

## **College Students' Preference in Reading Non-Fiction Texts**

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### **Abstract**

Extensive reading provides freedom to choose any kinds of texts that the reader want to read, both fiction and non-fiction. This research aims at investigating the students' preference in reading non-fiction texts during extensive reading course as well as their reason. Participants of this research are 30 undergraduate students from English Education Department. There was an interview to the participants to know what kinds of non-fiction texts that they prefer to read, and why they prefer to choose them. The result showed that most of the students prefer to read news, which provides current information for them related to their real environment. Some of them also prefer to read biography, to know more about a certain figure they are curious about.

**Keywords:** non-fiction text; extensive reading; students' preference

### **INTRODUCTION**

Extensive reading is an activity that includes reading fiction and non-fiction texts. Both are read according to each students' preference. There are certainly differences between fiction and non-fiction texts. Fiction texts contain stories made up from the author's imagination. While non-fiction texts are based on real events and are true. According to Trim (2014), non-fiction text is data-based writing and actual facts presented with formal or non-formal language style in the form of argumentation, exposition, or description.

Serrano (2023) states that non-fiction books should also be included in order to cater to the diverse reading preferences of students. Beside that, non-fiction texts have several types and examples in them. The non-fiction category includes news, history, biography, and articles. News text is a text about factual information from an event. Historical fiction is a literary genre that takes place in the past. Biography text tells the history of a figure's life written by someone else. Also, an article is a scientific paper that contains opinions about facts, data, and certain phenomena written based on research.

Students have full freedom in choosing the type of text they will read. Harmer (2007) explains that in extensive reading, it is not enough to ask students to 'read a lot', but it is very crucial to offer them a different program with suitable materials and assignments. As a result, their reading varies depending on their interests and purposes of reading. In this case, students read texts such as news to find out the latest current situations. Meanwhile, some others read texts such as motivation to increase their self-confidence.

The main purpose of this research was to investigate students' preferences in reading non-fiction texts. Knowing students' reading preference in the reading they choose will help teachers to direct and guide students in determining their reading interest. Therefore, this research is important to find out students' preferences for the kinds of non-fiction texts they read most often based on their respective reasons.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Extensive Reading**

Extensive Reading is reading activity with eliminate stress and pain for the readers. This activity is meant to build the learners' fluency, reading speed and general comprehension of reading texts as well as practicing the skill of reading itself (Waring: 2011). Extensive Reading means "Read quickly and Enjoyable wwith Adequate comprehension so they Don't need a dictionary"(ER Foundation).

Bamford and day (2002)in Fusting (2014) stated ten principles of Extensive Reading, as stated as follows;

1. The reading material is easy
2. A variety of material of a wide range of topic 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 its own reward
9. The teacher orinets and guides the students
10. The teacher is a role model of a learner

### **Non-Fiction texts**

Reading nonfiction builds academic vocabulary, connects students to real-world questions and content, and assists in cross-curricular learning (Flowers & Flowers, 2009). Non-fiction texts cover various kinds of text, such as descriptive, argumentative, report, recount, news item, hortatory, and other kinds of texts whibh have their own chaacteristics and generic structure. The way of the writer in delivering the main information determines what kind of text it is. Exploring a description of a certain thing will create descriptive text, persuadingothers to agree with the writer enables him to produce persuasive or exposition, while providing information to report something or an event can be categorized as a news item text. Therefore, the benefits of reading non-fiction will be different based on the type of text itself.

Nonfiction also gives students the opportunity for high-level questioning, allowing them to investigate their own interests as well as their own preconceived notions of what they may have thought they had known about the topic (Martin, 1984; Stein & Beed, 2004 in Coleman, 2016). The extensive reading activity gives the readers freedom to read any text based on their interest and necessity. What they want to gain is what they will read. Therefore, non-fiction provide this freedom to decide which text they want to explore. Donn and Soffos (2005) mentioned some purposes of reading non-fiction text. Those purposes are:

- Inquiry
- Activation of prior knowledge
- Identification of complex text features and structures
- The connection of inquiry purposes and with navigating text

Coleman (2016) stated some difference of fiction and non-fiction text in the following table.

**Table 1. the difference between fiction and non-fiction reading skill**

Fiction reading skill	Non-fiction reading skill
- Identifying new vocabulary	- Developing new vocabulary
- Predicting plot development	- Skimming for content
- Retelling/restating story	- Searching for necessary information
- Summarizing key ideas	- Categorizing ideas
- Recognizing themes	- Classifying information
- Attending to details	- Connecting to prior knowledge
- Identifying character roles	- Identifying main points and supporting details
- Relating to personal experiences/feelings	- Interpreting visual aids (graphs, charts, maps)
	- Developing questions about the text
	- Connecting ideas between the two texts on the same topic
	- Forming well supported conclusions
	- Evaluating evidence
	- Critiquing information sources

## METHOD

This study is a kind of descriptive research which focus on students' preference on choosing several types of non-fiction text. 30 students answered questionnaire regarding this topic as well as their reasons on choosing that text. The questionnaire is intended to gain the students' preference as well as their reasons in choosing the kind of text and the questions are in the form of open ended questions. After the data had been collected from the questionnaire, the data were analyzed by classifying the reasons of choosing certain

non-fiction texts as well as the reasons. There are some references that are used to analyzed the results based on the reasons of the students n choosing the texts.

## FINDINGS

Based on the questionnaire filled by 30 respondents, the result can be displayed in the following table.

