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Students' Perceptions on Reading Habits in The Extensive Reading Course: A Study at Fkip University of Mataram

[1*]Ni Nengah Titin, [2] Lalu Ali Wardana, [3] Sartika Hijriati

[1,2,3] English Education Program, Language and Arts Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Mataram , Indonesia

*Corresponding Author e-mail: ninengahtitin@gmail.com

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Abst ract

This study explores students' perceptions of reading habits and the challenges they face in maintaining those habits in the Extensive Reading (ER) course at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), University of Mataram. Although ER is widely claimed to support reading habits, previous studies have mainly examined reading strategies, reading journals, or single ER activities and have not sufficiently explained how students themselves view the formation of their reading habits and the challenges they face. This qualitative descriptive study addresses that gap by foregrounding students' perceptions and experiences. Data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire completed by 50 students who had taken the course and through semi-structured interviews with eight purposively selected participants. The questionnaire was developed from Day and Bamford's ER principles, and the data were analyzed thematically and triangulated. The findings indicate that students perceive reading habits as shaped by the amount and regularity of reading, learner autonomy, reading for pleasure, and teacher facilitation. Twenty-eight participants (56%) reported reading more frequently after taking the course; 45 (90%) selected texts based on personal interest; 45 (90%) read voluntarily beyond course requirements; and 32 (64%) reported that regular assignments and reminders encouraged them to read. Challenges included low motivation, boredom, and mood dependence (66%); time constraints and academic workload (64%); digital distractions (64%); and language and text difficulty (50%). Students responded with time management, rescheduling, choosing easier or more interesting texts, and taking short breaks. The novelty of this study lies in integrating students' perceptions of habit formation with the challenges and self-initiated strategies they use in one ER context. ER provides a supportive context for reading habits, but habit formation does not occur automatically; it depends on interest, autonomy, consistency, and support.

Keywords: Reading Habits, Extensive Reading, Students Perceptions, Learner Autonomy, Reading Challenges, EFL.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is a foundation of EFL learning that helps students access academic knowledge, increase their vocabulary, and develop their overall language proficiency (Grabe & Stoller, 2020). At the higher education level, students are expected to work with academic texts, research articles, and digital learning resources, most of which are written in English; however, the development of effective reading skills does not depend merely on linguistic knowledge but also on students' motivation and their ability to maintain regular reading habits (Grabe & Stoller, 2020). Extensive Reading

(ER), as proposed by Day and Bamford (2002), encourages learners to read large volumes of easy, engaging, and self-selected texts to build fluency and sustainable reading habits. In practice, ER courses are structured around activities such as choosing reading materials independently, silent reading, taking notes, keeping reading journals, sharing sessions, and personal reflection (Khotimah, 2020). These activities are grounded in principles that view student autonomy, reading for pleasure, and a large volume of easily understandable input as key conditions for habit formation (Day & Bamford, 2002; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016). However, what students actually perceive as shaping their reading habits, and what challenges they face in maintaining consistent reading throughout the course, still require additional empirical research.

In this study, reading habits are operationally defined as the frequency, regularity, persistence, and voluntary continuation of reading practices, including text selection and time management, as reported by students in the questionnaire and interviews. Students' perceptions are defined as the meanings, evaluations, and interpretations that students attach to those reading practices and to the ER activities they experienced. This operational definition is used to connect the questionnaire responses with the interview data and to keep the analysis focused on students' views rather than on measured linguistic outcomes. In addition, this study does not measure reading comprehension, vocabulary development, or other linguistic outcomes; rather, it focuses on students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences.

