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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' READING HABIT AND PERCEPTION ON READING FOR PLEASURE

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Abstract
This paper aims to identify high school students' reading habit and describe their perceptions on reading for pleasure. There were 41 high school students grade XI involved in this study. Data were collected from questionnaires, observation, and an interview. Results indicate that during holidays nearly 50% of the students read sometimes, 12% read once a week, 9% once in a month, and 29% never read although books are available. The students agree that reading for pleasure give many benefits, but the quantitative data indicate students' low interest in reading. This may be due to the reading culture which has not been sufficiently developed since the early ages. In addition, the availability and accessibility of reading materials seems to play roles in determining the students' reading interest. Reading materials should also vary in genres, in themes, and in forms of both printed and on-screen regarding students' digital nativity. This study has, therefore, initiated the needs for libraries with good book collection, facilities, andinteresting design to attract students.

Keywords: extensive reading, reading for pleasure, reading habit

Introduction

Reading is one of the important skills that students need to acquire in language learning especially for student in expanding circle country such as Indonesia that found English as Foreign Language (EFL) is considered hard to learn. As cited in (Ness, 2009), Gambrell et al (2002) claim that the most important thing about reading is comprehension. In line with (Quinn, Wagner, Petscher, & Lopez, 2014) that stated the improvement of reading comprehension depends on the vocabulary knowledge. Many researchers agree that through reading student can increase their vocabulary knowledge which is very useful in acquiring other skills in language learning. Therefore, it is very essential for student to improve their reading skill.

In this modern era, there are many researchers that have tried to develop an effective way to improve students' reading skill and 'reading for pleasure' is one of it. Through reading for pleasure student can independently read anything that they like such as magazine, newspaper, comic, and so on that also can take place

in school, home, library and wherever they want. Clark & Rumbold (2006) explain reading for pleasure could impact not only in educational aspect but personal development as well. However, based on World's Most Literate Nations, Indonesia's rank is at 60 out of 61 countries before Bostwana at 61. It is final rank among few considerations such as: Newspaper, Computer, Education system, Libraries, Education test score. Because of activities that conducted in Ngaglik 2 Senior High School that located in Sleman, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, it shows that most students there have many perceptions on reading for pleasure. Therefore, this paper focuses on exploring students' perception on reading for pleasure.

Reading is activity of acquiring meaning by understanding it through form of text. Reading allows reader to gain knowledge depends on what one read. Nunan (2003) postulates that reading is a process of gaining information that should be combined with readers' knowledge to construct meaning. The more one reads, the larger information he/she could merge. The thing needs to be considered by a reader is vocabulary mastery. Because literacy always deals with words, good vocabulary mastery level will be highly likely to be useful in the process of reading and inferencing meaning.

At some points, people read unconsciously, for instance, in the supermarket reading a product when choosing his favorite cereal, in the kitchen reading the new recipe to make fried rice with egg or reading an important message from a manager. Reading, according to Grabe & Stoller (2013) is indicated to have six different purposes: reading to look for information (readers tend to read faster), reading to learn (remember and understand information), read to integrate information (comparing information), read to evaluate (analyzing an issue), read to use the information (making decision), and read for comprehension (general purpose of reading). With those purposes, one should determine which that suits the most for their reading activity.

One purpose of reading, which is reading for general understanding, is commonly geared to reading for pleasure. Such a reading, which can be defined as reading during the leisure time to get the reading satisfaction (Clark & Rumbold, 2006), seems to be the simplest reading activity. It implies that reading for pleasure involves pure intension that comes from the readers. In similar view, Mikulecky & Jeffries (1996) add that readers are free to choose the book theywant to read. It is not what they read but more on how they enjoy it. In other words, it can be implied that reading to enjoy books may lead to reading satisfaction as the drive to read comes within the intension.

A reading activity that encourage readers to choose their own reading topics, books, and read in their pleasure time is extensive reading. Krashen (2011) uses the term Free Voluntary Reading to refer to reading many books with the goal to understand the content. Renandya (2007) proposes that the book selection should be based on the readers' vocabulary range and that tests should not worry them.

