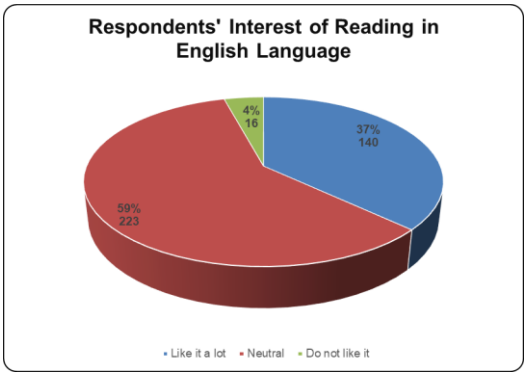


Figure 4. Students' interests of reading in English language

From Figure 4 above, it can be seen that the majority of the respondents of this study (59% or 223 students out of 379 students) chose to have a 'Neutral' interest toward reading English texts whereas 37% (140 out of 379 students) stated that they "Like it a lot". Compared to their answers of being interested to reading Indonesian texts, the percentage of the respondents who stated that they did not like reading English texts is 2% higher where there are 16 out of 379 students (4%) of them who chose the statement of "Do not like it". The findings of this study are almost similar to the findings of Zur et al. (2022) study which found out that most of the students who became the respondents of their study are quite interested in reading, particularly reading English texts.

Students' reading habits and the types of texts that they read

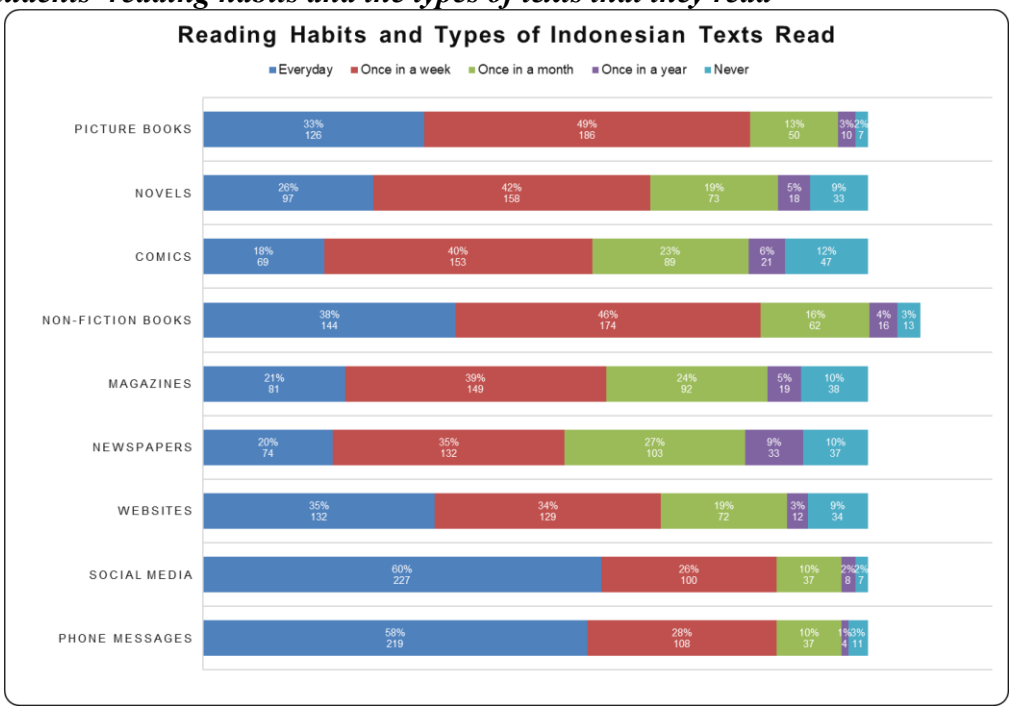


Figure 5. Students' Indonesian reading habits and the types of texts that they read

