

AN EXPLORATION OF READING HABITS AND PRACTICES AMONG ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITAS GRAHA NUSANTARA

Yuswin Harputra^{1*}

¹ English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Graha Nusantara, Indonesia

Yulia Rizki Ramadhani²

² English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Graha Nusantara, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Reading literacy among students entering higher education in Indonesia remains a significant concern, particularly among English Education students who are expected to engage actively with English-medium academic texts. This study aims to describe (1) students' purposes for reading, (2) the strategies they employ when encountering reading difficulties, and (3) their reading habits in both academic and non-academic contexts at the English Education Study Program of Universitas Graha Nusantara. The participants of this study were 60 English Education students. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data were analysed descriptively, while the qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings indicate that students primarily read for educational purposes and are predominantly driven by extrinsic motivation. When encountering reading difficulties, students tend to rely more on peers than lecturers for assistance. Furthermore, students demonstrate relatively low levels of academic reading frequency compared with their engagement in non-academic reading activities. These findings highlight the importance of



strengthening a disciplinary reading culture in English Education through greater lecturer involvement, structured reading support, and strategies that encourage students' sustained engagement with academic texts.

Corresponding Author:

Yuswin Harputra

A English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Graha Nusantara, Indonesia

Email: yuswinharputra63@gmail.com

A. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a receptive language skill that forms the cornerstone of academic success for university students, including students in the English Education study program who engage daily with English-medium academic texts, whether in the form of journal articles, textbooks, or online reading materials. Strong reading ability enables students to acquire, process, and produce new knowledge within their discipline, rather than remaining passive recipients of lecture notes (Bharuthram, 2017).

A number of studies at both international and national levels have shown that students entering higher education often possess reading habits that are insufficiently developed to meet the demands of academic literacy (Bharuthram, 2017; Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2014). This phenomenon is also observed among English Education students in Indonesia, who would ideally represent a group with strong English reading literacy given their field of study, yet in practice many students only read assigned material when facing an assignment or examination, rather than as a habit driven by intrinsic motivation (Grabe & Stoller, 2019).

Limited engagement in extensive reading among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners has implications for vocabulary development, discourse comprehension, and overall English proficiency (Day & Bamford, 1998; Krashen, 2004). Furthermore, heavy reliance on lecturers' notes without a corresponding habit of reading primary sources risks positioning students as reproducers rather than producers of knowledge (Bharuthram, 2017).

Based on this problem, the present study aims to explore the reading habits and practices of English Education students at Universitas Graha Nusantara, guided by three research questions: (1) what are students' goals for reading; (2) what strategies do students use when they experience difficulty understanding a text; and (3) what patterns characterise students' reading habits in both academic and recreational

contexts. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a basis for lecturers and study program management in designing more effective pedagogical interventions to foster a disciplinary reading culture.

B. LITERATUR REVIEW

Reading habits are defined as a planned and consistent pattern of reading undertaken by an individual in order to understand academic and non-academic material (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2014). Good reading habits are strongly correlated with academic achievement, since reading is a primary vehicle for the transfer of knowledge that cannot be entirely substituted by lecturers' oral explanations (Palani, 2012).

Within second/foreign language learning, Grabe and Stoller (2019) classify reading purposes into several categories, including reading to search for information, reading for general comprehension, and reading to critique or reading to learn, which involves evaluating and synthesising ideas. This classification is relevant for understanding the extent to which English Education students develop higher-order reading purposes, rather than reading solely to complete assignments.

Bharuthram's (2017) study of first-year students at a university of technology in South Africa found that students' reading goals were dominated by educational purposes, followed by casual reading, with practical reasons being the least frequently reported. The same study found that the most commonly used strategy when students encountered reading difficulties was seeking help from friends rather than lecturers, and that students rarely applied higher-order metacognitive strategies such as summarising or generating questions about the text.

The concept of extensive reading, as advanced by Day and Bamford (1998) and Krashen (2004), holds that broad and enjoyable reading exposure -- rather than merely intensive reading for assignments -- contributes significantly to vocabulary growth, reading fluency, and positive attitudes toward the target language. Conversely, EFL learners exposed only to compulsory readings risk stagnation in their foreign-language literacy development (Renandya & Jacobs, 2016).

