

EFL Students' Perceptions of Reading for Pleasure in Indonesian Higher Education: Motivation, Habits, Material Preferences, and Language Skill Development

Dyah Kusumastuti¹, Athayazhafirah Aulia Dien², Katim Lowe³
 Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Indonesia^{1,2}
 Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education the Republic of the Gambia, Africa³
 E-mail Correspondence: dyahkusumastuti@ump.ac.id

Abstract

Background:

This study explores the EFL university students' perceptions of Reading for Pleasure (RfP) in terms of reading motivation, reading habits, material preferences, and perceived English language skill development.

Methodology:

A quantitative descriptive research design was employed. Data collected from 35 second semester students of English Education at one of the private universities in Central Java by using a validated questionnaire.

Findings:

Results show that students have a high opinion of so-called RfP, especially its effect on vocabulary and reading comprehension (more than 80%). Much of the motivation is instrumental in nature, and students read to get better at reading rather than to enjoy it. The participation is still sporadic due to the time (71.4 %) and low institutional (42.9%) support for research. For media preference, the results show that materials of choice are fictional works (82.8%) and digital versions (74.3%), indicating change in reading habits. The findings of the regression analysis provide evidence that investment in reading as an activity has a greater effect on skill development ($\beta = 1.50$) than motivation, reinforcing the importance of turning motivation into practice over time.

Conclusion:

Students acknowledged the linguistic and academic benefits of RfP. The school-level practices, including organized RfP activities, rich materials and an autonomy supportive climate are critical to cultivation of consistent reading habits and comprehensive language knowledge. Use of longitudinal designs and digital/collaborative reading practice might provide further explanation to sustaining engagement.

Originality:

Despite the well-established influence, with evidence of its positive contributions on learners, few studies have addressed how motivation, reading habits, material preference and perceived skill development interrelate in Indonesian higher education.

Keywords : reading for pleasure; motivation; EFL students; reading habits; material preferences

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading for pleasure (RfP) has gained great attention in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, connecting language proficiency with affective engagement and personal growth. As far as the development of new language is concerned, reading has traditionally been seen not only as a way to increase vocabulary and comprehension, but also as the basis for burgeoning motivation from within, autonomous learning and favorable attitudes toward language acquisition (Anindita, 2020; Karasu & Tunaboynu, 2022; Safei & Ekasari, 2022). Unlike scholarly reading that promotes analytic and critical thinking, pleasure reading is motivated by the enjoyment, curiosity and voluntary nature of intrapersonal engagement. By selecting resources that appeal to learners' interests, they will naturally acquire grammar forms, become fluent and confident by engaging in real, meaningful usage of the language. So RfP simultaneously functions as a language and literacy enrichment activity and as an orientation for developing lifelong reading habits.

Although research has previously enthusiastically endorsed the pedagogical and psychological benefits of RfP. Karasu and Tunaboynu (2022) along with Fuentes (2023) indicated that voluntary reading helps their vocabulary skill, reading comprehension and cultural awareness but the result from Fatimah & Yulianto (2025) discovered that students wanted to read for pleasure; they knew of its benefits yet they were restricted by academic tasks such as time. Other research has added to our understanding of motivational and contextual factors that contribute to the act of pleasure reading. Saito (2025) confirmed that involving and motivation are the last piece in puzzle to win ER among students of university. Moreover Putri & Damayanti (2025) stated that digital reading can develop comprehension by varying learning materials referring to students' interest, and so did Anggrainy et al. (2024) which demonstrated the effectiveness of gamified reading activities to enhance students' motivation and engagement. Ateek (2021) also reported that extensive reading can have a positive effect on learners' attitudes and language development, which further supports the role of long-term voluntary reading in EFL classrooms. Taken together, the message of these studies is that although students value reading for pleasure, sustained engagement requires internal motivation and nurturant learning environments.

Recent reports emphasize on a significant change of readout tendencies from technological progress. Chang et al. (2022) noted that broader use of digital platforms (e.g., e-books, blogs, and reading apps) provides access to a wider array of texts for students but is also rife with distractions which may detract from deep reading and critical engagement.

Khonamri et al. (2024) they also stated that social motivation and accountability during the reading might counteract the rapid decline in a sustained reading event such as readathons when combined with collaborative reading practices (i.e., reading circles). Similarly, Juliari et al. (2024) indicate that supporting parents to be involved with children's reading and school based literacy movements make a major difference in generating an interest in reading, especially when developing language at early and intermediate stages. These results serve to highlight the multiple dimensions which influence recreational reading, and additionally reveal it as a highly complex yet essential aspect of language learning.

