EFL COLLEGE STUDENTS' READING STRATEGIES FOR COMPREHENDING READING TEXTS

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Article Info	Abstract
	This qualitative study attempts to look into reading strategies employed by college students to comprehend the texts they are reading. Semi-structured interviews and observations were conducted to obtain verbal and nonverbal data regarding reading strategies. The findings revealed that six participants of English students used all types of reading strategies developed by Mokhtari et al.: global reading strategies, problem-solving reading strategies, and support reading strategies. Support reading strategies and problem-solving reading strategies were the most frequent reading strategies the students used, and they seldom applied global reading strategies while reading. However, although they are equally high achiever students, they still need to be better readers; their reading comprehension skills differ.

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INTRODUCTION

Success in reading is among the most important achievements for all students due to its role in academic learning. Students will learn new words, terms, and phrases that automatically enrich their vocabulary through reading. However, reading and comprehension are important skills for EFL students. Reading without comprehension is not reading because the ultimate goal of reading is comprehension. Unfortunately, when students are asked what they have just read, there are no responses; they do not comprehend what they read. Thus, although they may get a high score in reading fluency, they are not good readers.

Students may have problems identifying pivotal information and comprehending textbooks, journals, and articles simultaneously. Biancarosa and Snow (2006) in Cardullo et al. (2017) state, "Yet approximately eight million young people between the fourth and twelfth-grade struggle to read at grade level; their most common problem is that they are not able to comprehend what they read." In addition, Taraban et al. (2000), as cited in Lei et al. (2010) and Zeivots (2021), revealed that even though college students read textbooks and academic materials, this does not guarantee they always understand what the text is about. Reading appears more problematic because the readers must construct meaning from the text. For EFL students, encountering unfamiliar words, extracting information, and interpreting the text can be major difficulties in reading because of their limited language proficiency.

Reading strategies (RS) can assist students in comprehending English text. Students' reading proficiency improves if students can employ the strategies well. Palincsar and Brown (1984), also Alamin and Ahmed (2014) state that implementing strategies while reading helps low-achieving students enhance their text retention and avoid incomprehension of the text. Thus, such important people as teachers or lecturers have a great role in making their students proficient readers. Teaching reading strategies for various text types to students develop their reading ability eventually.

Different orthography backgrounds and learning experiences have students, especially those who learn English as a second or foreign language, employ strategies differently to comprehend English texts. Students who know how to use them effectively can assist the various cognitive processes and construct a meaningful comprehension as reading strategies (RS) contain some ways to process the text depending on the reader's purpose, the characteristics of the text, and the context. If they read word by word without strategies, they will get problems identifying main ideas, summarizing, etc. Therefore, students' awareness of the strategies could help them handle the reading materials.

Numerous studies have revealed reading problems and strategies for processing and comprehending text. Al-Jarrah & Ismail (2018) say that students' insufficient knowledge of vocabulary might result in less reading comprehension. Besides, Al-Brashdi (2002) states, "Vocabulary is perceived as the greatest difficulty, and the others were: a style of writing, speed of reading, difficulty in getting the main idea of the text, and not given enough time for reading." In addition, the different text types seem to affect the strategies many readers deploy in processing the texts. In some studies, readers deployed more strategies in reading stories than comprehension texts. However, proficient readers seem to employ more strategies in processing both texts regarding kind and frequency.

In more studies on reading strategies, Jian (2022) reported that college students in some departments used different cognitive strategies while they read printed text and text in digital media. While reading printed text, students performed more selective and intentional reading behavior, and they comprehended better than digital reading. Like Jian's research, Barrot (2016) reported that Civil Engineering students consistently employ various strategies while reading different types of texts in intermediate reading classes. In addition, Wijaya (2022) investigated the perception of English Education students on metacognitive reading strategies in academic reading. The results showed that these metacognitive strategies transform EFL college students into proficient readers and attain fruitful outcomes in academic reading.

Reading strategies are pivotal for students to develop and enhance their comprehension. Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) designed reading strategies for adolescent and adult ES/FL students. They developed the instruments of RS and named it the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI), validated by a large native speaker population from middle school to college. These reading strategies categorize into three, namely: global reading strategies (GRS), problem-solving reading strategies (PSS), and support reading strategies (SRS). In 2018, Mokhtari et al. revised their MARSI. The number of RS in the MARSI-R instrument reduces to 15 of 30 before MARSI (Mokhtari et al., 2018).

