

Students' Reading Preferences and Reflections: From Pleasure to Meaningful

DEWI LISTIA APRILIYANTI

IKIP Siliwangi

Reading can be challenging for Gen-Z students, particularly in the post-COVID-19 era where learning processes remain constrained. To enhance the learning process and its outcome, a survey was conducted to investigate students' preferences and reflections on reading courses. Ninety-nine Indonesian college students participated in this study. This study revealed students' preferences for reading activities, including their favoured book genres and resources. Additionally, this study highlighted the need to integrate enjoyable reading experiences with the development of critical reading skills to ensure students can effectively engage with texts beyond mere question-answering exercises.

Keywords: reading for pleasure; reading for learning; preference; reflection

urrently, education is recovering from post-COVID-19 consequences (Bhuana & Apriliyanti, 2021). The disruptions to educational systems during the pandemic have driven inequalities in learning (The World Bank, 2021). As Saavedra (UNICEF, 2021) stated, the potential increase in learning poverty post-pandemic might have a devastating impact on future productivity, earnings, and well-being for this generation of children and youth, their families, and the world's economies. Moreover, during the pandemic, students were required to be able to study independently with the help of teacher instructions during online learning (Azhari & Fajri, 2022; Aliyyah, et al., 2020; Reimers et al., 2020). Hence, these conditions require the students to be able to critically read their learning resources, for instance, textbooks, digital texts and other sources. In other words, it is not only the learning process that is affected by this pandemic but the pattern of students' reading activities during their online learning as well.

Reading is the process of digesting information in the sense of letters, symbols, and texts using a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, feeling, and motivation (Ahmadi et al., 2013; Nassaji, 2003; Castles et al.,

2018; Jacobs & Willems, 2018). Sometimes reading is assumed to be similar to literacy (Edelsky, 2006). However, reading and literacy are quite different. According to Aron (2011), reading is the sense of interpreting text sources while literacy is the sense of ability to read and write. Reading allows the reader to feel free to learn and boost imagination and creativity. Also, reading and literacy are intertwined, as reading literacy involves the ability to comprehend, use, and reflect on written texts to achieve goals, develop knowledge, and participate in society (OECD, 2003).

Additionally, in higher education, reading skill is a compulsory skill to be learned by the students, especially in learning languages. The students are required to independently read a number of textbooks, including both printed and digital sources (Bharuthram, 2012). Thence, reading and literacy are important skills to be mastered especially in the context of 'Industry 4.0' where misleading information often occurs due to the avalanche of information (Abdukadirova & Mirzajonova, 2021; Wolf et al., 2009). Consequently, reading course teachers face the challenge of designing proper learning activities to cultivate strong reading skills in this information-saturated age.

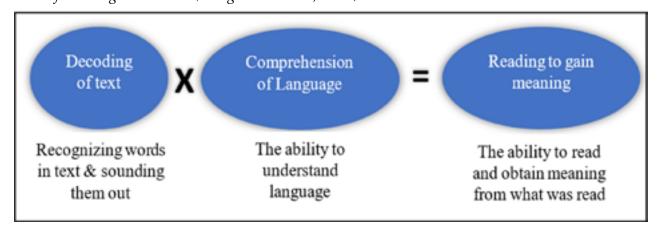
In preparing the activities, there are two types of reading activities, namely, intensive reading and extensive reading (Mikulecky, 2008). Intensive reading requires learners to read in detail with specific learning aims and tasks (British Council, 2022; Khazaal, 2019). During the process, the readers fully use a dictionary and a grammar book, which helps to consolidate what they learned in the past based on the context (Grabe & Stoller, 2013) The purpose of intensive reading is to acquire specific knowledge and an understanding of the materials (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 1996; Shen, 2008). On the other hand, extensive reading is the reading approach where the reader should read extensively, and read very easy, enjoyable books to build their reading speed and fluency (Extensive Reading Central, 2022; Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009). In other words, the students learn to read by actually reading rather than examining texts by studying the vocabulary, grammar, and phrases. Another purpose of extensive reading is reading for pleasure (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 1996).

