

INVESTIGATING STUDENTS' READING INTEREST ON ENGLISH READING MATERIALS THROUGH THEIR READING HABITS DURING A PANDEMIC

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Abstract

This research was conducted to investigate students' reading interest on English reading materials through their reading habits during a Covid-19 pandemic. It also discovers contents of English reading materials that students most like to read. Survey research design was conducted by the researcher to investigate 98 students which consist 41 male students and 57 female from 9 high schools in Subang. The data were collected using questionnaire that was distributed through social media in the form of Google Form link. It was found that 42.9% of the participants have the motivation as well as the willingness, and half (49%) of the total number of the participants get pleasure from reading English materials. Although 33.7% students do not accustom to read English materials outside English classes, it was embodying students' reading habit which 60 students only read 2 – 3 days a week with the most answer of length less than an hour (41 Students). There are 38 students selected 'articles on internet' and 36 students selected 'academic books' as their favourite types of reading. Afterward, reading genres the students most selected are 'education' (44 students) and 'entertainment' (19 students), the rest of them selected poetry, horror, romance, humour, science fiction and other.

Keywords: reading interest, reading habits, pandemic Covid-19

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 has a huge impact to every sector in human life, including education. Classroom learning activity shifted to distance learning (online learning). Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, prepared the scenario of online learning for students during Covid-19. They develop distance learning applications based on android: "Portal Rumah Belajar" (Kemendikbud, 2020). Furthermore, the

Ministry of Education and Culture has joined forces with online learning platforms, for instance Google Indonesia, Sekolahmu, Quipper, School, Ruang Guru, Zenius, Kelas Pintar and Microsioft. The Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim, declared that several associates reveal be able to participate the implementation of online learning system. Each platform will give facilities that are publicly accessible and

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free for all Indonesian Students (Putsanra, 2020).

The learning process used to be done face-to-face, can only be done through internet technology without having to face-to-face between the instructor and learner that is called as an online learning (e-learning) nowadays. Students can learn anytime and anywhere as long as they are connected to the internet. They are able to discuss several topics with their teachers from home through their smartphones. The students do not have to travel anywhere to study, they can simply take their smartphones which is connected to internet and learn from the comfort of their own home. Abidah *et al.* (2020) stated the strength of online learning is not limited by space and time.

HootSuite (2020) released data and trends about the usage of internet and social media in Indonesia. The data showed, Indonesian citizen spend 7 hours and 59 minutes to surfing an internet. Internet and social media users' in Indonesia is extremely significant. Caused of Twitter post, Jakarta counted as a city most talkative compared with big city in another country. At least 10 million tweet a day are posted from this city, it is more elevated comparing with Tokyo, London, New York and Sao Paulo (Defega, 2017).

On the other contrary, Indonesian National Library released the data that shows only 10% of Indonesian above 10 years old are interested in reading (Wibowo, 2015). For learners particularly, reading might be primary need to achieve the academic success. It is generally assumed that reading will take place meaningfully if it is preceded by interest to read. According to United Nations Educational Survey that was carried out in 2012, the Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Indonesia's rank is 69th out of 127 countries in reading competence, and only 1 out of 1000 people

in Indonesia loves reading (in Hutabarat, 2020).

Nonetheless, Brown (2004) stated the most essential skill for success in all educational contexts is reading. Reading is one of four language skills to be mastered by students who learn languages. Loan (2009) assured the importance of reading by claiming that individuals with good reading habits have the chance to widen their mental horizons and to multiply their opportunities. Reading habits are obtained through forming and developing reading activity hence that an interest construction is created which will gradually turn into a habit (Andayani and Maryam, 2018). It is a cyclical process which needs to be developed by the students as a learner moreover the teachers as an instructor.

Based on two surveys mentioned earlier, Kominfo (2017) declared low reading interest but talkative in social media make Indonesian citizen easy to get misunderstanding. But a year before Nuning, K (2016) already mentioned, is Indonesian reading habit now day reflected reading interest thoroughly? She considered that reading interest parameters should be adjusted according to the changing elements in digital era.

Equal with Nuning, K (2016), the Researchers are also questioning the same question. While Nuning, K (2016) examined about reading interest in digital era, the researchers are examine reading interest on English reading materials. As we know, Pandemic has significantly retained students' activities. This situation are utilized the students to explore their adeptness. Developing reading activity can be effective in this condition since the students have more time while doing their work or study from home. Bearing in mind the previous explanation, this research was aimed to investigate students' reading interest on English reading materials through their reading habits during a pandemic. Moreover, it is also performed to

discover the contents of English reading materials that students most like to read.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading Interest are constructed through reading activity. As Andayani and Maryam (2018) we need to form and develop reading activity hence that an interest construction is created which will gradually turn into a habit. In academic fields, having good reading habits helps the students to easily understand the meaning of the context in a reading text and answer the questions without any obstacles. In addition, having good reading habits also will make students are able to speak confidently in front of the class. Finally, pursuing reading habit helps the students to improve analytical skill in comprehension task.