The discussion above interests the researcher to observe the reading strategies used by English department students at the State Polytechnic (*Politeknik Negeri*) of Madiun using the MARSI-R instrument. Furthermore, in tertiary education, students must take reading courses with many types of textbooks and academic articles. The variety of the texts students read also creates an interesting investigation area. Specifically, the main purposes of this study are to know how and the extent to which students use global reading strategies, problem-solving reading strategies, and support reading strategies to achieve their reading purposes successfully.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Reading

Urquhart and Weir (2014), as cited in Grabe and Yamashita (2022), say reading is receiving and analyzing information encoded in the form of language through printed media. Readers must recognize the words to process their comprehension. This interactive process will lead to reading fluency when the readers interact with the text and try to elicit the meaning through bottom-up and/or top-down processing. Many researchers and teachers attempt to create a general understanding of the reading process. They categorize three reading processes which are bottom-up, top-down, and interactive models (Alderson, 2000; Brown & Lee, 2015; Forrester, 1996; Grabe & Yamashita, 2022; Hudson, 2007; Nuttall, 1996). In other words, these models describe the complementary ways of text processing. The various processes may differ for the same or different readers depending on different texts at different times and with different purposes.

Readers engage in various types of texts depending on their purposes or goals. Reading performance in the language class is influenced by the text's variety presented to learners (Brown & Lee, 2015). The more genres the students read, the more comprehend they are. They will adjust their reading purpose for different types of text. Grabe and Yamashita (2022) mention six majors' academic purposes for reading. Those are: (1) searching for information (scanning and skimming), (2) quick understanding (skimming), (3) learning, (4) integrating information, (5) evaluating, criticizing, and using information, and (6) general comprehension.

Reading is an activity to get meaning from words or symbols, leading to the ultimate goal of reading called comprehension. Thus, comprehension is an active process that has some levels. Gray (1990) in Alderson (2000) divides the levels into reading the lines (the literal meaning), reading between the lines (inferred meaning), and reading beyond the lines (the reader's critical evaluation of the text).

In tertiary education, the lecturer expects students to have all levels of comprehension. Reading the lines refers to literal understanding or understanding of the meanings explicitly expressed in the text. This level of comprehension involves surface meanings, and the text explicitly stated explain information and ideas to students. At this level, students can attempt to answer the questions. The common questions used to elicit this level are who, what, when, and where.

Reading between the lines or interpretive understanding has students figure out what the statements mean. In order to understand the deeper meanings, students read beyond what is said. They must read carefully and analyze what they have read. They must comprehend how

ideas relate to one another, how they fit together, and the underlying meanings of those ideas. Students must first have a literal understanding of the concepts presented before they can perform this task. This level of comprehension includes thinking processes like drawing conclusions, making generalizations, and predicting outcomes. The exact answer cannot be found directly in the text. Key questions include why, what if, and how.

The third level is reading beyond the lines or critical reading, evaluating ideas and information. Students analyze or synthesize information at this level and apply it to other information. Critical reading only occurs after students understand the ideas and information in the texts. In addition, reading a passage eliciting an emotional or other valued response can also help students comprehend it. However, Alderson (2000) points out that different levels of understanding are usually difficult to explain as language is either explicit or implicit, and readers must make inferences to process the implicit ones.

Reading Strategies

Strategy is needed to solve a new and unique task. Appropriate language learning strategies can enhance students' learning and increase proficiency and confidence. Therefore, by applying strategies, students can effectively retrieve information from the text and improve their reading comprehension skills. Conceptions of reading strategies generally focus on creating and maintaining meaning; as Hudson (2007) describes, "A reading strategy is an interactive process that aims to obtain meaning from connected text, and reading skills operate within the context of such reading strategies."

Reading has students use certain strategies in constructing and comprehending the meaning of the text. For example, previewing the text and accessing prior knowledge can aid students in predicting what the text is about. When readers get the hints (cover, headline, picture, etc.), they predict what they will read and process the information (Harmer, 2007). For most English Second or Foreign language learners, comprehension is the main problem. Reading strategy helps students understand the text and what they read, making reading much more fun, not just words.

