

JEPAL

Journal of English Pedagogy and Applied Linguistics

<https://journal.masoemiversity.ac.id/jepal/index.php/englishpedagogy>

Submitted: 5 January 2025 Accepted: 31 January 2025 Available Online: 31 January 2025

EXAMINING GENDER DIVIDE, READING HABITS AND PREFERENCES IN EFL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract: This study explores gender differences, reading habits, and preferences among undergraduate students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at Ma'soem University, focusing on second, fourth, and eighth semesters. A qualitative descriptive approach was used to gather detailed data through comprehensive questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The sample included 32 participants, evenly distributed between male and female students. Key findings revealed a significant language preference gap, with 37.5% of female students preferring foreign language reading, compared to 18.8% of males who favored their native language. Regarding format, male students overwhelmingly preferred print books (93.8%), while females were more divided, with 75% favoring print and 25% choosing electronic formats. Both genders leaned towards fiction, though females showed a slightly stronger preference. Genre preferences also differed, with males favoring fantasy, mystery/thriller, and self-help, while females leaned towards fantasy, romance, and self-help. Access methods varied, with males more likely to use bookstores and lending networks, while females frequently used libraries and online platforms.

Keywords: gender divide, reading habits, reading preferences, EFL undergraduate students

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian students have a wide range of abilities in English. Some of them have a basic understanding of the language, but others have difficulty comprehending texts beyond simple sentences. Because they aren't often exposed to authentic English texts outside of the classroom, this further hinders their ability to understand English, especially in reading English materials. Reading, a pivotal language-related activity, enriches language proficiency and comprehension. For EFL learners, reading plays a multifaceted role, aiding in skills enhancement through practices like reading aloud, reinforcing grammar, increasing vocabulary, recognizing verbal symbols, gaining insights, and getting pleasure (Krashen, 1994). Furthermore, reading proficiency and

comprehension are essential prerequisites for success in the classroom. It is impossible for students to separate reading for prolonged or intensive reading from their academic habits.

Krashen's (1985) theory highlights the centrality of individual reading in language acquisition, particularly in the development of comprehension and vocabulary. As stated by Sakina et al., (2023) reading comprehension is the most important reading skill and the cornerstone of all reading exercises. Independent reading provides learners with the necessary input to acquire language naturally and effectively, promoting a deeper understanding of the language and a richer vocabulary. Encouraging students to read widely and regularly can significantly enhance their language skills, making them more confident and proficient language users. Educators and parents should therefore provide ample opportunities and resources for individual reading to support the language learning process.

Enhancing and improving students' reading skills can be achieved by nurturing their motivation and desire to read. Engaging in reading allows students to acquire, absorb, and process ideas that can be implemented in their social lives (Zare and Othman, 2013). The key to fostering a love for reading lies in identifying individual interests and needs, and guiding students towards materials that align with those preferences (Blau & Baker, 2006). This approach empowers learners to pursue their own reading choices, ultimately strengthening their motivation (Aydın and Ayrancı, 2018). By catering to their reading preferences, students can fulfill personal needs, foster maturity, and exercise freedom in forming and reflecting upon their opinions (Hussain and Munshi, 2011).

To develop and enhance students' reading interest, it is crucial to consider their reading preferences as a priority. By making reading more appealing and aligning it with their preferences, the quality of their reading experience can be improved (Aydın and Ayrancı, 2018). Different motives and intentions influence reading habits among young children and adolescents (Mart, 2015). Individual interests and contextual factors serve as fundamental drivers that push them to seek information and comprehension (Arthi & Srinivasan, 2018). Therefore, reading materials such as books, magazines, novels, articles, and research papers become essential in satisfying their thirst for knowledge and understanding. It is worth noting that reading preferences can vary among individuals based on their specific age groups and information needs (Hussain and Munshi, 2011).

Taking into account students' preferences when selecting reading materials is just as important as understanding their requirements (Bouchamma, Poulin, Basque, & Ruel, 2013). The initial step in determining students' reading preferences is identifying materials that captivate their interest. Regardless of the difficulty level of a text, if it fails to engage students, it will be perceived as boring or challenging to read (Celik, 2017).

Students are more likely to hesitate in reading unless they come across materials that align with their interests. Adolescents particularly prefer light and enjoyable reading, finding pleasure and educational value in books that offer a sense of fun (Jacobs, 2014). When students engage in reading voluntarily and choose texts that resonate with them, their enthusiasm and motivation to read will persist.

For readers who intend to select appropriate reading materials, it is advisable to dedicate sufficient time to analyze essential aspects (Alshammari, 2015). Several crucial factors in the process of selecting reading materials include students' proficiency levels, preferences, interests, needs, and background knowledge. Additionally, the content, relevance, and authenticity of the text itself are related factors to consider (Arias, 2007).

Research has shown that students' reading-related interests vary widely and that

gender differences in text preference exist (Clark, 2019; McGeown, Osborne, Warhurst, Norgate, & Duncan, 2016; Merisuo-Strom, 2006). Drawing on theories positing interest as a crucial motivational construct and gender as a core individual characteristic, various text-related factors, such as text topic or genre, have been proposed as potential underlying factors of differences in students' text-based interest (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002; Hidi, 2001; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Krapp, 2002).

Although personal interests and academic requirements are two main factors that can shape reading preferences, studies have also shown that gender plays a role in influencing those preferences. According to research, it is common for females to prefer narrative-based texts like short stories, personal narratives, and novels, while males tend to gravitate towards analytic or informational texts, such as scientific articles, magazines, and newspapers (Chantal, Justine, & Nele, 2021). The potential effect of these preferences on foreign language acquisition underscores the need to delve deeper into understanding the reading material preferences of students pursuing English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Consequently, this research aims to explore gender-based reading preference differences in EFL undergraduates and the extent to which these differences play a role in shaping their preferences.

Previous studies have examined students' reading preferences in all levels of education (Hussain and Munshi, 2011; Bouchamma et al., 2013; Shonfeld & Meishar-Tal, 2016; Aharony & Bar-Ilan, 2018; Lestari, 2018; Eutsler & Trotter, 2020). However, none of them have been investigating reading preferences of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Indonesia especially at the tertiary level of English education department students, presenting a gap that the current study aims to fill. Therefore, the aims of this study are to investigate reading habits and preferences of EFL students at Ma'soem University and to explore potential gender differences in their reading habits and preferences. Understanding what EFL students read during their leisure time can be highly beneficial and predictive of their reading competence, potentially enhancing their academic success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading Preferences in Language Learning

Reading preferences encompass the personalized ways in which students prefer to acquire and process information during the learning process. In the context of language learning, these preferences involve examining the factors that influence individuals' choices of specific types of reading materials, such as fiction, non-fiction, newspapers, or digital platforms. By exploring the concept of reading preferences, this will lay a foundation for understanding the motivations and choices of EFL undergraduate students when it comes to reading, Schmidt, R., & Watanabe, Y. (2001).

In language learning, reading preferences refer to the inclinations and choices individuals make regarding the texts they find appealing and enjoy reading, including fiction, non-fiction, newspapers, or digital platforms. These preferences can be shaped by personal interests, cultural backgrounds, and educational contexts. Understanding these preferences is vital for developing targeted instructional strategies that cater to learners' needs and interests (Maro et al., 2020).

Gender Differences in Reading Preferences

Gender differences in reading preferences will investigate whether there are any notable variations in reading preferences between male and female EFL undergraduate students. By analyzing survey responses and conducting statistical analysis, the study

aims to identify any distinctive patterns or preferences that may emerge based on gender.