However, despite several positive findings of RfP a number of limitations persist. Affective enjoyment was found to be strongly associated to learning persistence, yet its interrelationship with linguistic development is not always straightforward (Zhang et al., 2024). In addition, Hakiki and Mardiana (2024) found that the competency of a teacher, as well as classroom climate, can either reinforce or undermine students' desire to read on their own; likewise, Ibhar (2022) showed that interest in reading is predictive of vocabulary development once it is supported by scaffolding from teachers. These results lead to the conclusion that RfP studies should proceed from single variables to similar integrated levels of motivational, behavioral and linguistic dimensions. The current study thus expands and clarifies the prior work by taking a more comprehensive perspective. Towards these aims, the paper answers the following research questions:

1. How do EFL learners perceive reading for pleasure with regard to their reading habits, motivation, language ability and material preference?
2. How do these perceptions illustrate the connection between intrinsic motivation, reading engagement and English proficiency growth?

In theory, this research is informed by four main perspectives. Krashen's Input Hypothesis posits that input for language acquisition should contain slightly more difficult sentences than the learners' current proficiency level ($i + 1$), a condition easily met in pleasure reading (Krashen, 1982). This concept is supported by Day and Bamford (1998) Extensive Reading Theory who advocate the fact that vast amount's interesting, comprehensible reading enhances fluency as well as vocabulary. Motivationally, Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) offers an explanation of how intrinsic motivation is influenced by autonomy, competence and relatedness. Autonomous choice, perceived value of reading and experience sharing with friends seemed to help maintain the learners' interests in engaging in role-play. Finally, Rosenblatt's Reader-Response Theory illustrates that the relationships and emotional

reactions between reader and text are crucial for better understanding and long-term interest (Rosenblatt, 1978). Taken together, these theories offer a sound theoretical basis for how RfP not only fosters cognitive aspects of EFL learning but also supports various affective phenomena.

The goal of the scientific contribution of this study is to merge these theoretical and empirical findings in an integrated model that specifies how reading habits, motivation, language skills and material preferences interrelate when explaining children's leisure reading perceptions. It does so theoretically, by bridging theories of linguistic acquisition, psychological motivation models, and reader-centred approaches, as well as empirically – with data from higher education in Indonesia and thus contribute to RfP research that still lags behind in this context. Anticipated findings include that positive RfP attitudes predict higher levels of intrinsic motivation, proceduralized reading habits, and English proficiency; and these relationships are all moderated through autonomy, digital engagement, and institutional support.

The present study further contributes to the field of EFL reading research by examining EFL students' perceptions of recreational reading, and this is examined from the perspectives of motivational, behavioral, and linguistic dimensions at once. Unlike the past literature, which always separate one variable for explaining motivation (Saito, 2025; Ryan & Deci, 2000) or reading habits (Fatimah & Yulianto, 2025; Anindita, 2020), this study has more comprehensive frameworks that relate intrinsic and extrinsic motivation along with their preferences of materials in developing skills offered Indonesian higher education—a background underrepresented in RfP studies (Fuentes, 2023; Harimurti et al., 2016). Through a focus on second-semester university students and their developing digital reading practices (Chang et al., 2022; Putri & Damayanti, 2025), the findings contribute to new understandings of the interplay between technology, autonomy, and institutional support in narrating engagement with reading (Khonamri et al., 2024; Hakiki & Mardiana, 2024). This contribution is significant for teaching academia, in quartations and decision makers trying to develop ecology-friendly reading and writing activities among EFL classes (Karasu & Tunaboynu, 2022; Angrainy et al., 2024).

2. METHODOLOGY

It sought to investigate EFL students' attitudes toward pleasure reading, their factors in relation to enjoyable reading, habits of reading motivation, language proficiency and texts they fancy most. The methodological framework was created so that collection and analysis

of data corresponds with the purpose of the study and is coherent with its theoretical underpinnings.

2.1 Study Design

In this research, a quantitative descriptive survey design was used. A quantitative approach was chosen in order to provide an empirical representation of students' perceptions and phenomena; for that purpose, the use of numerical data is employed to depict patterns and relationships between variables. A descriptive investigation was thought appropriate in order to try to discover an existing pattern of the students' attitudes and habits concerning leisure reading without manipulations of extraneous variables. The design also enables the researchers to report generalizable findings in similar EFL learner populations. Further, the model is consistent with studies on reading attitudes and habits (Saito (2025), Rahmaningtias & Kusumastuti (2019), Fatimah and Yulianto (2025) and Anggrainy et al. (2024)), which also used quantitative methods to study students' motivation and reading engagement.

2.2 Sample Population

The study population was undergraduate students participating in the English Education Program at a private university located in Central Java, Indonesia. The participants were 35 second-semester students of English Education Program. Among them, 74.3% were female and 25.7% were male and there was an age range of 18-21 years old. Participants' average GPA was 3.45 (on a 4.0 scale), which suggests that they perform well academically overall. All students had previously taken at least one academic reading course, and were experienced with both print and digital reading formats. It is these background data that contribute to an understanding of the reading behavior and preferences of the students. They were approached through purposive sampling as the individuals who belonged to a cohort of future English learners at an initial early stage. The survey was voluntary, and the students gave their consent before responding. Ethics such as confidentiality and anonymity of the data were fully observed.

