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Fall 10-16-2021

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Endri, Endri, "The Effect of Visual Communication on Children's Reading Interest" (2021). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 6440.  
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# The Effect of Visual Communication on Children's Reading Interest

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to measure the visual communication effect of Noura storybooks on children's reading interests. Theories used in the research are family communication theory, storybook visualization, and children's reading interest. The method used is an explanatory survey method with a quantitative approach and positivistic paradigm. The study population consisted of parents of the Setya Bakti Early Childhood Education Program (PAUD). The sampling technique used was simple random sampling, with 100 respondents. The data analysis technique used is the person correlation and regression test. The analysis resulted that Noura's storybook contributed 24.5% to children's reading interest. The remaining percentage of 75.5% is the influence of other factors which not examined in this study. Hypothesis testing shows that  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_a$  is accepted, which means that there is a significant influence between the visual variables of Noura storybooks on children's reading interests. Conclusion: visual storybook Noura (X) affects positively children's reading interest (Y).

**Keywords:** Family Communication, Visual Communication, Picture Books, Reading Interest, Children

## 1. Introduction

Reading is a language skill and an important factor in the learning process, as, through reading, students receive information. Reading is also included as a literacy activity. As we know, literacy cannot be separated from education. Literacy is a means for students to recognize, understand, and apply the knowledge they receive from the school. However, the learning process does not only occur at school but also at home. In other words, the family also plays an important role in children's learning process. Family communication greatly influences the success of this process, especially at an early age, as early age is a golden period to introduce reading habits to children. The role of family communication in familiarizing children with reading books can be started by introducing them to children's storybooks (Sciascia et al., 2013). In a study by Zaini and Soenarto (2019) with 45 respondents of kindergarten children aged 4-6 years, 94% of parents said their children are used to smartphones and tablets. Research results found that the tendency of children aged 4-6 years to play smartphones and tablets for educational purposes was only 39%, while it reached 43% for gaming. Therefore, it can be concluded that children aged 4-6 years in this era have digital literacy. However, the results of the study also imply that parents must limit and supervise the use of gadgets in children aged 4-6 years to avoid abuse and addiction that could arise from technological use.

Up to this day, Indonesian people's reading interest is rated as very low. Based on the results of the "Most Littered Nation in the World" study released by Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) in March 2016, Indonesia was ranked 60 out of 61 countries in reading interest; only one level above Botswana and one level below Thailand (Central Connecticut State University, 2016). The Center for Research on Education and Culture Policy, Research and Development Agency, Ministry of Education and Culture published a Reading Literacy Activity Index of 34 Provinces in April 2019 that supports the study. By using the Alibaca Index calculation, this government-issued index shows that the average National Alibaca Index falls into the category of low literacy activities, with a figure of 37.32 (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2019). Alibaca index is a composite index composed of four dimensions, namely the Skill Dimension, the Access Dimension, the Alternative Dimension, and the Cultural Dimension. The four dimensions include 16 indicators. The Skill Dimension Index provides the largest contribution, followed by the Alternative Dimension Index, the Cultural Dimension Index, and the Access Dimension Index, which means the latest is the smallest contributor.

CNN Indonesia.com conducted a survey, which involving citizens as respondents, to find out how many Indonesians include reading in their routines. The results of this survey, which was aired in *Insight with Desi Anwar* in the episode entitled *Literacy as the Nation's Axis* (CNN Indonesia, 2016), showed that only 39% of respondents made reading their routine activity. Meanwhile, 47% of respondents answered that sometimes they read books and the remaining 14% said they did not make reading books a routine. In addition, 67% of respondents prefer to read physical books and the remaining 33% choose digital books. In the fourth paragraph of the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution, there are noble ideals of the founders of the nation, one of which is to enrich the quality of life of a nation. Reading is one of the ways to enrich the quality of life, as by the adage that says a book is a window to the world; by reading a book, one can discover a lot of knowledge and get a lot of insights. Furthermore, one of the famous quotes from Mohammad Hatta or Bung Hatta is "I am willing to go to jail as long as I am with a book because with books I'm free". Reading interest exists because someone has an interest in the activity. Interest in reading does not come out of the blue, it was believed that the process must have begun from childhood activity.

