IS COLLEGE STUDENTS' READING HABIT TRULY RELATED TO THEIR WRITING ABILITY?

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed to describe college students' reading habits and find the relationship between their reading habits and their writing ability. The data were collected from 50 non-English Department students who took English subject whose content was English language skills, including reading and writing. A questionnaire about reading habits was created and distributed to these students. Then in the classroom, they were assigned to write an essay about a topic they like twice. The analysis was done by analyzing the questionnaire's results on reading habits, then comparing these results with writing scores using a statistical program, SPSS. The findings show that generally, more than half of the respondents usually read, even though they do not read quite often. Most students think that reading contributes to writing, especially in vocabulary and gathering ideas. However, their reading habits do not have a correlation with their writing ability.

Keywords: reading habits, writing ability, college students

INTRODUCTION

College students who take English subjects generally acquire four language skills, namely listening, reading, speaking, and writing. These four skills are an integral part of the internationally standardized test, namely TOEFL and IELTS. Historically, the four language skills, reading comprehension, and writing in a second or foreign language can be regarded as the oldest and most viable skills in both being learned or taught in educational settings across the world (Farahzad & Emam, 2010). As one of the basic language skills, reading influences individuals' personalities, values, and interests. This influence might create affective changes (Ünal & İseri, 2012). Moreover, reading skills can be applied for several purposes, such as for school tasks and throughout life, because it is a beneficial lifelong skill (Küçükoğlu, 2013). This is in line with Gilakjani and Sabouri's (2016) statement that reading also helps extend the development of learner's various academic

tasks. Meanwhile, Artieda (2017) suggests that to become successful L2 learners, they need to acquire L1 literacy, especially for adults. In other words, adult reading habits in L1 support their L2 acquisition at intermediate levels of proficiency (Artieda, 2017).

A rather different view is of Schoonen (2019) who suggests that reading and writing seem to be built on the same skills, especially linguistic and metacognitive knowledge resources. He emphasizes that none should be prioritized over another. Both literacy abilities interact with each other, and both use to a large extent, the same language knowledge resources, and students' reading and writing most likely will benefit from expanding these language resources.

Furthermore, Ünal and İseri (2012) point out that reading and writing skills are the main determinants of individuals' educational lives and many elements in these lives. The most prominent factors directly influencing reading and writing skills are the attitudes towards these skills. With regard to writing skill,

Hamp-Lyons and Heasley (2006) point out that writing is clearly a complex process and is frequently accepted as being the last language skill to be required. Thus, because it involves a number of aspects such as word choices, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and coherence, this skill is considered challenging (Lestari & Holandyah, 2016).

Moreover, in terms of skills of language learning, which in this case are reading and writing, several studies have suggested that these two skills are related and should be integrated when applied to EFL (English as a Foreign Language)/ESL (English as a Second Language) language learners. Al-Busaidi (2013) states that language skills can be developed because of other skills. He illustrates by relating reading and writing skills. According to him, the development of vocabulary and language structures can be stimulated by reading, which in turn helps develop writing accordingly. Similarly, Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2014) have found that reading habits may influence writing, and good academic performance can also be affected by good writing. The more particular finding is by Eldouma and Adam (2005) who have found that the correlation between who have found that the correlation between students' reading and writing performance is quite high. Students are able to relate between what they read and what they wrote by making notes/summary of what they had read, developing topics of their reading into paragraphs, and using the main ideas of their reading texts to help them in their writing activities.

Correspondingly, Ünal and İseri (2012) have found that even though reading and writing attitudes do not substantially affect academic performance, reading attitude significantly predicts writing attitude. Likewise, Yoshimura, (2009) has found that connecting reading and writing seems to affect EFL learners' behavior positively. Thus, connecting reading and writing in itself contributes to EFL learners' learning about English writing. Similar results have also been found by Motlaq and Egresh (2016), who highlight that learners who are better readers and have better reading ability are able to write more qualified writings. Nevertheless, the ability to organize the structure in academic writing is not significantly influenced by reading ability; thus, learners should be more exposed to academic genres in their readings.

