

STUDENTS' PREFERENCE OF DIGITAL OR PRINT BOOKS/READING MATERIALS

Alfiah Kharisma, Anik Nunuk Wulyani, Utari Praba Astuti

Universitas Negeri Malang

alfiah.kharisma.1702216@students.um.ac.id, anik.nunuk.fs@um.ac.id,

utari.praba.fs@um.ac.id

Abstract: *This survey study aims to obtain information associated with the 7th graders' preference for reading digital/online and print books. The data was obtained from an online questionnaire which was distributed to the 7th graders of one state junior high school in Lumajang Regency. The findings of this study shows that the majority of the students prefer to read print books/reading materials rather than the digital books. This indicates that it is important for both teachers and students to understand what types of books are appropriate to improve students' knowledge in the learning process*

Keywords: *Reading, Preference, Digital Book, Print Book*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a purposeful activity. It aims at gaining new facts, stories, or instructions. It plays a vital role in mastering English. Reading is not only about enjoyment, but it is an activity to gain something beneficial for life. From reading, students can increase their knowledge of the language by doing this kind of pleasurable activity that also gives them much information. As cited in Nyarko, Kugbey, Kofi, Cole, & Adentwi, (2018), Cimmuyotti (2013) stated that reading is a significant for all people and is a part of the whole educational process involved in all the courses taught at all levels of the educational system. to Junior High School students. This level of education is a transition period from elementary school to a higher level, secondary school. Reading in English, as a part of curriculum in secondary schools, aims to enhance students' ability, knowledge and also their English language competence. By reading, students will not only obtain more information, but also will enhance their vocabulary which in turns will affect their language competence (Haryadi, 2020)

Two types of books are available for readers to read. They are the old school books, the hardcopies or the print books, and the softcopies or digital or online books. In this digital and modern era, students are surrounded by sophisticated technologies that are connected with internet access and choices of the types of the books they want to read. Thus, it is common for students to read different types of books, including reading through digital screens (Haddock, Foad, Saul, Brown, & Thompson, 2020). However, we argue that different students will have different preferences, on the types of books they want to read.

Online or digital books are also known as electronic books or e-books, in short. Different scholars define e-books differently. Amstrong (2002: 217) defines e-books:

[...] any piece of electronic text regardless of size or composition (a digital object), but excluding journal publications, made available electronically (or optically) for any device (handheld or desk-bound) that includes a screen.

Grudzien and Casey's ideas (2008) state that online or digital book refers to the print books that have been converted to digital format that can be read using a personal computer (PC), laptop, smartphone, and tablet. They further state that online books are print books that have been converted to digital format. On the other hand, the print book refers to the physical form of a book made of paper.

Quite a few benefits were shared by the proponents of print books. First, according to Evans (2017), readers can feel their reading progress and enjoy it when they read through a print book. Secondly, readers remember

a story better when reading a book than reading the same story in an e-book (Mangen, Walgermo, & Brønnick, 2013). Third, it has previously been observed that the reading time was faster when students read the print texts (Daniel & Woody, 2013). In addition, Rose (2011), argued that the reasons for readers to read print books is because sometimes multiple screens on a computer can distract their focus on reading. In the same vein, Gerlach & Buxmann (2011) state that students cannot feel the tactile feel of a book and are unfamiliar with the feel of e-books.

In contrast to earlier findings, however, Kuzmičová et al., (2020) state that reading through smartphones also provides an alternative source of reading material that is not available in the print book. The technical and material features of digital reading devices are different from the print book. Rosso (2009) states, reading from the screen seems to be unfavourable at first sight, however there are some benefits of reading from a screen such as mobility, portability, saving time and money. As cited in Tveit & Mangen (2014), Hayler (2011) states a “do-it-all” device such as a tablet can run and display some features such as audio, video, and text simultaneously. The other reasons for preferring online reading included quicker and easier to locate, unlimited hours to access, lower cost, can access everywhere, and also the convenience to read.

Several studies investigated students’ preference for online and print reading in some countries, such as “I’d still prefer to read the hard copy: Adolescents’ print and digital reading habits”, written by Loh and Sun (2019). The aim is to examine adolescents’ print and digital reading habits in Singapore. The study shows that adolescents in Singapore prefer print books but move toward online reading as they grow older. The second study is “A joker in the class: Teenage readers’ attitudes and preference to reading on different devices” that was written by Tveit and Mangen (2014). The aim of their study was to gain data related to students’ preference between reading on Sony E-reader and in print in Oslo, Norway. The result of this study is that most students preferred reading on the e-reader. This study also shows that this preference was especially robust among boys and unwilling readers, otherwise, avid readers still prefer print.

