Reading Attitude and Its Influence on Students' Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

This paper investigated the level of the students' reading attitude and examined its influence on their reading comprehension in undergradute program of English Education Muhammadiyah Purworejo University. Sixty two students participated in the study. Two types of instruments were used to collect the data, namely reading attitude questionnaire and reading test. The questionnaire is in Likert-scale type with five responses in term of agreement with the score starts from 5 – 1. The reading test consists of 40 of multiple-choice type items assessing the students reading skills. Descriptive and inferensial statistics were used to analyze the data, including testing the linearity as the assumption of one set data. For doing the analyses, SPSS version 22 was used. The finding showed that the students' reading attitude was high as the mean was 78.66 while, the reading comprehension is sufficient as the mean was 64.02. Reading attitude had significant correlation toward reading comprehension as the r-value was 0.568. In addition, reading attitude had positive and significant influence on students' reading comprehension as the R-square= 0.322 with sig. 0.000. Reading attitude influenced reading comprehension as much as 32.2%, while 67.8% was influenced by other factors.

Introduction

There are many factors affecting English Proficiency, however in this study, I only corncerns on social-psychologial factors in second or foreign language aquisition. In SLA, earlier researchers called them individual differences (IDs). Ellis (2004) explains that there are seven factors, namely Language Aptitude, Learning Style, Motivation, Anxiety, Personality, Learner Belief and Learning Strategies (as cited in Davies & Elder, 2004, p.33). While, Freeman and Long (2014) mention them which include motivation, Attitude, Personality, Cognitive Style, Hemisphere specialization, Learning Strategies, and other factors like memory, language disability, interest, sex and prior experience. On the other hand, Dornyei (2005) describes "the Taxonomy of Individual Differences (IDs) namely temperament, intelligence, attitudes, and abilities as the main focus areas" (p.7).

Based on the facts above, attitude is one of IDs which contribute to the result of language learning. Attitude toward language learning is important factor in determining the language learning achievement. As it is pointed out by Kumaravadivellu (2008) that "attitude linked to the language learning processes and practices because it affects the learner not only on processing information but also with respect to motives and relationship between language and culture"(p.39). Reading is one of the receptive skills which is very important in boosting other

skills like writing and speaking. Through reading language learners can obtain large amount of vocabulary and become more familiar with written expression. The more frequent the learners read, the more they are familiar with English vocabulary. On the contrary, the learners often find difficulty in learning English particularly reading because of certain factors. The causes of poor comprehension among them are limited vocabulary knowledge, lack of practice, lack of fluency, lack of familiarity with subject matter, difficulty level of text, inadequate use of effective reading strategies (Westwood, 2008).

I am as the lecturer of reading is concerned about the learners' proficiency in reading. The learners often get unsatifying result in reading test. I believed it is related to the factor of the individual differences among the learners. Attitude is one of the individual differences as one of the variables which can influence on the learning result or the learners' achievement. As it is pointed out by Brown (2007) that language learners benefit from positive attitude and that negative attitude may lead to decreased motivation, because of decreased input and interaction, to unsuccessful attainment of proficiency. Does the low score of reading because of the low reading attitude? If the students' reading attitude is high, is there any other factor contributes to the low reading score? These misteries lead the writer to conduct the study related to the reading attitude and its influence on their reading comprehension.

Several studies had been conducted in relation with attitude and reading comprehension or learning achievement. Among them were descriptive research and correlational studies. The descriptive studies were done by Azizifar et al. (2014); Hosseini and Pourmandnia (2013); and Sidek (2009). These studies tried to explored the learners' attitude toward learning English. While the correlational studies were conducted by Kocaarslan (2016); Alkaff (2013); Awe (2014); Bastug (2014); Dehbozorgi (2014); Sani and Zain (2011). These studies investigated the correalation of language attitude toward the language learning in various contexts. Learning the importance of attitude as one of IDs and understanding students' attitude in learning reading and its contribution to the reading comprehension, leads me to conduct the study which aims to investigate:

1. the level of reading attitude of the fifth semester of under-graduate students of English Education Program.
2. the influence of students' reading attitude on their reading comprehension.

