

Reading Strategies: The Employment in Academic Reading and The Teaching Way

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Abstract

Reading is deemed to have great significance to develop other skills such as writing, speaking, and listening. It provides information and knowledge from a source in the written form. Moreover, reading and comprehension take place not only in the realm of education but in every field of life. Therefore, foreign language learners are supposed to be introduced with reading strategies in order to have successful reading comprehension as the essence of reading. This study explored the type and the frequency of the employment of reading strategies in academic reading. This was done through the instrument developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002), the students' preferred reading strategy was revealed. Additionally, the teacher's method of teaching reading strategies was also explored.

Keywords: reading strategies, reading comprehension, academic reading

1. Introduction

Harmer (2007) points out the importance of the ability to read English text for students as one of language teacher's issue to take charge of. Reading skill is mastered as it is fundamental for students' academic purpose, careers, even for pleasure. Moreover, reading specifically also contributes towards students vocabulary knowledge, spelling, and writing. In language learning, reading problems are commonly faced by foreign language learners as they acquire another language which has different features from their mother language. Dreyer and Nel (2003) state that the emergence of reading problem is possibly because reading itself is not assessed, but the outputs from reading are assessed. Similarly, Bolukbas (2013) views reading more than just word decoding of text, but it essentially involves understanding and comprehending the full text.

It can be said that reading comprehension has turned out to be the heart of reading. Therefore, the main objective of reading for students is to obtain the gist of what they read.

However, readers can find various difficulties at this comprehension level of reading. McNamara (2009) explains that it can be challenging for the readers to understand how the words come together in each sentence. She also provides another case in which the readers may understand each word and even sentence, but they cannot understand the relationship between the sentences and the meaning

of the text as a whole. Reading comprehension refers to the ability to understand written material involving the interaction between reader and text. As stated by Seyed et al. (2010), comprehension means fully understanding ideas of the text beyond the words. In line with that idea, Souhila (2014) emphasizes that reading comprehension involves the process of extracting meaning conveyed in the text, rather than gaining meaning from isolated words and sentences.

Reading problems are encountered with several factors behind them, one of them lies in teacher's teaching reading method. Dreyer and Nel (2003) assert the Durkin's research (1979) revealing that there was only 2% of the classroom time allocated for teaching reading comprehension including they way students comprehend what they read. Teachers had less attention to reading instruction, whereas it considerably can advance students' comprehension of what they read. Besides, this occurrence is often considered to be learners' weaknesses as they have low awareness of reading strategies and inadequate knowledge of effective use of reading strategies. Therefore, teacher is supposed to initiate students into reading strategies. As Yousefian (2015) states that the utilization of reading strategies creates easy, joyful and active reading atmosphere that assist the students in grasping the meaning of the text they read. Furthermore, McNamara (2009) points out the importance of reading strategies as a means of how to efficiently deal with intricate difficulties in

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reading. It reveals that reading strategies are especially beneficial for learners who have less prior knowledge and low reading ability. Moreover, several reading techniques such as skimming, scanning, guessing, and underlying are effective to analyze reading information in language learners' mind.

Bolukbas defines (2013) reading strategies as the cognitive strategies utilized by readers in three stages that are pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading to have better comprehension of the text. The use of reading strategies is to ensure that the readers fully comprehend the accurate gist of the text. Yi iter and Gürses (2004) add the certain objectives of reading strategies under each reading stages. In pre-reading, strategies are used to activate students' background knowledge about the material they read leading to their interest in reading. The aim of strategies during reading is to build connection with the text so that students can assume the main idea of the text and the unfamiliar words. Meanwhile, the use of post-reading strategies is to provide students with deep analysis of the text and the combination of background knowledge and ideas of the text.

The classification of reading strategies has been developed by many researchers. Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001) classify ESL reading strategies into three groups: metacognitive, cognitive, and support. Shortly, Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) define those categories, metacognitive strategies become global reading strategies and cognitive strategies become problem solving reading strategies. The descriptions of each category are explained as follows:

1. Global Reading Strategies (GLOB) are those intentional, carefully planned techniques by which learners monitor or manage their reading, such as having a purpose in mind, previewing the text as to its length and organization, or using typographical aids and tables and figures. These activities refer to activities in pre reading stage.
2. Problem Solving Strategies (PROB) are the actions and procedures that readers use while working directly with the text. These are localized, focused techniques used when problems develop in understanding textual information; examples include adjusting one's speed of reading when the material becomes difficult or easy, guessing the meaning of unknown words, and rereading the text to improve comprehension.
3. Support Strategies (SUP) are basic support mechanisms intended to aid the reader in comprehending the text such as using a dictionary, taking notes, underlining, or highlighting textual information.

