

Metacognitive Strategies in Academic Reading by EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

Metacognitive strategies are widely used by students in learning activities, often without them realizing it. They become one of crucial aspects for learners in comprehending the academic reading text. In this study, the writer describes students' metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension. A quantitative survey was used as the design of the study. A questionnaire was the instrument used to collect the data in order to have a description of how students applied metacognitive strategies in reading and to what extent their awareness of metacognitive reading strategies was used in academic reading. There were 285 students in the English study program who filled out the questionnaire for the Survey of Reading Strategies Awareness (SORS). Metacognitive awareness of reading strategies used by college students in reading academic texts in English was problem solving (PROB), support (SUP) and global (GLOB). For EFL students, problem solving was the most used strategy. Students and other readers should adapt these reading methods and be guided by lecturers in using different methods.

Key words: academic reading, metacognitive strategies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since reading is a technique to learn new things and raise information that requires thought, it is one of the key abilities in learning a language. Unfortunately, a lot of Indonesian students have a distaste for reading due to a lack of enthusiasm and desire, hence their comprehension is very low. This is demonstrated by the fact that Indonesia ranked 41st out of 45 nations in terms of reading ability according to the 2006 results of Progress in International Reading Literacy (PRILS) (cited in Litbang Kemdikbud). This indicates that reading proficiency among Indonesian students is still incredibly low and much below predictions.

According to Klingner (2007), in order to achieve comprehension, a number of complex processes such as word reading, word and world knowledge, and fluency must be coordinated. Reading requires the reader to draw on prior knowledge because it is an active process rather than a passive one. However, students frequently encounter

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difficulties when attempting to comprehend a reading text; some students are unaware with the topic of the text, there are many new words contained in a text, and so on.

A specific type of reading is called academic reading. It is important to keep in mind that academic reading is a performance. We will be expected to directly act upon the knowledge we study in college, as opposed to just passively taking it in. We'll be tested or interrogated. We'll be asked to discuss, break down, or evaluate what we read. We must carefully study the material, retain it in our minds, and evaluate its style and content in light of similar works.

Grabe and Stoller (2002) highlight that readers who are just beginning their study of the English language are likely to encounter challenges when attempting to derive and apply meaning from the text as well as understand its content. Liu et al (2003) discovered that their primary challenges included a lack of metacognitive skills, a lack of vocabulary, and a lack of comprehension of grammatical structures. As part of their education to become better readers, these students have been familiarized with and instructed in a wide variety of reading strategies. They are already familiar with the definition as well as a variety of reading strategies. According to Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002), there has been a lot of interest in the application of reading methods in English because of the apparent relevance of reading proficiency in English as an international language. This interest has been sparked by the fact that English is widely used.

Metacognitive awareness of reading techniques is one of the tactics that reading skill specialists advise readers to use to handle challenging and complex academic reading. Metacognitive reading strategy awareness is the deliberate planning, monitoring, and evaluating a reader does to understand a text they are reading (Mokhtari and Sheorey, 2002). Good readers often have an awareness of why and what they are reading, as well as how to overcome difficulties as they go along and keep an eye on their comprehension. Tavakoli (2014) asserts that readers who are aware of metacognitive tactics know when and how to use particular cognitive reading strategies based on the difficulty of the text. He continues by saying that reading comprehension is impacted by how effectively readers use metacognitive strategy awareness. In line with the findings of his study, students who used more metacognitive methods performed better on a reading comprehension test than those who used fewer strategies.

Because they will need to read and study even when they are not in a formal classroom setting, university students are expected to undertake a lot of self-learning. In this case, metacognitive reading techniques support students in taking charge of their own

education (Paris & Winograd, 1990). The successful learning of students is correlated with students' awareness of and use of metacognitive methods, according to a number of earlier studies. On the metacognitive reading techniques used by less skilled readers, Pammu, Amir, Rizan, and Maasum (2012) explained that students with lower levels of proficiency did not preview, skim, or scan texts in order to gain a broad concept of what they would read about and what the primary theme of the text was. They were also less critical about information they found in the text. As a result, the writer intended to find out how EFL learners used metacognitive awareness in academic reading as well as the types of metacognitive reading strategies they frequently employed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the level of understanding of a passage or text (McConaughay, 2008). Furthermore, he argued that reading comprehension is a process in which readers construct meaning by interacting with text using a combination of prior knowledge and prior experience, information in the text, and the reader's attitude in relation to the text. To be a good reader, they must not only be able to determine words, but also understand them. The ultimate goal of reading is to comprehend what is read. Reading is done for the purpose of comprehension. Readers are not reading if they can read the words but do not understand what they are reading.

As a result, reading comprehension can be defined as the result of reading activity. It is the process of constructing adequate and exact meaning by connecting what was read to what the students already know and thinking about all of the information until it is recognized. Reading comprehension occurs when we finish reading a text or passage and understand the message or purpose that the researcher is attempting to convey.

