

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter shows the research background, research questions, research purposes, research significance, research scope, conceptual framework, and previous studies.

A. Research Background

This study aims to explore students' perceptions of personalized learning in promoting their interest in reading. The research focuses on "interest" because it is closely related to students' engagement in reading activities. According to Harackiewicz et al. (2016), interest energizes learning by acting as a motivational process that supports academic progress and success.

EFL reading refers to the process of understanding and constructing meaning from texts written in English by learners whose first language is not English. The term combines two components: EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and reading. Harmer (2007) puts forward that EFL involves learning English to communicate with other English users. Meanwhile, Meitifazahra et al. (2023, p.1) define reading as students' understanding of the meaning and value of a text.

Moreover, the concept of EFL reading encompasses several theoretical approaches, particularly cognitive and social factors (Kusumarasdyati, 2022, p.6). Since social factors play a role, students' interest is considered part of the social dimension. As claimed by Ryan and Deci (2000, p.73), students' interest, enjoyment, and positive reactions are influenced by teacher regulation that aligns with students' own goals and values.

Theoretically, difficulties in EFL reading often stem from linguistic differences between English and the learners' first language. In accordance with Kusumarasdyati (2022, p.6), challenges include vocabulary memory and differences in syntax, phonology, and lexis. Although English and Indonesian use similar alphabets, their grammar, word structures, and pronunciation systems differ. As a result, these differences slow down learners' processing of English input.

In preliminary observations at SMPN 1 Cileunyi, students demonstrated low interest in reading textbook materials, as several students did not actively

participate in reading activities. However, when they were given the opportunity to choose their own reading materials, such as folklore texts accessed through a website, all students became actively engaged in the activity. This approach reflects the concept of personalized learning, in which students select reading materials based on their individual interests. Furthermore, the researcher conducted a follow-up survey in the English Club using a reading test. The results showed that out of 17 students, their level of reading interest was categorized as moderate, while their reading ability was at a basic level. Based on these findings, the primary problem identified by the researcher is the students' low interest in reading.

Based on Habók et al. (2024), reading strategies are essential for improving reading performance, especially in digital contexts. This supports the relevance of personalized learning in the current study. Since interest is often connected to individual learning preferences, personalized learning is an effective way to align teaching methods with students' unique needs. Brown (2007), referencing Herbert Puchta and Michael Schratz, advocates connecting language teaching to students' everyday interests, a key principle of humanistic teaching. Bridging the gap between students' lives and academic content can enhance motivation and achievement.

In addition, personalized learning supports learning style theory, which emphasizes that learners have different ways of absorbing and processing information. Stevenson and Dunn (2001), as cited by Gohar and Sadeghi (2014), argue that when materials align with a student's learning style, learning becomes more effective. Therefore, student interest is essential to foster deeper engagement in reading activities. Linvill (2014) also highlights that interest and engagement—especially in the form of attention—significantly influence academic outcomes.

In this study, personalized learning is used as a strategy to promote students' reading interest by adapting reading strategies to students' individual needs. Reading strategies are a key component of EFL instruction. Harmer (1988) argues that students who are not interested in reading benefit less from instruction than those who are engaged. EFL reading theory also recognizes that both cognitive and social factors shape the strategies students use in learning to read in a second

language.

A related study by Ramos and Ferreira (2023) used gamification to raise reading interest, especially when students were allowed to make decisions within story missions which is part of personalized learning. Their findings showed that 27.27% of students rated this element as “moderately important,” 45.45% as “important,” and 27.27% as “very important,” with no negative responses.

Then, Kaban (2021) conducted a quasi-experimental study with 60 students in Turkey, using e-books. The results showed that the experimental group, which used personalized e-books, was more motivated and engaged in reading. Furthermore, learning analytics data from the LMS indicated that this group also interacted more frequently, especially when personalized feedback was provided.

To sum up, these prior studies all indicate the positive impact of personalized learning on student interest. However, the research gap addressed by this study lies in exploring how students’ perceptions of personalized learning—specifically using online folklore texts—can enhance their interest in reading, as opposed to other media.

B. Research Questions

This research decides to find out the answers to two questions.

