

## READING INTEREST OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

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### Abstract

Nowadays, the development of the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language has been transformed. Learners do not only focus on the learning of speaking and writing but also reading since they are required to be able to smartly respond to the texts they are reading. The development of the information and technology forces the focus of teaching and learning on the critical reading that might be less interesting for the students. The students may not know their interest in reading before they start reading. A unique condition in Magelang regency, a small town close to Yogyakarta, the students of senior high schools have achieved their best achievement for their learning that can be seen from the rank of the school that becomes the best school in terms of the final examination in Central Java. To know the teaching and learning of English in that school can be an alternative for other schools. Based on the case study conducted in some schools in Magelang regency, it can be found that the teaching and learning are still varied. The findings were discussed under the following terms; students' reading activities, mastery of reading skills, reading materials, and reading modality. It is a problem for the success of language teaching as the students can have low motivation in reading if the reading materials were not interesting for them.

**Key Words:** *Reading, EFL, Reading Interest*

### Abstrak

Perkembangan belajar mengajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing telah berubah. Pembelajar tidak hanya berfokus pada bagaimana belajar berbicara dan menulis tetapi juga membaca karena mereka harus mampu merespon dengan cerdas teks yang mereka baca. Perkembangan informasi dan teknologi memaksa perubahan focus belajar dan mengajar oada penguatan kemampuan membaca kritis yang dipandang kurang menarik bagi pembelajar. Para pembelajar bias jadi tidak mengetahui minat mereka terhadap membaca sebelum mereka memulai untuk membaca. Sebuah kondisi yang unik di kota Magelang, sebuah kota kecil yang terletak dekat dengan Yogyakarta sebagai kota Pelajar, para pembelajar di sekolah negeri di Magelang mampu mencapai nilai tertinggi di Jawa Tengah dalam Ujian Akhir Nasional. Salah satu motivasi unik bagi peneliti untuk mengetahui kegiatan yang dilakukan di sekolah di Magelang. Temuan tersebut dapat dijadikan alternative bagi sekolah lain untuk menerapkan tips dan trik yang sama untuk mengembangkan pembelajarannya. Berdasarkan studi kasus yang telah dilakukan pada beberapa sekolah di kota Magelang, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa proses pembelajarannya masih beragam dan belum terfokus pada kemampuan membaca kritis. Temuan-temuan tersebut akan dibahas lebih lanjut lagi pada aspek-aspek berikut ini: minat baca, kegiatan membaca pemelajar, penguasaan kemampuan membaca, bahan bacaan dan modalitas dalam membaca.

**Kata Kunci:** *Membaca, EFL, Minat Baca*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The teaching of reading has been changed from the learning of passive language skills mostly known as reading and listening to the active ones; speaking and writing. The teaching of English had been focused on the implementation of reading class since the main purpose of learning English was to be able to read and write. In the following decade, the teaching of reading has been changed into the teaching active skills, speaking and writing. This change was on the influence of the students' curiosity of communicating with other people all over the world. People are getting interested in mastering the ability to speak to be able to communicate directly with other language users. The current trend of language teaching in Indonesia, especially with the influence of technology, the free mass media forces the students to be ready with any possibility of the free information offered by the technology. Therefore, the teaching of English as a foreign language is on reading skills.

Facing the current demand and the condition as elaborated above, the students should have high reading skills mastery. The students are expected to be able to not only understand the texts but also criticizing the texts they read. It can be seen from the curriculum developed by the government for the senior high school students. The main purpose of English language teaching and learning is the empowerment of the higher order thinking skills. There are various preparation to succeed this goal. The teachers should be trained in critical reading and they have to believe on the critical reading benefits. The teachers are expected to have positive views on the students' ability to criticize texts.

