

CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS READING INTEREST AND TOEFL READING COMPREHENSION ABILITY

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Abstract

Reading is important skill in life, it allows the reader to gain information unbound by age of information and space. Through reading, an individual will be able to gain knowledge from many places in the world. Reading comprehension is process of comprehending what is being read. Reading interest is the basis aspect that drive and motivates an individual to read. Each person has different way and interest to read, the most notable aspects that determine interest in reading is gender

Quantitative approach was used as the research design of this study. The population was English third semester students at University of Islam Malang. The researcher chose 49 students who had already filled out the questionnaire. The instruments were reading questionnaire and TOEFL reading task, which used to know students reading interest, which used to know the correlation between reading interest and TOEFL reading comprehension. The techniques involved two steps; giving a questionnaire and collecting students' score from lecturers' document. To analyze the data, the researcher used Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation on SPSS version 24.

The results of the study showed Based on the study's findings, the researcher concludes that Significant correlation exists between English reading interest and TOEFL reading comprehension score with Sig = 0.004 and low level of correlation with the correlation $r = 0.405$. This indicated that better students' English reading interest also better in their TOEFL reading comprehension score, which replied to the first question. Additionally, the study also revealed that there is no significant difference in students' gender both in English reading interest with Sig = 0.144 and TOEFL reading comprehension score with Sig 0.809 which indicated that the difference in academic performance between male and female students in terms of English reading interest are not far different.

Keywords: Reading interest, TOEFL reading comprehension, students gender.

INTRODUCTION

English is the most popular foreign language nowadays. People have many reasons to learn English in this globalized era (Ni'mah & Sholihah, 2022). Language is important parts of communication. English is the first foreign language in Indonesia. Learning English has been applied since elementary school. In learning English there are four abilities, including speaking, reading, listening and writing. Teaching English should be cover the four language skills, in English reading are language skills that holds special place among other skills in gaining information beyond interaction and oral communication. Anderson (1985) defined reading as one of language skills that involves process of making meaning and understanding the content from written texts.

Reading is important skill in life, it allows the reader to gain information unbound by age of information and space. (Ni'mah & Sholihah 2022) stated that reading as a receptive skill helps students to comprehend and respond to the text they read. Through reading, an individual will be able to gain knowledge from many places in the world and from author who already passed away.

According to Hornby (1995) writings and articles is the immortalization of the authors' knowledge that will inform others beyond their time. Reading is an essential part in learning the language because it provides many opportunities for students to learn language and information. The most essential aspect that promotes tendency of reading is reading interest. Reading interest is a basis motivation to do reading activity. In Indonesia, the interest of reading is considered below average which is shown by low literacy of the population. Based on the study of Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018, it is shown that Indonesia has low literacy level with the score 371 in comparison to the average of OECD countries of 487 point. Moreover, the study by PISA in 2017 on 72 countries shows that Indonesia is ahead of Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Brazil. But ranked 62 out of 72 countries. The Indonesian score for reading is 397 compared to average score of all 72 countries of 493 point. Therefore, it is necessary to promote interest of reading in Indonesia.

Reading interest is the basis aspect that drive and motivates an individual to read. According to Brown and Lent (2003), "reading interest of an individual can be defined as individual preferences, like or dislike for, and indifference to reading activity". Interest can be developed through motivation; therefore, support and motivation are needed to promote students' interest in reading (Chotimah, 2020). In the attempt to promote reading interest, it is necessary to understand what is the driving factors promoting interest itself.

In this research reading Interest mean that students' interesting and understanding in reading the TOEFL text to know the students' ability especially in TOEFL reading comprehension. According to (Dewi, Fahrurrozi, Hasanah & Wahyudi 2020), Reading interest means a high tendency towards reading activity or a high willingness in reading activity, or can be identified with the love for reading. According to Shnayer, 1968 as cited in Dewi, et.al (2020) stated that "reading interest is recognized as a multidimensional construct, incorporating one's affective, cognitive and behavioral tendencies towards an object, event or tasks related to reading".

According to Alexander (1988), there are two main heading for the factors influencing interest in reading, those are personal and institutional. Personal factors include age, gender, abilities, mental health issues, and attitude while institutional factors involve material accessibility, facility, attitude on reading, competition, and getting pleasure. These factors are the advice on how to improve quality of reading interest and will promote reading comprehension. In identifying students' reading interest, it is necessary to understand indication of students' interest. Skinner (1984) noted four indications that shows the pleasure, willingness, consciousness, and concentration that kids have for reading. Moreover, Chotimah (2020) Also add that attitude, habit, facility, and motivation are four factors that might have an impact on a person's interest in reading.

Comprehension has the same meaning as understanding. It is the capability to grasp meaning in a text and also the writer's idea. It is readers' ability to understand the author's message which is influenced by their background knowledge in the topic given by the text. According to Hornby (1995, p.235), "comprehension is means and has excessively aimed at improving or testing one's understanding of a language whether written or spoken". Comprehension is not only needed in a student's reading activities, but also to measure the ability of each student in the classroom.

