



EFL STUDENTS' READING HABIT THROUGH EXTENSIVE READING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate Indonesian college students' reading habits. 60 non-English major students who took Extensive Reading course involved in this study in the sixth semester. Previous research has discussed related to English major students' reading habit, however this study focuses on non-English major students' reading habit. Descriptive quantitative research was used to reveal the students' reading habit in English. Data were collected from questionnaire about reading habit activity adapted from Mikulecky and Jeffries (1996). The results indicated that all of students agreed that reading aloud helps them to improve their reading (95%). 96% of them also agree that reading English slowly makes more understand. Besides, most of them (95%) agreed that learning grammar help them to understand more in reading English and 98% of them also agreed that learning vocabulary supported them to understand more English. Majority of them (95%) need to know every word in order to understand English material. 95% of them also agreed that pronouncing every word helps them to read well in English. It can be concluded that Reading slowly and learning vocabulary support them to understand more in reading. This finding confirms that the language teachers or lecturers should be able to help their students cope with foreign language reading anxiety by creating a learning environment which is less stressful. This study provides pedagogical implication that provides significant pedagogical implication for language practitioners and students in creating enjoyable atmosphere in reading class and provide the reading material based on students need.

Keywords: *extensive reading; reading habit; english as a foreign language.*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most powerful tools that people employ in both their educational and social lives. It also comes before all other abilities. Reading has many definitions since it is so important. In this era, the primary goal of education is to develop individuals who can think, express themselves effectively, criticize, conduct research, read, interpret, apply knowledge and communicate this to others. Variety academics have varied definitions of reading as one of the most useful instruments in teaching. Reading is one of the four primary skills used in both first and second language instruction. Reading is a complex process that consists of several phases of development. Students must develop a reading

habit in order to excel at English reading. This is intended to help students grasp the material and improve their command of English, particularly reading.

Reading plays the vital role in teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia. Inevitably, most students in Indonesia face challenges in comprehending reading text (Poedjiastuti, 2018). Reading is one of crucial language skills to reach in learning at the primary to university level along with listening, speaking and writing because the skills are interrelated (Suryani, 2022). Reading should be a habit and this should also become the basic goal of education. Reading is crucial because it enables students to improve their reading comprehension,

understand new material related to their studies, and expand their knowledge. (Pragasam and Sulaiman, 2023). Reading skill, that is a complex and comprehensive skill area, should be developed through a planned education process. Numerous factors, including attitude toward reading, reading habits, reading interests, and reading tactics, should be taken into consideration during this education process (Ounissi et al, 2025). Making reading a habit helps people improve their reading comprehension skills on a fundamental level as well as their ability to share and discuss what they read with those around them, evaluate what they read, and be conscious of the books they choose to read (Renandya et al, 2021). A good reading habit will help to improve learners' reading achievement significantly.

Indonesia had the second-lowest reading habit among the 65 countries based on the most recent survey conducted by Program International for Student Assessment (PISA). The reading habits of Singaporeans are reportedly among the highest in all of East Asia, surpassing those of Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia. The Statistics Bureau's 2006 data also demonstrates Indonesia's poor reading habits. It demonstrated that reading has not become the primary leisure activity in our society. Instead of reading the newspaper (23.46%), people would rather watch TV (85.6%) or listen to the radio (40.26%). According to the Economic Development Cooperation Organization (OECD), among the 52 nations in East Asia, Indonesians have the lowest reading culture (Indonesia's Reading Culture is Lowest in East Asia, 2009).

Recently, graded readers developed for students' extensive reading (ER) in English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) have become popular alternatives for learners at the beginning and intermediate levels (Yang, Chu & Chen, 2021). ER practice has grown in popularity in recent years following decades of research detailing their powerful effects on language acquisition, particularly in an EFL environment such as in Indonesia. Extensive reading can be defined as reading for pleasure (Ng et al., 2019) and reading outside of the class (Torres, 2024). It becomes the main attention for educators and researchers to be an alternative reading instruction in teaching English as English Second Language (ESL) and English Foreign Language (EFL) (Grabe & Yamashita; 2022; Nation & Waring, 2019). Extensive reading is pleasant and informal, and it allows students to select materials based on their English language