To achieve the learning goals, the teachers make their teaching and learning preparation to accommodate the students in mastering the reading skills. Training the students' critical thinking is not a direct activity that does not pass the lower order thinking skills. The micro- and macro skills of reading should be mastered first before they can criticize the texts. This requires systematic preparation to make the teaching and learning process more practical and feasible. The selection of the reading materials are also important for the teacher to consider before they teach. The students will have higher motivation in reading if they access sophisticated reading materials. Improving the students' motivation during the teaching is a must and it can be done through providing engaging reading materials. Then, the selection of the learning activities is also one of the key success of the teaching of reading. Monotonous activities will be boring for the students and it will decrease the students' motivation in reading. The teaching media to facilitate the students in learning through selected learning activities is highlighted depending on the appropriateness and the feasibility.

The facility provided by the schools also plays important role in the success of the learning goals. The teaching of reading is successful if it is supported by the completeness of the facility. Many teachers have known well how to teach their students according to the teaching and learning theories they have learned. Supporting the students with the facilities that suit to the students' needs and demands is crucial for the success of teaching and learning. In the modern era, the teaching and learning should not only be done based on paper works but it also from multimodal used, for examples, pictures and videos. The existence of digital

media such as LCD and computer can help the teacher in achieving the learning goals. Students are curious on the use of new media during their class and it can improve the students' motivation in learning. If the schools do not facilitate the teachers with the learning media needed, it is difficult for them to succeed the teaching and learning.

From all of the factors elaborated above, the main factor influencing the success of teaching and learning is the students' motivation in learning. It is proven that the students' learning motivation becomes one of the crucial aspects of the success of the teaching and learning. Students as human beings have their own interest on something that can influence the teaching and learning. The use of teaching techniques, learning materials, learning media and also the learning activities are the external motivation which can improve the success of the teaching and learning. While the internal motivation can be improved by having heart to heart relationship between the teacher and the students also among the students. By having high learning motivation in reading, the students can improve their reading comprehension and their interest on the reading activities.

Dealing with the students' motivation, the reading interest of the students plays important roles. The students' interest on reading influences the teachers in teaching reading in relation with the learning materials and the media used in delivering the reading materials. The theme and types of texts given to the students should be considered based on the students' learning characteristics and the needs of the students in learning. Types of media used to present the teaching and learning materials directly attract the students if the media are up to date and represent the students' current

interest, for example the use of internet and computer. The students are getting familiar with the use of internet and computer so it will increase the students' motivation to learn. Improving the students' interest by providing interesting learning materials and activities can be an alternative for the teachers in reading classes.

### **Reading**

Reading purpose has been defined as the reasons behind the process of reading any written texts (Thomas, 2001). There are four reading purposes defined by Thomas; being entertained, understanding life, understanding oneself, and understanding others. Being entertained means that the readers read to be entertained which depend on their characteristics of entertainment. Through reading, various information can be gathered to not only understand the content which might be someone else' experiences but also feelings of others. Whether the reading purposes can be classified into two types, pragmatic and recreational purposes. Pragmatic purpose deals with the reading as a need of gathering information. The recreational purpose pursues the enjoyment and entertainment of the readers in reading the texts.

It seems that reading purposes play important roles on the reading comprehension. As mentioned earlier by Linderhold, Cong, and Zhao (2008) on their study, reading purpose influences the success of comprehending texts. Through having different purpose of reading, the readers will use different types of reading skills. To read an important task of reading, the readers will have different skills of reading from the reading for pleasure. Skimming and scanning will be done during the reading of important task but reading for

pleasure or entertainment will require more skills of previewing, predicting, and also making inference. Thus, reading purposes might have different types of reading skills.

Rosenshine in Hudson (2011: 80-1) defines seven skills of reading. They are (1) recognizing sequence, (2) recognizing words in context, (3) identifying the main ideas, (4) decoding detail, (5) drawing inferences, (6) recognizing cause and effect, and (7) comparing and contrasting. Recognizing sequence is the ability of know the sequence of the text read. Understanding the meaning of words in context also important skill of reading. Finding the main ideas and the supporting details can improve the reading comprehension which finally lead the readers to draw inferences from the texts. Finding the pattern of the text, the cause and effect, comparison and contrast becomes the last reading skills needed. Those reading skills are still on the reading comprehension skills.