As research findings have shown, extensive reading has many benefits including enhanced language learning, increased knowledge of the world, improved reading and writing skills, greater enjoyment of reading, more positive attitude toward reading, and higher possibility of developing a reading habit

(Renandya & Jacobs, 2002). Therefore, this study was conducted to get the description of high school's students reading habit and how they perceive the activity of extensive reading.

Method

This study involved 41 high school student respondents grade X. A questionnaire was distributed, and descriptive results are expected to be obtained. A semi-structure interview was also conducted with three students in a group interview. The interview lasted for 30 minutes.

The interview was transcribed verbatim and themes were extracted from the transcription. The next step was categorizing the themes into more general themes. Analysis and interpretation were carried out based on the themes.

Findings and Discussion

The number of the students are 41 students. From the data, it can be seen from the table that 68% students read novel, short stories, humor, poems, and plays. As many as 27% of the students opt for reading anime, 20% read *online e- books*. In addition, 7%, 7%, 5% of the students read newspapers, magazines, and other kinds of books.

The second item asks about students' motivation to read books in English language in their leisure time. Reading for pleasure has many benefits such as improving students' reading and writing skills, enhancing their knowledge, growing positive reading attitudes and reading habit (Jacobs & Renandya, 2014) (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002). In addition, extensive reading activities can increase students' English vocabulary (Soltani, 2011). Besides, *extensive reading* is indicated to have impacts on students reading comprehension, language acquisition, and reading attitudes (Leung, 2002). Therefore, it can be concluded that *reading for pleasure* is an important step to develop students' reading interest. The reading interest, hence, is expected to become ways for students to have a reading habit. Consequently, this activity can be done in fun ways and in good environment. The reading materials should also be adjusted based on students' varied ability so that they do not feel intimidated with unknown vocabulary.

Students think that reading English books in their leisure time is important (38%) and beneficial (54%). As many as 8% of the students feel unsure whether the activity is useful or not. In addition, kinds of books that the students like (in ranking) include fiction/novel, mystery/detective, adventure, romance, hobbies/travelling, non-fictions, science fiction, magazines, and poems. One interesting finding is that all students thinks that *reading for pleasure* is important because it gives a lot of benefits such as enhance knowledge, vocabularies, widen the horizon, entertainment, and increase grammar skills.

Table 1 shows that of 41 respondents, 59% students sometimes read books in Bahasa Indonesia in their leisure time or when in vacation. In addition, 29% of the students read once a week or more than that. As many as 10% of the students read once in one or two month(s), while 2% of them prefer doing other activities.

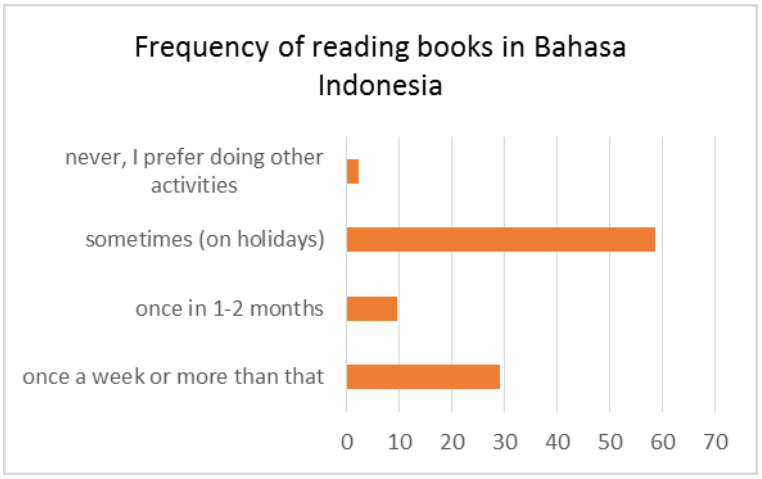


Figure 1. The frequency of reading books in Bahasa Indonesia

In the meantime, within the last 12 months, the average number of books read in their leisure time is 1-2 books (39%), 3-5 books (32%), and more than 5 books (29%). Nearly half of the respondents spent their holiday time reading books (see Graph 2).