2.2. Reading Strategy

Reading comprehension strategies are generally defined as mental activities used by readers to construct the text. In previous research, the term "strategy" was defined differently. Reading strategies are defined as "the mental operation involved when readers approach a text effectively and make sense of what they read" (Barnet, 1988). Pereira-Laird and Deane (1997) identify strategy as "a deliberate action taken voluntarily by readers to gain a better understanding of what they read." Reading strategies, in short, are

deliberate, conscious techniques that readers use to improve their understanding or preservation of textual information.

2.3. Metacognitive Awareness

Metacognitive means thinking beyond cognitive thinking. Meta-cognitive strategies go beyond cognitive devices to help learners coordinate their own learning (Oxford, 1990). Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) define metacognitive reading as planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Metacognitive reading strategy awareness refers to the reader's awareness of when and how to apply a particular reading strategy given the text, environment, and reader's skills. Metacognitive reading strategy awareness focuses on the reading process and outcome. Metacognitive reading strategy awareness helps academic reading comprehension because readers know when and how to use particular reading strategies based on text difficulty and reader ability. So, readers can easily adapt to new text. Organizing, tracking, and assessing reading is encouraged (Palincsar & Brown, 1984)

The metacognitive components of reading have frequently shown a favorable association between metacognitive knowledge of reading techniques and students' reading performance (Zahra et al,2016). Students who have confidence in their ability to learn and who can apply metacognitive reading strategies like planning, monitoring, and assessing to their reading program are more effective than those who cannot (Wang, et al. 2009).

Reading strategies are typically classified differently by researchers based on a variety of criteria. The Reading Strategy Model of Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) was used in this study. Mokhtari and Reichard were well-known for their MARS (the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory). It is divided into three sections: global reading (GLOB), problem-solving (PROB), and support reading (SUP).

Global Reading Strategies (GLOB) assist students in controlling or dealing with their reading by employing deliberate, well-planned techniques (e.g. having a target, previewing the reading text with regard to its design and arrangement, or utilizing graphs, tables, and figures). Global strategies, according to Martinez (2008), are generalized or global reading strategies aimed at setting the stage for the reading act, such as setting a purpose for reading, previewing the text content, or predicting what the text is about.

Problem Solving Strategies (PROB) are the activities and processes that readers engage in while directly dealing with the text. When readers have difficulty comprehending texts, they use these strategies as confined, attentive techniques. For example, changing the

reading speed when the text becomes easier or more difficult to understand, predicting the meanings of unknown vocabulary, and reading the text again to better understand the text.

Support Reading Strategies (SUP) are a type of grants program that aids the reader in comprehending the text. (For example, using a dictionary, taking notes, underlining, or highlighting textual information). These strategies serve as a support mechanism for maintaining responses to reading. According to Zhang (2009), the value of support strategies is heavily dependent on the context in which they are used, and thus this result could imply the participants' flexibility in strategic planning use as well as their personal freedom in using the strategies based on their needs.

3. METHOD OF RESEARCH

The study examined the students' overall tendency of awareness in using metacognitive strategies while reading by using a quantitative approach. Furthermore, this research looked into which strategy was used the most and least frequently. As a result, the data for this study was gathered using a questionnaire. The Survey of Reading Strategies Questionnaire (SORS) was developed by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) is used to collect data in this study. The SORS was a 30-item questionnaire with a Likert Scale of 5 points.

The writer distributed the questionnaire to all of the students at English study program at one of State Islamic University in Palembang. In fact, there were 285 students who filled the questionnaire. The students were asked to circle the number that matched their frequency of using the reading strategies described in the statement. Individual item scores were entered into their strategy subscales (GLOB, PROB and SUP). They were then added up to get a total score, which was then divided by the number of items to get an average response for each strategy subscale, as Fitriasia et al. suggested (2015). According to Oxford (1990), three levels of usage were identified for language learning strategy usage: high (mean of 3.5 or higher), moderate (mean of 2.5 to 3.4), and low (mean of 2.4 or lower).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

The students were aware in using metacognitive strategy in the process of reading. It is shown that the students have high level of metacognitive reading strat-

egies use ($\bar{x} = 3.5$). More than half of the students (83%) had high awareness in using metacognitive reading strategies. Then, there were 17% of the students were at the medium category and there was only no student was categorized in low level. The students seemed to know what strategies they should use when the text became difficulties to understand. Figure 1 below was the result of students' metacognitive awareness in reading.

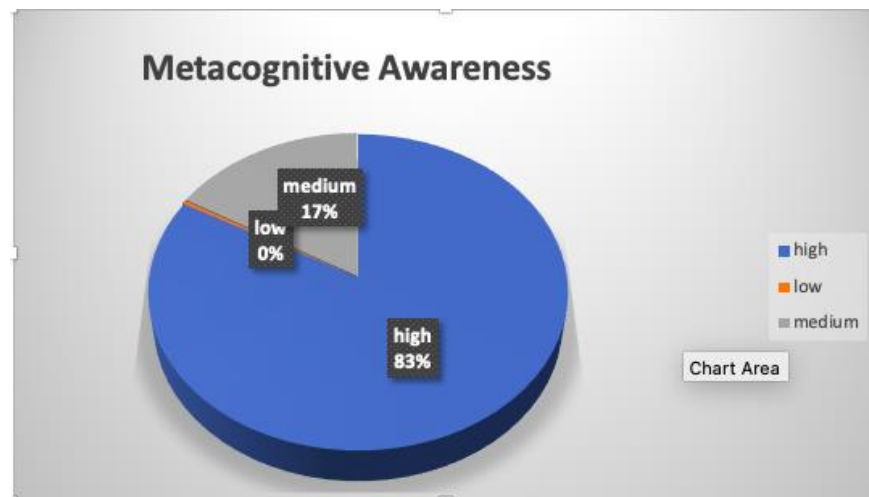


Figure 1. Percentage of Metacognitive Reading Strategies Used.

