

## **Learning Strategies in Reading Comprehension at Junior High School Students in Foreign Language Setting**

Anggreini Khandari

*English Education Post-Graduate Program, Lampung University, Indonesia*

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**Abstract :** the research aimed to find out which one of learning strategies mostly used by junior high school students in reading skill and to measure the difference among three learning strategies. The sample of this research was one class in junior high school students in kotabumi, north lampung that was consisted of 36 students. Reading test and language learning strategy questionnaire were applied as instruments in this research. The data were analyzed by independent-sample t-test at the significant level of 0.05 in which is approved if  $\text{sig.} < \alpha$ . The results show that (1) most of students used cognitive strategy (3.00), and followed by using metacognitive strategy (2.91) and social strategy (2.82). Further, there is no significant difference among three learning strategies that used by the students in reading achievement. By employing appropriate learning strategies in reading skill, it can help student to master reading comprehension skill.

**Keywords** – Cognitive, Language Learning Strategies, Metacognitive, Reading Comprehension, Social

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Reading dominates teaching materials in almost english textbooks where there are some types of reading text that should be mastered by the student of junior high school (smp). Since reading is also valuable for learners to improve their comprehension in a text and beneficial in developing prior knowledge, junior high school students should be able to use the language in informational level that is expected to access knowledge by the language skills. However, in practical learning reading, reading has been seen a hard nut to crack all along time.

Basically, there are many english texts which have good content for learners but sometimes there is a misunderstanding between what the writer of book means and what the learners mean. In fact, there are many learners who still do not know how to understand a text properly. Sometimes, they are getting confused and time consuming when the learners try to translate english into indonesian of the text. It may occur because they use inappropriate learning strategies.

Haycraft (1978: 8) states that there are two broad skills in mastering a language: receptive skill, i.e. reading (understanding the written language) and listening (understanding the spoken language); and productive skills, i.e. speaking and writing. As a receptive skill, the learners are not required to produce the language. But they have to read, think, and do what the instruction of the reading text is. Moreover, the learners have to understand what the messages of the reading texts mean.

Unfortunately, some learners are not aware in employing their learning strategies effectively in mastering reading yet. The success of learning reading depends on how the learners use their learning strategies appropriately. Having different learning strategies is something that may be knowledgeable and useful for learning reading in second language. Therefore, it cannot be denied that learning strategies give a good result of learners' achievement in learning english. On the other hand, improper strategies will lead into failure. It means that by having appropriate learning strategies, learners can be successful in reading comprehension. According to nuttal (1982), she defines reading as the meaningful interpretation of written text. It means that reading is a result of interaction between the perception of the written text that represents language and the reader's language skill, cognitive skill, and the background knowledge. In this process the reader tries to recreate the meaning intended by the writer.

Goodman (1973b: 180) cited in sutarsyah (2013: 6) defines that reading is not a process of combining individual letters into words, and string of words into sentences, from which meanings spring automatically. Moreover, goodman (1971) in sutarsyah (2013) views that reading is a "psycholinguistic guessing game" in which the reader reconstructs a message that has been encoded by a writer as a graphic display. He describes it as a cyclical process of sampling, predicting, testing, and confirming.

Furthermore, reading is a complex cognitive activity that is crucial for adequate functioning and for obtaining information in current society and requires an integration of memory and meaning construction

(alfassi, 2000 cited in zare & othman, 2013). In addition, richard (1999) cited in afdaleni (2013) defines comprehension as the process by which the person understands the meaning of the written or spoken language. It means that comprehension determines the essence of the reading process. Without comprehension, their reading activity will be empty and meaningless.

Therefore, reading comprehension is a term that represent an active act of a process in understanding what the purpose of the text is, reading can be media between an author and reader to communicate indirectly through a written text and reading can support the readers to find out something new as their knowledge. According to nuttal (1982), there are five types of reading comprehension that is, determining main idea finding the specific information or part of text, finding inference, finding reference, and understanding vocabulary. Meanwhile, in accordance with hughes (1989: 116), reading skill can be classified as macro-skills that is, scanning text to locate specific information; skimming text to obtain the gist; identifying stages of an argument; identifying example presented in support of argument. Meanwhile, hughes classifies micro-skills such as identifying referents of pronouns, etc.