While previous studies have shown the preference of students in Singapore and also Norway, very little is known about the preference of secondary school students in the Indonesian context. Thus, the present study attempts to show that Indonesian secondary school students have different preferences in the types of books or reading material they read. The present study attempts to replicate the study by Loh and Sun (2018) and Tveit and Mangen (2014) in the context of students’ preference at one Junior High School in Lumajang towards reading online and print books. This study aims to gain some information related to the response of 7th graders about the preference of reading online and print books using a questionnaire. This study is asking the following research questions: “What is the preference of 7th graders between reading digital/online and print books? Why do they prefer it?”

Considering that reading is one of the significant aspects of learning English, this survey is designed to obtain information associated with the 7th graders’ preference for reading digital/online and print books. The reason for conducting this study is because as we know the situation nowadays requires students to utilize digital books/reading materials in the learning process. The results of this study will be beneficial for teachers and students in this school, and also for future researchers. By understanding the students’ preference of reading, the teacher can choose the appropriate book for students to increase their knowledge of English. For future researchers, the results of this research can be used as references to conduct the next research related to the study. The future researcher can apply the same methodology to conduct related studies at different levels. Then, the results of each related study can be used as a consideration for teachers in choosing the appropriate types of books in the teaching and learning process.

METHOD

This study employed a survey distributed to 7th graders of one state junior high school in Lumajang Regency, to examine their preference for reading online and print books. The 7th grade was chosen because it is the transition period for students from elementary school into their new stage in junior high school. Furthermore, in this pandemic era, all schools apply the online teaching that makes all materials including English should be given in form of digital materials,

The instrument used to gain the data from students is an Indonesian questionnaire. The reason for choosing an Indonesian questionnaire is that it will be easier for students to understand each statement in the questionnaire which will increase the values of the responses. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher and validated by the expert. The questionnaire consists of 15 Likert scale questions with four options: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The description of each option such as, scale 1 means strongly disagree, 2 means disagree, 3 means agree, and the last is a scale of 4 which means strongly agree. The questionnaire is in the form of a google form that will be distributed directly to the students through WhatsApp. The reason for choosing an online questionnaire is to simplify the process of analyzing and classifying the results of the data obtained.

There are 2 sections in the questionnaire: the first section is about the personal information of the respondents (name, class, and attendee's number), the second section is 15 Likert scale questions. Furthermore, the questionnaire includes 6 categories that are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Blueprint of Students' Preference of Reading Online and Print Book

Variable	Indicators	Items Number	Scale			
			1	2	3	4
Reading preference between digital/online and print book	a. Reading qualities	Number 1-4				
	b. Reading speed	Number 5				
	c. Reading concentration	Number 6				
	d. Physical reactions to reading	Number 7-9				
	e. Emotional reactions to reading	Number 10-14				
	f. Eligibility for continued use	Number 15				

The description of each indicator in the blueprint such as, reading qualities means that certain qualities that students obtain when reading both digital/online or print books. Reading speed is about students' reading speed when reading certain types of books. Reading concentration means what types of books make students more focused when reading. Physical reactions to reading is about physical reactions felt by readers when reading, such as feeling more comfortable for their eyes and more comfortable to write additional notes when they read certain types of books. Then, emotional reactions to reading is about the reader's emotional reaction when reading certain types of books. Lastly, eligibility for continued use means that certain types of books are better to keep using in the future.

The simple random sampling technique was chosen in taking the sample from 7th graders of one state junior high school in Lumajang Regency. Sample size in this study was determined based on Slovin (1960) as cited in Fadilah, Anugerahwati, & Prayogo (2017) using the following formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + (N \times e^2))}$$

$$n = \frac{186}{(1 + (186 \times 0.05^2))}$$

$$n = \frac{186}{(1 + (186 \times 0.0025))}$$

$$n = \frac{186}{(1 + 0.465)}$$

$$n = \frac{186}{1.465}$$

$$n = 126.962457$$

$$n = 127$$

The description of the formula above is n is the sample size, N is the population size, e is the margin of error. From the procedure, 127 students have been selected to be the sample of this study. The collected data is classified into six tables. Then, each table is explained by some sentences that are also completed with the total amounts of respondents who choose a specific scale for each statement in the questionnaire.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings of this study are based on the students' answers on the questionnaire that are presented in the following six tables, such as reading qualities, reading speed, reading concentration, physical reactions to reading, emotional reactions to reading, and sustainability for continuous use.

