

Reading Strategies in Enhancing Students' Reading Comprehension: Are They Still Relevant?

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Abstract. As a result of recent technological advancements, reading in the modern period has altered in more ways than only how students interact with textbooks. However, this technological advancement has a detrimental effect on students' reading skills. Students tend to be lazy to read books and prefer to read entertainment stuff on cell phones where the language is mostly informal. Due to the informal language that is often used in social media and messaging apps, students were struggling with a variety of issues, such as a lack of pleasure in reading, a lack of critical thinking ability, a bad reading style, and a lack of strategy, all of which contribute to their ultimate demotivation to read. This review aims to discuss theories and previous studies related to the impact of implementing reading strategies on students' reading comprehension. The findings of this review show that students' reading comprehension is positively affected by the use of reading strategies. Therefore, it is clear that reading strategies effectively contribute to a prominent improvement in the student's reading comprehension.

Keywords: reading strategies, reading comprehension, reading skill.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, engagement with print text or textbooks is no longer the only aspect of literacy that has changed due to current technological breakthroughs (Yang et al., 2018). Nevertheless, this technological development harms students in terms of their reading ability. One of the reasons the student's proficiency in reading comprehension is still below average is that students prefer to read things on their smartphones purely for entertainment, such as reading messages on social media, blogs, webtoons and many more. It is in with Sari et al. (2020) state that compared to reading textbooks which are considered a boring activity, students found reading messages from social media applications, storybooks, and comics on a smartphone to be more fascinating. Consequently, students are not used to reading or comprehending standard words because social media and messaging applications tend to use informal language, which

causes them to lack formal vocabulary (Sari et al., 2020). Not only does they lack formal vocabulary, but students also get several troubles, such as low interest in reading, low critical thinking skills, poor reading style, and lack of strategy, eventually making them lose motivation to read (Febtisari & Fitrawati, 2017).

In addition, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development or OECD (2019) has released a survey from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in terms of student's performance in reading literacy. The survey result showed that Indonesia is ranked 71st out of 76 countries, meaning that Indonesia is among the countries with the lowest reading skills. The score obtained by Indonesia is around 371, which is quite far from the average score of other countries, which is around 487. Related to the phenomenon, it is undeniable that the ability to understand reading texts has become a mandatory skill that must be owned by every student so that they not only know the literal meaning of each word and sentence but are also able to understand the information within the text profoundly (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

Moreover, comprehending a reading text not only helps the students gain the knowledge needed to complete their tasks (Suyitno, 2017) but also helps them to meet the criteria of being educated both in educational and real-life situations (Marzuki et al., 2018). That is why reading comprehension is critical for students to be grasped. Additionally, reading strategies are needed to construct meaningful information within the text. It is in line with Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), who reveals that prosperous readers manage to apply several reading strategies to interpret what they are reading. Not only that, students, who use certain strategies, will find it easy to absorb information or knowledge of the text (Hayashi, 1999). Thus, reading strategies become one of the keys for students to be able to master reading comprehension successfully.

Therefore, regarding the facts above, this review aims to discuss certain theories about the use of reading strategies in evolving students' reading comprehension. Then, it is expected that this paper explains some major theories related to using reading strategies for more effective students' reading improvement in comprehending the passage. First of all, the definition of reading comprehension will be discussed, followed by various problems in reading, the kinds of reading strategies, and the previous studies conducted by scholars related to the implementation of reading strategies. Finally, at the end of the section, this paper provides a conclusion regarding the implementation of reading strategies toward the students' reading comprehension.

2. THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

Reading Comprehension

Latifa and Manan (2018) state that people's reading comprehension depends on how they link the ideas they already have and the process of recognizing meaning from the text. Additionally, instead of gaining meaning from each sentence or word respectively, reading comprehension, according to Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), requires readers to comprehend the meaning of a text. They further mention that readers' previous knowledge, incorporated with the mental representation of the meaning of the text, results from reading comprehension. Furthermore, Sua (2021) reveals that background knowledge helps the reader actively interact with the passage since they are better equipped to comprehend the information it contains. From these statements, it is obvious that reading comprehension is an interaction between the text and the information the students already possessed before to construct a better comprehension of the text.

