

THE READING STRATEGIES USED BY FRESHMEN AT THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF SURABAYA IN COMPREHENDING TEXT

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Abstrak

Membaca adalah satu dari kemampuan yang paling penting untuk di kuasai oleh siswa ESL/EFL. Bagaimanapun juga, siswa angkatan pertama dari Departemen Bahasa Inggris menghadapi banyak tantangan di dalam kelas. Ini berdasarkan fakta bahwa kebanyakan dari mereka lemah dalam kemampuan membaca teks akademik, terutama karena strategi membaca pada level Universitas berbeda dengan ketika berada di Sekolah Menengah Atas. Tetapi, kebanyakan dari mereka menerapkan strategi yang sama ketika masih di jenjang Sekolah Menengah Atas ketika membaca teks akademik. Hasilnya, mereka mendapatkan kesulitan untuk memahami teks yang mereka baca.

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mencari tahu kemampuan mereka dalam memahami teks, untuk menginvestigasi strategi apa yang paling sering di gunakan oleh mereka dan untuk mencari tau alasan mereka menggunakan strategy itu. Oleh karena itu, strategi yang paling tepat untuk di gunakan dalam penelitian adalah strategi campuran. Strategi ini di terapkan mengingat penelitian ini berhubungan dengan dua data yang berbeda, yang berbentuk angka, sesuai dengan rumusan masalah 1 dan 2 dan yang berbentuk kata-kata, sesuai dengan rumusan masalah yang ketiga. Ini mengkombinasikan antara pendekatan kualitatif dan kuantitatif di satu atau banyak fase penelitian. Tes Pemahaman Membaca dan Penemuan Strategi untuk Pembelajaran bahasa di gunakan untuk mengumpulkan semua data. Peneliti juga melaksanakan interview untuk mengetahui alasan dari siswa dalam menggunakan berbagai strategi membaca. Terdapat 37 peserta dari jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas negeri Surabaya. Berdasarkan pada nilai tes Pemahaman Membaca mereka, hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa ada 3 level yang berbeda dari pembaca: Bagus, Sedang, and Lemah.

Sementara itu, kebanyakan dari mereka menggunakan strategi metacognitive untuk memahami teks. Mereka menggunakan itu karena dengan merencanakan dan memfokuskan pembelajaran itu bisa memfasilitasi mereka untuk memahami teks dengan mudah. Bagaimanapun juga, terdapat beberapa siswa yang menggunakan lebih dari satu strategi membaca dalam waktu yang bersamaan. Mereka mengatakan bahwa dengan menggunakan strategi cognitive dan compensation, mereka dapat memahami apa yang mereka baca di waktu singkat tanpa harus membaca keseluruhan teks dan melihat arti kata sulit di dalam kamus. Sementara itu, di dalam kesadaran dalam menggunakan strategi membaca, pembaca yang bagus lebih mampu mengatur pemahaman mereka daripada pembaca yang lemah dan mereka yang bagus dapat menggunakan strategi lebih fleksibel. Mereka menggunakan konteks dengan efisien dan mampu untuk menggabungkan informasi ke dalam pengetahuan mereka yang utama yang telah ada sebelumnya, sebaik dalam mengetahui ketidakpastian teks dan menggunakan strategi untuk membuat ketidakpastian itu menjadi dapat di mengerti.

Kata kunci: Strategi membaca, Siswa Angkatan Tahun Pertama

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Abstract

Reading is one of the most important skills for ESL/EFL learners to master. However, freshmen of English Department face many challenges in the classroom. It is a fact that most first-year students lack academic reading skills, especially because University-level reading greatly differs from High School reading. Thus, most of them employ the same strategy that they use in senior high school to read academic text. As a result, they get difficulties to comprehend the text they read.

The purpose of this study were to find out the freshmen ability in comprehending text, to investigate the most frequent reading strategies used by them and to find out their reasons in using those strategy. Therefore, the most appropriate research method to be employed was mixed method research. Mixed method research was employed since the research deals with two different types of data; they were in the form of numbers, related to the first and second research question, and words, related to the third research question. It was combined qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single or multiphase study. The Reading Comprehension test and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) were used to collect the data. The researcher also conducted an interview in order to know freshmen reasons in using reading strategies. The participants were 37 freshmen students of English Education program at the State University of Surabaya. Based on the reading comprehension test scores, the results showed that there were 3 different levels of readers: good, average and poor readers. Meanwhile, most freshmen readers in English education program at the State University of Surabaya used metacognitive as their strategy in comprehending the text. They used it because by planning and centering their learning it facilitates them to understand the text easily. However, there were some freshmen using more than one reading strategy to comprehend reading text; cognitive strategy and compensation strategy at the same time. They said that by using cognitive and compensation strategies, they can understand more about what they read in limited time without reading the whole passages and checking the meaning in dictionary. While in terms of their awareness on the use of reading strategies, good readers are more able to monitor their comprehension than poor readers and they use those strategies more flexibly. They use context more efficiently and are able to relate new information to prior information already stated, as well as to notice inconsistencies in the text and employ strategies to make these inconsistencies understandable.