2.3 Data Collection Techniques and Instrument Development

This study used a closed-ended online survey that is the same as one adopted by Anindita (2020), Fuentes (2023), and Day & Bamford (1998) for four categories including reading motivation, reading habits, language skill development, and material preferences. The construct validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by factor analysis which exposed distinct clustering of items in their respective dimensions. For content validity, three lecturers of English professor examined the items and made suggestions on clarity, relevancy, and cultural

sensitivity. A pilot testing was carried out with 10 students who are from the same educational background to determine whether items being understood or responded consistently. According to the pilot results, wording was simple and ambiguity were removed after minor modifications. The questionnaire was of 20 items on Likert scale and five multiple choice questions, which were taken after refining them by well-known already existing instruments (Anindita, 2020; Fuentes, 2023; Day & Bamford, 1998). Expert judgment of the questionnaire was evaluated by three English education lecturers to ensure construct validity and content clarity. The reliability of the four scales was by Cronbach’s alpha $\alpha = 0.79$, indicating that the instrument was reliable for conducting quantitative measurements. The electronic data was shared by the way of a Google Form to make ready accessibility and participation during the month of April 2025 when this survey was conducted.

Table 1 Blueprint of the Questionnaire

No	Aspects	Indicators
1	<i>Habit and Perception</i>	<i>Frequency of reading in free time</i>
		<i>Ability to manage reading schedule</i>
		<i>Time management for reading</i>
		<i>Setting personal goals</i>
		<i>Perception of reading</i>
		<i>Excitement in finding new text</i>
2	<i>Motivation</i>	<i>Enjoyment in reading</i>
		<i>Beliefs in benefits of learning</i>
		<i>Social encouragement</i>
		<i>Skill’s improvement</i>
3	<i>Language Skills</i>	<i>Reading comprehension improvement</i>
		<i>Vocabulary/expressions acquisition</i>
		<i>Writing skill improvement</i>
		<i>Imaginative engagement through reading</i>
		<i>Overall language skill development</i>
		<i>Format preference (digital/print)</i>
4	<i>Reading Choices</i>	<i>Genre preference (fiction, etc.)</i>
		<i>Accessibility of texts</i>
		<i>Relevance to daily life/study</i>
		<i>Freedom in choosing format and genre</i>

2.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Data received were subjected to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Windows version 25.0. The student responses were summarized using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency and percentage) to summarize students' statements and to provide an overview of their general perceptions. Furthermore, Pearson product-moment correlation was run to investigate relationships among motivation, reading habits language skill development and Material preference. This enabled us to determine if positive attitudes towards reading for pleasure are related to self-reported frequency and perceived skill. The findings were then discussed in relation to the theoretical frameworks considered at the outset of this paper – specifically, Krashen's Input Hypothesis; Self-Determination Theory; Extensive Reading Theory; and Reader-Response Theory – such that these empirical observations might be channeled through some of the more established models for understanding reading motivation and language development.

3. FINDINGS

Quantitative results were further strengthened by several advanced statistical analyses. These high-level analyses - regression modelling, effect size assessment - were implemented to support qualitative findings and understand further correlation between motivation, habits of reading and developing language competence.

RQ1: How do EFL learners perceive reading for pleasure with regard to their reading habits, motivation, language ability and material preference?

Chart 1 Heatmap of factor loadings representing interfactor correlations the items loaded under four requested factors: Motivation, Reading Habits, Skill Development and Material Preferences

