

An Ethnography Case Study on Reading Habit of One Selected EFL Learner

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ABSTRACT

This ethnographic case study delves into the intricate reading habits of a fifth-semester EFL learner, exploring the multifaceted dynamics of her engagement with both fiction and non-fiction literature. The research unfolds the pivotal role of early exposure to reading, fostered by parental encouragement, in shaping a lifelong commitment to literary pursuits. The participant's diverse reading practices, encompassing print and e-books, reflect a nuanced approach to language acquisition and vocabulary enrichment. The study reveals a positive correlation between extensive reading habits and academic performance, particularly in TOEFL reading comprehension and overall language proficiency. The participant's transition from composing stories in Indonesian to writing in English, coupled with the abandonment of subtitles while engaging with English media, underscores the transformative impact of sustained reading habits on language skills. This research not only enhances the understanding of individual reading behaviors but also emphasizes broader implications for language development, academic success, and the cultivation of writing skills. Further research should investigate the unique impacts of different genres on language acquisition, the influence of digital platforms on reading behaviors, and how reading intersects with socioeconomic and cultural factors. A longitudinal study tracking individuals from infancy to adulthood might uncover the long-term impacts of early literacy. Further investigation is required to explore the impact of personalized reading programs in EFL courses on language proficiency and academic performance. Further research in this field can potentially enhance EFL teaching and overall progress.

KEYWORDS:

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Introduction

This research delves into an ethnographic case study to explore the reading habits of an EFL learner. Reading comprehension, a pivotal aspect of English language acquisition (Bakken & Lund, 2018), extends beyond mere textual consumption in English. It involves a purposeful engagement to attain a profound understanding (Amin & Bakhsh, 2021). Consequently,

mastering reading comprehension demands substantial effort, study, and practice from learners. They must invest significant time and energy to refine these skills, using reading as a conduit for acquiring knowledge in the target language. Active engagement with the material is essential, requiring learners to grasp and internalize thoughts rather than passively absorb information. This practice prompts learners to pose questions about the text, serving as a litmus test for their comprehension. The ability to tackle such questions hinges on a robust reading comprehension skill set. Regrettably, reading poses formidable challenges for students.

Reading comprehension, to the untrained observer, may appear deceptively straightforward. However, it is a nuanced and intricate process that encompasses various cognitive activities, including visual processing, critical thinking, psycholinguistics, and metacognition (Bakken & Lund, 2018). Despite its complexity, students often grapple with two primary challenges. Firstly, understanding an English text is hindered by a lack of familiarity with crucial vocabulary. Regardless of the efforts exerted by an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher, comprehension becomes elusive if students are unfamiliar with the meanings of words. Consequently, continuous vocabulary instruction is imperative, as reading necessitates diverse mental operations across various stages of comprehension (Kit-ling, 2017). Additionally, achieving proficiency in reading comprehension is not a simple skill acquisition; it requires active engagement and systematic instruction. Students must be guided on how to participate proactively in the learning process, cultivating the comprehension skills essential for critical thinking. Critical thinkers, as opposed to passive receivers of information, analyze content critically and adjust their perspectives accordingly. EFL students embodying this cognitive approach are better equipped to distill the main points of a text.

A deficiency in reading comprehension can lead readers astray, hindering their ability to grasp the intended meaning (Williyen et al., 2023). Proficiency in understanding written content not only paves the way for future scholarly pursuits but also cultivates the skills necessary for innovative thinking and practical application of acquired knowledge. The foundational aspect of effective reading lies in the reader's capacity to synthesize individual alphabetic characters, vocabulary, and syntax, utilizing their reasoning skills to derive meaning from the text (Müller et al., 2020). Reading comprehension transcends the mere ability to articulate English texts verbally and pronounce words accurately; it involves the active construction of meaning from the text (Bakken & Lund, 2018), a cognitive process common to both native and foreign language contexts. Importantly, enhanced reading comprehension skills not only benefit the individual but also have broader implications. Consequently, it is evident that EFL learners must exert concerted effort to enhance their reading comprehension abilities. Accordingly, this study aims to explore the reading habits of a specific cohort of EFL students.