In addition, wenden and rubin (1987: 19) mention that learning strategies include any set of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learners to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval and use of information. The classification of language learning strategies has been reviewed by wenden (as cited in setiyadi, 2011, p. 18-19). She classifies language learning strategies into two broad categories. The first categories, cognitive strategies, involve selecting information from incoming data, comprehending and storing the information, and retrieving the information. The second category, which is called self-management strategies or metacognitive strategies, involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating. In addition, language learning strategies have also been proposed by o'malley et al. (1985) cited in setiyadi (2011), who consider psychologically based issues in their classification. In o'malley et al's study (1985) the classification consists of three categories, namely: cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social strategies (as cited in setiyadi, 2011, p. 15).

According to ghonsooly (1997) quoted in syatriana (2011) there are thirteen cognitive strategies, and eight of them are commonly used in reading activity by learners:

1. Using background knowledge
2. Prediction
3. Repetition to get the meaning of a word
4. Inference (reprocessing to get the meaning of a word)
5. Translation
6. Using the dictionary
7. Grammatical analysis
8. Imagery

In addition, o'malley and chamot (1990) define metacognitive learning strategies as higher order executive skills that may entail planning for, monitoring, or evaluating of the success of a learning activity. Meanwhile, social strategies are often called as a social mediation, the strategies under this category are asking question, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others (setiyadi, 2011). In relation to reading skill, it can be said that social strategies can give a big effect since these strategies contribute to develop equal opportunity for the students practicing their reading skill indirectly by creating group discussion and sharing their opinion of a text.

Considering the explanation above, the researcher tried to find out the most learning strategies used by high and low students of junior high school in their reading achievement level and the significant difference among three learning strategies.

## **II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### *2.1 Design*

This research was a quantitative research, in which data tend to use statistic as measurement in deciding the conclusion. In conducting this research, the researcher used a causal comparative design of ex post facto designs. In accordance with setiyadi (2006), there are two types of ex post facto research design, "*co-relational study involves one group and causal comparative study involves two groups.*" Since two groups which were still orientated to cause-effect relationship between the variable compared in this research, *causal-comparative study* was used.

### *2.2 Sampling Technique*

The sample of this research was one class (consists of 36 students) in the second grade of junior high school (smp negri 03 kotabumi, north lampung) students that was taken by the researcher by using theoretical sampling (purposive sampling).

### 2.3 Instruments

To collect the research data, the researcher used both reading comprehension test and questionnaire. A reading test had been given to the students in order to see the students' reading comprehension achievement. After that, the researcher gave a questionnaire (llsq) in order to know which learning strategy was employed by the students in comprehending a reading text.

#### 2.3.1 Questionnaire

It was a list of some statements that will be answered by the learners to find out which learners' learning strategies were used. The research used close-ended questionnaire where the answer is limited. In accordance with setiyadi (2011), the questionnaire that was given to the students was adapted from "language learning strategy questionnaire" which was modeled to discover of learning strategies employed by the learners. Further, the researcher used language learning strategy questionnaire for reading skill only.

In order to know the learners' learning strategies in studying english especially in reading skill, the researcher gave a set of questionnaire to it. The researcher used setiyadi's questionnaire (2011) because it had been arranged into three classification of learning strategies and supported by o'malley's classification, namely, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social strategies. Besides that, to measure validity of reading comprehension test, the researcher used content and construct validity. Besides that, item analysis (iteman) was used in order to measure the reliability of reading test and the result of alpha in scale statistic shows that it has 0.748. Further, croanbach alpha in spss was used to measure the reliability of llsq because the questionnaire is formed in likert scale and the questionnaire had high coeficient, that is, the reliability coeficient of questionnaire was 0.890.

#### 2.3.2 Reading Comprehension Test

Reading test had been given in order to know the students' reading achievement in comprehending text and see how many students who passed the standard scoring criteria. The result of the reading test was used to determine the successful learners and unsuccessful learners in which the category in specifying them was based on "score averages" in reading test (taylor & russel, 1939 cited in allen & yen, 2001). Taylor and russel develop a technique the effectiveness of a test used for admitting students. The technique assumes that the test scores, x, are used to criterion scores like grade-point averages and then criterion can be dichotomized into successful or unsuccessful categories. So, according to the theory, reading test scores were used to dichotomize learners into successful and unsuccessful category. The successful learners were represented by the learners who got score above the averages. Meanwhile, the unsuccessful learners were represented by the learners who got score under the averages of reading test scores.