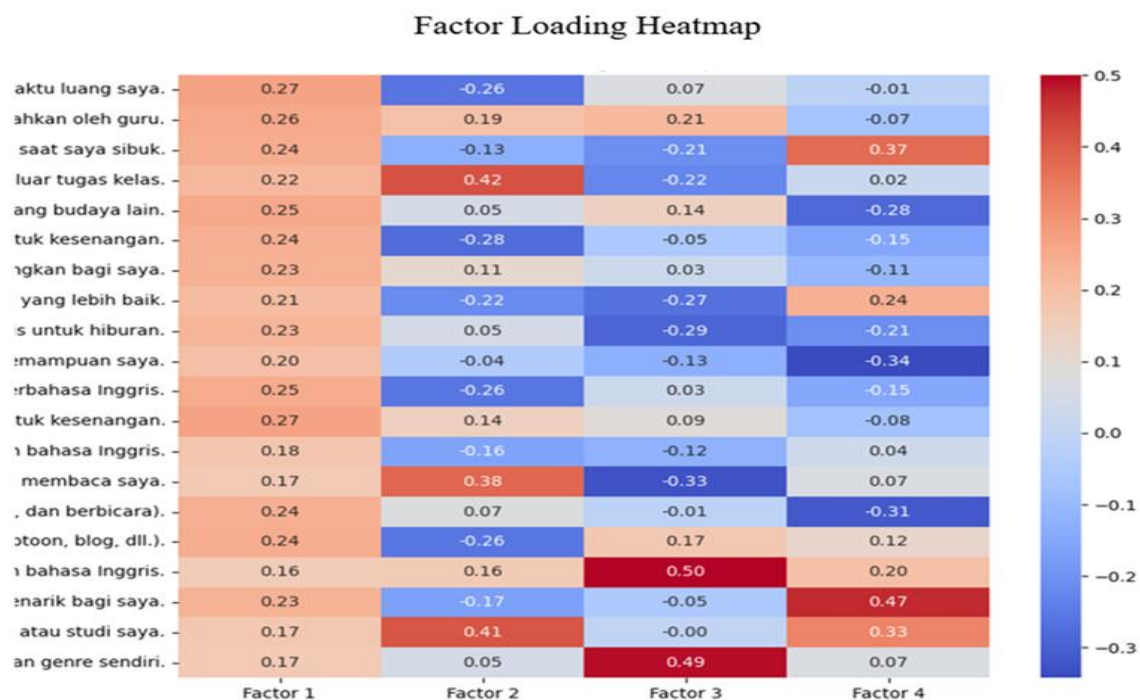


Chart 1 displays a heatmap of factor loadings for the 20 survey-items, classified in four theoretical dimensions namely Motivation (Items 1–5), Reading Habits ([Items 6–10), Skill Development (Items11–15) and Material Preferences (Items 16 –20). The blacker a cell, stronger the correlation, indicating good coverage of measurement and constructs.

Chart 2 Percentage Distribution of EFL Students in the Responses through Constructs of RfP

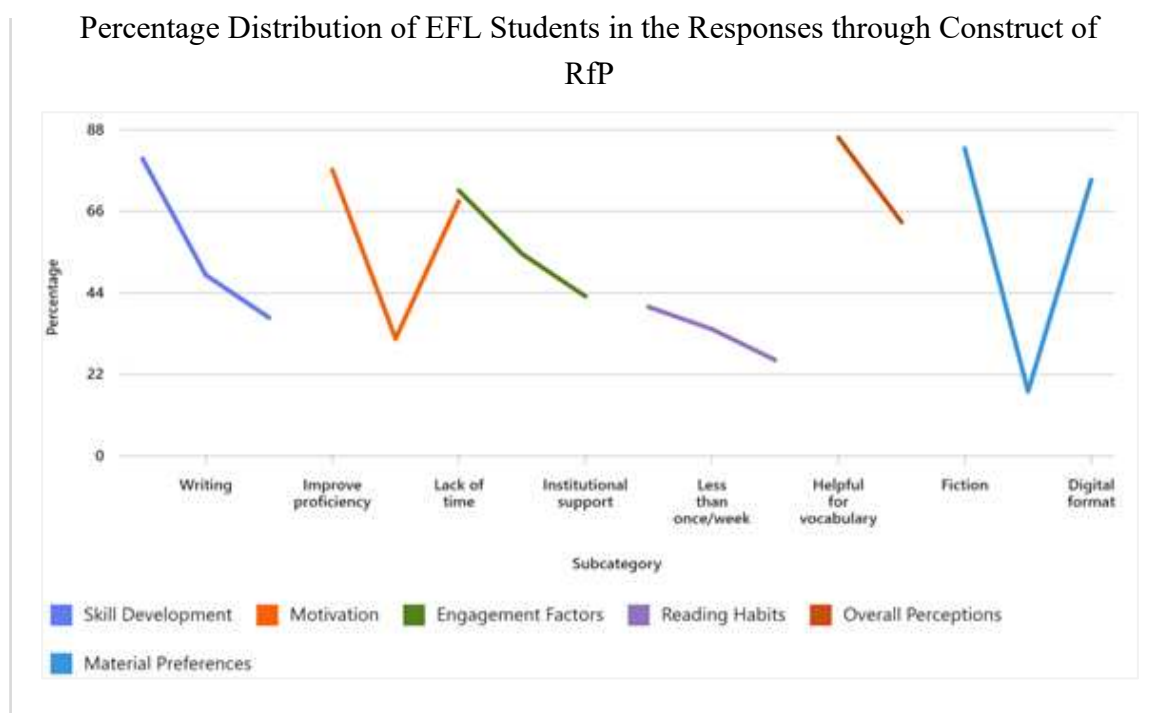
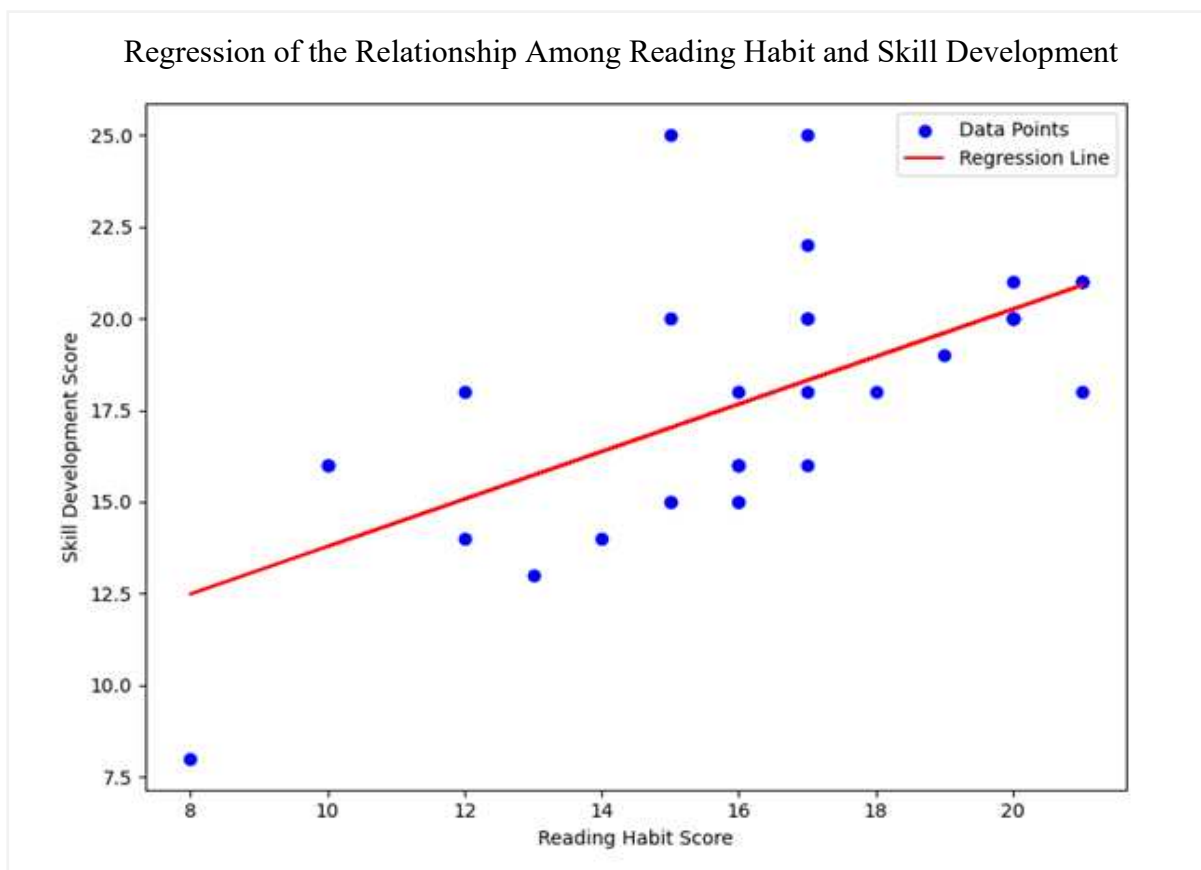


