ACADEMIC READING ATTITUDES OF UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Melati, Nyimas Triyana Safitri, and Radiatan Mardiah
Universitas Jambi

Abstract

In academic setting, reading is an important activity as this activity provides students with useful information for the students to produce scholarly outcomes. There are reading resources available online and printed so the students can choose which version that are convenient to them, both with their respective benefits and weaknesses. However, research shown that students have low motivation to approach their reading assignment for their college studies. Thus, this research is conducted in order to figure out the academic reading attitude of students in one university in Indonesia as it will provide information about recent attitude toward academic reading. In collecting data, this research uses Isakson Survey of Academic Reading Attitude (ISARA). The results indicate that students have moderate level of academic reading attitude in three areas, namely value, self-efficacy, and behavior components. By recognizing this attitude, students can gain more motivation to accomplish their academic reading and be more aware of the importance of the relation between having positive reading attitude and their reading achievement afterwards.

Keywords: academic reading; reading attitudes

INTRODUCTION

The ability to read is a basic skill of reading that must be gained by EFL learner as it is a form of realization of language competence. In particular, it helps EFL learners develop vocabulary, understand various sentence structures, and find explicit or implied meaning. In general, reading skill can be viewed from three perspectives: practice, product, or process depending on the field of study. Catherine Wallace in Nunan & Carter (2001) states that reading in the first perspective is when the practice of reading is associated with its usefulness in everyday life. This perspective is a field of study carried out by anthropologists and psychologists. The second reading orientation is seen as a product, emphases on how the message that has been compiled in the written text and its constituents can be understood by the reader. The third perspective in reading is that reading is seen as a process. This perspective focuses on the role of the reader to actively construct meaning in a text.

At university level in Indonesian contexts, particularly at English Study Program Universitas Jambi, reading course is positioned as a core course or subject that is taught for four semesters with its certain purposes and competences. In practicing of learning reading, EFL students are provided by various reading resources available for both printed and online version in which they can choose which form that are convenient to them, both with their respective benefits and weaknesses. However, many of EFL students experience inattentive to approach their reading for the task and assignment for their college studies. In the case of EFL students in Universitas Jambi, it is found that student almost spend limited time to do the required reading. This finding is based on initial discussion from peer lecturers and students' performance in a class where there is a reading assignment. For this reason, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive study of EFL students' reading attitude, especially in the academic reading at one university in Indonesia to provide information regarding recent attitude toward academic reading.

*Corresponding author:
melati@unja.ac.id

Reading Skill and English Academic Reading

Reading is one of the four skills of English, regarded as a dynamic process in which the reader combines information from a text with their own prior knowledge to construct meaning (Nunan, 2003). It is also defined as an access to social, economic, and civic life as well as an underlying mechanism of supporting the effectiveness of the learning process (Clark & Akerman, 2006; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Renandya, 2007) which has a good impact on academic performance (Adetunji & Oladeji, 2007). Reading is also seen as a process, a mode of thinking, a kind of real experience and involves many complex skills: the ability to perceive printed words, to skim for information and then perhaps read intensively, (Al-Adwani & Al-Fadley, 2017).

More importantly reading skill is associated with various activities in teaching learning process as it is needed to become a habit and attitude for students. As it is claimed by many researchers that the importance of reading has resulted in much research work conducted to understand the nature of the reading habits and attitude of individuals.

Academic reading, which is part of reading skill, defined as an active process of reading where the reader interacts with a text through taking notes, making connections between the text through what they already know and what other texts have said, and asking critical questions about the content they read. Academic reading involves a multi-faceted approach of engagement where the reader uses a range of reading strategies (prediction, surveying, skimming, scanning, analysis, reading in detail and summarizing) to determine the scope and relevance of a piece and deciding which parts should be read in more depth. In their article, Al-Mahrooqi & Roscoe (2014) highlight series of strategies to help reader in academic reading texts. They note that before reading, examine the overall structure of the book or article to see how it is put together. Then read the introduction and conclusion carefully so that you know the main conclusions before immersing yourself in the details. This preparation will help you situate difficult passages into the context of the whole. Besides they also claim that to understand a particularly complex sentence, begin by searching for the main subject and main verb. These two components will give readers a basic idea of what the sentence is about. In addition to this, the readers may break apart sentences or paragraphs into their components to see what ideas are linked and how.

