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DOI: 10.18777/degres.v20i1.57

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A Study of Students Online Reading Habits and Preferences

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Abstract: This study is an attempt to determine the undergraduate students online reading habits. It also intends to find out their most dominant preferences on online reading. It employed a descriptive statistic technique. The instrument used is a set of questionnaires. The result revealed that a large number of the students preferred to read online compared to reading with printed books or material. Even though the result showed that the students preferred the online reading, it is still poor for their habit in reading. The majority of the students mostly read to gain knowledge for general information. It is concluded that, the teachers must provide material for their students to read online. As a recommendation, teachers should also design their online teaching material which is interesting and comprehensive so that the students may understand it easily.

Keywords: *Reading Habit; Online Teaching Material.*

1. Introduction

Obtaining information by reading nowadays can be accessed easily through internet. It is not like in the past few decades when people find it very difficult to get accessed to information or news. With a quick access to information, learners now tend to neglect all the printed information like books, magazines or newspapers. Therefore, students must adapt or change their habit of learning or getting information from the old fashioned to the updated one. Yet, in digitalized era, both learners and teachers can access the internet quickly. They can do everything online only by clicking or surfing the internet for some reasons. Some read for knowledge and information, whereas some other for pleasure and even for necessities. However, recently reading has become a problematic issue in learning of language skills in the level of university. Most of the undergraduate students have low interest and motivation when it comes to learning the reading skills in terms of reading the printed books. Based on the writer observation, the students only read when the subjects they are interested in or they are instructed or requested to read books. In other words, they would read books when they are forced to read by their teachers. It is assumed that they have a very low motivation and willingness to read. A number of studies conducted (see Khairuddin, 2013; Asgari, 2012; Male, 2019; Male and Tias, 2019) have showed that through reading, it may be significantly improved the students' success in academic and their knowledge in general.

In addition, the writer often motivates them to read more books either online or using printed books. The response would be the same they are not really interested in reading printed books unless they are instructed to do so. This can be understood since

nowadays, the online reading material or books can be accessed everywhere as long as there is internet connection. When undergraduate students have very low interest and habit, it may result in a poor reading habit either.

In Indonesian context, the students have very low rates of reading interest. The data taken from National Library pointed out that only 10% of Indonesian whose age is above 10 years old are interested in reading (Wibowo, 2015). Kweldju (1996) pointed out that the students in Indonesia admitted that they realized the usefulness of reading, but they do not like to read textbooks. Rukmini (2004) also reported that students lacked of interest in reading. A recent study conducted by Maharsi, Ghali, & Maulani (2019) also showed that the students have low interest in reading. It is obviously that the students might not be exposed much with reading when they are young resulting in a poor score academically. There is also a tendency that the students might not have prior knowledge regarding the importance of reading and to comprehend the text and its complicated structure. Cahyono and Widiati (2006) have pointed out that in order to comprehend the reading text, readers have to deal with *schema theory*. Even though reading paradigm has changed from the old fashioned style to the online version, it does not mean that the students reading habit have improved a lot. Shen (2006) pointed out that EFL students 's reading habits have changed from paper-based to internet-based reading. However, this study may not yet be fully applied in Indonesian. Not only English is seen as a foreign language but also it is not interesting to read (see Wibowo, 2015). In line with Sanacore (2002) in his study, he found out that EFL learners do not like to read. It is believed that there can be other psychological aspect why the students find reading is difficult. Based on the aforementioned discussion, the writer then is interested to find out whether or not the undergraduate students have no interest in reading.

This study merely aims to answer the following research questions: 1) What is the most dominant undergraduate students' online reading habit preferences? And 2) Is there any difference between the undergraduate students' choices between online and printed reading materials?.

2. Literature Review

It is believed that students may have a very large broaden of knowledge when they read a lot. They will also have wide range of vocabularies or new terminologies that they can use for their study. As Chettri & Rout (2013) pointed out that the activity of reading is regarded as a habit when it is repeatedly carried out. By reading, they can also build their personality and be better in academic performance (See, Skenderi & Ejupi, 2018). Cline, Johnstone, and King (2006) have defined reading as the process of decoding and understanding the written text. They further stated that decoding requires translating the symbols of writing systems (including braille) into the spoken words they

represent. Understanding is determined by the purposes for reading, the context, the nature of the text and the reader's strategies and knowledge. The habit of reading is the basis of lifelong learning (Erdem, 2014). A number of researchers have attempted to carry out the study related to the importance of reading (Akarsu & Dariyemez, 2014; Erdem, 2014). In the study conducted by Florence, Adesola, Alaba, and Adewumi, (2017) showed that reading can boot the quality of life, reinforce and merge people together in a unifying force. Noor (2011) also said that reading has become the most important academic skills. This is in line with (Owusu-Acheaw, 2014) stated that reading can help the students improve better in their academic performance. As Indonesian consider English as a foreign language, this can be difficult for the students who have low interest in reading. However, there has been very little attention paid on the importance of the online reading in Indonesia context. The writer therefore is interested to find out whether the undergraduate students' in university context has put much interest on the online reading version compared to printed reading material.

