The English Language Education Department Students' Perception

on Reading English Textbooks : factors and difficulties

A Skripsi

Submitted to Language Education Faculty as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement

For the Degree

Sarjana Pendidikan

Yus Alek Nur Yaqin

20150810035

English Language Education Department

Faculty of Language Education

Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta

2019

Approval Sheet

The English Language Education Department Students' Perception

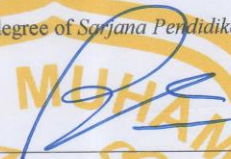On Reading English Textbooks: Factors and Difficulties

We hereby approve the *Skripsi* of

Yus Alek Nur Yaqin

20150810035

Candidate for the degree of *Sarjana Pendidikan*

July 11, 2019

Sri Rejeki Murtiningsih, S.Pd., M.Ed., Ph. D.

The *Skripsi* Supervisor

July 11, 2019

Gendroyono, S.Pd., M.Pd.

Examiner 1

July 11, 2019

Andi Wirantaka, S.Pd., M.Hum.

Examiner 2

Yogyakarta, July 11, 2019

Accepted

Dr. Suryanto M. H.Sc

Dean of Language Education Faculty

Abstract

English textbook is one of the literatures used in teaching and learning process. English textbooks play an important role in learning language through material served in the textbooks. However, sometimes students still struggle in understanding English textbooks. The aim of this research is to find out the students' perception on the factors that influence the students to read English textbooks and to find out the difficulties encountered by the students in understanding English textbooks. This research was conducted at English Language Education Department (ELED) of a private university in Yogyakarta. The qualitative approach was applied as a research design of this research. The research data were collected through the interview. The participants of this research were three students batch 2016 who have exposed some inputs from reading textbooks. The results of this research show that the factors influencing ELED students to read are the obligation of the students, command from the lecturer, the students' needs, and the easy vocabulary. In addition, this research also reveals four difficulties encountered by the ELED students in undersatanding English textbooks. The difficulties found are low frequency words, time management, personal concern, low motivation, and types of reading texts.

Keywords: Students' perception, reading textbooks, factors, difficulties.

Background of Study

Reading is a necessary skill for students, because they must able to read and understand an English text. According to Nunan (2003), reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from a text and their own background knowledge to build meaning. Quadri and Abomoge (2013) refer reading as a key to wealth of experience that links people in a way far beyond distance or time. Reading can be used by English teacher as teaching learning process to

increase other skills likes writing, speaking, and listening. Thus, reading is the process to obtain knowledge and enhance other skill.

According to Harmer (2001), to get maximum benefit from their reading, students need to be involved in both extensive and intensive reading (Harmer, 2001). Kinds of reading are extensive and intensive reading. Extensive reading is where students are reading material especially at their level and their own. Furthermore, the students enjoy and feel pleased with their reading. According to Harmer (2001), such a program in extensive reading will make students more positive about reading, improve overall comprehension skills, and give them a wider passive and active vocabulary. Intensive reading requires students to read the same material in the classroom (Harmer, 2001). In intensive reading, the teachers have roles to ask the students to read intensively. In addition, intensive reading has deep process and also task in the end of it.

The students at an English Language Education Department are required to read English textbooks in the learning process. The teacher usually use English textbook as a teaching material. The students must read all of the English textbook that they have to carry out their learning. According to Tomlinson (2012), materials can include textbooks, audio-visual aids, computer mediated resources, real objects, or performance. Teachers and students will get benefits when textbooks are used in teaching and learning process (Harmer, 2007). The other factors that affect students in learning is motivation. According to Istianti (2013) motivation is one of important part in learning something. Furthermore, students who learned English language should engage with written text in English and consequently should have good skill in reading. Based on the definition above about motivation, it can be concluded that motivation directs students to achieve the goals in learning.

From the researcher observation in joining a course called "Principles of Teaching and Learning" which required the students to read English textbooks, most of the student encounter some problems, such as they do not continue in reading the textbooks when they find the difficult words, they only read the textbooks because they are asked to read by the teachers. Moreover, when they meet the difficult word and some educational theories, they do not continue to read those textbooks. They also think that textbooks are not important. The other students also think that they can search the information on those textbooks from their friends. Thus, from those problems they do not continue reading textbooks in the learning process.

To make this discussion more focused, the researcher limits the problem. Therefore, the researcher wants to find out the factors influencing students on reading English Textbooks at English Language Education Department. Then, the researcher wants to investigate the difficulties encountered by the English Language Education Department students in understanding English Textbooks.