Family and school environments also play a role in shaping early reading habits. Children who grow up in environments that value literacy tend to develop more positive attitudes toward reading than those from backgrounds oriented more toward oral tradition (Lukhele, 2013). At the higher education level, lecturers who create structured reading demands -- for example, through short quizzes or reading-based assignments -

- can encourage students to read more consistently (Bharuthram, 2017; Pecorari et al., 2012).

Building on this review, the present study frames English Education students' reading habits as the product of an interaction between individual factors (motivation, cognitive strategies), institutional factors (lecturer and curriculum demands), and family and prior schooling background.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach within a case study design. The study was conducted to examine the reading habits and practices of students in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Graha Nusantara. The quantitative component was used to identify general patterns in students' reading habits through a questionnaire, while the qualitative component was used to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons, experiences, and contexts underlying those patterns through semi-structured interviews. The research framework was adapted from Bharuthram (2017) and contextualised to the setting of English Education students at Universitas Graha Nusantara.

The participants were students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Graha Nusantara. The questionnaire was administered to students who met the predetermined criteria for participation in the study. Participants for the semi-structured interviews were selected purposively from the questionnaire respondents to obtain more detailed information about their reading experiences and practices. The selection considered the relevance of participants' responses to the research questions and their willingness to participate in the interview.

The main instrument for quantitative data collection was a questionnaire adapted from Bharuthram (2017) and adjusted to the context of English Education students at Universitas Graha Nusantara. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended and open-ended questions addressing students' reading purposes, reading frequency, academic and non-academic reading practices, and strategies used when encountering reading difficulties. The qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews designed to explore students' reading experiences, including their previous reading experiences, reading environment, difficulties in reading English-language texts, and the factors influencing their reading practices.

Data collection was conducted through the administration of the questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews with the selected participants. Before data

collection, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature of their participation. The questionnaire responses were compiled and organised for analysis, while the interview data were recorded and transcribed for qualitative analysis.

The quantitative data obtained from the closed-ended questionnaire items were analysed descriptively using frequencies and percentages to identify patterns in students' reading habits and practices. Responses to the open-ended questionnaire items and the semi-structured interviews were analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis. The analysis involved identifying recurring patterns in the participants' responses, coding relevant statements, grouping related codes into categories, and developing themes corresponding to the research questions. The qualitative analysis followed the principles of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' Reading Goals

The questionnaire results provide information about the purposes for which students engage in reading. The responses were classified into several reading-goal categories based on the questionnaire items and the analytical framework adapted from previous research. The categories included educational purposes, casual or recreational reading, and practical purposes.

Table 1
Reading Goals of English Education Students

Reading Goal Category	Frequency (n=60)	Percentage (%)
Educational Goals	31	51.7%
Casual Reading/Relaxation	18	30.0%
Practical Reasons	11	18.3%
Total	60	100.0%

As presented in Table 1, educational goals were the most frequently reported reading purpose, accounting for 31 students (51.7%). This was followed by casual reading or reading for relaxation, reported by 18 students (30.0%). Practical reasons were reported by 11 students (18.3%), representing the least frequently reported reading goal among the participants.

These findings indicate that reading among the participating English Education students was more commonly associated with educational purposes than with casual or practical purposes. The finding can subsequently be compared with previous research, including Bharuthram (2017), to identify similarities and differences in students' reading purposes across higher education contexts. However, the results presented in this section are based specifically on the questionnaire data collected from English Education students at Universitas Graha Nusantara.

2. Strategies for Overcoming Reading Difficulties

Table 2 presents the strategies reported by the 60 participating students when they encountered difficulties in understanding English-language texts.

Table 2.
Strategies for Overcoming Reading Difficulties

Strategy	Frequency (n=60)	Percentage (%)
Asking friends for help	41	68.3
Using a dictionary	33	55.0
Re-reading the text	25	41.7
Asking lecturers for help	7	11.7

As shown in Table 2, asking friends for help was the most frequently reported strategy, with 41 students (68.3%) indicating that they sought assistance from their peers when experiencing difficulties with English-language texts. This was followed by using a dictionary, reported by 33 students (55.0%), and re-reading the text, reported by 25 students (41.7%). In contrast, only 7 students (11.7%) reported asking lecturers for help.

The relatively high proportion of students who relied on their peers suggests that peer support played an important role in dealing with reading difficulties. This finding is comparable to previous research on undergraduate students' reading practices, although the extent to which the findings are similar should be interpreted in relation to differences in institutional and participant contexts.