When the students were asked about their habits of reading Indonesian texts and the types of Indonesian texts that they read, they stated their answers as the ones that can be seen in Figure 5 above. From the results of analyzing the respondents' answers, it was found out that the highest percentages of the respondents' answers are for the option of reading Indonesian texts 'Every Day'. It is the followed by the option of reading Indonesian texts 'Once in a Week', 'Once in a Month', 'Once in a Year', and 'Never'. However, the percentages for each frequency option are different depending on the types of the texts. For the option of 'Every day', as many as 277 out of 379 respondents (60%) chose 'Social Media' as the type of Indonesian texts that they read on a daily basis, followed by 'Phone Messages' which was chosen by as many as 219 out of 379 respondents (58%), 'Non-Fiction Books' which was chosen by as many as 144 out of 379 respondents (38%), 'Websites' which was chosen by as many as 132 out of 379 respondents (35%), 'Picture Books' which was chosen by as many as 126 out of 379 respondents (33%), 'Novels' which was chosen by as many as 97 out of 379 respondents (26%), 'Magazines' which was chosen by as many as 81 out of 379 respondents (21%), 'Newspapers' which was chosen by as many as 74 out of 379 respondents (20%), and 'Comics' in the last position which was chosen by as many as 69 out of 379 respondents (18%).

As for the types of Indonesian texts that they read 'Once in a Week' are different in their order, placing 'Picture Books' as the type of Indonesian texts which they read 'Once in a Week' in the first position with 186 out of 379 respondents (49%) choosing this option. This is followed by 'Non-Fiction Books' option which was chosen by as many as 174 out of 379 respondents (46%), 'Novels' option which was chosen by as many as 158 out of 379 respondents (42%), 'Comics' option which was chosen by as many as 153 out of 379 respondents

(40%), 'Magazines' option which was chosen by as many as 149 out of 379 respondents (39%), 'Newspapers' option which was chosen by as many as 132 out of 379 respondents (35%), 'Websites' option which was chosen by as many as 129 out of 379 respondents (34%), 'Phone Messages' option which was chosen by as many as 108 out of 379 respondents (28%), and 'Social Media' option which was chosen by as many as 100 out of 379 respondents (26%).

The respondents also chose the option of 'Once in a Month' when they were asked about their frequency of reading Indonesian texts. The types of Indonesian texts that they read 'Once in a Month' starting from the ones with chosen by more respondents to the ones chosen by fewer respondents are: 'Newspapers' (27% or chosen by 103 out of 379 respondents), 'Magazines' (24% or chosen by 92 out of 379 respondents), 'Comics' (23% or chosen by 89 out of 379 respondents), 'Novels' (19% or chosen by 73 out of 379 respondents), 'Websites' (19% or chosen by 72 out of 379 respondents), 'Non-Fiction Books' (16% or chosen by 62 out of 379 respondents), 'Picture Books' (13% or chosen by 50 out of 379 respondents), and 'Social Media' and 'Phone Messages' (10% each or chosen by 37 out of 379 respondents).

The option of 'Once in a Year' was also chosen by the respondents to inform about the types of Indonesian reading texts that they rarely read. Those Indonesian types of texts which they rarely read starting from the ones chosen by more respondents to the ones chosen by fewer respondents are: 'Newspapers' (9% or chosen by 33 out of 379 respondents), 'Comics' (6% or chosen by 21 out of 379 respondents), 'Magazines' (5% or chosen by 19 out of 379 respondents), 'Novels' (5% or chosen by 18 out of 379 respondents), 'Non-Fiction Books' (4% or chosen by 16 out of 379 respondents), 'Websites' (3% or chosen by 12 out of 379 respondents), 'Picture Books' (3% or chosen by 10 out of 379 respondents), 'Social Media' (2% or chosen by 8 out of 379 respondents), and 'Phone Messages' (1% or chosen by 4 out of 379 respondents).

The respondents also chose the option of 'Never' to state about the type of Indonesian texts that they have never read. The Indonesian texts that they have never read from the ones chosen by more respondents to the ones chosen by fewer respondents are: 'Comics' (12% or chosen by 47 out of 379 respondents), 'Magazines' (10% or chosen by 38 out of 379 respondents), 'Newspapers' (10% or chosen by 37 out of 379 respondents), 'Websites' (9% or chosen by 34 out of 379 respondents), 'Novels' (9% or chosen by 33 out of 379 respondents), 'Non-Fiction Books' and 'Phone Messages' (each 3% or chosen by 13 and 11 out of 379 respondents), and 'Picture Books' and 'Social Media' (each 2% or chosen by 7 out of 379 respondents).