Many previous studies have investigated the effectiveness of these two types of reading activities in enhancing students' reading skills. Some argue that extensive reading is more effective than intensive reading in improving reading skills (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009; Sugiura, 2019; Tang et al., 2019; Anandari & Iswandari, 2019; Li et al., 2021). On the other hand, some argue that intensive reading is more effective for enhancing students' reading skills (Audina et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2021; Numan Khazaal, 2019), particularly in formal learning contexts (Mantra et al., 2022). Besides, some contend that critical reading and students' reading habits can hasten students' improvement in their reading (Ahmadi et al., 2013; Aliyyah et al., 2020; Baba, 2020; Alsaeedi et al., 2021; Jacobs & Willems, 2018). However, some argue that it is the selection of appropriate reading sources and learning media innovations, rather than extensive or intensive reading, that can influence students' reading skills (Mikulecky, 2008; Reimers et al., 2020). Thus, students' preferences are important in this case to enhance learning engagement and outcome.

Mappiare (1994, p. 62) defined preferences as 'a mental set consisting of a mixture of feelings, hopes, beliefs, prejudices, fears or other tendencies that lead the individual to a particular choice'. Reading preferences are the attitudes of students toward reading (Baba, 2020). Reading preferences are also beneficial for a student to enhance their reading skills (Miller, 2013; Uslu, 2020; Alsaeedi et al., 2021). Accordingly, before deciding which approach is best for teaching and learning reading, students' preferences for reading activities should be considered.

Figure 1

SVR of Reading Awareness (Gough & Tunmer, 1986)



Not only reading preferences but reading reflection related to students' reading awareness also has its contribution to the continuity of the learning process of fluent reading skills. Reading awareness refers to the reader's understanding of the essence of reading. Based on the simple view of reading theory from Gough and Tunmer (1986), the framework of reading is presented in Figure 1.

Based on the aforementioned arguments, this study is intended to explore students' reading preferences and reflections during their learning activities post-pandemic. This study addressed the following questions:

- 1. What are Indonesian college students' preferences for their reading activities?
 - a) What genres of reading books do Indonesian college students prefer reading?

- b) What reading sources do Indonesian college students prefer during their reading activity?
- 2. How do students reflect on their reading activities to enhance their learning outcomes?

Methods

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed method where quantitative data became the primary data, and qualitative data was the secondary data resulting in continuous data (Apriliyanti, 2020; Suryani et al, 2021). A survey was conducted in this study to investigate students' preferences toward their reading activities. The domain of the survey is presented in Table 1. Also, five interviews have been conducted to investigate students' reflections on their reading activities during the reading for basic strategies course.

Table 1The domain in this study

Domain	Indicator	Total Items	Item Number
Reading preferences	Students' preferences towards their reading activities	9	ST03, ST05, ST06, ST09, ST10, ST13, A02, A03, B01, B03, B04
	Students' preferences towards their reading strategies	3	ST04, ST12, B02
	Students' obstacles during reading activities	2	ST07, ST08, ST11
Reading Reflection	Students' Reflective towards their reading activities	2	B03, B04

 Table 2

 The respondents' demographics

	Age					Cumulative		
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Percent
Male	1.0%	12.1%	13.1%	2.0%	2.0%	0.0%	1.0%	31.3%
Female	1.0%	35.4%	16.2%	7.1%	4.0%	4.0%	1.0%	68.7%
Total	2.0%	47.5%	29.3%	9.1%	6.1%	4.0%	2.0%	100.0%

Participants of this study

The participants were selected using a homogenous purposive sampling technique. Homogeneous purposive sampling focuses on a particular subgroup to which all sample members share specific characteristics (Ritchie et al., 2003). The participants in this study should have similar characteristics as follows:

- 1. they belong to the z generation where the age range is 12—27; and
- 2. they are Indonesian college students in the English or English Education study program; and
- 3. they are students who are studying and/or have already studied reading courses.

In total, 99 college students participated in this study. The participant's gender and age distributions are presented in Table 2.

Results and Discussion

This section is divided into two sections, namely, reading preferences, and reading reflections toward their reading activities.