Teachers can teach reading strategies in reading class as they can aid students in increasing their performance on recalling and tests. It helps students achieve an understanding of the text. Good readers often use reading strategies without even realizing it. Nevertheless, the quantity of reading strategies used does not distinguish a strategic reader; rather, it is the quality and choice of reading strategies appropriate for the text, the reading goal, and the time and place.
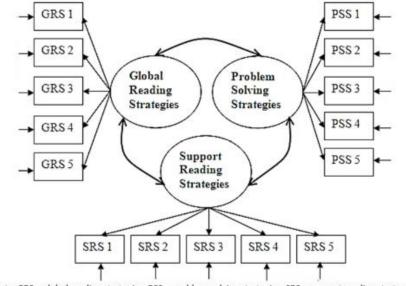
Helping students become strategic and independent readers is the most important goal of teaching reading. A variety of text types can encourage practice. It is helpful to determine if there are strategies and skills that students already process. Reading activities can be organized to foster independent readers who set their own goals and strategies for reading. Individual students may require explicit instruction in different aspects of reading, and the teacher has to respond to their needs.

Many experts have presented reading strategies that promote reading comprehension. Paris et al. (1996) in Hudson (2007) categorize reading strategies applied before, during, and after reading. Like Paris, Padron and Waxman in Hudson (2007) also propose reading strategies. Based on their research, the strategies related to reading achievement fall into positive and negative strategy categories. Meanwhile, Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) designed reading strategies into global reading strategies, problem-solving strategies, and support reading strategies.

In 2018, Mokhtari et al. revised the strategies known as the MARSI-R, consisting of 15 items as in Table 1. Three categories of MARSI are interconnected. *Global reading strategies* are approaches taken before starting to read and involve several strategies to monitor students' reading. *Problem-solving strategies* refer to dealing with the obstacles readers encounter in reading and ensuring reading is not merely decoding but also understanding. Meanwhile, *support reading strategies* are a strategy for retaining enough information to make it comprehensible later, even after reading.

Table 1. Description of the items under MARSI-R

Categories	Description
Global Reading Strategies (GRS)	1. Having a purpose in mind when reading 2. Previewing the text to see what it is about before reading 3. Checking to see if the content of the text fits my purpose of reading 4. Using typographical aids like bold face and italics to pick out key information 5. Critically analyzing and evaluating the information read
Problem-Solving Strategies (PSS)	1. Getting back on track when getting sidetracked or distracted 2. Adjusting reading pace or speed based on what I'm reading 3. Stopping from time to time to think about what I'm reading 4. Re-reading to help ensure I understand what I'm reading 5. Guessing the meaning of unknown words or phrases
Support Reading Strategies (SRS)	1. Taking notes while reading 2. Reading aloud to help me understand what I'm reading 3. Discussing what I read with others to check my understanding 4. underlining or circling important information in the text 5. using reference materials such as dictionaries to support my reading

Note: GRS = global reading strategies, PSS = problem-solving strategies, SRS = support reading strategies

Figure 1: MARSI-R by Mokhtari et al. (2018)

METHOD

This study focuses on reading strategies. Through this study, the researcher found out reading strategies employed by college students in comprehending reading texts and described the extent to which the students adopt reading strategies for reading. She selected six high-achiever students to represent the interview session. This study was administered at the State Polytechnic (*Politeknik Negeri*) of Madiun, and second-year English department students taking a Reading course were the subjects.

The researchers used three instruments to support the researcher in the investigation and collect the data: the MARSI-R instrument, observation field notes, and interview guide. The MARSI-R instrument developed by Mokhtari et al. was used to observe the reading strategies employed by the students. Secondly is observation field notes. Observation field notes were used to note what occurred in reading class during the teaching-learning process. The researcher also prepared a set of guiding questions, and the format was open-ended. The semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to negotiate meanings with the interviewees and allowed her to probe for further and deeper information.

The data of this study were analyzed descriptively. The data in observation field notes were used to describe what occurred in reading class. Meanwhile, one on one semi-structured interview with six participants was administered to collect data to obtain the depth of data and information. The researcher analyzed nonverbal and verbal behavior data. The copies of students' documents also added information that supported analyses. The researcher organized

the data into easy codes. The researcher classified them into segments with similar characteristics and labels.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

The result of this study presented two points: 1) Reading Strategies Employed by University Students, this point divided into three parts, they are global reading strategies, problem-solving reading strategies, and support reading strategies, and 2) the extent to which the university students employed GRS, PSS, and SRS in comprehending a text.

Reading Strategies Employed by University Students

Global Reading Strategies Employed by University Students

GRS 2: Previewing the text to see what it is about before reading

All interviewees said that by previewing the text, they could guess what it was about based on the general information they gained from the title. Most of them thought that the title could describe what the text was about because it covered the text's content, so they could automatically guess or predict the content of the text.

GRS 5: Critically analyzing and evaluating the information read.

