

## ENGLISH STUDENTS READING INTEREST BY USING LITERARY READING

**Kiki Andriyani<sup>1</sup>, Agung Suhadi<sup>2</sup>, Dian Susyla<sup>3</sup>, Ria Anggraini<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu

Email: [andrianik003@gmail.com](mailto:andrianik003@gmail.com)

[agunglecturer@gmail.com](mailto:agunglecturer@gmail.com), [dsusyla@umb.ac.id](mailto:dsusyla@umb.ac.id), [ria@umb.ac.id](mailto:ria@umb.ac.id)

### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of reading interest and the factors that influence the reading interest of fourth and sixth semester students of English Education Study Program of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu towards literary reading. Therefore, this research method is qualitative research. This research uses a qualitative approach by using descriptive qualitative. Data were obtained through questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire is to find out the level of students' reading interest in literary reading, while the interview is to get more in-depth information related to students' reading interest in literary reading. The subjects of this study were fourth and sixth semester students of English Education Study Program totaling 40 students as respondents for questionnaires and from the 40 students, 10 students were taken as informants for interviews. From the results of the study, the researcher found that the average student reading interest level was quite high with the following details: 8 (20%) students got the "Low" category, 26 (65%) students got the "Medium" category, and 6 (15%) students got the "High" category. Meanwhile, the results of the study through interviews found more in-depth information on factors affecting student reading interests, namely: Building knowledge of reading literacy, willingness to read, the role of literary reading, personal interests, and the benefits of literary reading. Students state that reading literary works can add to their knowledge of reading, hone creativity, and can also hone them to think critically. Therefore, it is a factor that affects the high interest in reading students in the fourth and sixth semester, so students still familiarize themselves to read literary works.

**Keywords: Reading Interest, English Students, Literature**

### INTRODUCTION

English is very important for individual to learn nowadays. English is the main language used throughout the world, by mastering English it will be easier for us to support our school career or the job we dream of. In learning English well and correctly we must know some of the skills that must be mastered, namely speaking, writing, listening and reading skills. Reading is one of the important skills in learning English. By reading students can gain new ideas, obtain the information needed, can support their ideas, help complete their tasks and add to their motivation to know the whole world, not only as an important skill for students in their lives but also as an important aspect in the national final exam.

The benefits of reading are numerous if someone can understand the content of the reading. This is supported by Kurniawan (2020), stating that reading is an extraordinary achievement when viewed from the many levels and components that must be

mastered. Reading is one of the basic skills along with listening, which is referred to as receptive skills, while the other two skills, namely speaking and writing are referred to as productive skills. All these skills are important in learning English, but reading is more important for learners to process because this skill is helpful in almost all aspects of their academic activities.

In reading we need motivation that can encourage us to be interested and read the books. One of the motivations that can encourage us in reading is interest. According to Idris (2023) interest is defined as a high inclination of the heart towards something with passion or enthusiasm. In addition, reading is one of the language skills that is closely related to the needs of human life. As a basic ability that everyone has, reading supports other basic human abilities, namely writing and speaking. This indicates that a high interest in reading will improve one's ability to write or speak.

Reading activities will be carried out if there is interest from the person concerned. The role of interest occupies the most determining position, in addition to students' ability to read. Interest has a strong driving force in the realization of an activity. Students' interest in reading arises from their curiosity to understand or obtain information from their environment. No matter how good and interesting the content of the reading text is, if the person is lazy to read, then the reading activity is impossible.

Interest has a big influence on learning, because if the subject matter studied is not in accordance with the student's interests, there is no attraction for him. Lessons that interest students, are easier to learn and retain in memory, because interest adds to active learning. Factors that support and inhibit students' interest in reading tend to be educators and parents. In addition, facilities and infrastructure factors such as libraries can be decisive in fostering and developing students' interest in reading. Another fact shows that interest not only affects learning outcomes. The more you read, the more knowledge you gain. This will affect learning achievement.

Learning materials at every level of education in Indonesia do not escape language and literature teaching materials. Formally, literature lessons have been given since elementary school. Deepening the material lasts until high school and even university level. But in reality, students' interest in appreciating literature can be said to be lacking. The fact is that there are very few students in Indonesia who enjoy quality literary works. New-age students tend to enjoy reading less. This may be due to the students' lack of interest in literary books. They rarely read books of poetry, drama, prose, short stories, or novels. For them, reading literary works is a less interesting activity.

