

THE PERSPECTIVE OF EFL STUDENTS ON READING TEXTBOOKS AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

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Abstract: In school, students are provided with the textbook as a tool in the teaching-learning process. Hence, this research aimed at investigating the students' perception of the use of textbooks in class. In this research, the researcher used surveys and qualitative methods. 26 students of the 6th-semester study in the English education department of the University of Islam Malang as the subject of the study. The researcher used three instruments in this study. There are questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. Questionnaires were used to gain the students' perception of reading textbooks in class. The use of interviews was aimed to acquire depth information based on the questionnaires, while documentation was used as secondary data to know the students' abilities in the class. The findings showed that even though the students only spent a little time reading, the use of textbooks in the class was effective, helpful, and understandable. Reading textbooks improve their score and abilities in class. The students acknowledge that they might get a standard score if they did not read textbooks. They also admitted that reading textbooks in class are their responsibility, not the lecturers'. For the findings of this research, the researcher suggests the lecturer give the students new strategies to motivate them to read. The researcher also suggests the students not wait for the lecturers' instructions to read textbooks since that is their responsibility. For future research, the researcher expects to conduct the observation directly to meet the subject and deeply investigate the students' anxiety related to the instruction to read by the lecturer.

Keywords: Reading, Students' perspective, Students' expectation, Textbooks

INTRODUCTION

Humans are social creatures which means that human lives depend on other humans. They cannot live in isolation nor do anything by themselves. As social creatures, human needs to interact with other humans, they need language to make it happen. Language is really important for human life. Language itself can help people to communicate with each other. In the world, there are so many languages since every country has different international and local languages.

One of the languages is English. In line with Ilyosovna (2020), 67 countries have English as their language and 27 countries have English as a secondary language. English may not be the most widely spoken language in the world, but there are 53 countries and over 400 million people use English as their language. English is always

developing all the time. Based on Crystal (2003), it happens at the end of the nineteenth century where British colonial power was up and the rise of the United States as the superpower of the world economy. That is the reason why English is spoken in almost every country in the world.

Lauder (2008) states that even though in Indonesia English is not widely spoken, it is still seen as a priority as the most important foreign language to be taught, However, the level of English interest in Indonesia seems not good enough. Indonesia known as the most populous country in the non-English-speaking world continues to be an important market for English education. It also highlights a position in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) community where English is the most spoken language that driving force of globalization with influences extending beyond linguistics also spanning the economy, politics, culture, and ideology (Zein, 2019).

Indonesia has low proficiency in learning English. It is ranked 61st among 100 countries in the world. The data were carried out by English First using English Proficiency Index (EPI) (Yosintha, 2020). If a student wants to be proficient in understanding English, they must also be diligent in reading. Not only low in English but also literacy, Wijayanti (2020) stated that the students read less than they should due to the distraction of the internet. Wijayanti also stated that the reading habit decreases as the use of technology increases. Many students tend to be used social media instead of doing their academic tasks.

Nowadays, English is an international language. There are four skills in English such as reading, speaking, listening, and writing. Reading, one of the skills in English is an important part of learning a new language. But today, many students think that it is difficult to read English books. That is one of the reasons why students are not interested in reading. According to (Berry, Cook, Hill & Steven (2010), many researchers report that the students do not read assignments and do not consider the textbook as an important part of learning. (Sikorski et al., 2002) also surveyed that students only purchased books a few times.

From the previous study, almost 18% of the students reported that they did not read the textbook, and approximately 92% of the students spent up to three hours or less reading their finance book. It means that some of the students only spent time reading a book in a week. Some students realize that they did not aware of what their professors expect from them by spending only a little time reading (Berry et al., 2010). The students know how important reading is, but they choose to not read the textbook (Culver & Hutchens (2021), Aagard et al (2014)). The statements show that textbook seems not used well in the teaching-learning process. All previous studies also only revealed the students' perception of how important reading is and how much the students take time to read.

