

## **An Analysis of Reading Performances of Indonesian EFL Learners for Extensive Reading Practice**

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**Abstract.** Learners' reading performances are needed to be studied in order to clarify the appropriate context of studies about learners' extensive reading experiences. This article is based on a preliminary study on "a Case Study on Two Indonesian Learners' Extensive Reading in English Experiences towards Developing Reading Competency". This article aimed to answer two questions: (1) How is The Indonesian EFL learners' reading performance before learning extensive reading? (2) How is The Indonesian EFL learners' reading TOEFL score for reading section before learning extensive reading? An analysis was conducted for the data on the documents of reading performance and Reading Section of TOEFL score. The result of this study found: (1) The Indonesian EFL learners' reading performance before learning extensive reading is in the range 66-80 (B) in Reading III for all learners (100%) (2) The Indonesian EFL learners' TOEFL score for Reading section before learning extensive reading is in the range 51% - 80 %. These preliminary data were needed in order to indentify the learners' reading performances, therefore, it is expected that the findings are meaningful for the study designed.

**Keywords:** *EFL learners, Extensive reading, Language competence.*

### **1 Introduction**

EFL learners majoring in English may do reading activities outside of the classroom. They may read at any places; at home and at the campus area. They usually read texts which are interesting for them and they have reasons why they read the texts that they selected. Reading English texts has very important roles for EFL learners since reading is not only as a subject but also as an activity done in studying other courses.

Indonesian learners have been introduced to extensive reading in their first language since Senior High School as stated in the 2006 curriculum for Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia). However, the extensive reading that they have done is only through the reading materials in their handbook; as a topic to be discussed in the learning materials (P.Tukan, 2007). The students are

not controlled whether they practice extensive reading or not outside of the classroom.

To the context of this study, the teaching of English in the English Study Programme of the Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Siak University (pseudonym) is based on the revised curriculum. One of the language skills designed in the curriculum is reading. The Curriculum states that 10 credits of reading courses have to be taught at the university in different levels and with different goals. That is, six credits are offered in three semesters and the focus is on intensive reading. The subjects are Reading Comprehension I, Reading Comprehension II, and Reading Comprehension III. The other two reading courses are Academic Reading and Writing and Extensive Reading. Academic Reading and Writing is offered in semester IV while Extensive Reading is done in semester V.

Extensive Reading course is one of the courses which is important for learners to experience in facing their academic world. Then, in finishing their studies, learners are required to take a-TOEFL - based test before taking their thesis examination. TOEFL test is supposed to be representative indicating the learners' English. The aim of the TOEFL test is to perform the learners' English competence. Studies have shown the relationship between extensive reading and learning language aspects and language skills for EFL learners (Lee and Hs, 2009; Mermelstein, 2014; Sarwo Edy, 2014). This should be made aware of by all Indonesian EFL learners that extensive reading is more than just reading extensively; that it helps develop their language competency. It is due to the fact that English is as a foreign language for Indonesian learners. Besides, learners have different extensive reading in English experiences. Their experiences may reflect on their reading competency.

This article is based on a preliminary study on "*a Case Study on Two Indonesian Learners' Extensive Reading in English Experiences towards Developing Reading Competency*". The aim of this article is to answer two questions: (1) How is learners' reading performance before learning extensive reading? (2) How is the learners' TOEFL score before learning extensive reading?

Theories related to this article "An Analysis of Reading Performances of Indonesian EFL Learners for Extensive Reading Practice" are Indonesian EFL learners, extensive reading and language competence. Each theories will be discussed in the following discussion.

### **1.1 Indonesian EFL Learners**

In Indonesia contexts, English is learnt by referring to language learning policy implemented in the curriculum. Language learning policy in Indonesia is based on the legislation in which education systems are

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controlled and supervised by the government. It is implemented by the expectation of the curriculum. The core curriculum for whole schools in Indonesia is national curriculum. Some evidences referring to the language policy in Indonesia reflect on the language learning. Indonesian is as the national language and English is the first foreign language. As a foreign language, English is learnt. Despite the learning of English as a subject in schools, Cleophas' (2006) study found that Indonesian students graduating senior high school were still not competent in English. One of the causes of the errors made by Indonesian students is due to the lack of understanding the content of the language. This reflects on the competency of the EFL learners in tertiary education.