3. Method

This study employed the quantitative research and was carried out through questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from Abidin, Mohammadi, and Jesmin (2011), therefore the questionnaire was not tested anymore for its reliability and validity; it is considered valid and reliable. The data collected then analysed using descriptive statistics by using excel (Microsoft Office) program. The participants of the study consist of 3 batches students of English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Jakarta with the total number of the participants is 55. The participants were dominated by female students. And their age was varied from 19-22 years old. Since the questionnaire is in English, the participants of the study is merely distributed to the students majoring in English and their language proficiency is considered quite competent.

4. Result and Discussion

This study employed an adopted and modified questionnaire that was carried out under a number of main of categories such as data demography, computer access, hours spent on reading habits, topics of interest in the newspapers and e-newspapers, reading preference: e-magazines (online magazine): field of interest, reading preference: online information fields of interest, reading preference: preference between online reading and printed reading materials, preference of language, preference of online reading materials. what do you usually read on the internet fields of interest, reading while listening to songs or music in the internet, preference of online activities. what do you do when you surf on the internet, hours spent weekly on internet activities, and purpose of online reading. Each of categories is then analysed using excel (Microsoft Office) program to

synthesize its percentages and frequencies. For some categories of the questionnaires, the respondents were asked to choose more than one answers/choices.

Data Demography

The data demography was focused on gender, age, batch, and domicile. There were only few male participants participated in the study. The rest was dominated by the female participants. Their age was varied from 19-22 years old and the total number of the participants was 55. The majority of students live with their parents and the rest of them live in dormitory, and rental house.

Computer Access

Table 1 Respondents with Access to the Internet

Category	Frequency (N=55)		%
Computer access	Yes	42	76.4
	No	13	23.6

Table 1 shows that 42 out of 55 respondents have computers with the internet access at their home. Whereas only 13 respondents responded ‘no’ which means that they have no computers at their home.

Table 2 Computer Access

Where do you use the computer?	Frequency (N=55)	%
At home	37	67.3
At a friend’s house	13	27.3
At campus	2	3.6
At a cyber (internet) cafe	1	1.8

Table 2 shows that the majority of the students 37 (67%) use their computer to access the internet at home. 13 (27,3%) use computer at their friends house. 2 (3,6%) of them use it at campus and the rest 1 (1,8%) use the it at a cyber (internet) café.

Table 3 Common Activity when Using a Computer

Common activity when using a computer	Frequency	%
Games	9	16,4
Surfing the internet	34	61,8
Research for college	27	49,1
E-mail	25	45,5
Watching films	35	63,6

Chatting	11	20
Downloading music	10	18,2
Reading e-books	16	29,1
Reading e-news	10	18,2
Reading e-magazines	4	7,3

For Table 3, the respondents were asked to choose more than one activities when they are using their computer and it shows that there are ten common activities when they use a computer such as reading e-magazines, reading e-news, reading e-books, downloading music, chatting, watching films, e-mail, research for college, and games. Most of the respondents chose *watching films* as their most common activity with 63%. The second most common activities is surfing the internet with 34%. The third is research for college with 49%. Next, some of them chose e-mail with 45.5%. These findings do not confirm the study by Abidin, Mohammadi, and Jesmin (2011). In their findings, the most common activities the respondents chose was surfing the internet is on the first rank.

Table 4 Hours Spent on Reading Habits

Reading Material	Hours spent (frequency (N=55 and %)			
	Less than an hour	1-3 hours	4-6 hours	More than 6 hours
Daily newspaper (printed)	43 (78.2%)	11 (20%)	1 (1.8%)	
E-books	29 (52.7)	22 (41.8%)	2 (3.6%)	1 (1.8%)
E-news	34 (61.8%)	17 (30.9%)	3 (5.5%)	1 (1.8%)
E-magazines	41 (74.5%)	12 (21.8%)	2 (3.6%)	
E-newspaper	47 (85.5%)	7(12.7%)	1 (1.8%)	

As seen in Table 4, in the first rank most of the students 47 (85.5%) spend less than an hour to read E-newspaper followed by reading daily newspaper (printed) 43 (78.2%). Spending time on reading E-magazines is the third place. Whereas spending time E-news 34 (61.8%) is in the fourth and E-books 29 (52.7%) is the last place. This finding is clear that most of the students spend less than an hour on reading habits.