Problems Experienced in Reading

However, comprehending the text's meaning is not such an easy task for some students. There are certain factors that can make students' reading comprehension hampered. According to Kasim and Raisha (2017), problems in reading comprehension are classified into linguistics and non-linguistics problems.

Linguistic problems

Many students face several problems while reading a text. One of the problems is in the linguistic aspect. According to Dzulfikri and Saukah (2017), vocabulary and syntactical knowledge are some aspects that include in the linguistic realm. Lack of vocabulary becomes an obstacle and a reason why students are not interested in reading the text. Kasim and Raisha (2017) also reveal that they have low interest in reading because they struggle to understand the text. Without solid vocabulary, students will have trouble understanding the passage since they look for the meaning during reading (Alowalid et al., 2018). It can make students cannot get the importance of knowledge maximally.

Meanwhile, syntactical complexities, according to Kasim and Raisha (2017), pervade the insufficiency of knowledge related to endurable sentence structure and endurable grammar. In sum, a text with a higher difficulty level than students' reading proficiency will confuse them

and require them to look for the meaning of each word rather than comprehend the text. Therefore, the information about the text they should get cannot be absorbed.

Non-linguistic problems

On the flip side, things to consider in the non-linguistic aspect include anything not found in the linguistic aspect. It includes attitude, motivation, background knowledge, and reading strategies (Dzulfikri & Saukah, 2017). Students cannot gain all of those aspects in a short time without painstaking effort. Students who are not enthusiastic about reading will be too lazy to read the text. In addition, Satriani (2018) reveals why students are demotivated to read or have a low reading habit because their objective of reading is to complete the task and get through the exam instead of understanding the text. Not only that, they are lazy and not motivated to read because they do not have sufficient background knowledge, which can ease them to connect the ideas they have before with the text they are reading.

Regarding this statement, Latifa and Manan (2018) reveal that readers will be effortless to understand the text if the text given is familiar to them. In other words, students with insufficient background knowledge will find it difficult to connect the ideas they have before with the text they are reading. Furthermore, Hayashi (1999) describes that students might find strategies suitable to understand the meaning of the text as long as they have adequate knowledge of a given text and knowledge. Therefore, without having a good reading strategy, students will struggle or have difficulty comprehending the text.

Reading Strategies

In addition, Suyitno (2017) asserts that the cause of the obstruction of students to understand the text when reading is due to inappropriate strategies. On the other hand, students who can use appropriate reading strategies according to the text and their abilities can understand the reading text well. Therefore, reading strategies have a pivotal role during the learning process. Oxford (1990) classified reading strategies into six clusters as follows.

- Cognitive strategies

These strategies allow students to practice in naturalist settings and practice structures and sound formally by manipulating the language material directly through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining, and reorganizing information to upgrade stronger schemas (knowledge structure) (Oxford, 2003). Students try to adjust the language material with what they already know to develop the

structure of their knowledge (schemas). Students feel easier to comprehend the text if the text is already manipulated to make it suitable to students' prior knowledge. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) also add that students' schemas will always shift and develop while learning new information through reading and experience.

- **Metacognitive strategies**

Oxford (2003) says that metacognitive strategies are required to manage the whole learning process. Related to that, Oxford (2003) further states that metacognition is about recognizing preferences and needs to be related to a student's learning style, planning a task for an L2, collecting and organizing materials, regulating a place, and a schedule for study, observing faults, evaluating assignment success, and evaluating any effective learning strategy. These strategies encourage students to manage their learning process to be better and more effective by knowing what factors can make students' comprehension develop or decrease. It is in line with Griffiths and Parr (2001), who say that metacognitive strategy is about managing students' learning, such as using information from English faults to do better. In short, the use of metacognitive strategies is highly recommended for students who are still confused about what they must do to improve their understanding or knowledge, making it difficult to master the materials given.