This study employs an ethnographic case study methodology situated within the realm of qualitative research (Steffensen & Havgaard, 2020). Ethnography, etymologically rooted in the Greek terms "ethos" (tribe) and "graphos" (something written), is dedicated to exploring the behavior and culture of a specific group. This exploration encompasses various facets, including language, rituals, economic and political systems, life phases, interactions, and forms of communication (Harwati, 2019). Initially emerging from cultural anthropology, ethnography traces its origins to the late 19th and early 20th centuries when anthropologists conducted comparative studies of primitive civilizations by traveling to different countries. Subsequently, from the 1920s to the 1950s, sociologists at the University of Chicago focused

on individual cases of culture. Notably, from the 1980s onward, anthropologists have refined research methods for cultural groups, underscoring the evolving nature of ethnographic approaches (Lönngren, 2021). This evolution inherently acknowledges that ethnographers continually shape and adapt their study methods.

Certainly, when applying ethnographic research, specific conditions must be carefully considered. Ethnographic research is particularly useful when delving into the intricacies of a specific group that can illuminate broader cultural issues (Jonasson, 2019). Within a defined time frame, this group acts as a focal point for cultural exploration, facilitating the identification of shared values, beliefs, and language dynamics (Walford, 2018). Through this lens, researchers can discern the nuanced variations in behavior among different ethnicities and tribes. A key aspect of ethnographic research involves the researchers immersing themselves in the field, adopting a role akin to that of the subjects under study (Jonasson, 2019). Consequently, in the present study, the researchers spent a week alongside the respondent to gain a profound understanding of her reading habits. This immersive approach is integral to the thorough examination of the cultural context.

Reading habits, encompassing both conscious and subconscious mechanisms, denote the processes involved in extracting meaning from written material. (Erdem, 2015) succinctly defines it as an individual's inclination to consistently, regularly, and critically engage in reading throughout their life, driven by a genuine value and enjoyment of the activity. The foundation of a lifelong commitment to education lies in a deep-rooted love for reading, a practice that must be sustained over time to qualify one as a true lifelong learner. Encouraging reading habits, particularly among students, becomes imperative as it equips them with the ability to glean information from various sources, including schoolbooks, aiding in comprehending and addressing challenges encountered in the learning process (Ferisia et al., 2020). This encouragement is crucial for EFL learners who, in the later stages of their academic journey, engage in extensive reading for research purposes, especially when conducting thesis work that thoroughly explores research articles. Acknowledging the paramount importance of cultivating a healthy reading habit, as emphasized by (Chettri, 2013), becomes instrumental for intellectual development and plays a pivotal role in determining how effectively knowledge can be applied in practical, real-world scenarios.

Numerous previous studies have investigated reading habits, providing inspiration for the current study to contribute to the expanding knowledge base in the field of reading. The global decline in the popularity of reading can be ascribed to the widespread influence of the media and the swift advancement of the entertainment industry. These influential factors have led to the displacement of reading from its revered status as a valuable source of information and pleasurable leisure activity (Kamalova & Koletvinova, 2016).

The first study, conducted by Iftanti (2015), titled "What Makes EFL Students Establish Good Reading Habits in English," underscores the significance of exposing EFL students to digital texts and noteworthy literary works. It emphasizes the crucial role of growing up in a home where literacy is highly valued and parents frequently engage in reading aloud to their children. The second research effort by Iftanti (2012), titled "A Survey of The English Reading Habits of EFL Students in Indonesia," delves into the reading preferences of Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Through interviews and questionnaires involving 546 East Javanese EFL students, the study reveals that many students did not exhibit proficient reading skills in the language despite receiving English reading instruction since elementary school. Furthermore, the statistical analysis indicates a lack of developed reading habits in English, although there is a strong motivation for reading English literature for

enjoyment. The third study, conducted by Akarsu & Dariyemez (2014) and titled "The Reading Habits of University Students Studying English Language and Literature in The Digital Age," explores the reading preferences and habits of the current generation of English majors. It seeks to understand how extensive internet use and alternative multimedia sources have influenced their reading habits, providing valuable insights into the evolving landscape of reading practices. These studies contribute to a comprehensive understanding of EFL students' reading habits and the impact of digital influences on contemporary reading practices among English majors.

