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"I Love Creepy Pasta": EFL Students' Book Selection for Extensive Reading

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Abstract—**The important element in extensive reading, a second language reading approach, is materials to read. Finding suitable reading materials is the biggest mission to achieve the goal of the approach which is reading for pleasure or reading engagement. The current paper aims at uncovering a trend of books selected by EFL students for extensive reading and elaborating students' perception on what makes them engaged with the chosen books. To meet the purpose, this research employed a mixed-method design by distributing a questionnaire about book choices to 123 university freshmen. Interview was also conducted to two male and four female students who joined an extensive reading class to understand of the book that influenced their reading engagement. The findings showed top six favorite books based on the genre which were romance (65.85%), comedy (53.66%), children story (46.34%), adventure and fantasy (45.52%), horror and creepy pasta (24.39%), and mystery and detective (24.34%). Meanwhile, according to the interview results, aspects of the books affecting their reading engagement were students' connection toward the books and language appropriacy. The drawn conclusion is that in order to gain reading engagement, both students and teachers should understand students' personal information and their English level so that they could choose books which suit their level of English proficiency.**

Keywords—*book selection, extensive reading materials, reading engagement*

I. INTRODUCTION

Extensive reading is a teaching reading approach which highlights a great number of texts students read and students' enjoyment when reading without weighing them with memorization and detailed information. This approach is considered by experts as a worth doing approach to increase students' literacy awareness both for first language and for second language reading. The success of its implementation in second language reading is approved by several studies about extensive reading (see [1], [2], [3] and [4]).

Even though extensive reading puts the focus on a high quantity of books to read, it may not be burdensome for students as it is done through self-selected reading [5]. In the same vein, R. Day [6] asserted that letting students choose their own books can give positive impacts to their reading motivation. The power of self-selected books to students' motivation was also discussed by W. A. Renandya [7] stating that getting everything chosen and fixed including the materials crushed students' learning motivation. Other studies in different settings (see [8], [9], [10], [11]) also showed that

self-selected reading could give precious benefits for an English as a foreign language (EFL) reading learning process.

However, giving students a card of freedom to choose own books as what extensive reading encourages is not an easy task. The choices could bring the process of reading into success or failure. If students pick the right books, they will be motivated to finish the books and possibly crave for other books after the current ones. On the other hand, if the students meet a book with much unfamiliar vocabulary and complicated English structure, they may stop reading. Therefore, teachers as a material provider in extensive reading are required to understand what suitable books they should recommend to students [12], [5].

There are three previous studies that book preferences in extensive reading. In a context of first language readings, J. Manuel and J. Carter [13] did a study on students' book preferences in Australia by involving 1012 students. The result emphasized that over 50% of all students prefer reading fiction rather than reading other types of books. The data also informed that the female students' preferences were fantasy, mystery, detective, and action and adventure while the male students enjoyed science-fiction more than other genres. In an EFL context, M. A. Stewart [14] carried out a singled-case study to a young multilingual girl in Burma who could master five languages. The study revealed that reading relevant authentic literatures helped the participant develop their self-identity, build a multilingual skill and enhance multicultural knowledge. The other study in an EFL context is done by A. L. Barry [15] which focused on investigating book preferences of 148 eighth graders in Hispanic school. The findings showed that scary, funny, graphic, and sports books were students' favorite to read.

In Indonesia, a study that captures students' book preferences is still scarce. In fact, extensive reading is widely popular among practitioners and researchers in that country. One example of extensive reading implementation in Indonesia is conducted by a private university in the country. In English reading class, the teacher applied the approach for university freshmen. During the course, the students should finish three reading missions given by the teacher in one semester. To do the missions, they had to choose their own books. Since mapping students' book preferences and their views on their chosen books is urgently needed for evaluation and references, an investigation on that area needs to be carried out.

