

**AN ANALYSIS OF THIRD SEMESTER STUDENTS' READING INTEREST
TOWARDS ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ISLAM
MALANG**

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Abstract: Reading is the most fundamental skill in term of acquiring information, it allows the reader to obtain knowledge from any parts of the world. Nowadays reading material can be easily obtained through internet, this quick access to information should be able to develop students' reading interest. Developing reading interest allows the reader to be more literate and improves analytical skill in comprehending text as well as to collect information and academic achievements. Therefore, the researcher interested to study, students' reading interest in academic purposes. This study was conducted using descriptive qualitative research design to find out the students' interest in reading related to their academic importance. The participants in this study is 31 students from third semester students at University of Islam Malang and 10 of them were selected for the interview. The questionnaire was analyzed using excel and the interview was analyzed using descriptive qualitative query analysis that consist of data reduction, data management, interpretation and drawing conclusion. The result shows that students' interest to read, comes from many factors including enjoyment, willingness, consciousness and attention. Moreover, there are many difficulties encountered by the students including boredom, laziness, lack of option and too difficult reading materials as most of the students tend to choose their own reading materials. The result of the study offers solution to improve reading interest such as start reading, finding interesting material that suit their interest instead of just reading learning materials, and motivate themselves to read a lot so eventually reading might become their habit.

Key Words: *Reading interest, academic purposes.*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is fundamental processes in language learning and knowledge development, as it involves the reader's prior knowledge and the textual understanding. As stated by Harmer (2007) that reading is the skill that allows individual to obtain knowledge from any parts of the world. Additionally, Palani

(2012) states that reading skill is an important language skill that allows reader to access global scale information in any point of time. Goodman (1988) stated that reading is a receptive language process that initiated with language that written by an individual in the text and continued by interpretation of meaning by the reader after reading. The main purpose on reading is to comprehend the written message contained in the text as it is considered the skill to grasp meaning in a text and also the writer's idea (Harmer, 2007).

Based on the curriculum in the University of Islam Malang, there are three kinds of reading focus, those are literal reading, intensive reading, academic reading and reading for TOEFL as well as critical reading and extensive reading. According to Mistar, Zuhairi and Yanti (2016), Literal reading skill is the ability to understand information that is stated explicitly in the text; thus, when students read for literal meaning, they are concerned merely with surface messages. Meanwhile, in terms of intensive reading Brown (2000) stated that intensive reading involves the analysis of several texts about the same or different topic to comprehend specific information. For academic reading, Wilson (2022) stated that academic reading involves a multi-faceted approach of engagement where the reader uses a range of reading strategies to determine the scope and relevance of a piece and deciding which parts should be read in more depth. Based on the topic of the study in reading for academic achievements, the researcher aims to cover the students' interest in reading English text as well as academic reading materials. Therefore, the study involve third semester students as the participants of the study.

The flexibility of reading by using technology and the availability of reading material due to internet should increase the reading interest of people worldwide. However, the data acquired from Program for International Student Assessment known as PISA, show large number of students in many countries are lacking sufficient reading competence. For instance, in Indonesia, recent record from PISA shows that Indonesia have 371 points of reading literacy which is considerably low compared to OECD countries such as US and UK with average

487 points in reading literacy. Developing reading interest allows the reader to become more literate as practicing reading improves analytical skill in comprehending text as well as the ability to collect information (Greene, 2001). Furthermore, Clark & Rumbold (2006) state that reading interest is fundamental for the development of reading habit and attitude towards reading that aids the mental abilities in the acquisition of knowledge.

Academic achievement refers as performance results that demonstrate how far a person has progressed toward specified goals that were the focus of activities in instructional settings, such as school, college, and university. In this study, academic achievements are focused on content courses which focused on English materials as the focus of reading habit in this research focused on English reading materials. According to Spinath (2012), underlines the significance of academic accomplishment from various perspectives (such as for individuals and societies, as well as psychological and educational research). It means that the most important determining factor in academic achievement is in oneself and the environment, as well as the lecture material that has been taught so far. If their academic achievement is low in one of the lecture materials, then the student is declared not to have passed the material.

There are many studies dedicated to reading interest, for instance, previous study conducted by Popoola, Amoo, Umar, and Olatunji (2020) showed that reading habit significantly influences academic achievement. Moreover, Bawawa, Winarsih, Uspayanti, Naharawarin, Butarbutar, and Manuhutu (2019) found that students' interest in reading is very lack. Factors that cause a lack of the students' interest in reading are factors from within themselves. Furthermore, a study conducted by Mustadi and Amri (2019) showed internal factors namely physical condition, understanding of content and reading needs, reading and attitude skills, vision and hearing, learning motivation and school work needs, psychic maturity, understanding and achievement, body condition and curiosity, body structure and habits. And for external factors namely imitating parents, teacher attention, following peers, peer invitations, cultural situations, practicing religious

teachings, variations of readings from teachers, rules and readiness to get religious readings and commands, readiness to get readings, completeness of reading and religious teachings, peer pressure, culture and climate environment, encouragement and availability of readings, association with friends, reading availability, and parental encouragement. From those previous studies above, this research was different as it focused on analysis of students' interest in reading of the third semester students on academic achievement. Therefore, the researcher is interested in studying students' reading interest for academic purposes.