Reading literature in an educational setting such as a college or university is nothing new as professors, lecturers, or students are the academics directly involved in this. However, most students read literary works only to do assignments, if only to read as a reference or increase knowledge is still very rare. Similarly, research results in several other studies also show that reading interest is still low. Based on research conducted by Central Connecticut State University "World's Most Literate Nations Ranked"

conducted in March 2016, it states that Indonesia is ranked 60 out of 61 countries for reading interest Devega in (Latifah, 2021). Then the research data is also not much different from UNESCO data, Indonesian people's reading interest is ranked second from the bottom regarding world literacy, which is only 0.001%, meaning that out of 1000 Indonesians only one person is diligent in reading (Devega, 2017).

Meanwhile, despite low interest in reading, wearesocial data as of January 2017 shows that Indonesians use gadgets for approximately 9 hours a day. This places Indonesia fifth in the world in terms of social media engagement based on research by *Semiocast*, an independent organization in Paris (Devega, 2017). The results of this research are related to the results of research from the digital marketing research institute Emarketer which states that there are more than 100 million active smartphone users in Indonesia in 2018 (Devega, 2017). The research shows that Indonesians are active on social media such as Twitter, Instagram, and others, not to access knowledge. Based on the explanation above, which shows low interest in reading. Therefore, the researcher will conduct a study that focuses on students' reading interest, especially in literary reading. Therefore, the researcher took the title "English Students Reading Interest By Using Literary Reading".

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Reading**

Reading is a crucial skill in learning English, requiring specific skills to comprehend the text. According to Yuliana (2016), four key steps to understand a sentence exposition are to read the entire text, list and verify main ideas, classify essential main ideas, and make a conclusion. Reading is an exercise dominated by the eyes and brain, requiring the ability to articulate and understand the meaning conveyed in the text. According to Grabe and Stoller in Chostelideou, reading can be said to be a way to extract information from text, in this case the concept of reading. Reading is indeed one way to find out information or knowledge, the more things that are read, the more things will be obtained.

In reading, there is an interaction between the written text and the reader that will connect the reader's knowledge and the reader's view of the text. This will continue to develop thinking about the text being read. Reading activities are very close to human life, most of the time is spent reading even though not only through formal means such as reading books, even reading messages via mobile phones or E-mail.

Reading activities are known to be divided into reading aloud and reading silently. Reading aloud is reading by making a sound so that readers or other people can listen to and understand the contents of the reading. While reading silently is reading without making a sound, in this case it is divided into two, namely extensive reading and intensive reading. The following is an explanation of the two types of reading (Hambali, 2018).

1. Extensive reading is reading a lot of text in a short period of time. The goal is to understand the content quickly and efficiently. Speed reading includes survey reading, shallow reading, and speed reading.
2. Intensive reading includes content analysis and language study. Content analysis reading is divided into critical reading, idea reading, close reading, and comprehension reading.

From some of the above statements, it can be concluded that reading is an active learning process, not passive learning. Then it must be supported by the reader's own interest and awareness. The reading process will combine two perspectives, namely the written text and the reader's background understanding.

## **2.2 Reading Interest**

Reading interest is a fixed preference or inclination to read. Reading interest is an activity that is carried out with full persistence in order to build communication with oneself to find the meaning of writing and seek information to develop intellectuality which is carried out with full awareness and feelings of pleasure that arise from within Dalman in (Latifah, 2020). In other sources, Gray and Rogers in (Nurdin, 2018) stated that by reading, people can find out the actual things that happen in the environment, satisfy curiosity, and increase interest in something more intensively.

According to Dalman in Latifah, 2020, reading interest indicators are as follows.

### **1. Frequency and Quality of Read**

The greater the interest in reading, the more often a person will read. This is because there is a mental tendency to do the activity diligently because of a sense of pleasure.

### **2. The desire to find reading material**

If someone already has an interest in reading, it will be manifested in daily behavior, namely trying to find reading material.

### **3. Quantity of reading sources**

In reading activities not only focus on one topic, but read a variety of readings.