David Bleich (1978), on his book "Subjective Criticism" mentioned about the Cognitive Differences Theory, which suggests that there are gender-related differences in the cognitive processes involved in reading due to variations in brain structures related to language and reading. This theory will be employed to examine how these cognitive differences can influence reading preferences based on gender. This theory will be relevant in exploring how gender characteristics of materials, as well as societal influences, may shape reading preferences, P. Scott, Kathryn (1983).

Mary and C. Roger (1989) discuss how gender schema theory is relevant to understanding the effects of gender characteristics of materials on readers. This schema indicates that based on people's sex-role identification, men and women interpret the same words differently. Based on gender schema theory, how individuals categorize and interpret information can also impact their reading preferences and understanding of texts. By incorporating these theories into the research framework, the study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between gender and reading preferences, shedding light on the underlying mechanisms and influencing factors.

According to Brown (2020), societal norms and expectations play a role in shaping gender differences in reading preferences. For example, girls are often encouraged to explore fictional stories, while boys are directed towards non-fiction and informational texts. Additionally, Lee and Kim's (2021) study suggest that these gender-based differences in reading preferences can also be linked to disparities in language development and cognitive processes. Females, who tend to possess stronger linguistic abilities, are inclined towards narrative-based and emotionally captivating texts.

EFL Undergraduate Students and Reading Preferences

Reading is an essential component of language learning, and understanding students' reading preferences can contribute to designing effective language teaching materials and strategies for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) undergraduate students.

Studies suggest that EFL (English as a Foreign Language) undergraduate students have dissimilar reading preferences compared to native speakers. As per Lee's (2018) research, EFL students commonly favor reading materials that are relevant to their immediate interests and needs, over purely literary texts. This choice for practicality and relevance is driven by their desire to enhance language skills for academic and professional purposes.

Furthermore, research indicates that cultural familiarity also impacts EFL students' reading preferences. Chen's (2017) study found that EFL undergraduate students preferred reading materials related to their own culture, as it aided them in comprehending the content on a deeper level.

In addition, genre choices play a considerable role in EFL students' reading preferences. According to Li's (2020) findings, while some EFL students preferred fiction and narrative texts, others leaned more towards non-fiction genres, including news articles and academic papers. Individual interests, academic requirements, and future career aspirations influenced these choices.

The influence of technology on EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' reading preferences is noteworthy. As digital reading materials become increasingly accessible, students have access to a vast range of online resources. According to Wang's (2021) study, EFL undergraduate students are more likely to be attracted to digital platforms and e-books due to the convenience, flexibility, and interactive features they offer.

When selecting reading materials and creating instructional activities, it is crucial for educators to take these preferences into account. By integrating texts that are culturally familiar, relevant, and aligned with students' genre preferences, educators can boost motivation, engagement, and overall reading proficiency of EFL undergraduate students.

Gender Divide and Reading Preferences

Gender Identity and Perception of Gender Roles

a. Gender Identity

Gender identity pertains to an individual's personal and internal understanding of their own gender, regardless of whether it aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth. The notion of perceiving gender roles relates to the societal norms and expectations that dictate the behaviors, roles, and characteristics considered masculine or feminine. Studies have delved into how gender identity shapes individuals' perspectives on gender roles and the broader implications this has for society (Maro, R. K., et al., 2020).

b. Gender Identity Development

Gaining an understanding of the development of gender identity is crucial in order to grasp how individuals perceive and internalize societal expectations regarding gender. Erikson's psychosocial theory suggests that a person's sense of gender identity begins to form in early childhood and has a subsequent impact on their understanding of gender roles (Gibbs & Bolger, 2020). This process is influenced by a combination of intricate factors, including biology, environment, and society.

c. Perceptions of Gender Roles

Research has brought attention to the variations in how individuals with different gender identities perceive and conform to conventional gender roles. Studies indicate that individuals who identify as cisgender, aligning with their assigned sex at birth, tend to exhibit a greater degree of conformity to traditional gender roles. On the other hand, individuals who identify as transgender or non-binary may actively question or resist these roles. The perception and acceptance of gender roles can widely differ based on an individual's gender identity and personal experiences (Glynn & Rudman, 2021).

d. Intersectionality and Gender Roles

The concept of intersectionality, which refers to the ways in which social categories (such as gender, race, and class) intersect with each other, has a significant impact on how individuals perceive and internalize gender roles. Studies have shown that individuals from various ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds may hold distinct perspectives and experiences concerning gender roles (Simon & Rausch, 2019). The concept of intersectionality underscores the idea that gender identity cannot be comprehensively understood in isolation, and requires consideration of the broader

socio-cultural context in which individuals exist.

e. Effects on Mental Health and Well-being

The way individuals perceive and internalize traditional gender roles can have substantial impacts on their mental health and overall well-being. Studies indicate that those who adhere strictly to rigid gender roles may face heightened levels of stress, stigma, and discrimination (Leach & Braithwaite, 2020). Conversely, individuals who feel empowered to challenge and express their gender identity in ways that go against traditional roles may experience greater resilience and well-being.

METHOD

This study employed qualitative research with descriptive survey revealing EFL undergraduate students' reading preferences based on gender differences. This research conducted at Ma'soem University, one of the private University in Sumedang. This research focuses on students majoring in English education, specifically 2nd, 4th, and 8th semester students at Ma'soem University. The selection of this site was based on two primary reasons.

First, the university's English education program aligns well with the research study's theme of reading preferences. By targeting students who are studying English education, the researchers can gain insights into the reading preferences of individuals who are actively engaged in the study and practice of the English language. Second, by including students from different semesters, the study incorporates a diverse range of experiences and language proficiency levels. The gender balance in the sample helps ensure that potential gender differences in reading preferences can be adequately explored and analyzed.

In collecting data for this study, the researcher used survey analysis. The researcher analyzed the survey data based on the responses received from the online survey questionnaire to understand students' reading habits and preferences based on their gender. The questionnaire in this research consisted of open-ended questions that aim to gain insights into the specific reading genres, themes, or authors that the students prefer. These types of questions allow respondents to express their personal opinions and provide more in-depth information. There are 32 students involved in the survey. After the data were gathered, the researcher analyzed the data.

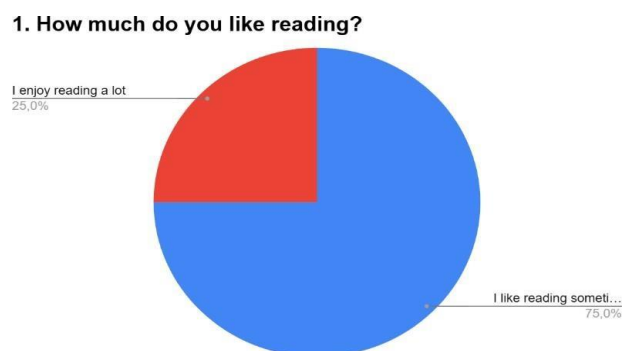
To analyze open-ended questionnaire data, the researcher developed a coding system based on themes, keywords, or concepts related to your research objectives, and organize responses by demographic variables (age, gender, proficiency). Next, familiarize with the data by reading through responses, highlighting common ideas or recurring patterns. Then, categorize these responses into themes or codes, such as "preferred genre" or "barriers to reading," and assign relevant codes. If applicable, quantify the qualitative data by analyzing the frequency of specific responses or calculating percentages for each theme. After categorizing, group similar responses and interpret the findings to identify key patterns, such as reading frequency or challenges faced. Finally, write a qualitative summary, incorporating representative quotes, and cross-reference with quantitative data from closed-ended questions to validate your findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Reading Habits of Male and Female Students

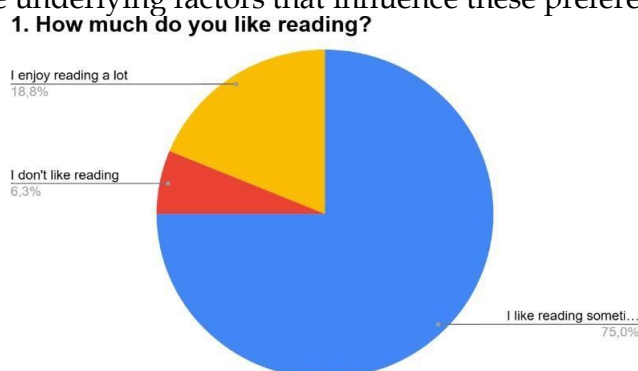
The research on Examining the Gender Divide and Its Factors in the Reading

Preferences of EFL (English as A Foreign Language) Undergraduate Students revealed intriguing insights, particularly concerning male and female students' attitudes towards reading. The study utilized a pie chart to visually represent the distribution of reading preferences among male and female participants, highlighting the proportion of those who like reading a lot versus those who like reading sometimes.