### **Teaching of Reading**

The development of the information and technology also influences the teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia, especially in the teaching of reading. Basically, the teaching of reading has been focused on the communicative language teaching since the recent language function is mostly to be able to communicate with others in the target language. The teaching of speaking and writing were highlighted though the teaching of listening and reading were also paid attention. The integration of the four language skills are viewed as important combination in the teaching of language because language skills are unseparatable. But with the explosion of the written texts as the digital texts have been widely spread and there is a great

demand for the society to master the skills of reading.

Anderson (1991) previously has been elaborated the principles of teaching reading. The teacher should exploit the readers' background knowledge and followed by build a strong vocabulary base. The mastery of the vocabulary in context may help the readers to make the comprehension as the third principle is teaching for reading comprehension. After the students are able to comprehend texts, they are exposed to be able to have high speed in reading or increase reading rate. Then, the students are taught the reading strategies and the teacher encourages the students to transform strategies into skills. Building assessment and evaluation are the next principle in teaching reading. Lastly, the students should have striven for continuous improvement as a reading instructor. To encounter those teaching principles, the teachers should consider other aspects such as reading materials, reading techniques, reading strategies, and reading modes.

Following Anderson, Harmer (2007: 201-2) proposed some basic principles of teaching reading in nature. Those principles are (1) encouraging the students to read, (2) engaging students in what they are reading, (3) encouraging students to respond to the content of a text and exploring the feelings on it, (4) asking the students to make prediction as major factor in reading, (5) matching the task to the topic in using intensive reading class, and (6) exploiting the text to the full. Each of the principles of teaching reading should be considered in making preparation of the reading class, during the teaching of reading, and the evaluation of the teaching.

The teaching of reading is growing based on the needs of reading itself. Many

readers are getting realized what the actual skills needed for their self-development. As proposed by Trilling and Fadel (2009: 49), the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, known as 4Cs, are critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. Those skills are also embedded in the teaching of reading. The students are required to master those skills to be ready with the real condition of the new era. Thus, the teachers should accommodate the skills in their teaching by considering the features of the subject they teach.

The teaching of reading has been focused on the critical reading, for some, and this is also for the mastery of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Critical reading skills are the implementation of higher order thinking skills. The mastery of lower order thinking skills is also highlighted to enable the students to master the higher order thinking skills. Scanning, skimming, previewing and predicting are the first reading skills should be mastered before they master the critical reading skills. The teachers should consider the portion of teaching each skill and the reading activities for the students to achieve the learning purposes.

In the communication language teaching, the implementation of communication and collaboration has made great changes and influences on the students learning process, learning input, and learning outcome. The communicative language teaching emphasizes the teaching of communicative skills which combines collaborative teaching. The teachers philosophically develop the teaching and learning goals, activities, and materials based on the communicative language teaching. The collaboration for the students can be done not only among the students, but also with the teachers and third parties which

help to achieve the success of teaching and learning.

The creativity facilitates the constructivism in which students should be able to express themselves and the teachers should not limit the students' creativity. Creativity depends on the students' background knowledge and language mastery. The teachers should pay attention on those differences to make positive understanding on the students' diversity in their creativity. The teachers' role in the teaching and learning is to be able to control the students' activity and their free thinking of creativity due to the guided free thinking, especially for the young learners. This is done to control the students' in their freedom in thinking so the misconception can be avoided.

### **Reading Interest**

Reading interest can be viewed a how a person being excited and engaged in reading activities (Thomas, 2001). It is about the readers' behavior during their reading activities. Their excitement in reading process which might be high or low influences their engagement in their reading. The readers' engagement and excitement depend on the reading activities which deal with the reading materials and the reading processes.

The initial study measuring the relationship between reading interest and the reading comprehension was done by Bernstein (1955) that empirically prove the fact that the reading interest impacts the reading comprehension. The study proves that the teachers and the stakeholders should consider the students' interest in reading. It supports the theory of human reading interest that may satisfy the needs of the readers (Wade et al., 2006: 4). Each reader

might have different reading purpose as acquisition of information or other purposes.