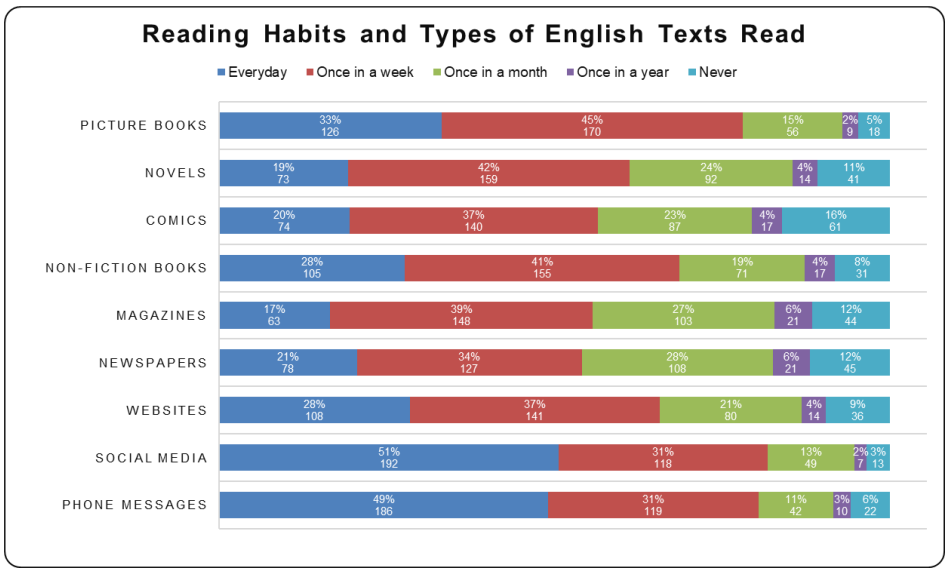


Figure 6. Students' English reading habits and the types of texts that they read

From Figure 6 above, it can be found out that the order of the chosen options starting from the highest percentages to the lowest one for the question of how often they read English texts are the option of 'Once in a Week' followed by the option of 'Every Day', 'Once in a Month', 'Once in a Year', and 'Never'. The percentages for each frequency option are different depending on the types of the texts. For the option of 'Once in a Week', as many as 170 out of 379 respondents (45%) chose 'Picture Books' as the type of English texts that they read occasionally, followed by 'Novels' which was chosen by as many as 159 out of 379 respondents (42%), 'Non-Fiction Books' which was chosen by as many as 155 out of 379 respondents (41%), 'Magazines' which was chosen by as many as 148 out of 379 respondents (39%), 'Websites' which was chosen by as many as 141 out of 379 respondents (37%), 'Comics' which was chosen by as many as 140 out of 379 respondents (37%), 'Newspapers' which was chosen by as many as 127 out of 379 respondents (34%), 'Phone Messages' which was chosen by as many as 119 out of 379 respondents (31%), and 'Social Media' in the last position which was chosen by as many as 118 out of 379 respondents (31%).

For the option of 'Every Day', as many as 192 out of 379 respondents (51%) chose 'Social Media' as the type of English texts that they on a daily basis, followed by 'Phone Messages' which was chosen by as many as 186 out of 379 respondents (49%), 'Picture Books' which was chosen by as many as 126 out of 379 respondents (33%), 'Websites' which was chosen by as many as 108 out of 379 respondents (28%), 'Non-Fiction Books' which was chosen by as many as 105 out of 379 respondents (28%), 'Newspapers' which was chosen by as many as 78 out of 379 respondents (21%), 'Comics' which was chosen by as many as 74 out of 379 respondents (20%), 'Novels' which was chosen by as many as 73 out of 379 respondents (19%), and 'Magazines' in the last position which was chosen by as many as 63 out of 379 respondents (17%).

Some respondents stated to have a reading habit of 'Once in a Week' for the following types of English texts: 'Newspapers' (chosen by 108 out of 379 respondents or 28% of them), 'Magazines' (chosen by 103 out of 379 respondents or 27% of them), 'Novels' (chosen by 92 out of 379 respondents or 24% of them),

'Comics' (chosen by 87 out of 379 respondents or 23% of them), 'Websites' (chosen by 80 out of 379 respondents or 21% of them), 'Non-Fiction Books' (chosen by 71 out of 379 respondents or 19% of them), 'Picture Books' (chosen by 56 out of 379 respondents or 15% of them), 'Social Media' (chosen by 49 out of 379 respondents or 13% of them), and 'Phone Messages' (chosen by 42 out of 379 respondents or 11% of them).