## **2. Literature Review**

Aspects of reading interest in children include a pleasure in the reading activity, an awareness of the benefits of reading, frequency of reading, and the number of books a child has read. Syakir and Azhim (2012) suggested that a child who has a high reading interest has the following characteristics: (1) a high desire to read, (2) has habits and continuity in reading, and (3) reading in their spare time. Reading habit needs to be adapted in the family environment and from an early age, especially in the golden period (golden age). Eighty percent of the size of the human brain in adulthood is determined in the first two years when humans are in the golden period and can learn many things quickly. As a consequence, early childhood education is the main pillar in developing the quality of human resources. One area that plays an important role in life is language. Through language, humans can communicate with each other; share experiences, learn from each other, and improve intellectual abilities. One way to improve language skills is reading. Reading is a typical human activity and ability. However, the ability to read does not happen automatically because it must be preceded by reading activities and habits. Research regarding children's reading habits has been conducted before, such as Learning to Read Focus on Bahasa Melayu, Tamil, and Chinese (Winskel, 2020), Child Interest to Read Beruk Novel (Junaidi et al., 2018), and

Developing Narrative Writing Skills via a Reading Programme (Mahadi et al., 2018). To communicate, one needs a form of language to interact and send messages to others.

Children's books are supposed to write in a simple form to be able to be easily understandable by children. In other words, children's books need to fulfill a certain level of legibility. Legibility is a typeface, which the target readers could identify or decode the symbol/character at ease (Wilkins et al., 2009). A typeface functions as an optic factor to measure how easily someone to recognize or differentiate a symbol or character. A text can be categorized as legible if each symbol or character is easy to identify and distinguishable from the other (Bernard et al., 2003; Velasco et al., 2015; Mujahidin et al., 2021). The use of symbols, or alphabet, also needs to be comprehensive to be legible. The combination of the alphabet to form words, phrases, text, could depend on what typeface someone uses. Meanwhile, readability measures how one could easily understand the content of the text. The readable text means the text can be read. Readability is built of good legibility (Bernard et al., 2003; Doruk et al., 2020; Ghani, 2011).

Early childhood education is strongly related to the development of preschool children's literacy. The development of preschool children's literacy can be done by introducing them to children's literary works. Children's literature is any story that correlates with the world of children (the world understood by children) and uses language that fits children's intellectual and emotional development (language understood by children). One genre of children's literature is child fiction. The book also describes subgenres in child fiction: (1) traditional children's fiction, such as fairy tales, folklore, legends, and so on; (2) modern children's fiction, for example, immortal stories, which includes both children's short stories and novels, published in the mass media and books. Picture books are storybooks that display narrative text verbally and are accompanied by illustrated pictures Lukens (2003) said that story illustrations and pictures are two different media, but in the storybook, they make a combination. Furthermore, based on *Children and Literature* (Stewing, 1980), a picture book is a book that provides stories along with pictures. These two elements work together to produce a story with illustrated images. In addition to having interesting and effective verbal aspects, storybooks must be supported by picture illustrations so that children grow interested in reading stories. Therefore, images in children's stories must be communicative. In other words, picture books contain stories that are effectively communicated, accompanied by communicative visual illustration designs. The effectiveness of stories in picture books is important, as it ensures the message or meaning of the story is delivered well (Silitonga et al., 2020).

Visual aspects of picture books can be effective to attract children aged 3-6 years and introduce them into the world of literacy. As Coosje van der Pol mentioned in his scientific article entitled *Reading Pictures Book as Literature: Four-to-Six-Year-Old Children and The Development of Literacy Competency* (Pol, 2012): "The exploration of " story characters " provides a good starting point when reading picturebooks as literature because characters are relatively accessible to young readers. The exploration of 'story characters' provides a good starting point when reading pictures as literature because characters are relatively accessible to young readers." Storybooks can be used as a medium to grow children's interest in reading and develop early literacy skills. In the scientific article entitled *The Influence of Home-Based Reading Interactions on 5-year-olds' Reading Motivations and Early Literacy Development* (Sonnenschein, 2002). Children with 2-6-year-olds, according to Piaget as quoted in the book *Psychology of Child and Adolescent Development* are in the cognitive development stage of the preoperative period. In this period, children begin to use and understand symbols. As a result, when we go to the children's section in the bookstore or library, we will find picture books dominating the shelves.

A picture book is a book that presents stories and pictures. These two elements work together to produce a story with illustrated images. In addition to stories that are interesting and effective in their verbal aspect, the books must be supported with picture illustrations to provoke children's interest in reading. Therefore, pictures provided in picture books must be communicative. In other words, picture books must contain stories that are effectively communicated, accompanied by communicative visual illustration designs (Adipta et al., 2018; Nursyaidah, 2016; Tarigan, 2018; Mansur et al., 2021). The effectiveness of verbal aspects in picture books aims to make the message or meaning of the story delivered well. This is very much determined by communication within the family. In this case, the role of parents is very important. Therefore, to ensure that messages in picture books are conveyed, communication of parents in the family is necessary (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Jowkar et al., 2011; Keating et al., 2013). Interest in reading and books is accepted as positive behavior and then shaped as a habit on children's minds (Tarigan, 2018). Reading translated as a fun activity that raises happiness which could raise children to interest in reading. Interest in reading is shaped by a desire to read, awareness of knowledge, reading frequency, and the total of the book a child reads. Also, the book the child reads does not have to be school material. The frequency of reading and total of the book a child read should be measured from needs, such as raising awareness of the world (Adipta et al., 2016; Fletcher & Reese, 2005; Morgan et al., 2008; Ortiz et al., 2001; Yeo et al., 2014).