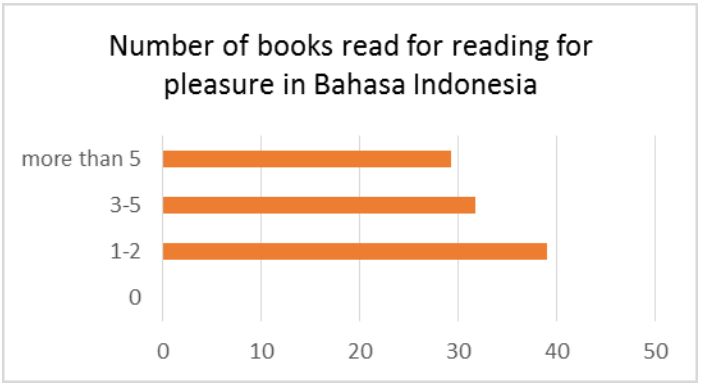


Figure 2. The number of books read for reading for pleasure in Bahasa Indonesia

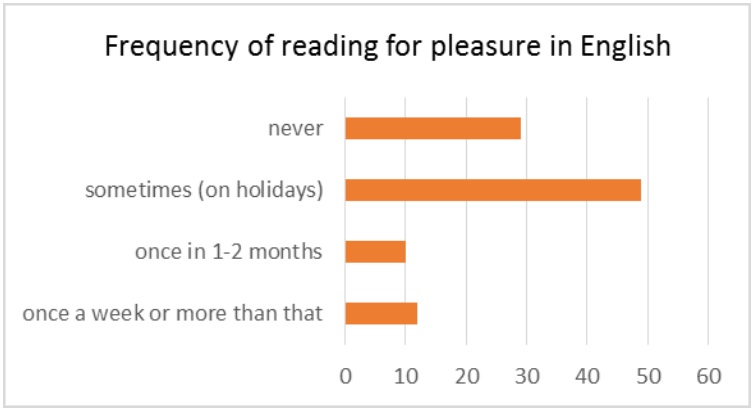


Figure 3. Frequency of reading for pleasure in English

The majority of the students (nearly 70%) read fictions such as novel, short stories, comedy, poem, and plays. While the rest read newspaper, magazines, anime, and others. The types of English books that the students read for pleasure are shown in Figure 4.

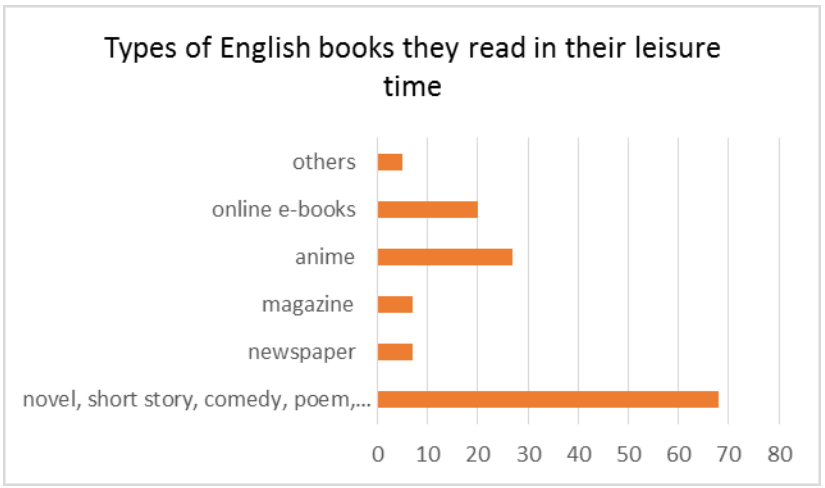


Figure 4. The types of English books that the students read for pleasure

In the last 12 months, nearly 50% of the students read 1-2 books, while the rest read 3-4 books, and 4 books. Interestingly, nearly 30% of the students did not read at all. The number of English books that the students read for pleasure is shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5. The number of English books that the students read for pleasure

When books are accessible, 46% of the students will allocate 1 hour/week to read, 33% of them allocate 2-3 hours/week, while the rest of 10% of the students allocate more than 3 hours/week, and the rest 10% do not allocate their time for reading books at all. Data show that there are students who have not been motivated to read in English although the books are available. Many of the students who allocate their time to read for 1 hour/week is considered as not

having enough reading interest or even not enough to increase their English language skills.

