TERTIARY STUDENTS' READING INTEREST AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILL: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

By:

Wina Fanta Anggalya
Tridinanti University
winafantawinafanta@gmail.com

Rahma Dianti
Tridinanti University
rahma_dianti@univ-tridinanti.ac.id

Abstract: Many research have proved that reading interest can influence the way someone thinks. It is crucial to promote critical thinking skills in higher education level. This study aimed to find out the level of students' critical thinking skills and to reveal the association between reading interest and critical thinking skill. This study used correlational research design. Fifty-seven tertiary students of English Education Department at Tridinanti University participated as the sample which were selected by using total sampling technique since the population size was small. The data were collected by administering a questionnaire of reading interest and critical thinking test. After gathering the data, it was analyzed by using Pearson Product Moment to examine the association between the students' reading interest and their critical thinking skill. The data obtained were analyzed by using Pearson Product Moment. The result of correlational analysis revealed that there was a very weak correlation between reading interest and critical thinking skill.

Keywords: reading interest, critical thinking skill, association

INTRODUCTION

Since reading is an essential component for academic success for all students in higher education, it is a vital skill (Tavakoli, 2014). Students at colleges are expected to engage in deep reading assignments that are based on scholarly works including essays, journal articles, and textbooks. Academic reading is

challenging since this is characterized by different length and text levels at various stages (Sohail, 2015). Reading for fun and reading for academics are two distinct endeavors. In university courses, students are expected to read substantially and independently. They need to decide which resources to read and which to skip over from enormous reading lists that will be presented to them. It primarily depends on reason they are reading. Also, they must be ready for complex reading assignments requiring for in-depth conceptual investigation and implementation of the contents. Students in higher education stages must therefore acquire advanced reading skills.

In advanced reading, readers use a fluent process to help them fully understand the reading's contents and create their own interpretations. Reading is a challenging task that requires the readers to consistently associate the source of information and build the interaction between context, meaning, content, and reading framework (Anderson, 2011). Students' minds will be striving to process all the information in the passage as they read it. The readers will use thought to go over the text they are reading. Higher education students must be able to comprehend a wide range of texts, and this ability is only acquired via extensive practice. Students read, nonetheless, for a variety of purposes. For reading different texts, they will use different approaches. Reading science books and fiction may not always adopt the same method. It is likely that a reader will read novels more quickly than science texts if reading speed is the metric. Because of a trait recognized

as being of interest, people can read novels more quickly than science texts.

In an academic setting, interest can be viewed as a mental state or as an intentional preference over a certain field of study. Interest is considered as one internal aspect of the learner that may have a significant impact on the pupils' reading abilities (Wilda & Ilma, 2020). Hence, reading interest drives the readers' motivation during reading activities and it is crucial for reading comprehension since it becomes the necessity for students to accomplish their reading goals (Käsper et al., 2018; Wigfield et al., 2015). Furthermore, reading interest can affect students' rational and emotional experiences at a moment when teachers must choose between ensuring that pupils read at age level and fostering a lifetime interest in reading (Springer et al., 2017).

Everyone strives to make their own competence in the age of information and knowledge by studying as much as they can. Reading is one way to acquire knowledge and information. Reading is the most effective option of instruction because it helps students develop their critical thinking skills, broaden their vision, comprehend who they are and how the world works, and evaluate future events and circumstances (Karadeniz, 2015). Critical thinking abilities are closely tied to reading ability. When Hosseini et al. (2021) examined into how EFL students' critical thinking, reading comprehension, and reading techniques related to one another, the findings showed that there was a strong correlation between the three.

Students who were more capable of critical thought demonstrated reading proficiency.

Education authorities believe that some components of the aptitude for critical thought should be included among those for proficient reading. These include assessment, analysis, drawing conclusions, and applying deductive and inductive reasoning. Reading involves reasoning in addition to evaluation, analysis, and drawing conclusions. Based on these reasons, it may be concluded that reading has a close relationship to the growth of thinking skills, particularly critical thinking. One of the main objectives of higher education is to develop the critical thinking abilities of undergraduate students, who will then be expected to become good citizens by assessing the authenticity of information, better decision-makers in their personal and professional lives, scholars, and educators. It is demanding that students in higher education can think critically since the coursework at this level relies on higher order thinking skills, like the capacity to conduct critical analysis and support arguments (Fahim & Masouleh, 2012). Students who possess good critical thinking abilities will be better prepared to compete and fulfill their citizenship rights and obligations in a global world.

The students at Tridinanti University's Faculty of Teacher Training and Education received training and instruction in how to become teachers. Further, from semester 1 through semester 5, reading ability was taught. A teacher should ideally have strong analytical and reading skills, but unfortunately,

Indonesian pupils' reading competence falls short of the standards level (OECD, 2019). This is apparently because the students are not really interested. The researchers believed that having a strong reading interest was a prerequisite for good thinking.