The option of 'Once in a Month' was also chosen by a small number of respondents. These respondents chose all types of English texts with the type of reading frequency of 'Once in a Month'. Those types of English reading texts that they rarely read from the highest percentage to the lowest one are: 'Magazines' and 'Newspapers' which were chosen by the same number of respondents that is 21 out of 379 respondents (6% of them), followed by 'Comics' and 'Non-Fiction Books' chosen by 17 respondents (4% of them), 'Novels' and 'Websites' chosen by 14 respondents (4% of them), 'Phone Messages' chosen by 10 respondents (3% of them), 'Picture Books' chosen by 9 respondents (2% of them), and in the last position is 'Social Media' chosen by 7 respondents (2% of them).

There are types of English texts that a few respondents had never read. Therefore, the option 'Never' to inform those types of English texts was also chosen by them. The types of English texts that the respondents never read starting from the one with the highest percentage to the one with the lowest percentage are: 'Comics' (chosen by 61 out of 379 respondents or 16% of them), 'Newspapers' (chosen by 45 out of 379 respondents or 12% of them), 'Magazines' (chosen by 44 out of 379 respondents or 12% of them), 'Novels' (chosen by 41 out of 379 respondents or 11% of them), 'Websites' (chosen by 36 out of 379 respondents or 9% of them), 'Non-Fiction Books' (chosen by 31 out of 379 respondents or 8% of them), 'Phone Messages' (chosen by 22 out of 379 respondents or 6% of them), 'Picture Books' (chosen by 18 out of 379 respondents or 5% of them), and 'Social Media' (chosen by 13 out of 379 respondents of 3% of them).

The findings of this study show that the respondents of this study did not really read the proper kinds of texts for one to build his/her reading habits because the most common types of either Indonesian or English texts that they read on a daily basis are 'Social Media' and 'Phone Messages' then followed by 'Non-Fictional Books' for Indonesian texts and 'Picture Books' for English texts. On the other hand, the types of texts that they read with a frequency of once in a week are 'Non-Fiction Books' followed by 'Picture Books', 'Novels', 'Comics', 'Magazines', and 'Newspapers' for Indonesian texts and 'Picture Books' followed by 'Novels', 'Non-Fiction Books', 'Magazines', 'Comics', and 'Newspapers' for English texts. In conclusion, reading proper Indonesian or English texts for the students is an activity that they can only do occasionally (to be specific, they can only do that once in a week). These findings are almost similar to the findings of Akmal et al.'s (2020) study where they found out that real reading texts such as non-fiction books and newspapers are the students' second-favorite reading materials, after captions on social media and articles from websites. Another study conducted by Haifa (2024a) revealed the findings that 42% of young people like to read every day while 24% of them read for 2-3 times in a week, 17% of them do not have exact reading habits because they read when they are in the mood to read, 11% of them read once in a week, 4% of them read 1-3 times in a month, and 2% of them read only 5-10 times in a year.

