Empowering Reading Habit of English Fiction Books to Improve English Vocabulary: Evidence from Students in an Indonesian Higher Education

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Low English literacy has a major impact on the education sector. In particular, it has an impact on less qualified human resources. This study aims to explore the students' perception of reading habits on English fiction books to improve English vocabulary in Indonesian higher education. This study used a qualitative case study method. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with four students consisting of two female and two male students from the English Education Department. The results of the study reveal that students believe that reading fiction books can help them memorize English vocabulary, and English fiction books can enrich English vocabulary, especially new words. On the other hand, some challenges appear in reading English fiction books. These include the difficulty of understanding unfamiliar words in English fiction books among male students and the need for sufficient time to read English fiction books completely. Finally, the implication of this study was discussed.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Many students have difficulty reading an English fiction book. This is caused by several factors including the lack of habit of reading books. This greatly affects the low level of reading literacy on campus. The next factor is the difficulty in understanding the meaning of a fiction book because it is presented in English. This difficulty is triggered because English is a second language. That is why many students complain that they have to go back and forth to open a dictionary to capture the contents of the book. The most influential factor is the social background factor of the student. This is based on research reporting that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds had a higher risk of low achievement, as measured by their parents' occupational status [1]. Usually, families from lower economic circles have not been educated much. Their lives are just about raising money by working there is no time to read books.

One of the solutions to overcome the problem is by increasing the practice of reading books. Fostering reading techniques can be used to make students easily understand books. One of them is by using the SQ3R technique. The study conducted by previous scholars shows that the SQ3R technique enabled low-level readers to achieve success and enjoyment from reading [2]. This technique aims to help students who have difficulty understanding the content of the readings. In addition, this technique also aims to make it easier for students to practice getting used to reading.

The challenge to be faced in reading an English fiction book is having to have a broad insight into the vocabulary. This is the basis for being able to read English fiction books. The advantage of having a broad vocabulary is positively beneficial for students, especially English education majors. Vocabulary insights are very influential in the development of reading [3], [4]. This plays a pivotal role in supporting education for four years and an undergraduate degree.

Several previous studies reported that English foreign language students who have habits of reading books will have the opportunity to enrich their vocabulary [5]–[9]. The ability to produce vocabulary varies from student to student [10]. In this context, through reading they can find dozens of vocabularies. Reading English fiction books can produce vocabulary. This is because reading fiction books is very fun and the language is still common. It is no wonder that English-language fiction books are the best medium to improve vocabulary.

Referring to these descriptions, the present study used the medium of English fiction books as a way to improve the vocabulary of English foreign language students through reading habits. Reading a book will directly add vocabulary because every unfamiliar word encountered will usually appear on the next page. Therefore, they will indirectly remember the unfamiliar word and find out its meaning [11]–[13]. In addition, the study conducted by the previous scholar reported that students produce their vocabulary based on the emotions that they have [14]. Therefore, the present study focuses on fostering reading habits by using English fiction books to improve vocabulary among students at an Indonesian higher education and its challenges.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study method. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with students of the English Education Department at an Indonesian higher education. The participants were drawn from 3rd semester English education students at an Indonesian university. The study sampled 4 participants comprising two female students categorized as S1 and S2 and two male students categorized as S3 and S4.

Each of them is 20 years old. Resource persons voluntarily participated in this study without any coercion. The interviews of the four participants were held from December 24th to 26th 2022. The interview was conducted using a voice note on WhatsApp. The interviewer asked the interviewee a few questions about the perceptions and experience of reading an English fiction book as a foreign language as well as the challenges they find while reading English fiction books.

Furthermore, the data analysis process adopted strategies recommended by Widodo consisting of multiple listens to a recording, accurate transcription by multiple readings of interview transcripts to gain a thorough understanding of the participants' stories, interpretation of the data by interpreting each participant's words, communication about

whether the data accurately reflect the participant's intent, and engaging data credibility by soliciting participant feedback on the interpretation of the data [15].

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The following elaborations explain the students' perception of reading habits in English fiction books.