Farahzad and Emam (2010) emphasize several variables involved in measuring a significant relationship between reading and writing skills. They state that it needs a comprehensive outlook since the learners develop at their own pace through interaction with the environment. Therefore, the variables such as cognitive, social, and emotional development should be viewed as inseparably associated. On the other hand, Boscolo et al. (2011) state that affective processes need to be taken into account since the reading-writing relationship does not only involve cognitive processes. Interest in the topic is one factor that influences the result of writing since learners are more engaged when they read then write a topic that is interesting to them.

To some extent, these findings have similar ideas that reading and writing skills are related and integrated, even though some variables need to be considered. Unfortunately, not all learners like to read. Lestari and Holandyah (2016) state that in Indonesia, some students are reluctant to read books because they think that reading is not the main activity to get new information. However, their findings show a correlation between the eleventh-grade students' reading attitude and their writing achievement. This is due to some reasons: (1) most of the students spend their time in the library in order to get information, (2) students are interested in reading academic and non-academic books, and (3) more students are involved in reading and writing activity (Lestari & Holandyah, 2016). This finding thus confirms what Boscolo et al. (2011) have stated that kinds of information, interest, and involvement are factors that need to be considered when assigning learners to read then write. In addition, Situmorang, Samhati, and Agustina (2013) have also found that nine-graders' reading habits in Bandar Lampung are significantly related to their narrative writing.

These studies have inspired the researchers to conduct the research as they mostly suggest that reading and writing are quite related, or reading ability is significantly correlated with someone's writing performance. Is it true? The research would investigate college students' reading habits and to what extent their reading habits influence their writing performance. This is significant because it may inspire teachers to design curriculum and instruction on the subjects involving reading and writing.

METHODS

The participants of the research are non-English Department students from a private university in Jakarta. In this case, they are the students of Computer Science, Information Technology, and Information System. They are chosen because they are registered to take an English subject, which supports the university's requirement for them to graduate with certain TOEFL scores. This subject involves English language skills, including reading and writing. There are a total of 50 students who have become respondents.

Two instruments are used for collecting data, questionnaire, and essay writing. The respondents are distributed questionnaires that are asking about their reading habits. Then in the classroom, they are asked to write an essay on the topic they like, specifically on 'compare and contrast' type. This writing activity is instructed twice with different topics. Then the students' writing is collected as the data for writing skills. Thus, there are two kinds of data; questionnaire results regarding reading habits and students' essays regarding writing skills.

After the data are collected, the questionnaire results are analyzed to describe the students' reading

habits. In the meantime, the students' essays are graded and scored based on the rubrics in paperrater.com. The rubrics used from the website are grammar, spelling, word choice, style, vocabulary words, and originality or plagiarism detection. However, due to the limits of time and energy, the analysis and discussion of the results only show the complete results of the writing. Afterward, the two results, reading habits, and writing scores are analyzed using the statistical tool, SPSS, to find the extent to which the reading habits correlate with writing ability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section discusess reading habits, essay writing, and the relation between reading habits and essay writing. Table 1 describes the number of students who convey their opinion toward the questions regarding their reading habits. There are eight questions asked; thus, the calculation is based on each question.

Table 1 Number of Students Answering Questions on Reading Habits
(in Percentage out of 50 Respondents)

Question	Answer A	Answer B	Answer C	Answer D
1	0	54	40	6
2	0	14	34	52
3	46	40	12	2
4	16	84	0	x
5	44	12	40	4
6	24	76	x	x
7	52	12	32	4
8	0	42	48	10
9	86	14	0	x
10	24	76	x	x
11	14	46	22	18

Question 1. I read a book/article/news:
    A. Never   C. Often
    B. Sometimes   D. Always

All the students read books, articles, or news, even though the frequency is various, and most of them do not always read books. The majority is only 'sometimes' read a book/article/news (54%), 40% of them are 'often' read, and only 6% 'always' read a book, articles, or news. This result means that, to some extent, the respondents read actively, and it builds the habit as Wagner (2002) has stated.

