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Impact of reading on students' writing ability

Abstract: For college students, reading and writing are very necessary for the success of their studies. Reading habit can severe their knowledge and comprehension in their field of subjects. This study sets out to investigate how students' reading skills affect students' academic writing. Fifty-two master students of English Language Education at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta, Indonesia were involved in this correlational study. Two questionnaires were used as instruments to obtain the data, i.e., the reading habit survey and the academic writing skill survey. The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics and single linear regression tests along with the prerequisite test of normality. The results revealed that the reading habit and writing skills of the students were at the medium level. Meanwhile, the other result showed that the reading habit had a profound effect on college students' academic writing skill shown by the p-value of T-test = 0.000 and F score = 352,524 at the significant $0,000 \leq 0,05$. In other words, reading habit has a significant influence on college students' academic writing skill.

Keywords: Reading habit, academic writing, students, cognitive skills and competence.

Introduction. For college students, reading and writing are very necessary for the successful study. Since writing is the act of transmitting knowledge in print, the students, therefore, must have information to share before they write (Suskie, 2018). Krashen (2016), mentions that we do not learn to write by writing, but rather by reading. It means reading and writing are substantially related to each other both concurrently and longitudinally. Firstly, secondary school level, for example, the free volunteer reading activities in their schools increased their reading comprehension, their writing style, their vocabulary, their spelling and their grammatical development (Arndt & Woorw, 2018). To Indonesian college students, however, writing in English has been a common problem due to insufficient exposure to English texts, different culture, and different reading habit (Connor, 1996; Dardjowidjojo, 1997; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Imran, 2005; Kridalaksana, 2002; Sukandi, 2013).

The term "reading habit" denotes to the manner which indicates the similarity of reading of person's styles of reading, tastes of reading, activity repeatedly carried out (Fatiloru, Adesola, Hameed, & Adewumi, 2017). It is assumed that the students who read more will also write better than those who don't (Cottrell, 2017). Low level of reading habit had been accused as the cause of a small number of published articles written by Indonesian college students (Iswandari, 2013; Wahyuni, Oktavia, & Marlina, 2019; and Wibowo, 2015). According to Cahyono & Widiati (2006 in Ayun & Yunus, 2017) university students in Indonesia lack of interest in reading classes since they are not familiar with explanation and discussion genres which are commonly used in reading.

Since not many studies have been done on the effect of reading habit to the problem of academic writing made by college students of English Language Teaching Education, a thorough investigation pertinent to this is needed to be conducted as they are going to be professional English teachers.

The research problems are formulated as follows:

- What is the degree of college students' reading habit and academic writing skills?
- Is there any significant effect of college students' reading habit on their academic writing?

Literature review

Academic Writing. By its definition, writing is the production of communication, linking ideas, and information development, or giving arguments to a particular reader or a group of readers (Hedge, 2005). This definition implies that writing is the production of the ideas expressed in the written form. Before producing the writing, the writer needs to receive and process information as much as possible. This assumption is in line with Kellogg's ideas that writing is a major cognitive challenge, because it is at once a test of memory, language, and thinking ability (Kellogg, 2018).

Bailey (2003), in particular, mentions that academic writing is the course which is designed for college students to learn how to write effectively as they have to do the college writing assignments for exam, coursework, thesis, or final project report. The process of academic writing is started from choosing a topic, writing an introductory paragraph, paragraph development, and concluding paragraph. All those paragraphs can be in the form of argumentative, descriptive, narrative, expository essay, paper, report, project portfolio, a case study or a dissertation (Redman & Maples, 2017).

