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## Revealing Student's Reading Interest through creative WhatsApp Status

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### ABSTRACT

Along with the rapid development of technology and digital era, this research investigated and reveal millennial students about their reading habit and interest. Specifically, this paper investigates about students' reading interest through creative WhatsApp status. This study was carried out by 18 students taking "Basic Reading" class and "Cultural Based Reading" class. It was conducted with descriptive qualitative method by using interview and observation of the students' WhatsApp *status* screenshot. It is found that 89% students of English Department Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang are more interested in reading fiction than the factual text. Besides, students also find that learning using experiment with social media is fun and challenging.

### KEYWORDS:

Digital reading;  
WhatsApp status;  
reveal;  
reading interest.

## Introduction

Indonesia, surprisingly, ranks the second-last in reading interest or number 60<sup>th</sup> out of 62 countries in the study held by Central Connecticut State University in the US. This is so ironic that this potential country has very low interest of reading. In fact, reading skill is very important to students (Akyol, Çakiroğlu, & Kuruyer, 2014). In addition, reading can help graduates find good career and will affect their working life later (Akyol et al., 2014), as this reading skill or literacy has a close relationship with academic achievement.

Literacy atmosphere in English Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang is not obviously encouraged. It can be seen from their reading habits. Most of students in "Basic Reading" class are not accustomed to read important matter or source of reading. They own many social media like

Instagram, Facebook, or WhatsApp to find unimportant content, such as curious about other's lives. Based on the writer's observation, 91% students in "Basic Reading" class is interested in spending their leisure time to scroll on their smart phone and read entertaining content, like personal status or Instagram caption instead of looking for informative content for the sake of self-improvement.

This is extremely ironic phenomenon, because in this 4.0 era all of the information and innovation spread rapidly only in one click. Meanwhile, some students still do not care about other's life. This education 4.0 lets students' access internet, technology even in the teaching learning process on the classroom. This is in line with the research, where the optimal use of technology is being used in the classroom (Anggraeni, 2018).

Bensalem (2018) investigating students' perceptions about the use WhatsApp in learning vocabulary. Jafari and Chalak (2016) investigate the role of WhatsApp in the vocabulary learning improvement of Iranian junior high school EFL students. The same thing was done by Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Esfahani (2018) their study about the effect of using WhatsApp on Iranian EFL Learners' Vocabulary Learning. Therefore, in this study, the writers tried to promote the use of hi-tech social media, such as WhatsApp status to reveal or observe the students' reading interest. In this study, students were asked to read as many sources as they can, then to write what have they read into WhatsApp status. By doing this, students' interest in reading was revealed in the other hand, what kind of material they would like to read can be seen by reading their WhatsApp Status.

### **Reading comprehension**

Reading, as one of the language skills is also regarded as difficult skill for many students. Several of students in "Basic Reading" class in Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang said that reading English material is difficult. The reasons vary from limited vocabulary, unfamiliar topic of discussion, and the

ability to comprehend the whole text. Reading needs to be comprehensive, because reading is an interactive process to infer, understand the words, and mostly comprehension (Akyol et al., 2014). Why comprehension? Because reader, in this case students should be able to infer the meaning, get the connection between texts, and gain the whole meaning at last.

Reflecting on the comprehension and ICT development, the writer promotes the use of social media to attract students' reading interest. This is because 100% students in the "Basic Reading" class own WhatsApp application in their smart phones and they spend screen time above 1-3 hours a day to access WhatsApp. This can be a good beginning for students to make reading habit become more popular than only reading trivial things like gossip or other's personal life.

By using technology, students are able to develop literacy skills (Korabiak & Mete, 2004). In addition, wide-spread technology like internet will ease teacher or facilitator for developing curriculum and attractive teaching-learning process. Many countries have developed the ICT-based reading program like one in Kenya. This country allow students to use Tablets and E-readers to improve the outcome of teaching reading (Piper, Jepkemei, Kwayumba, & Kibukho, 2015). Furthermore, it is claimed that computer and internet helps students best to enrich their vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Olszak, 2015).

