

READING HABIT TOWARDS STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL: A CASE STUDY IN STKIP PGRI JOMBANG

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English as a foreign language has four skills involved, they are speaking, listening, reading and writing. In Indonesian context, from all four skills, reading and writing skills have become teachers' and practitioners' focus since these two usually have less performance than the others; speaking and listening. As there are numbers of research have proofed that reading skill has significance relation with writing skill, the researchers believed students who have good reading habit will have good writing skill too. On this case, however, we still find some students who are not interested in reading or in other words, they have poor reading habit. It becomes a problem since we believe that poor reading habit will cause poor writing performance too. Based on those facts, this study aims to portray students' reading habit in relation to their writing skills or writing performances. To delimit the study, the researchers conducted the research to some writing students of STKIP PGRI Jombang, East Java. The significance of this study benefits not only teachers and practitioners, but also the students in emerging their reading habit, thus they will be able to gain better performance in writing skill.

Key words: reading habit, writing skill

INTRODUCTION

In this global era, information is growing so fast both in digital and printed media. By clicking in the Google search service we can get numerous types of information. However, the information provided mostly use English since most of people across nations use it as their international communication tool. Thus, learning English is of paramount importance in order to link with other people across countries. To EFL learners, like Indonesian, learning English might not as easy as acquiring either their mother tongue or first language since they are demanded to master the four English language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing, at the same time. Among all of the skills, reading becomes the most avoidable terms because learners commonly think that it is a boring activity and spends much time. As matter of the fact, reading is a receptive skill which gives language input to learners so that it cannot be avoided. No matter how hard reading is, learners should consider and practice their reading ability aims to improve their other language skills, especially their productive skills.

Many previous studies had been held either to figure out the advantages of having reading skill or to investigate its correlation with language competences; vocabulary, pronunciation system, grammar, & spelling system, and other language performances, especially writing and speaking. A massive reading practice benefits either directly to

improve students' word recognition and fluency or indirectly to increase students' comprehension (Shany & Biemiller, 2009; Chall, 1983; Chomsky, 1976; Meyer & Felton, 1999; Welsch, 2006). Furthermore, Shany & Biemiller (2009) state that a group of children who are assisted with reading practice make reading comprehension gains. In addition, they argue that those who have significant improvements in vocabulary will have larger comprehension too. Therefore, they suggest that the majority of children need more than considerably increased reading practice to increase their vocabulary.

Since the result of the previous studies shows the contribution of reading skill towards vocabulary gains, the researchers assume that reading has core role to students' productive skills, especially writing since it enables them to get numerous vocabulary and understand sentence constructions. Another research conducted by Emaliana (2015) entitled "Reading to Write: Changing Students' Epistemic Beliefs to Promote Critical Thinking in Argumentative Writing" shows that in writing an argumentative essay students are compulsory to sharpen their critical analyzing and synthesizing through reading aims to produce qualified argumentative essay, therefore, they need more multiple texts for their reading materials. Moreover, Beers, Quinlan and Harbaugh (2009) state, "Reading during writing can facilitate text production in ways that support text quality". Those all previous researches convince that to upgrade vocabulary gains, students need to read a lot.

However, practicing reading is not as easy as said, especially in English. To EFL learners reading English text is quite complicated since in fact they often get barriers in understanding the context and meaning of English text. It usually happens because they lack of vocabulary related to topic of text. Some reading texts may be difficult for them to be read since the topic relates to specific fields or disciplines, such as; politics, laws, economics, and social, therefore, some terms in the texts might be difficult to catch. To solve this problem students are promoted to endeavor practicing their English reading ability increasing step by step since having reading habit cannot be grabbed just in one time experience. It needs to be practiced a lot by upgrading level of difficulty of the texts so that students are able to gain good reading habit. Keeping in stuck in reading one type of texts only will not improve students' reading performance. While, grabbing numerous types of texts will be helpful to increase both directly to students' reading performance and indirectly to their writing product.