Question 2. How many times a week do you read?
    A. Never   C. Twice
    B. Once   D. More than twice

This question deals with the frequency of the respondents' reading. More than half of them (52%) read more than twice a week, 34% read twice a week, and 14% read-only once a week. It shows that the respondents have the activity of reading at least once a week.

Question 3. How long do you spend time for each reading?
    A. less than 1 hour   C. 2-3 hours
    B. 1-2 hours   D. More than 3 hours

Out of 50 respondents, 46% of them read less than one hour for each reading activity, 40% spend one to two hours for every reading activity, 12% spend two to three hours, and only 2% spend more than three hours to read. It shows that most respondents do not spend much time on each reading, and only 14% of them spend two hours and more on reading activity.

Question 4. The texts you mostly read are written in:
    A. English
    B. Indonesian
    C. Other language (mention): …

Since the respondents are students who take English subjects, this question is considered important concerning their exposures to English texts. 84% of them often read texts in their mother tongue, which is Indonesian. Only 16% of them are frequently exposed to English texts. This result shows that most respondents do not usually read English texts; instead, they prefer to read in Indonesian.

Question 5. I prefer to read:
A. Story/Novel/Fiction   C. Latest news
B. Magazine articles   D. History/non-fiction/knowledge books

This question deals with the respondents' habits about the types of reading they like. 44% of the students like reading stories, novels, or fiction than other types of texts, 40% like reading the latest news, 12% prefer to read articles in magazines, and only 2% like reading history, non-fiction, or knowledge books. This result indicates that the respondents do not really like reading a text with a serious topic. They tend to more like reading stories, novels or fiction, and the latest news.

Question 6. I prefer to read:
A. Offline (physical texts/hardcopy)
B. Online (websites, social media, etc.)

Interestingly, 76% of students prefer to read online texts, which can be read through online means. Oppositely, 24% still like reading offline, which means that they prefer to read a physical text rather than reading a softcopy. This result is likely to appear because nowadays, the young generation tends to use their gadgets all the time, so they read anything in their cellphones.

Question 7. Websites you often read:
  A. Domestics
  B. Overseas
  C. Social media
  D. Others: ………

More than half of the respondents (52%) often read domestic or national websites, and 12% of them like reading texts from overseas websites. Besides, 32% often read texts in social media, and only 4% often read from other kinds of sources. The media websites that are mostly read are Kompas.com, Metronews, webtoon, Line Today, and Instagram.

Question 8. Do you like writing?
  A. Very much dislike
  B. Dislike
  C. Like
  D. Very much like

Surprisingly, those who dislike and like writing are almost equal in terms of numbers; 42% and 48%, respectively. Only 10% like writing very much. It indicates that more than half of the respondents quite like writing, even though their level of likeness is various.

Question 9. I often write online:
  A. Never
  B. Yes, on…… (blog, social media, other)

It is quite surprising that 86% of the respondents never write online, even though they frequently use online means to read any articles. Only 14% of them ever write on online means. It indicates that most of the respondents do not like writing, especially on online media.

Question 10. In your opinion, the materials in your readings help you write.
  A. No
  B. Yes

The answers to this question are actually unsurprising. 76% of the respondents consider that their readings help them write. However, 24% of them believe that their readings do not contribute to the writing. Such a result indicates that most of the respondents think that the readings somehow contribute to their writing.

Question 11. If your answer to question 10 above is Yes, in what matters do your readings help you write?
  A. Vocabularies
  B. Getting ideas
  C. Compose ideas
  D. Others:………

This question results in various opinions. 46% of the respondents believe that their readings contribute to their writing mostly on getting ideas, which means that they can be inspired or gather ideas from their readings. Meanwhile, 22% of them consider that their readings contribute to their writing mostly on composing ideas. It means that they can compose ideas based on the materials they have read. Then 18% of the respondents consider that their readings contribute to both vocabularies and composing

ideas. This means that their readings contribute quite significantly to their writings. Only 14% of them think that their readings contribute to their writings only on vocabularies.

