

A study on leisure English reading habits among Jordanian EFL secondary school students

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate the leisure English reading habits among Jordanian EFL secondary school students specifically identifying the amount of time spent on leisure English reading habits and the types of English materials they prefer to read. The study was conducted in four secondary schools situated Al-Mafraq province. A questionnaire was used for the data collection. The data collected were analyzed quantitatively with the use of frequency analysis. A total of 100 students were randomly selected to participate in this study. The findings revealed that 49% of the respondents do not read at all in their leisure time. The results also revealed that most of the respondents prefer to read magazines over storybooks and comics.

Keywords: Leisure reading habit, Time spent on reading, types of reading materials, EFL students

Introduction

Reading habit was defined as the act of reading undertaken automatically by an individual in a situation where books, magazines, newspaper, comics and journals are readily available and accessible and reads daily in life. This would give an indication of his/her habit of reading (Ambigapathy, 1997) ^[1]. Similarly, Shen (2006) ^[10] regarded reading habit as how much, how often, and what kind of materials the individuals like to read.

Reading habit is a valuable source of understanding, knowledge, and provides a sense of values which allow the readers to develop the capacity for the purpose of understanding the individuals' beliefs on a regular basis (Cook, Halleran and Brien, 1998) ^[5]. Furthermore, the amount of reading within and without the school significantly influences reading in terms of fluency, speed, verbal capacity, overall knowledge and academic achievements (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2001) ^[6].

There are three key reasons as to why people read. Firstly, individuals read to collect information for the sake of assisting them to learn, create, and write. This sort of reading is an expectation in the classroom, as it is required in almost all subject areas for students' success. Secondly, people read for pleasure. This type of reading takes place when they select a book because it attracts them not for the sake of finding an answer to a science question but because they want to read it for enjoyment. Finally, people read to become life-long learners. To achieve a life-long learning, people need both reading for information and reading for pleasure (Borton, 2012) ^[4].

Statement of the Problem

A need for my study was developed when Dajani (2009) mentioned that Jordanian EFL students are reluctant to read for pleasure. They have never been taught how to love reading. Also, Banihani and Abu-Ashour (2015) ^[3] stated that little is known about students' views on reading for pleasure. In my study I questioned students about the amount of time spent on their leisure reading habits and the types of English materials they prefer to read.

Objective of the Study

The current study seeks to investigate the leisure English reading habits among Jordanian EFL secondary school students. The study attempts to:

1. Identify the amount of time spent on leisure English reading habits by Jordanian EFL students.
2. Identify the types of English materials they prefer to read.

Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How much time do Jordanian EFL students spend on leisure English reading habits per week?
2. What types of English materials do they prefer to read in Leisure time?

Methodology

The current study uses a quantitative research approach using a questionnaire. According to Mc Donough (1997) ^[8] questionnaire research is very popular among educational researchers. Reja *et al.*, (2003) ^[9] mentioned that questionnaire is important to elicit high quality data. Babbie (2004) ^[2] claims that questionnaire is the best method available especially in gathering original data for describing a population too large to describe directly.

Sampling

100 Jordanian EFL secondary school students from 4 secondary schools in the Al-Mafraq province participated in this study. They were randomly selected. The researcher administered the questionnaire to 11th and 12th grades. The students in these classes can read in English as they are the most exposed group to English language (nearly 8-10 years) in Jordanian schools where they study English language from the first grade.

Data Analysis

The data for this study was analyzed by using the frequency analysis. Frequency analysis is a descriptive statistical technique that shows the number of occurrences of each response chosen by the respondents.

Research question 1: How much time do Jordanian EFL students spend on leisure English reading habits per week? In answering the first research question, the study has attempted to obtain information on the average time spent on leisure English reading per week.

Table 1: Time spent on leisure English reading per week

Time	Percentage
I don't read at all	49
Less than 1 hour	15
1-3 hours	19
3-5 hours	10
More than 5 hours	7
Total	100

In this present sample of 100 respondents, 49% do not read at all in English. This indicates that only 51% of sample populations do read. Since reading less than 1 hour shows 15%, we can assume that the sample population has the habit such as browsing through newspapers or magazines which shows the population regularity in reading. Less than one third of the (19%) sample populations read one to three hours per week and 10% of the respondents read three to five hours per week. 7% of the respondents read for more than five hours per week. For this study, if the respondents read more than three and a half hours, the respondents are considered possessing reading habits (reading half an hour daily per week). Therefore, 17% of the respondents possess reading habits in the English language.

Research question 2: What types of English materials do they prefer to read in Leisure time?

In answering the second research question the study has attempted to obtain information on the amount and types of reading materials read for the period of one month. The table 2 below shows the amount of all the various reading materials read the previous month.

Table 2: The preferred types of English materials in Leisure time

Number of materials	Magazines	Storybooks	Comics
None	10	47	25
1-2	20	44	53
3-4	38	6	17
5-6	22	2	3
More than 6	10	1	2

Magazines

Less than 32% of the respondents have read more than four books. More than one third (38%) of the respondents, have read three to four magazines. 20% of the respondents have read one to two magazines. 10% of the respondents did not read any magazines.

Storybooks

Among the 100 respondents, a high percentage (47%) have not read any storybooks; more than one third (44%) have read one to two storybooks; 6% have read three to four storybooks and only 2% have read five to six magazines and another 1% has read more than 6 magazines.

Comics

Comics are not very popular compared to magazines among the sample population. 25% of the respondents have not read any comics. 53% of the respondents have read one to two comics. 17% of the respondents have read three to four comics; 3% of the respondents read five to six comics and only 2% read more than 6 comics.

Conclusion

The current study has investigated the leisure English reading habits among Jordanian EFL secondary school students through identifying the amount of time spent on leisure reading habits and the types of reading materials preferred to read. The findings have revealed that 17% of the sample population read for more than three hours per week. A quite high percentage (49%) answered that they do not read at all in the English language. This is a good indication that reading was not taken seriously by the respondents. The reason for the pervious problem is that respondents were found to focus more on school homework. When investigating the types of reading materials read, the analysis showed that (Table 2) among magazines, storybooks, and comics, the magazines are the most popular genre followed by comics and storybooks. The reason is that respondents were more interested in magazines compared to other books. The high cost of storybooks and comics was also another factor. The respondents also mentioned that they had no time to read storybooks and comics.

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