

## **Students' Perception of Using the Internet to Develop Reading Habits: A Case Study at the English Education Department of Universitas Kristen Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

The internet ubiquity in education has flooded the teaching and learning process with digital tools and drastically changed many aspects of academic life, including students' reading habits. This study aimed at exploring students' perceptions of using the internet to develop reading habits. The study employed the qualitative descriptive method with survey design and involved 43 students of the English department of Universitas Kristen Indonesia Jakarta. Data was collected by means of a questionnaire consisting of 20 items. The results showed that 43% of the respondents had a positive perception that the internet developed their reading habits. However, the majority of them regarded reading as merely an activity for getting information to finish school assignments. They viewed the internet as the main source of information they needed to finish their learning assignments. Since about one-fifth of them preferred paper-based reading, it was concluded that not the whole of Generation Z members totally ignored printed reading materials.

**Keywords:** internet, paper-based reading, reading habits, screen-based reading

### **INTRODUCTION**

The internet has been popular in the world, and people use it to support their everyday activities and needs fulfillment. The exponential recent growth of technologies connected to the internet has led to drastic changes in almost all life aspects, particularly the industrial, trading and educational sectors (Pardede, 2012). Through the internet which has been globally interconnected to computers provides various benefits, including access to information from faraway documents and databases that can be read and studied to corroborate knowledge (Larose, as cited in Oluwaseyi & Oluwatise, 2013). Due to technological advancement, people are now living in the world of digital. Pardede (2019a) accentuated that technological ubiquity in the sector of education has inundated the teaching and learning process with digital tools.

World of digital which is connected to the internet can provide any kind of information people want to know, and this has changed the habit of students in collecting data. Instead of visiting the library to find printed books, students tend to access digital texts through the internet. The internet does not merely provide information for students but also facilitating tools for discussing class materials and sharing academic issues through various social media (Salas & Alexander, as cited in Gok, 2016). In terms of language learning, Pardede (2019b) stated that information and communication technologies that are connected to the internet have even provided a growing range of possible solutions for refining the teaching and learning inputs, processes, and outcomes.

Technological ubiquity has really brought people to live in the digital world, and one of the main impacts is that people in general and students, in particular, spend more and more time accessing digital tools. Liu (as cited in Harafsheh & Pandian, 2016) found that “with the emergence of digital society, most people particularly adolescents are devoting much more time to reading electronic resources. They spend their time skimming, downloading and browsing information on the internet” (p. 18). Today’s students prefer to stay in one place and access the internet to read while doing another activity not just focus in one place and read lots of documents. Statista Research Department (2014) conveyed that though only 10.03 million e-books were sold in 2008 in the U.S., the sale increased to 457.09 million units by 2014. VitalSource Technologies Inc. (2015) found that the students using digital tools to read course material increased from 63% (2011) to 87% (2015), and those reading digital course materials frequently increased from 48% (2011) to 78% (2015).

In the current academic life, the use of digital texts is inescapable (Pardede, 2017) and it has significantly impacted students’ attitudes and reading habits. According to Chou and Hsiao (as cited in Oluwaseyi (2013) "the internet becomes an important part of college students' lives, not only for their studies and daily routine but as a tool for getting to know other people and the rest of the world" (p. 40). Several studies (Ackerman & Lauterman, 2012; Abanomey, 2013; Huang, 2014; Taj et.al. 2017) have been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of digital reading vs. printed reading. Some studies (Chauhan & Lal, 2012; Gay et al., 2006) have been also carried out to investigate the changes caused by digital texts to students’ reading habits. However, studies investigating students’ perception of the use of the internet to develop reading habits are still rare. As an attempt to fill in the gap, the present study was conducted to find out students' perception of using the internet to develop reading habits.

Based on the background above, the research question to be answered in this study was formulated as follows "What is students' perception of using the internet to develop their reading habits?"

