

Indonesian English Department Students' Reading Habits and Attitude Toward Literature in English

Delvi Wahyuni¹, Witri Oktavia², and Leni Marlina³

¹ Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia, ✉ delvi_wahyuni@fbs.ac.id/luckydelvi@gmail.com

² Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia, ✉ witrioktavia@gmail.com

³ Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia, ✉ lenimarlina.11@gmail.com

Abstract

This study reports the results of a survey on the reading habits of English Department Students at Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia, and their attitude towards literature in English. Reading Habit questionnaire developed by Pandian (1997) and an adaptation of Students' Attitude and Perception towards literature in English questionnaire developed by Tina Abdullah (2007) were employed. Both instruments were translated to Indonesian before being distributed to the respondents. The total number of respondents involved in this study was 125 comprising of 79 third year students and 46 fourth year students. These students were chosen as respondents because they had taken more than two compulsory literature subjects. First year students and second year students were not included because the former had not taken any compulsory literature subjects, while the latter had not completed their first compulsory literature subjects yet. A demography survey was also conducted to see their perception on their English proficiency and motivation to choose English as their major. Results showed that (i) the majority of the students believed that their English falls under the category of good and very good; (ii) students enrolled to English Department to learn English and/or to learn more about the English language; (iii) they have poor reading habits; (iv) they enjoy other technology related activities more compared to reading; (v) they believed that literature subjects are instrumental in improving their English; (vi) half of the respondents have negative attitude towards poetry in English; (vii) attitude towards longer literature work like novel and drama varied. Finally, pedagogical implications related to the instructional model to teach literature in English is discussed.

Keywords: *reading habits, reading attitude, literature in English, literature in language class, instructional model*

Introduction

It is generally postulated that one of the most valuable skills a university students must have is reading ability. Reading is generally defined as the process of interpreting printed and written words (Annamalai & Muniandy, 2013; Noor, 2011; Mart, 2012). It is often linked to academic success (Noor, 2011; Saiful, Jabu, & Atmowardoyo, 2019; Arslanoglu and Mor, 2018; Iftanti, 2012) and social success (Yilmaz, 1995). For English language learners, reading is also key to improved performance in other language skills. In this case, reading ability is instrumental in improving students' writing (Attiyat, 2019; Kirin, 2010; Habibi, Salleh, & Singh, 2015; Krashen, 2004; Amer, 2012), speaking (Novita, 2016; Mart, 2012), and listening (Loppies, 2019; Al-Nafisah, 2019). Some studies also reveal that it helps students to learn the majority of vocabulary needed to read academic texts (Krashen, 2011; Nation, 2013; Krashen, 2004). Moreover, reading can also help students to widen their grammatical knowledge which will eventually become a supporting factor in their writing (Khansir & Dehghani, 2015; Akbari, 2014; Krashen, 2004).

Those with good reading skill are believed to have positive reading habits (Annamalai & Muniandy, 2013; Deita, 2013; Iftanti, 2013). Several indications of good reading habits include repetition (Iftanti, 2012), voluntary (Tella, 2007), and automaticity (Morris, Bloodgood, Lomax and Perney, 2006). On the other hand, according to Iftanti (2013), "passive reading, purposeless reading and regressing" are the characteristics of poor reading habits.

Another factor which counts for students' success in the academic setting is their attitude towards learning. According Shajahan and Shajahan (2007) attitude is a "learned predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to a given object." Accordingly, students' attitude toward literature in English can be defined as how they feel about that it. In language learning, attaining the right attitude is necessary for the students to be successful learners (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011; Chalak & Kassaian, 2010; Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009).

To say that reading is an important skill for English majors is an understatement. In fact, reading is an integral part of their life as student because reading activities are the core of many of their compulsory subjects. This is also true for students of English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang. Throughout their time at this department, they are obliged to take literature courses despite the fact that some of them will eventually specialize in linguistics or language studies. In this case, students are to take courses named under three generic genres of literary work: Basic Poetry, Basic Prose and Basic Drama. In these courses, students are introduced to various important literary works written in English by writers from various literary periods and national backgrounds. These three courses share two common learning objectives: students are able to identify the literary elements of the assigned texts; and students are able to analyze the work studied. To be able to achieve these learning goals, students must have a sufficient reading skill and possess the right reading habits.