Literature Review

Concept of attitude in learning English

The concept of attitude is complex. Many definitions have been proposed to describe its essence. According to Allport (as cited in Gardner, 1985) an attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual response to all objects and situations with which is related. Attitudes are said to have cognitive, affective and conative components. The cognitive component refers to the individual's belief structure, the affective refers to emotional reactions, and the conative refers to the tendency to behave toward the attitude object. Gardner (1985)summarizes an individual's attitude is an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, infered on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinion about the referent. With regard to language attitudes, he explained that the cognitive component refers to the thoughts, beliefs, and values about the language of learners; the affective component concerns their feelings toward the language; and the conative component refers to a behavioral intention of the plan of action. Further, he points out if the students' attitude are favourable, it is reasonable to predict that other things being equal, that experience with the language will be pleasant, and the students will be encouraged to continue (Gardner, 1985, p.8). Specifically, the knowledge function reflects the ability of attitudes to

summarize information about objects in the environment, and the utilitarian function exists in attitudes that maximize rewards and minimize punishments obtained from objects in the environment (as cited in Haddock & Maio, 2004, p.13).

The concept of learners' attitudes has been the focus of attention in explanation and investigation of human behavior offered by social psychologists. Attitude is usually defined as a disposition or tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain thing such as an idea, object, person, or situation. Students have positive or negative attitudes towards the language they want to learn or the people who speak it. Malallaha (2000) points out that having positive attitude towards tests is also claimed to be one of the reasons which make students perform better on the tests in (as cited in Hosseini & Pourmandnia, 2013).

The concept of attitude which is based on multi component model of attitude has been developed by Haddock and Maio (2004). It shares the basic tenet that attitude are global evaluation of stimulus objects that are derived from three sources of information: affective responses, cognitions, and behavioural information. Affective refers to feeling and emotions associated with an attitude object; cognitive refers to beliefs about an attitude object, and behavioral refers to past behaviours associated with the attitude object. Positive feeling is usually accompanied by positive beliefs and positive experiences. At the same, it affects cognition.
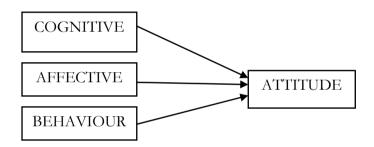

Figure 1. The multicomponent model of attitude (adopted from (Haddock & Maio, 2004, p. 36)

Baker (1992) explains a tripartile attitudinal structure, which covers cognitive, affective and conative constituents:
(1) Cognitive element is related to thoughts and beliefs.
(2) Affective components concerned aspects related to feeling and emotions.
(3) Conative aspect is associated with those aspects of attitude which connect with behavioural intention (as cited in Batram, 2010, p.36).
Brown's ideas (2007) about attitudes are not very different from those of Baker's. He believes that attitudes "develop in early childhood and are the result of parent's and peers' attitudes, of contact with people who are different in any number of ways, and of interacting different factors in the human experience". He touches on Gardner and Lambert (1972) extensive studies on the effect of attitudes on language learning is motivation as a construct made up of certain attitudes. To elaborate on the issue, Brown points to the large-scale studies that Oller and his colleagues (1977) conducted on the relationship between attitudes and language success (as cited in Brown, 2007).

There are a number of people whose attitudes to each other can be significant namely the learner, the teacher, the learner's peers and parents, and the speakers of the language, as it mentioned by (Freeman & Long, 2014, p.309). However, futher, they emphasize that learner attitude towards learning situation affect the degree of success. Meanwhile, teachers' attitude towards learners can also affect the quality and quantity of the learning (Freeman & Long, 2014, p.309).