Reading preferences

Reading preferences in this study focused on students' preferences for their reading activities both inside and outside the classroom. In this section, the results of this

Figure 2
Reading purpose preferences

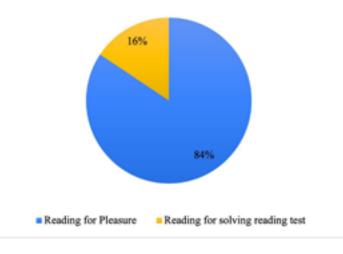
study will be arranged into three subsections, namely, general reading preferences in their reading activities, their preference for the genre of reading book that was most chosen in reading activities, and their preferences for the reading sources of the books they choose the most.

General reading preferences

Based on the results of the survey, it was found that 84% of the participants chose reading as reading for pleasure. Meanwhile, 16% of participants chose to learn reading to solve reading questions. The description of the results of this survey is presented in Figure 2.

From the data in Figure 2, it can be inferred that students tend to prioritize reading for pleasure over academic purposes. Notwithstanding, learning reading skills are also necessary for solving questions on the reading test. Hence, teachers should find innovative ways to motivate students to read while ensuring they acquire the necessary skills to comprehend complex texts, analyze information, and solve problems related to reading comprehension assessments.

Besides the result in Figure 2, a phase 1 survey related to students' preferences for their reading activities during the learning process and outside of the learning context was conducted to seek further information toward the study. The descriptive statistics

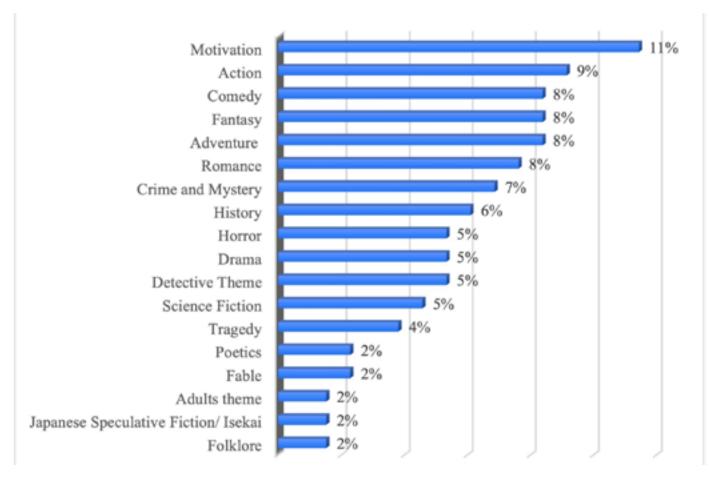


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Table 3Descriptive statistics of students' preferences for their reading

Item	Statement	N	Level of Agreement			3.4	Std. Devia-
			Agree	Fair	Disagree	Mean	tion
ST03	Reading aloud helps me improve my read- ing.	99	58.60%	32.30%	9.10%	2.49	0.66
ST04	I use different reading methods in my native language and English.	99	60.61%	25.25%	14.14%	2.46	0.73
ST05	When I read reading sources in English, I understand more if I read them slowly.	99	75.80%	22.20%	2.00%	2.74	0.49
ST06	If I don't know the meaning of a word in English, I always look it up in the dictionary.	99	90.90%	8.10%	1.00%	2.90	0.34
ST07	The best way to improve my reading in English is by learning as much grammar as possible.	99	65.66%	32.32%	2.02%	2.64	0.52
ST08	The best way to improve my reading in English is by learning as much new vocabulary as possible.	99	89.90%	10.10%	0.00%	2.90	0.30
ST09	When I am reading books in English, I need to know every word in order to understand.	99	64.60%	19.20%	16.20%	2.48	0.76
ST10	To read well in English, I must be able to pro- nounce every word.	99	74.75%	23.23%	2.02%	2.73	0.49
ST11	I can't understand a paragraph if it has sev- eral new words in it.	99	49.49%	33.33%	17.17%	2.32	0.75
ST12	I use the same reading methods for all kinds of texts	99	41.41%	45.45%	13.13%	2.28	0.69