The fourth study conducted by Cosgun and Akyay (2009) investigates student teachers' reading habits and preferences in foreign language departments. The study reveals that students from both majors exhibit a positive attitude toward reading and actively engage in various reading-related activities. Notably, the students demonstrate a promising inclination for reading in both their native and target languages. In the fifth research conducted by Álvarez-álvarez (2016) titled "Book Clubs: An Ethnographic Study of an Innovative Reading Practice in Spain," the central finding underscores the role of book club gatherings in fostering a conducive environment for literary analysis. These gatherings promote value-based adult learning and dialogic interactions among members, contributing to reading innovation and literature development. This innovative approach offers insights into effective strategies for enhancing literary engagement and analysis.

Previous research predominantly focuses on the analysis of reading habits, yet this study takes a distinctive approach by applying an ethnographic case study to comprehensively investigate the reading habits of a specifically chosen EFL learner. In addressing a notable gap in the literature, the utilization of case study ethnography to examine reading habits remains relatively limited. This study uniquely contributes by delving into the everyday life of the EFL learner, offering a direct exploration of contextual factors influencing their reading habits. Consequently, the research aims to provide valuable insights into this underexplored domain, thereby enhancing the existing body of knowledge in the field of reading habits.

Method

The research aims to comprehensively explore the experiences of a selected EFL learner regarding their reading habits, utilizing a qualitative methodology. The chosen qualitative approach is essential for in-depth investigation and understanding of the identified problem. Ethnography serves as the research design, aligning with the study's objectives. In ethnographic research, data collection involves various techniques such as participant observation, interviews, descriptive questionnaires, focus groups, participant writing, field recordings, document analysis, case studies, and examination of artifacts (Erlandson & Bengtsson Lau, 2022; Kipouropoulou, 2022). Ethnography is particularly suitable for this study as it focuses on analyzing social practices and examining specific social and minority groups. In the contemporary globalized context, ethnography extends to diaspora cultures, encompassing dispersed cultures across different regions.

This research employs ethnography as a methodological approach to systematically capture data by closely observing the daily activities of a selected EFL learner with established reading habits. The study focuses on a female student, and the research duration spans one week to comprehensively examine her reading practices in the context of her everyday life. Aligned with the methodology outlined by Bulgarelli and Toassi (2017), the research adheres to a meticulous procedure. Initially, explicit permission is sought from the participant to meticulously document her daily routines to scrutinize her reading habits over the designated

period. Subsequently, the researcher diligently records key aspects of the participant's reading behavior, encompassing details such as the time allocated to reading, the genre of the book, its title, the duration required to complete each reading session, and the corresponding reading comprehension scores on specific English proficiency assessments, treated as essential data points (Schmidt, 2020). The acquired data are then meticulously analyzed to present a nuanced depiction of the EFL learner's reading habits. This analysis encompasses critical aspects such as the time dedicated to reading, diverse types of reading engaged in, the titles of books consumed, and the quantification of pages read within the stipulated week. This approach ensures a cohesive and coherent exploration of the participant's reading behaviors, providing readers with valuable insights into the intricacies of her reading habits.

Results

A fifth-semester student at a Yogyakarta private institution with high accreditation is the subject of this study. In her tertiary institution, the participant majors in international class communication science. The participant has read regularly since a young age. The participant acknowledges that her reading habits have an impact on her academic performance. This research takes place in one week. The respondent, in a week, can read various books, both fiction and non-fiction books. The researcher spent one week with the respondents, and during that time, the researcher found many interesting phenomena related to reading habits.

Reading habit on the first day

The respondent began the routine of reading at nine in the morning on the very first day. Her preferred book genre was fiction, and she could read three novels at once. She was diligent in fulfilling her responsibilities as a student even while on break. She is responsible for completing her assignments in addition to other activities.