Indonesian learners learn English as a foreign language indicating that they do not use English in day to day communication; formal or in formal communication. Hence, in their dayli life they are expected to be exposed in English. They are also expected to be involved in the context in which the language used. One of the possible activities that the learners do is by doing extensive reading. Their involment to the language exposure through reading based on the students' interest develop their competence by doing extensive reading. Simultaneously, it will develop their habit doing extensive reading and involve in the exposure of the language used in their dayli life.

Indonesian learners are introduced to extensive reading in their first language in Senior High School as a topic discussed in the learning materials (P.Tukan, 2007). Their knowledge on vocabulary, various sentence structures, meaning of words, and different forms and functions of words will increase through extensive reading. Gradually, it will develop their competence in the language skills if they keep on doing extensive reading. It is also as a way to make Indonesian learners to be active.

Practicing extensive reading as reading activities by EFL learners in Indonesia is based a study on reading activities conducted by Delfi & Diah (2007). The result of the data analysis about the participant's experiences in reading show the stages faced by the participant in building her reading interest. The study was from the perspectives of holistic education. The participants were the students of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Siak University. The participant has been able to read since five years old. She kept on doing reading for her education. Her interest in reading in the first language at earlier age reflects on reading English texts. The participant always read various reading materials; magazines, news paper, and course books. She began to develop her interest to read by reading teaching materials from the course books. She often visited library at the school age. She read course books and stories in the library. She has had a collection of stories since senior high school. She had been reading stories since she was a university student. Her interest in reading also improved her ability as a learner majoring in English. She always reads all

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course books indicating her effort to increase her academic ability. This study shows that reading outside of classroom as a practice of extensive reading develops the participant's language competency. The participant's experiences might be or might not be representative for the learners' extensive reading experiences because reading is individual experiences. How the experiences contributes on the language competence need to be studied.

## 1.2 Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is good for personal development, therefore, promiscuously and associatively it is good not only for students but it is also good for teachers. This is because teachers who are constantly developing and growing as a whole human being for being able to help his or her learners to be able to do the same. Day and Bamford (1998) point out that the benefit of extensive reading for students who read more will not only become better and more confident readers but they will also improve their reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities and their vocabulary will get richer as well as in terms of motivation aspects of reading.

Bamford and Day (1998, 2004) explore ten principles of extensive reading: 1) The reading material is easy, (2) A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics is available, (3) Learners choose what they want to read, (4) Learners read as much as possible, (5) Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower, (6) The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding, (7) Reading is individual and silent, (8) Reading is own reward, (9) The teacher orients and guides students, (10) The teacher is a role model of a reader. These characteristics reflect on the benefit of extensive reading.

Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) conclude the benefit of extensive reading for second language readers into six ways. First, extensive reading improves comprehension skills through practice for background knowledge and reading skills to particular texts. Second, extensive reading develops automaticity through great reading. In the process of reading, learners recognize words as well as vocabulary knowledge, morphology and syntax in which the words occur. Pigada and Schmitt (2007) enhanced the students' knowledge about vocabulary in terms of spelling, meaning, and grammatical behavior of words in text. Siao-cinng Guo (2012) found that the effect on the use of extensive reading on the improvement of vocabulary aquisition in her study in Taiwan for college students majoring in English. She could not find the significant improvement of grammar. Nwabudike and Anaso (2013) found that the students of Nigerian-Turkish International College, Kano have high stock of vocabulary although they engaged on extensive reading on their own. To that context, extensive reading program was not implemented in Nigerian-Turkish International Colleges, Kano. The students expected that their college implemented extensive reading. Third,

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extensive reading builds background knowledge by engaging in the texts read. The background knowledge prepares readers to read in the future. Doing extensive reading builds vocabulary and grammar knowledge by acquiring linguistic knowledge through reading.