It is also safe to say that key to their survival in this course is good reading skill and good reading habits. However, Deita (2013) and Saiful, Baso Jabu and Haryanto Atmowardoyo (2019) claim that EFL English majors have low reading ability. Moreover, numerous studies have found that English majors have poor reading habits (Iftanti, 2010; Deita, 2013). Moreover, it is also necessary for students to express positive attitude towards literature in order to be successful in their literary courses. Previous studies which can be referred to about this topic are Alfauzan & Hussain, (2017) and Tevdovska (2016). However, in Indonesian context, studies which look to these two variables are still far between. Therefore, this study aims at investigating Indonesian English Department students' reading habits and attitude towards literature in English.

Method

The respondents participated in this survey study were 125 students who have completed at least two compulsory literature courses. They comprise of 79 third year students and 46 fourth year students. To gather data about students' reading habits, Reading Habit questionnaire developed by Pandian (1997) was adapted. An adaptation of Students' Attitude and Perception towards literature in English questionnaire developed by Tina Abdullah (2007) was administered to measure students' attitude towards literature in English. Both instruments were translated to Indonesian before being distributed to the respondents. The data were collected during the 7th and 8th week of the odd semester (July-December, 2019). To investigate students' perception about their perceived English language proficiency and motivation to choose English as their major, a demography survey was also conducted. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data

Results and Discussion

The results for students' perception of their English proficiency shows that the majority of the students believed that they have a sufficient English proficiency. Table 1 gives information that their perceived English proficiency falls under the category of fair and good (54, 8% and 39,7 %, respectively). Despite there was a small fracture of students believing that their proficiency was poor (3.2%) and very poor (0.8%), it can be concluded that students were quite confident with their ability.

Table1. Students' Perception of Their English Proficiency

Statement	%
Excellent	0.8%
Good	39.7%
Fair	54.8%
Poor	3.2%
Very Poor	0.8%

On students' motivation to choose English as their major, ten reasons were identified. In this case, they can be divided into three broad categories, namely: language learning; content and culture learning; and the feasibility of international career and travelling. Table 2 indicates that statements which garnered the highest percentage are statements under the category of language learning. 83% students chose to be English majors because they wanted to learn the English language. Statements under the category of content and culture learning come second. Interestingly, students were more motivated to learn the culture from English speaking countries (81%) than to study literature in English (71%). Furthermore, the percentage of those whose motivation was to go abroad to study and/or to work were 53% and 40 %, respectively.

Table 2. Students' Motivation to Choose English as Their Major

No	Statements	%
1	To learn the English language	83
2	To study literature in English	71
3	To study the culture of English speaking countries	81
4	To study the underlying meaning of a literary work	36
5	To learn critical thinking	50
6	To enrich knowledge about the English Language	44
7	To work in foreign-owned company	40
8	To study abroad	53
9	To work abroad	44
10	To learn how to write creatively in English	14

Table 3 shows the hours spent by student to read. In general, it can be seen that, they did not spend much time to read. In other words, they did not develop a good reading habits. In this regard, those who spent more than 4 hours to read every day only accounts for about 15 % of the students. Moreover, only less than one third of the student spent 3 to 4 hours to read every day. 26% students read for 2 to 3 hours per day.

Table 3. Hours Spent Reading

Hour	%
Less than one hour.	3%
1 to 2 hour	16%
2 to 3 hour.	26%
3 to 4 hour.	28%
> 4 hour	15%

Because this study found that students did not have good reading habits, it is also necessary to investigate what they do in their spare time. The results from Table 4 show that the almost all students spent their spare time to do internet-based activities (92%). Other activities which were done by the majority of students are movie and music related activities (84% and 82%, respectively). Those playing game in their spare time were well below 50%. Even though more than a half of the students (60%) read in their spare time, results in Table 4 indicates that it is a less preferable activity to do. In other words, they prefer doing other technology and internet based activities compared to reading.

Table 4. Students Activities in Their Spare time

Activities	%
Reading	60%
Internet	92%
Music	82%
Film	84%
Game	49%
Others	9%

Table 5 presented the results for students' attitude toward literature. Overall, this study found that students showed a positive attitude towards literature. In this case, almost all students (99%) believed that by studying literature, they can improve their language ability. Then, the majority of students also claimed that learning literature in English is necessary (94%) and enjoyable (92%). Moreover, 83% of them showed keen interest in studying literature in the English language (83%).

Other results shown in Table 5 is students' attitude toward certain genre of literature. In this case, students showed positive attitude towards short stories (94%). However, more than half of the respondents (54%) had negative attitude toward poetry. It is also important to note that students' attitude towards longer work like English literature book remained positive despite the fact that it had lower percentage.

Another interesting findings which can be derived from Table 5 is students' preferred language to study literature. First, 96 % students had positive attitude toward literary texts using simple language. About three quarter of the respondents preferred their teacher to explain the content to the literary text taught to them in Bahasa Indonesia. The majority of the respondents (85%) also showed no reservation about using Bahasa Indonesia to explain what they understand about the literary text they read in class.