Thus, the goals of this current research are focusing on unveiling a trend of students' selected books and discussing aspects of the books that affect their reading engagement. It is expected that the study can bring benefits to the better practice of extensive reading. Theoretical benefit of this research is becoming a reference for other researchers who are interested in conducting similar studies. Practically, this study gives information for English teachers and students who intend to implement extensive reading about considerations to choose the books.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Reading Materials for Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is a strategy used by education practitioners to encourage students to read a lot of books in order to acquire a new language. Based on the principles of extensive reading by J. Bamford, and R. R. Day [12] and the guideline of extensive reading from Extensive Reading Foundation [5], reading quantity is the key in order to train students' reading speed and fluency. The required number of books to read in this approach is not attentively defined. Nation and Wang [19] suggested that students need to read a book per week for vocabulary acquisition. In parallel with that, J. Bamford, and R. R. Day [12] also mentioned that a lot of books, without mentioning the exact number to be a lot, are needed to read to elevate students' reading ability. Even though the required quantity of books is still blurry, the quality of reading itself has been clearly agreed which is to provide joy in reading [5].

Since materials in extensive reading play a significant role, principles of extensive reading by J. Bamford, and R. R. Day [12] gave two points about how the materials should be. First, the materials should be easy to understand. Second, the materials should be chosen under teacher's provision and supervision. That is true that extensive reading accommodates students' self-regulation. However, a teacher still needs to take part in the process of choosing books by sorting the books or giving recommendation of what books they may select based on their personal preferences. According to S.E. Springer, S. Harris, and J. Dole [16], teacher's assistance to select texts based on individuals' preference will cultivate students' reading interest.

Besides interest, language level is the other consideration in choosing reading materials. J. Bamford, and R. R. Day [12] pointed that the materials should make the students at ease. According to M. Hu, and P. Nation [17], reading materials which will not hamper students' comprehension on the content should have familiar words as many as 98% of the total wordcounts. The ideal number of new words as an input for lexical development is only 2%. If the book contains more than that number, students will never get thorough information from the book. Consequently, they will consult a lot of unfamiliar words to dictionary back and forth which makes them feel distracted and pressured for spending more time checking the dictionary.

Types of reading materials that can be enjoyed by students in extensive reading are varied. Based on Throsby, D. Throsby, J. Zwar, and T. Longden [18], reading materials are categorized into fiction and nonfiction. A study conducted by E. Puspitasari [19] about the use of a young adult novel for university students in Indonesia in reading class showed students' positive responses on the novel due to the benefits obtained. The main reason for the positive response given by the students to the chosen novel was its relatable topic so that they could understand the story line quite easily. Not only fiction, non-fiction can also be a good reference to enhance students' motivation to read. That is supported by findings of a study conducted by J. Alexander, and R. Jarman [20] which emphasized new factual knowledge and information as the prominent reasons why the students enjoyed reading non-fiction. So, both fiction and non-fiction can be a preference of materials in extensive reading.

The other types of extensive reading materials are authentic and non-authentic materials. Y.C. Huang's case study conducted by involving students in Taiwan recommended authentic materials for extensive reading implementation [21]. Besides giving original view of language use and culture, benefits of using authentic materials was that students got exposure of cultural knowledge embedded in the language. Its rich and clear description in the materials also became a special offer to catch students' attention.

On the other end of the spectrum, R. Waring [22] argued that authentic materials in extensive reading practice will frustrate the students with abundant unfamiliar words. R. Waring [22] added that materials containing a lot of terms caused students' dependency on dictionary. As a result, the materials burden the students' comprehension and hinder their reading speed which violates extensive reading principles. As an alternative, Waring supported by J. Bamford, and R. R. Day [12] and Extensive Reading Foundation [5] suggested to use graded readers.

Graded readers are texts written to assist students to learn a new language. These easy books are simplified from authentic novels, films, biography, and travel experiences. Uden, Schmitt and Schmitt [23] defined graded readers as simplified texts for second language learners which are divided into several levels. The levels available are starter, elementary, intermediate, and advance. Being provided in abundant options of topics and different language levels, graded readers can be chosen by students according to their personal interest and English proficiency.