Figure 3
Reading book genre preferences



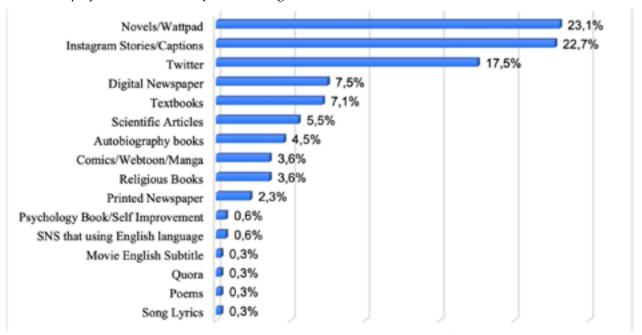
are presented in Table 3. The data in Table 3 presents the results of the descriptive statistics on the distributed questionnaires. A total of 99 respondents participated in this survey questionnaire. Based on the mean score obtained in Table 3, three aspects showed the highest score of students' preference. The first are items ST06 and ST08 which obtained the mean score = 2.90. Both of these items are related to the vocabulary barrier experienced by students during their reading activities. 90.9% of respondents responded that they agreed with the statement "If I don't know the meaning of a word in English, I always look it up in the dictionary." Instead of using inference to understand words that were not known before, students tend to look directly at the dictionary. Nevertheless, the students also realized that vocabulary is an important micro-skill needed for learning English. This is evidenced by a number of 89.9% of

respondents agreeing with the statement in item ST08.

The second highest aspect is ST05 which obtains the mean score = 2.74 and is related to the speed of reading. A total of 75.8% of respondents prefer to use slow-reading to understand the English reading material they have read. In other words, instead of using fast-reading, they tend to read at a slow speed so they can read it carefully and deeply.

Meanwhile, the third highest aspect is ST10 which receives the mean score = 2.73 related to micro-skills, namely pronunciation skills. A total of 74.7% of respondents agreed that in order to be able to read English reading sources, adequate pronunciation skills are an important aspect during the reading process.

Figure 4Students' preference in terms of the reading resources



In sum, sufficient vocabulary and proper reading speed for the students are the preferences that concern students the most in helping them read English reading resources. Hence, to help students enhance their reading skills, the results of these preferences can be used as a reference for teachers in preparing optimal teaching quality by considering the types of reading sources that are appropriate to the size of students' vocabulary and the level of reading speed of students so that students can understand the context of the reading in-depth, not just understand a number of reading techniques in reading learning. Therefore, a graded reading assessment for instance using a prior diagnostic test using the Macmillan Readers Level Test at https:// macmillanenglish.com/level-test/ the reading class learning process becomes important if we refer to the results of this study, and this is another challenge for teachers who are teaching reading courses.

Students' preference for the genre of their reading books

In reading class, students are often given a variety of texts according to the required learning material in the syllabus. In this case, knowing students' preferences towards the book genres is important to attract students' attention in the learning process. The results of the survey are presented in Figure 3.

In this survey-questionnaire, the respondents chose the genre they preferred—Romance, Action, Adventure, Crime and Mystery, Detective theme, Fantasy, Drama, Horror, Fable, Folklore, History, Speculative Fictional, Science Fiction, Adults, Tragedy, Comedy, Motivation, Poetic—presented in the distributed survey.

The genre of reading books most chosen by students was 'Motivation' which obtained 11%; the second was 'Action' which obtained 9%; and the third most chosen by students were 'Comedy, Fantasy, Adventure, and Romance' genres which obtained 8% each. And the seventh place was 'Crime and Mystery' genre of which obtained 7%.

Students' preference for the reading resources

Apart from examining the genre of books students prefer, reading sources are also essential to investigate. To transform reading for pleasure into a learning reading process, the teacher should find out which reading sources most students prefer during their reading activities. The results are presented in Figure 4.

There are nine reading sources—*Textbook*, Novels, Autobiography book, Scientific Articles, Religious Book, Instagram stories/captions, Digital Newspaper, Printed Newspaper, Twitter (plus 'other' option that can be filled in manually by respondents) in the distributed survey-questionnaire; and the results of the responses received were 7 other additional options which were filled in manually by the respondents. It revealed that the three reading resources of 16 resources that are most chosen by students were Novels/ (23.1%),Wattpad Instagram Stories/ Captions (22.7%), and Twitter (17.5%).