Previous research have shown that learners who are continuously exposed to the large amounts of English reading interest show an improvement in reading comprehension. According to Simanjuntak, *et al.* (2015) there was a significant effect of students' reading interest and vocabulary mastery on students' reading comprehension. The higher reading interest and vocabulary mastery had gotten by the students, the higher reading comprehension had gotten by the students. When one is interested in the topic or the text, it will affect his/her mood and finally, she/he will engage in the reading. Hidi (2001) added that interest influences the reader's comprehension and recall positively. In line with this, Ebbers (2011) confirms that by having interest, it will enable the readers to process the text, comprehend it deeply, and recall the information longer. Those who are interested in reading will become absorbed in the reading activity and, finally, gain more comprehension.

Asniar *et al.* (2020) was organized factors affecting students' low reading interest in one Oheo public senior high school (SMA Negeri 1 Oheo). The researcher divided the factor that affecting

students reading interest becoming 2 factor that is internal and external factor. Psychology and habit are part of internal factor that affected students reading interest. Then reading sources, family and school environment are external factor that affected students reading interest.

Reading interest is important in enhancing students' success in school and life out of it (Khairuddin, 2013). Although reading is important, students have relatively low interest in reading English materials. It can be seen in Khairuddin's (2013) research when he studied students' reading interest of 86 students in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia. It is found that only three out of 86 students like to read English reading materials every day. Additionally, there are seven students who read English reading materials for 5 – 6 times a week. The rest of it, 45 students read English reading materials less than four times a week and 31 students have never read English reading materials.

In addition Ponton, *et al* (2019) presented a confirmation from parents who collaborated with his study in improving reading habit that students' habits were weak because they just read when they had to complete assignments. The result showed the majority of participants (62.19%) could not read in English, while 37.81% stated they could do it. Even though the majority of the students could not read in English, 20.49% said they just read for classwork purposes, and 12.27 % read because they had to. Reading for pleasure and reading as a hobby, considered as intrinsic motivation, were the least reasons why students practiced this skill, with only 5.3% and 4.82%, respectively.

Regarding the importance of reading, it is essential for students to establish the appropriate English reading materials habits. Some authors have investigated the importance of reading habits in EFL learning at different educational level. Floris (2009) investigated

reading skills EFL University students and their reading habit. Then, Noor (2011) investigated reading habits and preferences of English Foreign Language (EFL) post graduate students. On the next year, Ifati (2012) conducted a survey of the English Reading Habits of EFL students in Indonesia. In 2015, Mlay investigated how Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can improve reading habits among university students. Noortyani (2018) tried to developing students' reading interest through reading-retelling activity.

METHODOLOGY

This study is the quantitative research since it was used survey research design to make claims about the populations. Survey research designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population (Creswell, 2012).

The participants of this research were comprised of 98 students in 9 senior high schools in Subang. There are 41 male students and 57 female students, they were selected as a random sampling. The researchers believe that high school students, who are in the range age 15 – 18 years old, are mature enough to answer the questions from the researcher. As Kagan and Coles (1972) stated that middle adolescence are around 16 years old.

An issue about students' reading habits and interest was collected by the researchers through the questionnaire. The questionnaire was created in the form Google Form. Link of the Google Form was distributed through social media of the researcher during 3 days. The students were only required to write their schools without having to write their names. As a result, the students free to answer the questions without worrying their privacy.

The Questionnaire consists of 9 items of questions, 5 items are about reading interest and 4 items are about reading habits. 5 questions on reading interest section had 4 options using Likert- Scale, namely absolutely (4), probably (3), not sure (2), no (1). It is bilingual where the questions are written in both English and Bahasa Indonesia, to avoid confusion or misunderstanding. Close-item questionnaire is adapted from Khairuddin (2013) and Nooryatni (2018).

FINDING AND DISCUSION

The finding of this study is divided in two sections. First category is students' reading interest upon English reading materials, it was showed on the table 1. The questionnaire on reading interest section is adapted from Nortyani (2018).