Writing becomes the second focus because many researches show that there is relation between reading and writing. The other reason is because in Indonesian context, writing has less performance than the other language skills as Brown (2007) says that writing is a complicated process. Moreover, he adds that the complex process of writing is starting when the writer should develop their ideas, analyze, and apply them in the written form. This fact is in line with Sulisty's statement (2011) that reading is more than just a passive skill; it necessarily involves very complicated process. As both are categorized as complicated process, therefore, there is no doubt that some Indonesian students have difficulty in it. So based on those elaborated facts, this study aims to portray students' reading habit in relation to their writing skills or writing performances. By the result of this study, it is hoped that students will read various types of texts as a habit to get enormous language input in order to produce qualified writing skill or performance.

METHOD

The researchers took two undergraduate students in STKIP PGRI Jombang who had already got essay writing class as the subject of this study. Having essay writing class became one of the criteria for the participant since the researchers assume that essay writing is an advance writing which is appropriate to see students' reading habit. The researchers believe that to master advance writing, students need to have broad knowledge and references. Reading takes paramount role for students to increase their knowledge and references, therefore, to see the phenomenon of students' reading habit towards their writing skill, it is appropriate to take undergraduate students of STKIP PGRI Jombang since they stand in semester three and they have just got writing two, in which it deals with essay, comparison and contrast. The decision of choosing the two subjects is based on their performance in writing. Subject A has good writing skill while the second, subject B has less writing skill. Based on those two situations, the researchers could portray the relation of their reading habit and their writing skill or performance.

The researchers considered the design of this study using qualitative research in terms of case study since it endeavored to depict students' behavior in terms of reading habit and its influence towards writing skill. As Baxter and Jack (2008) propose that qualitative case study facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. To answer the research problem, the researchers used single instrumental case study since the researchers only concerned on single case on how students' reading habit effects on their writing performance.

The instruments used in this study were interview and the researchers themselves. Interview has become the instrument done by the researchers to collect the data because interview make the researchers and participants to interact in deep about the case and it could give deep result in digging the participants' experience and also performance related to their reading habit and also their writing skill. As it is stated by Borg, W.R, Gall, M.D. (1989) in Latief (2013) that interview is a data gathering instrument that involves direct verbal interaction between individuals. It is also stated by Borg, W.R, Gall, J.P, Gall, M.D. (2003) that interviews consists of oral questions asked by the interviewer and oral responses by the research participants. Therefore, the interview was done by asking some questions and also requesting them to write something so it can reveal the relation of their reading habit and writing performance. As it is direct verbal interview so the researchers done it by recording the process, so the detail will not be missed. The interview were structurally designed and consisted of 19 sequence items which were dealing with students' reading habit and their writing skill.

The second instrument used was the primary instrument in which the researchers employed themselves to classify and elaborate the data collected in the form of explanation. As Heigham and Crocker (2009) state that researchers take role as main instruments since their role is of paramount importance to get a valid research data by considering some of the criteria such as; 1. Understanding about what qualitative research is, 2. Mastering the research field that is taken, 3. The readiness of the researcher to analyze the research object.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings show that both of the research participants in this study are interested in reading, moreover, they add that reading is kind of their habit. However, they have different frequency either in quantity or kinds of reading texts. The facts about the difference between both participants are shown in the table 1 below.

Table 1. The result of the interview.

