

STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN CULTIVATING THEIR READING HABIT

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out reading strategies used by students at a public university in Aceh in cultivating their reading habit. Data were collected by means of questionnaire and interview. The results showed that most of the students were interested in reading and they had started it before coming to university. Family and friends had a little influence on them as they were self-motivated. The two most common reading habits that they had were having a reading schedule and making a reading list of their favorite book genres. On the other hand, none of them like to either bring books everywhere or read for others. They believed that reading has a lot of benefits, however, they did not want to force others to love reading.

KEYWORDS: *Cultivating Reading, Reading Habit, Reading Strategy.*


INTRODUCTION

Generally, reading is known as an activity of obtaining information from something written, as Finochiarro and Bonomo (1973) state that "reading as a process of bringing meaning to and getting meaning from printed or written material" (p. 119). Thus, reading is a useful activity in everyday life through which people can enhance their knowledge (Patel & Jain, 2008.) In addition, reading is important for language acquisition, meaning that the more people read, the better they will acquire language (Harmer, 2007). Reading is not an invariant skill; there are various types of reading skills which link many different purposes we have for reading (Nunan, 1989).

In principle, it is necessary for someone to have deep enthusiasm to read at first, and develop in the reading process. With this mindset, it will be easy to be purposeful in reading books.

There are some points needed to build a comfortable reading habit as follows:

1. Making reading enjoyable by choosing a pop-up books or other creatively published text which is interesting to read frequently;

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2. Having exposure to a variety of book genres, even comic books may also stimulate interest in reading;
 3. Reading every night and associate reading with relaxation; and
 4. Visiting library can also be an option.

However, although the benefits of reading are unquestionable, it is still hard to identify if Acehnese students, as the subjects under study, have reading habit. Preliminary observations showed that most of them only read whenever the lecturers asked them to. These days, many Acehnese students lack interest in improving their reading habits.

In light of this issue, the study attempted to find out more about what kind of strategies students applied in order to cultivate their reading habits. By knowing this, hopefully other readers can gain and apply the same strategies to develop their reading habits.

LITERATURE REVIEW

FACTORS ENCOURAGING READING HABIT

Having a good reading skill is necessary, especially for getting jobs. To this end, reading for pleasure is believed to enhance reading comprehension (Dupuy & Krashen, 1993).

In addition, to develop a reading habit, there are several factors to consider: 1) parents, 2) school, and 3) students.

Parents play an influential role in their children's life, of whom children imitate or model their parents' behaviors and attitudes (Clark, 2007). In this matter, parents should help develop their children's reading habit by purchasing books fitting their children to read. They can also create a corner of their house for a reading area, which will allow children to get a place to read.

Wollscheid (2014) has mentioned several points on how important parents' role in building a reading habit to the children, as the following:

1. Mothers (in particular) make a difference to younger children;
2. Children may also influence parents;
3. Policy should look beyond the family to influence the reading behaviors of boys.

Another factor, school, also plays an important role in the students' reading habits as well. School has a library wherein books are preserved for students to read. Still, students do not completely utilized the library as they seldom go and read there, except when they are assigned to do reading assignments.

The third factor is the students themselves. It is of no use to help students to improve their reading habit if they do not have their own motivation to do so. As students, they

should understand that reading plays a major role in one's success as reading allows people to obtain information, be up-to-date, and increase intelligence (Clark, 2007).

STRATEGIES IN CULTIVATING READING HABIT

Babar (2014) proposes some points that can be done by parents to develop reading habit as follows: 1) developing children's oral language by giving a suitable story level, 2) reading some stories on a daily basis, 3) surrounding children with reading materials, 4) encouraging children to do varied reading activities, 5) using technology to boost children's self-esteem, 6) allowing children to use e-readers, 7) allowing children to select what they want to read, 8) help children choose age-appropriate books, 9) making use of gadgets and creative apps, and 10) showing interest in children's reading.

Moreover, Wignall (2021) suggests several innovative ideas to build a reading habit, which are: (1) quitting having more books, 2) using the To-Go box method, 3) making book summaries are not cheating, 4) embracing the audio book, 5) skipping the stories, 6) reading with a pencil, 7) getting a book buddy, 8) creating some book nooks, 9) using a commitment device, 10) using a reading tracker, 11) cultivating a board of recommended readings, 12) consuming less news, 13) reading in bursts, 14) always having a book on deck, 15) writing a (tiny) book report, 16) creating a reading bucket list, 17) mastering the art of reading, 18) scheduling a library day, and (19) finding the real reason to read.