In the context of real-world education, students' reading habits are often inconsistent. Students read especially to fulfill course requirements, and in ER courses, they may only read when assignment deadlines approach, with limited effort to maintain a routine of voluntary reading (Rahma et al., 2025). Digital media can add further pressure, as the devices that provide access to reading materials also provide access to social media and entertainment that compete for the same attention. Previous research has explored related issues from various perspectives. Rahma et al. (2025) found that students in ER classes rely on surface-level strategies such as reading slowly, reading aloud, and focusing on vocabulary and grammar; however, their study primarily presented quantitative patterns and did not explore how students maintain these habits over time. Zur et al. (2025) reported that reading journals help build reading routines, but they focused on only one instructional tool. Rosmayanti and Yahrif (2023) identified teachers' practices that motivated students to read more frequently, but they emphasized teaching techniques rather than the challenges students faced. Aisyah et al. (2025) investigated vocabulary learning strategies that support reading comprehension, while Aristawidya et al. (2026) examined teachers' strategies for fostering reading habits among high school students. Studies on specific ER activities, such as Khotimah's (2020) study on 15-minute silent reading and Khotimah et al.'s (2024) study on self-selected reading and learner autonomy, also did not examine how students view the role of ER activities in shaping their overall reading habits or what challenges they face in consistently practicing those habits.

Based on this gap, this study explores students' perceptions of reading habits and the challenges they face in maintaining those habits in the Extensive Reading course at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Mataram. This study examines two research questions: (1) What are students' perceptions of reading habits in the Extensive Reading course? (2) What challenges do students face in

implementing reading habits in the Extensive Reading course? The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to integrate students' perceptions of habit formation, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they use within one ER course, rather than focusing only on a single instructional tool, teaching technique, or vocabulary strategy. The results are expected to provide input for the design of the Extensive Reading course so that more consistent and sustainable reading habits can be supported among learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. This design was chosen because the study aimed to explore students' reading habits, perceptions, and challenges in depth within the natural context of the ER course, rather than evaluating them statistically (Sugiyono, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2017). This design is also consistent with the ER framework proposed by Day and Bamford (2002), as it allows for the exploration of perceptions regarding volume, student autonomy, reading for pleasure, and teacher facilitation. The study was conducted in the Odd Semester of the 2024/2025 academic year at the English Education Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Mataram, during and immediately after the Extensive Reading course. The study population consisted of students in the English Language Education Department who had taken the Extensive Reading course. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a technique in which participants are intentionally chosen because they can explain the phenomenon under study most effectively (Sugiyono, 2019). A total of 50 students who had completed the course, generally in their third or fourth semester, voluntarily participated by filling out an open-ended questionnaire. Eight of them were selected for interviews based on the depth and diversity of their written responses, as well as their willingness to participate further.

Two instruments were used, along with the researcher as the primary instrument. The first was an open-ended questionnaire consisting of 11 items developed based on the ER principles of Day and Bamford (2002): reading volume (2 items), student autonomy (2 items), reading for pleasure (2 items), teacher facilitation (2 items), and challenges in maintaining a reading habit (3 items). The second instrument was a semi-structured interview guide based on themes identified in the questionnaire responses, which allowed for follow-up questions while maintaining focus on the research questions (Patton, 2015). Both instruments were reviewed by the supervisor and examiners, who are experts in the field of English language education, before being used. Data were collected in two stages. In the first stage, questionnaires were distributed to students who had completed the course. In the second stage, semi-structured interviews were conducted in person or online, according to the participants' availability. With their consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The questionnaire responses and interview transcripts were read multiple times and thematically coded (Braun & Clarke, 2006) based on five indicators: reading frequency, student autonomy, reading for pleasure, teacher facilitation, and challenges in maintaining reading habits. The coding process was carried out operationally by reading the transcripts repeatedly, assigning initial codes to meaningful units, grouping similar codes into the five indicators, reviewing and

naming the themes, selecting representative quotations, and calculating frequencies and percentages only for questionnaire themes to indicate how often each pattern appeared among the 50 participants. Since a single response could be coded under more than one theme, the percentages in the tables do not always add up to 100%. Credibility was supported through triangulation of questionnaire themes and interview themes, as well as through verification by the interview participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants were identified as Q1–Q50 for questionnaire respondents and P1–P8 for interview participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Perceptions of Reading Habits in the Extensive Reading Course

The data show that students understand reading habits in the Extensive Reading course through four interconnected aspects, namely the amount and regularity of reading, learning autonomy, reading for pleasure, and teacher facilitation. Table 1 presents students' reported reading frequency during the course.