In terms of addressing the problems highlighted above, the researchers conducted a study to examine at the relationship between undergraduate students' reading interest and their critical thinking abilities.

METHODOLOGY

A correlational study was conducted as the research design since this study examined the relationship between tertiary students' reading preferences and critical thinking abilities.. Fifty-seven participants were selected by using Total Sampling technique. This technique was applied since the numbers of population was small. As the result, all the population would be involved as the sample.

A questionnaire and a test were distributed online to gather the data due to Pandemic Covid 19. The questionnaire was administered to obtain the data dealing with students' reading interest. It was adopted from a ready-made questionnaire from (Fajri, 2015) and consisted of 18 items measuring the following aspects: internal motivation and emotional factors. The participants responded the questionnaire by rating the items using the following scales: scale 1 signifying never, scale 2 signifying seldom, scale 3 signifying sometimes, scale 4 signifying often, and scale 5

signifying always. While, to obtain the data in terms of students' critical thinking skill, a ready-made test of College Assessment for Academic Proficiency (CAAP) critical thinking skill test from American College Testing Program (2008) was adopted. The test consisted of 32 items of multiple choices and measured the three indicators of critical thinking skill as follows: analyzing the argument, evaluating the argument, and extending the argument.

After gathering the data for students reading interest and critical thinking skill, Pearson Product Moment was run to analyze the association between students' reading interest and their critical thinking skill. Before administering the inferential analysis, the researchers measured the normality obtained data to assess whether the data obtained were normal or not.

To measure the data normality, Kolmogorov Smirnov was run. The results of the normality test for reading interest and critical thinking skill indicated that the data were normally distributed. It could be seen from the significance coefficients (α values) for both reading interest and critical thinking skill. The summary of the normality test results can be seen in the below table.

Table 1
Summary of Normality Test Results

Variables	Kolmogorov Smirnov	Sig. (2 tailed)
Reading Interest	0.829	0.498
Critical Thinking	1.104	0.175

The above data showed that the coefficients of the alpha value were higher than 0.05. Therefore, the data of students' reading interest and

critical thinking skill were considered normal.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The obtained data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially to verify the testing hypotheses of the association between the variables measured. The following table presents the summary of the descriptive statistical analysis for the students' reading interest and critical thinking skill.

Table 2
Summary of Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Reading Interest and Critical Thinking

Test	N	Minimum	Maximum
Reading Interest	57	52.00	82.00
Critical Thinking Skill	57	19.00	91.00

The data from the table above showed that for students' reading interest, the highest score was 82 and the lowest score was 52. For students' critical thinking skill, the maximum score was 91 and the minimum score was 19.

In addition, regarding to the students' reading interest level, it was found that mostly students of English Department at Tridinanti University were classified average in reading interest level. The result of frequency analysis of reading interest showed that 17 students (29.83%) were in high level, 40 students (70.17%) were in average level, and there was none of student classified in low level. In other words, it indicated that the students were categorized as average in reading interest level. Chart 1 portrays the reading interest level possessed by English Department students of Tridinanti University.

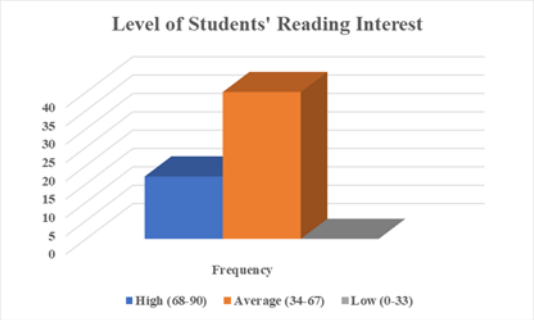

Chart 1. Reading Interest Level

While, for critical thinking skill, most of the students were categorized as very low. The result of frequency analysis revealed that 2 students (3.5%) were in very high category, none of student classified into high and moderate category, 13 students (13%) were in low category, and 42 students (73.7%) were in very low level. The summary of students' level of

critical thinking is displayed in Chart 2.

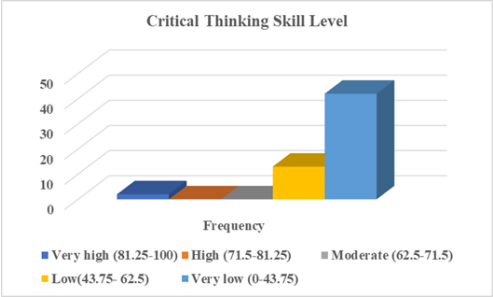

Chart 2. Critical Thinking Skill Level

Those findings were supported by the analysis result of critical thinking subskills possessed by the students. For the aspects of critical thinking, 46 students (80.7%) were able to analyze the arguments, 8 students (14.03%) were able to evaluate the arguments, and 13 students (22.80%) were able to extend the arguments. Chart 3 portrays the level of critical thinking subskills possessed by English Department students of Tridinanti University.

