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Investigating Students' Reading Skill on ESP Class

Yvette Umwari*
University of Kibungo, Rwanda
umwariyvette1991@gmail.com

Dewi Zulaiha
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia
dewizulaiha.2019@student.uny.ac.id

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*corresponding author

Abstract

It is important to know students' language ability before teaching. It is used to prepare anything to apply teaching program. This way is also used to know what they need. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the English reading skills of ESP students at Raden Mas Said State Islamic University Surakarta. This study used a quantitative approach with a survey instrument as the data collection. A total of 127 students of Non-English study program (Islamic Family Law) were involved in this study. The instrument implemented Brown's theory about micro and macro skill in reading comprehension. The results showed that their level of English reading ability is quite low. Furthermore, students' English reading ability can be seen from their habit of using English. Their perception of writing also shows a low level because their understanding of reading is very low as well.

Keywords: *reading skill, micro skill, macro skill, English reading ability, reading comprehension*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an activity that is very useful in communicating in everyday life. It is a passive skill that can increase knowledge of something. By reading, people can talk and write expressions of feelings or whatever they think (Zulaiha & Triana, 2023). However, without reading, the person will have difficulty speaking and writing something (Kucirkova et al., 2023; Triana et al., 2020). Therefore, reading is a very important skill for creating knowledge and experience which is used as material to be reproduced both orally and in writing.

In current EFL learning, actually quite a lot of students are doing reading activities both inside and outside the classroom. But in fact, they do not know the purpose of deeper reading. They only know the reading based on the meaning because technology such as Google translate helps them translate into languages they understand, such as Indonesian or local languages. In a recent study, it was proven that students who use Google Translate without guidance can produce a different quality from using Google Translate with the guidance of a lecturer (Cancino & Panes, 2021). The activity of using google translate with guidance like a lecturer or teacher turns out to have a good impact on students. Thus, students will gain better and more focused cognitive abilities.

In addition, motivation can also affect reading activity. Students with low motivation certainly will not engage in reading activities at all. In class, they do reading activities because of external motivations such as because of class assignments, homework and exams. Previous research has revealed that students' motivation and perceptions influence reading activities in class quite a bit (Matsumoto et al., 2013). Instruction from the lecturer in class is the main factor that increases student motivation to read.

Furthermore, anyone's daily habits can also affect the intensity of reading (Matsumoto et al., 2013). Habits are a special challenge to students. Moreover, most argue that reading activities are not carried out because of basic needs. Many people read because of certain things that are

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temporary, not making reading activities to enrich knowledge and experience. In other words, English is used to be secondary language and not as the main language.

From the description above, this research was conducted to find out how much students' reading skills are based on three dimensions of activity trigger factors. Their comprehensive reading ability are going to be measured from the determining specific variables stated by (Brown, 2007). Micro and macro skills are measured based on student perceptions. In EFL learning in ESP classes, this research is important to do to measure students' abilities and the challenges faced by lecturers.

METHOD

This study aims to find out the level of reading weakness of ESP students. This study uses a statistical quantitative approach by distributing questionnaires as the instrument (Cresswell, 2012). This research involved 127 Islamic Economic Law students at Raden Mas Said University, Surakarta. The survey was designed using a Likert scale. Survey used five alternatives answer including Strongly Agree, Agree, Moderate, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The maximum value for each survey item is 5 (strongly agree). Each survey uses a positive meaning. That is, if the value of each item is 5, so it shows a positive value and vice versa. If the value is 1, it means that they perceive negative. The survey was adopted from the theory of micro and macro-skills for reading comprehension stated by (Brown, 2007).

RESULTS

The survey which was distributed to 127 Islamic Economic Law students showed the following demographic data of students characteristics.

Table 1. Student Characteristic

Variable	Category	Frequency
Gender	Male	52
	Female	75
Age	17	2
	18	49
	19	59
	20	15
	21	2
The most mastered skill	Reading	105
	Writing	10
	Listening	8
	speaking	4

Based on the table above, there are 75 female and 52 male students in the Sharia Economic Law study program. The students ranged in age from 17 to 21 years and most of them were 19 years old. The data also illustrates that they mostly mastered reading skill.

To find out students' daily reading habits, the researcher uses five items to measure it. The Likert scale is used to measure the frequency of students taking actions related to reading.