In teaching reading strategies, teacher can implement the technique including in reading strategies by explaining and demonstrating it. In

addition, teacher has crucial role in providing encouragement for students to use those reading strategies after considering the great significance of reading strategies for students' reading comprehension. In addition, teacher is supposed to be able to raise students' awareness of ultimate role of reading strategies in students' improvement in storing, retaining, and using information in reading. Reading strategies become fundamental instrument in learning as Guvenç (2017) states "the higher the students' awareness about strategy usage, the better they choose strategies fit their learning style." He, furthermore, explains that reading strategies are planned ways obtained by students particularly in multiple choice questions of reading passages. In this study, the reading passage refers to the reading comprehension included in reading section of National Examination as academic reading. In Indonesia, the National Exam (abbreviated as NE, Indonesian: *Ujian Nasional*) itself is a test which is conducted in order to measure and evaluate the students' competence nationally by the central government after the teaching and learning process. This test can be defined as a requirement for students to graduate and proceed with the next education level after the learning competences are achieved. English is one of subjects examined in National Exam for Senior High School students. The NE tests the students' language skills of listening and reading. It includes 50 multiple-choice items in total, 15 numbers of listening section and 35 numbers of reading section

Sengupta (2002) defines academic reading as "purposeful and critical reading of a range of lengthy academic text for completing the study of specific major subject areas." He adds that academic reading involves three elements; a combination of extensive reading and intensive reading, a combination of material from a variety of sources, and the ability to find authorial intentions and purposes. Intensive reading deals with the completion of comprehension and language-focused task in one single text. Meanwhile, extensive reading involves learners to work with a certain number of texts written within a restricted lexicon. The role of intensive reading is considered to be helpful for students to help them in gaining a certain background of grammar and vocabulary and practicing word recognition skills and some basic reading strategies like skimming or scanning (Hoang, 2010).

There are several studies examining the use those three types of reading strategies. SORS (Survey of Reading Strategies) is used to measure GLOB, PROB, and SUP developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). This instrument is aimed to measure teenager and adult ESL students' metacognitive awareness and perceived use of reading strategies while reading academic materials. Poole (2005)

applied this instrument to investigate the reading strategies of 248 university ESL students in United States. The findings revealed that problem-solving strategies had high usage level, while global and support strategies had medium usage level. Meanwhile, Chen and Chen (2015) looked into the employment of reading strategies used by high school students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The findings showed that the EFL high school students had high awareness of reading strategy, especially global reading strategies, followed by problem-solving strategies and support strategies. Additionally, investigating students' reading strategies and its effect on their reading comprehension skill had been conducted by previous researchers. Kummin and Rahman (2010) found that students who were competent in English often used a variety of strategies. They tended to use more than one strategies to support their comprehension of a text. On the contrary, the students who were less competent had slight knowledge about reading strategies.

In a nutshell, this study was carried out to discover specific reading strategies used by senior high school students as EFL learners. It is restricted on the issue of academic reading contained in reading comprehension section of English NE. Importantly, study of the reading strategies used by high school students is crucial to figure out which reading strategies employed when they are reading. Therefore, the students are expected to effectively make a use their preferred reading strategies during their reading process. Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) point out the significance of surveying reading strategies which is to enhance students' awareness of reading strategies and consequently provide the notions of reading and learning from text. In addition, exploring reading teaching was crucial to create effective learning atmosphere for students.

2. Method

The aim of this study is to find out which reading strategies employed by students in academic reading. The term of academic reading refers to National Exam as a standardized English test which is conducted in order to measure and evaluate the students' competence nationally by the central government. This test primarily consists of reading section which measures the students' competency in reading comprehension. Therefore, this research involved 31 twelfth grade students of senior high school as the research subject as they were prepared to have NE. In order to obtain the data, a questionnaire, Survey of Reading Strategies, developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) was distributed. This questionnaire was specifically designed to measure adolescent and adult ESL learners' metacognitive awareness in reading academic English text. The SORS is a means to

gauge the type and frequency of reading strategies employed according to the students' preference. There are three types of reading strategies classified namely global reading strategies (GLOB), problem solving strategies (PROB), and support strategies (SUP). This questionnaire consisted of 30 items including 13 items of GLOB, 8 items of PROB, and 9 items of SUP. Each item of the questionnaire was graded by five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*I never do this*) to 5 (*I always do this*). After analyzing the score of each item, the data were interpreted into standard usage levels. Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) explain that reading strategy usage is identified into three levels proposed by Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995): High (mean of 3.5 or higher), moderate (mean of 2.5 to 3.4), and low (mean of 2.4 or lower). Therefore, the higher the number, the more frequent the use of the strategies. Besides, the teacher's method in teaching reading strategies was also investigated through classroom observation and interview. The English teacher who has responsibility to deliver learning material is supposed to facilitate conducive environment for studying. The observation includes the learning activities conducted in the classroom from the beginning to the end and the activity of the teacher and students during the reading learning process. Meanwhile, additional data were obtained through interview with the students and the English teacher to know their perspectives on reading strategies and reading comprehension.