B. Book Preferences and EFL Reading Engagement

Reading engagement is defined as reading that involves intrinsic motivation. In line with that, T. Barber, M. M. Buehl, J. K. Kidd, E. G. Sturtevant, R. R. Nuland, and J. Beck [24] defined reading engagement as a formula that consists of motivation and cognitive aspects in the process of reading. It means that to feel engaged, students need to enjoy and be personally motivated to what they read. Nobody could create engagement for others since that feeling should come out from inside of readers.

Reading engagement corresponds with extensive reading in a way of making students compelled with what they read. By feeling engaged with their reading, they will not feel forced and get the pleasure of it. Choosing own book is a vehicle to bring students from common feeling of reading to reading engagement. The tight positive connection between reading engagement and extensive reading is confirmed by experts ([25], [12]).

Types of reading materials that can make students engaged become significant to discuss. G. Ivey, and P.H. Johnston [26] believed that connection between books and readers triggered reading engagement. Through studies, thought, and opinions, some experts were in the same side. F.Y. Wang's research showed how a mom reader felt compelled with a novel because of lessons she learned from it [27]. P. M. Balt, and M. Veltkamp's research discussed how empathy attached the readers to their reading [28]. C. Ng, and S. Graham [29] claimed that connection can be created from similar experience. Reading stories that are related to their own experience is like a phone call to nostalgic feeling which makes the students carried away and engaged to materials they read.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research aims at finding a trend of students' book preferences for extensive reading and discussing their perception on aspects of the books that affect their reading engagement. The trend of students' book preferences was presented in numerical data and the students' perception about their book choices and reading engagement dealing with elaboration of participants' thoughts and opinions were given in description. Since the data needed involved numbers and description, this research stood under mix-method study [30]. This research was carried out in an English department of one university in Indonesia which implemented extensive reading by involving 123 students consisting of 22 males and 101 females.

To get deep understanding on students' views on their preferred book types, six first year students, two male and four females were interviewed. They were Amanda, Bimo, Citra, Diana, Erika, and Fahmi who are all presented in pseudonymous names. The chosen participants were those who read more than three books in each mission of reading during the class. Amanda and Fahmi admitted that they did not like reading before joining an extensive reading class and that was their first experience in L2 reading, while Bimo, Citra, Diana, and Erika had been keen on first language reading since they were in junior high school.

Then, quantitative data were analyzed by finding the percentage of the chosen book type while qualitative data from the interview were analyzed using coding steps by J. Saldaña [31]. Interview excerpts were presented to strengthen the points posit by the participants. In order to keep the article readable, all responses were corrected without changing meaning or participants' voices.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Books that Students Chose for Extensive Reading

This article discusses types of book that students chose for extensive reading. Based on the quantitative data taken from questionnaire, 98% of the total respondents preferred self-selected books rather than teacher-selected books in reading instruction. According to the data, they considered that by selecting books by themselves they could read books that met their interest and language level which made them enjoy reading the books. The result is in line with D. Fisher, and N. Frey [11] and R. R. Day [6] who agreed that choosing own book has a magic to boost young adults' reading motivation.

W. A. Renandya [7] also had the same opinion that getting everything chosen and fixed will shut down students' learning motivation. So, based on students' perception, compared to teacher-selected, students-selected reading is more rewarding to increase students' reading interest.

The questionnaire also revealed that choosing own books accommodated students' voices which could assure them that they were more than capable of finishing the books. It is supported by J. Bamford, and R. R. Day [12] who stated that materials that meet students' language level can build students' confidence in reading. Research finding by R. Raissi, and M. Roustaei [32] also presented that extensive reading increased students' reading self-efficacy. Selecting own book is one of extensive reading characteristics [12] and confidence leads to self-efficacy, students' optimism to success [33]. It means that letting students select their own books makes them more confident which leads them to be a successful reader.

The distributed questionnaire showed that all books that students read were fiction. D. Throsby, J. Zwar, and T. Longden [18] affirmed that fiction can be an alternative for reading materials that impacts students' affection. In the same vein, E. Puspitasari's study [19] revealed that students got a lot of amusement when reading fictional novels. So, the spirit of extensive reading was clearly seen in the reading practice that the students did because they got joy from fiction they read.