Male pie chart figure 1. 1

According to the data, 25% (4 among 16 students) of male respondents indicated a strong preference for reading, expressing that they 'like reading a lot', whereas 75% (12 among students) of the male participants reported a more moderate interest, suggesting that they 'like reading sometimes'. This distribution not only demonstrates the varied reading preferences among male EFL students but also underscores the need for a deeper understanding of the underlying factors that influence these preferences.



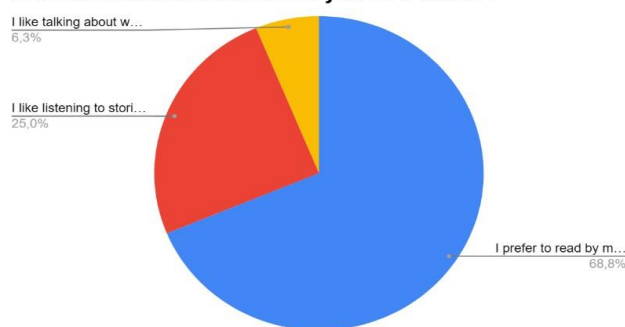
Female pie chart figure 1. 2

The pie chart analysis of 16 female participants revealed interesting insights into their attitudes toward reading. A minority of approximately 3 female students, or 18.8% of the sample, expressed a strong affinity for reading, indicating that they "like reading a lot." These students likely view reading as an engaging and enriching activity that complements their language learning experience. On the other hand, the majority, roughly 12 students or 75%, reported that they "like reading sometimes," suggesting a moderate interest in reading, possibly influenced by the relevance or appeal of the reading material to their personal preferences or academic requirements.

A small percentage, about 1 student or 6.3%, admitted that they "don't like reading," which highlights the existence of barriers or disinterest in reading among a segment of the female EFL student population. These findings underscore the need for educators to adopt a multifaceted approach to reading instruction, ensuring that materials are diverse,

engaging, and responsive to the varied preferences and needs of students.

2. Which statements describe you as a reader?



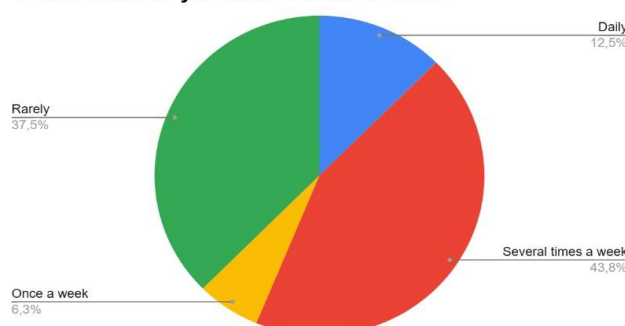
Male pie chart figure 1. 3

The research findings reveal that a significant majority (68.8%) of the male EFL undergraduate students surveyed prefer to read by themselves. This indicates a strong inclination towards independent reading, highlighting the importance of personal space and peace in their reading habits. Such a preference may be attributed to the desire for deeper individual comprehension and absorption of the material, suggesting that educational interventions for this group should focus on providing ample resources for solitary reading and personal exploration of texts. This aligns with studies that emphasize the role of individual reading in enhancing comprehension and vocabulary development (Krashen, 1985).

Interestingly, a substantial portion (25%) of the male students expressed a fondness for listening to stories or being read to. This finding underscores the relevance of auditory learning and its potential to complement solitary reading, especially in the context of EFL learning. Incorporating audiobooks or listening sessions could enrich their learning experiences, offering alternative pathways for language acquisition and potentially enhancing their engagement with English texts. This preference for auditory learning is supported by research on multimodal learning, which suggests that combining different sensory inputs can improve retention and comprehension (Mayer, 2001).

Contrasting with the aforementioned preferences, only a small fraction (6.3%) of the male students enjoy talking about what they have heard. This could imply a lower preference for interactive or collaborative learning environments when it comes to reading.

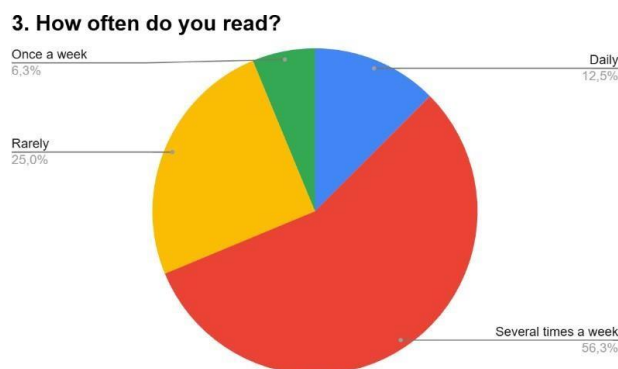
4. How often do you read outside of class?



Female pie chart figure 1. 4

When comparing the results of the pie charts for both female and male participants,

it is observed that the distributions of reading preferences are remarkably similar. Both genders exhibit nearly identical patterns in their responses to reading habits, with comparable percentages favoring solitary reading, enjoying listening to stories, and expressing interest in discussing what they have heard. This indicates that, despite potential differences in other areas, the preferences for reading engagement among the female and male EFL undergraduate students are essentially congruent.

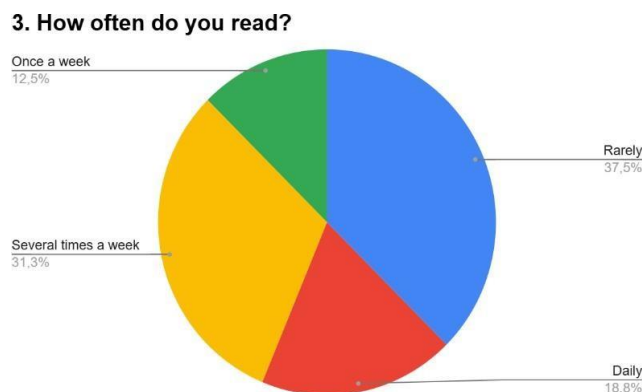


Male pie chart figure 1.5

The data from this research indicates that only a small minority (12.5%) of the male EFL undergraduate students surveyed read on a daily basis. This finding suggests that daily reading is not a common practice among this demographic, possibly due to time constraints, lack of interest, or competing academic demands. The low rate of daily reading habits could have implications for language proficiency, as consistent reading is known to be a key factor in vocabulary expansion and comprehension (Day & Bamford, 1998).

A significant majority (56.3%) of the male students reported reading several times a week. This indicates a moderate reading frequency that could still offer substantial benefits for language acquisition. Reading several times a week allows for regular exposure to English texts, which is essential for developing fluency and familiarity with the language.

A small percentage (6.3%) of the male students read once a week. This suggests that while they maintain some level of reading activity, it is minimal and may not provide the same benefits as more frequent reading. Regular weekly reading can still contribute to language learning, but the impact might be less pronounced compared to more frequent reading habits.