Thursday	Book	Page of Book
9 A.M. - 12 P.M.	The Lawyer by Arrow Felicity (fiction)	Not listed (e-book)
3 A.M. - 5 P.M.	Atlas Six (fiction)	383 pages
10 P.M. - 1 A.M.	Pride and Prejudice (fiction)	347 pages

The respondent started the habit of reading from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. The respondent read a fiction book entitled *The Lawyer by Arrow Felicity* with an undisclosed amount because the respondents read it in an e-book. Around 1 p.m. to 2 p.m., the respondent carried out other activities. The respondent went to clean up her boarding house, do her college assignments, and do other activities. Exactly at 3 p.m., the respondent started reading again. She read a fiction book entitled *Atlas Six*, which had 383 pages. The respondent spends this time reading until 5 p.m. From 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., the respondent rested and did other activities. The respondent went to do her college assignments. Arriving at 10 p.m., the respondent started to read again, this time a fictional book entitled *Pride and Prejudice*, with a total of 347 pages. She read this book until 1 a.m. Then, the respondent went to rest.

Reading habit on the second day

On the second day, the respondent woke up at 9 a.m. Then she did her activities. On the second day, she had an afternoon class for the Communication Psychology course. After completing the afternoon class, she went to hang out with her friends and when she arrived at his boarding house, she started reading books again.

Friday	Book	Page of Book
9 A.M. - 1 P.M.	High Fidelity (fiction)	253 pages
	Momentary Oblivion (fiction)	380 pages
	The Consequences of Gravity (fiction)	167 pages
3 P.M. - 5 P.M.	Psikologi Komunikasi (nonfiction)	
10 P.M. - 2 A.M.	Ride or Die (fiction)	1074 pages (e-book)

The respondent started reading activities at 9 a.m. Because she went to bed at 2 a.m. yesterday, she awoke late on Friday. From 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., she read three fiction books. The respondent read the book *High Fidelity*, which has a total of 253 pages. The second fiction book she read was titled *Momentary Oblivion* with 380 pages, and the third fiction book was *The Consequences of Gravity* with 167 pages. After that, the respondent prepared to take the afternoon class on her campus. From 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., the respondent read non-fiction books, namely textbooks in her subjects. After class ended, she went to rest and went out with her campus friends to hang out in a coffee shop. Then, after she finished playing, she continued reading fiction books, with the book title *Ride or Die* totaling 1074 pages, but in e-book form. After 2 a.m., the respondent finished reading a book and went to sleep.

Reading habit on the third day

On the third day, the respondent woke up at 8 a.m., had breakfast, and then started reading fiction books. After reading, she attended lectures. Then, the respondent prepared for a campus event with her friends and then went to rest.

Saturday	Book	Page of Book
9 A.M. - 12 P.M.	Lavoisier's Exception and the Red String of Fate (fiction)	Not listed (e-book)
1 P.M. - 5 P.M.	Psikologi Komunikasi (nonfiction)	

The respondent started reading fiction books in the morning. The fiction book she read was entitled *Lavoisier's Exception and the Red String of Fate*. The number of pages in this book was not stated because she read it via a certain platform. She completed this reading from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. After that, she took a break for lunch and got ready for her lectures. The lecture began at 1 p.m. and ended at 5 p.m. During lectures, students read non-fiction books titled *Psychology of Communication*. After the class ended, the respondent carried out another activity, namely, preparing for her campus event. The respondent took part in campus activities as an event organizer. Reading activities on the third day had to be stopped because of the respondent's busyness.

Reading habit on the fourth day

On the fourth day, the respondent did reading activities at night. In the morning, she got ready to look for sponsors for campus events and other activities. She only read fiction books before going to bed after finishing all her work.

Sunday	Book	Page of Book
8 P.M. - 1 A.M.	The Auction (fiction)	80 pages

The fourth day was spent with the respondent reading works of fiction. The fictional book's title was *The Auction*, and it contained a total of 80 pages. She became tired due to their actions, and she fell asleep as a result.

Reading habit on the fifth day

On the fifth day, beginning in the morning, the respondent continued to be busy with the events happening on campus. She went out to look for a sponsor for the event she was planning on campus. She began reading novels once she had finished looking for sponsors and other people, and then she continued with the activity.