The fourth benefit of extensive reading is the exposure of the natural use of language in the printed materials. It can make them acquire the language for their progress in the language. Fifth, extensive reading improves productive skills through acquiring the input from reading for the output for productive skills. Siao-cinng Guo (2012) also proves that extensive reading has effects on the students' language skills. The last use of extensive reading is to promote students with confidence and motivation. This is because extensive is enjoyable and it motivates learners to take reading on their own in the future. This can build confidence in their own reading skills and their ability to use the second language.

Mermelstein (2014) studied the use of extensive reading in improving EFL learners' reading for non English major in Taiwan. The study proves significantly higher reading level gained by the treatment group. The study suggests that utilizing extensive reading can provide a successful alternative to improve Asian learner's reading levels as well as considering pedagogical suggestion in implementing ER. The practice on extensive reading in this study was only for reading course in which the goal is for comprehension. Therefore, Sarwo Edy suggests make special course for extensive reading in order to enhance the students' reading skills and reading habit. Ho-Hyak Jang et al (2015) studied the effect of English extensive reading activities on the students' reading proficiency and reading motivation in Korea. The study found that extensive reading activities have a positive influence on students' reading proficiency and their intrinsic motivation.

The studies on extensive reading prove the benefits of extensive reading for EFL/ ESL learners. They are in terms of language competence; language components and language skills, and learners' attitude, motivation, and confidence on learning language generally and specifically on reading. These are as the reflection of characteristics of extensive reading indicating the activities of extensive reading.

### **1.3 Language Competency**

Language competence is in terms of having knowledge about the language aspects and how they are used. The language aspects are vocabulary, grammar: tenses, sound system, pragmatic: language context, and the rule/ structure/ syntax. Brown (2007) points out that competence refers to one's underlying knowledge of system of event or fact. Hence, Brown (2007) states that performance is actual production (speaking and writing) or the comprehension (listening and reading) of linguistic form. Language competence in the context of this current study refers to both

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comprehension and production. Performance looks at actual utterance as well as the learners' knowledge about the language (Ellis, 2012). He also points out that the study of SLA is directed at accounting for learner's competence referring to the investigation how learners perform in using the second language. To the context of this study, the EFL learners' competence on English is identified through their performance in using the aspects of the language and how the competence is contributed by extensive reading.

Richards and Rodgers (2007) believe that competencies describe the students' ability to apply basic and other skills in situations that are commonly encountered in everyday life. Reading competence can be defined from multiple perspectives: cognitive view; decoding, text-meaning construction, and assimilation with prior knowledge, developmental perspective; decoding and comprehension, and gear theory; reading purpose (Koda, 2010). Language competence is essentially acquired through practice and experience.

## **2. Methodology**

As a preliminary study for "*a Case Study on Two Indonesian Learners' Extensive Reading in English Experiences towards Developing Reading Competency*", this study was conducted in order to perceive about the participants' reading competency and their context. The participants were semester five learners of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Siak University in Indonesia taking the Extensive Reading course. The participants were purposively chosen and they should meet the appropriate characteristics. In order to meet the characteristics as participants, the writer used documents as instruments. The documents determined appropriate for this study was document about the students' reading performances. These performances were taken from the learners' academic record and TOEFL score for Reading section. Academic record was used in order to answer the first research question and TOEFL score for Reading section was used in answering the second research question. After the documents were collected, they were analyzed in order to obtain the aim why this study was conducted.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

An analysis of the reading performance of all learners in Extensive Reading course was conducted indicating their reading performance. The data were gained from the learners' academic record for Reading courses before taking Extensive Reading course from semester 1 until semester 3. It indicates that their reading ability is as the reflection of TOEFL score. It

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shows that none of the learners gain the range 81-100. It presents the range, the number of students and its percentage in the following table.