The purpose of writing in an academic setting is different from that of non-academic one. Writing to a friend, for example, is aimed at informing him/her about the writer's condition; and writing a funny story, the main purpose is usually to entertain the reader. In the academic setting, however, the purpose of writing is to express thoughts in a logical and critical way (Horkoff, 2015). The quality of academic writing, therefore, is determined by the writer's information, structural, transactional, aesthetic, and process knowledge (Rubin & Hansen, 1984 in Hattab, 2018). There are of course some reasons why college students in Indonesia have a problem with writing skills. Among the reasons may be English grammar skill, lack of English vocabularies, and less writing practice. Students tend to translate directly from Bahasa Indonesia into English or use google translation for their writing assignments. They frequently write ambiguity statement that sometimes has no sense or difficult to understand (Ariyanti, 2016 in Husin & Nurbayani, 2017).

Reading habit. The term "reading habit" refers to the behavior which expresses the likeness of reading of individual types of reading, and tastes of reading (Fatiloro, Adesola, Hameed, & Adewumi, 2017). It is a pattern with which an individual organizes his or her reading. It is repeated behavior that becomes an automatic action without purposeful thinking to do and there is no sense of awareness (McKnight & Allen, 2018).

Reading habit can be categorized into very low, rather low, medium, high, and very high (Anderson, 1981, in Ellis, 2016). It is measured from several aspects such as the number of reading practices, vast amount of time provided for reading, good proficiency in English (Ogeyik & Akyay, 2009 in Kanmani & Muniandy, 2013; and Renandya, 2007 in January, 2018), positive attitude toward reading, conscious and avid reading (Park, 2011), self-selection of books, motivation to read, eagerness to receive a book as a present (Jamnik, 2005 in Iftanti, 2015), and regular reading after school hours (Adetunji & Oladeji, 2007 in Iftanti, 2015).

Based on a research conducted by Miller (2016) president of Central Connecticut State University, on the literate behaviors and their supporting resources such as size and number of libraries and newspaper readership of the people in more than 60 countries, it is found the Nordic countries (Finland, Norway, Iceland, Denmark, and Sweden,) are among the five most literate nations in the world, while the U.S. and Canada rank 7th and 11th respectively while Indonesia has the rank at the 60th out of 61 countries in terms of reading habits. Indonesian reading habit is below that of Thailand and above Botswana. Among 1.000 Indonesian people, only 1 person reads books on a regular basis or for leisure.

Students in Indonesia do not belong to heavy readers who read numerous texts or novels as much as possible and as many times as possible in a month. They do not also include moderate readers who read same texts and novels as seen useful for them or inactive readers those who like to read and they regard themselves as readers. Indonesian people do not take the time to read regularly. Indonesian people like spending much of their time (431 minutes /day = 7 hours/day) watching video or movie more than a global viewer of 402 minutes/day (Noviadhista, 2016).

Reading Habit and Writing Skill of Indonesian College Students. There have been some researches on the relationship between reading habit toward vocabulary mastery of the English language of college students (Santoso, 2015), reading habit and reading comprehension (Muawanah, 2014), reading habit and speaking skill (Akbar, 2014), Reading habit and writing skill (Juriati, Ariyanti, & Fitriana, 2018), Reading

habit and critical thinking of college students (Suhartono, 2014). These mean that there are always such investigations or research related to reading and writing in Indonesian context. Moreover, there are also some reasons why EFL students have a problem with writing skills, especially for Indonesian college students. Among the reasons are structural, grammatical, and style differences between Bahasa (Indonesian language) and English language. Students try to translate directly from Bahasa Indonesia into English. In this case, students frequently produce a statement which some time has no sense or difficult for readers to understand (Ariyanti, 2016 in Husin & Nurbayani, 2017)

One study conducted on 546 EFL college students in East Java showed that less than 25 % of them read outside the classroom (Nazhari & Delfi, 2016). Then, based on a study conducted by Mustafa (2012) to the students of English Language Study Program at the University of Riau, such low reading habit was influenced by Indonesian tradition of spoken culture. Those findings are also in line with Adetunji (2007) statement that personal characteristics of the students including age distribution, social class, and parents' occupation are determinant factors for reading habit among high school students. Nevertheless, Nathanson, Pruslow, and Levitt (2008) found evidence that parents have a more powerful effect in creating enthusiastic readers among the students. Another factor is the accessibility to electronic facilities such as the internet (Ogeyik & Akyay, 2009).