Monday	Book	Page of Book
1 P.M. - 5 P.M.	Attack of the Killer Mimbulus Mimbletonia (fiction)	Not listed (e-book)

The respondent began the reading session at 1 p.m. and continued until 5 p.m. by reading fiction. Her reading material consisted of a novel named *Attack of the Killer Mimbulus Mimbletonia*. Due to the fact that she read it using e-books, the number of pages was not mentioned. After that, the respondent went on with the activities she had planned for the occasion on campus and did not pick up a book again until she had arrived at her boarding place.

Reading habit on the sixth day

The respondent continued to be engaged in the same activities on the sixth day of the observation. The respondent made an effort to acquire funding and sponsorship for various events and activities on campus. It was five o'clock when she arrived at the boarding house. After getting herself cleaned up and having some rest, she resumed her reading habits. After that, she read till one in the morning, taking a short break to attend to some of her responsibilities.

Tuesday	Book	Page of Book
6 P.M - 8 P.M.	Arctic Wolf (fiction)	Not listed (e-book)
11 P.M. - 1 A.M.	Sanctify (fiction) On A Wednesday, In A Cafe (fiction)	426 pages Not listed (e-book)

The respondent engaged in additional activities during the morning. The respondent then began reading fiction books between the hours of six and eight o'clock in the evening. She used the e-book version of *Arctic Wolf*; hence the page count is not provided. The respondent carried on with her activities after that and resumed reading between the hours of 11 p.m. and 1 a.m. During this time period, she read two works of fiction. Both *Sanctify* and *On a Wednesday, in a Cafe* are the titles of works of fiction that she has read. In the first book, there were 426 pages, but in the second book, which was read as an e-book, the number of pages is not indicated. She went to rest after completing their reading activities.

Reading habit on the seventh day

On the seventh day, the last day of the study. The respondent is in a meeting for a campus event that will be held the next day. This makes reading activities carried out during the day. The respondent did not read much on the seventh day because she was still busy. After completing all the activities, the respondent went to rest.

Wednesday	Book	Page of Book
1 P.M. - 5 P.M.	Little Women (fiction)	374 pages

On the seventh, the final day of the investigation, the respondent attended a planning session for an on-campus event that was scheduled to take place the following day. This makes it impossible to engage in reading activities during the course of the day. Because she was still quite busy on the seventh day, she did not get much reading done, but she still managed to read one fiction book from 1 p.m. to p.m. She then went to relax after finishing all of the activities that were planned for her.

Discussion

In this ethnographic research on reading habits, the respondent read more fiction books. She usually reads fiction books from AO 3 (e-book). When she reads books online, the books are typically less than 100,000 words in length. She can finish one book in three to four hours. Reading books under 100,000 words can be completed by the respondent in a matter of hours. Therefore, in a day, she is able to read two to three books. The habit of reading from a young age has a significant impact on how frequently the respondent reads (Bakken & Lund, 2018). From the interview, she stated that her parents always teach her the importance of reading books. Not surprisingly, the respondent was able to read various articles in one day.

The respondent not only reads online books (e-books), but she also reads print fiction books. She typically reads books with more than 400 pages. The answer has been accustomed to her mother reading to her since childhood or kindergarten. According to Ahmad et al. (2020) parents play a significant role in inculcating reading habits in their children since they are the first and primary source of power to raise and stimulate learning capacity through the development of a consistent reading habit. This demonstrates the approach to parenting of the respondent's parents, who instill in their children the habit of reading. The respondent used to read books such as BOBO magazine, KKPK, etc. This habit causes the habit of reading. Growing up, the respondent started looking for other books. She likes English, and her great curiosity causes the respondent to explore English through reading books. The respondent said that she really wanted to go to London because she really liked that country. The respondent is looking for books about London, smelling British, studying London culture, and so on. This encourages the respondent to be more interested in reading.

