

## EFL Students' Interest and Their Reasons towards Recreational Reading Activity

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### Abstract

Students' interest in reading has been studied by many researchers. However, there is little attention given to examining the interest of EFL students on recreational reading activity. Additionally, few studies have documented why EFL students have certain interests on the recreational reading activity. To fill this gap, why students have certain interest in recreational reading and the reasons why students have. This paper aims at describing the EFL students' interest of choosing recreational reading and their reasons for choosing the activity. To achieve this aim, the research used qualitative case study. By administering purposive sampling technique, five EFL students at the sixth grade were selected as the research participants. Data were collected from interview. The collected data were analyzed by following thematic analysis. The result found that a) the students' high interest in recreational reading activity, and b) the reasons why they had high interest were caused by some advantages they agreed can develop their cognitive and affective aspects.

**Keywords:** *reading interest, recreational reading, public elementary school students*

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### INTRODUCTION

The importance of reading is felt by all people in the world. Many benefits are obtained by reading. Clarke et al. (2014) stated that texts may ignite individual's imagination, enhance knowledge, vocabularies and stimulating critical thinking. Reading is very important to be learned since childhood. Indeed, reading should be applied in early age habits that is early literacy (Clay, 2001). This is beneficial especially for children since book-reading habits used to train children in applying language and developing positive behaviour (Anderson, et al, 2004).

According to Ebbers (2011), reading interest is a motivational force, which influences the deep focus of someone, increases better

comprehension, and also longer recall in the reading text. Karadima (2016) revealed that interest has two roles in reading process: 1) as the main predictor of individual's motivation in reading, and 2) as factor determines the development of good reading habits. It can be assumed that students' who have an interest in reading tend to be able in providing time for reading, give extra attention to comprehending texts, as well as having long-term memory in reading texts.

The interest in reading will be seen if their reading habits are ingrained from an early age, the more children read the books the clearer show its interest (Kirby et al. 2011). Someone has interest if there is a readiness or volition to be a

part of that activity (Springer, Harris, and Dole 2017). Some benefits are gained by students having a good interest in reading, namely: training students' critical thinking, learning language in appropriate way, and enriching vocabulary. Those who have interest to reading means that their high motivation in using reading as their hobby in spending free time (Fahrurrozi, Rachmadtullah, and Hasanah 2020).

Recreational reading also known as leisure reading, a pleasant activity, self-selected reading both fiction and nonfiction which allows readers to read in or outside schools (International Reading Association, 2014). Encouraging reading interest in students' leisure time and implementing recreational reading is way much beneficial for their growth, habit and culture (McKool, 2007). Recreational readings can increase them to select reading materials, either written texts or pictorial texts. In line with this, McKenna and Kear (1990) stated that pictorial is attractive and apprehensible to students. It also applies to start their interest in reading book. Commonly, reading comprehension is significantly important in human's life. Interest in reading should be improved and continuously done. Which already explained by Fahrurrozi, Rachmadtullah, and Hasanah (2020), they revealed that reading interest have positive relationship with Indonesian students' ability in reading books.

Regarding the importance of these factors in supporting students' reading skills. Many studies have researched about reading interest. Fahrurrozi, Rachmadtullah, and Hasanah (2020) explained that reading comprehension and reading interest has correlation each other since the individuals' feeling of wanting to know is needed in comprehending literature. Hence, ability of comprehending reading materials would be significantly improved when students have interest and willingness to read and exploring. This study determined the

reading interest of Elementary school students in South Jakarta specifically the sixth-grade. The descriptive and verification analysis used as method of the research. Hence, it was found that reading interest and reading comprehension have significant relation in the sixth-grade students. The quality of reading comprehension is depending on students' interest in reading and their willingness to learn.

Another previous research was conducted by Springer, et al. (2017), they revealed that interest brings a significant impact in reading, specifically on cognitive and affective sides. Besides motivation, interest also considered to be cognitive psychologist of person in having volition persuade self with specific things. The purpose of the research is to build students' interest in classroom with four research-based principles and the practical ideas. The four research-based principles namely, 1) Cultivating individual interest, 2) Forstering situational interest in the classroom, 3) Selecting texts with interest-enhancing elements, and 4) Teaching interest self-regulation strategies. The result found that the four research-based principles have significant effect to students in improving their reading interest. Indeed, to become interest in reading, students must enjoy the reading process (Gambrell, 2015), taking interesting texts to read, and keep persisting when reading become difficult or less interesting (Hiebert, 2014).