Reading habits of college students in other countries, however, are connected with students' gender and age. Schwabe, McElvany, and Trendtel, (2015) and Putro & Lee (2017) also showed that females as substantial readers compare to males or girls performed better than boys. Clark and Foster (2005, in Florence, 2017) expose that boys most times don't enjoy reading and have a negative attitude toward reading but girls mostly vice versa. In term of amount of time used for reading, the studies in the USA specify that college students don't read more than 2 hours in a day (Blackwood, 1991 in Florence, 2017) and Dipika and Md. Mehedi (2013) exposes that men usually prefer reading newspapers compared to women.

Research Hypothesis of the Research

Based on the literature review above, the research hypothesis is formulated as follows:

- There is a significant effect of reading habit on the academic writing of students of English Language Education of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD).

Advantages of the Research. Since the study was conducted before the process of teaching and learning at the graduate program, the professor who teaches "Thesis Writing Proposal" can get thorough information on the prior-writing skill of his master students. He or she, then, can develop instructional activities to improve reading habit and writing skill of the students.

Method

Participants. Participants were 52 college students of graduate programs of English Language and Education at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD), Yogyakarta. The participants were taken randomly from the total population of 76 students. They consisted of 25 males and 27 females. In addition, the participants had already finished all the compulsory courses including reading, writing and thesis proposal writing offered by the English Language and Education at UAD. They were also chosen since they are demanded to write an academic writing in the form of a master thesis. They need to read a lot of resources for accomplishing their writing.

Data Analysis and Procedure. This study employed questionnaires as instruments. The two questionnaires were: the adapted questionnaire from Iftanti (2012) and "The European Writing Survey (EUWRIT)" by Chitez et al. (2018). The questionnaires used several types of scales ranging from open questions to 5 point Likert scales. The questionnaires were distributed to 52 students of UAD, Yogyakarta before they started the course. Additionally, the researcher used self-enumeration technique in which they answered all items in the questionnaire without any assistance from the researcher. Regarding the validity and reliability of the instrument, they were examined by using SPSS 20 (Cronbach Alpha) with reliability coefficient bigger than r table 0,349. The data were analyzed in term of percentages, mean scores, standard deviation (SD), regression coefficients, and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Prerequisite Test. Prerequisite tests were used to test the normality of the data. The results showed that the data from those two instruments were normal with a significant score of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test above 0.05. Data in Iftanti (2012) instrument (X) obtained 0.728 in Kolmogorov-Smirnov test while the data

of Chitez’s et al. instrument (Y) (2018) got 0.549 in Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. They can be seen in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	X	Y	
N	52	52	
Normal parameters^{a,b}	Means	141,8269	120,6538
	Std. Deviation	10,05421	8,98776
	Absolute	,101	,076
Most Extreme Differences	Positive	,060	,062
	Negative	-,101	-,076
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	,728	,549	
Asymp. Sig.(2 tailed)	,664	,923	

a. Test distribution is Normal

b. Calculated from data

Findings and discussions

Research Question 1: What is the degree of reading habit and academic writing skill of college students of English Language Education at UAD? The results of the study are structured from general descriptive of the students, amount of time given for reading practice, types of texts they read, source of their reading text, other books they read, the number of published writings in national and international journals.

The students who took the course “Thesis Writing Proposal” at the graduate program of English Language Education, UAD are graduated from Bachelor of English Language Education of different colleges in Indonesia. Only two students (3.84 %) have the profession as English Language teachers at junior and senior high schools. They have taught the English Language for five years. It means that most of them (96,15%) are undergraduates without any professions.