Then based upon the data, it is known that 64.2% of all respondents admitted that they enjoyed authentic novels more than graded readers or simplified novels. In addition to that, the data also gave information that six most popular genres read by students were romance, comedy, children story, adventure and fantasy, horror and creepy pasta, and mystery and detective. The percentage of each genre is presented in the table 1.

TABLE I TYPES OF CHOSEN GENRE AND THE PERCENTAGE

No	Genre	Number	Percentage
1.	Romance	81	65.85%
2.	Comedy	66	53.66%
3.	Children Story	57	46.34%
4.	Adventure and Fantasy	56	45.52%
5.	Horror and Creepy pasta	30	24.39%
6.	Mystery and Detective	30	24.39%
N: 123 students (female: 101, male: 22)			

B. Connection between the Selected Books and the Students

Besides revealing that fiction was the genre all respondents read, the results of the in-depth interview showed that students had positive and negative perception toward the books. Positive perception is an indication that students gained reading engagement while negative perception is a symptom that the students did not feel compelled with what they read. The interview showed that students' connection toward the books and language level used to deliver the content of the books became factors which enhanced their reading engagement. The data also showed five dimensions triggering students' connection toward the books; life values learned from the books, self-experience that is relatable to the characters, favorite topic and genre, and prior knowledge.

1) Life Values

Connection between students and what they read can be created from values or lessons the students learn from the book. Based on the data, values learned by the students were creativity and heroism. Bimo, Diana, Erika, and Fahmi enjoyed adventure and fantasy books since the books could develop their creativity from imaginative stories presented in the books. Bimo said, "imagination that the genre gives leads him me to be a creative person". He then added "I could see more possibilities when encountering problems in life. From that point I know I am more creative now". Fahmi who admitted as an adventure and fantasy lover and read Coelho's Alchemist was also in the same side by saying, "Alchemist broadens my imagination. I think that's the positive side of reading this book". Besides creativity, another value that the students get from the selected books is heroism. Erika said that she liked her book entitled See You in the Cosmo because the characters taught her how to be heroic. She could not even drop the book because she was in awe to how courageous the character was. She learned heroism from how the main character of the book kept fighting to make his dream come true.

Reading books can build students' interpersonal skills through values presented in stories. That is what Bimo, Diana, Erika and Fahmi experienced. They learned how to be a creative and heroic person from books they selected. The finding showing that reading contained values to learn is supported by a narrative inquiry research conducted by F.Y. Wang [27]. The study showed a mom participant who could successfully learn how to get along to her son after reading Philomena. The finding is also in line with Bal and Veltkamp [28] who proved that reading fiction could affect readers' empathy level using transportation theory which never happened to people reading non-fiction. The empathy only appears when the readers are emotionally transported into the story either in the low level or in the high one. Readers will consider that creativity, heroism, sensitivity to be close to the loved one, and empathy as a precious lesson because deep down they realize they need to improve the skills inside them. It is called connection between themselves and their reading which becomes one of factors to reach reading engagement [26].

2) Self-experience

Another aspect that makes students connected to what they read is having the same feeling and story as the characters. Amanda who read a romance book said that romance was favorite among teenage girls because the story was relatable to their experience. Girls in the students' age are in the phase of meeting a new person, getting closer, having a date, and breaking up. That is the circle of their present world so they can relate the romantic stories. The statement is confirmed by Fahmi who revealed that most of his female classmates preferred romance for the reading class. He thought that the girls loved the genre because they just felt related to the story.

Connection between the reader and the book due to similar experience to the characters also happened to Citra. She read four Wimpy Kid series and she found two series, The Long Haul and The Last Straw, compelling. The Long Haul in which the story was about family vacation reminded her of an enjoyable trip with her family. Since she lived apart from her family now, the book could be such a magical pill for her longing. That is why she loved the book. In addition, she was keen on The Last Straw because it reminded her of senior high school life. Things that Greg, the main character of the story, did were similar to what she experienced during high school. "Reading this book is such a nostalgic moment," she added.