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Reading**

Reading is very vital for the overall improvement of a human being. According to Chettri and Rout (2013), reading affords experience through which an individual may enlarge his horizons of knowledge, identify, spread and increase his awareness and advances a deeper understanding of himself, of other people and of the world. In the context of education, a large amount of reading is essential because all learning activities involve reading skills and the success of students' study also depends on the greater part in their ability to read. Bashir and Mattoo (2012) emphasized that both reading and academic success are consistent and dependent relative to each other. Thus, the more students read books, the

more successful they will be in learning. Additionally, Palani (2012) stated that reading is interconnected with the total educational development and educational achievement needs successful reading. Krashen's (2004) study revealed that people with good reading habits tend to score better on all kinds of tests.

In the EFL context, reading is essentially the most important skill every learner should master. Pardede (2019a) identified three reasons why reading is crucial for EFL learners. First, EFL learners lack inputs from their daily interactions because English is not the primary language of the society where they study it. To overcome the input limitation, reading is the best solution. Secondly, reading significantly contributes to one's personal and intellectual development, further studies, job success, and career development, and the capability to meet changes. Third, reading skills enhance a learner's mastery of other areas of language teaching because it offers the learners with various good sentence structures so many times that they become accustomed to them. Reading also develops EFL learners' vocabulary by letting them get the most frequently used and useful words and learn them in context. It also improves writing skills for it enables the learners to figure out how to express ideas through words, how to use punctuation correctly, and so on. Reading is even the basis of instruction in all aspects of language learning.

In the past, reading was used to be defined as the ability to read and interpret meaning from varied texts. Widdowson (1979), for instance, defines reading as "the process of getting linguistic information via print". The expression "getting information", appears to imply that reading is a linear process by which readers decode a text word by word, linking the words into phrases and then sentences. Due to a better understanding of reading, current definitions view reading as a complex activity involving the understanding process of a whole text composed of written symbols. It is not regarded as a passive mechanical activity anymore but purposeful and rational, reliant on the reader's prior knowledge and expectations. Cline et.al (2006, p. 2) state that reading is "the process of deriving meaning from the text". For Toit (2001), reading is a process of thinking, recalling and relating concepts under the functioning of texts. In short, it is a psycholinguistic guessing game, a process in which readers sample the text, make hypotheses, confirm or reject them, make new hypotheses, and so forth.

### **Reading Habits**

Reading habit refers to the behavior which expresses the likeness of reading of individual types of reading and tastes of reading (Sangkaeo, 1999). It is a pattern with which an individual organizes his or her reading in terms of the type, content, and quantity of materials read, the reading frequency and the average time spent on reading. A person with a good reading habit makes reading a regular activity. In short, reading habit is the activity of deriving meaning from the text which is conducted frequently.

These definitions indicate that reading habit is personal because it is affected by an individual environment, education, gender, and age. According to Azikiwe (1998), reading habit is "the adopted way and manner a student plans his private readings, after classroom learning so as to attain mastery of the subject". According to her, "good reading habits are good assets to learners because they (habits) assist students to attain mastery in areas of specialization and consequent excellent performance, while opposite constitutes constraints to learning and achievement leading to failure".

The results of some current researches on reading habits have discovered that reading habits are associated with students' gender, age, educational background,

academic performance, and professional growth. According to Cesar, et.al (2010), there are six indicators of reading habit. First, reading frequency, i.e. the frequency at which the person reports to read books in their spare time. Moreover, reading frequency is the activity when someone does to read for some minutes or hours as frequently. Second, books read, which refer to the number of books that the person reports having read in the last three months. It is considered from the amount of books. Third, time spent on academic reading, i.e., the time that the person reports to devote to reading books on his or her study subjects. It is considered from the time reported as devoted to “Books for Class”. Fourth, time spent on non-academic reading, which refers to the time that the respondent reports to devote to reading books that are not directly related to the subjects of his or her studies. It is considered from the time reported as devoted to “Books that are not for class”. Fifth, motivation in the family environment, which is often reported by the person on the purchase of books, recommending books and reading interest in the family. Finally, motivation in the academic environment, i.e., the frequency the student reports on the teacher using activities to promote contact with psychology literature.