The first question requested the participants to respond about their willingness and motivation to read English reading materials. The results demonstrated that students' willingness and motivation to read English materials are wide sufficient. 42.9% answered 'absolutely' and 36.7% of the participants answered 'probably' have willingness and motivation to read English materials. Only 10.2% 'no' and the rest, 10.2%, answered 'not sure'.

It is supported by almost half of the students (49%) answered 'probably' and 22.4% answered 'absolutely' choose reading than the other activity. Merely 23.5% and 5.11% of the participants answered 'not sure' and 'no'. It indicates that the students already realize the important of reading, hence they have desire to read.

On the third question the researchers examine students' enjoyment on English reading materials. It is found only 8.2% of 98 students who do not enjoyed reading English material and 27.6% answered 'not sure'. The rest of the students (64.3%) claimed they enjoy to read English reading materials.

In the next question the researchers requested the students to choose between reading English materials and the translation (*Bahasa Indonesia*). 40.8% and 14.3% of the students answered ‘probably’ and ‘absolutely’, 28.6% answered ‘not sure’ and 16.3% answered ‘no’ while being asked to choose to read English material otherwise the translation (*Bahasa Indonesia*). The results are almost balance, it may signify that not all of the students who have a motivation applied their motivation into action.

The last question on reading interest section uncovers the students’ adeptness to reading English materials outside English class. The results showed that the students quiet unaccustomed to read English materials outside an English class. 33.7% of the participants answered ‘not’ accustom read English material outside English class and 29.6% of the participants answer ‘not sure’. Only 10.2% of the students answer ‘absolutely’ and 26.5% ‘probably’.

Table 1. *Students’ Questionnaires Responses*

No	Questions Item	Students Responses			
		Absolutely	Probably	Not sure	No
1	Do you have willingness and motivations to read English materials?	42.9%	36.7%	10.2%	10.2%
2	If you have the option between reading and other activities (such as: watching TV or playing) will you choose reading?	22.4%	49%	23.5%	5.1%
3	If you get English reading materials, do you read it with pleasure?	24.5%	39.8%	27.6%	8.2%
4	If you have the option between reading English materials or the translation (<i>Bahasa Indonesia</i> ,) will you choose to read English materials?	14.3%	40.8%	28.6%	16.3%
5	Are you accustomed to read English materials outside of English class?	10.2%	26.5%	29.6%	33.7%

The second category of results are students’ reading habit upon English reading

materials during pandemic. The questionnaires is adapted from Khairuddin

(2013) who adapted the questionnaire from Marero (2009).

The researchers asked 4 questions. The first question is about how often the participants read text written in English in a week. The results are only 7 out of 98 students' who read English materials 'every day' and 16 students selected '5-6 days'. Otherwise there are 15 students selected

'never read'. Most of them selected "less than 3 days" (60 students). It supports the last question on reading interest category that most of the students are not accustomed to read English materials. Most of them answered less than 3 days that means the students only read English materials during an English classes which 2 times a week. (See Figure 1)

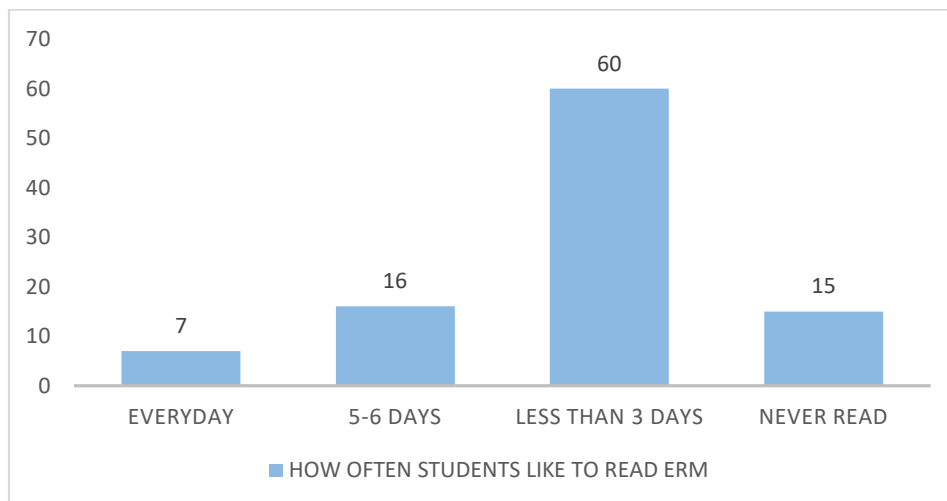


Figure 1. *Students' English reading materials activity in a week*

The first item was supported by the second item. It required students to respond about on how long they spend their time to read English materials. Most of the students

selected on 'less than an hour' 41 students, 'an hour' 38 students, '2 – 3 hours' 15 students and 'more than 3 hours' not more than 4 students. (See Figure 2)

