

Exploring Reading Strategies Used by Students Based on Metacognitive Awareness

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ABSTRACT

The crucial impact of knowing about learners reading strategies to acquire a second language has been widely accepted. Therefore, this paper reports a study investigating university students' awareness of their reading strategies when they read English academic texts. As many as 39 first-year university students took part as the research subject, and they answered a 30-item questionnaire on reading strategies. A four-point Likert Scale questionnaire named SORS (Survey of Reading Strategies) was deployed to collect the data concerning the use of reading strategies. The results indicated that among the three reading strategies, the students tended to use Problem-solving strategies more, followed by the Global Reading Strategies and Support Reading Strategies. Finally, the idea of metacognitive that undergoes before, during, and after reading activities must be equipped by the teachers to fulfil the scarcity in those stages of reading. The findings showed that the mean score of each category varied among the three, and these were discussed considering the reading strategy knowledge base as well as the theoretical and practical implications.

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Introduction

In the EFL context, where exposure to English is dependent merely on the classroom context, reading is essential to improve students' proficiency in English. One of the main prerequisites to mastering a reading skill is applying the proper reading strategies. Utilizing the perfect strategies will facilitate EFL students to comprehend the text and become proficient readers. However, EFL students might not be aware of their latent reading strategies. Thus, raising their awareness of reading strategies can improve their reading skills. The main difference between proficient and not proficient readers is their awareness of the reading strategy used (Cahyono & Widiati, 2006). This awareness of reading strategy is called metacognitive awareness.

Metacognitive awareness is vital to improving EFL students' reading skills. Furthermore, achieving competence in productive skills, namely speaking and writing, needs comprehensive input, mere reading, that can pave the way to obtain this productive skill (Brown, 2000). With this

regard, Krashen (1982) also emphasizes reading as an approach that can thoroughly cover a range of communicative language competence to achieve academic language competence, both receptive and productive skills. Therefore, reading as a robust input is an influential aspect of learning a language, especially in ESL. The significance of reading academic texts include students' prior knowledge (Hasan et al., 2018), vocabulary (Pasquarella et al., 2012), grammatical awareness (Alowalid, A., Mujiyanto, J., & Bharati, 2018), and their personal objectives to grasp the meaning of the text (Miftakh, 2019). Because reading skill is essential in the academic context, this study investigates different reading strategies. The study can be beneficial for students to raise their awareness of the reading strategies used and for lecturers to equip the student with reading strategies tailored to their learning style.

Studies have shown that EFL students with sufficient reading skills tend to acquire English better than those without (Floris & Divina, 2015). Moreover, they can both improve their reading and acquire a second language. The pioneer theory of exposure and response by Skinner (1957) compels the importance of input to get plenty of exposure to reading materials inclusively in class, especially in English as a foreign language. Realizing the importance of reading for EFL students, the students must have good reading proficiency by equipping proper reading strategies (Cahyono & Widiati, 2006). Therefore, exploring students reading strategies used in the Indonesian context is beneficial for students to know the perfect fit strategies employed and for teachers, to present a plethora of reading strategies if their students face problems in comprehending reading text.

Some studies conducted in Iran about metacognitive revealed that reading strategies could be implemented in both extensive and intensive reading. Thus, learners with good reading abilities can use those strategies in intensive reading (Hatami & Asl, 2017). Another study by Fauziana and Fazilla (2022) revealed the importance of metacognition in achieving the learning process. Somehow, learners did not realize that appropriate reading strategies could elucidate their perceived drawbacks in reading. Other studies by Fauzi and Ashadi (2019) and Cahyono and Widiati (2006) highlighted the importance of implementing the best reading strategies in the EFL context as crucial exposure to acquiring a foreign language. At this point, the current study tries to increase the students' reading strategies as one of the teachers' ways to give exposure through academic reading.

Therefore, this research, which focuses on EFL students, provides insightful findings related to students' use of a reading strategy. Considering the influence of reading strategies awareness and their use can foster EFL students' reading ability in comprehending academic material. This article examines whether the notion that first-year university students are unaware of their reading strategies is justified. The current study seeks the justification regarding the lack of students' awareness of their reading strategies. Therefore, the study is expected to benefit

students, allowing them to know their best reading strategies for reading academic texts. Besides, teachers can also use the findings to initiate implementing reading strategies to overcome students' reading difficulties.