3. Discussion And Result

This study tried to present the survey of the reading strategies employed by EFL students in reading academic English text. After collecting data through questionnaire and interview, the data were analyzed. Students' frequency of using reading strategies is described into mean score of each category of reading strategies in table 1. The findings reveal that the students who learn English as foreign language employ three types reading strategies at a high level ($M = 3.67$). The table 1 shows the mean score of each reading strategies; GLOB, PROB, and SUP. It reveals that problem solving reading strategy is most frequently used by the students. Then, it is followed with global reading strategy and support reading strategy. As a result, according to the table 1, the reading strategies employed by senior high school students can be arranged based on the frequency as follows; problem solving reading strategies ($M = 3.83$), global reading strategies ($M = 3.60$), and support reading strategies ($M = 3.59$). Then, the classification of usage level was done as each mean score of reading strategies is higher than 3.5, therefore they are categorized into high usage. Besides, from the interview it can be concluded that most of the students have awareness of the importance of reading strategies and

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understand several techniques used to solve reading problems.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic Results of GLOB, PROB, and SUP reading strategies

Strategy	Mean	Usage Level
GLOB	3.60	High
PROB	3.83	High
SUP	3.59	High

This study used the survey of reading strategies (SORS) as the instrument to collect the data. It consists of 30 items which are divided into three parts, 13 items of GLOB, 8 items of PROB, and 9 items of SUP. There are several tables included in this paper in order to provide the detailed description of each part of reading strategies.

According to the table 1 showing that problem solving strategy is the most frequently employed in this study, it means that the students preferred to use strategies during the reading process. Table 2 presents the items included in problem solving strategy. The eight items are dealing with adjusting reading speed, guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words, focusing on reading track, and visualizing information in reading. Table 2 indicates that the students preferred to always have their attention to the text when they found difficulties ($M = 4.13$). It means that they need to concentrate more when they cannot comprehend the text. This way made the students focus on what they are reading, so they know which most important pieces of information conveyed from the text. Moreover, the students had to be able to comprehend each text provided in the examination since there were 35 numbers of reading section in NE. Secondly, general techniques used by the students was guessing the meaning of words or phrases ($M = 4.06$). Since the students did the reading comprehension test as a strict examination, they cannot rely on the dictionary that they used to do in the classroom. Therefore, another way they did was guessing the meaning based on the information they obtained in reading. The students also admitted that they frequently reread the text more than once to ensure what they comprehend was correct and to gain more understanding ($M = 4.03$).

Slowly and carefully reading was also done ($M = 3.84$) as reading speed affected the students' reading comprehension in helping them to obtain more understanding about the text ($M = 3.74$). The students would slowly read a text if they hardly found the gist of the text. In addition, when the text became difficult, the students focus more on what

they read ($M = 3.74$). The students attempted to store information of what they read by forming picture their mind ($M = 3.48$). The students explained that when they read descriptive text telling about a specific place, they would imagine and visualize the information into a picture to help them remember easily. In reading examination, the students sometimes had lack of time to answer all of the questions. This was caused by inefficient allocation of time manage by the students. They often stopped from time to time and thought what they read ($M = 3.48$). This strategy actually can be beneficial for the students if they can use it appropriately to reflect on what they understand regarding the ideas of the text. Overall, the techniques of problem solving strategies were often used by the students. They confessed that this strategy assisted them in understanding textual information.

Table 2. Frequency distribution of Problem Solving Strategies (PROB)

Item	Mean
The students read slowly and carefully to make sure they understand what they are reading.	3.84
The students try to get back on track when they lose concentration.	4.13
They adjust their reading speed according to what they are reading.	3.74
When text becomes difficult, the students pay closer attention to what they are reading.	3.74
The students stop from time to time and think about what they are reading.	3.48
The students try to picture or visualize information to help remember what they read.	3.58
When text becomes difficult, the students re-read it to increase their understanding.	4.03
When the students read, they guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	4.06
	3.78

The numbers of global reading strategies are 13 items encompassing intentional planned techniques, for instance, having a purpose in mind, previewing the text as to its length and organization, or using typographical aids and tables and figures. Among those activities in pre reading stage, the students mostly thought about what they know in order to comprehend the text ($M = 4.04$). Therefore, before reading they took general outlook of the text to have representation of the content ($M = 3.81$). The students conveyed that before reading the text, they took a look at the text generally to know the broad topic discussed. This technique helped the students to brainstorm further ideas dealing with the topic, guess the content of the text and relate it to what

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they had known ($M= 3.81$). Then, when they found new information of the text, they confirmed their understanding ($M= 3.81$). As a result, they found out whether their guesses were correct or not ($M= 3.65$). By doing that, the students were sure that they obtained complete comprehension of the text.