## **2.3 Literary Reading**

In literary reading, readers engage with the text to become involved in events, setting, actions, consequences, characters, atmosphere, feelings, and ideas, and to enjoy language itself (Redaksi semilir, 2023). In order to understand and appreciate literature, each reader must bring to the text his or her own experiences, feelings,

appreciation of language, and knowledge of literary forms. For young readers, literature can offer the opportunity to explore situations and feelings they have not yet encountered.

Literature is a form of art associated with the use of language to convey messages, expressions, and human experiences. Literature has the power to stir emotions, influence thought, and provide new perspectives on life and the world. The concept of literature goes beyond mere writing or artwork. It encompasses diverse forms of expression, including poetry, prose, drama, novels, short stories and more. Literature is born out of the author's imagination, life experiences, and view of the world. It is thus a window that connects the writer and the reader on an intellectual and emotional journey.

### **1. Elements in literary works**

- a. Language style: the essence of literature. The use of beautiful words, metaphors, symbols, and figures of speech form a distinctive style in every literary work. It awakens the reader's imagination and gives the writing a unique appeal.
- b. Theme: the main message or idea that the author wants to convey through the literary work. Literature can address a variety of themes, such as love, friendship, loyalty struggles, justice, and personal growth. A strong theme gives depth to the literary work and allows the reader to contemplate deeper meanings.
- c. Plot: the sequence of events in a literary work. A good plot creates an interesting flow, has a suspenseful conflict, and produces change or growth in the main characters. An interesting plot captivates readers and keeps them thinking about how the story will develop.
- d. Characters: in literature, characters are the heart of the narrative. Complex, realistic, and consistent characters bring the story to life and make the reader emotionally connected to the story. Conflicts and dynamics between characters amplify the reader's experience.
- e. Setting: the place and time in which a literary story takes place. A strong setting helps visualize the world the author has created and creates an atmosphere that fits the story. The setting can also serve as a reflection of society or social reality at the time the literary work was written.

- f. Narrative style: includes narrative point of view (first person, third person), rhythm, and flow. A unique and consistent style of storytelling adds character to a literary work and makes it more appealing to readers.

## **2. Limitation of mentioning literary works**

While literature can encompass a wide range of art forms, there are some limitations in calling a work literature. Literary works must have elements of beauty in language and creativity in the use of words. This means that the work is characterized by a language style that is not found in ordinary forms of writing. Literary works tend to have a deeper expressive purpose than just conveying emotions, thoughts, and philosophical views on life and the world. The concept of literature goes beyond a mere art form, but encompasses personal expressions, philosophical thoughts, and even views on the world. Elements such as language style, theme, plot, character, setting, and narrative style are the pillars that make up a unique literary work and captivate readers. Literary works invite readers to contemplate, and feel the power of language that is capable of changing human views and emotions.

## **METHODS**

This research used the descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive qualitative method is a research process and understanding based on methods that investigate a social phenomenon, while in this study researchers created a complex picture, examined words, detailed reports from respondents' views and conducted studies in natural situations Iskandar in (Latifah, 2020). According to Bodgan and Taylor, qualitative research methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. While the instruments used in this research are questionnaires and in-depth interviews to collect data. The subjects in this study were English students in the 4th and 6th semester at Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS**

The result of this research is as follows.

### **3.1 Questionnaires' Result About Students Reading Interest By Using Literary Reading.**

The following are the results of the questionnaire distribution on students' reading interest in literary reading :

**Table 1.1 The Categories Of Students' Interests**

<b>Score</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Result</b>
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<b>40-48</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>8 Respondents (20%)</b>
<b>49-60</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>26 Respondents (65%)</b>
<b>61-67</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>6 Respondents (15%)</b>

Based on the data in table 1.1, the researcher found 8 (20%) respondents got the “Low” category, 26 (65%) respondents got the “Medium” category, and 6 (15%) respondents got the “High” category. From the data, the researcher identified that so far the fourth and sixth semester students of the English Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu in the academic year 2023/2024 were categorized into the Low, Medium and High categories in their interest in reading literature.

