

# The Portrait of Reading Habit among Junior High School Students

Ninda Chairanissa, Yanty Wirza

Department of English Education

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

Bandung, Indonesia

yantyvirza@upi.edu

**Abstract**—This study was aimed to investigate reading habit among junior high school students using a case study design involving ten students at one of junior high school in West Bandung Regency as participants. The data collections were obtained from classroom observation, questionnaire, interview, and document analysis. This study revealed that the students had low reading habit; they preferred watching TV and surfing the internet than reading for their leisure time. Most of them read-only for 1-2 hours per day. In term of reading material preference, most of students preferred fiction books written in Indonesian language. In addition, the students faced difficulties when engaged in reading in English due to their anxiety regarding their general proficiency needed to decode and comprehend the texts. The study invites teachers, school authorities, and family members to team up to improve students' reading habit.

**Keywords**—reading; reading habit; attitude toward reading

## I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a process of decoding printed words and written words. Nunan defined reading as a process of decoding written symbols that working from the smaller unit (individual letters) into a larger one (words, clauses, and sentences) [1]. Reading comes along with the three other skills of literacy – writing, listening and speaking – as necessary for living. However, reading is stated as one of the most crucial basic skill for life. According to Pandian, reading is regarded as one of the most important components in learning language and it is an essential tool for lifelong learning for all learners [2]. In essence, people read for different reasons and purposes. Howard asserted that there are two purposes of reading activity; social and personal functions [3]. As the personal function, reading is for pleasure. When it comes to the social function, reading is the fastest gate to obtain knowledge. Reading is a very important issue which is not only about enjoyment but also a necessity; the basic tool of education [4].

Regarding the essentials of reading, it is even more important to foster a good reading habit, especially among the students. However, various surveys showed very low rates of reading interest in Indonesia. A study by Central Connecticut State University in the US revealed Indonesia ranks 60<sup>th</sup> out of 61 countries in terms of reading interest [5]. This fact shows that most Indonesians lack reading interest. Thus, promoting

reading habit among students in Indonesia is of importance. Good, et al. argued that a good reading habit is described as a repeated eagerness of reading practice behavior that becomes the second nature [6]. As stated by Iftanti it is indicated by highly enjoyable reading practices, positive attitude toward reading and motivation to read [7]. On the other side, poor reading habit is defined as a poor reading behavior which is identified by passive reading, purposeless reading and regressing.

This study is intended to indicate the students' reading habit and attitude toward reading in junior high school. In addition, the students read the text in multiple languages. However, it is easier to understand a reading material in mother/first language than in other languages. In Indonesia, the students should read in other language such as English. As a foreign language in this country, students face some difficulties since Indonesian language and English totally have different orders. Therefore, the researcher desires to investigate the reading habit and reading attitude regarding both languages. Many previous studies related to the reading habit and attitudes have been conducted [8-10]. However, some of them were conducted in higher level of education and rarely in Indonesia. Thus, by conducting the study in junior high school, it is expected that the findings of this study will bear some contribution to improve reading habit in Indonesia.

## A. Reading Habit

According to Nilsen [11], habit is behavior that has been repeated until it has become more automatic, enacted without purposeful thinking, largely without any sense of awareness. A creative and pragmatic education involves the habit of personal investigation. The act of persona investigation requires self-study to be followed by self-thinking and analysis. Self-study otherwise referred to as reading at one's own accord, requires a habit, which is known as reading habit. It refers to the behavior which expresses the likeness of reading of individual types of reading, and taste of reading [12].

In term of acquiring these habits of reading, the reader must put these habits into practice. According to Palani, reading habit is an essential and important aspect of creating a literate society in this world [13]. Reading as a habit could be cultivated with some reading materials whether they are provided online (e-book) and printed book. Someone who has

an enamored reading habit has the willingness to read any kinds of reading material at anytime and anywhere since people could have broadened mind by reading anything. Diem and Atmanegara mentioned that those who have the enamored of reading habit (an avid reader) will read any available text from any sources [14].