Reading problems are commonly found when the text contains verily long passage. Most of the students agreed with that statement. Therefore, they had to decide to what to read carefully and what to neglect ($M= 3.68$). In doing so, they set a purpose in their mind to generate their concentration on the text ($M= 3.61$). Then, they would consider whether the content of the text correspond to their reading purpose ($M= 3.48$). The students considered that the initial step of reading is having purpose in mind, thus it guided them through the reading problems.

The physical appearance of the text, such as length, organization, tables, figures, bold and italics form, also play a role in students' reading comprehension. The characteristic like length and organization of text was considered to be importantly viewed before reading ($M= 3.48$). Besides, the significance of tables, figures, and picture could improve the students' comprehension ($M= 3.45$). Typographical features like bold face and italics was deemed to contribute beneficial effect as it made them recognize if there were some words highlighted. ($M= 3.29$). Those strategies assisted the students to analyze and evaluate the information delivered ($M= 3.45$), since they were considered to be visible signs that eased the reading problems. Meanwhile, the last techniques which had less rate is using context clues to help them have better understanding (3.19). Even though this technique has the lowest frequency, it is categorized into high usage level as its mean is higher than 3.5. It was supported with the students admission that they use context to make them understand what they read.

Table 3. Frequency distribution of Global Reading Strategies (GLOB)

Items	Mean
The students have a purpose in mind when they read.	3.61
The students think about what they know to help them understand what they read	4.04
The students take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.	3.81
The students think about whether the content of the text fits their reading purpose.	3.48
The students review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organization.	3.48
When reading, the students decide	3.68

what to read closely and what to ignore.	
The students use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase their understanding.	3.45
The students use context clues to help them better understand what they are reading.	3.19
The students use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information.	3.29
The students critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.	3.45
The students check their understanding when they come across new information.	3.81
The students try to guess what the content of the text is about when they read.	3.81
The students check to see if their guesses about the text are right or wrong.	3.65
	3.60

Support reading strategy was in the last position of the usage level in this study. It consisted of 9 numbers investigated in SORS. This strategy involves utilizing tools to comprehend text, for instance, using a dictionary, underlining or highlighting text.

The students found difficulties in relate the ideas of the text as a whole comprehension, therefore they went back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas ($M= 4.00$). As the mean reached number of 4, it means that all of the students agreed that they had to do this technique as they struggled to comprehend the text. The students learned English as foreign language, whenever they read English text, they thought of the gist not only in English but also in their mother tongue ($M= 3.81$), they translated from English into native language ($M= 3.77$). They thought that this way made them easier to understand the meaning of the English text. After that, the students restated their ideas into their words ($M= 3.77$). It seemed they create a summary of what they read using their own understanding and words, so the content of the text became clearer.

Furthermore, the students also highlighted pieces of information that they considered important by underlining the sentences ($M= 3.71$). One of student stated that she would not let the text clean without any writing on it. Other students also agreed that they always underlined several important sentences and wrote the meaning of under some words. Then, when they had to answer question based on the text, the students usually asked themselves questions to stimulate the answer from

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the text ($M = 3.61$). The students sometimes read aloud to help them understand what they read ($M = 3.45$). The teacher often found her students did reading aloud when they were having reading text. She thought that this technique was quite powerful unless the students read the text so loud that created noise noises and disturbed other students.

Besides, they utilized dictionary to find the meaning of words everytime they didn't know the meaning of unfamiliar words for them ($M = 3.29$). However, this assistance can not be used when the students are having a test as it is forbidden to use any tools such as dictionary and calculator. Beside underlining, the students also took notes while reading ($M = 2.90$). They sometimes wrote the gist of the text in a simple sentence, the meaning of some words, and the questions that they had to answer through reading the text. Among nine items of support reading strategies, six of them are highly used while the rest are used in medium frequency. However, the support reading strategies are generally highly employed by the students.