### 3.2 Students’ Interview Result About The Factors Influence Students Reading Interest By Using Literary Reading.

#### 1. Building knowledge about reading literacy

In the scope of higher education, reading literature is not a new thing for students, even since elementary education we have been given literary text material such as fairy tales and folklore. However, at the higher education level we have recognized broader types of literature such as novels, dramas, prose and poetry and others. The following are student responses regarding literary reading that can build reading literacy in English Education Study Program students.

Informant S : “My opinion about literature is that by reading literature, it broadens our knowledge about reading”. *(Respondent, 2024)*

The results of the interviews above show that students say that literary reading is very suitable to be used as reading material to fill their reading literacy, because students get many benefits from reading literature, not only knowledge gained, but English language skills, grammar, and insights that develop students' mindset.

#### 2. Willingness to read

Sometimes in order to do something, people need a reason or something else that drives them to do it. But in another sense, it is possible for someone to do something they want because of their personal will. Likewise, the reading interest of English Education students towards literary reading, whether because they read for the needs of course assignments or indeed awareness from themselves. The following are the responses of the informants.

Informant W : "What makes me interested in reading literature is that there are many types of literature that can be read, while the thing that sometimes makes me not interested is that reading too long a work can make me bored". (Respondent, 2024)

The results of the interviews above show that almost all students said that they read literature not only for the needs of course assignments but because they really want to read. This is purely due to the realization that knowledge can be obtained by reading. However, it cannot be denied that by reading literature students gain a lot of knowledge.

### 3. The role of literary reading

The role of literary reading is very useful in higher education. Literary reading is very close to the world of student creativity on campus, for example, such as making journals or articles that analyze novels, short stories, or poetry. The following are student responses.

Informant K : "I like literature like novels because a novel is a written work that contains the feelings, imagination, and emotions of the author contained in a story that will certainly be very interesting if we read it". (Respondent, 2024)

The results of the above interviews showed that most of the students stated that they read literary readings like novels for their own reasons. This shows that literary reading has a great influence on student reading references.

### 4. Personal interest

One of the next factors that is part of the reading interest factors of fourth and sixth semester English students is personal interest. Personal interest is an important factor that can encourage students to read. The following are the responses of the students.

Informant S : "My favorite reading themes in novels are for example about fiction or fantasy". (Respondent, 2024)

The results of interviews with informants show that they prefer science fiction or fantasy themes when they read novels while informants who like poetry prefer historical or life themes. Personal interest is an important factor that can motivate students to read.

### 5. Advantages of literary reading

In increasing our knowledge, it is not only fixated on one learning media. The more the better, it all depends on yourself whether you want to be serious in gaining knowledge or not. The following are student responses regarding literary reading as one of the



media in improving their knowledge.

Informant S : "I think reading literature can be entertaining and very insightful because by reading literature we can fantasize and feel the emotions contained in the literary reading". (Respondent, 2024)

The results of the interviews above show that students agree that reading literature can increase their knowledge, stimulate the imagination by presenting new worlds, ideas and possibilities to readers. In addition, reading literature can also be fun for them. Reading literature can be a form of escapism that provides a mental break from everyday stress. Spending time reading a good book can reduce stress levels and promote relaxation.

## **DISCUSSION**

In the scope of higher education, students are required to be able to develop insight because being a student means being ready to become a graduate who can become an agent of change in the social community, participating in advancing every aspect of community life with the knowledge that has been obtained. Indeed, knowledge can be obtained anywhere, for academics in the world of education there are ways to increase knowledge, namely by reading, discussing, and producing written work. In the learning process, student motivation has a relationship with students' ability to overcome problems (Muslimin, 2020). Everyone, especially students, has their own motivation, ways of learning, learning goals, and learning interests.

Based on 20 statement items in the questionnaire of students' interest in reading literature. The researcher found that there were 40 students who had different categories in their interest in reading literary works. First, there are 8 students (20%) who have a "Low" category with the score range for the "Low" category is  $X < 49$ . Second, there are 26 students (65%) who are in the "Moderate" category with a score range of  $49 \leq X < 61$ . Third, as many as 6 students (15%) are in the "Quite High" category with a score range of  $X \geq 61$ . In the questionnaire results, 23 respondents (57,5%) gave the highest answer "Often" on statement number 5 (I read books for pleasure, such as novels, short stories, or other literary readings). This means that fourth and sixth semester students of the English Education Study Program have an interest in reading literature.