There are three initial approaches to dealing with an academic reading introduced by Al-Mahrooqi & Roscoe (2014) namely The Bottom-Up Approach, The Top-Down Approach and The Interactive Approach. ***The Bottom-Up Approach,*** emphases the readers must decode the meaning of any text in which they can read only when they are able to sound out words in a text, it ignores readers' background "schemata" and emphasizes the ability to de-code or put into sound what is seen on the printed page. The readers use this approach to focus on decoding skills and spend almost no time helping emerging readers to recognize what they bring to the information in the text. However, this approach has been criticized for many limitations. One is the fact that it is difficult to account for sentence-context effects and the role of any prior knowledge of the text topic in 243 facilitating word recognition and comprehension. Evidently, it is inadequate for improving reading abilities because it underestimates the contribution of readers by failing to utilize their knowledge of language and how it works. Although knowing the meaning of unfamiliar words is helpful, it does not ensure that readers will be able to process them rapidly and accurately and thus constructively interact with the text. Meanwhile ***The Top-Down Approach*** focuses on what the reader brings to the reading process. The emphasis is on readers as they interact with the text. They are seen as active, making predictions, processing information, and reconstructing the author's message. They sample the text for information and contrast it with their knowledge in order to make sense of the written text. However, the top-down model is essentially a model of the fluent reader and does not account for all the needs of students who are developing their reading skills. Eskey (1988) also points out that, with many texts, the reader has little knowledge of the topic and cannot generate predictions. Also, this approach, which tends to de-emphasize the perceptual and decoding dimensions of the process, is good only for strategic and fluent readers for whom perception and decoding have become automatic. ***The Interactive Approach*** highlights many commentators recognize the value of and need for both the text and the reader in the reading process, so these are integrated in the interactive approach, which stresses what is in the text and what a reader brings to it by using both top-down and bottom-up skills. Good readers are both skillful decoders and good text interpreters. In order to read with fluency and accuracy, the readers need to master both their bottom-up recognition skills and top-down interpretation skills.

Reading Attitude; Framework and Conceptual

Reading attitude consists of three components: cognitive, affective, and conative (Yamashita, 2007). The cognitive component refers to personal, evaluative beliefs about the nature and value of reading; affective, to feelings or emotions about reading; and conative, to action readiness and behavior intentions. All three are affected by an individuals' past experiences with reading and may lead to an intention to read or to continue reading (Mathewson, 1994).

Additionally, as McKenna (2001) notes "reading attitudes also exist in relation to the attitudes we have toward potentially competing activities" (p. 137), such as playing video games or watching television. Positive attitudes toward reading are associated with more frequent reading (Mori, 2004), higher reading achievement, and sustained reading throughout life (Logan & Johnston, 2010). Regarding this, many researchers also claim that attitude towards reading is critical to determine student's success during the elementary school and first stage of school years(Stanfield, 2008).

Many studies about reading attitude have been conducted for decade. A study by Chaudhry (2014) who measured Private English as Secondary Language (ESL) students' attitudes toward e-book usage reported a positive attitude toward reading and comprehension level. Furthermore, Druyor (2012) found in his study that a student who has a positive attitude towards reading tends to have high achievement in reading. Other researchers reported positive attitudes as related to higher achievement in social studies and which leads to sustained lifelong reading (Logan & Johnston, 2010). Braden (2012) attempted to determine whether students' attitudes towards reading were linked to reading achievement, and whether the presence of reading role models within the classroom could help increase positive attitudes towards reading. Furthermore, attitudes toward any task are strongly influenced by how effectively the person approaches and performs the task, the behavior component. This connection also applies to attitudes toward reading and reading abilities (McKenna et al., 1995). For example, Smith et al. (1975) found that 63% of the adequate college readers in their study liked to read contrasted with only 26% of the remedial readers who liked reading. They believe if college readers use academic reading behaviors adequate for the task, students are more likely to have successful reading experiences leading to more positive attitudes.