Table 4. Frequency distribution of Support Reading Strategies (SUP)

Item	Mean
The students take notes while reading to help them understand what they read.	2.90
When text becomes difficult, the students read aloud to help them understand what they read.	3.45
They underline or circle information in the text to help them remember it.	3.71
The students use reference materials (e.g. a dictionary) to help them understand what they read.	3.29
The students paraphrase (restate ideas in their own words) to better understand what they read.	3.77
The students go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	4.00
The students ask themselves questions they like to have answered in the text.	3.61
When reading, the students translate from English into their native language.	3.77
When reading, they think about information in both English and their mother tongue.	3.81
	3.59

Moreover, referring to frequency scale proposed by Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995), this present study found that the frequency of the reading strategies was high. The problem solving strategy was regarded as high in frequency since its mean

score was 3.83 which was higher than 3.5. Similarly, the support and global reading strategies were categorized into high usage as well, seeing that their score averages were 3.59 and 3.60 consecutively. As the mean score of those three broad categories belong to high usage level and the mean of the SORS was 3.67, it obviously could be concluded that the students had high awareness of the reading strategies usage in academic reading activity. Besides, it indicated that the Indonesian EFL students use all types of reading strategies. This occurrence because the students were determined to pass the test leading the students to consciously or unconsciously use learning strategies in assisting them to achieve their learning goal, which is passing the National Exam. Therefore, Saukah & Cahyono (2015) consider that the NE is a high-stake testing as it brings to phenomena known as washback effect for students.

The research conducted by Chen and Chen (2015) also explored the same realm of research topic. However, their research presented different findings of mean score of each reading strategy category. They stated that the Taiwanese students preferred to use global reading strategies (3.95), followed by problem solving strategies (3.75) and support strategies (3.60). In this case, there are several factors influencing the score of reading strategy groups obtained by each student. Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) explain that the possible use of strategies is influenced by students reading ability in English, the type of reading material, and the reading purpose. They add that if a strategy is least employed, it means that there may be some strategies in that part that the students might want to learn about and consider using when reading. Therefore, it is possible to find various findings of research on the use of reading strategies used by EFL students. However, the main significance of reading strategies survey must be highlighted that "awareness and monitoring of one's comprehension processes are critically important aspects of skilled reading" (Mokhtari and Reichard, 2002).

The English teacher completely agreed that reading strategies can promote the students' reading comprehension, particularly for students who had less proficient in English. The students who often struggled in reading can overcome their reading problems by employing reading strategies. Therefore, the teacher attempted to provide reading strategies instruction for her students. According to Souhila (2014), students require direct and explicit instruction in knowing and learning reading strategies. In line with this, the teacher also explained how to appropriately use several reading strategies in various genre of text that the students read. During the teaching learning process, the teacher provided instructions for the students, for instance introducing the text regarding the genre and

topic, provoking the students' ideas dealing with the conveyed message from the text. The students perceived that their teacher firstly come with brief explanation to guide them in reading process. It means that the teacher offered opportunity for students to practice reading strategies, especially to solve their problem of reading comprehension.

The teacher had the same opinion with Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) explaining that the information obtained through SORS can be advantageous for students to develop their reading process and recognize their reading strategies. As the teacher recognized the importance of reading strategies, she knew that she played an important role to improve that reading strategies by training and practicing in reading activity. This study revealed the frequency of reading strategies used by the students, the teacher could focus on the less used strategies. Besides, this study also provided the description of reading strategy use of each student. Therefore, the teacher found which student that had less knowledge of reading strategies. She implied that she had to work harder for student who had less proficiency in English and had less awareness of strategies use. This challenging in teaching could motivate her to more pay attention to what she needed to. In doing so, the teacher gave explanation of different way of reading academic texts and non academic text. As she prepared the students to have NE, she tended to give exercise dealing with material included in the test. Finally, this study is expected to assist the teacher to develop her appropriate method in teaching.

4. Conclusion

In language learning process, students find difficulties in their foreign language learning for all time, actually this also can be found in their own native language. In certain instance, the students generally struggle to comprehend the gist of text in their reading. This kind of problem is hardly avoided but it can be overcome by effective use of reading strategies. This study proves that reading strategy is one of significant factor assisting students' reading comprehension. Each student has certain favored reading strategy that is different from each other. However, as long as the students are able to employ the strategies appropriately, it will result in students' improvement of both performance and understanding of their reading comprehension. The present study is expected to provide another insight into the improvement of the reading strategies which have not been frequently applied by EFL students. Thus, the students are able to utilize the reading strategies in an effective way. Nonetheless, the role of teacher is obviously needed in order to directly lead the students to the effective way of reading strategies usage. Therefore, pedagogical implication on teaching reading strategies is surely necessary.

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