1. How do the students perceive their reading interest toward English text using personalized learning styles?
2. What are students’ perceptions of how the implementation of personalized learning promotes their interest in reading?

C. Research Purposes

This research has two aims based on the research questions above.

1. To explore students’ perceptions of reading interest toward English texts using personalized learning styles.
2. To understand students’ perceptions of the implementation of personalized learning in promoting reading interest.

D. Research Significances

From this research, there are two benefits, theoretically and practically.

1. Theoretical Significance

This research will contribute to the theoretical framework of personalized learning, specifically in the reading assigned for English Club at SMPN 1 Cileunyi.

Besides, this research will strengthen the theory regarding personalized learning to promote students' interest in reading. Furthermore, it will show whether the theory is still relevant today.

2. Practical Significance

This research will be beneficial for teachers and students.

For teachers, this research can provide new insights for their reading lessons in the classroom, as it explores students' perceptions of personalized learning. This could offer teachers a new option—whether to incorporate personalized learning to enhance the class experience.

For students, this research can help them understand the perceptions of SMPN 1 Cileunyi students regarding personalized learning and its role in promoting their interest in reading. Based on these findings, they can consider whether or not to use personalized learning, making it a potential new option for their reading learning style.

E. Research Scope

This research focused on students' perceptions of personalized learning, whether it is promoting their interest in reading or not, at SMPN 1 Cileunyi, specifically in 8th grade. Besides, it also investigates most students' perceptions of personalized learning in reading text from folklore websites.

F. Conceptual Framework

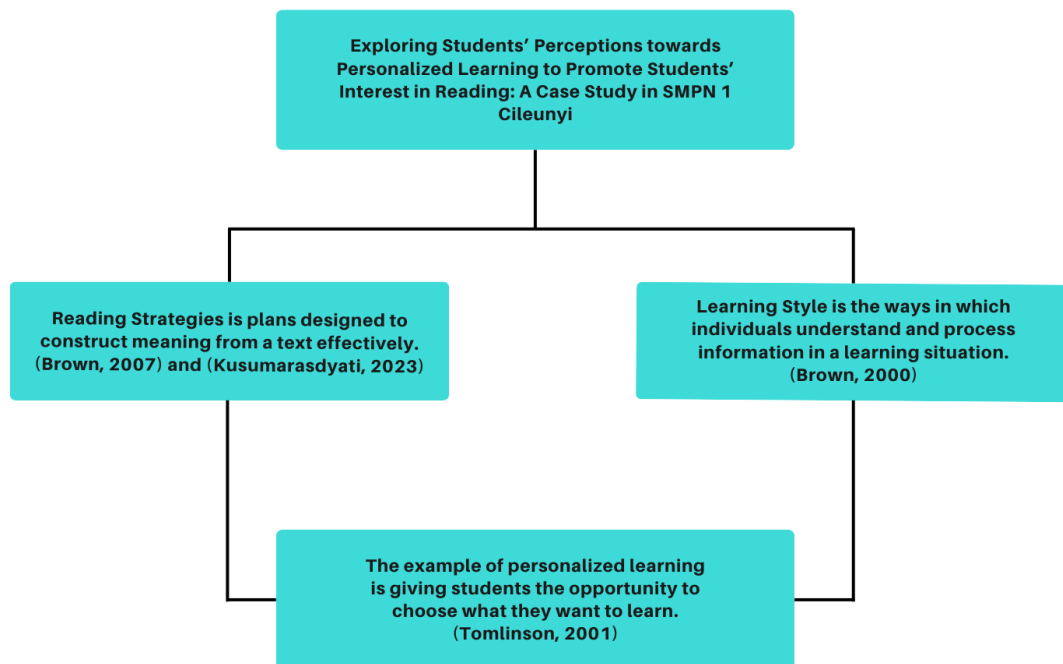


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

Starting with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading as the foundation, this study was conducted in Indonesia, where English is used as a foreign language (EFL). In this context, reading is viewed as the process of constructing meaning from a text, which involves both cognitive and social factors (Kusumarasdyati, 2022).

The cognitive and social factors mentioned are closely related to how students learn, the strategies they use to read, and the specific personalized learning approaches they employ. These concepts will be explained further in this study within the EFL reading context.