To see the results of students' essay writing, the writing is conducted twice. Therefore, there are two scores, each from assignment 1 and assignment 2. Each essay's score is calculated in general based on paperrater.com, a free online checker system whose rubrics are grammar, spelling, word choice, style, vocabulary words, and originality or plagiarism detection. Table 2 shows the complete results of both assignments and the average score of each respondent's writing.

Table 2 Respondents' Average Score of Writing

Student ID	Writing 1	Writing 2	Average
1	66	74	70
2	63	69	66
3	62	68	65
4	63	71	67
5	69	71	70
6	69	72	71
7	66	73	70
8	72	68	70
9	65	65	65
10	66	63	65
11	69	68	69
12	69	70	70
13	69	68	69
14	70	70	70
15	64	71	68
16	68	65	67
17	67	71	69
18	66	70	68
19	64	66	65
20	66	70	68
21	63	69	66
22	70	71	71
23	73	71	72
24	67	69	68
25	70	70	70
26	69	66	68
27	65	67	66
28	64	63	64
29	65	67	66
30	69	70	70
31	69	69	69

Table 2 Respondents' Average Score of Writing (Continued)

Student ID	Writing 1	Writing 2	Average
32	64	68	66
33	64	76	70
34	66	57	62
35	70	67	69
36	65	63	64
37	66	69	68
38	60	59	60
39	73	67	70
40	72	70	71
41	63	73	68
42	62	71	67
43	71	71	71
44	67	66	67
45	64	67	66
46	66	70	68
47	65	69	67
48	66	68	67

Figures 1-5 are the example of the respondent's essay. These are rated on paperrater.com and rated based on rubrics.
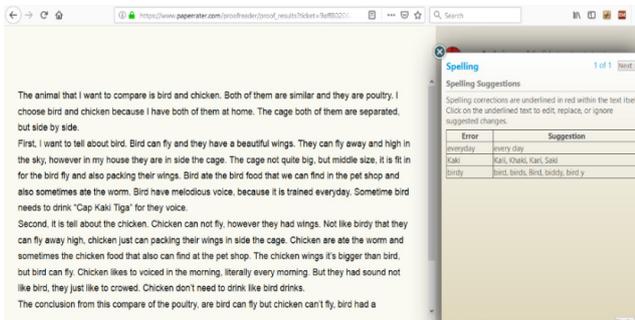

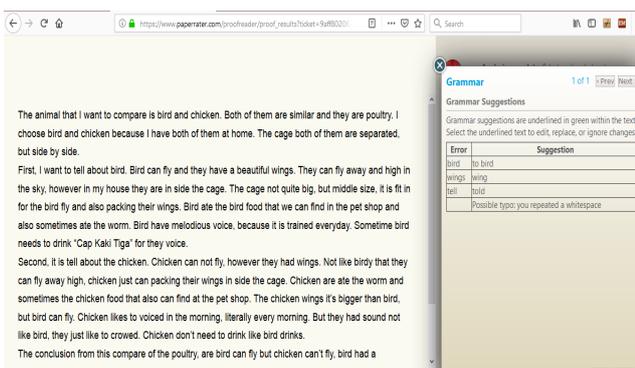Figure 1 Evaluation Based on Spelling
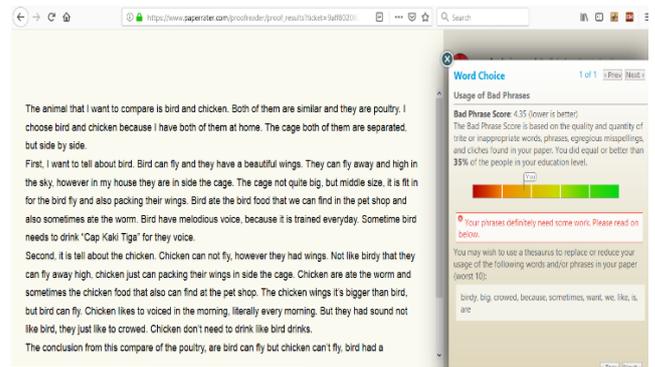