Comprehension and understanding identical means. It is capacity to discern the author's intention and meaning from a text. The ability of readers to comprehend the author's message and can restate it with their own sentences. According to Hornby (1995), "Comprehension means and has excessive aims in improving or testing one's understanding of a language whether written or spoken".

In addition to being necessary for a student's reading assignments, comprehension is also important for assessing each student's aptitude in the classroom.

Brown (2003) stated that “reading comprehension in general viewed is the resulting from the four-way interaction between readers, text, task, and structured activity”. The availability of high quality content and strategic approaches to new problem solving scenarios are essential to the success of this engagement. Additionally, reading comprehension the process of engaging with written language and concurrently deriving and constructing meaning. Simply said, reading comprehension is process of comprehending what is being read. It is an intentional, engaged, and interactive process that occurs before, during, and after, and following the inadvertent reading of a specific piece of writing.

(P. D. Longman, 2004, as cited in Hidayanti, Zuhairi, Kurniasih, 2021) The test score for TOEFL is measured based on the result from three sections of listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension. In Indonesia, English proficiency is an important factor to be measured due to the advance of globalization. TOEFL is the most internationally recognized test for measuring a people level of English (Warfield, et.al, 2013). One of which is reading. According to Stoller, (2002) reading is a way to draw information from the printed page and to interpret the information appropriately. The EFL students need to take the TOEFL test to measure their English achievement, and this is also a compulsory test regulated by universities (Hidayanti, Zuhairi & Kurniasih, 2021). We can take a TOEFL test to see how proficient we are in the English language because it is a recognized standard. Currently, one of the conditions for receiving an international scholarship is a passing TOEFL score. There are a lot of people who can take the TOEFL exam. Mahmud, 2014 stated that, in Indonesia TOEFL certified internationally is held by the English Language System (ETS). A TOEFL score is now required to graduate from all Indonesian universities, and it is even now a prerequisite to be hired. This prerequisite was established by university administrators because they feel that the TOEFL can assess students' proficiency with and aptitude for understanding English in academic contexts (Aliponga, 2013).

There are many studies regarding comprehension of TOEFL reading, one of which is the study by Antoni (2014) stated that the difficulties experienced by students in interpreting texts, vocabulary restrictions, and time constraints. Another research by Octarina (2018), many questions from Deborah Philips' TOEFL book were used in this study. That is, a challenge in locating the basic idea, the Implied Detail Question, the Unstated Detail Question, the Stated Detail Question, and the Vocabulary Question. According to this study, students had the most trouble locating the text's core concepts because of their limited vocabulary. Then, expanding your vocabulary should be your first priority

Male and female have their own exclusive preference when it comes to reading material. Uusen & Muursepp (2012) found that only few male students that prefer reading from books, they mostly prefer reading from digital source using computer and browsing while female have more students who tend to read from books. However female students mostly read novel and fiction while male tend to read about what is applicable for their daily routines. Moreover, Ameyaw (2017) also found that male students tend to read about lifestyle while female students tend to read novels, it also found that male students read more often but only to find information that they need while female tend to finish what they read. This indicates that gender plays important role in determining preference and interest in reading.

Considering the importance of reading comprehension that is related to reading interest, which is affected by the gender of the students, the researcher wants to look at the correlation between gender, reading interest, and reading comprehension.

METHOD

The researcher used quantitative research design. For this research, which was done to ascertain the association amongst students' reading interest and TOEFL reading comprehension, the researcher particularly used a quantitative correlation design. This research was mean to determine whether reading interest among students and TOEFL reading comprehension were significantly correlated. The study would conduct to students in their third semester at the University of Islam Malang. There were two variables measured in this study those are students' reading interest and TOEFL reading comprehension. Students at the University of Islam Malang's third semester contribute to the study's population. The researcher chose the third semester as the population because the third semester are undergoing TOEFL reading comprehension material. The sample that used by researcher is 49 students collected with random sampling technique. The samples are collected by distributing questionnaire and TOEFL reading text, it requires 4 times of follow up to get enough data for the study because the students require lots of free time to answer both questionnaire and TOEFL test.

In this research, the data collection would be done by distributing questionnaire about reading interest to the students and collecting TOEFL reading comprehension score from the TOEFL reading comprehension section test based on the example of TOEFL ITP test. Due to the social distance policy, the data collection was carried out online using a Google form. The data were analyzing quantitatively use Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24 to analyze correlation between reading interest between male and female and TOEFL reading comprehension. Meanwhile, to measure significant difference between male and female students in their reading interest, the researcher applied Independent Sample T-test. The data then presented using table or figure in the finding to be discussed in discussion session.