- **Memory-related strategies**

Remembering more effectively, retrieving, and transferring information needed for future language use is how memorization strategies work (Hardan, 2013). By memorizing, students can gather all the important information based on what they learn and save it in their memory. So, when students deal with a text which needs certain information in the past, they can get the information back by using this strategy. In addition, Oxford (2003) also states that memory strategies are frequently used for memorizing vocabulary and structure in language learning only in the early stages. However, this strategy is not used for students with an adequate vocabulary and structure of the language. Briefly, this strategy is only needed by the students who are still at the beginning level since this strategy involves the brain memorizing the vocabulary and the structure in general. However, even though this strategy only takes a small part of comprehending the text, it is still needed to achieve maximum understanding.

- Compensatory strategies

According to Oxford (2003), these strategies help students to compensate for unknown words. This strategy requires students to guess the meaning of the context in reading intelligently, whether with linguistics hints or other hints outside of the linguistics aspect. It is in line with Griffiths and Parr (2001), who states that this strategy "enables students to make up for limited knowledge, such as 'I read English without looking out every new word, or 'to understand unfamiliar English words I make guesses". Compensatory strategies are very useful for students who have limited vocabulary. If students find it difficult to understand certain words that seem new to them, they can guess the meaning of the word by looking at the follow-up sentences of the word. Students can also ask their friends or teacher to help them find the synonyms of the word.

- Affective strategies

These strategies help students recognize their mood and anxiety levels, talk about their feelings, give themselves a reward if they do a great performance, and require them to take a deep breath or positive self-talk (Oxford, 2003). Affective strategies provide good behavior and motivation to comprehend a written text. This statement is supported by Hardan (2013), who says that this strategy aids students to manage their emotions, manners, motivation, and values. Students with sufficient motivation to read text will be passionate about comprehending the text. Not only that, their reading comprehension will automatically improve. However, effective strategies will no longer use or less used for the students who have superb competence since students use cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies, which provide them a higher self-efficacy and ability.

- Social strategies

It aids students in working together with others and conceiving the language as well as the target culture, such as asking questions to acquire verification, asking for clarification for a perplexing point, asking for help doing the language task, talking with a native speaker, and understanding cultural and social norms (Oxford, 2003). Social strategies are very important for the students since the activities that students do in the class always involve their mates. Hardan (2013) also emphasizes that these strategies become important since it engages students to get involved with each other in the

learning process, and it is a form of social manner. So, this strategy benefits the students in social aspects, which will be very useful for the students not only inside the class but also outside of the class when they interact with others.

To sum up, all six strategies are necessary for the students. One of the ways to upgrade students' reading comprehension is knowing and understanding all of these strategies to select the most appropriate one. Then it is expected that these strategies greatly impact the students' reading comprehension.

Previous Studies

In order to gain a deeper insight, some of the previous studies regarding the engagement of reading strategies in enhancing reading comprehension, which proficient researchers have conducted, are presented below. In addition, all of the articles that were found ranged from 2012 up to 2021. Not only that, the quotation mark (“”) and Boolean operators such as (AND, OR and NOT) have greatly affected the choice of the articles. In total, there are 19 articles that the researcher found. Additionally, the order of these previous studies follows the reading strategies discussed in the previous section by Oxford, where the first paragraph discusses cognitive strategies, followed by metacognitive, memory-related, compensatory, and socio-affective strategies.