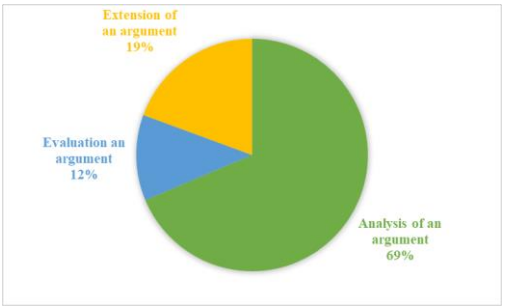

Chart 3. Critical Thinking Subskills

After analyzing the data descriptively, the researchers analyzed the data inferentially using Pearson Product Moment to analyze the correlation between reading interest and critical thinking skill. Table 3 presents the summary of the correlational analysis.

Table 3
The Result of Correlational Analysis

Correlation	Reading Interest and Critical Thinking Skill
Pearson Product Moment	0.024
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.85
N	57

The result of correlational analysis revealed that the coefficient of Pearson Product Moment was 0.024 with the significant value was

0.85. These data indicated that there was a very weak correlation between English Education Department students of Tridinanti University.

Based on the findings of the study, it could be interpreted that the level of correlation between the students' reading interest and their critical thinking skills was in a very weak association. It means that both variables were almost not correlated with each other. In this study, most of the students have average level in reading interest. However, their critical thinking skill level was categorized as very poor.

The findings of this research were consistent with what had been reported. by Zubaidah et al., (2018). They found that reading interest was not correlated significantly toward students' critical thinking skill. However, this finding was inconsistent with many scholars who have asserted about the impacts of the fond of reading to human's cognitive development. Reading becomes a critical catalyst for someone's academic success and the fond of reading contributes toward our cognitive prototype (Pae, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The results of the research showed that students' reading interest has a very weak correlation with their critical thinking skill. Although most of the students had average level of reading interest, they could not think critically yet. This condition did not prove the researcher's initial assumption that reading interest is positively related with thinking skill.

REFERENCES

Anderson, N. J. (2011). Individual differences in strategy use in

second language reading and testing. *The Modern Language Journal*, *75*(4), 460–472.

Fahim, M., & Masouleh, N. S. (2012). Critical thinking in higher education: A pedagogical look. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *2*(7), 1370–1375. https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.2.7.1370-1375

Fajri, M. (2015). *The correlation between students' reading interest and their speed reading* [Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis]. UIN Syarif Hidayatullah.

Hawkins, K. T. (2012). *Examination of the Relationship between Critical Thinking Skills Examination of the Relationship between Critical Thinking Skills and Voluntary Reading and Voluntary Reading*. https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss

Hosseini, E., Khodaei, F. B., Sarfallah, S., & Dowlatabadi, H. R. (2021). Exploring the relationship between critical thinking, reading comprehension, and reading strategies of. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, *17*(10).

Karadeniz, A. (2015). An Examination of Critical Reading Self-efficacy Perceptions among the Students of the Faculty of Education Over Different Variables. In *Anthropologist* (Vol. 22, Issue 2).

Käsper, M., Uibu, K., & Mikk, J. (2018). Language teaching strategies' impact on third-grade students' reading outcomes and reading interest. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, *10*(5), 601–610. https://doi.org/10.26822/iejee.2018541309

OECD. (2019). *PISA 2018 Resilts (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do.*

Pae With Foreword by Charles A Perfetti, H. K. (n.d.). *Script EE ects as the Hidden Drive of the Mind, Cognition, and Culture*. http://www.springer.com/series/7206

Sohail, S. (2015). Academic reading strategies used by Leeds Metropolitan University graduates: A case study. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, *2*(2), 115–133.

Springer, S. E., Harris, S., & Dole, J. A. (2017). From Surviving to Thriving: Four Research-Based Principles to Build Students' Reading Interest. *Reading Teacher*, *71*(1), 43–50. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1581

Tavakoli, H. (2014). The Effectiveness of Metacognitive Strategy Awareness in Reading Comprehension: The Case of Iranian University EFL Students.

In *The Reading Matrix* © (Vol. 14, Issue 2).

Wigfield, A., Eccles, J. S., Fredricks, J. A., Simpkins, S., Roeser, R. W., & Schiefele, U. (2015). Development of Achievement Motivation and Engagement. In *Handbook of Child Psychology and Developmental Science* (pp. 1–44). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118963418.childpsy316

Wilda, & Ilma, R. (2020). Undergraduate students' reading interest and reading comprehension of Tridinanti University Palembang. *Didascein: Journal of English Education*, *1*(2), 37–45.

Zubaidah, S., Corebima, A. D., Mahanal, S., & Mistianah. (2018). Revealing the relationship between reading interest and critical thinking skills through remap GI and remap jigsaw. *International Journal of Instruction*, *11*(2), 41–56. https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2018.1124a