Literature Review

Textbooks

There are several reading materials that can be used to enhance reading ability. The reading materials such as textbook, newspaper, magazine, article, journal, article, and novel. English textbooks are often as teaching material in several schools and used as media of teaching learning process.

The definition of textbook. According to Graves (2000), textbooks are books used as an instrument for teaching and learning in educational area which those have standard information source. In addition, textbooks in the learning situation serve much of input for the learner and as

a language practice that occurs in classroom. They are also as a literary that are relevant to the study of a subject. Additionally, textbooks are defined as useful resources and easy to access for both teachers and students, which they can apply it according to their needs (Mahmood, 2011). For teachers, textbooks are used as a resource to design the course. In the other hand, for students, textbooks are used as a resource to receive English language. Therefore, textbooks are tool in academic purposes. It is used to help in teaching learning process through the subject that has been design in curriculum.

The Advantages of textbooks. There are several advantages of textbooks in the language classroom. Some experts such as Ricards (2010), Bojanic and Topalov (2016) have been mentioned the advantages of textbooks. Here is the detail explanation of them.

Textboks provide structure and a syllabus for a program. The first advantages is provide structure and a syllabus for a program. Without textbooks a program may have no central core and learner may not receive a syllabus that has been systematically planned and developed (Richards, 2010).

Textboks help standardize instruction. The second advantages are to help standardize instruction. The used of textbook in program can ensure that the students in different classes receive similar content and therefore can be tested in the same way (Richards, 2010).

The factors that influence students to read

Reading is one of skills in learning process. In developing students' reading, it takes considerable factors to develop students' reading interest. Therefore, it shows that the factors have many functions in learning process in the classroom. Those factors give significances for both teachers, as informations to consider about it and students, as the language learner can take some informations to obtain the benefits by these factors as presented by the following paragraphs.

Motivation. In education, reading is one of process to obtain the knowledge. Shehu (2015) argues that self motivation as individual personal factor in reading. Basides, when students have a high motivation they will be consistent to read books. According to Creethman, Harper and Ito (2017) stated that motivation is a factors which impacts students to read. Thus motivation is one of factors that influence students to read the books.

Types of reading text. In class activities, one of input the knowledge is reading. Shehu (2015) stated that new word, types of reading text, background of knowledge, and pronoun are the factors students to read. In addition, the easy vocabulary is also effect students to read. According to Mourtaga (2005), he stated that the linguistic competence, students' first language and second language, and the spelling or sound of word are problems which influence students to read

Teachers. Reading is one of teaching activities in the classroom. In reading proces, the teachers asked to the students read some books. By reading the books, the teachers hope that the students improve their English skills. The teacher used the books to facilite students' sources. Thus, the teachers have the role to play the reading activities. According to McKool and Gespass (2009), the teachers, after parents, are the ones who have the greatest opportunity to influence student's reading habits.

Thus, we can cnclude that there are several factors which influence students to read. These factors are motivation, the types of reading text, the teachers. Therefore, it shows these factors have many functions in teaching learning process. These factors above give the benefit information for both teachers, as creators of the lesson to explain the information and students, as language learners to obtain language exposure.

Methodology

This research was conducted at a private university in Yogyakarta, particularly at English Language Education Department. There are some reasons in conducting this study in the English Language Education Department of the Islamic private university. First, some of the lecturers at the English Language Education Department of a private university require students to read English textbooks as the sources in their classroom. In addition, the lecturers used at least one English textbook or more in each course. Second, it would be easier for the researcher to gather the data and information, because the researcher is also a student of this department.

This research began in December 2018. The researcher collected the data of the research in January 2019. Then, the researcher analyzed the data in February 2019. Therefore, this research was completed in March 2019.

The participants of this research three students of English Language Education Department batch 2016 of an Islamic private university. The researcher had some reasons in choosing the participants of English Language Education Department students batch 2016. The first reason was that the students have had more experiences in reading textbooks. The second reason was that the students from batch 2016 has acquired knowledge and inputs from several textbooks. Then, the students from batch 2016 has numerous experiences in reading English textbooks during their study in this university. In addition, three participants were chosen based on the characteristics of the students who have low, middle and high score, as they would have more information which can supply rich data for this research on both the factors and difficulties in reading in ELED. The indications are low (1,80), middle (3,47), and high score (3,87) students are from their GPA (Grade point Average). To select the participants, the researcher adopted

several strategies. First, the researcher found out about the GPA of those participants from the office. Second, the name of all the participants were coded using pseudonyms (Layla, Miya, and Roger). In addition, the participants include one male and two female students.