Concept of reading and reading comprehension

Reading is an activity to get information and process to understand the material from different kinds of text critically. Reading is called receptive skills are the ways in which people extract meaning from the discourse they see or hear (Harmer, 2007). Reading is the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately (Grabe and Stroller, 2013). From the definitions above, it can be concluded that generally reading is about understanding written texts, however, to understand a written text is not simply by looking at the symbols, reading is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought.

Reading is an activity with purpose. As it is mentioned by Grabe and Stroller (2013) there are seven purposes of reading namely reading to search for simple information, reading to skim quickly, reading to learn from texts, reading to integrate information, reading to write or search for information needed for writing, reading to critique texts and reading for general comprehension. The purpose of reading also determines the appropriate approach to reading comprehension. Moreover, teaching reading will not be successfully if the students can only read words, without understanding the message being read. In other words, whatever we read, it should be understood.

Comprehension means understanding. This means that reading comprehension is a process of thought where the readers understand the writer's ideas and interpret them into his or her own needs. And it is generally accepted that the major goal for any reading activity is comprehension. that comprehension is the active process of constructing meaning from text; it involves accessing previous knowledge, understanding vocabulary concepts, making inferences, and linking key ideas. It is pointed out by Blanton (as cited Westwood, 2008, p.31) that comprehension an active thinking process through which a reader intentionally constructs meaning to form a deeper understanding of concepts and information presented in a text. Reading comprehension depends on three factors. The first factor is that the reader has command of the linguistic structures of the text. The second factor is that the reader is able to exercise metacognitive control over the content being read. This means that the reader is able to monitor and reflect on his or her own level of understanding while reading the material. According to Tankersley (2003), "The third and most important criterion influencing comprehension is that the reader has adequate background in the content and vocabulary being presented" (p.90).

From above definitions it can be concluded that reading comprehension is activity of visual process which involves perceiving symbols to get meaning from the writen text through active thinking by using background knowledge, vocabulary, drawing inference from the facts presented in the text.

Related Research

There were earlier research findings related to attitude and language learning. The descriptive studies among them are Sidek examined the language attitude among first year college students The finding indicated that the instruction helped improve EFL learners' language attitude towards EFL learning (Sidek, 2009). Hosseini found that having positive attitude a certain language and the way learners perceived that language can bring a big influence upon their performance on the language its (Hosseini & Pourmandnia, 2013). In line with Hosseini, Alkaff's finding showed that the most students had a positive attitude towards learning English and they try to improve their English and use the language eventhough there are a lot of demands on time and opportunity to practise it (Alkaff, 2013). However, Azizifar, Ghaitasi, and Gowhary (2014) focused on investigating the EFL adult learners found that the most students the participants had negative behavioral attitude toward speaking skill while they had postive cognitive and emotional attitude.

The second research type were correlational studies, among them are Sani and Zain (2011) research. They investigated the relationships among second language reading attitudes, reading self-efficacy, and reading ability, as well as gender differences. They found that L2 reading ability was found to be somewhat mediocre, L2 reading self-efficacy was low, and attitudes were not positive. L2 reading attitude and efficacy had significant roles in reading improvement in a non-supportive ESL setting (Sani & Zain, 2011). In line with Sani and Zain, Oroujlou emphasized that motivation and attitude had great roles in improving proficiency and efficiency of the students in language learning. Among the factors like taecher's and students' role, society, syllabus, etc. Motivation and attitude are very important in language learning. Another was Dehbozorgi's finding (2012) on the effects of attitude towards language learning and risk-taking on EFL students' proficiency. Correlational analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between attitude towards language learning and risk-taking ($r=.20$, $p< 0.05$). Besides, language proficiency and attitude towards language learning did not have a significant correlation ($r= .06$, $p> 0.05$) (Dehbozorgi, 2012).