Interest is important for human life quality, so parents should be able to identify a child's interests, such as (1) Joy and Enthusiastic. Joy is a happy feeling that someone feels when doing something, that could be different for each individual. But joy only would not make one interested, it is a push needed to be an enthusiast about something. (2) Attention, a focus or concentration from individual activity into a certain object or habit. When an individual has attention to a certain object, then interest will spontaneously arise. Attention is the active awareness raise from the human soul that is exerted in its concentration to a certain item that is both inside and outside the individual. (3) Activity is how much people express themselves, manifest their feelings and thoughts in action. Activity is the direct participation of individuals in something. So, activities are participation that is carried out continuously and eventually form a habit that raises a sense of pleasure or interest.

A child who has a high reading interest has the following characteristics: (1) Always eager to read. Reading is synonymous with science, an aspect of human civilization which is the main thing in which humans can develop their lives. The culture of reading is one of the main determinants that make science develop rapidly and lead people into dynamic and insightful lives so that humans can easily carry out their lives. (2) Having a habit and continuity in reading. For now, our society's interest and penchant for reading are still growing at certain levels, namely academics, community leaders, and those who are required to read because of their positions and duties. For most people, including students, reading activities are not yet a habit, even they still think that even without reading someone can achieve something they want. For that, there must be a serious and consistent effort in cultivating a fondness for reading. (3) Take every opportunity of the time to read. Many people have the opportunity to read, but few can take advantage of each of these opportunities to read. Reading is one thing that is less attractive to the general public and tends to be feared because it is considered tedious.

Picture books are storybooks that are presented using text and illustrations or pictures. This book is usually aimed at children. For low-grade elementary school children, pictures play an important role in the process of learning to read and write. Picture books further motivate them to learn. With good picture books, children will be helped in the process of understanding and enriching the experience of the story (Fletcher & Reese, 2005; Halim &

Munthe, 2019). Usually, picture books are intended to encourage appreciation and love for books. In addition to the verbal story being interesting, the book must contain images so that it affects students' interest in reading the story (Halim & Munthe, 2019; Shatzer, 2008). Pictures in children's stories must match the theme, setting, characterization, and plot in the story. Likewise as an illustration in a picture storybook (picture storybook) that functions to illustrate the actors, settings, and activities in a series of stories (plots) of a story. Good picture books can provide children with fun/entertainment and aesthetic experiences (Ganea et al., 2009)

### 3. Methodology

This research uses a quantitative approach survey method with a positivistic paradigm. Data collection techniques used were the distribution of questionnaires to respondents. The population of this research is the parents in Setya Bakti Early Childhood Education Program (PAUD), in which there are 300 people. Meanwhile, the sampling technique used is simple random sampling. The number of samples is 100 respondents. Instrument testing was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The results are as follows:

Tabel 1. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.963	21

Based on the table above, the questionnaire is declared reliable if it has an Alpha Cronbach value of 0.963. Meanwhile, the validity test results show a value of above 0.3 for each statement, which means that all statements are valid. Data analysis in this study used linear regression analysis. Regression analysis aims to determine the effect (relationship) of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

Ho: there is no positive and significant influence between visual communication design on reading interest.

Ha: there is a positive and significant influence between visual communication design on reading interest.

### 4. Results

To facilitate data analysis, researchers provide a detailed description of the research data, then present it in the form of respondents' profiles. This respondent profile is needed to find out the background of the respondent.

Table 2. Respondents' Characteristics

NO	Identity	Categorization											
1.	Gender	Male					Female						
2.	Age	20-30 years old			30-40 years old			>40 years old					
3.	Occupation	Government Employees	4%	State-Owned Enterprises	3%	Private Companies Employees	38%	Freelancer	2%	Housewives	42%	Entrepreneurs	10%
4.	Children's Age	2-4 years old					4-6 years old						

5.	Publisher of Picture Books	Noura	37%	Pelangi Mizan	34%	Erlangga for kids	10%	BIP	4%	Others	15%
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Most respondents are women, with a percentage of 83%. This is because they often take their children to school. Most of the respondents are young mothers or young couples aged between 20-30 years (61%). Therefore, the majority of respondent professions are housewives, with a percentage of 42%. The age of the respondent's children ranged from 2-6 years old. The respondents also knew the names of children's storybook publishers, namely Noura (37%) and Pelangi Mizan (34%).

Table 3. The Visual Of Noura Picture Books Variable

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low (14-39)	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Medium (40-65)	18	18.0	18.0	19.0
	High (66-91)	81	81.0	81.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

The majority of respondents were interested in visual children's picture books from Noura publishers (81%). This means that the respondent has read the picture book from the publisher Noura and likes the pictures in the storybooks.