The frequent use of dictionaries and re-reading also indicates that students employed practical strategies to address problems in vocabulary and text comprehension. However, the present questionnaire data alone do not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that students rarely used higher-order metacognitive strategies,

such as summarising, concept mapping, or generating questions. Such conclusions should be supported by specific questionnaire items or interview data. Therefore, the qualitative findings are important for further explaining how students approached reading difficulties and why particular strategies were preferred.

3. Reading Frequency and Habits

Figure 2.
Reading Frequency among English Education Students

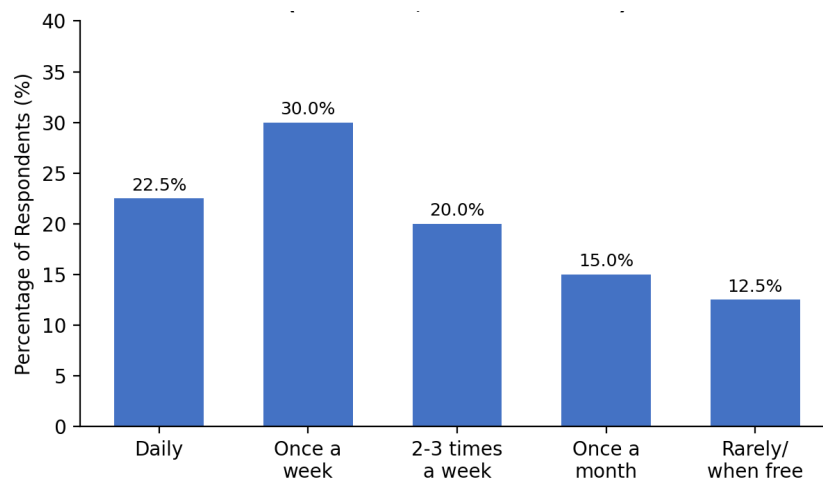


Figure 2 presents the reading frequency reported by the 60 participating English Education students across different types of reading materials. The findings indicate that students' reading frequency varied considerably. Only a relatively small proportion of students reported reading on a daily basis, whereas a larger proportion reported reading on a weekly or monthly basis. This pattern suggests that although students may recognise the importance of reading, regular reading has not yet become a consistent practice for many of the participants.

The relatively limited frequency of reading may have implications for students' development as independent readers, particularly in an English Education program where continuous exposure to academic and English-language texts is important. Previous studies have similarly highlighted the gap between students' recognition of the importance of reading and the frequency with which they engage in reading activities (Bharuthram, 2017; Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2014). However, the present finding should be interpreted within the context of the students and institution examined in this study.

The findings also highlight the potential role of lecturers in encouraging more consistent reading practices. Reading-based activities, such as short pre-lecture reading tasks, reading discussions, reflective reading logs, and brief comprehension quizzes, may help integrate regular reading into students' academic routines. Such activities can provide structured opportunities for students to engage with texts beyond the materials directly provided during classroom instruction.

E. CONCLUSION

This study examined the reading goals, strategies for overcoming reading difficulties, and reading frequency and habits of English Education students at Universitas Graha Nusantara. The findings show that educational purposes were the most frequently reported reading goals among the participants. In dealing with difficulties in understanding English-language texts, students most frequently relied on assistance from friends, followed by the use of dictionaries and re-reading the text, while asking lecturers for help was reported less frequently. The findings also indicate that regular reading was not yet consistently practised by all students, as only a relatively small proportion reported reading on a daily basis, while others reported reading on a weekly or monthly basis.

Overall, the findings suggest that students' reading practices were more strongly associated with academic purposes than recreational or practical purposes, but their reading frequency and use of reading-support strategies indicate opportunities for further development. The findings highlight the potential role of lecturers in creating structured opportunities for regular reading through activities such as reading-based discussions, short comprehension tasks, reflective reading logs, and guided engagement with academic and English-language texts. Such activities may help students develop more consistent reading habits and become more independent readers.

This study is limited to students in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Graha Nusantara; therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the specific institutional and participant context. Further research could involve students from different study programs, academic cohorts, and higher education institutions to provide broader comparisons of reading practices. Future studies could also investigate

the relationship between students' reading habits and academic achievement and examine changes in reading practices over time through longitudinal research.

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