Key words: Reading Strategies, Freshmen



INTRODUCTION

Reading is a process of looking at and understanding what is written. Stopar (2003) stated that reading is one of the most significant communicational activities of every individual. It is one of the most important skills for ESL/EFL learners to master. The importance of reading English for EFL language learners cannot be overemphasized. Anderson (2003) states that the mastery of reading skill could help ESL/EFL learners achieve success not only in English learning but also in other content-based classes where English reading proficiency was required. Reading has played a crucial role in overall development in language skills and even in academic success for decades (Cochran, 1993).

Reading English text is regarded to be a problematical activity for students in Indonesia. This is due to the fact that the way something is conveyed in written English is different to one written in Bahasa Indonesia (Lestari, 2014). That difference underlies comprehension difficulty rising among Indonesian students. When it is taught for them to comprehend a reading material, it will be difficult for them to be a good reader, whereas Kusumarasdyati (2006) claimed that reading ability affects somebody's success throughout life. Anderson et al., (as cited in Bowman et al, 1998) added that ones will miss the opportunities to be successful without good reading ability.

Students face many challenges in the classroom. The reality is that most first-year students lack academic reading skills, especially because University-level reading greatly differs from High School reading. Thus, most students employ non-university strategies to read academic texts. As stated before, comprehension difficulty rises among the students in Indonesia while they are reading an English text. This difficulty appears because students cannot grasp the information or the gist genuinely (Scholten, 2002). The complexity to organize information obtained from a reading material may lead the students to stumble upon comprehension difficulty. When they fail to organize the info well, it can be inferred that they will not be able to remember the information easily and once they fail to remember, they cannot comprehend the reading material well as Nation (2004) asserted that language comprehension requires good retention.

Teaching students how to use the skills and knowledge they bring from their first language, develop vocabulary skills, improve reading comprehension and rate, and monitor their own improvement are just some of the elements that

teachers must consider in preparing for a reading class. For the student, learning to read is a process that involves learning skills, learning new vocabulary and collective patterns, and cultivating the ability to transfer these skills from the classroom to the real world where English is used.

Research on reading reports strong support for the positive relationship between the students' reading process and their ability to comprehend what they are reading. Many students have "major difficulties" with English reading comprehension even after years of learning the English language. A case study conducted by Radha M.K. Nambiar (2007),

found that... .."learners tended to rely heavily on the cognitive strategy of using the dictionary to help them read and understand a text. They rarely made an effort to understand the unfamiliar word using contextual clues and were quick to look into the dictionary and this hampered the reading process. To quote from one learner, "If the word is difficult, I take the dictionary book and find out the meaning". This strategy was often used together with the cognitive strategy of using emphasis by the learners. For instance, whenever they came across an unfamiliar word they would underline or highlight the word and write the meaning in the text, after consulting a dictionary. For many learners the importance of vocabulary, especially understanding unfamiliar words was indicated in the markings on the text. To quote from the learners,

"I underline what I think is important"

"Usually I write the meaning of the word on top of the word to help me read and understand".

Learners find the kinds of academic texts they have to read in university conceptually and syntactically difficult. In addition, their poor understanding of vocabulary hampers their reading ability "... (Radha Nambiar, 2007)

From the findings above we know that learners (first year undergraduates majoring in English Language Studies) are not analytical or critical when they read and tend to use surface level processing of text all which suggest they are not ready to cope with academic literacy. They tend to resort to using the dictionary if they could not understand the text instead of trying to make an effort to use contextual clues or read between the lines for deeper meaning.

In order to achieve comprehension the students need strategies. Strategic processing of reading texts plays an essential part in achieving comprehension goals and removing reading

difficulties (Phan, 2006). Scarcella& Oxford (1992) explained that learning strategies are the conscious thoughts and actions that students take in order to achieve a learning goal. It is defined as “specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language tasks by students to enhance their own learning. When the students consciously choose strategies that fit his or her learning style, these strategies become a useful toolkit for active, conscious, and purposeful self regulation of learning. According to Oxford (1990) Learning strategies can be classified into six groups: cognitive, metacognitive, memory-related, compensatory, affective, and social. By using reading strategy, the students are able to be effective and good readers in reading activity. So that the students are hope to comprehend the text easily since they choose the best strategy that they should use.

