

## THE USE OF METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES IN EFL READING COMPREHENSION

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### Abstract

The following study aims to find out which is the highest use of metacognitive reading strategies among the academic learners majoring ELT students, Faculty Education and Teacher Training UIN Walisongo Semarang. There is only one class which administered to this study. It consists of forty three students; ten male and there are thirty three female ones. First of all metacognition discusses the process of an individual in planning and managing oneself in order to achieve his or her goal. In other words, metacognitive strategies are steps take for improving their language performances. Based on SORS (Survey of Reading Strategies) questionnaire, there are three categories being scored in metacognitive strategies. They are global reading strategies, problem-solving strategies, and support reading strategies. The result shows that academic learners mostly apply the problem solving strategies, followed by global reading strategies, and support reading strategies.

**Keywords:** metacognitive strategies, EFL learners, reading comprehension

### Introduction

Reading is one of the fundamental skills that every educated person needs to acquire to a considerable extent both in their native language and their second or foreign language. Needless to say, reading is not a skill which can be acquired naturally or in an automatic way, but it must be learned and practiced through formal instruction and experience. Therefore, a conscious effort is required in order to analyze and comprehend the ideas within the continuous development of a text.

Reading academic texts in English is an essential ability to survive in university lives mainly for students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) since they have responsibility to carry a great range of assignments that depend on reading (Levine, Ferenz, & Revez, 2000).

The skill of reading goes beyond the ability of simply recognizing letters and sounding them. The essential step in the skill of reading is the comprehension of the material. Relatively, Goodman (1988, p. 11) proposes two views on reading; with the first one he accepts it as “matching sounds to letters”, and with the second one he

indicates that it is a mystery, that “nobody knows how reading works”. In a probable manner Goodman was under the sway of MacLeish (1968, p. 43) who asserted that “readers of all written languages are ‘getting’ sounds from the printed page”.

In addition, a good reading skill will help very much those who want to continue their study to the higher level or to get job. As stated by Haris and Sipay (1977, p. 1); they said that technology advances more occupations tend to require higher level education or specialized training in which improved reading ability plays a vital role. Automation has eliminated the job of many unskilled or semi-skilled workers, many of whom were not even functionally literate and became unemployed or chronically unemployable because they did not process in other positions.

Reading English text, as a foreign language is not the same as reading in our first language. The former is more difficult than the last one. Learners encounter difficulties in vocabulary, structure, or in any other feature of the languages. It is not surprising that those difficulties make them frustrated. There are many factors that

influence the reading ability. Haris and Smith state:

There are five factors that are identified as the primary determinants of reading comprehension in the figure: background experience, language abilities, thinking ability, affection (interest motivation, attitude, feeling) and reading purposes. These factors really influence the students' reading comprehending ability. (1980, p. 20)

Reading involves comprehension. In the comprehension process, students should not read the material for a long time just to get the thorough comprehension. Reading in that way may not lead the reader to a full understanding about what s/he reads, it is wasting time. Therefore, students should improve the reading speed and skimming in all reading course.

Therefore this project is designed to know the participant's difficulties in reading academic texts and give instructional interventions which focus on teaching some metacognitive reading strategies in order to solve the participant's problems in reading comprehension, particularly in academic English texts.

### 1. Learning strategy

Learning strategies have been described by Wenden and Rubin (1987, p. 19) as "any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and the use of information". It was argued by Richards and Platt (1992, p. 209) that "learning strategies are intentional behavior and thoughts that learners make use of during learning in order to develop reading understanding among students, learn, or remember new information". Learning strategies are also illustrated by O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 1) as "special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information".

Therefore, learning strategies are seen as special ways of processing information that improve comprehension of the information. Whereas prior descriptions

of learning strategies paid more attention to products of learning and behaviors reflecting unobservable cognitive process, definitions eventually provided clearer understanding of learners think and during language learning. Hence, it is stated by Cohen (1990, p. 4) that "learning strategies are process which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or use of second or foreign language through storage, retention, recall, application of information about language".

Learning strategies are the total effort that students need to process, understand, and adopt the information introduced in learning-teaching processes or in their individual preparation (Tay, 2013). In other words information in cognitive and affective processes (Kafadar, 2013a). As it is understood from definitions, learning strategies include more than one activity. Different classifications of these activities are seen (Kirby, 1984 cited in Hewitt, 2008; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986; Mayer, 1988). Learning strategies that underline this study are classified into categories cognitive and affective by Gagne & Driscoll (1998). Cognitive strategies are separated into five sub-groups as: attention strategies, storage strategies in short time memory, coding strategies, restoration strategies and monitoring strategies.

### 2. Metacognitive strategies and L2 reading comprehension

Reading requires language comprehension, some sort of semantic processing, and the ability to understand the meaning of the visual symbols which provide the form of language to be comprehended. Reading, per se, must involve not only particular type of language behavior, but also special form of non-verbal thinking (i.e., metacognition) (Waterhouse, 1980). Furthermore, the crucial issue of the role of metacognitive awareness in reading will be stated by knowing and understanding two dimensions of metacognitive ability, which have discussed above. Therefore, it is expected to make a student aware of what is

needed to perform effectively, and then it is possible to take steps to achieve the goals of reading condition more effectively. It is also asserted that the student will be able to conceptualize the reading process by thinking what she is doing in reading (Carrell, 1989). Forrest-Pressley & Waller (1984) suggested that in term; of metacognition, reading is not merely decoding process from print to sound and comprehending the written material, but it also involves advanced reading strategies and knowledge about those skills and how to control them. When skilled readers decide to read, they usually have particular purpose in mind. Therefore, they do more than decode a word; the skilled readers know that there are various ways to decode and can do something on their decoding activities, such as monitor them, change and then predict their sufficiency.

### Methodology

This study was conducted with 41 male and female of EFL learners with the ten male students and thirty three female students UIN Walisongo Semarang. Commonly, “experiments are carried out in order to explore the strength of relationships between variables (Nunan, 1992). This research is categorized as an experimental research since it attempts to provide treatment to experimental group and maintain control over all factors that may affect the result of an experiment.

The students’ metacognitive awareness of reading strategies was administered by employing the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSİ) which was designed by Mokhtary and Reichard (2000). The researcher used Likert scale which range from 1 to 5 for scoring it. The instrument was administered during a regular class in reading comprehension subject.

### Results

The data was analyzed quantitatively. The descriptive statistic for students’ perceived use of individual strategies and the overall

mean of each of the three categories of metacognitive reading strategies were also included. For the component of global strategies, the mean score was 3.5. In fact, the students used previewing text before reading as one of the highest usage (M=4.17). This showed that these students demonstrated a capacity of planning of reading.

Support strategies were used by students to enhance understanding and memory. The result showed that the learners’ use of support strategies were in the range of moderate to high for example, the frequent use of reference materials such as dictionaries (M=3.82, SD=0.91) and finding relationships (SM=3.60, SD=0.97). Within the category problem solving strategies, all 8 strategies were reported to be of high usage. This showed that learners were generally conscious of their comprehension process and were able to take appropriate actions when comprehension breaks down. Based on high range of strategy use (M=3.63-4.43), it can be said that these students used problem solving strategies to solve their comprehension problems when the text was difficult.

### Conclusion

With metacognitive reading strategies, students were aware of their goals. Therefore, they were able to monitor the reading process, check their reading comprehension, arrange strategies, evaluate their strategy application and after evaluation, adjust their choice of strategy if needed. Learners will be more motivated in using metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension through effective monitoring of comprehension process which were considered important in developing skilled reading.

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