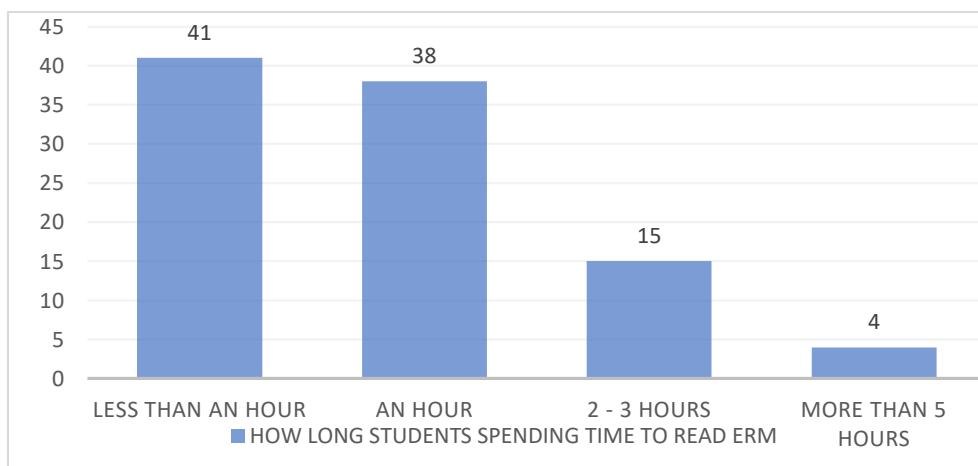


Figure 2. *Students reading English materials activity in a day*

Two last questions ask about the types and genres that students are interested on reading English materials. There are 38 students selected 'articles on internet' and

36 students selected 'academic books' as their favourite types of reading. It indicates that the students only want to read English material on their subject matter. Only 1

student selected ‘newspaper’, 3 students for magazine, 5 students for English novels, 8

student for English comics and 7 students for nothing. (See Figure 3)

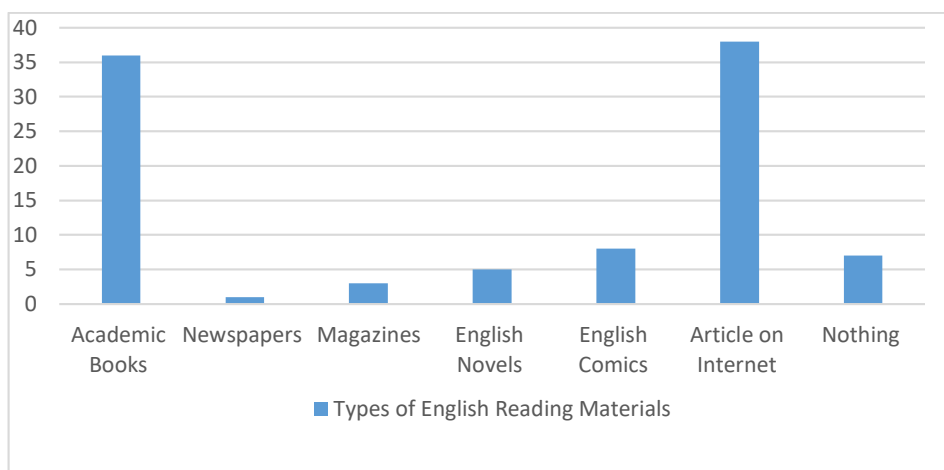


Figure 3. *Types of English reading materials*

Afterward, the genres the students most selected are ‘education’ (44 students) and ‘entertainment’ (19 students). In the meantime, the rest of them selected fantasy,

science fiction, horror, humour, romance, thriller, historical, poetry and other. (See Figure 4).