Pertinent to a questionnaire administered, it is found that their writing skill has low means score compared to that of reading habit (see Table 2). This is based upon the results of the questionnaire given to 52 college students at the Graduate Program of English Language Teaching. The detail is explained that that writing skill variable (Y) has a minimum score of 94 and a maximum score of 140 with means 120,65 and standard deviation of 8,98. Then reading habit variable (X) shows a minimum score of 114 and maximum score 165 with means 141,83 and standard deviation 10,054.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	X (reading habit)	Y (writing skill)
N Valid	52	52
Missing	0	0
Mean	141,8269	120,6538
Std. Deviation	10,05421	8,98776
Variance	101,087	80,780
Range	51,00	46,00
Minimum	114,00	94,00
Maximum	165,00	140,00

Source: Primary data

Since these two results indicate that the reading habit owned by the college students of UAD is higher than that of academic writing skill, therefore, it can be meant that they have already practiced well on their ability to read more about English books, texts such as newspaper, magazines, leaflets, comics, and many others. In relation to this, these results also in line with the findings of Iftanti (2012) that the more the students read a lot the more knowledge they will gain. In other words, the college students of UAD are aware of the need to elevate their English reading skill. This activity can be categorized as the basic learning to conquer about other skills pertinent to reading habit (Erdem, 2014).

Meanwhile, referring to the questionnaires on writing skill distributed to the 52 college students, it is found that the highest score is 140 and the lowest score is 94 with means of 120,65. The percentage of the writing skill of the college students belong to the medium/neutral level. For detail, it can be seen in Table 3. This level indicates that the college student of (UAD) still like to write in English, to plan before they start writing, to read the materials at first then continue to put their idea into their writing. Further, this level clearly shows that the college students are able to utilize their competence to write well such as adjusting the structures of paragraphs, creating good sentences which are all depending on what they have learned. One scholar ever says that the aim of a writing is to express the idea logically and to encourage one’s critical way of thinking (Horkof, 2015).

Table 3. Variable description of Academic Writing Skills

Class interval	Frequency	Percentage	Categories
94-103	2	3.85	Lowest
104-113	110	19.23	Rather low
114-123	22	42.30	Neutral
124-133	15	28.85	Rather high
134-143	3	5.77	Highest
Total	52	100	

Moreover, the detailed description of reading habit of 52 college students of UAD is exhibited in Table 4. It is shown that their reading habit is also at a medium/neutral level. It is shown by the “mean” score (141, 8269) which is then converted into class interval. The detail can be seen in Table 4. This level expresses that the college students of UAD have boosted their reading habit through reading various kinds of texts such as short story, drama, novel, fairy tales, and textbooks on various topics, letters, and many others. These are based on the items on the questionnaires. These kinds of activities imply that they have a good reading habit (Iftanti, 2012).

Table 4. Variable description of Reading Habits

Class interval	Frequency	Percentage	Categories
114-124	2	3.85	Lowest
125-135	12,23	44,23	Rather low
136-146	12	23.08	Neutral
147-157	13	24.99	Rather high
158-168	2	3.85	Highest
Total	52	100	

In addition, it is revealed from the study that more than half of the students or 65.5% out of 23 students affirmed that they read textbooks in their areas of specialization if assigned by the professor. They rarely read motivational books, novels, books, and informational/current affairs on a daily basis. Interestingly 83.0% of them read from internet resources when given a daily assignment. Only 12.5% of them read magazines once a month.

In term of length of time for reading activities, the statistical data imply that the respondents’ reading habits are low (rather low and low=48,08%). There are only 15 students (28,845 %) respondents who read four hours or more every day. Spending at least four until more than five hours every day can reflect their interest in reading practice. This indicates that only less than 50% of the students have good reading habits.

Students do not belong to the:

- heavy readers (reading numerous texts and novels as much as possible and as many times as possible in a month);
- moderate readers (reading a few texts and novels as seem convenient for them);
- dormant readers (those who enjoyed reading and they regarded themselves readers but did not take time to read regularly and update their knowledge).