### **WhatsApp status**

According to the WhatsApp.com WhatsApp status allows someone to share text, photos, videos and animated GIFs that disappear after 24 hours (WhatsApp, 2016). Thus, users or students can write a text in the WhatsApp status and let other people read the status. In this "Basic Reading" class, students are asked to create as creative status as possible, post it and let their friends read the status for good. This is really helpful that everyone can also contribute to give feedback if in case there is any misspelling or mistake in the

sentences. The only requirement for this “game” is to make sure that everyone save classmates numbers in order to view the status and give comment (if it is possible).

In addition, there are also advantage and disadvantage of using ICT as the media in reading. First, it can help students to be more active and careful for example in choosing writing material or reading material. The most popular from ICT that can be used in reading and writing such as blog (Md Yunus, Nordin, Salehi, Sun, & Embi, 2013) and e-reader. Besides, posting video through *Youtube* can also be the other option for teacher and students in utilizing ICT-based learning. However, preparing video is more complex than writing a *WhatsApp status* for students.

### ***Nature of Teaching Reading in “Basic Reading” Class in English Department of Unimus***

At least 20 students are taking the “*Basic Reading*” class in this department. Those students have their own nature of learning style. Surprisingly, most of students in this class do not like reading at all. Based on the observation, 3 of students read a novel in Bahasa Indonesia, 4 others said that they do not like read novel, and the rest said that they do not like reading anything at all. It is so ironic, once again, as the class of reading demand high intensity and interest of reading. Reading anything will be just fine as long as they try to comprehend the text well. Unfortunately, because of their lack of interest in reading, then the researcher tries to implement *WhatsApp status* in helping them integrate their daily social media life and the subject or reading material.

The reason of choosing *WhatsApp status* to encourage students’ interest in reading is 100 % of them have that application installed in their smartphone. In addition, students are frequently open and access *WhatsApp* to communicate daily in written text with their friends, family, lecturers, and others because this social media is relatively cheaper than regular SMS nowadays. Should someone have the internet connection, *WhatsApp* is good and cheap choice to

communication. The second reason is that everyone in the classroom has similar hobby such as writing and reading WhatsApp status. Everyone will share what they feel in status and everyone also spend most of their time to read someone's status and try to build communication by commenting on the status. So far, the result is satisfying enough, because many input that they can share through their social media, especially WhatsApp. Based on the (Assia, 2012), there is any slightly difference between conventional and ICT-based Reading that can be seen through table 1. Using technology in the classroom simply will enhance the interaction between teacher and students as well as the spirit of collaborative (student with student). It also enables more active and lively class because the control is not only on the teacher, but student may contribute to create more active classroom. Besides, student can choose their own reading topic to be discussed or promote independent learning.

Table 1. The comparison between conventional and ICT-based reading class

EFL Traditional Reading Classroom	EFL Technology-Enhanced Reading Classroom
More teacher-centered	More learning-centered
Teacher authority is limitless	Teacher authority is restricted
The text is the only used material	The technology is an aid for reading
Teacher monitors every step in reading	Students monitor their own reading and the teacher guidance is provided only when necessary
Text selection is most of the time the teacher's responsibility	It is advised to provide students freedom for text selection when possible
Teacher instruction and control	Teacher-student and student-student interaction

## Method

This study was aimed to investigate and reveal students' reading interest by implementing WhatsApp status in their smart phone. The qualitative approach was employed to gain the objective of the study. This study also used questionnaire to fulfill the objective of this study. Students were asked about their reading habit and about the book they have read before. Besides, interview also conducted to get the further explanation from students.

### *Participants / Subject / Population and Sample*

The participant of this study were 18 students in English Department of Unimus who take Basic Reading Comprehension subject. And all of students in the classroom have WhatsApp application in their smart phone to participate in this study.