First, Marzuki et al. (2018) conducted a study in Indonesia investigating 30 university-level students in a shoreside area related to the use of cognitive strategies and their reading comprehension using quantitative Classroom Action Research (CAR). They revealed that students' reading comprehension skills developed after using cognitive strategies in their reading activities, which encouraged them to be more active and fully engaged in participation during the learning process. The reason behind the success of this strategy is due to two factors, namely the selection of reading texts that are in accordance with the interests of the students and the clear and structured learning process that requires students to reflect, analyze, summarize, synthesize, recognize, and mark-off the information of the reading passage. It aligns with Sua's study (2020) in Colombia, which investigated 40 secondary-level students using qualitative action research. She stated that due to the use of cognitive strategies, students tended to be more motivated to read, could pinpoint a reading goal and derive meaning from the passage.

However, Suyitno (2017), who investigated 97 Indonesian university-level students using descriptive quantitative, shared the same result, but with a few exceptions. His study

showed that cognitive strategies contributed positively, with a few negatively to students' reading comprehension. Several factors cause this negative contribution. First, the lack of experience and students' ability to match cognitive strategies with reading texts makes reading comprehension achievement inadequate compared to the students who were experienced and skilled enough in choosing appropriate cognitive strategies. Secondly, it depends on the difficulty level of the text.

Additionally, Naseri and Zaferanieh (2012) conducted a study in Iran investigating 80 university-level students using a quantitative correlational design. Their study showed a positive or substantial correlation between their self-efficacy, reading strategy and reading comprehension. The ability to comprehend what they read, their perceptions about their own reading efficacy, and how they apply reading strategies vary between students. Of the four existing strategies, cognitive is the most widely used, and compensatory is the least. Nonetheless, although cognitive strategies are the most widely used by students, metacognitive strategies appear to be the most effective in enhancing reading comprehension.

In brief, students applied various cognitive strategies in understanding reading texts. The use of cognitive strategies is proven to be effective in improving students' reading comprehension. However, there are some conditions that must be met for the strategy to work properly. Firstly, the reading passage must align with the student's interests. Not only that, the difficulty level of the passage must be adjusted to the level of students' reading skills. These two requirements must be fulfilled. Otherwise, the students cannot use the strategies due to their lack of interest or low motivation toward the text. Another important point is that the students must recognize where and when to apply these cognitive strategies to the text. They must know what kind of text would be suitable for them to use so that the strategies they implement do not become misplaced, which eventually can affect their reading achievement.

In terms of metacognitive strategies, Muhid et al. (2020), who have been investigating 50 secondary-level Indonesian students using a descriptive quasi-experimental design, and Rastegar et al. (2017), who have been investigating 120 Iranian university-level students using descriptive quantitative research design, found that the student's performance in reading comprehension was significantly associated with the application of their general metacognitive reading strategies. Students' reading achievement increased after applying metacognitive strategies in their reading activity. This increased achievement is because students, who implement metacognitive strategies, tend to be aware of their weaknesses in reading and make

sure not to repeat their mistakes in the next reading activity. Not only that, but students also paid attention to sub-headings, main topics, and other important points, which in the end, made the students' reading activities more effective and efficient. The result of the study conducted by Zhussupova and Kazbekova (2016) in Kazakhstan using a quantitative quasi-experimental research design along with 60 university-level students as their subject also shared the same result, which stated that along with the use of metacognitive strategies, students were able to learn reading comprehension strategies and practice critical thinking when reading short stories. In other words, metacognitive strategies were successful in enhancing students' reading comprehension skills.

Nevertheless, despite having strong metacognitive reading recognition ratings, the students were categorized as having low reading competency. According to Dardjito (2019), who has been examining 373 university-level students in Indonesia by using a mixed method explanatory research design revealed that there is no connection between the students' academic English reading comprehension and their metacognitive reading recognition. The reason for this is that the students' vocabulary was inadequate. That is why the implementation of metacognitive strategies was not maximal since most of the students use these strategies to find the meaning of the word within the text.