The representatives stated they would combine or compare the new information within the text they read with what they already knew. That served to confirm comprehension and alert the students to any mismatch between incoming information and relevant known information. The new information might be compatible with the given information or provide an expansion and elaboration. Likewise, the new information may lead to clarifying existing incorrect knowledge. If the information contrasted with their opinion or information they have in their prior knowledge, they would criticize the information. Here, the students evaluated whether new information was to be accepted or not and evaluated the value of what was being read in the text.

Problem-Solving Strategies Employed by University Students

PSS 2: Adjusting reading pace or speed based on what I'm reading

The student's proficiency influenced the students' reading speed to understand the text. The smartest student in the class read a text neither fast nor slow. Some read slowly but not too slowly to understand a text. Meanwhile, the rest read a text slowly to understand.

PSS 3: Stopping from time to time to think about what I'm reading

All subjects employed this strategy. They did this strategy to ensure they understood the information presented in the text.

PSS 4: Re-reading to help ensure I understand what I'm reading

Some participants employed this strategy when they got difficulties understanding the text. They would stop reading when they were having difficulties understanding and then read back and forth the particular passage they did not know.

PSS 5: Guessing the meaning of unknown words or phrases

The interviewees sometimes guessed the meaning of unknown words while reading, but when they still felt difficult, they looked up the dictionary. To guess the meaning of unknown words, they read entire sentences and tried to connect with the previous and the next words to get the meaning.

Support Reading Strategies Employed by University Students

SRS 1: Taking notes while reading

Most underlined particular sentences and then wrote notes (main or noteworthy information) on the right side.

SRS 2: Reading aloud to help me understand what I'm reading

The style the students read an English text to understand the text was not the same. Some preferred reading aloud some read silently.

SRS 4: Underlining or circling important information in the text

The students employed this strategy if they needed to find the answer or if they found the important information, so when re-read, they could find it easily. Moreover, underlining the textual information helped the student with difficulty remembering to save important information.

SRS 5: Using reference materials such as dictionaries to support my reading

All used dictionaries, yet, they preferred guessing an unknown word before looking it up in the dictionary.

Discussions

While reading and trying to understand a text, problems always appeared. Their main problems were mostly difficult words, the difficult part of the text, and concentration. Students overcame these problems by employing some strategies. The most frequent reading strategies

employed by English Students in this study were problem-solving reading strategies (PSS) and support reading strategies (SRS) and followed by global reading strategies (SRS).

Students automatically combine reading strategies while reading a passage since they complement each other. Problem-Solving Reading Strategies represented some strategies used by the students when problems appear in understanding the text. They often combined PSS with SRS as a basic support mechanism to assist them. Meanwhile, students employed GRS to manage and monitor their comprehension. However, support strategies were the strategies employed by the students very often.

This study's findings are similar to the previous studies (Do & Phan, 2021; Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002; Vasantha, 2010), in which the participant most frequently used problem-solving strategies. "Successful comprehension is augmented when students have practice with strategies for monitoring their understanding, increasing their intrinsic interest in the text, and creating goals and purpose for their reading" (Willis, 2008). Increasing students' awareness of global reading strategies as an integral part of reading comprehension in classrooms is also helpful, even though problem-solving strategies can be so helpful for improved reading comprehension.

Students should be educated on how to use these strategies correctly because only knowing them does not guarantee that they will be successful in reading comprehension. Therefore, classroom activity can enhance metacognitive knowledge, and students can be taught effective reading strategies to enhance their performance on the given reading task.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate EFL college students' reading strategies for comprehending reading texts. Based on the finding of this study, all achievers employed all types of strategies to comprehend a text and mostly used the same strategies. However, the analysis of strategies employed in comprehending the texts indicates that students' proficiency levels also affected the strategies used. Although they are high achiever students, it does not mean they all are good readers; they have different capabilities in reading comprehension.

Some differences that stand out are: 1) although the subjects are equally high achiever students, only three students adjusted their reading pace or speed to understand a text, and the others preferred to read slowly to understand a text; 2) One high achiever student focused most attention on comprehension of the overall text, took a top-down process in reading, and preferred to skip the words or sentences that were difficult to understand and then re-read a

whole text. She can regulate the use of such strategies while reading; and 3) how and the extent to which reading strategies are used while reading are sometimes different, although the subjects are equally high achiever students. The different strategies they employ show up in quantity and qualities, such as how they use them flexibly and appropriately. They may use the same strategy, but they might use it in different ways.

The present study explored the reading strategies employed by EFL college students. It would be interesting to do further studies by exploring reading strategies the students used at different education levels and types of text. The result will benefit the lecturer by teaching or providing activities to train the students to use reading strategies appropriately and more effectively.

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