In collecting the data of this research, the researcher used interview as the data gathering method. In qualitative research, the researcher gathers data through observing behaviors, examining documents, or interviewing the participants (Creswell, 2009). Interview was a way to look for the information with in-depth questions. The purposes of the interview are to evaluate a person in some respect, to test or develop hypotheses and to sample respondents' opinions. Moreover, Patton (as cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011) argues that in the standardized open-ended interview, the questions are determined in advance and the participants are asked the same basic questions and interview guide lines. For the interview, the researcher needed to design an interview protocol. Interview protocol consist ed of several questions that were asked to the participants. The researcher asked the participants several questions related to the factors to read English textbooks and the difficulties in understanding English textbooks. Second, the researcher used a mobile phone to record the interview. Third, the researcher prepared a note and a pen to write down the important points of the interview.

The researcher contacted the participant through WhatsApp (WA) to give information about the interview process. The researcher interviewed the participants in the campus where the participants study. Besides, the researcher used Bahasa Indonesia in the interview process because Bahasa Indonesia is more effective for the researcher to obtain the in-depth information. Meanwhile, Bahasa Indonesia makes it easy for the participants to express their feelings. Moreover, as the procedure in interview, the researcher asked the participants intensively to obtain in-depth information from the participants. The researcher prepared a note and a pen to

write down the important points of the interview process. The researcher asked each participant around 30 minutes to collect the data from the participants. In the last process, the researcher analyzed the data and transcribed the data into written text.

After transcribing the data, the researcher did a member checking from the interview. Member checking is the stage of data analysis process to confirm the data from participants. Moreover, member checking is carried out for the validity of the data. Creswell (2007) states that in member checking, the researcher asked the participants' response to confirm the accuracy of the statement. The researcher confirmed the data that were still ambiguous from the participants through WA. The result of member checking showed that one of the participants gave additional information for some unclear statements. The first, the participant stated that "I feel difficulty to understand the textbooks". Then, the additional is the participant stated that "I feel difficulty with too high a vocab" (P3.8). After that, the researcher put the result of member checking into the transcribing.

The next stage was coding. Coding is simply a name or label that the researcher gives to a piece of text (Cohen et al, 2011). Coding is the translation of question responses and participants' information to specific categories. The researcher coded the point of the participants' response. The researcher translated the participants' responses in coding process.

According to Mahpur (2017), the researcher translate the record into sentences. In this stage, the researcher interviewed the participants first. The researcher used audio recording as the item or facility to interview the participant. Then, the researcher transcribed the result of interview to the sentences and table. The second is compaction of facts. Mahpur (2017) argues that the purpose of the compacting of facts is to obtain the facts that had been collected. In this

stage, the researcher reorganized the sentences from the transcription of data, because usually in transcribing, the data or the sentences are unclear. Furthermore, the mistake in this stage is the researcher was in haste to judgment.

Finding and Discussion

The Factors that influence students to read English textbooks as perceived by the students

The first research question is to find out the factors that influence English Language Education Department (ELED) to read English textbooks as perceived by students. The second, to find out kinds of the difficulties encountered by the ELED students in understanding English textbooks. There are three findings about the factors that influence ELED students to read English textbooks. Then, five findings about the difficulties encountered by the ELED students in understanding English textbooks. Those findings are further elaborated in these following paragraphs, and related to some experts' statements.

The student interests. The first factor that influence English Language Education Department students to read English textbooks was the student concerns. When being asked about the factors to read, one of the participants mentioned in the interview that reading is an obligatory for the students. Layla stated that "Reading is the obligation of the students" (P1.4). In addition, Layla said, "As students, reading or reading textbooks is the obligation and command from the lecturer." She also stated that most of the lecturers used textbooks as the teaching material. Thus, from the case above, the students should increase the frequency of reading textbooks.

The researcher also revealed other finding retaled on the factors that influence English Language Education Department students to read English textbooks as perceived by the students

was the command from the lecturer. Layla argued that "I read textbooks because the lecturers command us" (P1.5). Layla also said, "The first is command from the lecturer, after that I like to read textbooks". She said that usually the lecturer asked the students read one chapter in one week. After that, sometimes, the lecturer asked the students to retell the chapter that they have read. Those finding was in line with the finding of McKool and Gespass (2009). They revealed that teachers, after parents, are the ones who have the greatest opportunity to influence students' reading habits.