To sum up, even though metacognitive strategies were found to be successful in aiding students to have a better understanding of the text, some students did not receive any improvement after implementing the strategies due to their unlimited vocabulary. In other words, it is proven that metacognitive strategies are not the only factor that can affect the students' reading comprehension of the text, but the other factor, such as how much vocabulary they have mastered, also plays an important role. In addition, based on the findings above, these metacognitive strategies are proven to be effective for university-level students in increasing their reading comprehension. Yet, it is still unknown for the primary-level students whether these strategies can benefit them.

Furthermore, multiple studies have found evidence supporting student reading comprehension development by using memory-related strategies. In their research, Sharifi and Rezaei (2018) investigated 30 Iranian primary-level students who suffered from dyslexia by using a quantitative quasi-experimental research design. They demonstrated that working memory training-based interventions can lessen the students reading problems who have a reading disorder. Mahdavi et al. (2015) investigated 33 Iranian primary-level dyslexic students

using a quantitative quasi-experimental research design. They also supported the previous study, completing a research project on the effect of the implementation of working memory strategies on enhancing reading ability and lowering depression in dyslexic youngsters. The study by Mahdavi et al. (2015) confirmed that working memory strategies considerably enhanced reading comprehension and decreased depressive symptoms. Compared to healthy students, students with dyslexia have a greater proportion of depressive disorders; hence a decrease in depression was predicted as dyslexic students' reading abilities improved.

In addition, Hayet et al. (2016) conducted a study in Bangladesh that examined 60 university-level students using descriptive quantitative research design. They stated that three reading strategies are proven to be effective in helping students understand the text, namely meta-cognitive, cognitive, and memory-related strategies. However, some students did not use these strategies because they had no idea how important and effective the strategies were because they were unfamiliar with them. It is in line with the result of the study conducted by Chan (2014), who investigated 208 Chinese university-level students using embedded mixed methods and revealed that all six strategies were found to be helpful for the students in improving their reading skills. Nevertheless, memory-related (association with reciting more vocabulary) is one of the least strategies that higher-level students use. As a result of feeling less pressure to learn English, higher-level students only implemented a few memory- and affective-related strategies.

In brief, it is proven that memory-related strategies did help students in enhancing their reading comprehension. However, the previous studies showed that the vast majority of the students, especially at the university level, did not use this strategy due to the unfamiliarity of the strategy itself. That is why among the other strategies, memory-related strategies were barely used by the students. Furthermore, based on the previous studies, these memory-related strategies only best worked for the students who suffered from dyslexia. It appeared to be effective in developing the reading ability of students diagnosed with dyslexia which at the same time can decrease their moodiness. However, based on the findings of the previous studies, there is no evidence whether these strategies can also help students who are not diagnosed with dyslexia and are fully aware of the strategies significantly or not.

Regarding compensatory strategies, Ismail et al. (2015) examined 3.567 Malaysian secondary-level students using a heuristic strategy. Their research stated that most students with low reading ability tend to use compensatory reading strategies. Smart reading, one of the

compensatory strategies, was discovered to have a strong correlation with the students' reading enthusiasm and self-perception of their reading proficiency. Not only that, the result of the study conducted by Siripitakchai and Tiyawongsuwan (2021) in Thailand, who investigated 314 secondary-level students using quantitative correlational research design, showed that compensatory, affective and metacognitive techniques were found to be positively correlated with the vital aspect of reading in English that is literal comprehension. In other words, as students use these strategies more often, their motivations, reading skills and understanding of the reading texts also increase.

In addition, Hardini et al. (2018) also investigated 13 Indonesian primary-level students and 8 Indonesian teachers using a quantitative quasi-experimental research design. They found that the reading comprehension ability for the informational text of students who received learning task design based on the interactive compensatory model treatment increased compared to those in the control group who did not receive the same treatment. However, the following enhancement differs based on a few crucial parameters. First of all, students have different fundamental understandings depending on the text they read. Second, the query is on whether students can simply access the knowledge or information through textbooks and any other reference materials in the school. Lastly, how do the teachers deliver and encourage meaningful information to the students in the learning process?