Method

The research subjects were higher education students in Aceh, particularly those learning English language studies at the State Islamic Institute of Lhokseumawe. The qualitative descriptive methods were applied to investigate 39 first-year students' reading strategies. Since this study aims to elucidate the reading strategy used, the qualitative descriptive method helps the researcher examine the phenomenon within its real-life context. The data obtained could help to reveal the phenomenon regarding reading strategies applied by the students. It was a one-cycle questionnaire aimed at describing the phenomenon of a group at one point in time. The data were elicited using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was chosen as the research instrument to elicit in-depth insight into students' reading strategies. The structured questionnaire used is closed-ended to know students' reading strategies.

In this study, the participants answered the questionnaire that was divided into two sections. The first one was about the students' demography consisting of name, gender, and age, while the second was the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) adapted from Mokhtari & Sheorey (2002). Moreover, the item was translated into the participants' first language. The questionnaire was suitable for the current study because it was designed to assess L2 learners' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies while reading academic materials (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002). The SORS has been extensively adapted in EFL contexts to discover the differences between learners' use of reading strategies. The SORS consists of 30 items each to be rated on a 4-point Likert scale (never, occasionally, usually, always) and includes three sub-categories of reading strategies: 1) Global Reading Strategies that consist of 13 items of questions, 2) Problem-Solving Strategies (8 Items), and 3) Support Reading Strategies that has 9 items.

No neutral option was provided in the choices to avoid confusion in deciding the reading strategies used. Mulyatiningsih (2012) suggested using four scales of answers without using a neutral answer so that respondent answers will be more assertive. Therefore, the choices of the questionnaires are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Likert scale

No.	Category	Scale
1.	Strongly Agree	Always
2.	Agree	Usually
3.	Disagree	Occasionally
4.	Strongly Disagree	Never

The author used the scale in Table 2 to classify the respondent's answers to the questionnaire adapted from Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995). Table 2 gives a clear description of the range of scores analyzed.

Table 2. The authentication of range score value of questionnaires

<i>Qualification</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Mean</i>
High	Always	3.5 to 4.0
	Usually	2.5 to 3.4
Low	Only occasionally	1.5 to 2.4
	Never or Almost Never	1.0 to 1.4

The questionnaires were distributed to one class along with an explanation about how to complete them. The respondents have also been informed about the scores of the questionnaires so that they were aware of the level of their reading strategies. The respondents were conveyed that their answers were not scored as right or wrong, and the answers were relevant to their real condition. Besides, the respondents were informed that the reading strategies assessed through the SORS questionnaire were those used when reading academic materials, such as articles and textbooks, instead of newspapers or novels. Further, the authors analyzed the data of students' reading strategies by calculating the frequency and the mean score of the responses using computer software (Microsoft Excel 2013). Then, the authors classified the mean scores based on the mean range of the SORS questionnaire. Finally, the authors described the data supported by relevant theories and findings from previous studies.

To analyze and enlighten the problem of this study, the author conducted a descriptive analysis. The central tendency measure (mode and median) was taken into consideration. Further, the authors analyzed the data in three steps. First, measuring the students' responses related to the reading strategies they used for each item of the questionnaire, second, identifying the reading types they used based on the mean score of each type of reading strategy; and last, finding out the most dominant reading strategy used. After calculating the central tendency, the range of the most to less dominant reading strategies implemented was identified.