The students' need. The second finding on factors that influence English Language Education Department students to read English textbooks as perceived by the students was as the needs. Reading activity can encourage students' academic life and increase their knowledge. Reading is an activity that can be done everywhere. By reading, students' knowledge can be extended. Not only learning in the class, by reading students can enrich their knowledge. One of the participants stated that reading is one of the the needs of the students. As Miya said, "I want to read because it is my need" (P.2.4). In addition, Miya felt unconfident when she attend the class and have not read the material beforehand. Nevertheless, Miya only read the core of the text. Moreover, this finding is line with Kucukonglu (2013). He mentioned that reading is one of the most basic skills that should be mastered by students because it plays an important role at school.

The easy vocabulary. The next finding on factors that influence English Language Education Department students to read English textbooks as perceived by the students was the easy vocabulary. Reading textbooks provide some challenging in order to increase their vocabulary knowledge. However, the participant acquired some reason from the reading textbooks that enlarge their vocabulary knowledge. Roger argues, "I want to read the textbooks which use an easy vocabulary" (P3.4). In addition, Roger want to read textbooks when the vocab

of the textbooks is simple. There is more interest for Roger to read the textbooks. Puspita (2017) stated that students have difficulty in understanding a written message, because it contains a lot of unknown words.

In addition, the third participant did not directly say that he read the textbook because his GPA was low. Thus, his motivation was too low to read the textbook. He wanted to read if there are pictures in the textbook.

The difficulties encountered by the students in understanding textbooks.

The purpose of this research is to find out about the difficulties encountered by the English Language Education Department students in understanding English textbooks. According to the research data, there are five difficulties encountered by the students in understanding English textbooks, such as low frequency word, time management, personal concerns, low motivation, and the types of text.

Low frequency words. The first, the researcher found that the difficulties encountered by English Language Education Department in understanding textbooks is unfamiliar vocabulary. The textbooks provides some challenging words in order to understand the meaning of textbooks. The participant found some difficult words from the textbooks that increase their vocabulary knowledge. Their vocabulary knowledge does not stop on certain level, but it keeps growing during the time. Thus, the more the participants use the textbooks, the harder the words will be. According to Nuttal (2000), a word with several meaning is difficult to understand because students need to find a close meaning or other possible meaning. So, they are demanded to read and think carefully.

Moreover, the students feel difficult when they encounter unfamiliar vocabulary. When this research was conducted at ELED at this Islamic private university, the other finding revealed that students were reluctant to read especially reading English textbooks because the students lack English vocabulary. One of the participants admitted that the difficulty to read is caused by unfamiliar vocab. Layla stated, "The difficulty is when I encounter unfamiliar vocab" (P1.7). In addition, the other difficulty of the participant is in the first time reading. Layla stated that the first time reading is so hard, such as to build the reading habit, improve the motivation, and understand unfamiliar vocabulary. After that, it is easier than the first time. In line with that, Mourtaga (2006) stated that language differences between first language and second language is one of the problems encountered by foreign language students because the students need more time to construct the meaning of the target language.

Moreover, Layla said, "Sometimes, the vocabulary in textbooks is too advanced, so they cause misinformation" (P2.8). Moreover, Layla needed up to three times reading to understand the text. The first is when she tried to translate the vocabulary. After that, she tried to find the meaning of the sentence. Then, she tried to find the meaning of all of the pages on the chapter.

In addition, Roger stated that, "I face difficulty when the vocabulary is too advanced" (P3.8). Roger felt difficulty because he needed to search the meaning of the word one by one. Roger stated that it can make him bored and lazy to read. According to Baiba (2015), the existence of various meaning within the same word becomes a problem for foreign language students in reading using other languages. In line with the case above, low frequency vocabulary is one of the difficulties encountered by the English Language Education Department students.

Time management. The researcher found that there are some activities that make students have no time to read such as doing assignments, joining organizations and doing house chores. Those activities are consuming the students' time which make them have no time to read. There is one participant who argues that they lack the time to read because they have assignments that should be done Furthermore, the students in college have live independent. Means that the students are not only busy with their activities in college but they are also busy their activities out of campus. Those statement related with the finding. Miya said, "Right now, I have a lot of assignment and I also join an organization. I have many assignments from other courses then automatically, thus I lack time to read". In addition, Miya said, "I am doing other assignments because it is already the deadline." Another finding revealed that the student spent her leisure time to do house chores. Layla said, "During leisure time in daily life, I used to do house chores such as washing clothes, cleaning up my dorm and doing my assignment". As Miya said, "The difficulty is to allocate the time to read" (P2.6). That way, they still have the chance to read even though they are busy with their schedule.