Figure 2 Evaluation Based on Grammar

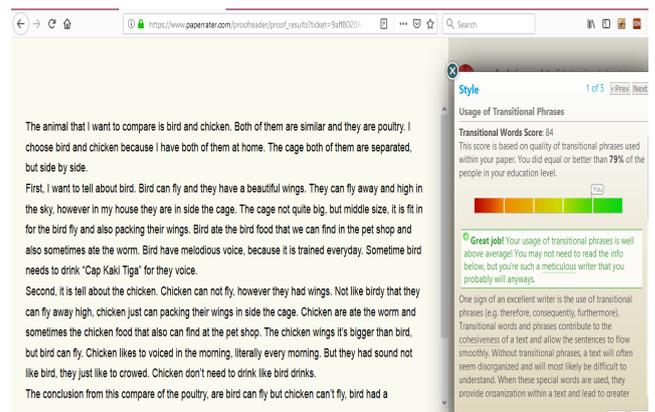Figure 3 Evaluation Based on Word Choice
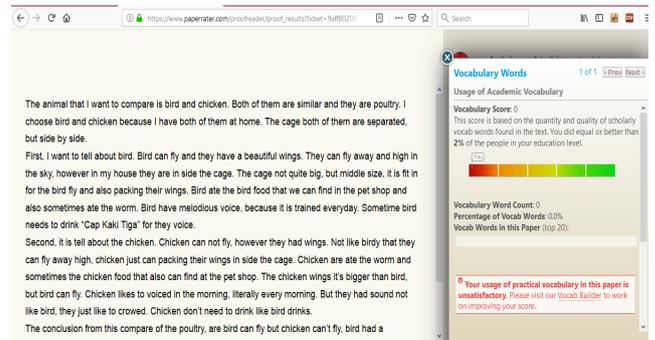

Figure 4 Evaluation Based on Style

Figure 5 Evaluation Based on Vocabulary

To find the relationship between reading habits and writing ability, there are several steps to be taken. First, the questions in the reading habits questionnaire are rated and converted into a score 0-100. Since not all questions in the questionnaire can be converted, then only questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8 are converted. Those that can be converted are the questions whose answers involve a Likert scale such as: 'very often', 'often', 'seldom', and 'rare' or 'never'. Then the answer of 'very often' is rated 4, 'often' is rated 3, 'seldom' is rated 3, and 'rare/never' is rated 1. Next, the answers of the six questions are added up and multiplied by 100 and divided by 24 (Those who answer all 'very often' would totally get 24). The calculation can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3 The Conversion Score of Reading Habits Questionnaire

St. ID	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q7	Q8	Total	Score (Q1+Q2+Q3+Q4+ Q7+Q8) X100 : 24
1	3	4	4	3	3	2	19	79
2	3	2	3	3	1	3	15	63
3	3	4	1	3	3	3	17	71
4	3	4	2	3	3	3	18	75
5	2	2	1	3	3	2	13	54
6	3	4	2	3	2	2	16	67
7	3	4	1	3	3	2	16	67
8	2	2	2	3	2	3	14	58
9	2	4	1	3	3	3	16	67
10	3	4	1	3	2	2	15	63
11	2	4	2	3	2	3	16	67
12	3	4	1	3	2	2	15	63
13	2	3	1	3	3	2	14	58
14	3	3	2	3	3	3	17	71
15	3	4	2	3	4	3	19	79
16	2	3	2	3	3	2	15	63
17	2	2	1	3	3	2	13	54
18	4	4	3	3	3	2	19	79
19	2	3	2	3	2	2	14	58
20	2	4	2	3	3	2	16	67
21	2	3	1	4	3	3	16	67
22	2	3	3	3	3	3	17	71
23	2	3	2	3	2	3	15	63
24	2	4	1	3	3	2	15	63
25	2	4	1	3	2	2	14	58
26	2	3	1	3	2	3	14	58
27	2	3	2	3	3	3	16	67
28	3	4	1	3	3	2	16	67
29	2	3	2	3	4	3	17	71
30	2	3	1	4	4	3	17	71
31	2	2	1	3	3	4	15	63
32	2	3	2	4	2	4	17	71
33	2	2	1	3	3	2	13	54
34	2	3	1	3	3	2	14	58
35	2	3	2	3	3	3	16	67
36	2	4	1	3	3	3	16	67
37	2	2	1	3	3	3	14	58
38	2	3	1	3	2	2	13	54
39	3	4	2	3	3	4	19	79
40	2	3	2	3	4	3	17	71
41	3	4	1	3	2	3	16	67
42	4	4	3	4	2	3	20	83
43	3	3	2	3	3	3	17	71
44	3	4	2	4	4	3	20	83
45	3	4	3	4	3	4	21	88