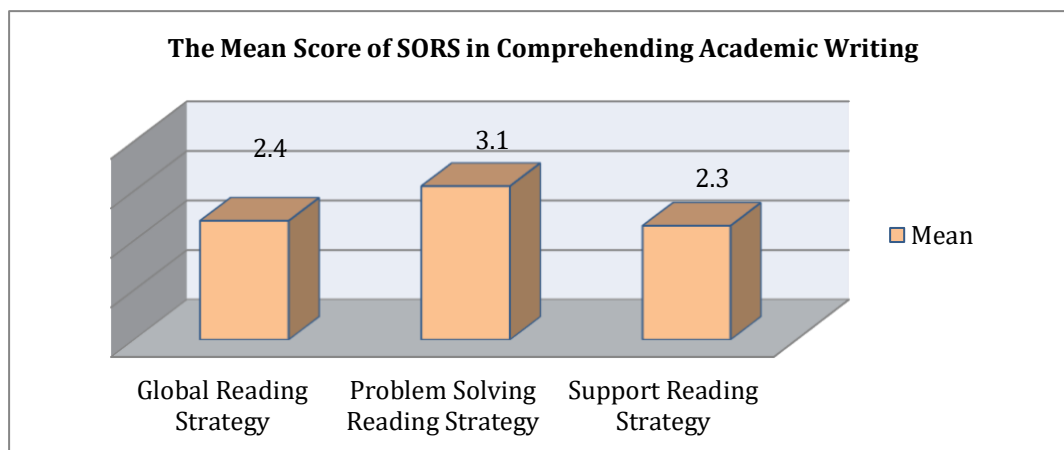
Discussion

The data and its analysis are presented as the following. The first part presents the overall pattern of strategy use, while the second part presents the most dominant reading strategies from the highly frequent use to the less one. In this part, the authors showed the result of the study from the descriptions of the overall use of reading strategies to pave the answers to the research question. Moreover, the authors displayed the most dominant reading strategies used by the students.

The authors formulated the mean of the responses to investigate the overall score of reading

strategies used by first-year students while reading academic materials. By adapting the range mean of Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995), the author displayed the mean of each reading strategy in Chart 1 based on each subscale (Global Reading Strategies, Problem Solving Strategies, Support Reading Strategies).

Chart 1. The mean score for each reading strategy



The overall mean score of students' reading strategies was 2.6, which is a high strategy usage level. Regarding the three sub-strategies, Problem-Solving Reading Strategy ranked first place (M=3.1), which belongs to the high-frequency level followed by Global Reading Strategies (M=2.4) and support Reading Strategies (M=2.3), which were at the high level of strategy use. The overall mean score and the mean scores of each sub-strategy indicated that the students applied reading strategies frequently in English Reading, specifically in English academic materials. This high-frequency reading strategy use also indicated that the students were highly encouraged by their latent strategy while reading academic text.

A. Global Reading Strategy

The second frequently used sub-strategy by the first-semester students was Global Reading Strategies (M= 2.4). Global Reading Strategies are those carefully planned techniques learners use to monitor or manage their reading. For instance, setting the purposes for reading, using background knowledge to understand texts, and using context clues to guess the meaning of words. Table 3 displayed the findings.

Table 3. The use of global reading strategies

No	Items of GLOB	Total Score Per Item	Mean	Level
1	1. I have a purpose in mind when I read.	146	3.7	High
2	3. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	72	1.8	Low
3	4. I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.	70	1.7	Low

4	6. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	131	3.3	High
5	8. I review the text by noting its characteristics like length and organization.	62	1.5	Low
6	12. When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	132	3.3	High
7	15. I use tables, figures, and pictures in the text to increase my understanding.	142	3.6	High
8	17. I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.	72	1.8	Low
9	20. I use typographical features like boldface and italics to identify key information.	134	3.4	High
10	21. I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.	68	1.7	Low
11	23. I check my understanding when I come across new information.	92	2.3	High
12	24. I try to guess what the content of the text is about when I read.	70	1.7	Low
13	27. I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	72	1.8	Low

