The Use of Metacognitive Reading Strategies by EFL Learners in Reading

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Abstract

Reading is considered as one of the most important skills in learning English as a foreign Language. Furthermore, it is important for the students to comprehend the text that they read and aware of the strategies they use in the reading process. Nevertheless, the students may have to deal with the problems when they read in English especially an academic text. In this case, it is necessary to find out about the students’ awareness and discover the use of reading strategies in reading process. This study aimed to reveal the students metacognitive awareness and the metacognitive reading strategies that are frequently used. In this study, quantitative research method was used through the implementation of Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) questionnaire by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002). The questionnaires were distributed to thirty students of a Critical Reading Class in Study Program of English Education, Syiah Kuala University. The results indicated that the students have high awareness of metacognitive reading strategies and use Problem Solving Reading Strategies (PROB) with high frequency.

Keywords: Metacognitive awareness, reading strategies, reading comprehension.

1. INTRODUCTION

It has been widely recognized that reading is one of the most important skills that people use to gain information. Carrel (1988) believes that for many students, reading is by far the most important skills in second language, particularly in English as a second or foreign language. Reading in both first and second language contexts involves the reader, the text, and the interaction between the reader and text. Reading in second or foreign language settings continues to play an important role. Apparently, reading cannot be separated from comprehension. When students read the text, they need to comprehend the content of the text in order to gain the necessary information.
Klingner (2007) states that coordinating a number of complex processes that include word reading, word and world knowledge, and fluency are required in process of meaning construction to achieve comprehension. Reading requires the reader to make reference on their prior knowledge since reading is not a passive, but rather an active process. But in fact, the students often face difficulties when they are trying to comprehend a reading text; some of the students do not familiar with the topic of the text, there are a lot of new words contained in a text, etc. Based on the preliminary study that conducted at a reading class, the researcher found out that the students aware to employ certain strategies to be able to comprehend a reading material.

Furthermore, metacognitive is believed as one of the strategies to evoke students’ consciousness and deliberate strategy to comprehend the reading text. Metacognitive processes have been understood to play an essential part in achieving comprehension (Phan, 2006). In addition, Oxford (1990) also states that in controlling understanding about a particular text, metacognitive strategies do help students in term of centering, arranging, planning, and evaluating the text. Therefore, the writer intended to see the relation to the students’ metacognitive awareness in reading comprehension and what kind of metacognitive reading strategies are frequently used by them.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Reading Comprehension

Reading skill requires one’s comprehension when she wants to grasp the message implied in the text. Without comprehension, there is nothing to do with the reading material. As Tankersley (2003) states that comprehension skills are the heart of reading process, and we bring our life experience to the act of reading.

Another statement of Gramrell & Dromsky (1998) as cited in Westwood, 2001 which mention that reading is a process in which readers actively search for and make meaning in what they read. Furthermore, Goodman (1998, cited in Carrel et al., 1988) believes that reading is a receptive language process. It is psycholinguistic process in that it starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning which the reader construct (Khalsiah & Fata, 2016).

2.2 Reading Strategies

Strategies of reading comprehension are generally described as mental activities used by readers to construct the text. The term “strategy” has been defined differently in previous study. (Barnet, 1988) defines reading strategies as “the mental operation involved when readers approach a text effectively and make sense of what they read”. Pereira-Laird & Deane (1997) define a strategy as a deliberate action that readers take voluntarily to develop an understanding of what they read”. In short, reading strategies are deliberate, conscious techniques that readers employ to enhance their comprehension or retention of the textual information.
2.3 Metacognitive Awareness

Metacognitive means beyond, beside, or with the cognitive. Therefore, metacognitive strategies are actions which go beyond purely cognitive devices, and which provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process (Oxford, 1990).

As far as it is concerned with reading, it is common to talk about metacognitive awareness (what we know) and metacognitive regulation or control (knowing when, where, and how to use strategies, that is, what we can do). As a whole, metacognitive strategy involves awareness and control of planning, monitoring, repairing, revising, summarizing, and evaluating (Karbalaei, 2010).

Previous studies recognized the role of metacognitive awareness in reading comprehension, whether one is reading in the native language or a second language. For instance, Chern (1993, cited in Tavakoli, 2014) found that there was a positive relationship between readers’ metacognitive reading strategy awareness and their reading comprehension process in EFL/ESL learners. Carel, et al. (1989) examined metacognitive awareness of reading strategies by two groups of learners in their L1 and L2, and the relationship between their awareness and reading comprehension. The results also showed that L2 learners of English at an advanced level tended to use more global strategies than lower level learners of Spanish. Indeed, the consensus view is that strategic awareness and monitoring of the comprehension process are critically important aspects of skilled reading.