Chart 2 displays the distribution of student's responses across variables. In terms of skill development, 48.6% of students reported enhancement in writing skills. Concerning motivation, 77.0% shows that they read English text to improve proficiency. For engagement factors, 71.4% of participants stated lack of time as a restriction, while 42.9% reported limited institutional support. With respect to reading habits, 34.05 of respondents reported reading English text for pleasure less than once per week. In relation to overall perception, more than 80.0% of students reported that RfP was helpful for vocabulary development. Regarding material preferences, 82.8% of students favored fictional texts, and 74.3% indicated a preference for digital reading formats.

RQ2: How do these perceptions illustrate the connection between intrinsic motivation, reading engagement and English proficiency growth?

Chart 3 Regression of the Relationship between Reading Habit and Skill Development Scores



From chart 3, every point on the scatter plot refers to one student's scores for these two variables. The ascending red trendline shows strong positive correlation: as reading habits becomes more regular, the scores attain significant skill development. The R^2 value of the regression model was 0.88, which says that 88% of variation in skill development could be explained through interaction of reading habit and motivation. Reading ability was the

strongest significant predictor (i.e., $\beta = 1.50$) indicating that regular and continued reading for pleasure played a critical role in contributing to improved language usage. Meanwhile, motivation had a negative beta weight ($\beta = -1.01$).

3.1. Overall, Views on Students' Reading for Pleasure

On the whole, students had good attitudes towards RfP. The statistics showed that most of the learners agreed with the statement that reading for recreation can be beneficial to learning English. About 85.7% of the students believed that RfP is a useful activity for them to enhance their vocabulary and comprehension. Less than two thirds (62.9%) perceived reading for pleasure as a personal pleasure and not an academic duty.

3.2. Reading Habits

With regard to reading frequencies, only some of the students frequently engaged in RfP. Approximately 40% of respondents read English for pleasure between two to three times a week, and 34% read under one time per week. Only 25.7% of the respondents read on a daily basis. A majority of the students preferred reading during their free time or before bed as opposed to at academic times.