Table 3 The Conversion Score of Reading Habits Questionnaire (Continued)

St. ID	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q7	Q8	Total	Score (Q1+Q2+Q3+Q4+ Q7+Q8) X100 : 24
46	3	4	2	3	3	3	18	75
47	3	4	1	4	4		16	67
48	3	4	1	3	2	2	15	63
49	4	4	3	3	3	2	19	79
50	3	4	2	4	4	4	21	88

After the reading habits scores are found, the next step is to compare the reading habits score and the writing score. Table 4 shows the two kinds of scores.

Table 4 The Reading Habits and Writing Scores

Student ID	Reading Habits Score	Writing Score
1	79	70
2	63	66
3	71	65
4	75	67
5	46	70
6	67	71
7	67	70
8	58	70
9	67	65
10	63	65
11	67	69
12	63	70
13	58	69
14	71	70
15	79	68
16	63	67
17	54	69
18	79	68
19	58	65
20	67	68
21	67	66
22	71	71
23	63	72
24	63	68
25	58	70
26	58	68
27	67	66
28	67	64
29	71	66
36	67	64
37	58	68
38	54	60
39	79	70
40	71	71
41	67	68

Table 4 The Reading Habits and Writing Scores (Continued)

Student ID	Reading Habits Score	Writing Score
42	83	67
43	71	71
44	83	67
45	88	66
46	75	68
47	67	67
48	63	67
49	79	64
50	88	65

Afterward, to determine the relationship between reading habits and writing performance, a statistical analysis is used. In this case, the analysis uses the SPSS program, which applies regression and correlation. These analyses are used since they are the most suitable analysis to determine the relationship between two elements. For the calculation, reading habits are determined as variable X, an independent variable that may influence another variable, variable Y. Variable Y is a dependent variable influenced by X. After inputting the data as in Table 4, the results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Data Exploration Based on Statistical Calculation

	Reading Habits Score	Writing Score
min	46	60
max	88	72
mean	67,54	67,54
Q1	63	66
Q2	67	68
Q3	71	70
Var (data variance)	81,60041	6,398367
Sd (standard deviation)	9,033294	2,529499

Based on data exploration in Table 5, the histograms in Figures 6 and 7, the reading habits

score curve is nearly normal. It is shown by the value of median and mean which is almost the same or not very different. However, the writing score data is not distributed normally since there are more data on the right side of the curve. Besides, the variance of the reading habits score is higher than that of the writing score. Furthermore, the relation between two variables can be found by visual diagnosis using scatter plots from both variables. The result is shown in Figure 8.

Based on Figure 8, it is hard to assert that there is a connection between reading habits and writing ability. This is because there is no real pattern in the visualization, for example, forming a straight line (linear).

Thus, based on the plots' visualization, it is assumed that the relationship between these two variables is weak. To further assess quantitatively, the calculation of correlation is performed. The correlation theory says that if the number results in 1 or close to

+1, it means that there is a positive linear relationship between two variables. If it is 0 or close to 0, it means that the two variables have no linear relationship. If the number shows -1 or close to -1, it means that the two variables have a negative linear relationship. The result of the correlation is:

> cor(reading_score,writing_score)
 -0,04669375

The correlation result shows a very small number. It indicates that there is 'no relation' between the two variables.