By looking at the background of the study above, the researcher design three research questions. The research questions are formulated as follows:

1. How is the freshmen’s ability in comprehending text?
2. What is the most frequent strategy used by them?
3. What are their reasons in using those strategies?

RESEARCH METHOD

This research described freshmen ability in comprehending text, the most frequent strategy used by them, and their reasons in using some kinds of reading strategies. Therefore, the most appropriate research method to be employed was mixed method research with sequential design. Mixed method research was employed since the research deals with two different types of data; they were in the form of numbers, related to the first and second research question, and words, related to the third research question. It was combined qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single or multiphase study.

In this study, the researcher purposively selected the freshmen of English Education at The State University of Surabaya as the subjects of this research. The freshmen of English Education were selected as the subject of this study since they have difficulty in comprehending text.

To collect the desired data, the researcher employed three instruments in this research. The first instrument used in this study is Reading comprehension Test. It is used in order to answer the first research question about the freshmen ability in comprehending text. Test was utilized to verify students’ mastery or understanding of certain units. Hendry (1994) states that test is set of questions or device used to measure the student’s skill, intelligent, ability and talent of an individual or group. The reading comprehension test was adopted from Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL test. While, to answer the second research question, the researcher used SILL Questionnaire to find out the most frequent strategies used by the freshmen. It is used to get student’s point of view and experience in using some reading strategies. SILL does not specify learners as good or poor learners but it measures the frequency of students applying certain LLS in learning English. In this study, the researcher also conducted an interview to find the reasons of the freshmen in using reading strategies regarding to the last research question. There are 10 questions to dig deeper about the freshmen reasons why they prefer to choose those kinds of reading strategies. The interpretation of all data concluded into a conclusion.

RESULT OF THE STUDY

Freshmen’s Comprehension in Comprehending Text

To get the answer related to the first research question, the researcher conducted a reading comprehension test to find out the ability of freshmen in comprehending text. The result showed that there were 3 different levels of readers: good readers, average readers and poor readers. The researchers classify them into those 3 levels based on the official guide to the TOEFL test book published by ETS by using a formula as below:

$$\frac{S}{MS} \times 100 = N$$

S = Score
MS= Maximum Score
N = Total Score

Based on the official guide to the TOEFL test book published by ETS, the score for those who has high level is between 22-30. While, the score for those who has average level is between 15-21. And

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the score for those who has low level is between 0-14.

Table 4.1 *Level of Freshmen's Comprehension Ability*

Level of Readers	Frequency	Mean Score	ETS
Good	8	23.3	22-30
Average	17	18.4	15-21
Poor	12	10.9	0-14

The result showed the participants who belong to good level are 8 freshmen with 23.3 mean score. The participants who belong to average level are 17 freshmen readers. And those who belong to poor level are 12 freshmen readers with 10.9 mean score.

The Most frequent Strategies Used by Good Readers

Good readers can understand the individual sentences and the organizational structure of a piece of writing. They can comprehend ideas, follow arguments, and detect implications. They know how to use effective strategies to facilitate the functioning of various cognitive processes and construct meaningful understanding of the text. In this section, the researcher used descriptive statistics, crosstabs, and rank of each items based on the items and responses to obtain the result.

Table 4.2 *The Most Frequent Strategy Used by Good Reader*

Level	Reading Strategy	ID Number	Total
Good Reader	MC32	30,31,32,33,36,37	6 freshmen
	M2	36	1 freshmen
	C16	37	1 freshmen
	CP24	35	1 freshmen
	A40	36	1 freshmen
	S47	34,36	2freshmen

The table showed that most frequent strategies used by Good reader is metacognitive strategy (MC32). There were 6 of 8 good readers used metacognitive as their strategy than the other strategy. It was a fact that metacognition is one of the most important elements to improve reading proficiency.