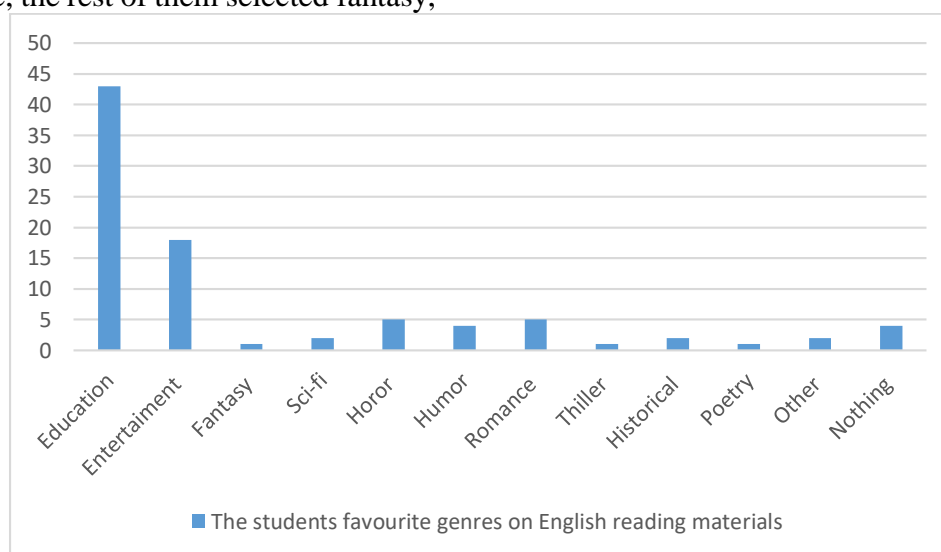


Figure 4. *Genres of English reading materials*

The aim of this research is to investigate students’ reading interest on English reading materials as well as to discover contents of English reading materials that students most like to read. It is revealed that the students’ reading interest can be categorized on minimum level. On the contrary, the students have high motivations (42.9%) and claim probably enjoys (39.8%) to read English reading materials but they do not accustom to read English materials outside English

class. The finding of this research are similar with the finding by Iftanti (2012). Although the English Foreign Language (EFL) students have positive beliefs that reading English can improve their English skills and knowledge and can support their future career and academic success, most of them may not to have good English reading habits (Iftanti, 2012).

Adetunji & Oladeji (2007) add that appropriate reading habits is indicated by

regular reading after school. On the other contrary, 60 of 98 students read English material less than 3 days a week. The students only read English materials on their English classes which 2 times a week. Additionally, there are 41 students (41.8%) who only read English materials less than an hour a day. These findings are resemble with study conducted by Hardianto (2011). He found that 58.53% collages students only read less than an hour. Thus the students do not adopt reading habits in their daily life. Regarding the importance of reading, the students need to developing good reading habit which construct an interest. As Soetimah stated on Idris *et al.* (2015) reading habits is a factor that affected on reading interest. The students who adopt reading habit will set aside more time to read than who do not adopt sufficient reading habit. It was similar with the result of Asniar (2020) that students do not have a habit to read through their spare time, and they only read while the teacher was asking to read.

Additionally, regarding the type of English reading materials, the students would rather to read the article on internet (38 students) than academic books (36 students). Moreover, most of the students choose an education as a genre they approximate to read. It has coloration with findings on Kumara and Kumar (2019) on students' reading purposes. It is found that, the majority of the students only read the topic they are interested in (53.2%) followed by reading for learning (46.3%). It was an occasion that the students elected an article in internet, which numerous reading sources are obtained for the students. As stated by Mlay *et al.* (2015) that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) makes access to reading materials more affordable and easier.

As Kurniasih (2016) stated parameter reading interest cannot generalize considering changing elements in digital era. Otherwise, the different reading materials, educational background,

ages, genders, and background of the participants. However the researcher believes the important of reading, – whatever the materials, the languages, the kind, or the genres– it is advantageous to success in especially academic or life for general.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that 98 students which 41 male students and 57 female from 9 high schools in Subang considered have minimum level reading interest on English reading materials. Even though the students have high motivations (42.9%) and claimed probably enjoys (39.8%) to read English reading materials, but they do not accustom to read English materials outside English classes. It was followed by insufficient students' reading habits. There are 41 students who only read English materials less than an hour a day. In addition, 60 students just read English materials 2 – 3 times a week. Moreover for the type of English reading materials the students would rather to read the article on internet (38 students) better than academic books (36 students). In addition, most of the students choose an education as a genre they approximate to read.

Considering an importance of reading, the researchers recommend the students to build reading interest in English reading materials. In this pandemic era while most of time are devoted at home, are appropriate time to self-development; start to formulate and develop reading activity on English materials, construct it as a habits in daily, not only on English Classes. It is also suggested for the teachers to instruct their students to continually develop their reading habits on various text genres. As Cambria and Guthrie (2010) stated that reading activity will be more meaningful and beneficial if the reading interest which precedes the reading rooted in one's intrinsic motivation, not in the force of other parties or extrinsic rewards. Considering this research findings, perhaps on the next

study be able to undertake internet as a consideration to forming and developing reading activity.

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