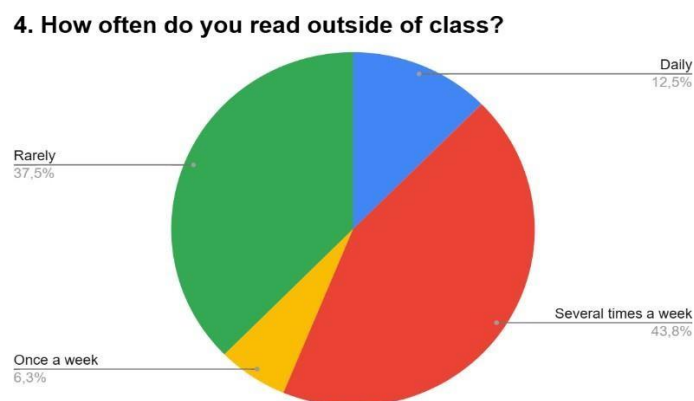
Female pie chart figure 1. 6

Female EFL undergraduate students demonstrate a slightly higher tendency toward daily reading compared to their male counterparts. About 18.8% of the surveyed females reported reading on a daily basis. This suggests that there is a small but significant segment of female students who prioritize reading as part of their daily routine, which could positively influence their language skills (Krashen, 1985). Regular daily reading is known to enhance vocabulary and comprehension, critical components for language proficiency.

A considerable 31.3% of female participants read several times a week. This indicates a moderate but consistent reading frequency, which is beneficial for maintaining and enhancing English language skills. Reading several times a week provides regular exposure to the language, facilitating deeper understanding and better retention (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

A smaller but notable 12.5% of female students read once a week. This infrequent reading pattern may not offer the same level of benefits as more regular reading habits but does indicate that these students are still engaging with reading materials on a weekly basis.

A significant 37.5% of the female students rarely read. This highlights the need for targeted strategies to engage this group in more frequent reading activities. The lack of reading can impede language development, particularly in vocabulary and comprehension, which are crucial for academic success (Anderson & Freebody, 1983).



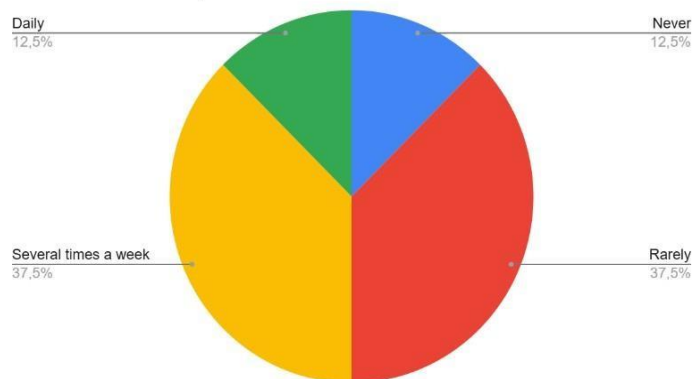
Male pie chart figure 1. 7

Among the male EFL undergraduate students surveyed, a modest 12.5% reported reading daily outside of class. This finding suggests that while some male students are committed to daily reading, the majority do not prioritize this activity in their leisure time.

A substantial 43.8% of the male participants read several times a week. This indicates a significant group of students who engage in reading outside of academic requirements on a moderate basis. Reading several times a week offers an optimal balance between leisure and learning, providing students with regular exposure to English texts without the daily commitment.

A small percentage, 6.3%, reported reading once a week. This infrequent reading habit does suggest that these students might not be fully utilizing reading as a tool for language learning. A notable 37.5% of the male students rarely read outside of class. This highlights a potential gap in engagement that could hinder their language development.

4. How often do you read outside of class?

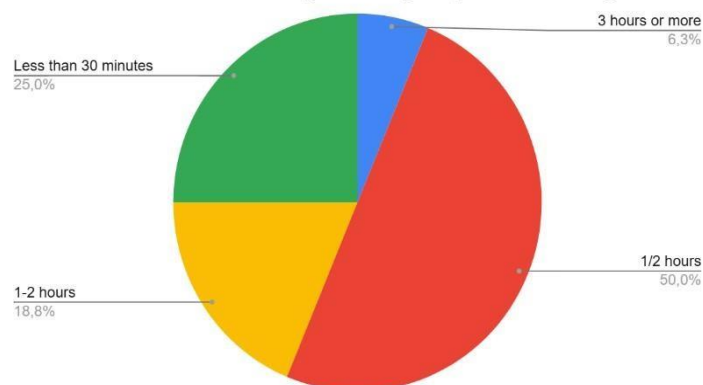


Male pie chart figure 1. 8

The analysis revealed that a small proportion, 12.5%, of female EFL undergraduate students read daily, indicating a dedicated group of avid readers who enjoy reading as a regular activity. A greater number, 37.5% of the female participants, reported reading several times a week. This suggests that a substantial portion of the study group maintains a regular, albeit not daily, reading habit. Interestingly, another 37.5% of the female students indicated that they rarely read books outside of class. This highlights a gap in reading engagement that might be addressed by educational initiatives aimed at promoting reading for pleasure among EFL students. Lastly, 12.5% of female participants said they never read books outside of class, pointing to a significant disinterest or lack of motivation in voluntary reading.

In exploring the reading habits and preferences among male undergraduate students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, a distinctive pattern emerges regarding the amount of time they prefer to dedicate to reading daily. The pie chart results, based on a sample of 16 male and 16 female students, reveal a varied distribution in reading time preferences.

5. How much time in a day would you prefer reading?



male pie chart figure 1. 9

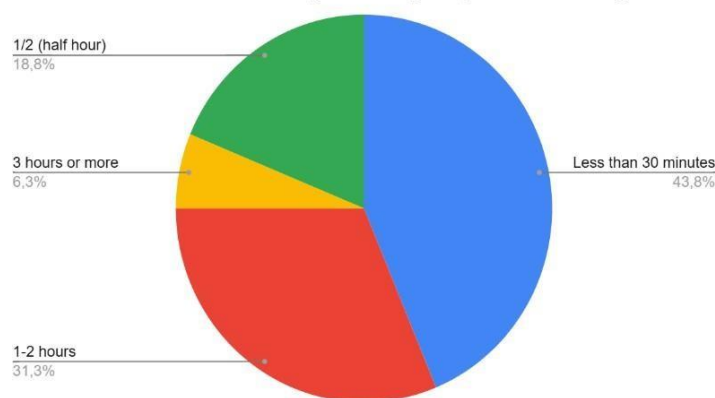
The data indicates that 50% of the male students prefer to read for half an hour every day, suggesting a moderate level of reading engagement. This preference for a moderate reading duration is significant, as it aligns with the typical time frame for daily reading

activities recommended by educational experts to enhance language skills (Smith, 2018). It provides a basis for understanding the reading habits that are most common among this demographic.

Moreover, 25% of the male students opt for reading sessions shorter than 30 minutes. This finding is noteworthy as it suggests a preference for brief reading periods, which could potentially be accommodated through the provision of concise and engaging reading materials.

A smaller yet notable 18.8% of male students prefer reading for 1-2 hours daily. This preference for longer reading sessions indicates a group of students who are more deeply engaged with reading activities. Lastly, 6.3% of male students dedicate 3 hours or more to reading. This extreme level of reading engagement among a small portion of the sample suggests a high degree of interest in reading or possibly a requirement for academic purposes.