The regression is done when it is sure that there is indeed a relationship between two variables. Because the results of the correlation and visual diagnosis indicate a weak relationship, so the regression actually becomes less useful to do.
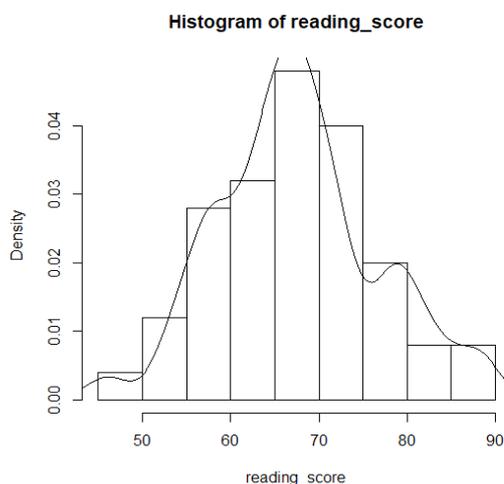

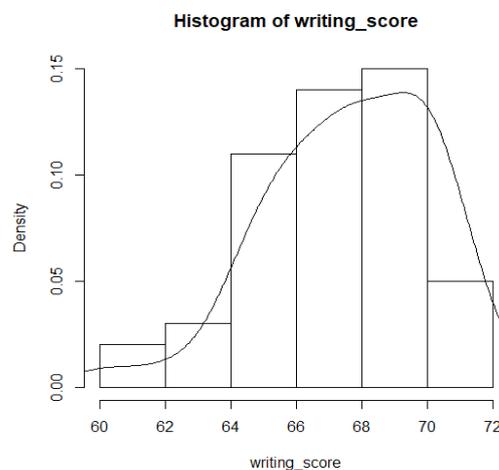Figure 6 Histogram of Reading Habits Score
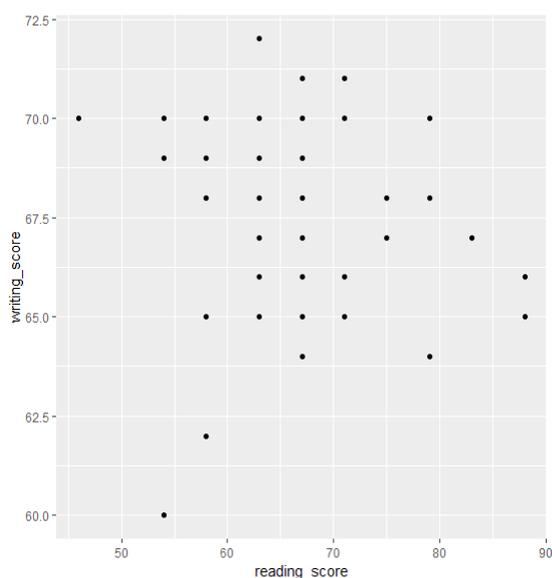

Figure 7 Histogram of Writing Score

Figure 8 Scatter plots of Reading Habits Score and Writing Score

CONCLUSIONS

The findings highlight several important ideas regarding reading habits and the relation between reading habits and writing ability. First, it is indicated that basically, more than half of the students usually read, even though they do not read quite often. They mostly read texts in Indonesian, and not many of them read English texts. The types of texts that the respondents mostly read are stories or fiction and the latest news. Furthermore, most students also consider that reading contributes to writing, especially in vocabulary and gathering ideas. The interesting finding is that most students prefer to read online means even though they do not like writing using online means. Next, it is found that in fact, there is no relation between reading habits and writing ability. This finding indicates that even though the respondents usually like reading, it does mean that they like writing. As a result, their habits in reading does not correlate at all to their writing ability. Reading instruction should likely be related to the writing topics; thus, students would feel involved and more interested. In addition, it is likely that in the subject, the respondents do not have numerous activities related to writing as they do not major in languages. However, this thought needs to be proved further.

Moreover, since the research indicates that there is no relation between students' reading habits and their writing ability, it is suggested for further studies to involve other factors that are likely related to writing ability. They can be reading comprehension, writing practice, and self-motivation. Thus, the resulted model can explain the diversity of the data of writing. Then the analysis can use other models such as adding random effects on each respondent (object of observation). It may also use another kind of distribution (other than normal distribution) that is more suitable for the data of writing, or use a non-parametric approach.

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