How to Measure Academic Reading Attitude

Through a review of relevant literature, many authors identified a set of attitudinal constructs that they believe underlie and should be included in a measure of academic reading attitudes. In this case they identify three interconnected dimensions: ***behavioral, cognitive, and affective***, all of which are acquired through experience and contribute to an intention to respond in a given situation (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991). This three-component model initially has been applied to the conceptualization of attitudes toward reading (Mizokawa & Hansen-Krening, 2000). In their study, they assume that students who gain effective behavioral approaches to academic reading, who have confidence in their ability to learn from reading, and who have positive feelings toward reading and value it as a way of learning will be more likely to choose to engage in and perform successfully on academic reading tasks. For the detail, ***Behavioral Construct of Attitude*** affects to any task which is strongly influenced by how effectively the person approaches and performs the task and the behavior component. This connection also applies to attitudes toward reading and reading abilities (McKenna et al., 1995). For example, Smith et al. (1975) found that 63% of the adequate college readers in their study liked to read contrasted with only 26% of the remedial readers who liked reading. For this reason, they believe if college readers use academic reading behaviors adequate for the task, they are more likely to have successful reading experiences leading to more positive attitudes. ***Cognitive and Affective Constructs of Attitude*** provides insights into human motivation in educational settings. J. Eccles (1983) attempts to account for the choice, persistence, and performance that a person brings to a learning task, such as a college student with a reading assignment. This has been applied to studying what motivates a student to engage in a learning task (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). According to this theory, motivation for engaging in a learning task is strongly influenced by two factors: (a) The cognitive component of attitudes involves the learners' mental mindset for expecting success based on how well they believe they can do the task, their self-efficacy; and (b) The affective component of attitude includes the learner's feelings toward doing the task and subjective task value placed on the

activity. Furthermore, Wigfield & Eccles (2000) summarize the power of both factors to motivate engagement for the expectation for success. In other words, Cognitive Beliefs regarding one's ability to succeed at a reading task, self-efficacy as a reader and Affective Feelings toward and value placed on academic reading. Regarding this, in their research Hood et al. (2012) supports both components by claiming that students who had positive expectations for learning statistics and who valued statistics were likely to have better course achievement. Expectations for Success are beliefs related to whether learners feel confident they can do what has to be done to succeed at an academic task, in other words, their feelings of self-efficacy as a learner.

From the review of Greene et al. (2004), it is explained that improving attitudes toward academic reading and increase compliance with reading assignments seems to involve three components: (a) helping students improve ways to learn well from academic reading (the behavior component), (b) helping them have successful experiences with academic reading to build their confidence (the cognitive component), and (c) helping them feel more positive toward academic reading and place greater value on reading as a way to learn (the affective component). All three should be components of a valid assessment of academic reading attitudes for college students. Based on this model, the following table describe the conceptualization of three components of Academic Reading Attitude:

Table 1
three components of academic reading attitude (Adapted from Isakson et al. (2016))

ARA Components	ISARA Construction	Example of items in the ISARA
Behavioral	The actual or potential behaviors brought to a reading situation	"I usually go to class having completed the assigned reading."
Cognitive	Beliefs regarding one's ability to succeed at a reading task, self-efficacy as a reader	"I usually get what the instructor wants me to get out of the reading."
Affective	Feelings toward and value placed on academic reading.	"I find my academic reading to be relevant and rewarding."

METHODS

This research employs descriptive quantitative method by looking at the mean of students' attitude toward 6 choices for its Likert scale, starting from strongly DISAGREE, generally DISAGREE, sort of DISAGREE, sort of AGREE, generally AGREE, and strongly AGREE. There are 29 participants who filling in the questionnaire and they come from fifth semester students of English Study Program at Universitas Jambi, Indonesia. Students of semester five are chosen because considering their reading load and the responsibility that they need to uphold for their study success. They also have already undertaken reading courses from their first to fourth semester which means that they have much exposure to reading and are aware about some useful reading strategies.