### **Impact of the Internet on Reading Habits**

Realizing the importance of reading, its development has been regarded as the first priority in EFL and printed texts have long played a great role in EFL classrooms. However, the increasing use of digital text in EFL learning and teaching due to the influx of digital tools has caused a fundamental change in the ways students read today (Pardede, 2019a). The internet has changed not only the way people communicate, how business is done, how entertainment is received, and how information is shared and received. It has also had a great effect on people’s reading habits. Shen (as cited in Tanjung, Ridwan & Gultom, 2017) even said that digital reading "is a new kind of reading habits at which (EFL) students preferred internet-based reading than paper-based one" and "with the growing amount of digital information available, people particularly young adults are found spending more time reading electronic materials" (p. 147).

Digital texts have two main types: the one accessed from the internet and those kept in screen reading tools, computers or hand handled devices. Both are electronically generated and multimodal (blending texts with audio, video, image, and hypertext). Such features make them more interactive than a printed text and bid the reader to explore in a nonlinear way. Hypertext, in particular, makes a digital text interconnected with many other texts which offer the readers various directional choices fitting to their interest. So, a single text can provide different access routes and, therefore, different options of reading. In this context, the hyper-textual nature promotes a flexible pattern of discovery that fosters readers’ greater cognitive effort for they must construct information frameworks based on the nature of the paths chosen (Spires & Estes, 2002).

Digital reading has both advantages and disadvantages for students. On the one hand, it makes reading and information accessibility easier and more enjoyable. On the other hand, it poses a threat to reading culture. One of the advantages of internet-based reading is that reading is now not focused on one place, silent and starts to read. Students can now read anywhere and anytime as long as they feel enjoy and comfortable. Another advantage is that using the internet-connected with media technology (computer) can generate a big motivation and enthusiasm to read. This fact is evidence that students have a favorable perception of the use of the internet in learning reading comprehension subjects. Sudiran (2015) listed several benefits of the internet-based-reading: (1) motivating students; (2) improving the quality of learning processes; (3) reducing the

misunderstanding among students; (4) increasing the students' curiosity; and (5) increasing the students' competitiveness to achieve their goals" (p. 687). Currently, most people believe that the success of graduates of each college or school is depending on how they learn to apply or use the internet as a source for gathering information. As a means of increasing knowledge, the internet plays a key role in learning reading comprehension because it helps students acquired much information from which their achievement has developed. The use of the internet for reading English makes students more capable and creative in learning.

However, various previous studies tended to suggest that printed or paper-based reading was superior to digital or screen-based reading tasks in terms of speed, accuracy, and comprehension. Dillon (1994) found that reading from a screen was almost 20 to 30% slower with regard to performance than a paper. Mayes et al. (2001) also found computer-based reading significantly slower. However, a more recent study (Solak, 2014) revealed that reading speed on a screen reading was nearly 12% faster than paper-based reading. In terms of accuracy, various studies (Muter et al., 1982; Creed et al., 1987; Ziefle, 1998) found that that print reading was superior to digital reading. However, Creed et al. (1987) found no significant difference between the two reading modes. In terms of comprehension, various studies (Macedo-Rouet et al., 2003; Mangen et.al. 2013; Solak, 2014) showed paper-based reading supremacy, while others (Abanomey, 2013; Aydemir et.al. 2013; Huang, 2014; Taj et.al. 2017) found that digital reading outperformed paper-based reading for comprehension.

These contradictive results of studies investigating the effect of paper-based reading versus screen-based reading to reading speed, accuracy, and comprehension, according to Pardede (2017) is due to two factors. First, the varieties of the study designs, including the heterogeneity of the subjects' age-group and sample size inadequacy, varied settings, diverse independent and dependent variables, unclear measures validity and reliability, and inappropriate mastery or even absence of digital reading strategies among the participants. Second, the various advancement levels of the technology employed in the study.