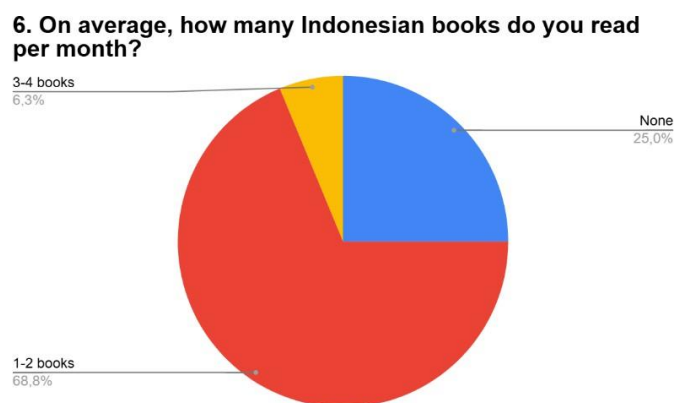
5. How much time in a day would you prefer reading?



Female pie chart figure 1. 10

A significant proportion of 43.8% of female students prefer to read for less than 30 minutes each day. This finding suggests a tendency towards brief reading sessions that could be attributed to time constraints or personal preference. Educators aiming to enhance reading engagement among female EFL students might consider incorporating quick, engaging reading materials that can be easily consumed within this time frame (Krashen, 2004).

In contrast, 18.8% of female students favor reading sessions lasting half an hour. This preference for moderate reading durations highlights a group of students who balance reading as an enjoyable activity with their daily responsibilities. 1.3% of female students show a preference for reading between 1-2 hours daily. This preference for longer reading sessions indicates a higher level of engagement and dedication to reading activities. A minority of 6.3% of female students dedicate 3 hours or more to reading. This group represents students with a strong reading interest or academic necessity for extended reading.

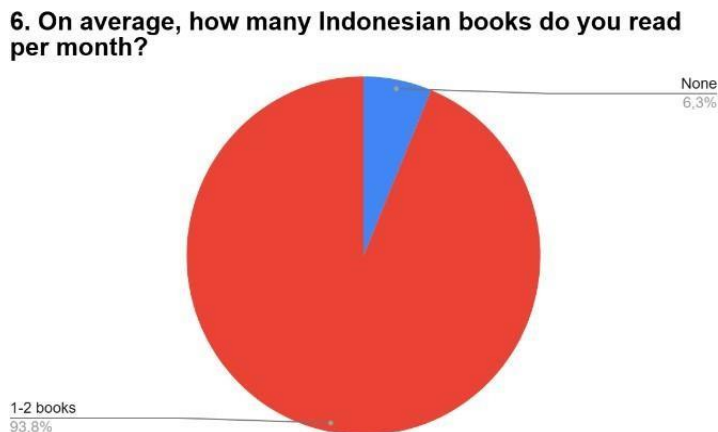


Male pie chart figure 1. 11

The pie chart results demonstrate that the majority of male students, approximately 68.8%, read between 1-2 Indonesian books per month. This finding suggests a moderate engagement with local literature, indicating a level of interest in Indonesian texts that is neither negligible nor excessively high.

A notable 25% of the male students reported reading no Indonesian books per month. This could be attributed to several factors, including a preference for English literature, the influence of digital media, or the availability of reading materials.

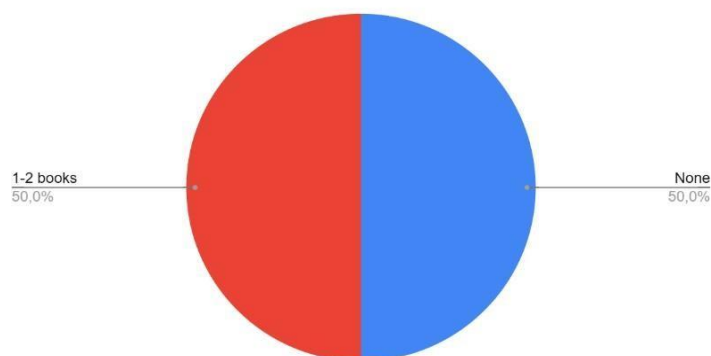
Only a small percentage, 6.3%, read 3-4 books per month. This group of avid readers could be considered outliers in the study, showing a higher-than-average interest in Indonesian books.



Female pie chart figure 1. 12

The data clearly shows that the vast majority, or 93.8%, of female students read between 1-2 Indonesian books per month. This high percentage suggests a strong engagement with local literature, indicating that these students actively seek out and consume Indonesian texts on a regular basis. Conversely, a small percentage, only 6.3%, of the female students reported reading no Indonesian books per month.

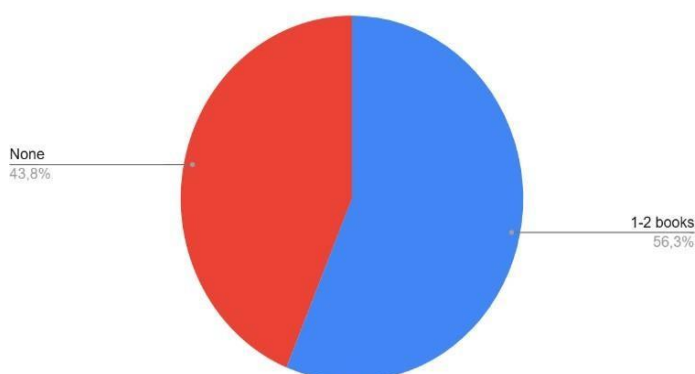
7. On average, how many English books do you read per month?



Male pie chart figure 1. 13

The findings indicate that there is an equal split in reading preferences among male students, with 50% reporting that they read no English books per month and the other 50% reading between 1-2 English books per month. This balanced distribution suggests a dichotomy in reading habits – half of the male students are not engaging with English literature at all, while the other half are reading English books at a moderate pace.

7. On average, how many English books do you read per month?



Female pie chart figure 1. 14

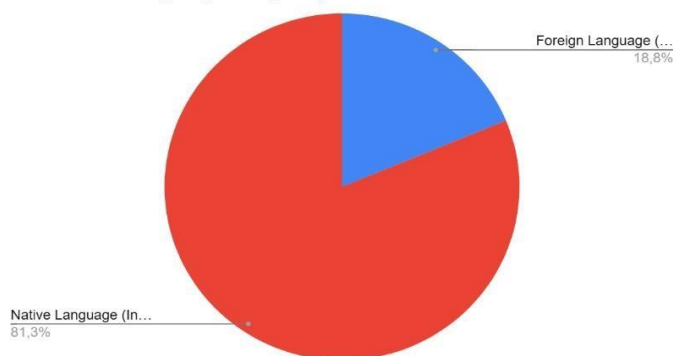
The data reveals that 56.3% of female students read between 1-2 English books per month, indicating a moderate level of engagement with English literature. This suggests that a significant number of female EFL students are actively seeking out and consuming English texts, which is a positive sign for their language acquisition and cultural understanding.

Conversely, 43.8% of female students reported reading no English books per month. This finding highlights a potential gap in reading habits among female students, which could be attributed to factors such as lack of access to English materials, disinterest in reading English literature, or time constraints due to other academic commitments.

There is a slight difference in the reading habits of female and male EFL undergraduate students, with female students showing slightly higher rates of reading English books, the data does not strongly support the presence of a significant gender divide in reading preferences.

Reading Preferences of Male and Female Students

1. In what language do you prefer to read?

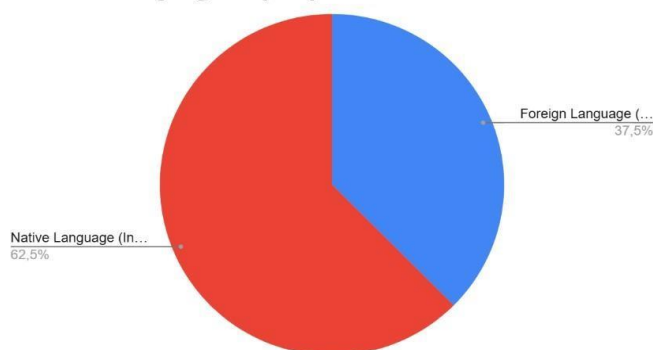


Male Pie Chart Figure 2. 1

The data indicates a significant preference for reading in their native language, Indonesian, over English. In our sample of 16 male students, a considerable 81.3% expressed a preference for reading in Indonesian, while only 18.8% indicated English as their preferred reading language.