Table 1. Students' Reported Reading Frequency During the Extensive Reading Course

Reading Frequency	Participants	Percentage
Low or occasional	18	36%
Regular	15	30%
Frequent	11	22%
Flexible, without a specified frequency	4	8%
Ambiguous or insufficient response	2	4%
Total	50	100%

When asked to compare their reading habits before and after taking the course, 28 participants (56%) reported an increased amount of reading, and 17 (34%) reported a more regular routine, while 5 (10%) reported little or no change at all; some participants described both types of changes. For example, Q1 almost never read English-language texts outside required course materials before the course but began completing one short text or one chapter each week. P4 said, "After taking the Extensive Reading course, I started reading almost every day because I had to keep up with the reading assignments." These examples demonstrate an improvement in reading habits that remains closely tied to the demands of the course.

This pattern supports Day and Bamford's (2002) principle that students must read large volumes on a sustained level. It also aligns with Wood and Rünger's (2016) definition of habit formation, in which behavior becomes a habit when repeated in a relatively stable context: reading logs, weekly reports, sharing sessions, and reading targets create such conditions. Similar structural activities have been reported to help students develop routines (Zur et al., 2025), and Khairani et al. (2022) found that an ER program can foster reading habits even when some ER principles are only partially

met. On the other hand, some students return to reading primarily when an academic need arises, suggesting that the course structure can trigger a routine, but maintaining it requires stronger motivation and self-management. This nuance complements teacher-centered findings, such as those of Rosmayanti and Yahrif (2023) and Aristawidya et al. (2026), by showing that teacher facilitation must be understood together with students' own perceptions and self-regulation. The other three aspects are summarized in Table 2, which lists the most frequent themes in the questionnaire responses.

Table 2. Most Frequent Themes Related to Learner Autonomy, Reading for Pleasure, and Teacher Facilitation (N = 50)

Aspect	Theme	Freq.	%
Learner autonomy	**Self-management of time and targets**	**46**	**92%**
Learner autonomy	**Selection based on personal interest**	**45**	**90%**
Learner autonomy	**Choice of reading environment**	**30**	**60%**
Learner autonomy	**Selection based on difficulty level**	**27**	**54%**
Learner autonomy	**Lecturer recommendation or assignment influences selection**	**26**	**52%**
Reading for pleasure	**Voluntary reading beyond course requirements**	**45**	**90%**
Reading for pleasure	**Continued reading based on preferred materials**	**37**	**74%**
Reading for pleasure	**Intrinsic interest drives voluntary reading**	**36**	**72%**
Reading for pleasure	**Interest in topic increases enjoyment**	**32**	**64%**
Reading for pleasure	**Task pressure reduces enjoyment**	**9**	**18%**
Teacher facilitation	**Regular assignments and reminders encourage reading**	**32**	**64%**
Teacher facilitation	**Feedback and discussion support reading**	**30**	**60%**

Aspect	Theme	Freq.	%
Teacher facilitation	**Guidance and recommendations from the lecturer**	**15**	**30%**

Autonomy appeared mainly in two forms: choosing texts and managing reading activities independently. Forty-five participants (90%) stated that they chose reading materials based on personal interests and 27 participants (54%) based on difficulty level, while 46 participants (92%) explained that they set their own schedules and goals. Participant Q11, for example, described setting goals, choosing a place to read, and selecting reading materials independently. P5 explained a time-limiting strategy for each session: "Setting a goal of about 10 minutes or aiming to read one page is the best strategy." These findings are consistent with Day and Bamford (2002), who stated that students should be free to choose reading materials that suit their interests and abilities, as well as with Khotimah et al. (2024), who found that self-selected reading can foster autonomy and persistence. However, this autonomy is not unlimited. Twenty-six participants (52%) stated that recommendations or assignments from instructors influenced what they read, and 12 participants (24%) cited recommendations from peers. Therefore, student autonomy and instructor facilitation appear to be complementary rather than contradictory: instructors provide a framework and suggestions, while students retain the final decision-making authority.