3.3. Reading Motivation

The motivations data indicate that, for the most part, students read for pleasure instrumentally. Approximately 77% reading English text to improve their proficiency, vocabulary and comprehension skill. A mere 31.4% said that they read simply for fun. This suggests that the motivation of the students is mostly extrinsically oriented rather than intrinsic in nature. In addition, 68.6% reported the insufficient time and academic burden prevented them from reading habits in regular time.

3.4. Language Skill Development

The students indicated that reading for fun contributed a large part to their receptive language skills such as expansion of vocabulary and achievements in comprehending reading. over 80% of them reported that RfP significantly helped in recognizing new words, understanding grammar rules and longer English readings. The perceived effects on receptive areas and productive skills (writing and speaking) were less marked, with 48.6% of respondents reporting that their writing had improved in fluency, and only 37.1% feeling that they expressed themselves better orally after training for the simultaneous interpreting task.

3.5. Material Preferences

In terms of material choice, the fictional and narrativist genres were predominant among students. Overall, 82.8% of participants stated that they preferred to read stories, novels or fictions/webs led versions and only 17.2 % were inclined towards non- fiction materials like news material and essays. Also, 74.3% of learners had a high preference for digital format which included e-books, Wattpad stories, online magazines and webtoons. The remaining 25.7% chose printed books with the reasons being less distractions and better concentration.

3.6. Factors Affecting Engagement

When asked about difficulties to keeping up RfP, most students reported lack of time (71.4%), followed by hard finding interesting materials (54.3%) and institutional support too low (42.9%). In the other hand, factors that promoted them to read were personal interest (65.7%), vocabulary inclusion (60%) and good reach of digital materials (57.1%).

4. DISCUSSION

The results of this study have confirmed that students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) typically tend to value RfP, though their involvement is patchier. These results provide further support for the idea that although students perceive RfP to be beneficial for language and enjoyment, their RPL is shaped by motivation, time resources, and contextual support. This is in line with what [Fatimah and Yulianto \(2025\)](#) found from the pattern where students in higher education usually understand the meaning of reading, yet they are not able to keep stable habits since they have a lot of workloads coming from their study and lack of encouragement by institution.

4.1 Motivation and Reading Habits

The result of the regression analysis indicated that reading habits have stronger effects on skill than motivation. Although motivation demonstrated a small negative coefficient when habits were included in the model, this does not mean that motivation is not significant but that there seems to be no significant associations with language gains if motivation practices are may guide one towards good socialized linguistic behavior. This result is consistent with a model such as Self-Determination Theory ([Ryan & Deci, 2000](#)), that argues that autonomy should be enabled and structured possibilities to act should be provided for intrinsic motivation. Learners' language proficiency significantly improved along with their reading habits; this

finding supported [Day and Bamford's \(1998\)](#) Extensive Reading Theory which states that learners who are exposed to an abundance of meaningful input will develop fluency and understanding.

Students' positive attitude towards RfP, according to them is as a result of their realization about the role, it plays in vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. This finding also supports Krashen's Input Hypothesis which claims that language is acquired when learners are exposed to meaningful and comprehensible input ([Krashen, 1982](#)). The large proportion of students who self-reported improving their vocabulary leads us to the underlined conclusion that pleasure reading affords natural language input beyond what students receive in traditional lessons. Consistent with [Saito \(2025\)](#) and [Safei and Ekasari \(2022\)](#), this repeated reading of enjoyable texts seems to contribute to language development, but the mechanism is more likely contextual learning than explicit memorization. However, as in the case of [Ahmed \(2016\)](#) students can also have positive perceptions towards reading but lack enjoyment and anxiety that interfere with consistent participation.

The results also indicate that the reading motivation of students is mainly instrumental rather than intrinsic. Most participants stated that they read for the purpose of enhancing English and not enjoying it. This indicates dependence on more extrinsic motivational orientation ([Ryan & Deci, 2000](#)) in that learner engagement is based on performance orientated goals and not self-actualisation. If autonomy and liking for activity are reduced intrinsic motivation is weakened leading to nonconsistent reading behavior. [Anggrainy et al. \(2024\)](#) also discovered that motivational design features (such as gamification and personal preference) significantly affect reading engagement. Thus, EFL teachers ought create an student centered learning atmosphere to facilitate autonomy and include pleasure reading practices in the curriculum to help learners migrate from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation.

4.2 Reading Practices and Time Pressures

The inconsistent reading practices revealed in this study indicate that the pupils consider RfP to be subordinate to their academic duties. Less than half of the students read for pleasure every day, which also reflects [Fatimah and Yulianto's \(2025\)](#) study showing heavy coursework and lack of time compensate with personal reading. This shows that, also when motivation is present, situational factors can limit reading consistency. This interpretation is also consistent with Day and Bamford's Extensive Reading Theory in which it is claimed that advances in language proficiency are contingent upon an extensive exposure to large amounts

of enjoyable reading (Day & Bamford, 1998). The fruits of RfP may not be fully realized if participants are not regularly involved. Facilitate structured reading times and institutional programs to enhance literacy, such as the use of reading circles or reflection journals may help fill this void (Khonamri et al., 2024). The impediments are not restricted to early adult readers, younger respondents experience problems such as screen time, lack of parental support and a deficit in reading materials which create unfavourable reading habitus (Ahmad et al., 2021).