Besides that, because the respondent's personality is introverted, she spends her time reading. Therefore, the reason she has a reading habit is because the respondent really likes to read. The respondent said that she preferred to stay in his room all day to read a book. Based on the fiction books read by the respondent, she also said that her English vocabulary started to increase when she read English fiction books (Erdem, 2015). British males' enthusiasm for fictional characters piqued the respondent's interest in reading activities. Compared to watching, the respondent still chose to read because she said that she was more touched while reading. Because while reading, she can imagine as she pleases.

In this ethnographic research on reading habits, the respondent read non-fiction books. Non-fiction books are books of knowledge from the campus program. She read non-fiction books during lecture hours. The respondent said that she can learn a lot of new vocabulary from non-fiction books. She enjoys reading non-fiction books as study materials for her academics. Even during the TOEFL test, the respondent got good scores. When she took the TOEFL test, she got a score of 642, even though it was the first test she took. The respondent said that she got it because she liked reading.

The respondent achieves the best score possible in the TOEFL reading comprehension section. In addition to that, she mentioned that their abilities in speaking and writing have improved as a result. She improves not just her speaking ability but also her writing ability. Her vocabulary has significantly expanded since she was last seen. This demonstrates that a person's reading habits have a connection to their academic performance. According to Francisco & Madrazo (2011), it was hypothesized that the students' reading habits would correlate with their reading comprehension and academic performance, and it was predicted that the students' reading comprehension would also correspond to their academic performance. Additionally, it was hypothesized that the students' reading habits would correlate with their academic performance.

Besides that, the respondent likes to write stories that are published on online websites. Her love of reading led her to try something new, namely writing an essay. She likes to write short stories in Indonesian, but as time goes by and she becomes used to reading English novels, she finally starts writing stories in English. She even likes to write on a website called *Medium*. From this, it can be seen that reading habits can also improve writing skills. (2019) states that for college students, reading and writing are necessary for the success of their studies, and reading habits can severely impact their knowledge and comprehension in their field of study.

The respondent also said that she no longer had difficulty speaking English when she got a new vocabulary. Even when the lecturer explained in English, she had no difficulty understanding it. Santoso (2014) states that there is an influence between reading habits on students' speaking abilities, as well as the effect of vocabulary mastery on students' speaking abilities. There is an influence between reading habits and vocabulary mastery on students' speaking abilities. Not only that, but usually the respondent composes in Indonesian, but now she is using English directly. Her reading habit has resulted in everything she has. Besides that, she said that when she watches a movie or any show, she does not use Indonesian subtitles. In general, the respondent learns English through reading habits, which ultimately help her finally understand English. From the books she read, it is clear that the academic improvement of the respondent had a big effect.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this ethnographic case study offers valuable insights into the reading habits of an EFL learner, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of her engagement with both fiction and non-fiction literature. The findings underscore the significant impact of early exposure to reading, supported by parental encouragement, in fostering a lifelong commitment to literary activities. The participant's diverse reading practices, encompassing both print and e-books, indicate a nuanced approach to language acquisition and vocabulary enhancement. Furthermore, the study reveals a positive correlation between the participant's extensive reading habits and her academic performance, particularly in areas such as TOEFL reading comprehension and overall language proficiency. The participant's transition from reading in

Indonesian to composing stories in English and actively engaging with English media without subtitles exemplifies the transformative potential of sustained reading habits on language skills. This study not only contributes to the understanding of individual reading behaviors but also highlights the broader implications for language development, academic success, and the cultivation of writing skills.

For future research, it is recommended to explore the impact of specific genres on language acquisition and cognitive development among EFL learners. Additionally, investigating the role of digital platforms and online reading communities in shaping reading habits and language proficiency could provide valuable insights into contemporary trends. A longitudinal study tracking individuals from childhood to adulthood would offer a comprehensive understanding of the lifelong impact of early reading exposure. Furthermore, exploring the intersectionality of reading habits with factors such as socio-economic background, cultural influences, and individual learning styles could enhance the depth of future research. Investigating the potential benefits of incorporating tailored reading programs into EFL curricula and evaluating their effectiveness in enhancing language skills and academic performance would be a valuable avenue for future exploration. Ultimately, continued research in this domain holds the potential to inform educational practices and contribute to the holistic development of EFL learners.

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