Table 2. Reading Qualities

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
Reading Qualities	Frequency/Percentage			
I understand much better when I read print books/reading materials than when I read digital books/reading materials	2.4%	6.3%	55.9%	35.4%
I want to read more when I read print books/reading materials than when I read digital books/reading materials	0.8%	16.5%	49.6%	33.1%
I remember much better what I read print books/reading materials than when I read digital books/reading materials	2.4%	18.1%	40.9%	38.6%
I observe much better when I read print books/reading materials than when I read digital books/reading materials	4.7%	8.7%	49.6%	37%

The first indicator contains four statements related to the qualities felt by students when reading certain types of books. Table 2 shows that most of the students, a total of 91.3%, agreed and strongly agreed that reading print books makes them understand much better than reading digital books. Then, most of them (82.7%) also agreed and strongly agreed that reading print books makes them want to read more. Next, most of the students (79.5%) agreed and strongly agreed that they can remember much better when reading print books than digital books. The last statement in this indicator was about students' observation when reading print books and digital books. The results showed that most students (86.6%) agreed and strongly agreed that they observe better when reading print books than digital books.

Table 3. Reading Speed

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
Reading Speed	Frequency/Percentage			

I am reading faster when reading print books/ reading materials than when I read digital books/reading materials.	3.9%	17.3%	44.1%	34.7%
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The second indicator concerns students' reading speed when reading print books and digital books. The finding from Table 3 shows that the majority of the students (44.1%) agreed that their reading speed is faster when reading the print books. Meanwhile, 34.7% strongly agreed with the statement. Furthermore, 17.3% of the students disagreed and the rest, 3.9% strongly disagreed.

Table 4. Reading Concentration

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
Reading Concentration	Frequency/Percentage			
I can focus much better when I read print books/reading materials than when I read digital books/reading materials	3.1%	11.8%	39.4%	45.7%

The third indicator in the survey was about students' concentration when reading certain types of books. Based on the results that can be seen in Table 4 showed that the majority (45.7%) strongly agreed that they concentrate better when reading the print books than digital books. Moreover, 39.4% agreed with the statement. On the other hand, 11.8% of students disagreed and 3.1% strongly disagreed that reading through print books makes them concentrate better than when reading digital books/reading materials.

Table 5. Physical Reactions to Reading

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
Physical Reactions to Reading	Frequency/Percentage			
I feel more comfortable for my eyes when I read print books/reading materials than when I read digital books/reading materials	0.8%	7.1%	42.5%	49.6%
I can write additional notes directly when I read print books/reading materials	4.7%	14.2%	48%	33.1%
I find it more comfortable to highlight important passages in the print books/reading materials than in the digital books/reading materials	6.3%	11%	51.2%	31.5%

The table above is about students' physical reactions to reading. There are three statements about what types of physical reactions that students felt when reading. Most of the students (49.6%) strongly agreed that reading through print books makes their eyes feel more comfortable than when reading digital books/reading materials. Then, it was more comfortable for them (48%) to write additional notes directly when reading print books. Lastly, they (51.2%) agreed that they felt more comfortable highlighting important passages in the print books than digital books.

Table 6. Emotional Reactions to Reading

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
Emotional Reactions to Reading	Frequency/Percentage			
I really enjoy reading print books/reading materials	5.5%	6.3%	48%	40.2%
I feel relaxed when I read print books/reading materials	3.9%	6.3%	48%	41.8%
I think reading print books/reading materials is not tiresome	3.1%	17.3%	48%	31.6%
I think reading print books/reading materials is fun	3.9%	7.9%	44.9%	43.3%
I think people in general love reading print books than digital books/reading materials than reading digital books/reading materials	1.6%	6.3%	59.8%	32.3%

The fifth indicator in the survey was about emotional reactions to reading. There were five statements related to students' emotional reactions to reading. It is shown in Table 6 that most of the students (48%) agreed that they really enjoy reading print books/reading materials. Moreover, they (48%) agreed that they feel relaxed when they read print books/reading materials. Next, as much as 48% of students agreed that reading print books/reading materials is not a tiresome activity. Lastly, most of the students (59.8%) agreed that people in general love reading print books/reading materials more than reading digital books/reading materials.