4.3 Digital Reading Practices and Material Preferences

The other discovery of this study is the students' overwhelming preference for digital reading formats such as Wattpad, webtoons and online novels. This preference reflects the digital nostalgia discovered by Chang et al. (2022) and Putri & Damayanti (2025) who discovered that easy access is a factor which encourages users to use the digital material more often. But this preference comes with questions about focus and understanding as well. Chang et al. (2022) noted that digital media platforms facilitate access to materials, but may also promote superficial reading because of interruptions and scattered attention. In the current study, students themselves mentioned that digital reading was enjoyable but also could hinder concentration. As a result, while digital tools can support engagement, they should be paired with reflective activities like reading logs, peer-to-peer conversations or comprehension journals to foster deep processing.

Students love the fictional and narrative genres also, according to Rosenblatt's Reader-Response Theory, personal engagement and emotional response to stories promote better comprehension and motivation). In this way, fictional content makes readers for the first time, feel and identify within a context of printed media: it transforms reading into an emotional/experiential act (Rosenblatt, 1978). This personal engagement explains why storylines still reign as the most common sources of pleasure reading among EFL students (Fuentes, 2023). However, this preference also points to an opening for teachers to avoid narrow definitions of 'pleasure' and promote diversity in reading materials such as semi-academic or cross-genre texts, which would connect pleasure with language growth.

Students prefer digital formats and fictional genres indicates changing literacy practices in a digital age. Although digital platforms make reading more accessible (Chang et al., 2022; Putri & Damayanti, 2025), they also present distractions that deter readers from deep engagement with readings. This preference can be used by educators to embed digital reading and reflective activities in a focused way.

4.4 Language Skill Development

The apparent gain in receptive skills—vocabulary and reading comprehension in particular this reveal shows that RfP does indeed serve as an effective means of promoting input-based learning, in line with Krashen's (1982) theory that extensive comprehensible input results in unconscious internalization. This research's findings have demonstrated that students need to read a lot of enjoyable texts at their language level (Safei & Ekasari (2022) and Saito (2025)). Nonetheless, the slight development in productive skills, including writing and speaking, implies that it is not necessarily guaranteed that reading will transfer into output. Ibhar (2022) and Juliari et al. (2024) also highlighted that, although reading for pleasure promotes receptive competence, productive proficiency depends on communicative activities as well. This means educators can coordinate reading-for-pleasure initiatives with speaking and writing activities, so students get to use new language in genuine situations.

4.5 Institutional and Pedagogical Implications

The findings highlight the importance of institutional support in maintaining students' involvement with RfP. Limited access to books and lack of structured encouragement were among the impediments toward a lifelong reading habit, said many respondents. Hakiki and Mardiana (2024) asserted that the role of teachers guidance and positive classroom atmosphere significantly influence reading motivation. In this respect, lecturers and schools hold the keys to establishing an environment in which acceptable reading and free reading are appreciated and celebrated. Integrating reading-for-pleasure elements in English classes; providing a range of reading materials, both digital and print; and creating peer-led reading communities can narrow the divide between awareness and frequent participation. Collaborative learning techniques, such as peer talk and group reading activity, also proved to help improve EFL students' speaking confidence and participation (e.g., Alzubi et. al., 2025).

The large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.72$) between high and low motivation groups points to the importance of affective factors in language learning. Nevertheless, the findings of the regression analysis suggest that habits are the underlying mechanism whereby motivation is affecting outcomes. This is consistent with Krashen (1982)'s Input Theory, which holds that L2 learners acquire language through exposure to comprehensible input. Pleasure reading is that input, but only if it becomes regular.

Factor analyses, revealed that it was possible to measure four constructs with the questionnaire: motivation, reading habits, skill development and material preferences. We hope

this validation increases the methodological soundness of the study and serves as an outline for future work. In terms of pedagogical implications, the results indicate that schools need to explore strategies that turn motivation into a routine behaviour. Programs like reading circles, gamified reading assignments and autonomy supportive environment may serve the gap between knowledge to participation on a regular basis (Anggrainy et al., 2024; Khonamri et al., 2024).

This research contributes by combining motivational, behavioural and linguistic factors that have often been studied separately. The findings contribute to the interrelationship between intrinsic motivation, sustained involvement and skill acquisition in RfP, providing a more integrated understanding of RfP within an EFL context. This is especially relevant for the Indonesian higher education system that has had few forms of organized assistance to support voluntary reading.