Furthermore, King (2017) proposes tips in cultivating a better and consistent reading habit as follows: setting reading goals, making a list of books every month, reading a minimum of 10-20 pages per day, investing in devices that promote reading, setting reading times or days, and getting a reading partner or a book club.

Babauta (2017) also suggests several ways to develop a reading habit including setting times for reading, making a list of good books to read, and finding a quiet place to read. Furthermore, Morgan (2021) proposes the steps of developing a reading habit into three main parts: developing reading habits (i.e., looking for ways to relate reading with everyday life), deciding what to read (i.e., creating a list of readings), and making reading a life-long commitment (i.e., being a volunteer reader or making a reading blog).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used the quantitative research approach. According to McLeod (2019, "Quantitative research" section),

Quantitative research involves the process of objectively collecting and analyzing numerical data to describe, predict, or control variables of interest. The goals of quantitative research are to test causal relationships between variables, make predictions, and generalize results to wider populations.

The study employed a questionnaire to obtain the data. The data were analyzed manually by calculating the percentage. The questionnaire consisted of ten questions in which four questions were related to the background of reading habit while six questions were related to reading habit strategies they used. The study was conducted on the fourth semester students of 2019-2020 academic year who have studied two levels of reading courses at the English Department of a public university in Banda Aceh, Aceh Province. The sample chosen consisted of 26 students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the questionnaire can be seen in the following table.

TABLE 1. *Students' Responses in the Questionnaire*

Point to Consider	Option	Frequency	%	Total	%
1. Like reading	Yes	25	96,1%	26	100%
	No	1	3%		
2. The first time to realize liking reading	Primary School	14	54%	26	100%
	Junior High School	6	23%		
	Senior High School	6	23%		
	University	0			
3. Get influenced by others to read	Family	3	11%	26	100%
	Friends	7	27%		
	No one	16	62%		
4. Reading schedule available	Yes	22	85%	26	100%
	No	4	15%		
5. Force to finish reading a book	Yes	0	0	26	100%
	No	26	100%		
6. Bring books (book bag) everywhere to go	Yes	0	0	26	100%
	No	26	100%		
7. Make a reading list	Yes	24	93%	26	100%
	No	2	7%		
8. Have a special genre of favorite book	Yes	24	93%	26	100%
	No	2	7%		
9. Read to others	Yes	2	7%	26	100%
	No	24	93%		
10. Action to do for friend that do not like reading	Give suggestion	17	65%	26	100%
	No action	9	35%		

Based on table 1, the results can be divided into two parts. First part is about students' background of reading habit and the second is about the maintenance of the habit.

The study found that almost all of the students (96.1%) liked to read. 54% of them have started liking to read during primary school, while the rest started reading in junior high school and senior high school. It is remarkable to see that none of them started reading when they were in university. This suggests that the students have had reading interest before they came to university and before they knew any reading courses.

Then, the study found that 62% of them said they had no reading influence from others, and only some got the influence from their family, while other from their friends. It can be concluded that the majority of the students have their own motivation for reading. This finding is somewhat in line with that of a study by Yusof (2010) who found that family has strongly affected the students' reading habit.


In regards to the reading habit that the students have, the results showed that 85% of them had their own reading schedule while the rest did not have any special schedule for reading. Further, the results also showed that no one forced themselves to finish the reading. This is a good thing to consider because they read according to their pace.

The study also found that almost all of the students made a reading list to motivate them to read. Also, most of them had their own favorite genre to read. This is good because it can grow their reading habit and make them comfortable to read. On the other hand, the majority of the students admitted that they did not like reading books to other, suggesting that they read for their own pleasure. The findings conform to what Hermawan (2020) has found that the students generally liked to read on their own time for enjoyment.

However, many agreed that they paid attention to people who do not like reading as reading is important and they love to share interesting books. Nevertheless, some also believed that each person may have their own view about reading and so they did not make any action to let other people like reading as well. These groups of students are mostly included to the group with their own motivation in reading without influences from others.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that reading habit has a lot of benefits. Reading can be used to gain information, to become an enjoyable activity, and also to extend knowledge of a language. Several factors influencing one's reading habit include personal motivation, parents, and also peers. The students here apply some strategies to cultivate reading habit, for example, making a reading list or making a schedule for reading. The students also believe that although reading has many benefits, they do not want to force other people to love reading.



The study expects that educators can broaden students' mind about the benefits of reading by introducing them interesting tips in reading. Additionally, parents should also take a role in building reading habits by constructing a comfortable situation to stimulate children's interest. Hopefully by being aware of these benefits, people will not say that reading is a useless activity to do.

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