The Most frequent Strategies Used by Average Readers

Average reader is typically understands academic texts in English that require a wide range of reading abilities, although their understanding of certain parts of the text is limited. Have a good command of common academic vocabulary, but still have some difficulty with high-level vocabulary. However, average readers used more reading strategies than above-average readers. It can be seen in this table below:

Table 4.3 *The Most Frequent Strategy Used by Average Reader*

Level	Reading Strategy	ID Number	Total
Average Reader	MC32	13,14,15,16,17,23,26,27,29	9 freshmen
	M2	14	1 freshmen
	C16	18,27,21,22	4 freshmen
	CP24	14,19,23,24,25	5 freshmen
	A40	14,17,20,27,28	5 freshmen
	S47	13,14,17,18,19,25,26,28	8 Freshmen

The table showed that most frequent strategies used by average reader are metacognitive (MC32) and social strategy (S47). They can understand and connect information, make appropriate inferences, and synthesize information in a range of texts, but have more difficulty when the vocabulary is high level and the text is conceptually dense. Because of that they tend to used more than one reading strategies such as utilized metacognitive and cognitive at the same time.

The Most frequent Strategies Used by Average Readers

While skilled readers know how to use effective strategies to facilitate the functioning of various cognitive processes and construct meaningful understanding of the text, poor reader are found to have problems in using many strategies, such as identifying main ideas, using generalization and construction rules in summarization, recognizing relevant signals and higher-order text structure, drawing inferences, detecting problems during reading and monitoring the reading process. The result of the most frequent reading strategy used by them, can be seen in this table below:

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Table 4.4 The Most Frequent Strategy Used by Poor Reader

Level	Reading Strategy	ID Number	Total
Average Reader	MC32	5,8,9,10,11	5 freshmen
	M2	8,10	2 freshmen
	C16	7	1 freshmen
	CP24	1,2,3,4	4 freshmen
	A40	-	0 freshmen
	S47	6,8,9,12	3 freshmen

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The table showed that most frequent strategies used by Poor reader is metacognitive strategy (MC32). On the other hand, they also tend to used compensation strategy (CP24) in comprehending the text. It was a fact that poor readers simply read the text word by word. They have a command of basic academic vocabulary, but their understanding of less common vocabulary is inconsistent. Moreover, they have limited ability to understand and connect information, have difficulty recognizing paraphrases of the text information, and often rely on particular words and phrases and rather than a complete understanding of the text.

The Reasons of Good, Average and Poor Readers in Using Reading Strategies

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As stated before, the researcher classified the freshmen students into three level; good, average and poor readers. To represent the whole participants, the researcher present the reasons of 3 students which were consist of 1 good, 1 average and 1 students of poor readers. Below were the quotations of good (37), average (18) and poor reader's (25) reasons in using reading strategies during the interview.

Interviewer : What are your reasons of using those kinds of strategies in comprehending the text?

37 : I can understand more about what I read in limited time without reading the whole passages. I can understand it by only read some important parts (first sentence and last sentence) and do some predicting and previewing the content of the text by a short time. I also become more sure if I check some words that I'm not familiar with in a

dictionary. So, there won't be any misinterpretation. I also take notes for some important message that I get. The last is summarizing the text that I have read. I do it because sometimes I will forget what I have read not long after I read a text.

: By skimming, I can more concern about what I'm looking for, and I don't need to read the whole passages. And I will use dictionary to find out the difficult word if there are no one can help me. It is very helpful. I also do write a note about the passage with my own language. Because I think it will help me to understand more about the text. After that I will make summarize of the text so I can comprehend the text.

: It is the simplest way to check the meaning of new words. Meanwhile, I'd like to share my answer to the other. I think sometimes the meaning of the word in dictionary is different with the right one. So, I ask my friend to check my answer for sure.

From the statements above, it was clear that effective readers know what they read, what they read is supposed to make sense. While, average readers typically understand academic text in English, but still have difficulty with high-level vocabulary. It can be seen in the statement above that they used guessing as their strategy when face difficulty with new vocabulary. However, poor readers have limited ability to understand and connect information. And their understanding about the text is limited, especially about high-level vocabulary. That is why they prefer to work with the other to help them understand better about the whole text and ask the question to their friends if it necessary for sure.

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Conclusion

Based on the finding and data analysis by using SPSS 16.0, the researcher concluded that there were 3 different levels of freshmen's comprehension ability. There were 8 freshmen belong to good readers, 17 freshmen belong to average readers and 12 freshmen belong to poor readers. The researcher classified them into those 3 levels based on their reading comprehension test score. While, the most of freshmen students in English Education program at The State University of Surabaya used metacognitive (MC32) as their strategy in comprehending text. Meanwhile, there were several freshmen use more than one reading strategy. They use it because they tend to be better readers at regulating the use of such strategies while reading. The metacognitive strategies play a more significant role than other strategies because once a student understands how to regulate his or her learning through the use of reading strategy, language acquisition should proceed at a faster rate.

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