4.6 Reading for pleasure and EFL literacy practice trends

Recent research has shown how EFL learners' engagement with RfP is influenced by technological developments, motivation theories, and pedagogical paradigms. One significant trend is the digitization of extensive reading in which learners use e-books, web-based stories and mobile apps more often for accessing what they read, thus gaining more accessibility but loss of autonomy and faced with challenges like distraction during reading and superficial engagement (Halum & Guna, 2023; Ounissi, Romly, & Tajuddin, 2025). Such platforms facilitate accessibility and agency, but they also present issues related to distraction and superficial engagement. Narrative reviews agree that online wide reading programs, with level-appropriate content and reflective tasks, lead to substantial gains in reading fluency and comprehension (Bui & Macalister, 2021; Ounissi, Romly, & Tajuddin, 2025; Zhou, 2024). This change highlights the importance of strong e-literacy in order to achieve as many benefits and compensation possibilities - but also for the mitigation of risks.

Equally significant is the increasing focus on motivation and emotional involvement. Research based on the Self-Determination Theory identifies autonomy and competence as important factors influencing long-lasting reading habits. Internal factors such as motivation and flow experiences, along with positive emotions, are positively related to persistence and language success as well while burnout and disengagement remain challenges in "exertional" contexts from the extant literature (Marszalek et al., 2022; Song, 2024). Recent interventions recommend to include individual reading preferences in order to foster learner interest and emotional well-being (Iwaniec & Khaled, 2024).

Another novel intervention is gamification and interactive reading, involving the use of gaming elements (e.g. points, badges, leader-boards) to promote completion of reading activities. Meta-analyses show that gamification effectively improves motivation and understanding when associated with specific goals and feedback (Li, Ma, & Shi, 2023). The findings from EFL classes also reveal that game-based reading activities promote engagement and comprehension among undergraduate students (Matyakhan, Chaowanakritsanakul, & Santos, 2024).

Collaborative and social reading practices are also identified as powerful mechanisms for the development of confidence, belonging, and oral proficiency in learners. Reading circles, peer discussions and other simulated user experiences make reading a social activity by developing supportive communities around targeted practice (Saville et al., 2022). These results are consistent with other motivational theories that also emphasize relatedness as a fundamental part of intrinsic motivation.

Support at policy and institutional level comes out to be crucial enabler of RfP. Systematic reviews are calling for the embedding of voluntary reading in curricula and literacy policies, the provision of access to diverse materials, using digital tools responsibly, and teaching scaffolding strategies to support students' independent reading (Cremin & Scholes, 2024; Vogrinčič Čepič et al., 2024). Together, these trends demonstrate a multilayered development of RfP practices in which technology, motivation, collaboration and institutional scapes intersect to determine the trajectory of EFL literacy.

Expanding this validated framework, the result represents how students' responses are distributed between the dimensions identified, reinforcing the multidimensionality of RfP within EFL settings. The chart shows huge variability between subcategories; the highest percentages are found on domains of improvement proficiency and vocabulary, showing the strong linguistic orientation of students' perception. In contrast, writing skills have the weakest relationship which indicates that RfP is seen to be more effective for receptive than productive skills. Motivation cues are still high for instrumental goals, though engagement deterrents such as time and institutional support prove insurmountable. Material affinities indicate a clear preference of fiction along with digital formats, showing the influence of digitization on literacy practices in contemporary times. These profiles were complementary to the factor analysis and demonstrated how established constructs are reflected in applied attitudes and behaviors, offering a strong basis on which to conceptualize the relationship between motivation, habits, and skill development.

In summary, the data indicated that EFL students consider reading for fun a worthwhile but periodic activity. Although they recognize the value of language learning for academic progress, and personal satisfaction, engagement was found to be affected by their responsibilities at school, insufficient time management strategies, and fluctuating motivation level. The results show a marked preference for narrative and digital publications, indicating that reading habits are changing in favor of technology-dependent platforms. In addition, pleasure reading seems to benefit receptive skills more than productive skills and pedagogical integration in order to optimize the impact of opportunities on a student's comprehensive language ability is recommended.

5. CONCLUSION

This research investigated EFL students' attitudes towards RfP in terms of their reading behaviour, motivation, language skill development and book preferences. Through the studies, it can be observed that students have an overall positive perception towards RfP as being beneficial for vocabulary and comprehension. But their practice turns to be not regular since they have restricted time, school work burdening and mood change.

This study is limited by its small sample size, single institution context, and reliance on self-reported data. Future studies should employ longitudinal and experimental designs. Therefore, future research on the interventions ought to focus on pathways that convert motivation into routine adherence. Reading circles, gamified reading and autonomy-supportive setting are measures that can close the gap from awareness to repeated active participation. A mixture of digital and print resources, and building RfP activity into the curriculum supports literacy practices over the long-term.

Additional research may be needed to enlarge the sample size, implement longitudinal design, and examine how digital reading practices affect language development in the long term. The role of social reading and collaborative reading practices could be further explored in terms of engagement maintenance in EFL settings.

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