Enjoyment is closely linked to interest in the material. Forty-five participants (90%) said they read voluntarily outside course requirements, 37 (74%) continued to read material they enjoyed, and 32 (64%) said that their interest in the topic increased their enjoyment. For example, Q17 often reads short stories with engaging plots and explained that reading is not just for assignments but also something they truly enjoy. P3 recalled finishing a Level 3 graded reader in three days as the most enjoyable experience during the course. Conversely, nine participants (18%) stated that pressure from assignments in other courses reduced their enjoyment, and 20 participants (40%) said that the difficulty level of the texts affected it. These results reflect the ER principle that enjoyment, quantity, and student choice are crucial factors for long-term reading habits (Day & Bamford, 2002; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016). These results can also be interpreted from the perspective of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000): when the material matches their interests, students have personal reasons to continue reading without relying solely on assignments or grades. This aligns with the emphasis placed by Rahma et al. (2025) on a pressure-free reading environment.

Instructors were seen as playing a positive role. Thirty-two participants (64%) stated that regular assignments and reminders greatly encouraged them to read; 30 participants (60%) said feedback and discussions supported their reading activities; and 15 participants (30%) appreciated the guidance and recommendations. P1 described a lecturer who asked students to form groups to discuss the books they read and report on their reading results every week. These practices align with the views of Day and Bamford (2002), who see teachers as mentors and motivators, as well as with the findings of Rosmayanti and Yahrif (2023) that classroom activities can encourage more frequent reading habits both inside and outside the classroom. However, the data also indicate that deadlines and workload can be sources of stress

for some students; therefore, facilitation must balance structure and freedom. This finding extends the teacher-strategy literature by showing that the same facilitative practices can be perceived as support by some students and as pressure by others, depending on students' motivation, workload, and autonomy.

Challenges in Maintaining Reading Habits and Students' Strategies

Students reported four main challenges, summarized in Table 3. Because one response could be coded under several themes, the categories overlap.

Table 3. Frequency of Challenges in Maintaining Reading Habits (N = 50)

Challenge	Freq.	%
Low motivation, boredom, and mood dependence	**33**	**66%**
Time constraints and academic workload	**32**	**64%**
Limited time for reading	**29**	**58%**
Competing academic tasks and responsibilities	**25**	**50%**
Fatigue	**10**	**20%**
Digital or social media distraction	**32**	**64%**
Text and language difficulty	**25**	**50%**
Vocabulary difficulty	**7**	**14%**
Text comprehension difficulty	**5**	**10%**

Time and workload are the most apparent external barriers. Q40 described time management as a major challenge because of the heavy course load, while Q30 had difficulty making time to read because other assignments had to be completed immediately. P3 described the weeks before midterm exams when assignments piled up: "I was completely exhausted," and stopped reading for more than a week. These findings align with the differentiation made by Oxford (1990) between internal and external factors, with workload and other competing responsibilities being external challenges. These findings also indicate that time constraints do not necessarily imply limited interest; students often have to prioritize their academic obligations and feel exhausted after classes end. Therefore, a flexible and realistic reading routine is essential.

A lack of motivation was also the most frequently cited challenge. Students described feeling bored, lazy, and said that they only read when they felt like it. P2 said he felt "lazy" during the first few weeks, but began to take reading seriously once he was given assignments. Originally, P4 motivated himself by thinking about getting an A, but after getting used to reading regularly, "I gradually began to enjoy reading." This aligns with the emphasis placed by Deci and Ryan (2000) on intrinsic motivation for sustained engagement, as well as with the observation by Wood and Rünger (2016) that habits strengthen when behavior is interrupted by mood swings. Jundi et al.

(2024) also found a significant relationship between reading habits and reading motivation. The current data complement these findings by showing that students experience these shifts in motivation in their daily lives: fluctuating motivation, boredom, and fatigue can hinder consistency, even when students recognize the benefits of reading.