Another finding of this research showed that there are several activities in the leisure time that students prefer than reading. For instance, students spent their leisure by choosing other activities other than reading, such as hanging out with their friends, doing activities outside the campus, and doing group exercises. Layla mentioned that she preferred to hang out with her friends or her friends in the organization. She added, "If I do not read, I go out to find inspiration. Sometimes I go to some places such as to the beach to find inspiration" (P2.9). Roger also argued that reading is a monotonous activity, he preferred to go out to some place that can entertain him or playing online games. In addition, Roger said, "I feel bored and lazy when I have to read a long text" (P3.9). The other finding related to this case researcher also found that

there is a student who uses her leisure time to have exercise. As Miya mentioned, she spent leisure time by doing other exercises and she added that in the leisure time usually her friends offer her to do exercises as they are more urgent than reading textbooks.

Personal concerns. Another finding found by the researcher related to this issue is that students are reluctant to read because of boredom. The student stops to read when he feels bored and lazy. As what Roger experienced, he feels bored and lazy when reading textbooks. The subject of discussion of the text makes him confused because it is discussed again in the next subject. He feels bored when reading texts which are. Moreover, he also feels bored reading a book without any pictures. He prefers to ask his friends because he can summarize the chapter. He added that he will not read texts which are considered too long. He feels bored and lazy.

Roger added that, "I feel bored and lazy when reading a long text" (P3.9). The researcher also revealed a finding stating that laziness also affect students to become reluctant to read. Moreover, a Miya said, "Sometimes I feel very spirited, and sometimes lazy" (P2.5). Furthermore, a mood that is not stable also affects students to be reluctant in reading. As Miya argued that during outside the class time, she feels that she has no interest in reading that books but she feels that reading the books is her obligation as a student. It means that she feels motivated to read because reading a book is the obligation of the students. The other reason is that because she does not like the lecturer. When she dislikes the lecturer she usually feels lazy to read. Sometimes, she used to read some pages, if her mood is not good she stops to read. She also argues that, her interest in reading depends on her mood. If her mood is good, she will read the books but if her mood is bad, she does not read. In this case, sometimes, Miya has a bad mood to read books because she has many activities outside the campus.

The other finding related to this issue is a lack of motivation. Students lacked motivation because of several reasons. Roger is reluctant in reading because he feels that reading is a boring activity and there are things that are more interesting. He said, "It can be said that I do not really like reading and reading is not my hobby." He also added, "Reading is boring, besides that I could not understand the content and there is something more interesting than reading. Therefore, from the reading activity, when I did not read the books, I ask my friends." From his statement, it can be seen that he does not like reading. Moreover, he is easily interrupted by something more interesting than reading and it would be difficult to recommend him to love reading.

Low motivation. Another finding on factors that influence English Language Education Department students to read English textbooks as perceived by the students were low motivation. In reading activities, some of the lecturers used textbooks as a teaching material. Besides, the third participants have a low motivation because actually I am not really interested in reading, and it is rather difficult for me to read textbook. Meanwhile, the participants showed that he wanted to read if the textbooks have many pictures. Roger stated, "I want to read when using an easy vocabulary" (P3.4). When studying in the university, he feels bored to read the books without pictures as it is in the form of academic texts. He thinks that the books are not simple. According to Waring and Takahashi (2000), the students want to read very simple texts. Moreover, Clarke, Truelove, Hulme, and Snowling (2014) stated that one of the most challenging difficulties is having the motivation to read.

The lengthy of text. The last finding that the researcher found related to the types of reading texts, is that one of the students does not want to read boring reading topics. Roger mentioned, "I feel bored if I read the text which is too long" (P3.8). In his statement, he said that boring reading materials such as philosophy makes him reluctant in reading. He did not

understand the content, and it was written in English which made him think twice. He had to translate and interpret the content of the text at the same time. This finding is in line with Hoeft's study (2012) who mentioned that the dislike of reading of any kind texts and lack of interest in topic are several factors which make students dislike reading. Thus, it can be seen that Roger is more interested in reading English texts that have many pictures illustration and is easy to understand.

Moreover, Miya argued that, "In my opinion, the academic text is definitely hard to understand". In this case, the students do not only have a problem of lack of interest with the topic of the text but she is also confused when reading the theoretical text or academic text. In her statement, she argued that academic texts are hard to understand. Miya said, "Sometimes, the text from the book that I read was about theories" (P2.10). In addition, the researcher found that the students are confused and do not read the books which have small fonts. As Miya said, "I encounter difficulties because of small fonts on the textbooks" (P.2.7). Therefore, she feels confused

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