It is crucial to highlight that although practices on EFL reading revealed that the learners had their purpose in mind while reading, they must consider the purpose of reading instruction. For example, answering the question after reading the passage makes the reading activity uninteresting (Cahyono & Widiati, 2006). Dealing with the use of context clues, the result of this study is in line with the study by Floris and Divina (2015). It is difficult for learners to use context clues to improve their reading. In addition, inference from the context skill was one of the essential skills in increasing new vocabulary, and the answer to the questionnaire raised disheartening facts. Contradictory to the notion by Floris and Divina (2015), the respondents of the current study tried to guess the word, but the answer was wrong. In other words, the learners show less effort in guessing the word's meaning and highly depend on the use of the dictionary. This fact perpetuates their lack of reading quality. The respondents went back and forth on the text. As a result, they could not activate their ability to see the context and to grab the word's meaning from the precedented vocabulary, which led to a lack of interest in reading (Hasan et al., 2018). Regarding the way the learners do scanning, their answers also tend to the negative way. They focused on their purpose of reading, which was answering the questions following the passage. The idea is that learners should be good readers if they are equipped with an adequate number of vocabularies, and the scarcity of teachers in providing pre, whilst, and post-reading must be fulfilled.

Meanwhile, the lowest mean score gained in difficult reading skills for these students was recognizing text organization (Mean=1.5). It was probably because many Indonesian students were not trained to activate recognizing text organization after they read a passage. Usually, they were asked to answer some questions after reading a text, which was the purpose of academic

reading, evident in the high mean score (Mean=3.7). Thus, they might not get enough exposure to the organization or characteristics of the text. Besides, they did not organize the text nor knew the text organization, which became another factor causing difficulties in comprehending the reading materials. Although various genres had been introduced in senior high, those did not fit the academic reading in higher education. Mostly, they learned narrative, descriptive, or procedure text (Cahyono & Widiati, 2006). Further, it influences their willingness to read.

B. Problem-Solving Reading Strategy

Amongst the three, the use of Problem-Solving Reading Strategies ranked first place (Mean=3.1), showing the activities and processes performed by the readers when dealing directly with the text and facing problems in comprehending texts. For instance, to adapt reading speed when the textual information becomes easy or difficult to understand, and rereading the text to understand the text better. Table 4 gives the vivid result of respondents' responses.

Table 4. The use of problem-solving reading strategies

No	Items of PROB	Total Score per Item	Mean	Level
1	7. I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading.	135	3.4	High
2	9. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	137	3.5	High
3	11. I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.	141	3.6	High
4	14. When text becomes difficult, I pay close attention to what I am reading.	143	3.6	High
5	16. I stop from time to time to think about what I am reading.	145	3.7	High
6	19. I try to picture or visualize information to help me remember what I read.	69	1.7	Low
7	25. When text becomes difficult, I reread it to increase my understanding.	150	3.8	High
8	28. When I read, I guess what the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	72	1.8	Low

The current study showed that the learners tend to be slow readers and adjust their speed, were often back on track, stop time to time, and reread the text to increase their understanding. However, they failed to visualize what they read and could not guess the unknown word from the context.

There is causality among the decelerating speed, trying back and forth on the reading line, repeating the passage read, losing concentration, and being unable to guess the word's meaning. As a direct result of their reading comprehension, students cannot visualize what they read. Although there is much discussion between reading fluency and comprehension, the lower the reading speed, the more unfamiliar word perceived, and the more difficult they drag the meaning

of the text (Department for Education, 2022). Further, comprehension increased as learners focused less on checking word meaning in the dictionary and more on perceiving meaning from the passage. Not having the speed and often repeating the sentence indicated the learners were unskilled readers (Floris & Divina, 2015). In higher education, students are supposed to read fluently and in meaningful chunks to obtain a better understanding of reading materials. Therefore, this idea can lead to a negative view of concentration. Those who are not fluent enough in reading due to the lack of background knowledge (Cahyono & Widiati, 2006) and a sufficient number of unfamiliar vocabularies (Paige, 2020) can both decrease the learners' concentration and lead them to consider reading as stress and unjoyful activities. The long academic text makes the learners reluctant to read, adding to the habits of repeating the sentences to increase their understanding of the text. This notion can lead to students' perception that reading is burdensome and time-consuming (Abdulameer Mohammad & Hasbi, 2021).

C. Support Reading Strategy

The third frequently applied reading strategy was Support Reading Strategy (Mean=2.3). The learners use Support Reading Strategy to boost their comprehension through various means or approaches. Table 5 displays various responses from the respondents.