Table 1: Reading Performance before Extensive Reading English Department Students of the Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Siak University

Reading	81-100	66-80	56-65	41-55	0-40
Reading. I	2 (18%)	8 (72 %)	1 (9%)		
Reading. II	2 (18%)	6 (54%)	3 (27%)		
Reading.		11 (100%)			

The result of analysis indicates that most of the participants' performance in Reading courses (Reading Comprehension I, Reading Comprehension II, Reading Comprehension III) shows is in the range of 71 – 80 (B). They could not obtain A (range 81-100) in Reading III (the last Reading course before learning Extensive Reading) although the learners could develop their ability from the range 56-65 (C) in Reading Comprehension III to the range of 66-80 (B). However, 54 % of the learners in the range of 66-80 (B) in Reading II were not able to make the range of 81-100 (A) in Reading III. It means that 100 % of students in Reading III in the range 66-80 (B). This finding is as the answer of the first question "How is the learners' reading performance before learning extensive reading?" This condition reflects on the learners' score for TOEFL test.

An analysis of 30 learners' performance in the TOEFL-based test since 2008 to 2012 shows that the learners' scores are lower than the highest converted scores described by the Practice-Test Analysis Scoring Sheet. The highest score for reading section is 67 respectively. The range of the score is associated with the percentage from 41% until 80%. It was considered because there was no students' score below 40 % and after above 80%. This analysis indicates the number and the percentage of the students including the range as the following table.

Table 2: Range of TOEFL Reading Score 2008-2012 English Department Students of the Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Siak University

Year	41%-50%	51%-60%	61%-70%	71%-80%
2008	-	3 (10%)	14 (47%)	13 (43%)
2009	3 (10%)	8 (27%)	14(47%)	5 (17%)
2010	-	5 (17%)	14(47%)	11 (37%)
2011	7 (23%)	6 (20%)	11 (37%)	6 (20%)
2012	-	1 (3%)	8 (27%)	12 (39%)

The result of analysis indicates that learners are not only in the range of 0%-40% but also not in the range of 81%-100%. Most of the students are in the middle positions which are in the ranges of 51%-80%. There were only within 2 years (2009 and 2011) in the range of 41%-50%. The result of

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analysis indicates that 3 learners (10%) were in 2009 and 7 (23%) in 2011. This finding answers the question of this study “How is the learners’ TOEFL score for Reading section before learning extensive reading?”

Research finding 1 shows that it is not really a problem for learners to improve their reading ability from the range 56-65 (C) to the range of 71 – 80 (B), however, it is difficult for them to increase from the range most of the range of 71 – 80 (B). It indicates that the learners need to improve their reading competency in order to be competent in the language learnt as Brown (2007) means. The competency is expected in terms of having knowledge about the language aspects and how they are used. They may lack of practicing reading outside of the classroom. It means that they have similar frequency of reading experiences outside of the classroom. However, reading is individual activity that might be different from one person to another.

Based on this analysis for the second finding might reflect on the following situation. This situation may be decreased or increased in the future whether for the lowest or for the highest range. However, for the highest score, the result of analysis is still consistent in which there was not more than 50% of learners gained in the range of 71%-80%. Comparing to in 2008 and in 2012, the number of the range of 71%-80% decreased 1 (3%). On the other hand, the number of students in the range of 41%-50% increased in which 3 learners (10%) were in 2009 and 7 (23%) were in 2011. It means that it is needed to be studied about activities that learners do outside of the classroom indicating the benefit of extensive reading as Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) mean.

Therefore, one of the possible alternatives to solve the problem is by reconsidering the use of Extensive Reading course. It can be done by doing thorough study about how learners’ experience in extensive reading developing their reading competency. The study will explore how learners keep on practicing doing extensive reading develops their reading competency. Learners who enjoy doing reading as the goal of extensive reading will do reading based on their interest.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This preliminary study on “a Case Study on Two Indonesian Learners’ Extensive Reading in English Experiences towards Developing Reading Competency” found; (1) The Indonesian EFL learners’ reading performance before learning extensive reading is in the range 66-80 (B) in Reading III for all learners (100%) in Reading III and (2) The Indonesian EFL learners’ TOEFL score for Reading section before learning extensive reading is in the range 51% - 80 %. The major point of this study was about the preliminary

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data in order to conduct a research on the contribution of extensive reading in English experiences towards developing reading competency. These preliminary data were needed in order to indentify the learners' reading performances. Therefore, the data were about the participants' performance before joining Extensive Reading course, while the data about the context indicating one of the criteria of the learners' competency. Finally, it is expected that the findings of this analysis is meaningful for the study designed.

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