Reading anxiety could have impacts on the reading habit. Kuuru found that anxiety in reading could come from one or the combination of these factors: personal factor, the text and the reading course [15]. As such, the anxiety could turn the reading to be unpleasant experience for the students. In addition, it was found that students with high anxiety felt less confident and enjoyment and focused on the word meaning through translation strategies while low-anxiety learners tended to use more of global reading strategies such guessing meaning form context and using background knowledge [16].

## II. METHOD

This study was conducted by using qualitative research method. A case study was used as the design of this study in order to explain the phenomenon related to the context. The multiple data sources consisted of classroom observation, questionnaire, interviews, and document analysis. The study was conducted at one of the public junior high school located in West Bandung Regency. Students attending the school came from the surrounding small communities of the rural farming areas. The participants were seventh-grade students at one of public junior high school in West Bandung Regency. The class consisted of 36 students with 12 males and 24 females. Ten students participated voluntarily as main participants for this study. Data collection techniques in this study include multiple techniques i.e. classroom observation, questionnaire, interview, home visit and documentation. This study employed a questionnaire to collect data on the points of views of students about their reading habits and attitudes towards reading. The questionnaire was adapted from Pandian's [2]. Reading Habit Questionnaire and the Adult Survey of Reading Attitude (ASRA) of Smith's with some modifications regarding the reading attitude of language preferences –Indonesian language and English [17].

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings and discussion on reading habits were described through the students' preferences in their leisure time activities, amount of time spent on reading in a day, the types of reading materials read, the language they prefer to read, frequency of books read in a week, and the amount of time spent on surfing the internet and gaming.

### A. Activity in Leisure Time

Table 1 illustrates the activities that the students did in their leisure time from the questionnaire. Majority of the students chose watching television for the highest percentage (40%). Then, reading got the second highest percentage (30%) for leisure time activity. It was followed by surfing the internet, listening to music, and hanging out that those activities got 10% each.

TABLE I. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES

Activities in leisure time	Respondent	Percentage
Surfing net	1	10%
Watching television	4	40%
Sport	-	-
Listening to music	1	10%
Reading	3	30%
Gaming	-	-
Hangout	1	10%
Other	-	-

The findings from the questionnaire related to the activity in students' leisure time were also confirmed by the students in the interview sections. The students confessed that they spent their spare time by taking advantage of technological developments. Nine out of ten students answered that they preferred watching TV or online video on their phone, while the other one preferred listening to music. Pandian in his work also agreed that the advancement of the technologies and electronic media will affect students to read even less and they get more involved with the internet, watching TV and playing electronic games in their spare time [2].

### B. Amount of Time Spent Reading

In relation to the amount of time spent for reading in a day( see table 2), only two students (20%) spent time for reading activity between 2 to 3 hours in a day. Almost half of the students read less than 1 hour (40%). Moreover, 4 out of 10 students (40%) read between 1 to 2 hours per day. It could be seen that reading habit of the students was not fostered since there were most of the students read even less than an hour in a day.

TABLE II. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS THE AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT ON READING IN A DAY

Hours	Respondent	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	4	40%
1 to 2 hours	4	40%
2 to 3 hours	2	20%
3 to 4 hours	-	-
More than 4 hours	-	-

### C. Student Preferences of Reading Materials

On average, the result in table 3 shows the students' preferences in reading activity which influenced their reading habit, i.e. e-book, storybook, comic, magazine, novel, textbook, poem, etc. A total of 7 respondents (70%) felt reading novel is the most significant. The novel was followed by storybook (10%), comic (10%), and textbook (10%). However, e-book, magazine, and poem were indicated as not significant.