Metacognitive awareness of reading strategy is likely to lead students eventually to become skilled readers. It has been suggested students without metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without direction or opportunity to review their progress, accomplishments, and future learning directions.

Zahra et al. (2016) revealed that the metacognitive aspects of reading have generally indicated positive relationship between metacognitive awareness of reading strategies and students’ reading performance. Students who have confidence in their learning process and can utilize metacognitive reading strategies such as planning, monitoring and evaluating are more successful than those students that do not use this strategy in their learning and reading program (Wang, et al. 2009).

Based on various criteria, researchers usually divide reading strategies differently. In this study, Mokhtari and Reichard’s Reading Strategy Model (2002) was employed. Mokhtari and Reichard were famous for the MARSI (the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory). It covers three subcategories: Global Reading (GLOB), Problem-Solving (PROB) and Support Reading (SUP) Strategies.

Global Reading Strategies (GLOB) help learners control or deal with their reading through deliberate, cautiously arranged techniques (e.g. having a target, previewing the reading text with regard to its design and arrangement, or utilizing graphs, tables, and figures). According to Martinez (2008), global strategies can be defined as generalized or global reading strategies aimed at setting the stage for the reading act for instance, setting a purpose for reading, previewing the text content, predicting what the text is about.
Problem Solving Strategies (PROB) is the activities and processes performed by the readers while they are dealing with the text directly. Readers use these strategies as confined, attentive techniques when they have problems in comprehending texts. For instance, adapting the reading speed when the textual information becomes easy or difficult to understand, predicting the meanings of unknown vocabulary, and reading the text again to understand the text better.

Such strategies are localized, focused problem-solving or repair strategies used when problems develop in understanding textual information. It has been argued that the use of problem-solving strategies is associated with skilled reading and that good readers use these strategies to enhance and regulate their reading comprehension (Baker & Brown, 1984).

Support Reading Strategies (SUP) are essential assistance system aimed to support the reader in terms of understanding the text. (e.g. using a dictionary, note-taking, underlining, or highlighting textual information). These strategies provide the support mechanism aimed at sustaining responses to reading. According to Zhang (2009), the value of support strategies depends largely on their context of use, and thus this result could imply the participants’ flexibility of strategy use as well as their autonomy in using the strategies based on their needs.

3. METHODS

The research design used in this study is quantitative method. According to Creswell (2003), a quantitative approach is one in which the investigator primarily uses post positivist claims for developing knowledge (i.e., cause and effect thinking, reduction to specific variables and hypotheses and questions, use of measurement and observation, and the test of theories), employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data. In this study, the Survey of Reading Strategies Questionnaire (SORS) developed by Mokhtari & Reichard (2002) is employed to collect the data. The SORS is a 30-item questionnaire using a 5-point Likert Scale.

The questionnaire was distributed to all participants. The students were asked to circle the number that applied to them indicating the frequency which they used the reading strategies described in the statement. Scores of individual items obtained were put into their strategy subscales (GLOB, PROB and SUP). After that, they were added up to obtain a total score, then divided by the number of items to get an average response for each strategy subscale as suggested by Fitisia et al. (2015). As suggested by Oxford (1990) for language learning strategy usage, three levels of usage were identified: high (mean of 3.5 or higher), moderate (mean of 2.5 to 3.4) and low (mean of 2.4 or lower).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

It is shown that the students have high level of metacognitive reading strategies use ($\bar{x} = 3.5$). It means that a large number of students use their metacognitive reading strategies when they face the difficulty in reading comprehension. Some students seem to have medium level of metacognitive reading strat-
egies use. Interestingly, the results indicated that there is no student who has low use of metacognitive reading strategies.

![Students Metacognitive Awareness](image)