Numerous recent studies (Jeong, 2012; Lim & Hew, 2014) examining students' and teachers' perceptions of digital reading focus on the use of e-books commonly revealed that more than 50% of users who had used e-books were satisfied with their experience of using them. Pardede (2019) found that pre-service English teachers perceived digital modules use in blended learning positively. But they expected the modules to be written in 'easier' language and accompanied by relevant videos. Jeong (2012) indicated that Korean students approved e-books. The students also admitted the current e-book's usefulness. Lim and Hew (2014) found that students generally held positive attitudes toward e-book.

Some other studies focused on comparing the preference for digital texts with their counterparts. Abdullah and Gibb (2008) revealed that users still prefer reading paper books for various reasons: preference of the feel for real books, disinclination to read on the screen, or difficulty to purchase the equipment. However, Eden and Eshet-Alkalai's (2013) study showed no significant differences in readers' average scores on the two formats, but participants reading the digital format finished their assignments faster.

## **METHOD**

This study is qualitative research with descriptive design employing the survey method. The participants were 43 students of the English Education Department Faculty of

Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Kristen Indonesia. Data was collected by means of a questionnaire consisting of twenty statements. This questionnaire had been validated by Sudiran (2015) and the researcher only adopted it according to the needs of this research. The participants responded to each statement by choosing one of the five options designed in the form of a Likert Scale. The obtained data were analysed using descriptive statistics.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Perception of Using the Internet

Table 1 shows that overall, the participants had a positive attitude towards using the internet. More than 2/3 of the respondents were used to read online or access the internet for getting the information they need in their study. The majority believed they could access the internet quite easily. This confirms the idea that being the members of Generation Z, the participants were 'tech-savvy'. They were the first generation born into a globally (internet) connected world and therefore "live and breathe" technology (Cilliers, 2017). That's why they did not find any difficulty in using information and communication technologies and could quickly access the information they needed. Being tech-savvy, they also believed the internet as the main means to connect them to the world.

**Table 1. Students' Perception of Using the Internet**

No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	
1.	I do reading on learning English through Internet.	0 (0%)	6 (14%)	7 (16%)	26 (60%)	4 (9%)	3.65
2.	I enjoy reading e-book or articles through the internet.	1 (2%)	5 (12%)	20 (47%)	14 (33%)	3 (7%)	3.30
3.	Reading using the internet develops my reading ability at the campus	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	14 (33%)	20 (47%)	6 (14%)	3.65
4.	It's easy and quick to read online for information,	0 (0%)	3 (7%)	5 (12%)	26 (60%)	9 (21%)	3.95
5.	The Internet drives me to read every day.	1 (2%)	7 (16%)	13 (30%)	16 (37%)	6 (14%)	3.44
6.	I have a particular time to read using the internet every day.	0 (0%)	4 (9%)	21 (49%)	15 (35%)	3 (7%)	3.40
7.	I feel confident using the searching machine (Yahoo & Google) to find necessary texts	0 (0%)	3 (7%)	12 (28%)	25 (58%)	3 (7%)	3.65
8.	The Internet motivates me to read and explore many topics I have not seen.	0 (0%)	4 (9%)	11 (26%)	21 (49%)	7 (16%)	3.72
9.	The Internet makes me connected to the world especially, through reading.	0 (0%)	2 (5%)	8 (19%)	27 (63%)	6 (14%)	3.86

However, since a majority of them did not love reading, they only read to access the required information. Only less than half of them enjoyed reading web-based texts and prepared a particular time to read online every day.

### Reading Habits

Table 2 shows that the majority of the respondents basically did not love reading. They read only because they were assigned to or to finish their assignment. Only 40% of them viewed reading as their hobby and liked reading most compared to other language skills. Consequently, only 32% read online every day; only 31% felt comfortable spending time reading online, and only 42% read books online. These findings indicate that a majority of the respondents employed online reading as the main way to get information, but they did it only for finishing the school works assigned by their teacher. Only a minority of the read for enjoyment.