The questionnaire used to measure the reading attitude is ISARA (Isakson Academic Reading Attitude) (Isakson et al., 2016). The creators of ISARA wanted a survey that can measure students' motivation to reading compliance and how students can learn from their readings. They argue that the previous reading attitude questionnaire do not focus on academic reading, but on reading habit and attitude as a whole, which would mean also cover the attitude toward leisure reading. Meanwhile, this type of reading has different nature with academic one, where the previous is lack of responsibility and the latter is more a like work where ones should accomplish. Furthermore, there are three constructs of attitudes identified and looked at in ISARA questionnaire. The first is behavior construct, which means the students' typical behavior in reading in approaching and completing their reading assignments. The example of 'good' behavior is like completing reading before class starts, motivated to complete academic reading assignment and so on. Next is self-efficacy construct. This type of construct deals with the confidence of students to read and become successful in learning from a text. Some points outlined in self-efficacy constructs are feeling sure and capable of academic reading and getting what the teacher ask to get from the reading. The last construct is value construct. It deals more with how the students can learn well from the texts. It also gives its focus on students' appreciation of reading as a way to learn. Example of questions in relation to this construct are reading beyond the class's minimum requirement due to students' interest in the topic and reading additional resources from the library or online texts.

In the development process, this questionnaire has been tested back and forth, starting from four construct (but different labels) and different numbers of the total questionnaire. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) at the fourth and final iteration (resulting on 20 question items) reveals that these three constructs was a good fit for the data and the most plausible way to represent this overall construct of attitude toward academic reading. Thus, by considering those aspects, the researchers feel that this questionnaire is appropriate to measure academic reading attitude of English learners at Universitas Jambi.

The data were analyzed by calculating the mean for each of the attitude construct, in order to look at general phenomena of students' reading behavior. After that, the findings are revealed and referred back to literature review.
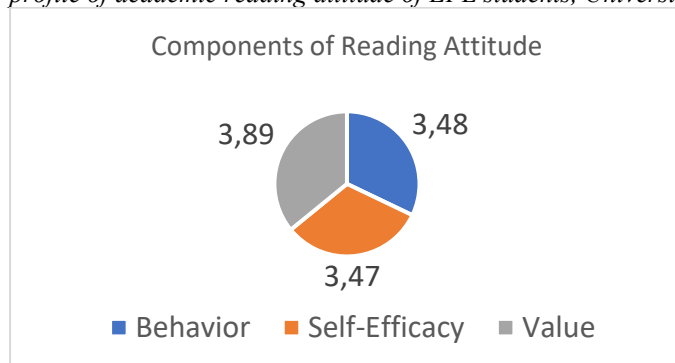
FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to figure out students' academic reading attitude when they come across reading assignments. It is important to know since a good reading attitude will contribute to academic success. Being able to read but choosing not to, or is known as aliteracy, is a current phenomenon among college students. This is so unfortunate because 85% of college learning eventually involves reading (Isakson, 2016). Thus, by knowing the students' attitude, this study will provide information for both students and teachers to do something to improve the situation.

Based on analysis of the questionnaire, the findings reveal that majority of students mostly belong to moderate low category of academic reading attitudes. The scores obtained below are out of 6 choices of agree and disagree range in Likert scale. The following is the general profile of students' academic reading attitude.

Figure 1

profile of academic reading attitude of EFL students, Universitas Jambi

In behavior construct, the mean is 3.48. The following are the questions under behavior construct:

Table 2

EFL students' answer for behavior construct

Number	Questions	Mean
1	I am motivated to complete my academic reading assignments.	4.05
2	During class, I can tell that I am a person who completes the reading assignments more often than other members of the class.	2.95
3	I usually go to class having completed the assigned reading.	3.65
4	When I receive an academic reading assignment, I am able to accomplish the reading efficiently and on time	3.3
5	Even though some reading assignments take a lot of time, I go to class having completed them	3.55
6	I usually DON'T procrastinate my academic reading assignments.	3.2
7	Completing reading assignments for class is a high priority for me.	3.65
	MEAN	**3.48**

Meanwhile, in Self-Efficacy construct the mean score is 3.47, slightly lower than previous one. The following are the details of question:

Table 3

EFL students' answer for self-efficacy construct

Number	Questions	Mean
1	I am a capable academic reader	2.95
2	I usually get what the instructor wants me to get out of the reading	3.85
3	I am confident in my abilities as an academic reader	3.35
4	As I approach a reading assignment, I am confident that I will understand the important information in the text	3.65
5	I can adjust my reading speed to get what I need from the text	3.75
6	I am good at retaining and recalling the important information from an academic reading assignment	3.3
	MEAN	**3.47**

The mean score for value construct is 3.89. This is the highest score that students obtain among the other two. The following are the questions regarding how students value reading as a way to learn.