Table 5. Students' Attitudes towards Literature in English

Statement	%
I like reading English literature books.	79%
I think it is necessary to learn literature in English.	94%
I think literature lessons are enjoyable.	92%
I am interested in learning literature in the English language.	83%
I think that teachers can use some Bahasa Indonesia in explaining literary content.	71%
I think teacher should allow students to use some Bahasa Indonesia to explain their understanding of the literary text read.	85%
I think I can improve my proficiency in the English language through literature lessons.	99%
I like to read literary text that use simple English language.	96%
I like to read poetry.	54%
I like to read short stories.	94%

In this study, students' reading habits is measured based on its frequency. Subsequently, this study found that the respondents have poor reading habits. In this case, they do not spend much time to read in their daily life. This result is relevant with Iftanti (2012) and Deita (2013). One factor which can be attributed to students' poor reading habits is the advancement of disruptive technology. In the past, reading is an activity which students normally do in their spare time. These days, with the development of technology, students might spend more time with their gadgets or computers making making reading less appealing to them. In this regards, this study also found that students enjoy doing other activities in their spare time, especially those related with technology more than reading. Other studies which are in agreement with this finding are Annamalai and Muniandy (2013); Kasuma & Tan (2019); Loan (2011); Lieury, Lorant, Trosseille, Champault, & Vourc'h (2014).

The second objective of this result is to investigate students' attitude towards literature. The results of this study show that students have positive attitude toward literature in English. They believe that it can improve the language ability. This result supports other studies like Muhammed (2013); Nair, Setia, Ghazali, Sabapathy, Mohammad, Ali, Muniandy, Theethappan, Hassan, Hassan (2012); Hismanoglu (2005). According Hall (2015), literature is a potential resource for students to learn the language and communicate their feelings and thoughts. Similarly, Choudhary (2016) contends that students can learn about the "practical use" of the language through literature.

In spite of their like of literature, the majority of students show reservation toward poetry. Other studies such as that of Danesh & Shirkhani (2015); Tevdovska (2016); Khatib (2011); Nobles and Azano (2016); Utami (2012) also show a similar results. Interestingly, this specific genre is not only dreaded by students but also by teachers. Delvi Wahyuni and Witri Oktavia (2018) reports that Indonesian high school teachers are grappled with dilemma about how to teach poetry in English. Their dilemma stems from their anxiety over instructional approaches they can use to teach poetry in English and their insecurity over their own knowledge about the genre. Third, students show varied attitude toward longer literary work such as literature books novels. In this case, their most preferred genre is short story. Students also prefer shorter work with simple language. These results can be linked to students' poor reading habits. As English majors, they are supposed to read a lot and be prepared to read difficult or longer work. However, available literature like Deita (2013) and Saiful, Baso Jabu and Haryanto Atmowardoyo (2019) found that EFL English majors have low reading ability. Accordingly, a link can be made between students' reading habits and their attitude towards certain genre of literature.

Conclusions

This study has revealed that Indonesian English Department Students' reading habits are poor. This result should alarm educators in this field because for English majors reading is the core activity in many of their courses. Despite the fact that this study major finding shows that students have poor reading habits, the data gathered are limited to traditional reading resources like printed books or printed magazines. Therefore, precautions are taken to generalize the results of this study to other modes of readings. With the advent of the internet, information starts to be available in the form of electronic resources like e-books and e-magazines. Tsai (2016) contends that digital reading begins with the invention of personal computer make it not a so new phenomena. In light of this development, Sheng (2006) found the shift of students' reading habits from "paper-based to internet-based." Moreover, a similar result is also reported by Akarsu and Dariyemez (2014). In this regards, one thing that educators cannot overlook is the fact that students might have developed online

reading habits. Therefore, one thing that educators can do is to re-design their teaching model to include activities which can nurture good reading habits regardless the reading modes the students prefer. Moreover, educators should also include activities which students can do by using their mobile phones or computers in their lesson plan.

Another finding of this research is students having a positive attitude toward literature in English. However, students show a negative attitude toward a certain literary genre, namely poetry. On the contrary, students' top pick is shorter literary works like short story. They are also more inclined to read work with simple language. What can be concluded from these results is there is a strong correlation between their reading ability, reading habits and attitude toward literature. In this case, it is very likely that students face problems with reading (low reading ability) and do not have a good reading habits. As a result, they do not show positive attitude towards the literary genre which demands good reading skill such as poetry. Therefore, it is best for educators to use a teaching model which includes activities that address students' language problems before coming to the content of the literary work.