The second research question looked into the metacognitive reading strategies that students commonly employ. This was accomplished by calculating the mean of the SORS's three subscales (Global, Problem-Solving, and Support Reading strategies). The mean score was distributed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Mean Score of Metacognitive Reading Strategies

Metacognitive Reading Strategies	Mean
Global Reading Strategies (GLOB)	3.76
Support Reading Strategies (SUP)	3.85
Problem Solving Strategies (PRO)	4.15

Table 1 showed that the average use of Problem Solving Strategies (PROB) when the students read a reading text was the highest one with mean 4.15. On the other hand,

Support Reading Strategies (SUP) with mean 3.85 and Global Reading Strategies (GLOB) with mean 3.76 seems to be in the medium level of use that utilized by the students.

4.2. Discussion

The writer arrived at the finding regarding the students' metacognitive awareness in reading as well as the metacognitive reading strategies that are most commonly used by the students as a result of the steps taken in collecting and analysing the data of the questionnaire. The findings show that students are conscious of their own metacognitive reading strategy. The high frequency of overall strategy use with mean score 3.5 lent credence to the findings. Eighty three percent of students were very or extremely aware of the importance of employing metacognitive reading strategies. It appeared that the students were aware of the methods they should employ when reading became challenging.

The result of the questionnaire revealed that problem-solving strategies (PROB) are the strategies that students prefer to use the most ($\bar{x}=4.15$), followed by global reading strategies (GLOB) and support reading strategies (SUP). Students chose problem-solving strategies because the materials in this course equip them to overcome challenges posed by the challenging texts they study. This finding was in keeping with the findings of a previous study (Karbalaei, 2010), which proposed that college students learning English as a foreign language and English as a second language both preferred problem-solving strategies, such as reading slowly and carefully or re-reading for better comprehension, as their most used technique. This is backed up by research from Shikano (2012), who found that Japanese university students as a whole are more likely to use strategies for tackling complex problems and rely less on rote memorization. Dian (2015), in a related study, found that students most frequently used a problem-solving approach $M = 3.755$), followed by global analyzing strategies $M = 3.455$), and finally, support reading strategies $M = 3.211$). From these various outcomes, it is clear that the problem-solving approach is the most frequently used approach by EFL students.

The next intriguing finding highlights the fact that students relied less on the support reading strategy. Taking notes while reading, paraphrasing for better understanding, critically analysing and evaluating the information presented in the text, summarizing what was read to reflect on important information in the text, and using typographical aids like boldface and italics to identify key information are some of the least used support reading strategies. Students rarely employ support reading strategies because doing so took extra effort on their part. Conversely, students favoured quick and easy

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methods. Because of this, the most popular tactics was the ones that can be executed quickly. This suggests that students were avoiding time-consuming reading practices.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

According to the findings of the survey, the majority of students received high to average mean scores for their metacognitive awareness. The students were able to make informed decisions regarding which reading strategies were appropriate for which texts and conditions of reading. It's possible that some of the approaches described in the questionnaire had more than one use. There were some of them that were not suitable for reading in all environments. Therefore, it was not surprising that they did not employ them in the same frequency as before. This was an exceptional circumstance, and it does not suggest that they have a lower ability of academic reading in English.

Problem Solving Reading Strategies (PROB) came in first place for the most frequently used metacognitive reading strategy among the students, with an average frequency of usage of 4.15 times per reading assignment. When students struggled to comprehend the material at hand, they frequently turned to this tactic in order to force themselves into a more focused and attentive state. For example, adjusting reading speed according to how easy or difficult the text was to comprehend, speculating on the possible meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary, and reading the text more than once to gain a deeper comprehension of the material.

The writer would like to offer some suggestions to teachers, students, and other researchers. Students must use cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies to understand academic reading in a foreign language. They should also know how they evaluate their own reading. It helps solve reading problems.

English teachers should know their students' reading ability and quality. Students used dictionaries, according to the results. Teachers could show them other useful resources. The 2013 curriculum requires teachers to state the meeting's purpose before the lesson. Clear goals helps students understand what they will read. Ask questions before, during, and after reading. This helped students to focus on key points. Teachers could ask students to summarize what they have read to check comprehension.

EFL teachers and instructors should also provide students with interesting reading materials to improve their reading awareness. Reading classrooms can do many activities. It's also good that teachers encourage and make students practice reading strategies from the beginning. Students should learn reading strategies soon.

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