This finding suggests that, despite being EFL students and actively learning English, the majority of male participants feel more comfortable and engaged when reading materials are in their native language. This could be attributed to cultural familiarity, ease of understanding, and the emotional connection that comes with reading in one's first language (Jambor, 2016).

1. In what language do you prefer to read?



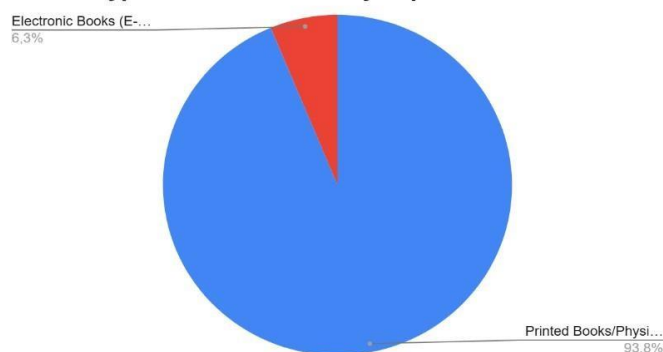
Female pie chart figure 2. 2

The data indicates that 62.5% of these female students prefer reading in their native language, Indonesian, while 37.5% express a preference for reading in English. This inclination toward native language reading could be linked to the richness of cultural context provided by Indonesian literature, which resonates more deeply with personal and societal experiences (Jambor, 2016). However, the notable percentage (37.5%) who prefer reading in English indicates a higher level of engagement and perhaps a different set of motivations or interests compared to their male counterparts.

In conclusion, while both male and female EFL students in our sample have a preference for reading in their native language, the data suggests that female students are

more open to reading in English.

2. What types of book forms do you prefer to read?

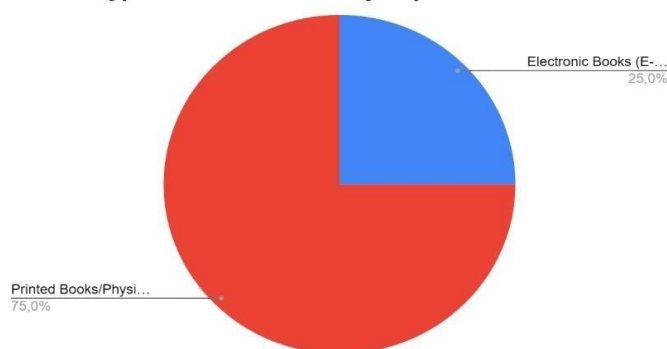


Male Pie Chart Figure 2.3

Of the 16 male students surveyed, a striking 93.8% expressed a clear preference for printed or physical books over electronic alternatives. This overwhelming inclination toward traditional reading formats provides invaluable insight into the comforts and preferences of male EFL students.

The high preference for physical books among male EFL students can be attributed to several factors. The tangible experience of handling a book, the lack of screen time, and the ability to engage with the text in a tactile manner are often cited as reasons for this preference (Mangen & Velay, 2016). Despite the growing popularity of digital reading formats, only 6.3% of male students in our study preferred electronic books (e-books). This statistic suggests that, among male EFL students, digital reading options are not widely favored.

2. What types of book forms do you prefer to read?

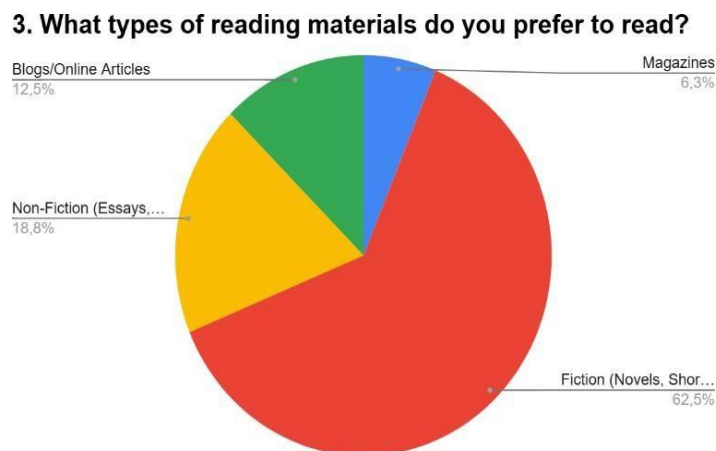


Female pie chart figure 2.4

The researcher observed that 75% of female students in the sample of 16 participants expressed a strong inclination toward printed or physical books. This finding indicates a significant preference for traditional reading mediums among female EFL students, reflecting the enduring appeal of physical books.

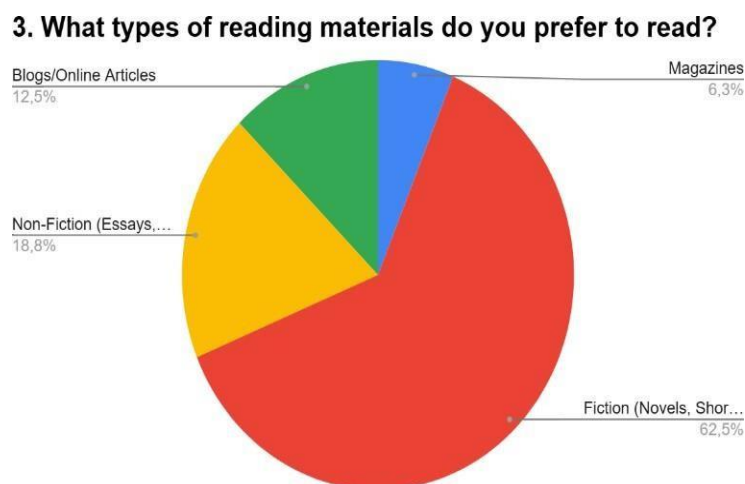
It also highlighted that 25% of female students favored electronic books (e-books) as their reading medium of choice. This preference for e-books indicates that a portion of female EFL students are receptive to digital reading formats. The convenience, accessibility, and portability of e-books can be particularly appealing to students in the digital age, allowing for flexibility in reading practices (Kobayashi & Alzghoul, 2021).

This reveals that while both male and female students predominantly prefer printed books, there is a notable difference in the level of preference.



Male Pie Chart Figure 2. 5

Approximately 62.5% of male participants indicated a strong inclination toward novels, short stories, and similar narrative genres. The data also revealed that 18.8% of male students favored non-fiction reading materials. This includes essays and other informational texts. A notable 12.5% of male EFL students expressed a preference for blogs and online articles. This highlights the relevance of digital media in contemporary reading habits, where real-time information and interactive content are easily accessible. The remaining 6.3% of male students preferred magazines. This preference for magazines indicates an interest in diverse topics and a more relaxed reading experience.