Acknowledgments

This research was funded by LP2M, Universitas Negeri Padang in 2019.

References

- Abdullah, T., Zakaria, M.H., Ismail, F., Mansor, W.F.A.W., Aziz, M.A., (2007). A New Teaching Model to Teach Literature for the TESL Pretraining Service Programme. *Research Vot No: 75167*. Jabatan Bahasa Moden, Fakulti Pengurusan Dan Pembangunan Sumber Manusia, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.
- Akbari, Z. (2014). The Role of Grammar in Second Language Reading Comprehension: Iranian ESP Context. *Social and Behavioral* 98, 122-126.
- Akarsu, O. And Dariyemez, T. (2014). The Reading Habits of University Students Studying English Language and Literature in the Digital Age. *Journal of Langague ad Linguistic Studies*, 10(2), 85-99.
- Al-Nafizah, K.I. (2019). Issues and Strategies in Improving Listening Comprehension in a Classroom. *Inteernational Journal of Linguistics Volume 11 Nomor 3*, 93-106.
- Alfauzan, A.H. & Hussain, A.G. (2017). Attitude towards and Perception of Literature in EFL Setting: A Case Study on QU Male Undergraduate Students. *English Language Teaching; Vol. 10, No. 1*, 1-17.
- Al-Tamimi, A., & Shuib, M. (2009). Motivation And Attitudes Towards Learning English: A Study Of Petroleum Engineering Undergraduates At Hadhramout University Of Sciences And Technology. *GEMA Online® Journal Of Language Studies*, 9(2).
- Amer, A.A. (2012). *Using Literature in Reading English as Second/Foreign Language*. Egypt:Tanta University.
- Annamalai, S., & Muniandy, B. (2013). Reading Habit and Attitude among Malaysian Polytechnic Students. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 5(1).
- Arslanoglu, C. & Mor, A. (2018). An Analysis of The reading Habits of University Studying Physical Education and Sports Training. *World Journal of Education Volume 8 Nomor 4*, 102-110.
- Attiyat, N. M. A. (2019). The Impact of Pleasure Reading on Enhancing Writing Achievement and Reading Comprehension. *International Peer Reviewed Journal Volume 10, Number 1*, 155-165.
- Chalak, A., & Kassaian, Z. (2010). Motivation and attitudes of Iranian undergraduate EFL students towards learning English. *GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies*, 10(2).
- Choudhary, S. (2016). Literary approach to teaching English language in a multicultural classroom. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 6(4), 1-6. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/iew/1858869508?accountid=14089%5Cnhttps://eu.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/view/uresolver/44UOC_INST/1?genre=article&atitle=Literary+Approach+to+Teaching+English+L+anguge+in+a+Multicultural+Classroom&author=Choudhary%2C+Sanju&v.
- Danesh, A. & Shirkhani, S. (2015). Students' Attitudes towards the Use OF Poetry in Second Language Classroom. *I-manager's Journal on English Language Teaching volume 5 nomor 2*, 32-37.
- Deita, H.C.H. (2013). Reading Habits of English Major Students: Basis for Improving Teaching Strategies. *SPUC National Conference*, 11-21.
- Habibi, H., Salleh, A.H., & Singh, M. K. S. (2015). Te Effect of Reading on Improving the Writing of EFL Students. *Social Sciences & Humanities* 23(4), 1115-1138.
- Hall, G. (2015) Recent Developments in Uses of Literature in Language Teaching. In Teranishi, M., Saito, Y., Wales, K., Literature and Language Learning in the EFL Classroom.
- Hismanoglu, M. (2005). Teaching English through Literature. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, Volume 1 Nomor 1*, 54-66.