METHOD

Research Design

This research aims to determine students' perspectives about the use of textbooks whether printed or digital textbooks and the student's achievement in English learning. Therefore, the type of approaches that use in this research is surveys and qualitative research. The researcher uses a qualitative research approach in order to get deep data where it contains a purpose. This research has a descriptive quality which is the collected data can be in the form of words or pictures so that it does not emphasize a numeral form. Then, in this study, the researcher investigates University of Islam Malang students' perspectives related to the use of textbooks in the teaching-learning process.

Participants

The subject of this research was the students in their 6th semester in the English Education Department at the University of Islam Malang. 26 students were chosen to fill out the questionnaire. Those students were using textbooks since their first semester and have been using textbooks both in offline and online classes. The reason why the researcher chooses the students from the 6th semester is that they have been using textbooks longer than the students in the early semester. The researcher also takes two students to be the participants in the interview. The first student is someone who

routinely read the textbooks and the second student is someone who rarely read the textbooks.

Instruments

To answer the research problems, the researcher used questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. There are 23 statements in the questionnaire. The researcher modified the questionnaires based on the students' use and perception (Cuttler, 2019) and Tiffany and Hutchens (2021). The questionnaire was divided into three sections which are 8 statements consisting of the student's perception of textbooks in the class, 8 statements consisting of how students perceive the benefits of textbooks, and 7 statements consisting of their expectations about the use of textbooks in class. The researcher used SPSS to check the reliability test. It shows that the result of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.653 which means that the data have consistency and stability. The next instrument is the interview. Both of interview and questionnaire have been validated by the lecturer with 12 years of experience in teaching. The third instrument is documentation. The researcher used the students' report cards as documentation.

Data Collection

The researcher conducted the research in the pandemic era. Therefore, the researcher did not meet the subject directly. To collect the questionnaire data, the researcher used Google Form to make it easier. After that, the researcher distributed the link to Google Form through Whatsapp Group. For the interview, the researcher also used Whatsapp group to collect the data from the participant. After collecting the interview data, the researcher asked participants to send their student report cards in order to answer the research problem.

Data analysis

There are three instruments in this study. The first instrument is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was analyzed using a formula from Sugiyono (2013). While the data of the interview was analyzed by using three components of analyzing data from Miles and Huberman. The data of documentation was analyzed by comparing the students' report cards from two participants. The first participant is someone who always read textbooks and the second participant is someone who rarely read textbooks.

FINDINGS

The findings provide the data gathered by using internet-based research. The researcher used Google Forms and Whatsapp applications as tools to collect the data. The finding aims to answer the research problem of this research. The researcher used three instruments to collect the data. The first is a questionnaire. There are 20 questions which 19 questions ask about the student's perspective of textbooks and three questions ask about their self-efficacy. Those 23 questions had been shared with the 26 students of the sixth-semester class using Google form. After gathering the answers, the researcher analyzed them in-depth in the form of percentages. The second data was gathered by using interviews. The result of the questionnaire on students' perception of textbooks as tools in the teaching-learning process can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Students' Perception of the Textbooks as Tools in the Teaching Learning Process

Statements	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
I routinely read the textbooks in the majority of my courses.	0	26.9	38.5	34.6	0
I read textbooks usually more than 1 hour	3.8	34.6	34.6	23.1	3.8
I read textbooks at least 3 days per week	15.4	23.1	42.3	15.4	3.8
I read textbooks if only I will have quizzes or exam	0	19.2	30.8	38.5	11.5
I read textbooks only to complete my assignment	0	15.4	34.6	23.1	26.9
I routinely use the textbooks during classes	3.8	19.2	50	23.1	3.8
Times have changed. Reading is no longer important	30.8	38.5	19.2	11.5	0
Reading textbooks is important for me	0	3.8	38.5	34.6	23.1

From table 1, it can be concluded that many students routinely read the textbook yet they only read for less than an hour. They did not read textbooks every day or at least three days per week. They also acknowledge the statement that they only read textbooks if they will have quizzes and assignments but they routinely read textbooks during class.