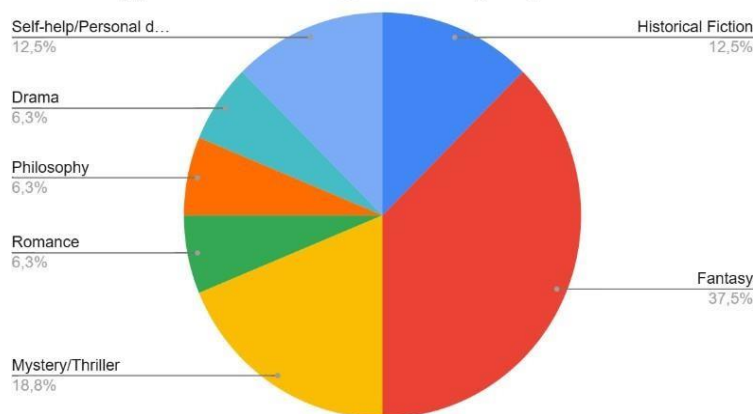
Female pie chart figure 2. 6

With 68.8% of female participants favoring novels, short stories, and other narrative literature, this finding underscores the significant role of creative storytelling in engaging female EFL students. Beyond fiction, the data reveals a balanced interest in a variety of reading materials. The remaining 31.2% is evenly distributed among non-fiction, academic texts, blogs/online articles, self-improvement books, and magazines. This

distribution indicates that female EFL students are not only interested in narrative-driven texts but also seek out educational, practical, and current information.

When compared to female EFL students, whose preferences were similarly surveyed, male students showed a slightly lower preference for fiction (62.5% for males vs. 68.8% for females). In contrast, males indicated a higher inclination toward non-fiction (18.8% for males vs. 6.3% for females). These differences suggest that while both genders appreciate fiction, male EFL students are also more drawn to informational and analytical content.

4. What types of literature genres do you prefer to read?



Male Pie Chart Figure 2. 7

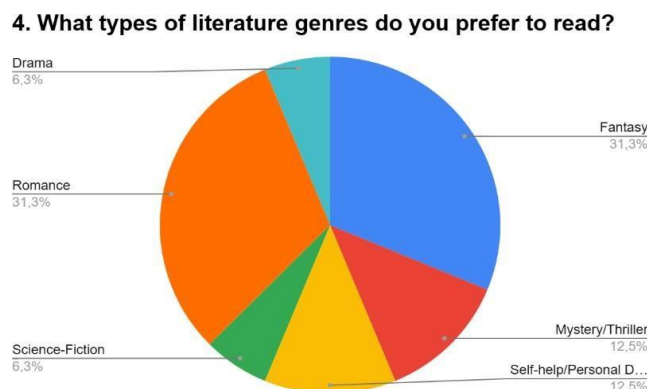
The result highlights a significant inclination toward fantasy literature. With 37.5% of male participants expressing a preference for fantasy novels, this genre emerges as a popular choice among these students. Fantasy literature's ability to transport readers to alternate worlds and explore complex themes through unique storytelling is a likely factor behind its appeal (Hansen, 2012).

Mystery and thriller genres follow closely behind, with 18.8% of male EFL students finding these types of literature particularly engaging. These genres can challenge critical thinking skills and offer a more dynamic reading experience, which may be why they are preferred by a substantial portion of the participants (Serafini, 2014).

Historical fiction, with a 12.5% preference, suggests an interest in learning about different historical periods through a narrative lens. This genre not only educates but also entertains, providing a richer understanding of history and its impact on contemporary society (Bennett, 2010).

The same 12.5% preference for self-help and personal development books reflects a desire for self-improvement and personal growth. These genres can offer practical advice and insights, contributing to the holistic development of EFL students (Kovacs, 2015).

The remaining genres — drama, philosophy, and romance — each accounted for 6.3% of the female EFL students' preferences. This highlights that while certain genres may dominate, there is a significant interest in a broad range of literature types, suggesting a diverse readership.

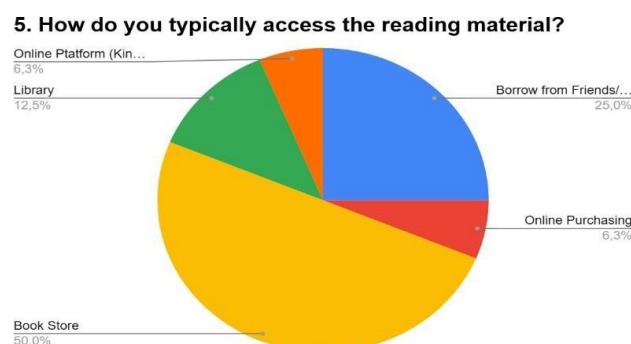


Female pie chart figure 2. 8

The survey results reveal that fantasy and romance are the most preferred genres among female EFL students, each accounting for 31.3% of the respondents' preferences. Science fiction, with its speculative and futuristic themes, garnered the interest of 6.3% of the participants, indicating a smaller but notable preference for this genre. Similarly, drama, known for its deep character explorations and intense emotional narratives, was also preferred by 6.3% of the female students, showcasing a liking for stories that reflect the complexities of human life.

Self-help and personal development books were chosen by 12.5% of the female students, highlighting a trend towards reading material that offers practical advice and personal growth. This inclination might be attributed to the students' desire for self-improvement and acquisition of skills to navigate their personal and professional lives more effectively (Wong & Yip, 2016). Mystery and thriller genres, characterized by suspense and unexpected plot twists, were favored by another 12.5% of the group.

Female students and male students both showed a clear preference for Fantasy, with females at 31.3% and males at 37.5%. Notably, the data highlights a significant gender divide in other genre preferences. Female students displayed a strong inclination towards Romance, with it mirroring Fantasy at 31.3%.



Male pie chart figure 2. 9

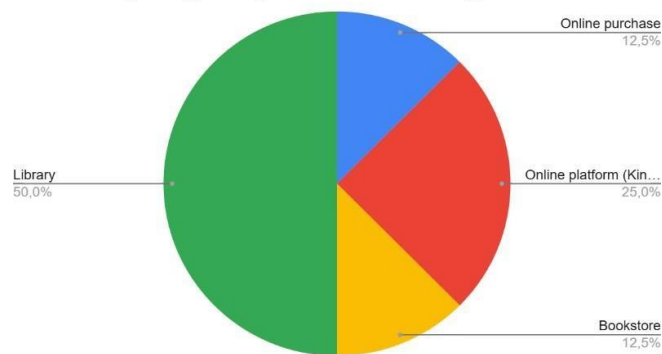
An intriguing finding from the survey is the predominant use of bookstores as a source for reading materials. An impressive 50% of the male students reported purchasing their reading materials from bookstores.

Another notable trend is the frequency of borrowing from friends, observed to be the second most popular method at 25%. This practice not only allows students to gain access

to a variety of reading materials without financial cost but also fosters a sense of community and shared learning experiences (Finlayson, 2018).

The data reveals that the use of libraries and online platforms (Kindle, Google Books) is less common. Libraries were reported as a source by only 12.5% of the male students, which may be indicative of the perceived limitations of library resources or availability in their immediate environment.

5. How do you typically access the reading materials?



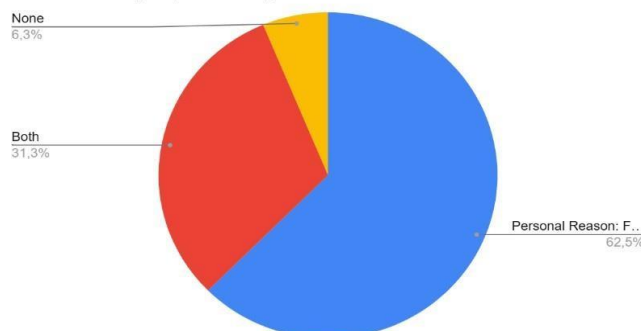
Female pie chart figure 2. 10

The findings indicate that libraries remain a central resource for female EFL students. A substantial 50% of female participants reported accessing their reading materials through library resources. Libraries serve as repositories not only for a wide range of reading materials but also as quiet study environments that can foster deep learning and reading habits (Ostrom, 2017).

Online platforms, such as Kindle and Google Books, are also a significant source of reading materials for male EFL students, with 25% preferring this method. The data further reveals that 12.5% of female students opt for online purchases, while another 12.5% choose to buy books from physical bookstores.