Half of the participants reported experiencing difficulties related to language or text difficulty. P5 reported losing concentration when there were too many unfamiliar words and eventually skipping several paragraphs, while P3 described choosing a book that was "far too difficult," feeling overwhelmed after three pages, and only recovering after the instructor suggested choosing an easier book. This is directly related to the ER principle that material must be appropriate for the reader's language proficiency level (Day & Bamford, 2002). Rahma et al. (2025) also observed that students tend to read slowly and focus on vocabulary and grammar, which can conflict with ER's characteristics of fluency and meaning-oriented reading. Therefore, selecting texts with an appropriate level of difficulty is crucial to ensuring that reading remains an enjoyable and engaging activity.

Thirty-two participants (64%) cited digital media or other activities as distractions during their reading. Questions 5 and 7 identified social media as the main distractions, and in the interviews, Participant 1 and Participant 5 mentioned Instagram, TikTok, and video games as things that cut their reading time. For example, Participant 5 usually wanted to "scroll through TikTok or play video games" after a full day of classes and homework. Based on the Oxford framework (1990), digital distractions can be classified as external challenges. These findings suggest that reading habits in the digital age depend not only on available time but also on how students manage their attention and priorities. Despite these challenges, students were not passive. Table 4 shows the strategies they reported.

Table 4. Strategies for Overcoming Reading Challenges (N = 50)

Strategy	**Freq.**	**%**
Time-management strategies	**24**	**48%**
Postponing or rescheduling reading	**23**	**46%**
Choosing easier or more interesting materials	**18**	**36%**
Taking a restorative break	**11**	**22%**
Using vocabulary or comprehension aids	**7**	**14%**
Seeking interpersonal support	**6**	**12%**
Controlling digital distraction	**4**	**8%**

Students schedule time for reading, read in short sessions, choose books that are easier or more interesting, take short breaks, and seek support from others; for example, Q33 recommends joining a reading community. These strategies are forms of student autonomy and self-management (Day & Bamford, 2002), and are similar to

the structured routines and vocabulary strategies reported by Zur et al. (2025), Rosmayanti and Yahrif (2023), and Aisyah et al. (2025). Their effectiveness may vary between individuals, as each student has different needs, abilities, schedules, and interests. It is worth noting that only 4 participants (8%) mentioned managing digital distractions, even though 64% cited it as a challenge, which may indicate an area where students need more support. Taken together, the findings suggest that ER provides a supportive context for reading habits, but habit formation is relational: it depends on the interaction between students' interest and autonomy, the structure provided by teachers, the difficulty of texts, and the competing demands of academic and digital environments.

CONCLUSION

This study examines students' perceptions of reading habits and the challenges they ace in maintaining them in the Extensive Reading course at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), University of Mataram, based on questionnaire responses from 50 students and interviews with 8 of them. Students view reading habits as a process shaped by amount and regularity of reading, learning autonomy, reading for pleasure, and lecturers support. Many reported reading more frequently and regularly after taking the course, choosing texts based on their interests, and reading beyond course requirements, with assignments, reminders, discussions, and instructor feedback helping them stay consistent. However, these habits develop inconsistently: some students became more consistent readers, while others read only occasionally or when required.

Students faced challenges related to low motivation, boredom, and dependence on mood (66%); time constraints and academic workload (64%); digital distractions (64%); and difficulties with language and texts (50%). They respond with strategies such as scheduling reading time, reading in short sessions, choosing easier or more interesting reading materials, taking breaks, and seeking support. Overall, ER provides a context that supports the development of reading habits. However, habit formation does not occur automatically; it depends on a balance between internal factors such as motivation and interest and external factors such as academic pressure, faculty support, text difficulty, and digital distractions.

RECOMENDATIONS

Students are encouraged to build realistic and consistent routines, starting with short sessions and reading materials that align ith their interests and proficiency levels, as well as managing digital distractions and academic schedules so that reading is not limited to times when assignments are due. Instructors should continue to give students the freedom to choose texts while providing regular guidance, reminders, discussions, and achievable goals, ensuring that assignments and deadlines do not create excessive pressure that diminishes the enjoyment of reading. Academic programs and institutions can support ER by providing a variety of print and digital reading materials, improving access to reading facilities, and promoting academic activities that foster a culture of reading.

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