When discussing reading strategies, Brown (2007) defines strategies as specific methods used to approach a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular goal, and planned frameworks for controlling information. By combining the definitions of reading and strategies, reading strategies can be understood as

plans designed to construct meaning from a text effectively.

Besides, learning styles are also connected to reading strategies. As stated by Brown (2000), learning styles refer to the ways in which individuals understand and process information in a learning situation. In other words, reading strategies and learning styles are interrelated and form the basis of personalized learning itself.

At SMPN 1 Cileunyi, challenges in the reading class inspired the concept of personalized learning. Personalization serves as the foundation of student-centered learning, where students focus on their strengths and weaknesses to create learning materials tailored to their needs (Makhambetova, 2021). Thus, personalized learning aligns with students' pace, learning styles, and needs, and it can increase their interest by offering flexible choices.

Moreover, students' interest plays a key role in making choices that are relevant to them, which can lead to automatic engagement in learning and foster a sense of attachment. Their satisfaction encourages learning driven by curiosity. Therefore, student interest helps students engage with and absorb new content more effectively (Firmani, S. H., 2009).

In line with personalized learning, numerous studies have shown that giving students the opportunity to choose what they want to learn, as well as how to apply and express that information, enhances their learning experience (Tomlinson, 2001). In conclusion, personalized learning enables students to select the texts they wish to read, which aligns with the purpose of this study: to explore how personalized learning, through the combination of reading strategies and learning styles, can promote students' interest in reading.

G. Previous Studies

Several previous studies have explored personalized learning and reading as central themes.

Sande et al. (2022) examined the impact of personalized expert guidance in students' book choices in primary and secondary education. The study, which used a quasi-experimental design with 82 Grade 7 and 54 Grade 8 students, found that personalized guidance helped stabilize reading attitudes among proficient readers.

However, it lacked qualitative data and did not explore the use of folklore texts, revealing a research gap.

Ding & Xue (2025) investigated how Chinese university students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) interacted with AI-driven personalization, emotion recognition, digital learning anxiety, and student engagement. 493 individuals completed an online questionnaire as part of the study's quantitative design. The results showed that emotion recognition and AI-driven customization were adversely correlated with digital learning anxiety and positively correlated with student engagement. The difference with this study is the use of methods and the implication because this study focused on personalization and engagement of EFL junior high school, not university students, and didn't use AI to customize but tests.

Jiang (2025) developed and assessed a CNN-based Personalized Recommendation (CNN-PR) system for teaching English listening skills using a quantitative experimental design. Students majoring in English participated in the study in two groups (Class A and Class B), and the outcomes of their midterm exams were utilized to compare the experimental results over the course of six weeks. Testing the algorithm's ability to create individualized learning routes using learners' linguistic and performance data was the main goal of the study. On the other hand, the researcher is using qualitative methods, and the treatments will be conducted in three days towards junior high school students to know the perceptions, not to create learning routes, because it is included in the treatments.

Yuliani et al. (2021) studied the use of digital storytelling based on Riau Malay folklore in English classes. Using a mixed-methods design, the study involved first-grade Islamic junior high school students and eight pre-service English teachers in Pekanbaru, Indonesia. The findings supported the effectiveness of digital storytelling videos. However, the study did not investigate personalized learning strategies or gather qualitative data on student perceptions.

Fatmawaty (2022) focused on using local folklore to improve reading comprehension of narrative texts. Using a quantitative design and a self-rated questionnaire with 22 ninth-grade students from SMPN 1 Sugio to improve reading

comprehension through selected folklore texts. Results showed notable improvement across two cycles. However, the study focused solely on comprehension and did not explore personalized learning or students' qualitative responses.

Sumekto et al. (2022) used Classroom Action Research (CAR), the study assessed 182 undergraduate EFL students. Results showed that reading habits and enjoyment significantly supported performance. Still, the study did not incorporate personalized learning approaches or examine how folklore might enhance motivation from an individual perspective.

Unlike previous studies, the present research adopts a qualitative case study approach focused specifically on students' perceptions of personalized learning in reading—an area that remains underexplored.