Male students favor the tangible experience of physical books by primarily accessing materials through bookstores, while female students prefer the diverse and often cost-effective resources available at libraries. The higher use of online platforms by female students compared to their male counterparts indicates a possible greater comfort or preference for digital reading among women.

6. For what purpose do you read books?



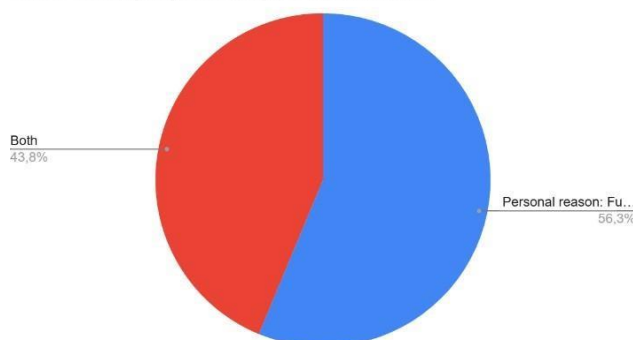
Male pie chart figure 2. 11

The most dominant finding is the high prevalence of personal reading for fun and

relaxation, with a significant 62.5% of male students indicating that their primary reading purpose lies in the realm of leisure and personal enjoyment. The data reveals that reading for academic reasons, specifically to meet school needs, plays a relatively minor role in the reading habits of female EFL students. Only 6.3% of the participants reported academic needs as their primary reading purpose.

A substantial 31.3% of male students reported reading for both personal and academic reasons. This dual-purpose reading behavior reflects a balance between academic obligations and personal interests.

6. For what purpose do you read books?

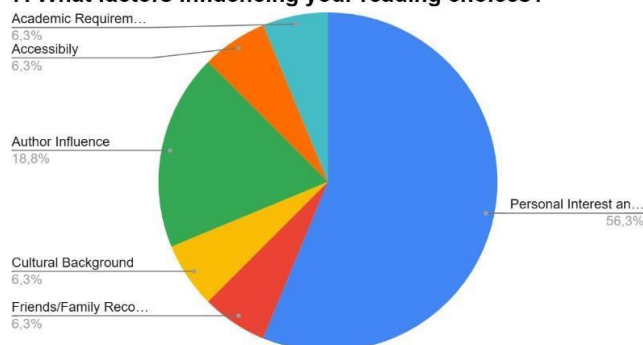


Female pie chart figure 2. 12

The most striking finding is the high percentage of female students who read books primarily for fun and relaxation, with a notable 56.3% of respondents indicating this as their primary reading purpose. This suggests that for female EFLundergraduates, reading is not merely an academic exercise, but a personal leisure activity that serves as a means of relaxation amidst the pressures of academic life (Cunningham & Zentall, 2016). Additionally, 43.8% of female students reported that their reading habits serve both personal and academic purposes. This dual-purpose reading behavior showcases the dynamic and flexible reading patterns of female EFL undergraduates.

In summary, both male and female EFL undergraduate students predominantly read books for personal enjoyment, specifically for fun and relaxation. This trend indicates a strong preference for leisure reading across genders. While there is a slight difference in the percentage of males compared to females reading for personal reasons, the data suggests that academic reading needs do not significantly motivate students to read outside of the required course materials.

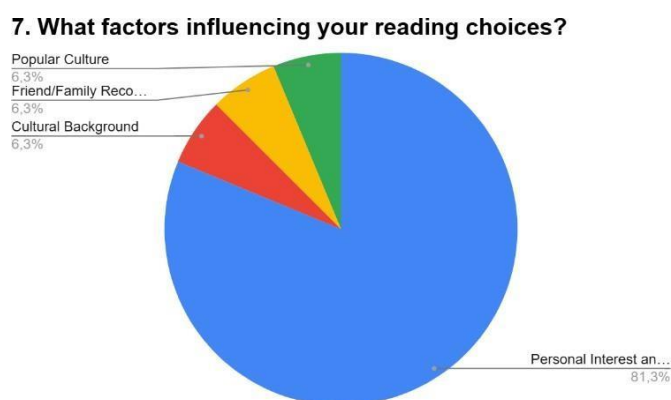
7. What factors influencing your reading choices?



Male pie chart figure 2. 13

The result reveals that personal interest and motivation are the most influential factors behind their reading choices, accounting for a significant 56.3% of the preferences. This suggests that these students are largely driven by their own intrinsic motivations and preferences when selecting reading materials. The second most impactful factor is the influence of the author, which accounts for 18.8% of reading choices. This highlights the role of an author's reputation, style, and previous works in shaping students' preferences.

Other factors such as academic requirements, accessibility, friend/family recommendations, and cultural background each contribute 6.3% to the reading preferences of these male EFL students. This indicates that while they have a strong personal preference in what they choose to read, they are also influenced by practical considerations and social factors.



Female pie chart figure 2. 14

The most dominant factor in shaping the reading preferences of the female EFL undergraduate students is personal interest and motivation, accounting for a remarkable 81.3% of the responses. This finding underlines the significance of individual preference and intrinsic motivation in guiding reading choices among this demographic.

Similarly, popular culture and cultural background, each representing 6.3% of the responses, play minor roles in determining reading choices. These findings challenge the assumption that current trends and cultural heritage are major determinants of reading preferences. Instead, they point to a more individualistic approach to reading, where personal interests and motivations hold precedence over external influences.

Both male and female students prominently display a high level of personal interest and motivation in their reading choices. For females, this factor is overwhelmingly dominant at 81.3%, significantly higher than the 56.3% seen in males. This suggests that female students are more likely to choose reading materials that align closely with their personal interests, which may indicate a deeper level of engagement with reading as a self-driven activity.

There is a notable difference in the influence of friends and family versus the impact of an author's reputation. Female students are more likely to be swayed by recommendations from friends and family (6.3%) compared to males, where author influence comes in as the second most significant factor (18.8%). This indicates that for

male students, the reputation of the author plays a more crucial role in their reading choices, possibly reflecting a tendency to seek out established or well-regarded authors in their reading selections.

For male students, academic requirements and accessibility each hold 6.3% of the influence, suggesting that these factors play a more significant role in their reading choices compared to female students, where these factors are not mentioned. This might indicate that male students are more likely to consider the practical aspects of reading, such as the relevance of the material to their studies and the ease of accessing the reading materials.

CONCLUSION

The study on examining the gender divide and its factors in reading preferences among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) undergraduate students reveals several insightful trends and patterns. The study on the gender divide and factors influencing reading preferences among EFL undergraduate students highlights distinct patterns and trends. There is a significant difference in the language of reading preference between genders, with more female EFL students (37.5%) preferring to read in a foreign language compared to male students (18.8%), who predominantly prefer their native language. Male students overwhelmingly prefer printed books (93.8%) over electronic books, whereas female students are more evenly split, with 75% preferring printed books and 25% opting for electronic formats. Both male and female students have a similar preference for fiction over non-fiction, but female students are slightly more inclined towards fiction.

Male students have a preference for fantasy, mystery/thriller, and self-help/personal development genres, whereas female students lean towards fantasy, romance, and self-help/personal development. However, a considerable proportion of female students prefer romance, which is less favored by male students. Male students are more likely to access books through bookstores and borrowing from friends/families, while female students are more inclined to use the library and online platforms. Both genders primarily read for personal reasons such as fun and relaxation, with a slight difference in the proportion of male and female students engaging in reading for both personal and academic purposes.

It is suggested to ensure that the library collections are diverse, catering to different language preferences and offering a mix of physical and electronic formats. Moreover, the students are encouraged to improve their foreign language skills by providing additional resources and language learning support. Explore how gender intersects with other demographic variables (race, socioeconomic status, cultural background) to influence reading preferences. This approach will provide a more nuanced understanding of how multiple identities affect reading choices.

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