What happened to Amanda, most of Fahmi's female classmates, and Citra is in line with C. Ng, and S. Graham [29] who asserted that reading materials can gain students' engagement if they are relevant to students' self-experience. That also corresponds with E. Puspitasari's [19] study in an EFL context unveiled how young adult books made students love to read because the story was connected to their life. Life-related reading materials can strongly attach a string between students and reading engagement. It means that when students read a book that connects to their personal experience, possibilities of leaving the book out are relatively low since they enjoy the reading.

3) Favorite Topic and Genre

Favorite topic and genre become the next causing factor for reading engagement. Based on the interview, what made students survived with the books was their interest of topics and genre. Bimo and Diana stated that she could strive for finishing a thick book that the language was rather complicated because of their interest in detective and mystery books. "Detective stories raise my curiosity. That is why I kept going with the book even though the language is quite difficult," said Bimo who read Dan Brown's The Lost Symbol which has 670 pages. Fahmi also has similar perception about how interest can make a reader stand no matter how hard the language is. Fahmi who loved philosophical book read Alchemist. He struggled a lot to understand the content. He even had to check dictionary application in his phone back and forth while reading the book. "I don't feel bothered checking the dictionary again and again to understand the novel because I love adventure and philosophy". Fahmi stated.

All books read by those participants are authentic ones written by the authors not purposively aiming to help students learn a new language but just to entertain them. Unbridged versions are usually served with authentic language which are quite hard for English learners to understand. However, students who are keen on the genre will be able to stand no matter how hard the language is because they got the pleasure already. What the students said corresponds with G.M. Jacobs [34]. Interest is the key to struggle with reading difficulties. That is what happened to Frank who broke the rule of extensive reading which is not looking up dictionary and suggests the readers to guess unfamiliar words from the context ([12], [5]). However, they still enjoyed reading the book and it is still in line with primary goal of extensive reading which is to experience reading for pleasure.

Different from what Bimo, Diana, and Fahmi who could struggle with the language barrier due to their strong interest in the story, Citra had a romance graded reader entitled Eat Pray Love. Although the language was relatively easy for her, she could not bear with it since she did not like romance. In fact, graded readers are an easy book for language learners. However, it does not affect anything to reading engagement when their interest is absent. In line with Citra, Diana also had a similar perception about a romance book she read. Her tremendous interest is in puzzled stories such as detective books and mystery. When she read a graded reader entitled

Little Girl, her impression was not quite good. She stated. "I just randomly picked the book from the teacher office. When I finally read, I just didn't get the spark. I don't like romance". She added.

The findings prove that language suitability cannot stand in isolation without interest. Even though the books are not beyond the students' language capacity, it does not result anything without meeting their interest. The students read graded readers and they found themselves bored with the books because they are not interested in the genre. It objected R. Waring [26] who stipulated that authentic books frustrated the students due to language difficulties so graded readers are more recommended. When the topic or genre of the books is not in line with their interest, no matter how easy the language is, students will not enjoy the reading. In reverse, no matter how hard the language in a book is, if they really like the topic, they will get the pleasure of it.

4) Students' Prior Knowledge

The last finding of what makes students engaged to what they read is connection between the reading materials and their prior knowledge. Bimo chose The Lost Symbol and Citra decided to read her creepy pasta because they ever enjoyed the book in Indonesian translated version. That happened to Diana who loved reading Enchanted because she ever watched the movie. Background knowledge that they had after reading the books in their first language and watching the movie helped them depict what the story told them about. If they understand what the story tells about, they could enjoy the book better.

Information students got before reading was called prior knowledge, background knowledge or plain experience. Studies from some experts highlighted the importance of having the knowledge to comprehend reading texts ([35], [36], and [37]).