**Table 2. Students' preference and reasons**

<b>Types of text</b>	<b>Numbers of student</b>	<b>Reasons</b>
News item	16	To get information about current issue in local, national, and international scope. To gain information about new things. News item is easier to understand
history	4	To gain information about something or someone in the past
Self motivation text	2	To get motivation To teach us to be better person
Descriptive article	7	To get information about something new
Social event	1	To find solution for problems in real life

## DISCUSSION

Reading nonfiction is not only reading the plot of the text which is amusing the readers, but also read something important for them. Nonfiction can activate prior learning and encourage students to learn to categorize and synthesize information, especially when combined with scientific inquiry (Coleman:2016). By reading non fiction texts, readers can treat themselves to be smarter and more critical in analyzing texts, which leads them to believe or not in the text. It also means that reading non-fiction is not only about getting information from texts, but also treating the readers to analyze and evaluate the texts itself.

In order to get the important information from a text, a reader will use one or some techniques that they believe it is the best one to be implemented on the text. Those techniques can be skimming, scanning, questioning, hand tapping, connecting/comprehending with the prior knowledge, etc. those techniques can be implemented separately or combined, depends on the reader ability and need. They can be practiced in extensive reading activity, to read any text they need.

Extensive reading is the reader's door to open their adventure and exploration they like in order to add any information which has been invisible in front of them (Sofa: 2019). The readers are able to answer their curiosity by finding the information in texts, as long as they have willingness in reading. The more texts they read, the more references they can use to decide the next step. Absolutely, it is not only limited in reading non-fiction texts.

Both fiction and non-fiction have their own advantages for readers. However, the answer for the real life curiosity can be found in non-fiction texts.

Based on the result, news item is the most popular genre chosen by the college students. Combined with extensive reading principles, the students have freedom to choose any text they want to read. The reasons why most of them prefer to read news item are:

- To get information about current issue in local, national, and international scope.

Recent era requires everyone to update any information from various topics both through online or offline. Offline information can be spread by the printed newspaper, magazine, article, or someone's verbal information that is forwarded to others. Online information uses various media, especially social media that has been widely spread among people. Reading is no longer confined to print-based text, rather it is seen as multimodal, interactive and informative (Wilson, Coe and Cordullo: 2017). Nowadays, reading is dominated by online sources, in the form of e-book, online articles, social media platform, online story, etc.

Online information enables people to gain information from local until international scope, which is accessible for everyone. Some online platforms that are very popular in accessing information is instagram, facebook, twitter, etc. people can access those platform from anywhere in anytime to find many information in any topic they want to get. One thing the people need to do is only typing the keyword about what they want to know about, and in seconds they can find thousands information about that case.

- To gain information about new things.

People's curiosity in finding information from a certain new thing guides them to browse and search some appropriate sources to get. People can use any source to fulfil their curiosity in finding certain terms they are curious about, because a new thing is very exciting for everyone.

Gaining information about new thing provides new insight and experience for readers, and sometimes, can change the readers' mind about something. It is also very interesting for the readers.

- News item is easier to understand

Most news item use simple present and simple past structure, which is easy to understand. The use of V1 and V2 is easier for the readers to investigate the exact time occurs in the news. The construction of significant lexico—grammatical features of news item text shows that all the elements are implemented in the texts. They are mostly well-structured.

Besides the use of simple structure, the organization of thee texts is also easy to understand. News item consists of newsworthy event, background of the event and sources. Those structures guarantee the validity of the text itself. People do not need to worry if the text is a kind of fake news or real news, because there is a source included in the text. This characteristic is a special thing of a news item text.

Moreover, news item provides reliable and valid information, that can be trusted by readers. This is an advantage of reading news item, because readers can gain truth, not only prediction or assumption form a certain topic. Its social function is to provide information to the readers, listeners or viewers about events of the day which are considered newsworthy or important (Gerot and Wignell, 1994)

According to the result, besides news item, there other several topics that are most favourable for college students. Those topics are history, self-motivation, descriptive text and report text of a special event. Each of those kinds have its benefits in fulfilling readers' need.

History text is a kind of recount that tells about someone's life, career, or experience . This kind of text provides information for people who has high interest in knowing a certain figure. Self-motivation text can be categorized as a recount, descriptive, or procedure text. It depends on what strategy that the writer uses in motivating the reader. Some people prefer to read someone's experience in the form of recount text to motivate themselves, and others prefer to read the steps or procedures to do something to motivate them in doing something.

Descriptive text is an easy text for students from junior high school level. This kind of text usually uses simple present text or using v1 which is the easiest level of grammatical structure. This text provides information of a person, place, hobby, animal, or anything that can be a new source for the readers who read about this information for the first time. Text of a social event can be categorized as recount, report, or news item text. It depends on the way of the writer in elaborating the event. One distinguished thing is the college students prefer the social event, not other events, because he believes that the text will provide new insight in overcoming problems in real life.

## **CONCLUSION**

Reading non-fiction can be varied based on the readers' need. This study found that there are some kinds of texts preferred by college students as a non-fiction text for their extensive reading activity. Most of the reasons in choosing the texts are based on their necessity in getting information. It is a proof that college students do not only think about how to amuse or entertain themselves during extensive reading activity, but also how to gain some local, national, and international information. Besides that, the text types that are preference of college students are news item, self-motivation text, descriptive text, history, and social event.

Hopefully, this finding will provide additional information about the students' preference in reading non-fiction texts, so the teachers can provide more texts that can answer the students' need. Moreover, this study also supports the articles that discuss about benefits of non-fiction texts.

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