level and interests. It also includes individualized and independent reading, which allows students to choose materials based on their own interests without having to discuss texts in class (Asmara, 2021; Torres, 2024). Many studies have conducted the impact of ER on cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects in the ESL and EFL context. Cognitively, ER was reported to improve the participants' general reading ability and reading comprehension (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022), enhance incidental vocabulary acquisition (Zakrah et.al, 2024; Promluan & Sukying, 2022) and promote writing skills (Mwagi & Bwire, 2020). Affectively, ER encourages learners' motivation to read, learners' autonomy and to have positive attitude in reading a second/ foreign language (Li et al, 2021). In behavior aspect, ER can help learners to develop reading habit (Wani & Ismail, 2024), change their reading behavior (Savitri et al., 2024) and improve their reading rate (Renandya & Day, 2020). Besides, Extensive reading also improves students' students' reading habit, reading speed, vocabulary, writing, speaking and listening (Chang & Renandya, 2018; Azizi et al, 2020).

The input hypothesis (Krashen, 1982 cited in Ounissi et al, 2025) arguing for intelligible input as the sufficient requirement for L2 acquisition and/or the reading hypothesis provide theoretical support for extensive reading in the field of L2 study. The input which contends that comprehensible input is a necessary condition for L2 acquisition, or the reading hypothesis which postulates the facilitative effect of extensive reading on various skills like reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, grammar, and spelling, provide theoretical support for extensive reading in the field of L2 research. Whether or not the experts completely agree with these assumptions, it has been noticed that L2 instructors and researchers are becoming more interested in substantial reading. Krashen also adds that extensive reading entails reading highly comprehensible and interesting target language contents which immerse language learners in comprehensible input, leading to the acquisition of "literacy-related aspects of language".

Researchers have dedicated much effort to investigating students' reading habits. All of these studies show how reading for academic purposes gains significant importance, but we cannot ignore voluntary or recreational reading—reading that is done voluntarily during free time, outside of school activities, and by choice of material—

because it is precisely this kind of reading that makes people readers. A study from Stroller and Nguyen (2020) state that Vietnamese University English major have strong preference on printed sources than digital sources. Because so much of daily life is becoming digitized and has become heavily reliant on digital text, the quick expansion of digital media and online services has led to a greater reliance on reading (Schüller et al, 2022). As reading shifts from paper to screens more and more, it also enters the realm of Big Tech, a small group of profit-driven businesses that dominate the world's digital media platforms and mainly flout regulations.

According to Natioanl Literacy Trust (2025), while girls' daily reading levels stayed relatively constant between 2024 and 2025, boys' reading levels decreased throughout the majority of age groups, especially for those between the ages of 11 and 16. Compared to their counterparts in Scotland (16.8%) and Northern Ireland (16.9%), a higher percentage of children and youth in England (19.1%) reported reading every day in their spare time. Wales's reading rate per day was the lowest at 12.5%. Regional differences were also observed throughout England, with a higher percentage of children and young adults in London reporting daily free-time reading, followed by those in the North East and East. These elements are crucial to pupils' enthusiasm for reading.

According to Arifin et al (2025), women read for pleasure alongside their male counterparts in terms language preference and book format preferences. Most female students preferred foreign language reading (37,5%) than mother language compared to male students (18,8%) and they also preferred digital format to read the sources (75%). According to Lee and Kim's (2021) research, these gender-based variations in reading preferences may also be connected to variances in cognitive and language development. Women are more likely to prefer narrative-based and emotionally engaging texts since they often have superior language skills. These decisions were impacted by personal preferences, educational needs, and future professional goals. Therefore, good reading habits give some advantages based on some experts (Green, 2022), that are to increase students' reading skills, to widen students' general knowledge and experience and to develop reading speed, vocabulary and academic achievement.