Reading interest is not only derived from the students as individual or human being since they are growing. To encounter this, types of interest in reading are individual interest and situational interest. The first interest, individual interest is viewed as a relatively stable predisposition that grows in accordance with increased value, knowledge, and positive feelings so it spends much time (Krapp, 1999 and Renninger, 2000). It is symbolized by time persistence, engagements, and strategic text processing (Benton et al, 1998). Meanwhile, the situational interests depend on the external stimuli (Schiefele, 1998). The external stimuli comes from the students' surroundings for example, the teacher's stimuli in the teaching of reading such as in the selection of texts.

The students' reading interest lies in the students' psychological condition that is not easy for the teacher to recognize the students' interest. Hurlock (1978: 114) presents three types of activities represent the students' reading interest. Student's observation on his or her interest on reading for example dragging the students' attention. The second one is questions describe the students' interest on a preferred activity. The third is topic of the texts which can show the students' interests. Each of the activities above can be done by the teacher to measure the reading interest and help the teacher to find the best reading activities and reading materials before they teach reading.

Reading interest has positive correlation with the reading motivation. Reading interest can improve the students' reading motivation that surely increase the students' involvement and achievement on the reading. Although the accumulation of

the interest and the motivation is not a sudden act. Adjah (2012) elaborates that reading interest and motivation are contributed to by a lifelong behavior from previous experience, education, and knowledge. Experiences, level of education, and knowledge diversity contribute different point of view and reading interest which suit to their needs.

Actually there are some positive behaviors that can be viewed from the readers who have high level of reading interest. Miranda et al (2011) present some of the reading behavior in terms of the level of text difficulty. Readers who have high reading interest and engagement are keen on understanding ambiguous words, ideas, and contexts of the texts. They also share more enjoyment during their reading than the low reading interest. Presenting their understanding of texts also a characteristic of having high reading interest. They will have some recommendation to others on reading good books or reading materials.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study is a case study conducted in some schools in Magelang regency which measure the students' reading interest during the teaching of English as a foreign language. As noted before that a case study is a study which is done to get the real value of the case arise. Case study is done to engage with and report the complexity of any social life aimed at representing meanings of individual actors that bring it into the settings and manufactures all (Stark & Torrance, 2005: 33). A case study is done not only to present a case which mostly problems but it is done also to create the betterment of the field being studied. Mostly, a case study is done to take deeper understanding of the case being studied.

The process of case study had been conducted in this study was a single case study to measure the reading interest by employing questioners, observation, and also interview both the students and also the English teacher. All of the instruments for the teacher and the students were not same. Those were differentiated in terms of the students' and teacher's roles. Questioners were used to measure the students' reading interest for at least three schools, two public schools (SMAN 1 Magelang and SMAN 4 Magelang) and one public school (SMAN 1 Muhammadiyah Magelang). The number of respondents were three classes, one school one class with 30 students per class.

The interview was done in each of the schools but not with all of the students. The researcher only took some students due to the time limitation and the homogeneity of the class as observed before the interview. One school had around 10 students to be interviewed after the English class about their reading interest. The interview was done to get the confirmation of the students' responses on the questioners. The teachers were also interviewed in terms of what they have given to the students during their teaching of reading. The questions addressed were based on the learning needs and wants of the students.

Lastly, the observation was done in the three classes of the three schools during the teaching of reading. The researcher observed the learning materials and the process of the teaching and learning of reading. The observation was done based on the observation guideline which was done to keep the researcher on track of the case study.

The whole data gathered through the use of observation, interview, and questioners were analyzed to get one

coherent findings on the student' reading interest. The reading interest were in terms of the reading materials, the reading habit, the reading process, and the reading media or modal both at schools and out of schools. All of the data were analyzed though the use of qualitative analysis.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

After the researcher conducted a case study on some senior high schools in Magelang regency. It can be concluded that there are some findings on the students' reading interest. The findings are elaborated in terms of the students' reading activities, mastery of reading skills, reading materials, and reading modality. Each of the aspects are discussed in details below.