Awe (2014) studied the relationship between reading attitudes and reading comprehension performance of secondary school students. It was found that a total of 65.75% of the students had a generally negative attitude towards reading: 61.13% of them performed well only at the literal level of reading; 38%; 60% and 65.87% at the inferential, evaluate and creative levels, respectively. Also, there was a very high, positive and significant relationship between the students' reading attitudes and their reading comprehension performance ($r=.0835$ df 798 $P\leq 0.05$).These findings implied that negative attitudes to extensive reading could lead to students' poor performance in reading comprehension, which could in turn lead to poor performance in English language (Awe, 2014). However, Bastug (2014) found that the result reading attitude and reading comprehension significantly predicted academic achievement. In addition, reading attitude was found to be a significant predictor of reading comprehension (Bastug, 2014). In line with Bastug' finding Kocaarslan (2016) found that reading attitude and vividness of mental imagery were significant predictors for students' reading comprehension competencies. In addition, the results indicated that approximately 14% of the variance in reading comprehension competence could be explained by reading attitude (Kocaarslan, 2016).

Methods

This research belonged to quantitative non-experimental research It used correlational design involving two variables namely independent and dependent. The independent variable was reading attitude and dependent variable was reading comprehension. The research was conducted at the fifth semester of English Education Program of Muhammadiyah Purworejo University of Central Java. Purposive sampling technique was used to determine the sample. There were 62 under-graduate students of the fifth semester of the third year with the age range between 21-22 years old participated in the study.

To get the data I used two types of instruments, they were test and non-test. The first was a questionnaire of reading attitude to get the data on the students' attitude toward reading. There were 20 Likert-scale items in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was constructed by adopting Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) issued by Gardner (2005). The participants were asked to rate the degree of agreement on a five-point scale *(5=Strongly Agree,4= Agree, 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 2=Disagree* and *1=Strongly Disagree).* The questionnaire had been tried out to 30 students who almost had similar characteristics to the target participants and tested for the validity and realiability. The result of questionnaire validity and realiability showed that all items were valid and reliable as the r-value of each item was higher than 0.05. The second instrument was a reading test to get data of students' reading comprehension. The test

consisted of 40 items which were constructed by adopting and adapting TOEFL and test items of First Certificate in English (FCE) which had high validity and realibility. The test was tried out to 60 students of the sixth semester of English Education Program Purworejo Muhammadiyah University to check for the difficulty index. The try-out participant characteristics were similar to the actual participants. Based on the item analysis the difficulty index was 0.75.

The data of the students' attitude were calculated based on the students' response in answering questionaire. The range score is between 1 – 100. Futhermore, the reading test score was also calculated based on the students' correct answer with the similar range score from 1 – 100. After the data were completed, the data were analyzed by using descriptive and inferential analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to find out about the students' reading attitude and reading comprehension. It was specifically to find the mean of both variables. In making inferential analysis, first the data of both variable were tested for the linearity to see whether the data of the two variables were linear or not. As it was mentioned by Ho (2014) "for testing correlation there must be pairs score and the assumption was the relationship between the two variable must be linear" (p.220). To test the hypotheses, correlation and regression were applied. The test was done by using SPSS version 22

Findings and Discussion

1. Students' reading attitude and reading comprehension

To classify the score of reading attitude and reading comprehesion, I adopted the achievement classification category issued by Arikunto (2009, p.245). There were five range score with five categories. The classification was as follows.

Table 1. Achievement classification category

Score	Grade	Level
80-100	A	Excellent
66-79	B	Good
56-65	C	Sufficient
40-55	D	Fairly-sufficient
30-39	E	Low

The results of students' reading attitude and reading comprehension were described in the table below.

Table 2. Table of Students' Reading Attitude and Reading comprehension

Range Score	Reading Attitude	Percentage (%)	Reading Proficiency	Percentage (%)
80-100	34	54.84	4	6.45
66-79	28	45.16	18	29.03
56-65	0		28	45.16
40-55	0		12	20.97
30-39	0		0	0
Total	62	100	62	100

