

# Reading Habits of Indonesian English Department Polytechnic Students

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**Abstract**—This study reported the reading habits of the English Department students of Politeknik Negeri Padang. The survey method was applied in this research. Forty nine students from the second year level were the respondents in this study. The findings revealed that (1) majority of the respondents do not spend much time for reading activity; (2) the respondents mostly read novel than academic reading; (3) more than half of the respondents choose to spend their spare time with internet related activities; (4) they prefer Indonesian reading materials than English. Further, the findings are discussed as well as the implication of it for academic teaching.

**Keywords**—Polytechnic students, reading habits, reading skill

## I. INTRODUCTION

Reading habit has already known as a pivotal aspect in elevating students' academic achievement. Reading activity has also become compulsory activity in all level of students at school. In higher level of education, where the pupils have already known how to read and what to read, reading activity should be something regularly done by students including Polytechnic English Department students. This group of students has demand to work in the field of translation, social media content creator, journalism and broadcasting field. All of these working fields need workers to acquire reading skill. Hence, knowing the reading habits of these students will give insight to the academic teaching.

Furthermore, Polytechnic students in Indonesia have been given the level of KKNI (Indonesian National Qualification Framework) in level 5 [8], which is to have skill as technician or analyst. Thus, the reading skill is a must have skill that need to be mastered by these students. Hence, acquiring good reading habits will support this skill and later on will promote the graduate success in working field. Based on this premise, the researchers intend to conduct a survey on the reading habits of Polytechnic English

Department students. The purpose of this study was to find out the answers for the following questions:

1) What is the English Department students reading habits in terms of:

- a. How much time they spend for reading activity?
- b. Reading materials they prefer to read?
- c. Their activities in the leisure time?
- d. In what language do they prefer in reading; English or Indonesian?

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 2.1 Reading as a Skill

Researchers propose different definitions of reading. Karim and Hasan in [10] define reading as a process, a mode of thinking, a kind of real experience and involves many complex skills; the ability to perceive printed words, to skim for information and then perhaps read intensively. Through reading, people may expand his horizons of knowledge, identity, extend and intensify his interests. Meanwhile, Smith and Robinson in [5] mention reading as an active attempt on the part of the reader to understand the "writer's message". Thus reading is as a skill to be had by people in order to proceed the information in written form so that he or she can get the information and knowledge.

Reading skill must be had by people as a basic of the study and will be developed inline with his/her area of interest. This skill is consciously learned since the beginning of the learning process. This concept has been stated by Aina *et. al* in [10] that reading is a skill that must be nurtured from a child's earliest years and the habit of reading should begin at an early stage and should be imbibed throughout one's lifetime. Therefore it is a need to provide the students with reading strategies so that

they can match the strategies with the material they read. As a skill, reading is a persistent activity of day to day training that evolves into a habit. The more people read the better he read, and the better he read the more he read . Hence reading comprehension will be improved as much as the reading activity done by the people.

**2.2 Reading Habits**

Reading habit is totally different from reading. Reading is a process of reading the written information by understanding or interpreting the meaning. Meanwhile, reading habit means a repeated action of reading or reading activity implemented by a reader by using some number or reading materials, having the frequency of reading and spending some times to do it. From the previous information, it can be simplified that reading does not need the numbers of reading materials but it a must for the reading habit. Reading is done momentarily, but for the reading habit, it needs the frequency or sequence of the time. The last one is reading is a short activity, but for reading habit, it needs couple of time to read and understanding the meaning [12] .

Reading habit in college institution should be considered seriously by students. It is because it is related to the academic performance. Academic performance will be affected by the numbers of references used by the lecturers to use in the class, the time-given by the lecturers for the students to present the paper. [9] has already mentioned three main types of reading habits. They are hobby, recreational and concentration. Hobby is an activity consisting of joy and satisfaction; recreational means that people will do reading as a way to release their boring activities and problems; and concentration means that the reading activities will be interrelated to the student achievements. It means that in reading habit, there are joy and satisfaction; people read for recreational purposes and there are achievements to do so.

**III. METHODOLOGY**

For this study, a survey research method was employed to allow the researchers explaining further the behaviors or attitudes of the population [3]. Forty-nine students of English Department of Politeknik Negeri Padang were recruited for this study. All of the students were the second year students. Among the respondents, 13 students (26.5%) were male and 36 students (73.5%) were female. For gathering the data, a survey modified from the College Students' Reading Habits Survey (RHS) [2] was applied. The time spent by the students and the kind of reading materials were mainly asked in this survey. There were five time frames created by the researchers for the survey; less than 1 hour, 2-3 hours, 4-5 hours, 6-7

hours, more than 7 hours. The survey in a form of questionnaire was given through Google form link and descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data.

**IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**4.1 Reading Habits**

The research findings were analyzed from the time spent by the respondents on reading per week, their types of reading material, their activities in spare time and preferred language they choose to read.