The first aspect is the students' reading activities during the teaching and learning of reading. It was found that the students mostly have the reading activities as prepared by the teacher. Since the focus of the English teaching is on the text types, the teacher provides more activities to achieve the main purposes of learning. Actually, the main purpose of reading in the formal school is done to enable the students in working on their final examination. Therefore, the reading skills mostly train are scanning and skimming. Thus, the reading activities were done mostly to master the scanning and skimming skills.

Secondly, the mastery of reading skills as mentioned before was in terms of scanning and skimming. Based on the observation done during the teaching of reading, the students mostly deal with scanning and skimming in order to be able to answer questions on the reading skills. From the interview done, most of the teachers also stated that they implement other reading skills during their teaching though they

realize that the time allocation is too short. There are only two hours per week for the schools that implement the Curriculum, 2013. Other skills of reading were difficult to maintain during the class so the teacher mostly gave homework for the students to train the students' reading comprehension. Another skill that is needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the ability to criticize texts. It was surprising that the students do not know exactly how to criticize texts since their teachers seldom ask them to criticize texts. It is because the teachers assume that their students only have low order thinking skills so they cannot criticize the texts. Of course, if the teachers do not believe on what the students' competence, it is difficult for the students to grow.

Considering the two aspect explained before, it can be seen that the students still have low reading interest. One of the criteria having high reading interest is the engagement during the reading. Low order thinking skills show that the students have low reading interest. They cannot enjoy the reading and they cannot engage with the texts. The level of higher order thinking skill, criticizing text will be done by readers who have high reading interest and motivation in reading.

As mentioned earlier, one of the direct reasons of having high reading interest is the text selection. It is very vital for the success of reading classes. Based on the data gathered, the students wish to have more texts that train their ability to think critically but still on the tract of their current interest. The teachers are expected to select appropriate texts according to their students' needs, wants, necessities, and lacks. Based on the curriculum implemented in the teaching and learning as proposed by the policy maker, the teachers should also

accommodate the students' wants in terms of the reading materials. The teachers can select texts that will attract the students to read, for example by providing texts close to the students' daily life. Hence, the teacher should have close relationship to know well the students' current interest.

Presenting the reading materials is also considered in this mini study. It is the mode of the texts presentation which might improve the students' motivation and interest in reading. The students explained that they want to have not only printed text but also non-printed ones such as through the use of digital media. The exploration of texts in the internet can be a rich source for the students to have more reading activities, especially to criticize texts. The use of computer and internet will also attract the students to deal with not only printed texts since it might be too traditional as it will costly and limited. The students will have their own priority to search for addition information dealing with their limited knowledge. It will increase the students' reading comprehension and also their critical reading. Thus, text presentation will positively influence the students' reading interest.

From the elaboration of the reading aspects selected in this study, it is clear that the students want to have more engaging reading activities that can improve their reading interest. The students expect to have more variations in reading in terms of students' reading activities, mastery of reading skills, reading materials, and reading modality. Although the students do not have good skills of higher order thinking, they need to have those skills to help them ready to face the rapid grow of information and technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## CONCLUSION

Reading has been the main focus of English as Foreign Language teaching today in Indonesia. The curriculum implemented in the senior high schools forces the teachers to teach the reading comprehension for the students of senior high schools. In relation to the demand of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, the students should be able to not only comprehend the texts but also criticizing the texts. To be able to criticize texts, the students must have high reading interest and motivation in reading. The findings of the data taken in this study derive some conclusion that the students of senior high schools in Magelang regency have intermediate reading interest. Some of them have high reading interest but some of them also have low reading interest. The main reasons for this are the less interesting texts for the students, the reading activities done during the reading class, the reading approach, and also the reading modes. Those factors should be considered by the teachers and the stakeholders in their teaching preparation, process, and evaluation to achieve the main teaching goals.

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