Students' reading difficulties

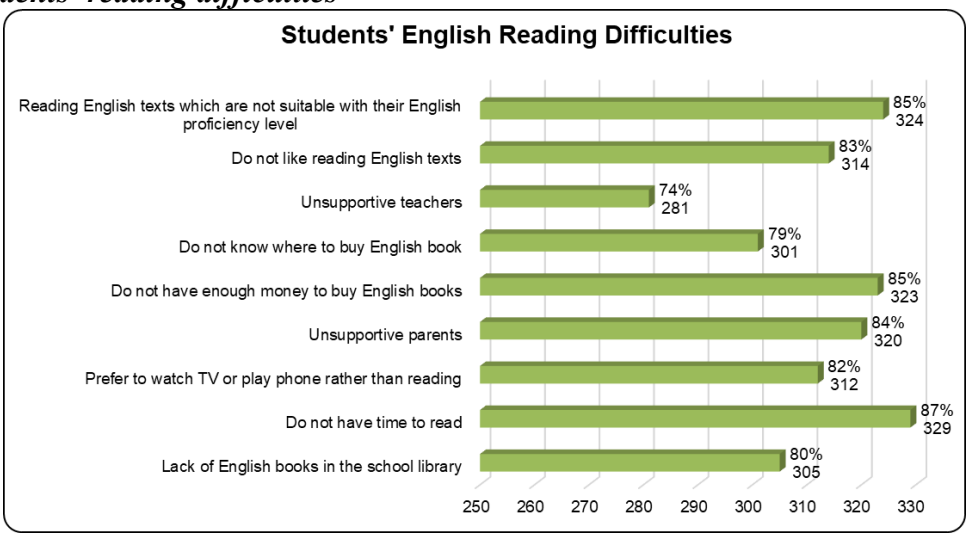


Figure 7. Students' English reading difficulties

Figure 7 above shows the findings on the respondents' difficulties in reading English texts. All of the respondents stated that they had difficulties when reading English texts even though the types of difficulties that they had are different. There are a total of 9 categories that were drawn from classifying the respondents' answers for the open-ended question of 'What are your English reading difficulties?' in the questionnaire. Seven (7) out of those nine categories of difficulties get the percentage of 80% or more which means that these categories of English reading difficulties were faced by the majority of the respondents. Those difficulties are 'Do not have time to read' stated by 329 out of 379 respondents (87% of them), 'Reading English texts which are not suitable with their English proficiency level' (stated by 324 out of 379 respondents or 85% of them), 'Do not have enough money to buy English books' (stated by 323 out of 379 respondents or 85% of them), 'Unsupportive parents' (stated by 320 out of 379 respondents or 84% of them), 'Do not like reading English texts' (stated by 314 out of 379 respondents or 83% of them), 'Prefer to watch TV or play phone rather than reading' (stated by 312 out of 379 respondents or 82% of them), and 'Lack of English books in the school library' (stated by 305 out of 379 respondents or 80% of them). The rest two difficulties even though their percentages do not reach 80%, the percentages are still over 50% which means that these two English reading difficulties were experienced by more than half of the respondents. Those two difficulties are 'Do not know where to buy English books' stated by 301 out of 379 respondents (79% of them) and 'Unsupportive teachers' stated by 281 of them (74%).

The findings of this study are almost similar to the findings of a research conducted by Haifa (2024b) where from their online survey involving 1,267 respondents, the second highest reason (stated by 35% of the respondents) for difficulties to do reading activity was because they could not find time to read (too busy to spare some of their time to read). The reason that gets the highest percentage of 40% is the high prices of the books for the respondents to buy and the reason which gets the third position chosen by 25% of the respondents is the difficulty to find the books that they really want to read. These two reasons are also stated by the respondents of this study and take the second and third position as the students'

difficulties to read English texts.

The fourth reason which gets 84% responses from the respondents is 'Unsupportive parents' where the majority respondents of this study stated that their parents considered reading as a lazy activity because the respondents were seen by their parents as not doing an active activity. The researcher thinks that the respondents' parents have an opinion about reading like this because probably they come from a working class (blue-collar workers). As Yenn (2018) contended in her essay collection, the leisure time that white-collar workers often take for granted is, in fact, scarce for blue-collar workers, who endure long hours and unpredictable shifts, making it difficult for them to engage in reading during their limited leisure time.

The difficulty of having very few English books in the school library is stated by 80% of the respondents. Nihayah and Revina (2020) cited a report from the National Library which stated that in 2020, Indonesia had only about 154,000 libraries fulfilling barely 20% of the national demand. Access to libraries and reading books in areas outside Java, like in East Nusa Tenggara, West Kalimantan, Aceh, and Papua provinces, received scores below 20, significantly lower than the scores gotten by provinces in Java like in Yogyakarta (47.11) and Jakarta (46.46). Besides that, their reading materials were dominated by textbooks (67%), and only a few of the books were storybooks (13%) or general information books (2%).

The respondents of this study also stated that one of their difficulties in reading English texts is because they do not like reading English texts (stated by 83% of them). The reason they do not like reading texts in English is because they often find too many difficult words in the texts that they read causing them not to understand what the texts are about. This finding is similar to the finding of Zur et al.'s (2022) study where they found out that 87% of the respondents of their study stated that they did not like reading English text with difficult words. This factor becomes an important factor in arousing students' interest when reading English texts. In order for them to get interested to reading English texts, they must read books which are suitable with their English language proficiency level.