5) English Level Suitability

Besides connection, the data showed that English level suitability becomes a factor that affects students' reading engagement. When the students do not have any problem with the language used in the books they read, they will understand the whole content which can drive them to feel engaged with what they read. Bimo and Fahmi had an interesting experience with graded readers. Both could enjoy the books since the language used was easy to keep up. They also added due to their pleasure from reading books, they even asked for more recommendation of graded readers to their teacher.

Amanda has a different story which signifies the importance of language suitability to reading engagement. In a process of choosing books, she took several books with different genre. However, the only type of books that made her comfortable was children books such as Dirty Bertie, Dora the Explorer, and one of Geronimo Stilton series. In two months, she could finish seven books with pictures. That was beyond her expectation considering that it was her first experience of second language reading.

Still highlighting how significant the language suitability for reading engagement is, Citra, Diana, and Erika also had a story. Different from Bimo, Fahmi, and Amanda who got the joy of reading, they had undergone an unpleasant experience for the language used in books. Citra finally gave up with Harry Potter in English version because she was struggling

with its sky-high language. "The book is actually interesting, but the language is unbearable for me," she said. Diana and Erika also got similar experiences. Diana who read LA Connection, admitted that the book was way too hard. "Those books are not for students with average level of English," she said. She added that due to the sophistication of the language, she skipped a lot of pages which caused her getting incomplete stories of the book and losing the joy of reading the book. With the same sense of story, Erika who landed her choice on Tales of the Peculiar Children as one of books she read mentioned that the book used classic language which was difficult to understand for her. She ended up leaving the books to look for something else with easier English.

Not only too sophisticated English, books with too easy English can hinder students' engagement. Diana whose English was in intermediate level got bored when reading a graded reader entitled Peter Pan. She thought that the language was too easy, and she could not find unfamiliar vocabulary which was not challenging for her. Even though she only needed couple minutes to finish the book, she did not feel compelled with it.

From the findings, it can be known that language is a quite significant aspect that affects how students perceive the chosen books. Students can get more pleasure from their reading if the language employed in the books matches their language proficiency. That is why students tend to choose books with a lot of familiar vocabulary ([38]). In the same vein, M. Hu, and P. Nation [39] exclaimed that effective reading materials are those which contain 98% familiar vocabulary that will not burden their comprehension. The rest 2% of the total wordcount is an ideal portion of new vocabulary that students learn from the book. In short, reading engagement can be gained when students understand what they read which will not be achieved if the language is too high for them. It is because comprehension and students' engagement walk hand in hand ([40], [41] and [42]). Books with language way lower than students' capability lead to students' boredom. That is why Extensive Reading Foundation [5] suggested five finger rules in which students should not take reading materials that contain only one or two unfamiliar words in each page. Through Input Hypothesis, S. Krashen [43] also said that language input should meet the requirement of i+1 meaning that the material must be one level higher than students' level so that students are able to learn something new from the material. To sum up, in order to make students feel compelled with their reading, the language used should be appropriate for them.

V. CONCLUSION

From the findings and discussion above, it can be concluded types of books that become university freshmen's favorite for extensive reading are romance, comedy, children story, adventure and fantasy, and horror and creepy pasta. Students will be more comfortable if the books are chosen by themselves rather than by the teachers. However, self-chosen reading is not always smooth, and it is not always considered as a blessing either for students. Students with high reading interest will not bother with the system since they know books that fit them. However, some others who are still in progress of trying to improve their reading interest will be flooded by many options that lead to great confusion. It happens because they did not know what types of suitable books to read. One

suggestion readers can take to solve the problem is by finding a string that possibly connect them with the book. It could be values learned from the books, similarity to their self-experience, their favorite genre, or their prior knowledge. Besides connection that can engage them in book selection, language should also be taken into account before choosing a book. If they are still beginners, children stories can be a thoughtful idea as reading materials. However, readers whose English skill is over intermediate English level are more suggested to prefer unabridged version rather than graded readers because graded readers do not describe settings, characters, and plot vividly. The unabridged novel merely presents the general depiction of literature components with simple language which will bore students with high English level and may lower their reading motivation.

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