No	Question Items Related to Study	Subject A	Subject B
1	Favorite language skill in English	Speaking and writing.	Reading.
2	The most difficult language skill in English	Writing. Because she thought she was not good in scientific writing.	Writing and Listening. Because when he wants to start to compose a paragraph, he gets difficulties to write down the vocabulary and generate ideas.
3	Reading hour/day	1 or 2 hours	Uncertain schedule, he says that he does not read every day, it depends on the time if he has time he does reading.
4	Reading texts	Novel, biography, poetry, and short story.	English subject book, magazine, and novels.
5	Students' opinion why reading is interesting	Reading inspires her and gives her enjoyment.	No specific reason, he said he just like it.
6	Starting time of reading as habit	12 years old	Since at the first grade of junior high school or 13 years old.
7	Students' opinion about reading habit	Reading can develop her imagination.	Reading is interesting because it helps him to learn foreign language.
8	Students' opinion about English reading texts	English literature books are difficult, especially to catch the meaning.	It is hard about vocabulary, grammar, idea, those all make it difficult.
9	Students' opinion about writing	She likes writing. She writes diary every day. Other things are novels, diary, short stories, and poetries. Short stories are the most. She has written	He does not like writing because it is difficult for him.

		6 short stories. Per each she has 40 pages.	
10	Students' opinion about the benefits of reading habit towards writing skill or performance	Reading habit influences writing performance because when someone wants to write something, s/he needs some references, s/he has to read and understand it. And her writing is really helped by her reading habit.	Reading habit influences writing performance because he believes that by reading he can have ideas to make stories, or paragraphs.
11	Students' performance in writing	Topic A. Less than a minute she wrote her first sentence and got the idea, it was approximately only 15 seconds. She started writing from 8.52 to 9.15, so she spent 23 minutes. Topic B. She began to write in a minute. She started from 9.16 to 9.23, so she spent for about 7 minutes.	Topic A. He got the idea in 3 minutes, from 9.53 to 9.56. He started writing at 9.53 and finished at 10.19, so he spent 26 minutes. Topic B. He got the idea in a minute. He started from 10.20 to 10.31. It means he spent for about 11 minutes.

STUDENTS' READING HABIT

Based on the data gained, it can be seen that both participants like reading, related to subject A when the researchers asked about her reading activity, she said that she loves reading and she can read one or two hours per day, and she spends special time in a day to read something, she usually reads novels, biography, and poetry. From this fact, it can be concluded that she does really enjoy reading activity. It is also supported by the time the researchers asked her whether she likes reading, she approved that. Her answer implied that she loves the activity of reading and mostly it is reading for enjoyment. The other fact about her reading activity is when the researchers asked her whether reading is her hobby or not and she accepts that.

Compared to subject A, subject B told the researchers that he has reading schedule too, but it is not every day. It depends on the available time. It means that he loves reading but not as much as subject A. He usually reads magazine, novels, and English subject

book, such as IC book. This answer implies that his purpose of reading is for seeking information as he said that he rarely reads novel and reads magazine most. The difference that can be spotted here is that subject A enjoys reading, she does that because she is purely interested in it without having any significant purpose, while subject B does it probably in purpose of enhancing his English skill. Measuring reading habit can be determined in two view points; in term of the amount of material being read and in term of the frequency of reading (Chettri & Rout, 2013; Wagner, 2002). From these facts, it convinces that subject A is more appropriate to be admitted having good reading habit since she provides special time to read every day.

Reading by purpose, especially for understanding subject material, is not as comfortable as reading for fun. It happens because of forcing demand, therefore, the reader usually cannot catch the whole insight and ideas in the text. Due to this fact, it can be noted that subject A is a fluent reader compares to subject B. According to Rasinski (2004) cited in Rifa'i and Virdaus (2015) a fluent reader is a reader who has good expression and enthusiasm throughout the text. In this case, it is implied by subject A when she explains how she enjoys reading and feels it fun, while subject B feels his reading as compulsory activity aims to increase his English skill.

Asked about why reading is interesting, the two subjects have different answer. Subject A said that reading inspires her and gives her enjoyment while subject B said that he has no specific reason, he said he just like it. It can be implied that subject A really understands her reading texts while subject B does not really understand it since he cannot give specific reason. The researchers assume that he likes it because it triggers his curiosity since based on the interview he also said that English makes him curious, and reading is part of English learning. As Chettri & Rout (2013) state, "All reading patterns in terms of emotional response enhance emotional satisfaction of individuals". It is also convinced by Sangkaeo (1999) cited in Chettri & Rout (2013) states that reading habit expresses individual behaviors towards the likeness of reading of individual types of reading and tastes of reading. It again shows that reading activities done by subject A is closer to the terms of good reading habit than subject B since subject A emphasizes that reading is joyful activity for her.