In short, the results of the studies conducted by the experts related to the use of compensatory strategies in developing students' reading comprehension revealed that the strategies were helpful for the students. They can understand the word's meaning in the passage, which they did not know before. Consequently, they became much more enthusiastic and passionate while they were trying to comprehend the passage. Nonetheless, based on the data that the researcher got, the participants of the studies were all primary and secondary-level students. It is still unknown whether these strategies will work on a higher level of the students, such as at the university level.

In terms of socio-affective strategies, the finding of the study conducted by Rahman et al. (2021), who investigated 159 Malaysian respondents as the subject of their research by using a descriptive quantitative research design, revealed it could not be denied that students, during reading activities, did experience few difficulties both in term of linguistics (i.e., vocabulary & syntactic knowledge) and non-linguistics (i.e., attitudes, motivation & background knowledge). To cope with these difficulties, students tend to implement socio-affective strategies. Thus, by

implementing these strategies, students, according to Alzubi and Singh (2018), who investigated 70 Arabian university-level students using a sequential quantitative quasi-experimental research design, are pleased when working together with their friends, were given more opportunities to read and provide comments on reading, were emphasized with others via culture, emotions, and attitudes, and were able to analyze the social elements in reading texts.

Additionally, the study from Zhou and Zhao (2014), who examined 170 Chinese university-level students using descriptive quantitative research design, also revealed that using reading strategies could help students understand the text better and more easily. However, the results showed that the freshmen students used socio-affective strategies while the old students used cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The reason for this is that freshmen students tended to be more motivated and help each other if they faced some difficulties in order to comprehend the texts. In contrast, old students tended to study alone and be more independent in understanding reading texts because they were used to the learning system on campus. Thus, they tried to choose a learning style that matched their conditions. Another study conducted by Puspita (2016), who investigated 254 Indonesian secondary-level students using correlational explanatory research design, also revealed that the six reading strategies strongly correlate with the student's reading comprehension. Yet, social and affective strategies only contributed inconsiderably to the student's reading comprehension. Out of the six strategies, only metacognitive strategies significantly contributed to their reading comprehension.

As the whole package, it is proved that reading strategies work well. Students used a variety of reading strategies. It is in line with Suyitno (2017), who says that the different strategies taken by each reader in responding to the information in the reading text reflect the reader's attitudes and cognitive preferences. Besides, instead of teaching the students the same strategies every day, the teacher needs to use and teach them a variety of reading strategies that are in accordance with the student's needs and learning styles (Ali & Razali, 2019). All in all, the results of the studies indicate that reading strategies greatly impact students' reading comprehension. Thus, it is obvious that reading strategies are one way to increase students' reading comprehension significantly.

3. CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation of theories and previous studies above, reading strategies significantly enhance the student's reading comprehension. Although most students initially have problems in their reading comprehension, they can overcome the problem they face by

degrees as long as they implement the reading strategies. Students who use the reading strategies on the passage they read can comprehend it easily. Nevertheless, it is not enough for students to only implement the reading strategies. The teacher also has a pivotal role in guiding the students to comprehend the text well. A teacher must evaluate the learning process in order to he or she can find the appropriate reading strategies to fix the problems which the students face during the learning process. Also, a teacher must alternately integrate the reading strategies in the classroom instruction, so the students can learn or adapt how to use the strategies based on the kinds of texts or their preferences.

The students have to read a lot of text or reading passages to acquire a lot of knowledge and understand the passage well. In addition, students must practice and apply the reading strategies that they know to the passage, so they can comprehend the passage, not only the meaning of the word but also the idea of the overall text easily and holistically. Additionally, among all of the six strategies, cognitive and metacognitive are the strategies that the students used the most. Nonetheless, this does not mean that other strategies do not work or are less effective; it is merely based on the students' preferences. Lastly, for further research, the reading strategies examined in this paper are a few. Therefore, the next researchers are expected to find and examine more and an in-depth review of the articles with the same topic in order for the findings can be more generalized and more versatile.

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