Another finding that this study reveals as the students' difficulty in reading English texts is that they prefer to watch TV or play with their cellphones rather than to read (stated by 82% of the respondents). This finding is aligned with the finding of Wiranatha and Santosa's (2024) study which found out that students' reading habits in Indonesia are generally poor and are affected by technology usage, particularly cellphones and computers, which are predominantly utilized for enjoyment rather than reading.

As many as 301 respondents (79% of them) stated that their difficulty in reading English books is because they do not know where to buy English books. This reason is understandable as in West Sumba, we cannot find any book stores. This finding is aligned with what was written by Solihin (2017) in his article published in *The Conversation*. Solihin (2017) stated that one of the reasons why the reading rate in Indonesia is low is because of a lack of opportunity to read which one of them is caused by the inadequate number of book stores in Indonesia. There are fewer book stores than there are islands in the archipelago. Out of Indonesia's 514 cities and regencies, Gramedia, the largest chain of book stores, only operates in 100 locations in a few major cities in Indonesia.

The last difficulty mentioned by 74% of the respondents of this study for them to read English materials is because of their unsupportive teachers. What they mean by this is that their English teachers did not give them any chance to read their own chosen English books in class and that their teachers focused on finishing teaching the materials in the textbooks. This finding reveals the fact that teachers at schools are torn between teaching their students the materials that they need to finish teaching to their students according to the curriculum and implementing the literacy program at their schools. This finding is similar to the finding of Mukhasonah and Azah (2022) where in their study, they found out that the execution of school literacy policies was hampered by the shortage of teachers with literacy proficiency and thus, efforts had to be made to enhance teacher education and training so that they can successfully help their students to increase their reading literacy skills.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the respondents have a good interest in both reading Indonesian and English texts. The slight difference is on the highest option chosen by the respondents. For reading Indonesian texts, the highest option chosen is 'Like it a lot' whereas for reading English texts, the highest option chosen by the respondents is 'Neutral' indicating that they do not really like reading in English. Besides that, there is a slight difference on the number of the respondents who chose the answer of 'Do Not Like'.

Related to the respondents' reading habits, it can be concluded that they have quite a good reading habit for both Indonesian and English texts as the majority of them chose 'Every day' when they were asked about how often they read Indonesian texts and 'Once in a week' when they were asked about how often they read English texts. However, the type of Indonesian texts that they read on a daily basis is captions on social media and phone messages which are not really a reading text. On the other hand, the type of English texts that they read once in a week is an appropriate reading text such as 'Picture Books', 'Novels', and 'Non-Fiction Books'. From this finding, it can be concluded that even though they do not really like reading English texts, they read the appropriate type of English texts in their reading activity. The question that comes up to mind might be the reason why they do not like reading those types of English texts, and this question is answered when they respondents were asked about their difficulty of reading in English.

The category that appears as the second highest difficulty stated by the respondents as their difficulty of reading English texts is that they read English texts which are not suitable with their English proficiency level. Reading English texts which are too difficult may demotivate or even make the students lose their interests in reading. The last conclusion that can be drawn from the findings on students' difficulties in reading English texts which gets the highest category is that they did not have time to read and this answer is related to the categories of 'Unsupportive Parents' and 'Unsupportive Teachers' which were also stated by the respondents. At home, as the parents did not have a good reading habit, they did not support their children to do reading, assuming that reading is a passive activity which has no good effects for the children. At school, the teachers were busy finishing the teaching materials as what was expected for them to do by the curriculum. As a result, they did not spare some time for their students to do reading activities in class or even if they spare some time for their students to do reading in class, the

materials were chosen by the teachers which may not be interested for the students. Besides that, the respondents also stated 'Lack of English books in the school library' as another difficulty for them to read English texts, leaving them less option to choose books which suits their interests. The two difficulties of not knowing where to buy English books and respondents' preference of watching TV or playing with their cell phones can be related when they think of their TV or cell phones as tools that can help them to find English texts to read. However, these students need to be guided to find appropriate English texts, either in the form of written texts or videos, to support their English reading habits.

Introducing Extensive Reading program to both students and teachers and also getting them to know online reading resources are the two suggestions that the researcher can think of as solutions based on the findings of this study. In order for the teachers in Waikabubak, Sumba Barat to initiate a program that will support the government's School Literacy Program (*Program Literasi Sekolah*) to arouse the students' interests and increase their motivation to read English books, it is high time that they be introduced to Extensive Reading, its principles, and ideas to initiate the program at the schools where they teach.

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