Due to the prior research, it is reflecting the condition faced by EFL students' in Bali where many of EFL students have interest in reading especially recreational reading. Most of the students feel enthusiastic in recreational reading rather than school reading. It is because they cannot feel enjoy and under pressure while reading. This present study believes that reading interest actually has powerful effect for reader's

psychologist and skill. Selected activities and reading materials also influence person's ability in reading. Therefore, the present study investigates the students' interest of choosing recreational reading and their reasons for choosing the activity.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach that refers to research which combining written words or oral words from the samples descriptively answered the gap of the research (Zuriah, 2006). The method used is case study which used to understanding an issue or gap found in a case (Creswell et al, 2007:73). Specifically, it identified students' interest and reasons on recreational reading.

In order to obtain information for this case study, the selected sample of the study was grade 6 in three Public Elementary Schools in Desa Kutuh. There were 90 students of grade 6 recorded in academic year 2020/2021. In addition, there were 10 students receiving "A" score for English subject. Then, there were 5 students purposively chose from different schools with "A" score in English subject and good speaking skill in English.

In order to figure out the answer of the present study, the data was obtained through structured interview. This method of interviewing as also known as Standardized Open-ended interview (Patton, 2002) containing list of questions which have limited response categories. The samples were asked 10 questions related to students' interest in recreational reading, the materials of reading and the reasons in choosing the activity.

Then, the data analysis was divided into several stages. Firstly, selecting appropriate cases for reading interest, it includes adopting interview question from Karadima (2016). Secondly, gaining the data through structured

interview for the selected samples, then taking notes of the obtained data, transcribing the interview processes. Finally, is taking assumption of the findings by summarizing and connecting the results with related theories.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Interest is a constant tendency to pay attention to and remember some activities. In another sense, interest is a feeling of interest in something or activity without anyone telling and forcing it (Sutikno, 2009). Student who has an interest in reading usually has a strong urge to be active in that activity which interests him, and this is very influential in increasing the success of an activity he is interested in. The interest of recreational reading is characterized by liking and being related to activity that students can do in leisure time without being told. They found their enthusiast in reading some materials such as fairy tales, fables, novels, and comics. That is, there must be someone's willingness to do something they like. Thus, the emergence of interest occurs because of relationship acceptance between oneself and something outside their self.

### **A. Students' interest of recreational reading**

#### *1. Recreational reading widens their horizons*

The students mostly prefer recreational reading as the way to improve knowledge. Several reading texts chose as their favourite material, fiction books such as fairy tales and fables, non-fictions books such as school books and general articles on social media platforms. This is also supported by samples' argument from Student 2 and Student 4:

Student 2 "I like reading fairy tales and mostly fables; I can learn both things that is moral value and language"

Student 4 "I mostly read articles on internet or *Instagram*, that is interesting

because I know the latest information, and enrich my vocabulary”

Most of samples prefer to read interesting materials in their leisure time. Moreover, several of them stated their interest to articles to add their information. These statements are in line with Akmal, et al. (2020) that reading can advance readers’ intellect and improve their horizons by reading interesting materials.

### 2. *To improve their vocabulary of a language*

Language becomes an important thing for the students. Especially English language, their willingness to learn English was huge. They believed that reading favourite topics can improve their vocabularies. As already stated by Student 3:

Student 3 “I agree that reading can enrich my vocabulary, so I can understand when someone is speaking English or writing with English language”

In line with Bojovic’s theory (2010) that reading is one of cognitive ability which engage readers to be able in use language orally or written form. Some of students also agree with his statement since reading can broaden their ability in mastering English, especially vocabulary. In addition, reading interest linked to the vocabulary development, comprehension, fluency, as well as person’s psychologist development (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

### 3. *Amusement in leisure time*

To engage students in recreational reading, family has a big role to acquire the reading interest. The students agreed that their parents lead them to read books at home or bookstores every time they and their parents going out. They stated that parents play role model as a

good reader and example for them. This is in line with students’ statements:

Student 1 “I often read books with my father; he always brings me new books every time he came back from work”

Student 2 “My parents usually take me to bookstore, buy or just read the books there. That is so fun and I like it”

Taking recreational reading as amusement activity in leisure time is surely beneficial for students in training themselves to read frequently. Reading interest in family is needed, where encouraging children to have special time looking at picture books, and reading stories together and aloud will help students having interest (Celik, 2019).