METHOD

This study was conducted using descriptive qualitative research design to find out the students' interest in reading related to their academic importance and to promote their academic achievement especially in English education program. The participants of this study are originated from the third semester students at University of Islam Malang. The researcher chooses the third semester students because they have finished reading 3 course and they have more freedom in choosing literal reading materials unlike 5th semester who mostly focused on research.

To collect the data, the researcher used reading interest questionnaires and documents of students' reading habit questionnaire in English department as well as interview guidelines to collect the data for the current study. The questionnaire of reading interest is adapted from the questionnaire of Chotimah (2019). The questionnaire consisted of 31 items, 9 items represents enjoyment, 6 items for willingness, 9 items for consciousness, and 6 items for attention. The questionnaire is in the form statements measured using Likert scale with 1 to 5 points. 5 indicates "strongly agree", 4 for "agree", 3 for "neutral", 2 for "disagree" and 1 for "strongly disagree". The score was calculated with the sum of all scales based on the statements. In terms of the interview, the researcher conducted semi structured interview on 10 students with the highest score in the questionnaire. Semi structured interview is chosen because it enables the researcher to ask

additional questions if necessary, to avoid conducting interview more than once. The interview guideline is translated and adapted from Maulidar (2018) that includes the questions about reading interest and interest in reading for academic purposes, difficulties in reading for academic purposes and solution to solve it. The researcher excluded the question about motivation that present in the original interview guideline to adapt with the research question and gain focused result.

In this study, the data collection was done by distributing questionnaire about reading interest to the students in 3rd semester in English department, the questionnaires are distributed in link through WhatsApp in the form of Google form. The researcher gives the students time to answer in three days, after three days, the researcher chose 10 students with the highest result to participate more in the study. The students participating in the interview has been compensated more than other participants. The interview session is expected to be done once via WhatsApp. Moreover, each interview session has been done separately for each participant and one session lasted for approximately 30 minutes. The researcher managed to collect 33 data from the students who answer the questionnaire from one class, and only used 10 participants who have the best score in reading interest questionnaire as interviewee because 10 participants is sufficient for qualitative study and sufficient enough to represent the students participating in the survey. The data analyzed in descriptive qualitative analysis, the questionnaire was analyzed by using excel to measure students' score and the interview was analyzed by using descriptive qualitative query analysis based on Creswell (2006) that consist of data reduction, data management, interpretation and drawing conclusion. The data is presented in order with the research questions.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The finding of the study indicated that students' interest in reading English text, is affected by students' determination to enhance their English proficiency and knowledge. This is in line with the study of Dakhi and Damanik (2018) who

found that many students are motivated to read English text to improve their academic skills, broadens their knowledge, and English language competence. The result indicates students' interest might also come from many aspects such as the characteristic of English language itself. Some students feel easier to comprehend when reading English text and get the western feeling on western related topics. Moreover, English text offers larger availability of information in global sources such as internet compared to other languages. These findings are in contrast with the finding of Maulidar (2018) who indicated that students' difficulties to read English makes the majority of the students feel demotivated and lack of interest to read English text, especially for academic purposes. However, this is in line with Bawawa, et al (2019) that some students preferred English text to improve their English while they are reading.

Other than that, some students perceived that reading interest mostly come from the content of the text, as the quality and attractiveness of the reading content might cause the students to be more interested in reading it. This is in line with Mustadi and Amri (2019) that internal factors influencing reading interest includes the quality of content, understanding of content, vision and hearing, learning motivation and school work needs, achievement, curiosity and habits. Additionally, the newness of the text also drives the students to read an English text. This is in line with Sandria (2020) who found that the students tend to be more interested in reading popular topics and updated articles. In term of students' perception about books and reading materials, the result indicated several perceptions of the students. Most of the students perceive a book as the source of information, other than that some of them also see a book as the instrument to their hobbies and enjoyment as it provides experience that are rarely happens in real life. This finding is in line with Maulidar (2018) where the students explained that the meaning of book to them is the source of information, source of completing assignment and for enjoyment.