Research Question 2: Is there a significant effect of reading habit towards college students' academic writing of English Language Education at UAD? The regression score of reading habits is 0,837 which indicates an increasing reading habit can also increase the writing skill at the 0,837 with the constant 2.006. Such significant relationship then was tested by using ANOVA. The results show that F score is 352,524 at the significant $0,000 \leq 0,05$. Thus, it can be said that the reading habits of college students of UAD have a significant influence on their writing skill. Those can be seen in Table 5 and Table 6 as follows:

Table 5. The Result of Regression Coefficients Reading Habits (X) towards Writing Skills (Y)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2,006	6,335		,317	,753
X	,837	,045	,936	18,776	,000

Table 6. ANOVA

Model		Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1 Regression		3608,027	1	3608,027	352,524	,000 ^b
Residual		511,742	50	10,235		
Total		4119,769	51			

a. Dependent variable: Y

b. Predictors: (Constant), X

The strength of the correlation is examined by using Pearson Correlation. Its coefficient correlation is 0,936 which is much bigger than r-table of 0.239. It means the better the college students' reading habit of UAD, the higher their writing skill level will be. The amount of the contribution of reading habits to the writing skills is shown by R square in the Model Summary below:

Table 7. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,936 ^a	,876	,873	3,19920

a. Predictors: (Constant), X

b. Dependent Variable: Y

The findings above confirm that writing is not an easy task as it needs an ample of vocabularies, wide knowledge of various genres, and it is in line with Kellogg's statement (Kellogg, 2008) that writing is a major cognitive challenge, because it is at once a test of memory, language, and thinking ability.

Since writing skill is assumed to correlate with a reading habit, the study shows that most of the respondents or 35 students (68 %) do not have any published writings in a national or international journal or articles in the newspaper. It is in accordance with the statement given by Alwasilah (2004); Wibowo, (2015); and Wahyuni, Oktavia, & Marlina (2019).

Though they are graduated from a Bachelor of English Language Education and have a medium level of reading habit, they almost never publish essay, paper, research report, or article. Only a few of them (5 students) published their writing to national journal and one (1) student has international publication. Such small number of published writing can be caused by their writing qualities reading habits contribute 87,6 %

to the writing quality and the rest 12,4 % is caused by other factors such as publication fee, journal priority, the novelty of the research, etc.

Most importantly, major problems of their writing are grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and paragraph development are also emerged. Most errors are found in the use of the passive sentence, conditional clause, conjunction, noun clause, and cohesive items. In writing an academic essay they tend to use google translate which is frequently made inappropriate option of vocabulary. All of these stuffs should be taken into consideration by the college students since the problems will halt their competence in both reading and writing skills. Author (Kassymova G. K., 2018) states that the term 'competence' which is a key solution for the survival of organizations in the labor market and gives explanation on term 'competence'. It is very important to develop competence for students while they are studying at university.

Conclusions. The reading habits of college students at the graduate program of English Language Education, UAD are categorized into the medium level. This means that they already encouraged their capability to read a lot regularly pertaining to the topics they are eager to read. In addition, they have also showed that they have a good activity improve their knowledge related to everything via reading habit. Meanwhile, the level of writing skill of the students at the graduate program of English Language Education are also in the medium level. It is less than the reading habit. Hence, it can be meant that the college students need to elevate their competence of writing so that they can balance both their competence reading towards writing. Likewise, this study confirms that the reading habit has effected on their academic writing. It is due to many errors made by them for examples they lack English grammar, syntax, choice of words, and the cohesive item of the paragraph. In other words, those lacks of skills should be mastered and learnt by the college students since they are prepared to behold the future for their successful career.

Acknowledgement. We would like to gratefully thank the Head of Department of the English Language Education, a graduate school of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta for the support given during the research.

Cite this article as: Atayeva M., Putro, N. H. P. S., Kassymova G., Kosbay S. (2019) Impact of reading on students' writing ability. *Materials of International Practical Internet Conference "Challenges of Science"*. ISBN 978-601-323-144-0. Issue II, 2019. Page 5-13.
<https://doi.org/10.31643/2019.001>

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