FINDING

The result of this research acquired through data collection and data analysis which aims to respond the research question. The data were collected from TOEFL reading comprehension test and questionnaire of students' interest in reading English language text. The data analysis is done using SPSS 24 and results of the study are presented as follows:

Table 1. Correlation between students' reading interest and TOEFL reading comprehension

		Interest	TOEFL
Interest	Pearson's correlation	1	.405**
	Sig. (2 - tailed)		.004
	N	49	49

TOEFL	Pearson's correlation	.405	1
	Sig. (2 - tailed)	.004**	
	N	49	49

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The data shows reading interest and TOEFL reading comprehension are positive correlated have the Pearson Correlation score of $r = 0.405$ which is considered as moderate correlation coefficient. However, the significance shows Sig. = 0.004 which is lower than 0.01. This indicated that the two variables are positive at 0.01 and have low correlation coefficient. Therefore, from this result it might be assumed that the hypothesis alternative (H_a) is approve and null hypothesis H_0 is rejected.

Based on the data, the researcher found the mean differences between male and female in reading interest. The researcher then analyzes the data using Independent Sample T-test to get the outcome of significant differences between male and female in reading interest. The outcome is shown following is:

Table 2. The difference between male and female in reading interest

Group statistic

Gender	N	Mean	S.D	Std. Error mean
Male	20	3.33	5.27	0.34
Female	29	3.9	6.78	0.68

The outcome indicates that female students are more interested in reading with the score of 3.9 compared to male students with 3.33 but not far different.

DISCUSSION

In this part, the researcher meant to show the finding from the result along with the discussion from the finding of previous studies. The analysis of this study presents a clear answer to the research question. From the table 4.2, it might be seen that there is a positive correlation between reading interest and TOEFL reading comprehension, as the value is at $r = 0.405$ with the level of significance of 0.004 which indicates that the two variables have low correlation but significant at 0.01. This result is same with the study conducted by Susanto (2015) that was evident when students received high scores for their interest test scores and their reading comprehension and students who were highly interested in reading were able to read more proficiently than those who were not. Furthermore, it is also related with the finding of Chotimah (2020) who also found low but significant correlation between reading interest and reading comprehension capability. The outcome of this study that reading interest support TOEFL reading comprehension also supported by the theory of the most important ability for academic success is reading, according to Brown (2003). Additionally, Dewi

(2019) demonstrated that motivating kids to read requires creating a positive reading environment, and that reading frequently facilitates comprehension of texts.

Moreover, the statistic shows that the female students have higher score in both reading habit and TOEFL reading comprehension with mean difference of 3.45 and significance of 0.144 for reading interest and 0.6034 and significance of 0.809 for TOEFL reading comprehension. The outcome is consistent with research from Purnama (2017) shows that female students have higher score in reading interest and also reading comprehension compared to male students which in line with this study that female students have more score in reading comprehension due to the higher score of reading interest. Furthermore, more recent study by Adiarti (2018) that female students have higher score in reading interest and frequency of reading. This support the previous result that more enthusiasm for reading also promotes the students' tendency to read.

The significance of 0.144 for reading interest and significance of 0.809 for TOEFL reading comprehension which shows that in terms of reading interest and TOEFL reading comprehension, male and female students do not significantly differ from one another. This is consistent with Lestari's (2018) study show that no discernible difference in the frequency of reading and interest of reading, and the thing that differs both male and female students are preference of reading. More recent study by Chotimah (2020) also showed students that are female have higher score in reading comprehension (Ni'mah, 2022) but there is not a significant disparity in reading comprehension between men and women. This is supported by statement of Oda (2017) that have the same result says there is no statistically significant difference in reading comprehension between students based on gender and each gender have dominance in different strategy. Old further stated that while female students read more and applies more strategies in reading, male students also applied more strategy in discussion and post reading, therefore, identical reading comprehension examination was unable to reflects the difference between male and female students as they have difference way to read and preference in reading material.

CONCLUSSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the study's findings, the researcher concludes that positive correlation exists between English reading interest and TOEFL reading comprehension score with Sig = 0.004 and moderate level of correlation with the correlation $r = 0.405$. This indicated that better students' English reading interest also better in their TOEFL reading comprehension score, which replied to the first question. Additionally, the study also revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female both in English reading interest which indicated that the difference in academic performance between male and female students in terms of English reading interest and TOEFL reading comprehension are not far different.

Through the results of the research, the researcher gives suggestion to several parties as follows; for the student to improve reading interest especially in English text to get better score at TOEFL reading comprehension section that might influence TOEFL score in general. For the lecturer, encouraging students' enthusiasm in reading is suggested

English-language text in their free time in addition for teaching TOEFL reading strategies and reading skills, so that the students have more time to develop their reading skills independently. For the next researcher, there are many weaknesses in this current study. It is suggested for the next researcher to collect the data from students at the late semester who already completed their TOEFL test because in this research, the author encounters difficulties in collecting data because the students

still need to do TOEFL test on their own which result in longer data collection, more follow up and some students did not give their best in completing the test.

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