Table 2 showed the result of reading attitude and reading comprehension. Reading attitude laid only on two categories namely very high (54.84%) and high (45.16). Before calculating the average, it could be predicted that the students' reading attitude was in good category. While reading comprehension laid on four categories namely very high only 6.45%, high (29.03%), sufficient (45.16%) and low (20.97%). It showed that reading attitude was better than reading comprehension.
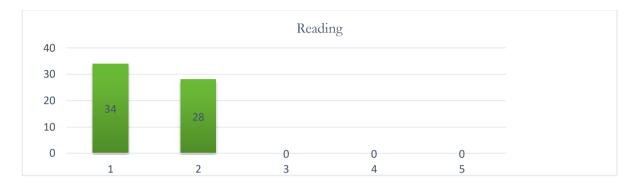

Figure 2. Students' reading attitude

There were only two bars in figure 2. It showed that there were 34 students in the range score between 80-100 and 28 students in the range score between 66-79.
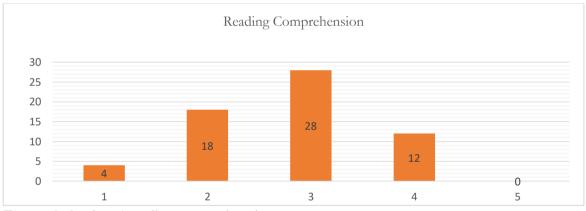

Figure 3. Students' reading comprehension

Different from the reading attitude, there were four bars in figure 3 described students' reading comprehension. It showed that there were four students in the range score between 80-100, 18 students in the range score between 66-79, 28 students in the range score between 56-65 and 12 students in the range score between 40-55. The comparison of the the result of reading attitude and reading proficiency could be seen in the table below.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of reading attitude and reading comprehension

		Attitude	Reading comprehension
N	Valid	62	62
	Missing	0	0
Mean		78,66	64,02
Median		80,00	64,00
Mode		80	65
Std. Deviation		5,660	8,916
Variance		32,031	79,492
Minimum		66	50
Maximum		89	88
Sum		4877	3969

Based on the Arikunto's score category (2009) the students had good reading attitude as the mean score was 78.66 in the range between 66-79, while students' reading comprehension was in sufficient category as the mean score is 64.02 in the range between 56-65. Even the two variables had different minimum and maximum score. The minimum score of reading attitude was 66 and this was in good category while the minimum score of reading comprehension was 50 and this was in fairly-sufficient category. However, the maximum score of reading attitude and reading comprehension had the same category or excellent as the the maximum score of reading attitude was 89 and the maximum score of reading comprehension was 88.

2. The influence of reading attitude on reading comprehension

Before testing the hypothesis, I tested the linearity of the two variables. Below was the result of the linearity test.

Table 4. Result of linearity test of reading attitude and reading comprehension

ANOVA

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Reading comprehension * Attitude	Between Groups	(Combined)	2938,448	18	163,247	3,674	,000
		Linearity	1566,204	1	1566,204	35,250	,000
		Deviation from Linearity	1372,244	17	80,720	1,817	,058
	Within Groups		1910,536	43	44,431		
	Total		4848,984	61			

First, based on the ANOVA output table, value sig. deviation from linearity of 0.058 > 0.05. It could be concluded that there was a linear relationship between the variables of reading attitude and reading comprehension. To test the hypothesis, correlation and regression test were applied. The result of Pearson Correlation was shown below.

Table 5. The correlation between reading attitude and reading comprehension

		Attitude	Reading comprehension
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	,568[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	1946,194	1743,355
	Covariance	31,905	28,580
	N	62	62
Reading comprehension	Pearson Correlation	,568[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	1743,355	4848,984
	Covariance	28,580	79,492
	N	62	62

[**]. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6. Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,568[a]	,322	,311	7,402

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude

Table 6 showed that R-value = 0.568 with sig. (2-tailed) 0.000. The correlation was medium as it was in the range between 0.40-0.599. Sig. (1-tailed) < 0.05, Ho was rejected so it could be concluded that their was positive correlation between reading attitude and reading comprehension. R-square= 0.322 showed coefficient determination (R^2). It implied the contribution of attitude to reading comprehension 32.2%, the rest (67.8%) from other other variables or other factors

Table 7. ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1561,657	1	1561,657	28,503	,000[b]
	Residual	3287,327	60	54,789		
	Total	4848,984	61			

a. Dependent Variable: Reading Profficiency

b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude

Table 7 showed the coefficient determination test result. The test found the F-value 28.503 with sig. = 0.000. as the sig. Value < 0.05 Ho is rejected. It meant reading attitude had significant influence on reading comprehension.