Table 5 Topics of Interest in the Newspapers and E-Newspapers

Topics of Interest in the newspaper and E-news paper	frequency (N=55)				
	never	rarely	sometimes	often	very often
Local news	2	10	33	8	3
Foreign news	2	14	32	6	1
Business/stock market	12	18	25	1	1
Leisure columns	12	20	21	2	1
Sports	5	19	28	3	
Editorials	7	22	25	2	
Book reviews	3	22	23	7	1

Table 5 shows that there are seven options of topics of interest both in the printed newspapers and E-newspapers. The majority of the students sometimes read the topics of interest in the newspapers and E-newspapers. The rest said they rarely read topics of interest mentioned. 12 students out of 55 said they never read business/stock market and leisure columns.

Table 6 Reading Preference: E-Magazines (Online Magazine): Fields of Interest

Reading preference: E-magazines (online magazine): Fields of interest	frequency (N=55)				
	never	rarely	sometimes	often	very often
Sports	8	18	26	4	
Music	3	10	24	15	5
Education	3	9	32	10	1
Vehicles	12	17	24	4	
Entertainment	2	11	24	14	6
Movies	1	12	22	16	4
Fashion	2	11	24	15	3
Pornography (sex sites)	30	16	8	1	

Table 6 shows that there are 32 out of 55 students chose sometimes on reading preference: E-magazines (online magazine), 10 of them chose often, 9 of them chose rarely, 1 of them chose very often, and 3 of them chose never read for education field of interest. It also indicates that the students sometimes read all those field of interest. Next, 26 out of 55 students said they sometimes read sports, 18 of them said rarely read it, 4 of them said often and 8 of them said never read sports as their field of interest in reading

preference. In the third place, 24 out of 55 students also sometimes read for music, vehicles, entertainment. Next, 30 students said they never read pornography (sex sites).

Table 7 Reading preference: Online Information Fields of Interest

Reading preference: Online Information Fields of Interest	frequency (N=55)				
	never	rarely	sometimes	often	very often
Sports	11	20	24	3	
Movies	11	29	13	2	
Gossips	5	15	26	9	
Examinations	2	17	32	5	

Table 7 shows that the majority of the students (32) preferred to read *examination* as online information field. Next, 26 students like to read gossips, 24 students like to read sports, and only 13 students like to read movies.

Table 8 Reading Preference: Preference Between Online Reading and Printed Reading Materials

Reading preference	frequency (N=55)	
	Printed	Online
Newspapers	15	40
Magazines	20	35
Books	26	29

Table 8 shows that the majority of the students prefer to read online reading materials than printed one. 40 respondents prefer to have online newspapers than printed material. They also stated they preferred to read online magazine and books to the printed versions. The finding also showed that the students preferred to have newspapers and magazine compared to reading books.

Table 9 Preference of Language

Preference of Language	frequency (N = 55)		
	English	Bahasa Indonesia	Local Language
Printed	20	34	6
Online	29	27	7

Table 9 shows that in terms of language preference the majority of the students prefer to read in Bahasa Indonesia for the printed version. While they prefer to read in English for the online version.

Table 10 Preference of Online Reading Materials. What do you usually read on the Internet Fields of Interest

Preference of Online Reading Materials	frequency (N=55)				
	never	rarely	sometimes	often	very often
I read online news	2	11	30	12	
I read online magazines	5	16	31	3	
I read e-books	3	23	31	5	3
I read stories/novels	2	16	22	9	6
I read emails	3	11	27	12	2
I read movie reviews	1	10	33	7	4
I read horoscope	10	18	23	4	
I read comic strips/jokes	4	12	23	9	7

Table 10 shows that among all the online reading material, most of the students stated they *sometimes* read online materials. They also stated *rarely* read the online reading material and a few of them said never read it. It is clear that they have very low reading interest as only few of them also stated *very often* to read the online reading material.

Table 11 Reading while Listening to Songs or Music in the Internet

Reading while listening to songs or music in the internet	Frequency (N = 55)				
	never	rarely	sometimes	often	very often
Reading while listening	1	7	19	11	15

Table 11 indicates that the majority of the students sometimes read while listening to songs or music in the internet. 15 of them read while listening to or songs or music in the internet very often. 11 of them often read while listening to songs or music. While 7 of them rarely read while listening songs or music in the internet.