In terms of preference, 42% of respondents favored digital reading and 21% favored paper-based reading. This finding confirms Jong's (2012) findings indicating Korean students' satisfaction with e-books and the results of Lim and Hew's (2014) study that showed that students generally had positive perceptions toward e-book use. The finding, however, does not confirm the results of a survey conducted by University of California (2014) revealing that among the 2,561 respondents, 49% stated they preferred reading printed books, 34 percent preferred digital book, and 17% answered no preference or that it depends on the context of the usage.

**Table 2. Students' Reading Habits**

No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	
10.	I like reading most than the other skills in learning English.	1 (2%)	12 (28%)	13 (30%)	15 (35%)	2 (5%)	3.12
11.	Reading English is my hobby.	3 (7%)	7 (16%)	16 (37%)	15 (35%)	2 (5%)	3.14
12.	Reading is one of my favorite activities	3 (7%)	7 (16%)	13 (30%)	17 (40%)	3 (7%)	3.23
13.	I read English books online.	1 (2%)	10 (23%)	14 (33%)	15 (35%)	3 (7%)	3.21
14.	I prefer reading e-book than reading a printed book.	3 (7%)	6 (14%)	16 (37%)	15 (35%)	3 (7%)	3.21
15.	Reading English texts using the internet helps me understand English literature	0 (0%)	4 (9%)	13 (30%)	21 (49%)	5 (12%)	3.63
16.	I usually stay online to read for longer periods than intended.	0 (0%)	9 (21%)	17 (40%)	15 (35%)	2 (5%)	3.23
17.	I feel joy and comfort spending time to read online	2 (5%)	14 (33%)	14 (33%)	11 (26%)	2 (5%)	2.93
18.	I read through the internet to find the information to do my assignment.	0 (0%)	4 (9%)	7 (16%)	24 (56%)	8 (19%)	3.84
19.	I enjoy reading online e-book almost every day.	3 (7%)	13 (30%)	13 (30%)	10 (23%)	4 (9%)	2.98
20.	Reading online provides every information for my daily reading.	0 (0%)	4 (9%)	11 (26%)	24 (56%)	4 (9%)	3.65

### Overall Perception of Using the Internet to Develop Reading Habits

Table 3 showed that 53% of the whole students “strongly agreed” and “agreed” with the use of the internet developed their reading habits as compared to 17% who “strongly disagreed” and “disagreed” While there were only 15% of the students who had disagreed that the use of internet develop their reading habits. The other 30% of the respondents were undecided. In short, about half of the students had a positive perception that the use of the internet developed their reading habits.

These findings support the idea that the students viewed the internet as a major source of information. Any time they needed information to fulfill their assignment, the internet would be the first resort to search. However, most of them read documents, articles, or books online only for the sake of finishing their school assignments. Only about one-third of them enjoyed spending time reading online and only 32% read online regularly on a daily basis.

**Table 3. Recapitulation of Students’ Perception (N=43)**

No	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean
1.	Strongly Disagree (SD)	19	2 %	3.44
2	Disagree (D)	126	15 %	
3.	Neutral (N)	258	30 %	
4	Agree (A)	372	43%	
5	Strongly Agree (SA)	85	10 %	
Total		860	100 %	

### CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion above, it was concluded that a slightly higher than half of the respondents positively perceived that the internet developed their reading habits. However, the majority regarded reading as an activity for getting information to finish school assignments only. They believed that the internet provides them many sources they could search to finish their learning assignments. They also believed the internet offers activities and materials they could use to learn English. However, the majority did not see the internet as a means for reading as entertainment. Only about 40% of them loved reading for pleasure and were ready to spend more time reading online. Despite these, almost one-fifth of them still preferred reading printed materials. This indicates that not the whole of Generation Z members totally ignored printed reading materials.

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