Table 5. The use of support reading strategies

No	Items of SUP	Total Score Per Item	Mean	Level
1	2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read	73	1.8	Low
2	5. When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read	75	1.9	Low
3	10. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember what I read.	71	1.8	Low
4	13. I use reference materials (e.g., a dictionary) to help me understand what I read	142	3.6	High
5	18. I paraphrase (restate my ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	48	1.2	Low
6	22. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	132	3.3	High
7	26. I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text	74	1.8	Low
8	29. When reading, I translate from English into my native language.	142	3.6	Low
9	30. When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue.	72	1.8	Low

The high surge in using dictionaries was in line with less skilled learners guessing the unknown words' meanings. Further, the study by Omar (2016) revealed that when learners did not know the meaning of a word, they tended to read the text loudly. However, the study's findings indicated that this kind of reading strategy was for novice learners in reading. Learners initially

struggle to decode a word's phonetics, then try comprehending the passage. Therefore, the learners did not mingle with the text since they focused on the word, both meaning and spelling (Abdulameer Mohammad & Hasbi, 2021).

It is said that if a passage contains too many unknown words, it may cause frustration to the readers (Paige, 2020). Therefore, a dictionary must be used wisely to make reading more fluent. Although the respondent was somehow allowed to check the dictionary, they could not find a suitable meaning in the dictionary (Floris & Divina, 2015). Thus, how they guess the meaning from the context and the skills in using the dictionary could make reading more joyful.

The lowest reading skill from Support Reading Strategy was paraphrasing (Mean=1.2). It could be because they had not thoroughly perceived the message of the original sentence. It might also be because they could not restate the ideas of the original passage or sentence in their own words, although they understood the idea of the original passage. To use different words to restate the original passage's idea, readers must have good vocabulary skills (Floris & Divina, 2015). It is also supported by the fact that the respondents were very dependent on the dictionary (Mean=3.6). Moreover, when we look at the mean score of guessing unknown words, the low score means that the respondent cannot guess the meaning of the words by seeing the context.

Moreover, Cahyono and Widiati (2006) state that once the paraphrasing mode is activated, students use their cognitive resources to facilitate their comprehension of the reading passage. Then, paraphrasing is one of the cognition activities (planning, monitoring, and evaluating). In sum, the metacognitive theory that paves the path of prereading, whilst reading, and post-reading phase ease learners to comprehend the passage either through independent reading or instructed reading toward academic passage, and teachers must enrich their repertoire of teaching reading to improve students' ability in paraphrasing the text.

There is a need to discuss why students go back and forth in reading to enhance their critical thinking (Fauzi & Ashadi, 2019) or to make meaningful meaning of the passage. The findings indicate that they cannot construct the meaning among the sentences. However, the longer the students take in a particular text and the lower grades they get in reading evaluation means that when they go back and forth in reading, they are trying to create chunks to understand the text.

Conclusion

Metacognition is knowledge about someone's cognition in reading activities; it includes planning, monitoring, and evaluating. In other words, the metacognitive theory concerns reading activities in pre-reading, whilst reading, and post-reading phases that must be followed either in independent reading or in reading by instruction; thus, learners can comprehend the text. The learners do not only apply the reading strategies but also know the best strategies done pre-, during, and post-reading.

In this regard, in reading by instruction, especially in the classroom context, teachers must be equipped with various reading instruction methods to facilitate the learners in these three phases. In pre-reading, teachers can activate students' background knowledge by arranging questions related to the primary material, introducing the list of vocabulary for unfamiliar words, etc. Besides, teachers can provide various practices related to the text and some examples during reading and evaluation for the post-reading, which can be both paper and paperless assessments. The role of teachers is suggested to integrate the various models of the reading process in instructing reading activities.

Further research is suggested to conduct on a larger scale in which the respondent becomes aware of their reading strategies and whether it is the best approach or not. Other phenomena that should be considered include vocabulary in reading instruction that can boost the students' comprehension of the text and English literacy, which is very beneficial as part of global communities. Therefore, EFL learners should be helped to enhance their ability and willingness to read, which can be equipped not only by reading by instruction but also by independent reading. As a limitation of this study, the instruments do not cover everything. Another issue is also researcher did not conduct a semi-structured interview to dig deeper data.

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