TABLE III. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS THE TYPES OF READING MATERIALS

Reading material	Respondent	Percentage
E-book	-	-
Storybook	1	10%
Comic	1	10%
Magazine	-	-
Novel	7	70%
Academic Textbook	1	10%
Poem	-	-
Other	-	-

#### D. Language Preference

As for the language preference (see table 4.4), the majority of the students put Indonesian reading material (80%) in the first place. This was followed by Sundanese (10%) as local language and other languages (10%). However, no one chose English as his or her language preference. This result was quite acceptable since all of the students are fluent and most of them communicate in Indonesian. According to Sanacore, EFL learners did not prefer to read in the foreign language since the reader could not get pleasure or meaning from the written text due to lack of languages knowledge [18].

TABLE IV. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE PREFERENCE

Reading material	Respondent	Percentage
Indonesian	8	80%
English	-	-
Sundanese	1	10%
Other	1	10%

#### E. Number of Books Read

As indicated in table 4.5, this result shows the number of books read in a month. A half of students (50%) read less than 1 book every month. And the other half admitted read between 1 to 2 books every week. The result is slightly higher than the data from National Library in 2017 that released the number of books read by Indonesian people in a year around 5-9 books [19].

TABLE V. PERCENTAGE AMOUNT OF BOOKS READ IN A MONTH

The frequency of reading books in a month	Respondent	Percentage
Less than 1 book	5	50%
1 to 2 books	5	50%
3 to 4 books	-	-
More than 4 books	-	-

#### F. Amount of Time Spent on Surfing the Internet

Concerning the amount of time spent for surfing the internet in a day (see table 4.6), a total of 4 students (40%) surfed internet between 2 to 3 hours and 30% between 3 to 4 hours. However, 4 students (40%) spent between 1 to 2 hours for surfing the internet.

TABLE VI. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT ON SURFING THE INTERNET IN A DAY

Hours	Respondent	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	-	-
1 to 2 hours	3	50%
2 to 3 hours	4	30%
3 to 4 hours	3	20%
More than 4 hours	-	-

#### G. Amount of Time Spent on Playing Video Games

The result in table 7 shows that the amount of time spent on gaming in a day. A half of 50% students spent less than 1 hour on gaming activity. While the other half (50%) spent around 1 to 2 hour.

TABLE VII. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF AMOUNT TIME SPENT ON PLAYING VIDEO GAMES IN A DAY

Hours	Respondent	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	5	50%
1 to 2 hours	5	50%
2 to 3 hours	-	-
3 to 4 hours	-	-
More than 4 hours	-	-

#### H. Anxiety and Difficulty in Reading

Eleven items of the questionnaire were committed to ask questions related to students' attitude toward anxiety and difficulty in reading. Further, it included 1 item regarding the attitude in general reading and 10 items in English reading activity.

There was only one statement related to attitude toward anxiety and difficulty in reading. The data of the students' attitude are presented in the table 8 below.

TABLE VIII. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS ATTITUDE OF READING ANXIETY AND DIFFICULTY

No	Statement	Anxiety and difficulty in reading								
		5		4	3	2				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree				
16	I quickly forgot what I have read even if I have just read it	-	2	20%	7	70%	1	10%	-	-

For the only one statement in reading anxiety and difficulty, the data showed that the students tended to choose *uncertain* with the percentage 70%. Then, two students (20%) chose *agree* to re-read the text because they could not remember what they have read. In addition, only one student (10%) selected *disagree* with this statement.

Further, the findings on the students' attitude toward anxiety and difficulty are presented for English only. The data are presented in the table 9 below.