Table 8. Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-6,432	13,229		-,486	,629
	Attitude	,896	,168	,568	5,339	,000

a. Dependent Variable: Reading comprehension

Table 8 showed test of linear regresion. Based on the test result, t-value was 5.339 with sig. = 0.000. as the sig. Value < 0.05 so Ho was rejected. It meant that reading attitude had positive influence on reading comprehension. From the test result, it could be stated that attitude had positive and significant influence on students' reading proficiency. In other words, attitude significantly predicted students' reading proficiency.

Based on the research finding, the students' reading attitude was high or positive. It was different from the earlier finding from Awe (2014) and Sani (2011) and that the students' attitude were not positive. However, the students' reading comprehension was only in sufficient level. There were different levels of the two variables. Although the students'reading attitude were high or positive the students' reading comprehension were not in the same level or high. The finding did not support the statement from Garnder (1985) "if the students' attitude are favourable, it is reasonable to predict that other things being equal"(p.8). This was also contradicted with Malallaha (as cited in Hosseini & Pourmandnia, 2013) that having positive attitude towards tests was claimed to be one of the reasons which make students perform better on the tests. It seemed that the students still found it difficult to do the reading test as it was the standardized test as they were lack of vocabulary mastery. The students needed more pratice in preparing the reading test and they also needed to expand the vocabulary particulary academic vocabulary.

The finding on the influence of reading attitude on students' reading comprehension supported several the earlier findings namely Kocaarslan (2016); Awe ((2014); Bastug (2014); and Sani (2011). The four studies had found that there were positive and significant relationship between attitude and reading comprehension or learning achievement. In Kocaarslan's finding it was only 14% the variance of reading comprehension could be explained by reading attitude while in this current study reading attitude gave influence 32.2 % on reading comprehension. It was greater than the previous research findings. However, the finding was contradictory with the earlier finding from Dehbozorgi (2012) that there was no significant correlation between attitude and students' proficiency.

Conclusion and Implication

Based on the descriptive analysis, the students had good level or positive reading attitude but it was not balanced with the reading comprehension. The students were only in the sufficient level. Based on the inferential analysis, reading attitude had significant correlation toward reading comprehension as the r-value is 0.568. In addition reading attitude has positive and significant influence on students' reading comprehension as the R-square= 0.322 with sig. 0.000. reading attitude. Reading attitude influenced reading comprehension as much as 32.2% while 67.8% was influenced by other phychological factors like motivation, self esteem, self efficacy, anxiety, personality, learning style and others. Gardner (1985) explains that negative attitude might result from frustrations experienced, while positive attitudes might evolved from success. (Gardner, 1985) related to this explanation the finding had implication that English teachers and lecturers should make class condition more relax-friendly-learning atmosphere in order that students have positive attitude toward the language they learn. The second finding related to the

influence of reading attitude on reading comprehension had implication that teachers of English and lecturers of reading had to to develop students' positive attiude towards reading as it contributed about 32.2% on reading comprehension. In other words, by developing students' positive attitude, students reading comprehension would be slightly better, of course it also needed to encourage students to expand their vocabulary and do more practice before doing reading test.

Limitation of the research

There are limitations of the study. First, in the way the students answer reading attitude questionnaire. They rated themselves high because if they rated low they were afraid it would have consequence in low final score of reading comprehension which was given by the lecturer. Second, in doing the reading test, the students had lack of academic vocabulary mastery so the reading score was not good. The third, the study is limited to the reading class at the fifth semester of the third year of undergradute program of English Education. To achieve more comprehensive data, futher research involving students studying on different semester or year.

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