Some studies have shown a wide range in the areas of ER in ESL/ EFL context. Bui and

Macalister (2021) implemented online extensive reading in Vietnam and shows that after learning extensive reading, students' reading fluency and speed are greater growth after 10-week participation. They considered extensive reading is effective in enhancing their reading fluency development, vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension skills and pragmatic use of language. A study from Rahman and Mohammad (2023) shows that extensive reading promotes students' reading motivation among ESL learners. Yet the implementation of ER may encounter some challenges including the availability of suitable reading materials, time constraints, and lack of motivation among learners. Besides, they emphasize the role of teachers and parents in encouraging and sustaining learners' reading motivation is also important.

In Indonesian context, a study from Mardiana et al (2021) found that apart from the benefit of ER for EFL students, some problems are also reported of ER in their study. In this study, four EFL university students' perceptions to ER were examined, along with the advantages and difficulties they encountered. Their knowledge of the ER concept was briefly questioned in the questionnaire and in-depth in the interview to investigate these two issues. This study demonstrates the numerous advantages and difficulties of implementing ER for four university students. These four students have a strong desire to read books in English, which is impacted by their home literacy and the result from observation shows that they are at least in the range of average-high achievers in the English subject. Study from Dafitri and Hakim (2025) on the reading habits of first-year students English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang showed that Using Choose-Read-Share (CRS) strategy and Reading Logs in extensive reading class increased student autonomy and engagement but posed challenges in maintaining motivation and confidence during discussions. These strategies supported comprehension and engagement in reading.

Due to the students' inability to grasp the implicit reading abilities, teaching and learning in higher education institutions encounter countless challenges. Therefore, there's a need for students to have good reading habit. By identifying students' reading habit, this paper tries to establish students' reading habit through extensive reading that concur with their reading preference. Although, a large amount of extensive

reading research has been conducted, there are few research examine non-English major targets. Most of the research investigated in English major students in the context of reading class. The current study examined the students' reading habit in extensive reading class from multi-disciplines major students. The finding of this study hopefully provides significant pedagogical implication for language practitioners and students in creating enjoyable atmosphere in reading class and provide the reading material based on students need.

METHOD

The currents study is descriptive qualitative research revealing the students' reading habit in English. The participants were 60 Indonesian University students from Universitas Teuku Umar. They are in the sixth semester and enrolled English Elective Subject of Extensive Reading course. They were from multidiscipline majors who learnt English as a foreign language. The participants had taken General English at the beginning/their freshmen year of their study. Data collection used in this study was questionnaire adapted from Mikulecky and Jeffries (1996) used closed-ended questions. The questionnaire oriented at determining more about the students' reading habit in English. A questionnaire was

used to measure the students' reading habits by using scale.

The data obtained were formulated manually for its descriptive statistics. The students were given questionnaires by the researcher to determine their reading habits for learning English. The researcher used quantitative analysis. The following formula was used in this study to examine the reading habits of the students learning English (Sudjana, 2020):

$$P = \frac{F}{N}$$

Where:

P = Number of Percentage

F = Frequency

n = Number of Sample

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned in the prior subsection, this present qualitative study attempted to shed new enlightenment regarding the students reading habit in English at Universitas Teuku Umar. To fulfill the objective of study, the following is results from questionnaire:

Table 1. *The result of students' reading habit in english*

No.	Item	Yes		No	
		F	%	F	%
1.	I always read every word of a passage	54	90	6	10
2.	Reading aloud helps me improve my reading	57	95	3	5
3.	I say the word aloud when I read	6	10	54	90
4.	I use different reading method in my native language and English	55	92	5	8
5.	When I read in English, I understand more when I read slowly	57	96	3	4
6.	If I don't know the meaning of a word in English, I always look it up in the dictionary	53	88	7	12
7.	The best way to improve my reading in English is by learning as much grammar as possible	57	95	3	5
8.	The best way to improve my reading in English is by learning as much new vocabulary as possible	58	98	2	2
9.	When I am reading material in English, I need to know every word in order to understand	57	95	3	5
10.	To read well in English, I must be able to pronounce every word	57	95	3	5
11.	I can't understand a paragraph if it has several new words in it	48	80	12	20
12.	I use the same reading method for all kinds of the texts (books, newspapers, etc.)	24	40	36	60