Table 7. Eligibility for Continuous Use

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
Eligibility for Continuous Use	Frequency/Percentage			
I think print books/reading materials should still be used in the future	1.6%	8.7%	40.9%	48.8%

Eligibility for continuous use was the sixth indicator in the survey, it contains one statement related to students' opinion that print books/reading materials should still be used in the future. The results that can be seen in Table 7 showed that most of the students (48.8%) thought that print books/reading materials should still be used in the future. Then, 40.9% agreed that print books should still be used in the future. Furthermore, 8.7% disagreed and the rest, 1.6% of the students, strongly disagree with the statement.

The findings above indicate that the 7th graders in this study had different preferences related to the types of books/reading materials. The majority of the students had a positive response to the print books/reading materials rather than the digital books.

Discussion

This study aims to obtain information associated with the 7th graders' preference for reading digital/online and print books. There are six important findings in this study related to students' preference for reading digital/online and print books, such as reading qualities, reading speed, reading concentration, physical reactions to reading, emotional reactions to reading, and better to keep using. By understanding the students' preference

of reading, it can help both teacher and students to have the appropriate books/reading materials to support the teaching and learning activity.

The current study found that related to reading qualities, the students understand much better when reading print books. Perhaps, it is because the distraction when reading through print books is not as much as when reading the digital books/reading materials. As we know, the notifications that pop up on the screen sometimes can distract students' focus when reading. Not only that, they also feel that by reading the print books they want to read more than when reading the digital books. It could be sometimes when reading a print book/reading material the desire to continue reading the next page is higher than reading on screen. When reading on a screen sometimes it is possible to have problems such as losing or missing the lines. According to Tosun (2014), sometimes students have difficulty finding the reading line and even losing it when reading through digital books because their eyes are vacillating in opposite directions. Not only that, but another factor that makes students want to read more using the print books because reading through a screen can cause some visual problems to the students.

Then, students state that they can remember much better when they read the print books/reading materials than when they read the digital books. It is in line with the previous study conducted by Mangen et al., (2013) readers remember a story better when reading a book compared to reading the same story on an e-book. Perhaps, it is because sometimes students read something then underlining the text and writing down the notes by their hand while reading, it makes them easier to remember what they read. In addition, according to Palsdottir (2019) the connection between reading and action is important, because scribbling, underlining the text, and writing notes make it easier for students to remember what they have read. Furthermore, they can focus better when reading print books/reading materials rather than digital books. It is consistent with data obtained in a previous study conducted by Rose (2011) that multiple screens on a computer distract readers' focus from undisturbed reading. In general, therefore, it seems that in aspects of reading qualities the majority of the students have a positive response to the print books.

Another important finding was that most of the students agree that their reading speed is faster when reading the print books/reading materials. As we know, sometimes reading on a screen can cause some visual problems for students that makes their eyes tire easily. So, it makes their reading speed not as fast as reading the print books/reading materials. This finding was also reported by Bao et. al., (2019) the reading time by print materials showed faster than those reading from e-book and tablets. In addition, Daniel and Woody (2013) reported that students' reading time was longer when reading the electronic text.

This study also found that majority students can concentrate much better when reading the print books rather than reading the digital books. It is in line with Baron et al., (2017) individuals may prefer print for lengthier texts and when they want to concentrate. There are some problems that can easily distract students' concentration when reading digital books/reading materials. As we know, sometimes there are some notifications pop up when reading through PC, tablet, and smartphone. It is possible for students to stop reading and check the notification and even do something else. A study done by Daniel and Woody (2013) finds that students felt an inclination towards a temptation to do something else on the computer, thus, they find difficulties to concentrate on their reading.

In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that the students experienced more eye fatigue when reading e-books than when reading print books (Jeong, 2012). In the current study, the results showed that the majority of students' eyes are more comfortable when reading print books/reading materials than the digital books. The results of this study also showed students prefer to read the print books/reading materials because it is easier for them to write additional notes directly when reading. Not only that, but students feel it is more comfortable for them to highlight the important passages they found in the print books/reading materials rather than in the digital books. This finding was also reported by Rockinson- Szapkiw et al., (2013) students being able to highlight the text, mark the pages, and to make handwritten notes.