From the results of the questionnaires, it can be summed up that students' reading habit needs to be improved. Reading has not become their habit yet and their time for reading is still limited to reading during holidays in their L1, let alone in their L2. However, when book collections are good and reading materialsare interesting, they are likely to be more encouraged to read. This is in line with the result of interviews with three students.

There are 8 issues that the students concern in relation with reading for pleasure—reading habit, reading model, awareness, facilities, interest, benefits, challenges, and digital books. Reading habit becomes the foundation for someone to read for pleasure. If not early encouraged, it may not be easy to enjoy reading books even reading for pleasure.

Reading habit is apparently connected with reading for pleasure in that reading for pleasure during one's leisure time needs habituation. Such a habit should be commenced early so that reading becomes his/her hobby. This is revealed from the participants' interviews.

> Yes, reading during leisure time is like reading novels or newspapers. For me, reading is one of my hobbies (A/R.HABIT/line 6)
> I rarely read at home [I don't read for pleasure] (B/R.HABIT/line 7)
> If not a habit, it's difficult [to read]. Since I was a kid, I read. It's been my habit (A/R.HABIT/line 50)
> It should be made a habit since early on. It should be forced… Later we will like reading (A/R.HABIT/line 56)

Children reading habit can be built by reading easy books or literature which is aimed to enjoy the reading activity. Such a reading activity, which is called as reading for pleasure, is believed to be linked with reading achievement (McKenna & Kear, 1990). It can then be assumed that one's reading achievement will somewhat be influenced by their reading for pleasure activities. When this reading activity continues and become one's need, it turns out to be one's reading habit. According to Bignold (2003) as cited in (Chettri & Rout, 2013) reading habit helps children improve their reading skills. Therefore, when children are encouraged to read since their early age, they will get reading benefits in the future.

Reading model seems to give strong impacts on someone to like reading. When parents love reading, have a collection of books, and read together with their children, the children's sense of love for reading tend to grow.

> When I was a kid, my parents want me to read lots of books and learn English from TV channels. All books that they bought were all written in English (A/R.MODEL/line 52)

According to Clark, Osborne, & Dugdale (2009), 78% of children have a role model which is predominantly their parents. Parents can be inspiring figures that

are closest to children. They can provide books, read for the children as well as read for themselves, and explain the importance of reading for their future. Love of books, therefore, can be grown in the homes where book collections and role models exist and reading inspiration are available.

One of the students is aware of the importance of reading. He views reading as the "windows to the world" and the fact that not many people love to read has raised his concern. Although he is fully aware of the importance of reading, he cannot help himself to love reading because he is not used to it.

> In my opinion, reading is "the window" [to the world], but only few people read. I was so sad. For myself, I rarely read because I don't like it.It is difficult to raise the interest in reading (C/AWARE/line 49).

Like reading role models, awareness of the importance of reading can be raised by parents or family members, neighbors, teachers, and friends. When such awareness has been fostered at early ages in families, schools and teachers can continue to nurture the awareness, encourage them to read, and provide facilities to book access as well as establishing a reading program that can systematically help students to build their reading habit.

In line with this study is the research of Clark & Foster (2005) who find that primary and secondary pupils in England read because it is a skill for life and it is important. The difference is that those pupils are aware of the importance of reading and they read whereas student C merely understands that reading isimportant and serves as the windows to the world, but he fails to make himselflike reading. This indicates that there should be more concerns from parents, societies, governments, and education institutions to set up a sustainable program of literacy throughout the country. Such a program needs to be supported by all elements and parties and should become a national movement towards better literate citizen.

To motivate students to read, facilities must be provided such as book collections, variety of genre, and internet connection to access e-books.