- Iftanti, E. (2012). A survey of the English reading habits of EFL students in Indonesia. *Teflin Journal*, 23(2), 149-164.
- Kasuma, S.A.A., Tan, D.A.L. esl Reading Activities on Facebook among Malaysian University Students. *Pertanika Journal Social Science and Humanities* 27(1), 101-102.
- Khansir, A.A. & Dehghani, N. (2015). The Impact of Extensive Reading on Grammatical Mastery on Iranian EFL Learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* Vol. 5, No. 7, 1501-1507.
- Khatib, M. (2011). A new approach to teaching English poetry to EFL students. *Journal Of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(1), 164.
- Kirin, W. (2010). Effects of Extensive Reading on Students' Writing Ability in an EFL Class. *The Journal of Asia TEFL Volume 7, Nomor 1*, 285-308.
- Krashen, S. (2004). *The Power Of Reading : Insights From The Research*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Krashen, S. (2011). *Free Volunatry Reading*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Lieury, A., Lorant, S., Trosseille, B., Champault, F., &Vourc'h, R. (2014).Video Games and School/Cognitive Performance s: A Study on 27000 Middle School Teenagers. *Educational Psychology*. doi:10.1080/01443410.2014.923556.
- Loan, F.A. (2011). Impact of Internet on Reading Habits of the Next Generation College Students. *International Journalof Digital Library Services Volume 1, Issue 2*, 43-48.
- Loppies, H.J. (2019). Rider Strategy: Its Effectiveness in Developing Listening Skills. *Tahuri Voume 16 Nomor 1*, 15-23.
- Muhammed, A.A. (2013). The Effect of Teaching Literature on Learning English Language: A Study on EFS (English as a Foreign Students) and EFL Classes. *Innternational Journal of Advance Research in Literature and Education, volume 1, issue 2*, 27-38.
- Mart, C. T. (2012). Developing Speaking Skills Through Reading. *International Journal of English Linguistics Volume 2 Nomor 6*, 91-96.
- Morris, D., Bloodgood, J.W., Lomax, R. G., and Perney, J. (2003). Developmental Steps In Learning To Read: A Longitudinal Study In Kindergarten And First Grade. *Reading Research Quarterly Vol. 38, No. 3*, 302-328.
- Muhammed, A.A. (2013). The Effect of Teaching Literature on Learning English Language: A Study on EFS (English as a Foreign Students) and EFL Classes. *Innternational Journal of Advance Research in Literature and Education, volume 1, issue 2*, 27-38.
- Nair, G. K.S., Setia, R., Ghazali, S.N., Sabapathy, E., Mohammad, R., Ali, M.M., Muniandy, M.K., Theethappan, R., Hassan, W.A.W., & Hassan, N.S.I.C. (2012). Can Literature Improve English Proficiency: The Students Perspective. *Asian Social Science, Volume 8, Nomor 12*, 21-27.
- Nobles, S.L. & Azano, A.P. (2016). Poetry Is Powerful: High School Students and Pre-Service Teachers Develop Literacy Relationships through Poetry. *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education Volume 5 Issue 1*.
- Noor, N. M. (2011). Reading Habits and Preferences of EFL Post Graduates: A case Study. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, Volume 1 Nomor 1*, 1-9.
- Novita, L. (2016). Relationship Between Reading and Pronunciation and Students' Speaking Skills. *Proceeding The Second International Conference on Teacher Training and Education Sebelas Maret University Volume 2, Nomor 1*, 527-532.
- Oroujlou, N., & Vahedi, M. (2011). Motivation, attitude, and language learning. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 29, 994-1000.
- Pandian, A. (1997). Literacy in Postcolonial Malaysia. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 40(5), 402-404.
- Saiful, Jabu, B. & Atmowardoyo, H. (2019). The Effects of the PORPE Method on Students' Reading Comprehension and Metacognitive Awarness. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research Volume 10 Nomor 3*, 569-582.
- Shajahan, S., & Shajahan, L. (2007). *Organization Behaviour (Text and Cases Including Internet Exerrcise And Sill Tests)*. New Delhi: New Age International Publisher.
- Shen, L.B. (2006). Computer Technology and College Students' Reading Habits. *Chia-Nan Annual Bulletin Vol. 32*, 559-572,
- Tella, A. (2007). Children Reading Habits And Availability Of Books In Botswana Primary Schools: Implications For Achieving Quality Education. *The Reading Matrix Volume 7 nomor 2*, 117-142.
- Tevdovska, E.S. (2016). Literature in ELT Setting: Students' Attitudes and Preferences towards Literary Texts. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 232 (2016), 161 – 169.

- Tsai, C.C. (2016). A Case Study of English-Major Students' Preferences for Reading from a Printed Text versus Electronic Text. *The New Educational Review*, 142- 151. <https://doi.org/10.15804/tner.2016.46.4.12>.
- Utami, L. P. (2012). Learning English Through Poetry For Efl Students. *Bahasa Dan Seni Nomor 1*, 70-80.
- Wahyuni, D. and Oktavia, W. (2018). PKM Kelompok Guru Bahasa Inggris Yang Mengalami Kesulitan Dalam Mengajarkan Puisi Dalam Bahasa Inggris di SMAN 1 Ampek Angkek Dan SMAN 1 Banu Hampu Kabupaten AGAM. *Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat Volume 2 Nomor 3*.
- Yilmaz, D.E. (2010). *Nursing students' critical thinking levels and attitudes towards reading habit*. Master Thesis, Hacettepe University, Health Science Institute, Ankara.