Table 4 Reading Interest Variable

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low (14-30)	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Medium (31-47)	36	36.0	36.0	37.0
	High (48-64)	63	63.0	63.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Most respondents stated that their children have a high interest in reading (63%). This means that the respondent is interested in the pictures and stories contained in the picture books.

Table 5. Summary of Regression Models

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error Of The Estimate
1	.499 <sup>a</sup>	.249	.234	.445

A. Predictors: (Constant), Variabel X

Based on the table above, the correlation between the visuals of Noura storybooks and reading interest has a value of 0.499. The visual aspect of the Noura storybook contributes 24.5% to children's reading interest. While the remaining 75.5% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

Table 6. A<sup>NOVA</sup>

	Model	Sum Of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.375	2	3.187	16.116	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	19.185	97	.198		
	Total	25.560	99			

A. Dependent Variable: Variabel Y

B. Predictors: (Constant), Variabel X

The calculation produces an F-count value of 16.116 and a significance value (sig.0,000). The significance value (sig) is smaller than the alpha value ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), which means that the visual variable of the storybook has a significant influence on reading interest. Furthermore, the authors conducted a hypothesis test with the F test with the following conditions:

- If  $F\text{-count} > F\text{-table}$ , it means that  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_a$  is accepted. This implies a significant influence between the visual variable of the storybook on children's reading interest.
- If  $F\text{-count} < F\text{-table}$ , it means  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_a$  is rejected. This implies no significant influence between the visual variable of storybooks on children's reading interest.

The results showed an F-count value of 16.116 and degrees of freedom (n-k-1) or  $100-2-1 = 97$ , then an F-table number of 3.159 was obtained while an F-count of 16.116, resulting in an  $F\text{-count} > F\text{-table}$ . In other words,  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_a$  is accepted, which means that there is a significant influence between the visual variables of the Noura storybook on children's reading interest.

Table 7. Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.128	.373	3.023	.003
	Variabel X	.643	.114	.521	.000

A. Dependent Variable: Variable Y

In the table above, a = constant number of unstandardized coefficients. In this case, the value is 1.128. This number is a constant number, which means that if there is no visual storybook (X), the value of consistency in children's reading interest (Y2) is 1.128.

b = regression coefficient number. The value is 0.643. This figure implies that for every 1% increase in the visual level of the storybook (X), children's reading interest (Y) will increase by 0.643.

Since the regression coefficient value is plus (+), it can be said that the visual storybook (X) has a positive effect on children's reading interest (Y). Consequently, the regression equation is  $Y = 1.128 + 0.643 X$ .

## 5. Discussion

Based on the results of the analysis conducted, the hypothesis proposed is proven true; visual storybooks can indeed affect children's interest in reading. The effective contribution of visual books on Noura to children's perceptions and reading interests is 24%. While the remaining 75% is influenced by other factors. This can be seen from several research results, such as research on storytelling activities through storytelling. Other factors are due to achievement motivation (Riyanto et al., 2021; Virgiawan et al., 2021), and the influence of literacy movements (Imroatun, 2018; Suraya et al., 2019). Visual in Noura storybooks consists of colors, illustrations, typography, and layout. The color and illustrations are the dimensions that influence children's reading interests the most. In other words, the use of bright and varied colors determines children's interest in reading. This is also supported by several other

studies (Ganea et al., 2009, 2011). The second most influential dimension is the illustration or picture in the book. Children are very interested in images, especially pictures related to their world. Because of this, children's books are generally full of pictures. This argument is in line with other studies (Elia et al., 2010; Leonard et al., 2009; Masataka, 2014; Pol, 2012; Shatzer, 2008).

## 6. Conclusion

Respondents put high interest (81%) in children's visual storybooks from Noura publishers and children's reading interest at 63%. The visual aspect of the Noura storybook contributes 24.5% to children's reading interest. While 75.5% of the rest were influenced by other factors not examined in this study. Based on the hypothesis test:  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_a$  is accepted, the test results show a significant influence between the visual variables of the Noura storybook on children's reading interest. In conclusion: the visual storybook Noura (X) has a positive effect on children's reading interests (Y). Parents are expected to prioritize frequency more than intensity to foster interest in reading. There have been many media to access books, such as mobile libraries. Put aside feeling lazy to be lazy. Remember that books are a window to the world, and reading is the key to unlocking the gates to endless adventures. Books are the cheapest vacations and entertainment that any individual can afford if there is determination and will to move. Start reading! Reading is fun.

## Acknowledgements

This research was funded by a Thesis research grant from the Indonesian Directorate of Higher Education. We would like to thank the ministry of education for providing this grant. We also express special gratitude to the Rector of Universitas Mercu Buana Jakarta who always gives support to us.

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