Table 4
EFL students' answer for value construct

Number	Questions	Mean
1	I read materials from the library or online to enhance what I'm learning in class	3.45
2	I value reading as an important way of learning in college	4.35
3	I find myself reading beyond the minimum requirement for class because I get interested in the topic	3.3
4	I want to continue to learn from academic reading after I complete college	3.85
5	I can see how being an effective reader is important to success in college	4.4
6	I find my academic reading to be relevant and rewarding	3.6
7	I wish more of my classmates would complete the assigned readings	4.25
	MEAN	**3.89**

DISCUSSION

From the scores above, the overall score can be grouped into moderate score of attitudes, with tendency of low category. It is said to be moderately low because the obtained score is just slightly above the mean score. Students have many chances to improve their reading ability like reading before classes, but apparently not many of them do so as is indicated by the score in question number 3 and 5 under behavior construct (3.65 and 3.55). The students (4.35) are mostly aware that reading is important during college learning (question number 2 of value construct) but the case is that it is hardly done by them. The first question in the self-efficacy construct also reveals that students are not fully confident with their own reading competencies (2.95), and it is strengthened with question number 3 under the same construct and gains the mean of 3.35. Looking at these two answers, students need to motivate themselves to read and believe that they can understand their reading text well. When reviewing of related literature, there is a term called as reading anxiety. Reading anxiety deals with the feeling of nervousness and apprehension when students read text in foreign language and try to comprehend it (Muhlis, 2017). It is said that this anxious feeling when reading, especially reading academic text in foreign language, may result in reducing self-efficacy among EFL students.

It also can be assumed that the highest score in value construct is a good indicator that the students still hold the belief that reading is indeed a good source of information and knowledge. It is a broad belief that almost all people would agree on. As indicated by question number 2 and 5 in value construct, students do put this belief in their mind. They both value that reading is important way of learning (4.35) and effective reader is a key to success in college study (4.4). However, the fact that they have lack approach to read that somehow contradict the belief is might due to some reasons. It might be because they consider that doing reading is a waste of time and prefer to do other activities (McKenna et al., 1995) or due to language ability when texts are in other languages (Deregozu & Ustun, 2021). It is related to language proficiency. These result in considerably low score to behavior and self-efficacy constructs. The students value reading as a way to learn, but when they approach reading activities, there seem to be burden that resist them for doing so.

Overall, students need to value more, behave better, and improve self-efficacy on their reading practices. As proposed by previous studies outlined above, positive reading attitude will bring to a better comprehension level (Druyor, 2012), a more successful college students (Smith et al., 1975), and

better course achievements (Hood et al., 2012). The result of this study provide a picture of students attitude toward reading and it is useful not only for students, but also for teachers to do reflection. For students, they can gain more confident and arrange more strategies to approach their reading. The reading comprehension does not only rely on the cognitive ability, but also setting 'other' strategies like metacognitive ones will definitely assist students to improve their both reading habit and competencies (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). For teachers, as attitude is shaped through learning experiences, teachers' role to present teaching and learning activities, especially on reading experiences, play important part in this case. This may lead students to have a positive attitude towards the reading subject (Putro, 2022).

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that students need to improve their attitude toward reading. Students do value to some extent that reading is a way to learn and success in their academic journey, but they need to improve both the way they approach reading and their self-confidence as well. Shortly, those things must can be kept in mind, namely increasing self-efficacy as academic reader, raising awareness of the importance of reading and how to learn well from the texts.

For further research, it is also important to investigate reading attitude not only for English students. Similar research can be done for students who are in other departments or faculty. In English study program where reading courses are offered, students still belong to moderate low attitude toward academic reading. A critical question that may arise is how students who study in university but not have sufficient knowledge about reading, such as on how to make relationship to the text, how to make connection from one text to another, and so on. Deep research need to be conducted, so the students reading attitude across departments can be known.

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