3.1. Students' Perceptions Toward Reading Habit in English Fiction Books

Each participant was interviewed about their experiences reading English fiction books as a second language. Reading English fiction books is indeed different from Indonesian fiction books. This makes for a very memorable experience for participants. Some of the experiences expressed by participants are below:

S1:
"This was the first experience I had from semester 1 during a reading lesson. I felt challenged because this was the first time, I read a fiction book but in English. I usually read fiction books in the Indonesian version" (S1, December 2022)
S2:
"Before, I was too lazy to read books. But in semester 1, there is one lesson that requires reading English books in one semester. At the beginning of reading, I found a lot of difficulties but finally, now I enjoy reading books" (S2, December 2022).
S3:
"Before the reading habit program, I never read an English fiction book. I'd rather play mobile legends than read. I think reading makes me boring" (S3, December 2022).
S4: "Actually, from a long time ago when I was in high school, I didn't like to read books. Although the study program I took required reading books, I was not interested in reading" (S4, December 2022).

The result of interviews shows that reading English fiction books is a challenge for students in secondary languages. Reading habits based on the interviews above were still low before the one-semester program of reading English fiction books in one semester [16]. It is very influential in improving reading habits through this medium. The results above show that gender greatly influences the interest in reading books. This was evidenced by participants 1 and 2 who were female and admitted that they were very challenged to read books while participants 3 and 4 showed disinterest in reading. The male students (S3 and S4) assume that reading is boring. This is inconsistent with previous studies that resulted in functioning and reading achievement is not directly related, detecting and correcting visual difficulties may improve reading comfort and efficiency[17]. The research above has resulted in previous learning achievements being very influential regarding comfort in reading.
Based on the results of the interview, students have their perspectives related to reading habits through English fiction books to improve their English vocabulary. These include:

3.1.1. Reading English fiction books helps students memorize English vocabulary
Reading English fiction books is a medium that is often used to add vocabulary. It also has a positive impact on remembering the vocabulary that has been obtained since the beginning of learning English. No one knows how much vocabulary has been obtained until now. The following are the results of the study:
S1:
From 20 unfamiliar words, I can remember as many as 10 words (S1, December 2022).
S2:
From 24 unfamiliar words, I can remember as many as 14 words (S2, December 2022).

S3:

 From 31 unfamiliar words, I can remember as many as 3 words (S3, December 2022).

S4:

 From 30 unfamiliar words, I can remember as many as 4 words (S4, December 2022).

Based on the results above, it was found that the level of remembering the vocabulary of all participants varies to each other. This is evidenced by the unfamiliar word 20, participant 1 can only remember 10 words. At that time, participant 2 had as many as 14 words out of 24 unfamiliar words. Participants 3 as many as 3 words from 31 unfamiliar words and participants 4 as many as 4 words from 30 unfamiliar words. The above results can be blunted that remembering vocabulary is difficult if the word is only discovered for the first time. It is strengthened by the study conducted by [18]reporting that there are several differences in learning and memory. Older subjects take longer to read material from primary memory, but they appear to be able to hold and retrieve approximately the same amount of information as younger subjects. Increasing secondary memory capacity appears to be linked to increasing age, regardless of retrieval mode. However, elderly people appear to retain what they have learned.

3.1.2 Reading English fiction books can add vocabulary insight

At this stage, three participants read an English fiction book of one sheet. After reading, participants were asked to write the unfamiliar word they found. After all unfamiliar words are recorded, they should look for their meaning. The result of finding the unfamiliar word is as follows:

S1:

I got 20 unfamiliar words (participant 1, December 2022).

S2:

I got 24 unfamiliar words (participant 2, December 2022).

S3:

I got 31 unfamiliar words (participant 3, December 2022).

S4:

 I got 30 unfamiliar words (participant 4, December 2022).