When the researchers try to seek since when both participants get their interest in reading, the answers are almost the same. Subject A said it was since when she was 12 years old while subject B said that it was since he was junior high school, it implies that it was when he was 13 years old. From subject A answer, it can be said that reading is becoming her hobby since she was young, from some couple of years ago which means she has built the habit since she was junior high school while now she is in semester three of her undergraduate program, it means it has been for about 7 years. She keeps on reading regularly by specific time schedule in every day. It does not so far different from subject B since there is only a year difference, so he also started since he was young, only 6 years if counted till today. When the researchers endeavored to ask whether their reading habit came from their childhood stage, subject A said that her reading habit was not influenced by her childhood because she said her parents did not read her a story when she was a kid. So, her reading habit was built by her own awareness, she also added that reading a book attracts her attention. The same fact was found in subject B. He told the researchers that his

parents did not read him bed time story, but they did tell him about fairy tale or something. So, it can be concluded that both did not get the reading habit from their childhood stage. Although subject B was told stories since he was a kid but it is different from what he read as he grows adult. As matter of the fact from all, it can be seen that the frequency of reading time spent by subject B is far less than subject A. Reading habit is not about since when someone start reading, but it is all about how often, how much, and what the texts are (Shen, 2006; Chettri & Rout 2013). It implies that having good reading habit means spending more time and more texts to read. It does not mean when someone has started to like reading since a long time, it can be said that s/he has good reading habit because s/he only spends rare time to read. This fact, for instance, happens to subject B who has started to like reading since he was in junior high school, but he spends less time. So, having good reading habit is dealing with how many qualified times they spend to read not how long they start to like it.

When the participants are asked about their opinion in the importance of reading habit, subject A said that reading can develop her imagination while subject B said that it is interesting because it helps him to learn foreign language. The answer of subject A means that she does not really focus on educational purpose, she purely loves reading for enjoyment, linier with her interest in books she reads. While subject B does it in purpose of educational motive for it implies that he wants to enhance his English skill. In this case, subject A is processing language acquisition while subject B is in the term of learning language. According to Reyhene (1998) cited in (Chettri & Rout 2013) reading for pleasure makes the reader involuntary and unconsciously improves his/her language skill. Asked about their opinion in English reading texts, subject A said that English literature books are difficult, especially to catch the meaning while subject B said that it is hard about vocabulary, grammar, and idea. Both have difficulty in English vocabulary but subject B has more difficulty in grammar and idea which means that probably it is because subject A has more time in doing her reading activity than subject B. Therefore, the result of reading gained by both subject A and subject B is different since they both have different intention and different terms in reading difficulty.

Based on the theory of types of reader proposed by Bullent (2002) there are four types of readers; heavy readers (reading 24 or more books per year or two per month); moderate readers (reading 7 – 23 books per year or 1 book per month); rare readers (reading 1 – 6 books per month or 1 book per two months); and non-readers. From the statement in connection with all of the facts elaborated above, it is found that subject A can be categorized as a heavy reader. It is proofed by how many hours she spends to read, her curiosity and the way she enjoys reading activity. While, subject B is categorized as a rare reader since it implies that he does not really enjoy it, it seems like he just force himself. It is proofed by the duration of reading time he spends and his way in enjoying reading time.

STUDENTS' WRITING PERFORMANCE

Related to writing, subject A said that she loves writing activity too although she also thinks that it is difficult. From this fact, it can be said that she does enjoy writing activity, proofed by the sentence that writing is the way she expresses her feeling, although she said it is also difficult, but it does not influence her writing enjoyment. On the other

hand, subject B said that although he does not avoid writing, but he said it is difficult for him. It deals with vocabulary, grammar, and also idea. These facts from both means that subject A enjoys writing while subject B does not enjoy it because he has difficulty in it.