Based on data findings in the area of reading preferences (see table 3), this study concludes that the respondents preferred to pay attention toward their reading speed $(\bar{x} = 2.90)$, vocabulary size $(\bar{x} = 2.74)$, pronunciation ($\bar{x} = 2.73$), and grammatical structure learning (\bar{x} = 2.64) during reading activities. Besides, the genres of books they preferred most in reading activities were the genres of Motivation, Action, Comedy, Fantasy, Adventure, Romance, Crime and Mystery. Moreover, in the process of their reading activities, reading sources sourced from Novels/Wattpad, Instagram Stories/ Captions, and Twitter were the most popular and interesting reading sources for these students. Furthermore, the results of this survey can be used as an initial reference which is useful for English teachers, especially in teaching reading skills to students belonging to Generation Z.

Hereinafter, based on the results of the survey-questionnaire, the next aspect to be investigated is related to students' reading reflection in terms of their reading awareness and their expectations from the reading class. This related data was obtained using interviews with five respondents. The results of this investigation will be explained in the next section.

Reading Reflections

Reading reflection is a methodical meansmaking process that involves self-introspection (which requires self-identity) and connection with others in order to recognize personal improvement in their reading activities (Cooper, 1998). In this study, five respondents who participated in the survey-questionnaire were selected (coded as R015, R047, R059, R062, R075) to be interviewed in order to investigate this case more deeply. As for the process, this investigation focused on exploring students' reflections on their reading awareness and their expectations in the learning process of reading courses at their college.

Students' reading awareness

Reading awareness is the awareness of the reader about the essence of reading. Based on the Simple View of Reading Theory from Gough & Tunmer (1986), there are at least two aspects that must be considered in interpreting reading activities, decoding of text-recognizing words in text and sounding them out phonemically—and comprehension of language—the ability to understand language. The results of the survey-questionnaire revealed that for these respondents having proper reading speed (x = 2.90), sufficient vocabulary (x = 2.74), proper pronunciation (x = 2.73), and grammatical structure (x = 2.64) were the preferences that concerned them the most in helping to read English reading resources (see Table 2). This finding is interesting for deeper investigation in a qualitative way to gain more insight regarding their awareness of the importance of learning reading skills.

When interviewing five participants who agreed to be interviewed, they were asked the same questions about what they knew

about reading strategies and learning to read before taking the reading course class. The results of the interviews revealed a range of responses, from those who only understood reading for pleasure to those who realized that reading is a multifaceted activity.

Based on the statement given by R059 It was found that R059's reading awareness was focused on the pleasure of reading without realizing that there was something more to it. As R059 stated:

"I just like to read like everyone else does, I don't know anything special in reading." [INT-R059-001].

Meanwhile, it demonstrated that the R015's and R047's reading awareness is associated with reading aloud, vocabulary building, and pronunciation, as stated as follow:

"Reading strategies do I know recently is only reading it aloud and if I find some new vocabularies that I don't understand, I will look for the words in u-dictionary app or translate google and I also try to look for the way to know how to pronounce the words and then I try to say it." [INT-R015-001].

In contrast to the previous responses, R062 and R075 have more in-depth knowledge in this regard. R062 realized that understanding and practicing reading strategies in reading activities is important as an initial asset in reading. This is evidenced by the statement of R062 as follow:

"Reading Strategies in here not just general reading but also Reading for Literature and Culture, reading for a business context, and reading for scientific context. Because it, the students expected to learn and know about material related to basic reading strategies, for instance, scanning, previewing and prediction, guessing words, synonyms, topic, main media, etc. The summary, students are expected to know theoretical concepts of reading comprehension strategies." [INT-R062-001].

According to the results, participants have various views on reading, ranging from reading for pleasure to reading to acquire English vocabulary (even with the help of a dictionary), to reading for other purposes, such as wanting to study with more comprehensive reading theories. However, this cannot be generalized to all respondents in this study.