### ***B. Reasons to reading fiction and non-fiction texts***

#### *1. For school assignments*

As a student, reading becomes the important activity to be done in every kinds of subject. Reading enlarges person’s perspective of the world and improves personality. The students said that reading both fiction and non-fiction texts are important for school assignments. This is supported by the statements from Student 5 and Student 3:

Student 5 “My teacher usually asks us to make a reading log, it is about what books do we read. I feel confidence because I have read a lot”

Student 3 “I can easily answer questions if I often read books, I able to do the assignments

Reading affects students’ ability in answering questions, as well as doing tasks given by teacher. It refers to the growth of students’ intellectual which able to understand the written texts and comprehension. This is in line with Mart (2012b) that, reading improves person’s intellectual development and develops critical thinking or understanding.

## 2. *Rehearsing reading skill*

As already mentioned above, the students' willingness to read affecting their intellectual development and critical thinking. Hence, it directly connects to students' cognitive and affective aspects. Some of students agreed that rehearsing selves in recreational reading will potentially improve their reading skill. Student 1 and Student 2 voiced:

Student 1 "Reading in leisure time helps me to understand English better, I can be more confident to speak and write my opinion properly"

Student 2 "For me, I have to always train myself for being happy in reading. Starting from fairy tales like Cinderella or Malin Kundang in English language then move to texts like newspaper, articles or magazine"

According to those statements, interests in reading engages cognitive and affective aspects and obviously contribute to develop the interest itself (Hidi, 2006). Students who train their reading skill can develop their language recognition skill, vocabulary, structural knowledge, discourse structure, evaluation strategies, and metacognitive.

The students who have interest will be effortlessly learning by reading. Springer, Harris and Dole (2017) stated where the willingness of someone to read is a part of growing interest in reading itself. It shows that the development of students' interest has increased especially by implementing recreational reading. Indeed, recreational reading is more autonomous rather than school reading (Locher, et al, 2019). In recreational reading, students can decide which the genre of book, pictorial or texts that probably they want to read. Moreover, recreational reading is an amusement reading. Students revealed that reading in leisure time can surely impacted to their knowledge. Which

means that students can be more freely to read wherever they want such as library or bookstores since those who have been there, they have more positive attitude and willingness to read and be excited of surrounded by books (Karadima, 2016). There are some benefits can be earned by students in recreational reading such as cognitive and affective development. Students who have reading interest will surely give their effort more in reading books. Besides, affective side which refers to feeling of related experience, both attitude and interaction to others (Alhamdu, 2015). In addition, recreational reading, also stated by students is useful for their school assignment and language improvement. The students able to develop their language skill in reading such like vocabulary, grammar structure, as well as their school tasks related to expressing opinion or essays.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion can be taken from the present study is that students' interest of choosing recreational reading give positive impact for their continuously experience. Some of their reasons for choosing the recreational reading are: 1) widen their horizons, 2) improving their vocabulary, 3) to amuse themselves in leisure time. Moreover, selected books such as fiction or non-fiction help them to several things such as: 1) to complete their school assignments, and 2) rehearsing their reading skill in English.

Therefore, in order to develop the reading interest of EFL students in Bali, there are some suggestion that could be suggested as follows: In order to develop literacy culture in family, school, and society, the Ministry of Education and Culture in Indonesia has released School's Literacy Movement or *Gerakan Literasi Sekolah* (inshort, *GLS*), a national literacy movement since 2016. The *GLS* was decreed to be implemented in all schools in Indonesia. Thus, schools and EFL teachers should support the

literacy program by providing students such as a special breaktime for recreational reading. Because, previous researches show that rich literacy environments are the most effective ways to support the development of reading by sharing books. The EFL teachers and the students should be involved seriously in the program.

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