### *Instrument*

Questionnaire and interview were employed as instrument. A questionnaire was designed to get the objective of the study. It asked about students' reading interest and their reading habit. Besides it also gave information about name, gender, and basic information. In addition, the writers also applied interview to give the further information about personal insight about reading habit and also its relation to ICT based reading in their daily. Writers also conducted the interview for the data collection. Screen shoot of the students' work were saved in the smartphone for analysis.

### **Result**

From the questionnaire, it consisted of open-ended and close-ended questions. Based on the data, there were 4 male and 14 female participated in this study. Besides, most of them can be classified into 19-23 year old range. In addition, they have a very unique reading habit everyday (table 2):

Table 2. Table of students Reading Interest

Reading interest	No of Respondent	Percentage (%)
Have good collection of books (more than 10) both Indonesian and English book	2 students	11%
Have moderate collection of book	3 students	17%
Have a few collections of book	9 students	50%
No book collection at all	4 students	22%

Based on the table 2, it can be seen that 50% of students in the classroom do not have good reading habit conventionally. They are not accustomed to read a book. They do not have good enough book to read every day. Whereas only 11% of them have a good reading hobby. From the collection of books

they have and through interview, those students really read the book or in other hand, their book is not just a collection on their shelf.

Majority of students in *Basic-Reading* subject spend 1-2 hours to read the electronic reading matter. While only 2 students (11%) only spend around 30 minutes to 1 hours to read from electronic reading material. It can be observed by the table 3.

Table 3. Table of students reading interest on Online Reading, especially electronic Reading

<b>Time spend</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
30 minutes – 1 hour	2 students	11%
1-2 hours	12 students	66%
More than 2 hours	4 students	23%

18 students were asked about their reading habit of online reading. Almost everyone in the classroom only read the material from the screen (both PC and smartphone). In addition, 2 of 8 students that download the material from the internet and surprisingly only 1 student downloaded the material and print it out. Since she thought that the reading material was important to be saved as documentation. However, for every entertaining content reading material, they said, printing the material out was not necessarily significant.

In this study, students were asked to read various reading material from fiction to factual texts. The first session, students were asked to read famous children story "The Tale of Peter Rabbit". After giving the material of reading, students were asked to read the story. Upon reading story, they must post something related to the story in their WhatsApp status. The status is expected to be read by many people, especially their classmates, then such comments may be raised and it stimulate interaction between students.

Students were given the factual text about health. They need to also make kind of summary or quote anything from the text to be posted in their WhatsApp status. This also will trigger friends or colleague to read and give comment on the status, so that it will stimulate and trigger two way written communication.

## Discussion

Students tend to perform their best when they are asked to post something, especially in the social media and internet where many people can access it. They try to be careful in arrange the words and do their best effort to minimize mistake. This is good, as actually internet help someone to improve their language skill.

From the first material, "The tale of Peter Rabbit", it can be seen that the children story has good message or moral value, so most of the students write about its moral value and the interesting point of the story. Almost 100% student will tell about the touching point from the story such as being good kid and don't make your mother sad and so on. Students' responses are varying, such as they feel excited with this kind of assignment. Besides learning how to read something, students also learn how to write. Usually students will give more attention to the way the write, the spelling, grammar, and so forth. They will be more careful on the mechanism. Besides, such interaction between students are possibly occur.

Another material to be discussed is the factual text. The example is taken from the English newspaper or website. What they have to do is almost similar to the first material. Read the given material carefully, then to share or post the important or news-worthy value in their WhatsApp status. By implementing this, writing WhatsApp status is helpful for students in triggering their interests in reading.

## Conclusion

From the explanation above, the writer can draw several conclusion. First, it is found that 89% students of English Department Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang are more interested in reading fiction than the factual text. This is due to the vocabulary difficulty level found in both text. In reading factual text sometimes students need to master more advanced and difficult vocabulary, but in understanding fiction is not necessarily for students to master particular vocabularies in any special terminologies. Besides, students also find that learning using experiment with social media is fun and challenging. It is fun because students can share their idea to the social world and interact with the



other users. However, it is also challenging, because in posting any content in social media. Moreover, using English language, students will be more careful and aware of their sentence patterns, vocabulary in order to present the best.

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