**Figure 1.** Percentage of Metacognitive Reading Strategies Used.

The second research question examined the metacognitive reading strategies which are mostly used by the students. This was done by calculating the average of the three subscales (Global, Problem-Solving, and Support Reading strategies) in the SORS using the mean formula.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metacognitive Reading Strategies</th>
<th>Mean ((\bar{x}))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving Strategies (PROB)</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Reading Strategies (SUP)</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Reading Strategies (GLOB)</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that the average use of Problem Solving Strategies (PROB) when the students read a reading text is the highest one. On the other hand, Support Reading Strategies (SUP) and Global Reading Strategies (GLOB) seems to be in the medium level of use that utilized by the students. For further comprehension about the results of the second research questions, the researcher presented the mean (\(\bar{x}\)) of each item more detail in 2 separated tables below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROB 25 When text becomes difficult, re-read it to increase my understanding.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUP 13 I use reference materials (e.g. a dictionary) to help me understand what I read.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result from Table 3 displays that the students used 17 strategies in which the mean scores ranged between 4.00 and 3.47. It seems that the statement “When text becomes difficult, I re-read it to increase my understanding” and “I use reference materials (e.g. a dictionary) to help me understand what I read” have the highest mean score (4.00), and it is the most preferred strategies to use by the students. These strategies are within the scope of Problem Reading Strategy (PROB) and Support Reading Strategy (SUP).
Table 3. Strategies Used with Medium Frequency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GLOB 17</strong> I use context clues (evidence or hints from background knowledge) to help me better understand what I am reading.</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUP 22</strong> I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GLOB 4</strong> I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUP 18</strong> I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GLOB 8</strong> I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organization.</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GLOB 12</strong> When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GLOB 21</strong> I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUP 29</strong> When reading, I translate from English into my native language.</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUP 2</strong> I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUP 30</strong> When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue.</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GLOB 20</strong> I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information.</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GLOB 6</strong> I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROB 16</strong> I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading.</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It illustrates that there were 13 strategies that were used by the students with medium frequency of use with the score between 3.40 and 2.77. The statement “I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading” within the scope of Problem Solving Strategy (PROB) seems to be the most rare strategy that were used by the students when reading a text. On the other hand, the students are more likely to use context clues (evidence or hints from background knowledge) to help them better understand what they are reading. This strategy is within the scope of Global Reading Strategy (GLOB).
4.2 Discussion

The steps carried out in collecting and analyzing the data of questionnaire of the critical reading classroom had brought the researcher into the finding regarding the students’ metacognitive awareness in reading as well as the metacognitive reading strategies that are mostly used by the students.

Based on the results of the study, the researcher found that the students aware of their metacognitive reading strategy. The results was supported by the high frequency of overall strategy use ($\bar{x}=3.5$). More than half of the students (70%) have high awareness in using metacognitive reading strategies. The students seem to know what strategies they should use when the text becomes difficult to understand.

The questionnaire results reveals that Problem Solving Strategies (PROB) are the most preferred strategies used by the students ($\bar{x}=4.24$) followed by Support Reading Strategies (SUP) and Global Reading Strategies (GLOB). This results similars to three previous studies conducted by some researchers. First study was conducted by Temur & Bahar (2011, cited in Dundar, 2016) who investigated Turkish Learners, Yuksel & Yuksel (2012,cited in Dundar, 2016) also undertook a research on the frequently of use of metacognitive reading strategies used by Turkish university students, and Shikano (2013, cited in Dundar, 2016) examined students’ reading strategy use in Japanese University. All studies found that Problem Solving Reading Strategies (PROB) used by the students with high frequency of use.

An interesting finding in this study is there is no strategy that is used by the students with low frequency. The results indicate only the high and moderate or medium strategies used. This means that, all of the students already aware to use certain strategies depend on their comprehension about the text. Moreover, it is seems that some students prefer to use context clues (evidence or hints from background knowledge) to help them understand the text.

In conclusion, the awareness and the use of the metacognitive reading strategies by the EFL learner in Critical Reading class at FKIP Unsyiah are considered high. From the three main subscales of metacognitive reading strategies, Problem Solving Strategies (PROB) has the highest percentage. This indicated that the learners tend to use localized and focused strategies to repair problems in understanding textual information. This finding agrees with the findings of the prior studies on the matter of the most used metacognitive reading strategies.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

It can be concluded that the students may have high awareness of their metacognitive reading strategies. Almost all of the students utilize an appropriate strategy to overcome the difficulty in comprehending the text. Their metacognitive awareness seems to enhance their ability to monitor their own learning. The results in this research are also consistent with the theory of Mokhtari & Reichard.

The first frequent used metacognitive reading strategy by the students is Problem Solving Reading Strategies (PROB) with the average frequency of usage was 4.24. The students tend to use this strategy as confined, attentive techniques when they have problems in comprehending the text. For instance, adapting to reading speed when the text becomes easy or difficult to under-
stand, predicting the meanings of unknown vocabulary, and reading the text over again to understand the text better.

The researcher further suggests teachers should train students to emphasize how to employ certain metacognitive reading strategies in their courses to increase students’ awareness. By making the students use certain metacognitive strategies in reading classrooms, there may be an increase in the reading proficiency level of the students. The teacher can also help the students identify their current metacognitive awareness by using questionnaire, informal self-checklist, diaries or verbal reports.

REFERENCES
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