Table 2. Reading Habits

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I often use English instead of Indonesian	127	2.0079	.87737
I often use English instead of local language	127	2.0079	1.07272
I often read English reading	127	1.8346	1.23291
I often listen to music/conversations/movies in English	127	2.4961	.98298

I often use English to operate technology such as cell phones and computers	127	2.1307	1.29133

Based on the table above, the Likert scale is used to measure how often students use English in their daily lives. Students often use Indonesian and local languages in everyday life. Even though students feel that reading is the most mastered skill, it turns out that they do not have the habit of reading English. In line with the latest theory which stated that these students are suspected of having metacognition anxiety (Hamada & Takaki, 2021). They don't like to use English because they are worried that they would not be able to use it well. On the other hand, they often hear songs or movies in English but are still categorized as quite high. This proves that audio-visual media can increase motivation to learn English (Nadera, 2015). Advanced technology does not help students get used to using English. Indonesian is believed to be the language of instruction for information technology on their electronic devices such as smart phones or computers. Even though the use of language in the setting of communication tools uses Indonesian, an approach to reading using information technology like this is quite capable of increasing reading habits. The use of web-based learning such as OER, practices and exercises can affect a person's reading habits (Grabe & Stoller, 2019; Zulaiha & Triana, 2023). This means that the use of English on modern tool is not used optimally. While, the standard deviation for each item is smaller than the mean. This shows that the distribution of data is categorized as normal or not biased.

Table 3. Micro skill Comprehensive Reading

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I know how to read English text or know the sound of English text.	127	2.7402	.96948
I know the meaning of a long reading in English.	127	2.2205	.95047
I know the meaning of efficient writing or use of pronouns in English.	127	2.0709	.83743
I know the meaning of the word in English.	127	2.6693	.92629
I know the intention of the sentence in English.	127	2.4646	.92406
I know how to use the English tense.	127	2.3780	.93375
I recognize that certain meanings can be expressed in different forms.	127	2.5354	.88007

Based on the table above, students' comprehensive reading skills are categorized as lacking based on the criteria by (Brown, 2007). Students find it most difficult to understand the meaning of writing and use pronouns in English. Furthermore, they have great difficulty with long readings. Even though they have studied tenses, it turns out that they don't know how to use tenses properly. In addition, they had difficulty expressing the purpose of a reading in the form of a sentence because their English vocabulary mastery was categorized as quite low. On the other hand, they know how to read English orally. But still, the results on these items are categorized as low. This result is presumably because their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar is very low. Previous research stated that the ability of EFL students would increase if they were familiar with grammar and vocabulary and vice versa (Aslrasuli & Bakhshian, 2014). While, the standard deviation for each item is smaller than the mean. This shows that the distribution of data is categorized as normal or not biased.

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Table 4. Macro skill Comprehensive Reading

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I can interpret sentences in written English	127	2.6299	.86192
I can recognize the communicative functions of written texts, according to form and purpose	127	2.6142	1.14813
I know that an English sentence can mean another meaning.	127	2.2047	.94565
I know cause and effect relationships in English.	127	2.0236	.86799
I can distinguish between literal and implied meanings in English.	127	2.0315	.87230
I know the context of reading in English.	127	2.4094	.96242
I can find the main Ide of reading English	127	2.4961	1.03029

Based on the table above, students' macro skills in comprehensive reading are categorized as low based on the criteria by (Brown, 2007). Students have the most difficulty identifying cause and effect in sentences. In addition, they also have difficulty identifying literal and implied meanings in English. On the other hand, students have other challenges in understanding the context of the reading and looking for the main idea of the reading. Even though they have quite good ability in interpreting sentences and recognizing the communicative functions of written texts, according to form and purpose, their ability in this point is categorized as low. The results of this study are in accordance with research by (Aslrasuli & Bakhshian, 2014), low language knowledge can result in low reading ability. Apart from being a factor of students, the lack of students' reading skills is also caused by the method the lecturers teach in class. Recent research stated that a method that fits the character, wants and needs of students can improve reading skills well (Harris et al., 2023). This proves that the lecturer has a big role in providing motivation and guidance for proper reading. In this way, students' cognitive skills towards reading will also increase autonomously (Triana & Nugroho, 2021). Systemically, reading ability will affect student involvement in using information technology systems such as Android, web, Windows and others (Makruf et al., 2022). They will find it easy to use the new modern tools while their English reading skills will be impeccable.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that motivation determines the ability to read English. Uniquely, the students argued that reading is very important for developing knowledge and experience, but recent study reported that their comprehensive reading skills are lacking. The results related to intrinsic motivation showed that the student's reading habit was very low. They tend to use avoid English by using Bahasa Indonesia or local language. Types of reading, language settings on gadgets or smartphones and very low reading intensity were the main points of their weaknesses. This result showed a surprising report. The level of students' English reading ability was also very low. The students are included as less able to understand reading in the context of sentences, and also reading the context of paragraphs. Therefore, this is a big challenge for lecturers. Lecturers are expected to be able to increase extrinsic motivation with interactive and creative activities regularly and continuously. Further research is expected to examine the factors that influence other language skills.

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