> It depends on the topic, whether it's fantasy or others. I prefer fantasy stories (C/FAC/line 24)
> Book varieties [are also needed] (A/FAC/line 50)
> Libraries should be improved to make it more attractive so that people want to visit it. The internet connection as well should be improved (B/FAC/line 51)
> The books in the library should be up dated, not the old ones… The books written in English are also limited. Mostly there are lesson books written in Bahasa Indonesia (C/FAC/line 52).

That websites become important reading resources are indeed true (Karim & Hasan, 2007). When reading resources are extensively available, it can be good opportunities for teachers to make good use of those materials. Reading activities can be set up and induced into the regular courses. What teachers need to do

include setting the goals, give instructions, and follow-up activities. Activities can vary because students have easy access to reading materials.

Someone may be interested to read when the stories are good, the book cover looks interesting, and the book is popular. In this case, regular renewal of book collections should be considered so that students are attracted to read.

> What is interesting is the story, I think… (A/INTEREST/line 2)
> Reading is fun because of the stories. Fiction can open new horizon, while detective stories are interesting because of the characters and the plots. It makes the mind juggling, thinking… (A/INTEREST/line 12)
> Books are chosen because of the covers (B/INTEREST/line 22)
> If the cover is good, continue checking the back of the book (B/INTEREST/line 23)
> …or whether the book is popular or not (A/INTEREST/line 25)

Based on this research finding what makes people interested in books are the story, the genre, and the popularity. To respond this issue, libraries should provide extensive range of both fiction and non-fiction. However, for some countries it is not easy to provide libraries with such book collections as fund is limited or even unavailable. Even when e-books can be accessed freely, literacy and internet connection should also be available. It is, therefore, understandable that reading for pleasure can be fun when facilities and infrastructure fully support.

It has been widely confirmed that reading brings huge benefits. This study finds that the benefits of reading include getting information, expanding horizon, and feeling the fun of reading.

> After reading, I hope that I can get information from what I read… from non-fictions books I can get knowledge of something… from fiction books I know various stories… and improve my reading interest and expand my horizon (C/BENEFITS/line 58).

The result of this study is in line with a research finding that reading fiction can increase empathy (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013). Being empathetic is a good character that one should have to interact with people well. Such a character, in fact, cannot be possessed instantly. It should be trained and developed overtime to become spontaneous.

Mood has been a reading's bedrock. One might give a good book to be recommended based on the reader's mood, but it may be ineffective for others because people have different interest and condition.

> For me, it also depends on mood too, sometimes [we] may not like it [the story], [we may like it] based on the story. But there are some boring stories too (C/CHALL/line 3).

According to the research result, it is in line with the study of Ross & Chelton (2001) that readers' knowledge regarding the previous book might influence the

mood and interest. Or else, mood can be affected from the book's review, cover and synopsis, and recommendation from family and friend as well. Therefore, it is necessary to understand readers' mood condition. If the reader is under pressure, he/she might want to read something lighter and visual. But if the reader has less pressure, reading heavy book can be a piece of cake.

Another problem raised by the research participants concerns with the digital-related issues. The current high school students belong to the generation Z (McCrindle Research, 2008), thereby their digital nativity seemingly gives big influence to their reading preference due its flexibility and accessibility.

> I prefer using digital book because it is so much easier. I could read it on my smartphone and I could carry it everywhere (C/DIGI/line 46).

Through digital books students can enhance their reading experience since the improved text and improved screen allow them to interact with it such as search, scan, select, cut, paste, highlight and so on (Brown, 2001). Those provided capabilities from digital book give benefit for student to create their personal library on their own devices. Students can manage their personal library through the genre, author, and even related topic. As a result, it is essential to provide the access to digital books for students in this modern era.

Conclusion

Reading for pleasure is an important reading activity that should be fostered since an early age. Regarding many benefits that it gives, parents should have the initiatives to introduce this activity to their children. Because having awareness that reading is important is not enough to make young people like reading, educational institution, libraries and other infrastructure should be made available and accessible and support the reading activity as a national movement.

This study is a small-scale study which is limited by the number of participants and sources of data. Therefore, results of this study could possibly be used for context-bound site. As this study is an initial inquiry prior to an extensive reading program, more data gathered after the program ends do provide more comprehensive results.

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