The other fact is that subject A has some writing products. They are diary, short stories, poetries, and even novels which she said still in progress. While subject B does not have writing product. It implies that subject A does really enjoy writing activity, proofed by the products she has while subject B does not have writing product. It also implies that subject A is influenced by her insight from her reading input so she produces more than subject B who has no writing products which means his reading habit does not really influence his writing performance in form of products.

When they are asked about their opinion about the benefits of reading habit towards writing skill or performance, subject A said that reading habit influences writing performance because when someone wants to write something, s/he needs some references, s/he has to read and understand it. And her writing is really helped by her reading habit. Her answer is supported by the fact that her writing in fact is influenced by her reading habit. Subject B said that reading habit influences writing performance because he believes that by reading he can have ideas to make stories, or paragraphs. However, his answer is less supported by the fact that his writing product does not really influenced by his reading habit. Both subject A's and subject B's assumption towards reading benefits in writing skill supported by Emaliana (2015) who states that in developing writing skill students need to develop their prior knowledge which can be gained by reading. In hence, understanding the theory of knowledge and how knowledge is represented and organized can improve students' ability in writing (Emiliana, 2015; Limbach & Waugh, 2010; Zabit, 2010; Alnofaie: 2013).

The last thing is about their writing product. The researchers asked both participants to write two products, one product about comparison and contrast and the other is free writing product. Related to the idea of writing, from the time the researchers gave the topic, subject A spent less than a minutes to produce her first sentence, it was probably only fifteen minutes while in the second product, she spent for about a minutes to get the idea. It means that subject A has good imagination and idea to write something based on the topic and it took no time for her to produce her first sentence. It also means that her reading habit really helps her to gain the idea. Then, she finished her first product in 23 minutes while the second product she spent only 7 minutes. It means that, subject A has bigger attention to something free as what she said that she likes reading for enjoyment, and her products are also mostly art things. And it also means that when there is no boundary like topic, she could finish her writing faster. While subject B, he spent 3 minutes to get the idea for the first product, and he finished it in 26 minutes. This fact means that it is hard for him to gain the idea although the topic has been already given. It is probably because when someone has been given a topic and the topic is not familiar with her/him, it will be hard for the one to develop the idea for less of background knowledge. But when he was asked to write something freely, he spent for about a minute to gain the idea, while he finished the writing for about 11 minutes. It means it was easier for him when he has to choose his own topic, but he spent much time in finishing it compared to subject A

Dealing with her product quality, to subject A, first of all it is good that it has introduction to the topic chosen, and then she also explains both sides of the topic in detail. Second, it is logic writing and many readers can accept it. Third, it has conclusion to sum up the idea of the writing product. She also gives inhomogeneous vocabulary, which means she has good diction and all of them are suitable with the topic. Related to grammar, she produces less grammar mistakes, it deals mostly with countable noun. And when she was asked to write something freely, her imagination was working. While to subject B, in product A, he directly went to the topic without any significant introduction. It means he missed one part of good paragraph characteristics. The idea is actually fine, but not really specific, it is still talking about something very general, like everybody has known it. But in the end he enclosed the conclusion too although it did not really reflect a comparison and contrast paragraphs. Related to diction, he also produced some grammar mistakes mostly about sentence structure, he also chose inappropriate diction. The same thing also happened in the second product when it did deal with free writing.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, reading habit does influence writing skill or performance. It deals with idea, diction or vocabulary, thinking way and also preciseness in relation to grammar. The more students read the more they gain various ideas, vocabulary and thinking way. Those things can give them good example in organizing sentences into a paragraph or paragraphs into a passage. Finally, when students have good reading habit they will have good writing performance too.

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