The students admit that reading is important therefore, they have to read textbooks to be successful in the course. Almost all respondents agree that reading is

still important in this era. It can be supported by the statement of the two interviewees. The first respondent stated that *“The use of textbooks recently in the class had been effective as long as we can use it maximally. That is the reason why I prefer using textbooks as tools in class. I realize that textbook is really important for me”*. The second respondent also stated the same statement *“I prefer to use textbooks in class. The use of textbook in the class have been effective yet it should be improved. By using textbooks, I could get more knowledge and information besides there are many mediums that we can use nowadays”*.

Table 2. How the students perceive the benefits of reading textbooks

Statements	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
I can easily understand the material in the textbooks	0	7.7	46.2	42.3	3.8
The textbooks which I read are really interesting	0	19.2	42.3	30.8	7.7
The textbooks which I read are understandable	3.8	19.2	30.8	42.3	3.8
The textbooks which I read are really helpful	0	0	34.6	57.7	7.7
It is very important to read the textbooks to be successful in my classes	0	0	30.8	46.2	23.1
	A	B	C	D	E
The most frequent grade you can earn on an exam if you do NOT read the textbooks	3.8	15.4	42.3	23.1	15.4
The most frequent grade you can earn in a course if you do NOT read textbooks	3.8	3.8	30.8	42.3	19.2

From the result above, we can conclude that the students know that textbooks help them to get a good score. They also acknowledge that the textbooks are understandable and interesting. To determine whether the students were academically superior and able to pass the course without reading, the researcher asked them to report their abilities. Based on the data obtained that 61.5% of students reported that they consider average. Most respondents also stated that they might get a “B” in the exam without reading and get a “D” score for an overall course if they do not read textbooks. In addition, from the topic discussion about “Can you pass the course without reading textbooks”, all of the respondents stated that they cannot pass the course without reading the textbook. The first respondent stated that *“We cannot pass the course*

without reading because it will be hard for us to understand the material. It is also difficult to understand the material in the class if we do not read the textbook before entering the class” The second participant stated that *“Actually, we can pass the course without reading, but we can be assured about it. Sometimes, the students who often read the textbook for the course can get only a standard score, you can imagine if we do not read the textbook”*.

The first respondent in the questionnaire stated that he rarely read the textbook in the course, but based on his students’ report cards, he got a “B” in the Statistics and Introduction to SLA lecture. The second participant stated that she often read textbooks in the course. She got an A in the Introduction to SLA and a “B” in the Statistics on ELT. Both of the lectures use the textbook as a tool in their teaching-learning process. It is clear from the result above that the students know that they might get a standard score in the class without reading a textbook but, some of them rarely or seldom read a textbook in the course.

Table 3. Student’s expectation about the use of textbooks

Statements	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
My lecturer always give test based on the textbooks	0	19.2	46.2	30.8	3.8
Professors should include questions on the exams about content that was NOT covered in class	0	15.4	57.7	23.1	3.8
It is the professor’s responsibility to motivate students to read his/her textbook	3.8	15.4	34.6	38.5	7.7
It is my responsibility to read the textbooks	0	2.8	24.6	46.2	15.4
Professors should teach reading skills on reading strategies in their courses	0	3.8	34.6	50	11.5
I feel pressured when the professor asks me to read	11.5	26.9	30.8	23.1	7.7

From the data above, it can be concluded that the students expect their lecturer to give tests based on the textbook they gave. The students also expect the lecturers to always motivate them in reading their textbooks. Even though they need the lecturer to always motivate them, they realize that reading textbooks are their responsibility. That

is also the reason why they do not feel pressured to read textbooks yet they still expect their lecturer to teach them some strategies in reading textbooks.

That conclusion is also supported by the answer of the interviewees. The first respondent stated that *“The lecturer should make the students like reading. It will make them easier to understand the material by reading textbooks in the class.”* He also stated that *“The textbooks should be provided in every English Education lecture because we will get more knowledge. It will help the students to answer questions from the lecturer or non-English major friends and it can be references to make journal or paper”*. He also expects that *“My lecturers can help the students more understand with the use of textbooks in their classes”*.