In sum, according to the findings of the interviews and the survey questionnaire, students' awareness of learning reading in general was to increase the size of their English vocabulary, and practice their English pronunciation, and its grammatical structures. This is in line with the Simple View of Reading theory (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) which revealed that this circumstance was under the category of 'decoding of text and language comprehension,' and it can be an initial capital (related to reading awareness) in exploring and improving their reading skills at a higher level. Furthermore, this study investigated their expectations for learning to read in reading classes. The findings are discussed in the following section.

Students' Expectations from the Reading Courses

This section discusses the results of the investigation regarding students' expectations in reading class. Learning expectations are students' hopes and desires for what is expected to be received in the learning process, especially in reading courses. The second question that is delivered to the five participants in this study is related to their expectations in reading courses and whether their expectations were satisfied in their reading class or not. The results show that there are various expectations that they expect and learn in their reading class, especially during online learning where they are required to be able to become independent learners.

The first came from R047 and R062 which expressed how to get novel insight knowledge and be able to understand the context

of reading in-depth in reading activities and reading course learning. It is revealed from R047's statement:

"Reading class, teaches us how to read correctly, and we get the meaning of the text. I think the important one is about the meaning from the text or even from the story that we read or listen to" [INT-R047-002]

And R062's statement:

"One leap forward to have a great future and knowledge" [INT-R062-002]

The second expectation is that they can improve their reading skills to solve the problem in reading textbook as R015's statement:

"I hope I could improve my reading skills by learning some materials in reading class" [INT-R015-002]; and R075's statement "I hope with this reading class I can read well and correctly" [INT-R075-002].

The last expectation is to be able to read a text fluently, as R059's statement:

"I expect this class will improve my reading skills whether it's academic or non-academic and I hope this class would give me some kind of new attraction on reading text, books, article and others" [INT-R059-002].

The aforementioned results revealed students' expectations in their reading courses. The interesting fact from this result is that from five participants, who were interviewed, they did not expect reading courses to focus solely on test-taking skills, but they want to be able to grasp the meaning of the texts that they have read. In a nutshell, they tend to read a text to comprehend the meaning rather than only solving the questions provided on the tests. Yet, this cannot be generalized to all respondents involved in this study. A more in-depth qualitative study is needed to investigate the expectations and needs of students in learning reading skills which can become their initial assets as independent readers and independent learners who can help the process of learning more advanced reading courses.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Based on the aforementioned results and discussion, this study has five conclusions. First, 84% of students in this study preferred pleasure reading. Thus, the teachers who are going to teach reading skills can use the reading for pleasure (extensive reading) approach to better align teaching with student preferences. Second, based on survey results (see Table 2), learning that focuses on maintaining proper speed-reading skills, building English vocabulary size, practicing English pronunciation, and practicing grammatical structures are highly recommended to be implemented in the learning process of reading courses. Third, based on the results of a survey related to reading book genres, there were seven genres of reading books most chosen by students, namely Motivation (11%); Action (9%); Comedy, Fantasy, Adventure, and Romance (8% each), and Crime and Mystery (7%). Fourth, based on survey results, out of 16 resources, the three that are most chosen by students were Novels/Wattpad (23.1%), Instagram Stories/Captions (22.7%), and Twitter (17.5%). Fifth, regarding reading reflections (reading awareness and reading expectation), gen-Z students at the Indonesian university where the study was conducted recognized that reading skills are very important skills in the language learning process, and in this case, having a sufficient English vocabulary is what they need most to strengthen their reading skills. In addition, they hope that in the reading class they will not only learn a number of reading strategies theoretically but will immediately practice them to improve their ability to fully understand the context of reading in a pleasurable way.

The author realizes that this research is not comprehensive because it only focused on 99 respondents who participated in this study so the results cannot be generalized to all students belonging to Generation Z.

More in-depth research is needed to investigate the expectations and needs of students in learning reading skills which can become their initial assets as independent readers and independent learners who can help the process of learning more advanced reading courses to face further challenges. Furthermore, the author hopes that the results of this study can assist teachers in preparing reading course classes that are more pleasing so that reading skills are not just reading and solving reading questions.

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