TABLE IX. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS ATTITUDE OF READING ANXIETY AND DIFFICULTY IN ENGLISH

No	Statement	Anxiety and difficulty in reading									
		5 Strongly agree		4 Agree		3 Uncertain		2 Disagree		1 Strongly disagree	
5	I can read but I don't understand what I've read in English	-	-	4	40%	3	30%	3	30%	-	-
6	I need a lot of help in English reading	-	-	8	80%	2	20%	-	-	-	-
7	I get upset when I think about having to read in English	-	-	2	20%	3	30%	5	50%	-	-
8	I try very hard, but I just cannot read English very well	-	-	2	20%	7	70%	1	10%	-	-
9	I often feel anxious when I have a lot of reading to do in English	-	-	1	10%	5	50%	3	30%	1	10%
10	I get nervous if I have to read a lot of information in English for my school activity	-	-	2	20%	6	60%	2	20%	-	-
11	Encountering unfamiliar words is the hardest part of reading	-	-	5	50%	4	40%	1	10%	-	-
12	I quickly forget what I have read in English even if I have just read it	-	-	3	30%	4	40%	3	30%	-	-
13	I try to avoid reading in English because it makes me feel anxious	-	-	2	20%	5	50%	3	30%	-	-
14	I have trouble understanding what I read in English	1	10%	5	50%	4	40%	-	-	-	-

In the table 9, item five to 14 indicates the students' anxiety and difficulty in varied types of reading activity. The data presented in item number five showed that 40% of the students *agree* that they could read but they did not understand what they have read in English. For the next item, it sought the students' attitude toward whether they got difficulty or not in English reading activity. Almost all of the students (80%) tended to agree that they need a lot of help reading in English. This is a clearer indication that the students experienced some level of anxiety when reading in English [15,16]. Further, the data in the following item showed various answers from the students. 20% of the students admitted that they got upset when they think about having to read in English. However, a half of the students (50%) disagreed that they were confused when asked to read in English. The tendency of the students in item number eight revealed that most of the students (70%) tended to choose *uncertain* with this statement. The data in item number nine presented various answers from the students. The average percentage showed that the students' trend apposed the statement. Some of the students (30%) disagreed, while 10% others chose *strongly disagree* with this statement.

In spite of that, a half of the students (50%) were not sure to be anxious in reading English activity. The data in number ten showed that 20% of the students agreed that they got nervous when they have to read a lot of information in English for their school activities. While more than a half of the students (60%) were uncertain with this statement. For the following item, the data showed that most of the student felt difficult when facing unfamiliar words in reading. A half of the students (50%) agreed that it was the hardest thing. Then, 40% others were not sure and only 1 student disagreed with this statement. The data in item number twelve revealed that 30% of students agreed that they re-read the text because they could not remember what they have read in English. The next item, *I try to avoid reading in English because it makes me feel*

*anxious*, showed a tendency of the students to admit this statement. Some of the students (20%) agreed while a half of them (50%) were uncertain to avoid English reading activity. In line with this, Patterson concluded that children with poor attitude toward reading tend to read only when it is necessary, try to avoid reading or refuse to read together [20]. For the last item, it presented interesting data. The trend of data revealed that almost all students got difficulty in understanding English reading activity.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of this study, reading is considered as a less-significant activity during the students' leisure time. The result indicates that the students preferred to spend a major of their time watching TV, surfing the internet and other technology-related activities rather than to read. Most of the students read-only for 1-2 hours daily and some even read less than an hour in a day. The students read various types of reading material such as novel, comic, and storybook which indicated for extensive reading. Moreover, eight out of ten students preferred to read books Indonesia language. The result also found that the students read less than one book for a month. The poor reading habit practice among junior high school students was ingrained from poor family literacy. These participants were expected to read more due to their engagement in the academic process that requires them to read, however they prefer to do others activities.

Regarding students' attitude toward reading, the result revealed that the students had overall negative attitude toward reading. It showed that the students lack motivation in reading activity. They also did not draw enjoyment in reading as much as other technology-related activities. Then, they faced difficulties in reading due to their anxiety in reading. Lastly,

the family literacy environment did not engage the students to have positive attitude toward reading.