Table 12 Preference of Online Activities. What do you do when you surf on the Internet?

Preference of Online Activities	frequency (N=55)				
	never	rarely	sometimes	often	very often
I play games	7	15	22	8	3
I look at photo albums (Facebook /Instagram)	4	18	11	14	8
I listen to music	1	8	15	10	21
I read all kinds of information	2	11	22	19	1
I use online chat application (google chat/yahoo messenger, etc.)	4	12	20	8	11
I use skype	26	15	14		
I use Myspace	33	12	10		
I check emails	2	10	23	12	8
I use YouTube	2	8	13	10	22
I use Facebook	7	18	24	4	2
I watch/read pornography materials	36	11	7	1	

Table 12 shows the students have various online activities when they surf the internet. In the first position, the majority of the students stated that they sometimes use Facebook a lot. In the second activity, they state they sometimes check emails. While looking at photo albums and reading all kinds of information is their third activity. Whereas other activities seem to be varied one another.

Table 13 Hours Spent Weekly on Internet Activities

Internet Activities	Hours spent (frequency (N=55 and %))			
	Less than an hour	1-3 hours	4-6 hours	More than 6 hours
I play games	30	20 (36.4)	4 (7.3%)	1 (1.8%)
I look at photo albums (Facebook /Instagram)	13 (23.6%)	23 (41.8)	8 (14.5)	11 (20%)
I listen to music	7 (12.7%)	23 (41.8%)	12 (21.8%)	7 (12.7%)
I read all kinds of information	18 (32.7%)	19 (34.5%)	9 (16.4)	9 (16.4)
I use online chat application	19	20	9 (16.4)	7 (12.7%)

(google chat/yahoo messenger, etc.)	(34.5%)	(36.4%)		
I use skype	49 (89.1%)	4 (7.3%)	1 (1.8%)	1 (1.8%)
I use Myspace	51 (92.7%)	3 (5.5%)		1 (1.8%)
I check emails	31 (56.4%)	17 (30.9%)	7 (12.7%)	
I use YouTube	5 (9.1%)	25 (45.5%)	15 (27.3%)	10 (18.2%)
I use Facebook	35 (63.6%)	16 (29.1%)	2 (3.6%)	2 (3.6%)
I watch/read pornography materials	50 (90.9%)	3 (5.5%)	2 (3.6%)	

Table 13 points out that among the internet activities they spent weekly is the use *Myspace* 51 (92.7%) is the highest rank with the duration of the activity is less than an hour. In the second rank 50 (90%) of them stated they spent less than an hour to watch/read pornography materials. In the third rank is the use of skype 49 (89.1%). In terms of spending hours on reading all kinds of information, 19 (34.5%) respondents spent 1-3 hours, 18 (32.7%) respondents spent less than an hour, and the rest 9 (16.4%) spent more than 4-6 hours. It is obvious that the majority of the respondents spent more time on watching and listening as well as using the online applications instead of reading.

Table 14 Purpose of Online Reading

Purpose of Online Reading	Frequency (N=55) (%)
General Information	40 (74.1%)
Pleasure	5 (9.3%)
Examination Purpose	3 (5.5%)
Others (Killing the time)	7 (13%)

Table 14 shows that the highest of the students' purpose of online reading is for general information 40 (74%) followed by others (killing the time), 7 (13%) and 5 (9.3%) of them state that their purpose of online reading is others (killing the time). The rest of the students stated 3 (5.5%) do online reading for their own pleasure.

In summary, the type of online reading activities may be various in today's era, however in this study the majority of the students do not show significant interest on reading.

5. Conclusion

The study showed that the majority of the students still have low interest in reading no matter the reading materials are now widely accessed through the online. The findings also indicated that even though there are various reading text can be found in internet, it does not guarantee that they will have put much interest on reading. In their online reading, they tend to have do other activities such as watching *You Tube* or listening to music and other online activities more than reading. The finding also showed that most of them preferred to spend hours on others activities to reading. It also indicated that the type of reading activity using internet does not guarantee that they would spend or do more on reading. Therefore, based on the survey findings, the teachers or lecturers should provide online reading material in this regard dealing with all the academic activities as creative as possible in order to show the students' interest in reading. The online reading material can be in in a simple text depending on the students' language proficiency. This way can help the students to improve their English specifically the online reading habits as well as other language skills.

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