The Table shows that the results of questionnaire from 60 students. Regarding what had been stated in the table above, it can be conjectured that item number 2, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 are the highest preferences for agree respondents. While item number 2 and number 12 are the

lowest preferences for agree respondents. As it can be observed in table 1, majority of Indonesian students (98%) agree that learning vocabulary is the best way to improve their reading skill. It is line with Promluan's and Sukyang's statement (2022) that reading improve incidental vocabulary

acquisition. In order to expose language learners to understandable information and help them acquire "literacy-related aspects of language," Krashen (2018) further states that extensive reading involves reading highly accessible and engaging target language content. 95% of students also agree that they understand more when reading the English text slowly. Reading slowly is also one part of EFL students' habit to help them getting more understanding the comprehension from English text. cognitive load that takes up capacity for intrinsic processing for meaning. Therefore, in processing the information of the text, the learners' cognitive attempts to understand words by word in their native language.

Most student also deal that reading aloud can help them to improve their reading comprehension (95%). It can be lined with Chang's and Reinandya's statement (2018) that students' behavior such as reading slowly and reading aloud can help students' understanding. Affectively, Renandya and Day (2020) deal that reading rate like reading speed can improve understanding and skill in reading comprehension.

Besides, learning grammar (95%), knowing every word in reading material (95%) and being able to pronounce every word (95%) are very beneficial to help them to comprehend the text. Grammar and pronunciation are parts of fluency that develop effective reading comprehension skill. Furthermore, reading widely exposes readers to language use in context, which enhances their understanding of grammar (Xenia and Anjani, 2022). Following repeated exposure to English prepositions through improved extensive reading, Xenia and Anjani found that 16 English as foreign language students at Indonesian universities shown a notable improvement in their incidental learning of the targeted English prepositions.

However, most of them prefer not to say word aloud when reading a book (10%) and not to use the same reading method for all the types. Every student has his/her own way to comprehend the text based on proficiency level. Therefore, it is advised to use a variety of collections that include graded materials, children's literature, young reader literature, popular literature, first-language reader materials, and internet texts (Yulia, 2018). It can be concluded that reading habit is one of the indispensable elements in reading for ESL & EFL.

Students prefer to use different method both in native language and English in their reading habit

(92%). The other reading habit often used by many of them is reading every word in reading English text (90%). To help them in understanding new vocabulary, some of them were used to look up dictionary as a helpful device (88%). Besides, they faced difficulty in understanding text when finding several new vocabularies that they never heard. It is related to Zakhrah et al (2025) who state that students vocabulary is important parts in reading. Therefore, students must be able to understand the meaning of words in a text. Most university students used mobile dictionary to help them look up the new vocabulary.

Based on the finding above, it confirms that students have positive attitude to reading in English. Tabata (2023) agree that when it comes to reading a second or foreign language, ER promotes students' motivation to read and positive attitude.

The following table shows students' reading frequency. The reading frequency refers to how often they read per day both academic purpose and recreational purpose.

Table 2. *Reading frequency*

No.	Reading Frequency Per Day	Percentage (%)	Participants
1.	Less than one hour	39,3	24
2.	About one hour	37,7	23
3.	About two hours	14,8	9
4.	More than two hours	8,2	4

How often and how much the students read are based on their reading habit. The table shows almost all the students read they normally read less than one hour each day (39.3%). This percentage has a little different with the students' reading frequency of 37.7 % (23 students) read about one hour per day. It indicates that students in higher education have a little motivation and interest to read bot academic and personal interest materials. The low reading frequency reflects low reading motivation (Rahman & Mohammad, 2023). This is considered as the most ideal way to develop our students as readers because pleasure for and love of reading cannot be taught; they can only be shared. We can see that reading may be performed successfully if students passionately to read more, whether inside or outside of the classroom. Extensive reading is about students' willingness to read. The reading materials are

freely chosen by the students based on their content interests. The material resources should make students actively enjoy reading and receive enjoyment from, which can boost their desire for English learning.

The successful development of extensive reading is dependent on the aforementioned characteristics as well as appropriate English reading resources and tactics that can guide students to a habit of extensive reading (Liu & Young, 2015). Thus, cultivating a reading habit is one strategy to encourage students to like and continue reading. The researchers in this current study supervised the students through reading tasks.