The findings in this study brought some implication particularly for pedagogic and social to more encourage the students to have a strong reading habit. Firstly, as a vital role for students' development, the teachers need to understand the importance of reading in order to motivate and encourage the students for both intensive and extensive reading. The teacher could assign the students to read for pleasure in the classroom in a certain amount of time in a week. The school's literacy program could be supported with various types of promotional activities like a book club, book fairs, and book promotions rather than only read book together. Secondly, for older family members (parents/older siblings), reading habit needs to be built and promoted from an early age. Therefore, the family members should encourage the students in reading activities. Expectantly, the family member could be a good reader model for the students, provide appropriate reading material, control the students' time for watching TV, playing games, and create a lovely reading environment.

## REFERENCES

- [1] D. Nunan, Practice English language teaching: Young learners. Singapore: McGraw Hill, 2006.
- [2] A. Pandian, "Literacy in postcolonial Malaysia," *Journal of adolescent and adult literacy*, vol. 40, no. 5, pp. 402-405, 1997.
- [3] V. Howard, "The important of pleasure reading in the lives of young teens: Self-identification, self-construction, and self-awareness," *Journal of librarianship and information science*, vol. 43, pp. 46-55, 2011.
- [4] R. Makotsi, Sharing resources- how library networks can help reach education goals. Book aid international, 2005.
- [5] Thejakartapost, "Indonesia ranks second-last in reading interest: Study" 2016 [Online]. Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2016/08/29/indonesia-ranks-second-last-in-reading-interest-study.html>
- [6] M. Good, Cambridge advanced Learner's dictionary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- [7] E. Iftanti, "What makes EFL students establish good reading habit in English?" *International journal of education and research*, vol. 3, pp. 365-374, 2015.
- [8] M. Annamalay, "Reading habit and attitude among Malaysian polytechnic students," *International journal of education and science*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 32-41, 2013.
- [9] J. Mercado, "Reading attitude of the students of polytechnic university of the Philippines: A principal component factor analysis," *European academic research*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 3167-3187, 2015.
- [10] A. Tella and S. Akande, "Children reading habits and availability of books in Botswana primary schools: Implications for achieving quality education," *The reading matrix*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 117-142, 2007.
- [11] P. Nilsen, "Creature of habit: Accounting for the role of habit in implementation research on clinical behavior change," *Implementation Science*, vol. 7, pp. 1-6, 2012.
- [12] S. Sangkaeo, "Reading habit promotion in ASEAN libraries," Paper presented in the 65th IFLA Council and General Conference, Bangkok Thailand, August 20-2, 1999.
- [13] K.K. Palani, "Promising reading habits and creating literate social," *International reference research journal*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 1-11.
- [14] C.D. Diem, and Y Atmanegara, "Cultivating childrens' reading habit: Literacy learning enhancement in the digitalization era," *International journal of innovative social & science education research*, vol. 3, pp. 1-11, 2014.
- [15] I. Kuru-Gonen, "The sources of foreign language reading anxiety of students in a Turkish EFL context," *reading*, vol. 11, no. 12, pp. 13, 2009.
- [16] H.Y. Lien, "EFL Learners' reading strategy use in relation to reading anxiety," *Language Education in Asia*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 199-212, 2011.
- [17] M.C. Smith, "An investigation of the construct validity of the adult survey of reading attitude," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the College Reading Association, Alexandria, Virginia, 1991.
- [18] J. Sanacore, "Struggling literacy learners benefit from lifetime literacy efforts," *Reading Psychology*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 67-86.
- [19] M. Nadir, "Per Hari, Rata-rata Orang Indonesia Hanya Baca Buku Kurang dari Sejam," 2018 [Online]. Retrieved from <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2018/03/26/14432641/per-hari-rata-rata-orang-indonesia-hanya-baca-buku-kurang-dari-sejam>.
- [20] G.R. Patterson, B.D. DeBaryshe and E. Ramsey, "A developmental perspective on antisocial behavior," In *Developmental and Life-course Criminological Theories*, pp. 29-35, Routledge, 2017.