The results above show that gender may affect the acquisition of a small number of unfamiliar words. In a sense, the fewer unfamiliar words found, the broader the insight into vocabulary mastery. Meanwhile, the more unfamiliar words are found, the more it is known that vocabulary mastery is still lacking. The data above shows that S1 (female) got 20 unfamiliar words and S2 (female) got 24   unfamiliar words. Meanwhile, S3 (male) received unfamiliar words 31, and S4 (male) received unfamiliar words as many as 30 words. It can be known that female participants are more diligent and persistent in reading than male participants. The results of the study follow the study undertaken by wahyuningsih that male and female students have their ways of using language [19]. Previous studies show that although the book is the best in terms of logistics, it needs to be improved in terms of human factors, particularly learners. Furthermore, 64% of teachers believe that the book's layout does not appeal to students, that it lacks appropriate visual materials, and that it is not learner-friendly at all [20]. The other study shows that experiential and conceptual backgrounds are crucial in vocabulary. development. Students can use their background experiences to develop, expand, and refine the concepts that words represent in the context of science [21].

3.2. Students' Challenges in Reading English Fiction Books

Unlike Indonesian fiction books whose words are easy to understand, English fiction books are often found in unfamiliar words. It is necessary to get used to reading English fiction books to broaden the horizons of vocabulary. Based on these problems, the challenges in reading English fiction books cover the difficulties of understanding unfamiliar words so they should look for a dictionary to find the meaning and less motivation to read English fiction books, particularly for male students (S3 and S4) completely and the need of a long time to complete the English Fiction Book during the program one semester. It was evidenced by the following excerpts:

S1:
"I think the difficulty in reading English fiction books is a lot of unfamiliar words. When reading, to find out the meaning in just one paragraph, I have to go back and forth to open the dictionary" (S1, December 2022).

S2:
"The difficulty is from oneself because lazy to read English fiction book. When opening the sheet of book that will be read but are no longer excited because there are many unfamiliar words" (S2, December 2022).

S3:
"From the beginning, I did not like to read so, the difficulty came from myself because I was lazy" (S3, December 2022).

S4:
"At first, I am not interested in reading a book at all because it is so very boring. I do not like the thickness of the book it makes me not like to read" (S4, December 2022).

Based on the data above, it was found that gender differences greatly affect the spirit of reading books. Further, it can be known that women get a lot of unfamiliar words while men have difficulty is themselves. In his case, the difficulty for the majority of participants is many unfamiliar words as in the arguments of participants 1 and 2. In male participants, their difficulty was not being able to control their laziness.

Concerning the need for time to finish reading English fiction books, some students spent different times reading English fiction books in one semester. The results are as follows:

S1:
I spent 4 months reading one book (S1, December 2022).

S2:
I spent 4 months reading one book (S2, December 2022).

S3:
I spent 5 months reading one book (S3, December 2022).

S4:
I spent 5 months reading one book (S4, December 2022).

Based on the data above, it was found that reading an English fiction book is the first book that should be read for a semester. However, some challenges can hinder them from reading books. In addition, assignments from other lecturers also affect the development of reading books. Their time is divided to do assignments given by other lecturers. Not only that, but the laziness factor also affects this program.

It can be seen from the data above that gender has a big influence on reading levels. S1 and S2 (female) finished reading books for 4 months in one semester while S3 and S4 (male) finished reading books for 5 months. This proves that the literacy rates for female and male students are different. This is in line with the study reporting that the risk of being a low achiever is strongly influenced by gender and a variety of sociocultural factors, as well as students' characteristics, attitudes, and activities both inside and outside of school [1].

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4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, reading English fiction books as a foreign language is the first experience for students. At first, all participants had difficulty reading the English fiction book, but over time they began to read it completely. The findings of the study reveal that students have their perspectives related to reading habits through English fiction books to improve their English vocabulary. These include reading English fiction books help students memorize English vocabulary and reading English fiction books can add vocabulary insight. Meanwhile, the challenges in reading English fiction books cover the difficulties of understanding unfamiliar words so they should look for a dictionary to find the meaning and less motivation to read English fiction books, particularly for male students (S3 and S4) completely and the need of a long time to complete the English Fiction Book during the program one semester. This study promotes an implication that the need to increase the literacy rate by fostering the students' habit of reading particularly English fiction books to enrich English vocabulary among students. By having the study, readers can obtain knowledge on the experience of students in reading English fiction books in the Indonesian higher education context.

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