In summary, the students expect their lecturer to be active in motivating them to read. Besides it help them to be motivated, it helps the teacher to be easier in explaining the lessons.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings above, the use of textbooks in the class is effective even though the students only spent a little time reading textbooks. Based on the findings, the students only read for less than an hour. The students also acknowledge that they only read if they will get quizzes or assignments since that is their responsibility to do the tasks. This finding is related to Schilling & Hammond (2019) that in this digital era, students do not enjoy their time reading traditional textbooks. The students tend to read textbooks only to focus on what earns them points in class but that is not what the instructors' expected. The students admitted that they only have a little frequency in reading. The finding is in line with Cesar, Gaona & González, (2011) reading frequency is one activity when someone read for some minutes or hours. They also stated that people's interest in the books can be shown by their reading frequencies. The higher frequencies of reading, the more they have high motivation to learn and got insight and knowledge. However, the finding researcher found that giving quizzes and assignments to the students can increase their frequency to read textbooks. The way the students spent their little time reading is consistent with a previous report from Berry et al

(2010). He stated that approximately 92% of the students reported that the students only spent three hours or less reading their textbooks.

Reading a textbook is important because textbooks provide knowledge, language skills, and information that the students need (Medina, 2018). This theory is in line with the finding that the students acknowledge that reading is important for them. They also stated that reading is important for them to be successful in class. In line with the previous study from Berry et al (2010) that students perceive reading their textbook as it relates to their course grade. The students admit that they could earn C or lower in a course if they do not read the textbook. The researcher also found from the interview that the students' aim to read is to comprehend the textbook rather than looking for a good score. This finding is in line with Sikorski et al (2002) that who found that most students who purchased textbooks perceived that studying class notes is better than reading for receiving a good grade. The students also admitted that reading is no longer important therefore, they only read for less than an hour. It can be concluded that the literacy in reading English Textbooks is low. This finding is supported by the data from English First that Indonesia ranked 61st among 100 countries in the world (Yosintha, 2020).

From the researcher's analysis, students suggested that the professors should motivate them to read. Based on students' perspectives some of the lecturers did not motivate or teach them some strategies to read. These findings support a previous study from Culver & Hutchens (2020). They stated that the students' survey revealed that instructors may not be holding students accountable for reading. There are 43% of students reported regularly reading their textbooks yet they had varied opinions regarding the instructor's role in motivating them and if the exams should include textbook material not covered in class. Motivating students to read is important. Kuşdemir & Bulut (2018) revealed a positive correlation between reading comprehension and reading motivation. Besides families, teachers or lecturers should be considered in reading motivation. The researcher ask the students about their abilities and if they were able to pass courses without reading. Over half of the respondents consider themselves to be average. Developing self-efficacy depends on how well students' reading performance is. Hence, the key to promoting self-efficacy is ensuring

success in reading (Schiefele et al., 2012). The subject of this study stated that they got many benefits from reading textbooks. Textbooks help them to understand the material in the class and help them to have long-term memories of the lesson. These finding related to Hutchinson & Torres as cited in Ramadhana et al. (2019) that textbooks help students to remember and permanently records the materials that have been learned.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding and the discussions from the previous chapter, the students acknowledge that the use of textbooks in the class gives them a positive impact. They find that the use of textbooks in the class is effective and helpful. Even though the students only spent a little time reading, they admitted that they can get many information and knowledge. Based on chapter four, the students agree with some statements that the textbooks they used are understandable and helpful. Reading is important for the students to be successful in class. The students acknowledge that they could earn a D score or worse than that if they did not read the textbooks. The research found that the students who read a lot of textbooks get a better score rather than the students who seldom or never read textbooks. Moreover, the students admitted that reading textbooks are their responsibility, not the lecturers'. However, many students still seldom read their textbooks. Lack of motivation from their lecturer can be one of the reasons. That is the reason why they expect their lecturer to motivate them. They also ask the lecturer to give them some strategies to more comprehend the textbooks. For the findings of this research, the researcher suggests the lecturer give the students new strategies to motivate them to read. The researcher also suggests the students not wait for the lecturers' instructions to read textbooks since that is their responsibility. For future research, the researcher expects to conduct the observation directly to meet the subject and deeply investigate the students' anxiety related to the instruction to read by the lecturer.

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