1) *Time spent on reading (per week)*. The result for time spent on reading (table 1) shows that majority of the respondents (42.9%) spent 4 to 5 hours per week in reading activity followed by 22.4% respondents spent 2 to 3 hours, then 16.3% respondents read less than 1 hour. Meanwhile, 12.2 % respondents spent 6 to 7 hours and and 6.1 % respondents spent 7 hours more per week in reading activity. This result is somewhat higher from previous study conducted by[10] on university in Nigeria where the average time of reading were 2 to 4 hours.

Table 1. Time Spent on Reading

Hours per week	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	16.30
2-3 hour	22.40
4-5 hour	42.90
6-7 hour	12.20
More than 7 hour	6.20

2) *Types of reading material*. Table 2 presents the rating of students' reading material preference. It is found out that the majority of the students read novel (51 %) followed by academic (34.7%) and website (32.7 %), then non major academic books shared similar percentage to comic books/manga (14.3%) , followed by newspaper (12.2%) then magazine (10.2%). The result indicates that the English students read more for pleasure activity than for academic purpose. The findings are similar to recent study conducted by [4] on university students in Palembang, Indonesia where the majority of the respondents; 13 out of 35 students (36%) prefer to read novel.

Table 2. Types of Reading Material

Reading Material	Percentage (%)
Novels	51
Academic	34.7
Website	32.7
Non major academic books	14.3
Comic books/manga	14.3
Newspaper	12.2
Magazine	10.2

3) *Students activities in their leisure time.* The respondents were asked what activities they do in their leisure time. The result from table 3 illustrates the rating of activities the respondents like to do in their leisure time. A majority of the respondents prefer to do internet based activities (61.2%) followed reading (22.4%). Meanwhile 8.2 % respondents prefer to do music related activity followed by games and movies (6.1% and 4.2% respectively). The result shows that the students do not prefer to read in their spare time. This result corroborate previous findings of [1] , where 60 of 119 respondents (50.5%) chose to surfing internet as the activity in their leisure time. Another research conducted by [6] on university students in the US also has similar finding with this result, where majority of the respondents spent 8.95 hours per week on internet activities compared to academic reading (7.72 hours) and extracurricular reading (4.24 hours).

Table 3. Preferred Leisure Time Activities

Activities	Percentage
Internet	61.20
Reading	22.40
Music	8.20
Games	6.10
Movies	4.20
Others	2

4) *Preferred language in reading.* The respondents were also asked which language they prefer in reading. The result in table 4 shows that more than half of the respondents (69.4%) prefer to read the reading materials in Indonesian language. Only 30.6% respondents choose to read English reading materials. The possible reason for this result could be due to their poor reading habits. Eventhough they prefer to do internet based activity, where they can access English material easily, this could not provide benefit for them.

Table 4. Preferred Language in Reading

Language	Percentage
Indonesian	69.4
English	30.6

The present study found that the respondents have poor reading habits. The amount of time the respondents spent for reading in a week are still low. The possible explanation for these results may be the interference of technology that degrades the desire for the students to read. This is supported by [11], [1], [6], [13]. In addition, the situation of online learning during this pandemic seems to support this premise where the students are more engage in gadgets and other information technology.

Further, the study revealed that the majority of the students show their liking in reading novel. This may due to their literacy activity from their senior high school. This literacy activity has been started since 2015 in all level of schools in Indonesia [7]. However, the preference in reading novel somehow does not bolster the time spent in reading activity. The possible explanation for this could be the limitation of the respondents in assessing public library since this study was conducted during the Covid 19 pandemic. Therefore, this study recommends the Polytechnic institution to equip the library with more e- books and e-reading materials.

Another finding is the activities spent by the respondents in their spare time; the respondents (61.20%) mostly choose to surfing internet. Somehow the percentage could be higher than this since during the pandemic, the learning activities conducting via online learning. However, the respondents could have limitation as well in assessing the internet since there are issues such as signal reception and internet quota.

The study also found out that the majority of the students (69.4%) prefer to read the reading materials in Indonesian language. This is somehow disappointing since they are English Department students. The possible reason for the result could be due to poor reading habit they have and also the limitation of the resource of English material. Hence, this study suggests the English Department to provide more English reading books.

However, this study has several limitation; (1) the population is only from one department and in a small scale, (2) this study do not have demographic explanation hence further research need to be done to cover this area, (3) the research do not investigate more on what content the students read from their internet related activity, since the digital literacy may somehow influence the reading habits of people.

## V. CONCLUSION

This research investigates the reading habits of English Department students. Forty-nine students were chosen to be the respondents of this survey. The overall results indicates that the English Department have poor reading habits; having limited time in reading activities, choosing reading novel than academic books, engaging more on internet activities than reading, and preferring Indonesian reading materials than English. These results may give suggestion to the teachers and lecturers in how to boost the students reading habits in the future. Furthermore, the awareness of the students in internet based activities may give benefit in the future in terms of digital literacy.

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