The results of the present study showed that most students enjoy and feel relaxed when reading the print books. This finding is consistent with that of Evans (2017) who states that students can feel their reading progress and enjoy it when reading the print books. The majority of students also agree that reading through print books/reading materials is fun and not a tiresome activity. As we know, sometimes it is really tiresome to read through a computer screen or other digital books. It is in line with Baron et al., (2017) who said that reading

through a screen can cause some problems for students, such as eyestrain and headaches that makes them tired easily. The findings of this study also show that the majority of students agree that people in general love reading print books/reading materials more than digital books. Contrary to today's popular belief that students are "digital natives", these results reflect those of Loh and Sun (2019) and Tveit and Mangen (2014) who also state that most of the students prefer to read print books rather than the digital/online books/reading materials. Loh and Sun (2019) states students still prefer print books but they do not completely eschew e-books and other online resources and will use them depending on the context. Furthermore, Tveit and Mangen (2014) state that paper book lovers that have a number of good reading experiences from print texts are less keen on reading from digital books because it represents another feeling and form.

The next important finding was that most of the students agree that print books/reading materials should still be used in the future. There are some possible reasons why students think that print books/reading materials should still be used in the future, such as the familiarity and the experience of reading. As we know, reading through print books/reading materials has been going on for a long time, it makes them feel comfortable to continue using print books. Then, students have a lot of experience reading print books rather than digital books. It is in line with Ball and Hourcade (2011) familiarity and experience with the format are the important factors. In conclusion, they think that print books/reading materials should still be used in the future.

Not only about students that responded positively to print books/reading materials, but the findings showed that some students also had negative responses to the print books. For example, some students have a negative response to the statement "I am reading faster when reading print books/reading materials". It is because for some people there is no difference between reading on paper and reading on screen. As cited in Tveit and Mangen (2014), according to Grzeschik et al., (2011) in contrast with popular belief, there is no decrease in reading speed and the students' concentration when reading digital books.

In the next findings, some students responded negatively to the statement about students' concentration. It is in line with the result from previous study, Palsdottir (2019) states, digital materials had a positive impact on students' learning engagement, reading through digital books can help to keep students' concentration because sometimes they don't realize how much of the text they have read.

Then, related to visual issues some students believed that reading on screen did not cause some problems for their eyes. According to Palsdottir (2019) students stated that the brightness of the screen prevents them from becoming sleepy.

Then, there were students that stated reading through print books/reading material was not fun. It is in line with the result of previous study by Evans (2017). In the study, the students stated that reading on their iPad is more fun. Sometimes some reading materials have colorful backgrounds or maybe beautiful fonts, so it makes the reader interesting to read and think that is a fun activity.

Next, related to the eligibility for continued use, some students believed that digital books should still be used in the future. As we know, digital books/reading materials also give some benefits for students, so that some of the students think that digital books are suitable for long term use. According to (Baron, et al., 2017; Ji et al., (2014) sometimes it is possible for students to get reading materials free of charge. Not only that, Li et al (2011) state that there are two favourable attributes of digital books/materials that are mentioned such as portability and mobility.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study was designed to determine students' preference of digital or print books/reading materials. This study has identified that the majority of students in one state junior high school in Lumajang Regency, prefer to read print books/reading materials rather than the digital books/reading materials. The majority of students agree that reading print books gives them some benefits, such as understanding much better about what they have read, focus much better when reading, more comfortable for their eyes to read the print books/reading materials, and many more.

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that students have different preferences regarding the types of books/reading materials. Thus, it is important for teachers and students to understand about students' preference between digital or print books/reading materials. It is in line with previous study conducted by Loh (2018) By understanding the students' preference, hopefully giving a good impact on students' learning process.

Thus, it can be concluded that the subjects of the study (the 7th graders in one state of junior high school in Lumajang Regency) have different preferences related to digital books/reading materials and the print one. The majority of them responded positively to the print books/reading materials rather than the digital books.

Some recommendations are proposed for the school where the study was done and for further researchers. First, it is important to understand what types of books are appropriate to use in the teaching and learning process. Then, it is also important for the English teacher, especially in this school, to understand students' desire for both digital and print books/reading materials. Furthermore, it will be better for asking the students what types of books that they prefer to read (Loh, 2018). By understanding students' desire between digital and print books/reading materials, it can help the school to facilitate the right types of books to use in teaching and learning process. Not only that, using the right types of books will help students to understand the materials better and also can improve their knowledge in English.

Since the study was limited, further study needs to be done to establish whether different students have similar preferences or not. It is necessary to capture a better representation of students' preferences for digital or print books/reading materials. The instrument of this study has limitations in terms of questions on the survey, so it is recommended for the future researcher to use different types of survey questions to prevent bias in certain preferences. Not only that, it is also possible for future researchers to conduct related studies for students at different levels because it can be the gap for further related studies.

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