Based on the results of interviews with students of the fourth and fifth semesters of the English Language Education Studies Program at Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. Here is an explanation of the factors that influence student reading interest in literary reading.

### **1. Building knowledge about reading literacy**

In the realm of higher education, reading literature is not new to students, even since our elementary education has been introduced to literary text materials such as fairy tales and folklore. Literary reading can be a reading choice for students. Reading

literature is not an unprofitable thing, rather with reading literature our knowledge of reading will increase, our reading knowledge will not only be embedded in academic reading but also encompasses literary reading rich in imagination.

## 2. Willingness to read

Almost all informants said that they read literature because of their own desires, but there were also those who stated because of course assignments. They have their own interest in literary reading, such as because there are many types of literary works that can be read, for example novels, short stories and poetry with various themes presented in the form of stories.

## 3. The role of literary reading

Almost all informants said they liked reading literature because they were interested in the content of the story. Literature encourages readers to think critically and analytically. Analyzing characters, themes and plots helps develop these skills, which are crucial for academic success and everyday problem solving. Literary reading is positive reading that can add to students' reading references.

## 4. Personal interest

Personal interest is also a factor that influences reading interest in literary reading, it can be seen that almost all informants are interested in various themes from reading novels that they like. Through themes related to their personal interests such as reading novels because it is fun, it proves that students want to read because the reading is fun according to them.

## 5. Advantages of literary reading

Literary reading allows students to explore different points of view and life experiences, broadening their understanding of the world. Literary reading can inspire students to pursue their interests, overcome challenges, and strive to achieve personal and academic goals. The compelling stories contained in literature can foster a lifelong love of reading and continuous learning. Reading literature can be a relaxing activity that helps students to unwind and reduce stress due to its wide variety of themes and forms.

In conclusion, the researcher obtained in-depth research results regarding the factors that influence the reading interest of fourth and sixth semester students of the English Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. In this case, students already have their own awareness that reading is an activity that must be familiarized to themselves, especially for students who are in the scope of higher education. Positive reading is not only about reading academic and scientific reading, but it is also important if students want to read literary reading because with this the insight gained is also increasing. Another finding was stated by Ines Ratna Sari (2018) the results of the research obtained show that students' reading interest in literary works in the Indonesian Literature Study Program class of 2014-2017 is still

relatively low. Students specializing in literature are still low in terms of interest in reading literary works. Within a year, there are more students who read <10 titles of literary works. Students only read literary works as a fulfillment of literature course assignments with  $\pm$  in one semester there are 3 literature courses and only spend <2 hours reading every day. This is different from the results shown by English Language Education students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu whose level of interest in reading literary literature is in the high category.

Similar findings were presented by Siswati (2010) that the benefits of reading obtained by students of the Faculty of Psychology UNDIP are new inspiration, references, new vocabulary, completing assignments, discussion materials, participating in competitions, increasing faith, adding experience, and refreshing the brain. The impact felt by individuals when reading habits and interests are formed will provide various benefits. Then, other findings were also presented by Maria Novita Inya Buku and Florentina Y. Sepe (2019) that the condition of students' reading interest in the Biology Education Study Program at FKIP Widya Mandira Catholic University showed that there were 1 student who had a very low reading interest (0.91%), 57 students had a low reading interest (51.82%), 52 students had a moderate reading interest (47.27%), and no students had a high reading interest.

## **CONCLUSION**

The conclusions of this research are first, the level of interest in reading English journal articles of fourth and sixth semester students of English Education Study Program of Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu can be said to be quite high. This is based on the results of the questionnaire, fourth and sixth semester students are categorized into Low, Medium, and High categories of student interest. As for the percentage of student interest, 8 students (20%) are in the "Low" category, 26 students (65%) are in the "Medium" category, and 6 students (15%) are in the "High" category in reading interest in literary reading.

Second, there are five factors that influence students' reading interest in reading English journal articles of fourth and sixth semester students of English Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, namely building knowledge about reading literacy, willingness to read, the role of literary reading, personal interests, and the advantages of literary reading. Based on the research findings, these factors do influence the high reading interest of fourth and sixth semester students of the English Education Study Program in reading literary works.

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