Regarding to the difficulties that hinders the students' interest, there are many difficulties encountered by the students including boredom, laziness, and

too difficult reading materials. It is also noted that difficulties to read makes the student feel lazy as they can't understand it anyways. This is in line with the study by Maulidar (2018) that indicates several factors that make the students not interested to read including laziness, lack of motivation, and difficult materials. Moreover, other problem is about the uninteresting reading content as the student lack an option to choose their own reading material in learning situation as several students preferred the material that suits their interest and based on their own choice. These findings show similarity with the study of Mustadi and Amri (2019) that most of the students are reluctant to read reading material provided by their teacher, however, the students are interested when they asked to read the book of their own choice in the library.

The result also indicates several solutions from the students to improve their reading interest such as finding interesting reading material that suits their interest instead of just reading learning materials, keep practicing their reading skills to improve their understanding, and motivate themselves to read a lot so eventually reading might become their habit. These findings have some similarities and difference with Maulidar (2018), the similarities are about finding interesting reading materials and self-motivation, while the new things found in this current study is about the solution to keep practicing and reading habit development.

To answer the second research question, the researcher found that the half of the students participated in the interview believe that they have no interest in academic materials. This is due to some students only interested in reading if the content related to stories or interesting. This is in line with the finding of Dakhi and Damanik (2018) that also indicates students' lack of interest in reading academic text. However, this result is in contrast with Sandria (2020) who found that students have positive responses towards reading in any kinds of text including academic text. Meanwhile, several students mentioned that they only read because of academic demands not interest and one of them only reads to practice and not related to the interest. Moreover, it also revealed that some of the

students read to perform well in the class. Regarding to these, other studies by Mustadi and Amri (2019) and Sandria (2020) showed that most of the students read because of obligations and assignment.

The data also show that some students do not have particular interest on academic reading material, but they have determination to develop reading interest towards reading academic English materials. This findings indicated that students' interest in reading academic text came from internal factors which is in line with Bawawa, et al (2019) who also indicated that internal factors like motivation, curiosity and preference determine the students' reading interest. Regarding the effect of reading interest towards students' achievements, the result shows that the more interest in English reading material the more the students will read it, thus increase the language competence. Other than that, reading interest drives them to read more, and increases general knowledge that boost achievements. Similarly, Papoola (2020) also indicated that reading interest significantly influences students' academic achievements. Moreover, a student also perceived that learning achievements depends on what the students read, if the students read a lot about academic material, their achievement might increase significantly. This is in line with Bawawa (2019) who indicated that reading interest and preference are influential in determining students' achievement. The result also shows that most of the students agreed that reading interest can improve English skills because they also practice English while reading as well as their language fluency. This is in line with Dakhi and Damanik (2018) who stated that reading English text is beneficial to increase students' language competence.

The result also shows that all the students agreed that their reading interest are sufficient to helps them to increase achievements as some students comparing before they started to read English and after they read English a lot. It is revealed after reading a lot of English text, their achievements are increased. Moreover, it is also noted that students' English competence and achievement increased as they get used to read English. This is in line with Papoola, et al (2020) who stated that reading habit, motivation and interest influence the students' tendency to read that

will also affect their academic achievements. Other than that, the more the student read English and the more useful the material is, the student will understand the English materials better, thus increases the score especially in English. Maulidar (2018) stated that reading academic text provides the student with useful information and knowledge to bolster their academic competence.

CONCLUSIONS

From the result of the study it can be concluded that students' interest affected by the availability and ease of access, material, feelings, content quality, newness and popularity of the text. The result also shows that there are many difficulties encountered by the students including boredom, laziness, lack of option and too difficult reading materials as most of the students tend to chose their own reading materials. The study offers solution to improve reading interest such as start reading, finding interesting reading material that suit their interest instead of just reading learning materials, and motivate themselves to read a lot so eventually reading might become their habit. The study also revealed that most of the students have no interest in academic materials and they read because of most of the students read because of obligations and assignment. Regarding the effect of reading interest towards students' achievements, the result shows that the more interest in English reading material the more the students will read it, thus increase the language competence, but it also depends on what the students' read. In terms of English skills, most of the students agreed that reading interest can improve English skills as they practice English while reading and get exposed to the language. Moreover, reading interest influence the students' tendency to read that will also affect their academic achievements.

From the conclusion of the study, the researcher suggested for the students, to find interest to read English text not only in English reading but also in academic text. It is also suggested to find passion or interest towards certain academic topic to increase reading interest. For the teachers and lecturers, it is suggested to prepare reading material as interesting as possible as well as

motivating students to read independently as well as designing reading course that allows the students to choose their own reading materials. For the next researcher, it is suggested to study about English reading interest for non-English department students to reveal more varied English reading interest and difficulties encountered by the students. Because in this study, most English department students already liked to read English text and have little or minor difficulties in understanding English text.

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