Extensive reading is believed as one of the strategy to encourage the reading rate, comprehension and vocabulary of learners since large amount of repeated exposure to interesting and meaningful L1/L2 reading materials (Iftianti, 2024). As shown in the table 1, it has been clearly stated majority of students are likely to get more vocabularies from extensive reading. It is line with the result of Zakrah's finding (2024) which shows that 33 eleventh grade students improved their vocabulary from extensive reading class. It also corresponded with Krashen's theory of Input hypothesis which mentions the lower Affective Barrier set, the more Comprehensive Input got, and the more language acquisition developed, learners' vocabulary could be improved by extensive reading, which is emphasized in reading for pleasure without pressure.

According to Arifin et al (2025), Fantasy, mystery/thriller, and self-help/personal development are the genres that male students choose, while female students tend to favor romance, fantasy, and self-help/personal development. Nonetheless, a sizable percentage of female students embrace romance, but male students are less fond of it. Female students are more likely to use the library and internet resources, whereas male students are more likely to obtain books from bookstores and borrow them from friends and family. There is a little variation in the percentage of male and female students who read for both academic and personal reasons, but both sexes read mainly for leisure and enjoyment.

Many college students read primarily for educational purposes. Their parents' and instructors' drive to do better academically is the reason for their bad attitude toward reading for pleasure. The statement seemed menacing to the students who had yet to develop a passion of

reading and a habit of reading. Even though they made an effort to make themselves read, they still felt undervalued. As a result, pupils' enjoyment becomes a source of pressure. The goal of ER, which is to instill a love of reading, will be futile if kids perceive it more as a burden, as they would attempt to avoid reading (Savitri et al, 2024).

Extensive reading strategies continue to have positive effects outside of higher education settings as well since they have significant effects on young EFL learners as well. Extensive reading strategy plays a crucial role in this area because engaging and meaningful extensive reading activities may enable EFL young learners to foster their four major language skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—while also improving their specific reading interest. As EFL young learners still need more intensive supervision in developing more positive reading habits throughout their daily basis.

The other finding of a study on extensive online reading conducted by Ermerawati (2019) also revealed that almost all of the young EFL learners from Indonesia had developed more favorable reading habits after fully engaging in the interactive extensive online reading activities incorporated by their teachers. Based on these brief summaries, it has become one of the main responsibilities of Indonesian EFL teachers to internalize extensive reading strategies in their varied L2 learning contexts in order to transform students into more proficient L2 readers. These readers will have a variety of laudable reading attributes available to them, including richer vocabulary knowledge, passionate reading interest, and proactive reading attitudes.

In relationship between different reading methods used in native language and English, a study from Spark (2012) states that L1 spelling has an impact on L2 achievement. L1 spelling is one reading method used in comprehend the text. It may be that it takes longer for learners to achieve a high level of L1 spelling than it takes them to achieve a threshold level of L1 reading comprehension. Therefore, there is a connection between L1 and L2 literacy. Learners who have difficulties in their L1 may lack the ability to reflect on the equivalent structures in a foreign language, and so their capacity to learn an L2 may be hindered. So, L1 literacy was the main explanatory factor of L2 achievement in a group of adult EFL beginners.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding mentioned earlier, there are some conclusion can be drawn. First, most students improve their vocabulary from extensive reading. Second, majority of students use reading English slowly help them to get understanding in reading passage. Third, reading aloud, learning grammar and pronouncing very word also help some learners to understand the reading text. The last is most of them spend their reading time only less than one hour per day (39,3%).

The pedagogical implication can be concluded from the results of study that the language teachers or lecturers should be able to help their students cope with foreign language reading anxiety by creating a learning environment which is less stressful. They should also provide reading motivations by fulfilling students' interest. This can be done when teachers employ various reading activities. They should also carefully select reading materials that are suitable for students' level and most importantly, they should select reading materials that is suitable with students' interest. To increase students' enthusiasm in learning, teachers are urged to establish a welcoming and encouraging environment in the classroom (Sari, 2024).

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