### 2.4 Procedure

In constructing the research, the research procedure uses these following steps: 1) observing the population 2) determining the sample of the research. 3) determining research instruments. 4) selecting instrument materials. 5) administering the reading test and questionnaire. 6) analyzing the data. 7) making the report of the findings. Therefore, to collect the research data, a reading text had been given to the students in order to see the students' reading comprehension achievement. After that, the researcher gave a questionnaire in order to know which learning strategy was employed by the students in comprehending a reading text.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Reading Comprehension Test

Having computed the result of reading test, it was found out that the highest score obtained was 85, while the lowest score was 50 out of 36 students. The average score was 73.2. The description of students reading score can be seen in the following table:

**Table 3.1.1 Frequency Distribution Of Students Reading Score**

No.	Class Interval	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	50-57.5	4	11.11%
2	60-65	3	8.33%
3.	70-77.5	18	50%
4.	80-85	11	30.5%
		36	100%

From the table above, it can be seen that there were 18 students or 50% got the average score. The students got score 50-65 (19.44%) and the students got score 80-85 (30.5%).

3.2 Types Of Learning Strategies Most Frequently Used By The Learners In Reading

**Table 3.2.1 Group Statistics**

	Student	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
COGNITIVE	Good Score	22	<b>3.00</b>	.617	.132
	Low Score	14	<b>3.14</b>	.535	.143
METACOGNITIVE	Good Score	22	<b>2.91</b>	.868	.185
	Low Score	14	<b>2.79</b>	.699	.187
SOCIAL	Good Score	22	<b>2.82</b>	.588	.125
	Low Score	14	<b>2.93</b>	.829	.221

In accordance with table 2 above, mean score of cognitive strategies have the highest mean (3.00) among three learning strategies of students who have good score. It means that the most of students who got good score used cognitive strategies in learning reading. Even though cognitive strategies have the highest score in term of good score, cognitive strategies also have the highest mean in term of students who have low score (3.14). Further, the result shows that the mean score of the students who used metacognitive strategies in english reading ability is low if compared to cognitive. The result shows that the mean score of good score (students) who students used metacognitive strategies is 2.91. Meanwhile, the mean score of low students' score is the lowest among them with the score 2.79. Then, the last is social strategies. As it could be seen in table 2 above, the result shows that the mean score of the students who used social strategies in english reading skill in which the mean score of good students is 2.82 and the mean score of low students who used social strategies is 2.93. It means that, the mean score of low students who used social strategies is the highest mean if it is compared among those low score of students.

**Table 3.2.2 Independent Samples T-Test**

		Levene's Test For Equality Of Variances		T-Test For Equality Of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-Tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval Of The Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Cognitive	Equal Variances Assumed	.318	.576	<b>-.712</b>	34	<b>.481</b>	-.143	.201	-.551	.265
	Equal Variances Not Assumed			<b>-.736</b>	30.726	<b>.468</b>	-.143	.194	-.539	.253
Metacognitive	Equal Variances Assumed	.431	.516	<b>.447</b>	34	<b>.658</b>	.123	.276	-.438	.684
	Equal Variances Not Assumed			<b>.469</b>	31.964	<b>.642</b>	.123	.263	-.412	.659
Social	Equal Variances Assumed	2.419	.129	<b>-.468</b>	34	<b>.643</b>	-.110	.236	-.590	.369

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Social	Equal Variances Assumed	2.419	.129	<b>-.468</b>	34	<b>.643</b>	-.110	.236	-.590	.369
	Equal Variances Not Assumed			<b>-.434</b>	21.322	<b>.669</b>	-.110	.255	-.639	.419

Furthermore, based on the result of table 3 above, it could be seen in colom t value and sig. (2-tailed) show that among those learning strategies did not have any significant difference between students who have good and low score in mastering english reading comprehension skill.

According to result above, the data analysis indicates that cognitive strategies are mostly used by junior high school students in reading comprehension, then followed by metacognitive strategies and the last is social strategies.

Since the research was taken from foreign language setting and the sample was the second grade students in junior high school, the researcher assumed that their level of their english ability was still low and lack of basic knowledge about target language. For the students who have low ability in english, it could be understandable in this case that they mostly used cognitive strategies to answer the questions more than other strategies.

According to ghonsooly (1997) quoted in syatriana (2011) there are thirteen cognitive strategies, and eight of them are commonly used in reading activity by students such as using background knowledge, prediction, repetition to get the meaning of a word, inference (reprocessing to get the meaning of a word), translation, using the dictionary, grammatical analysis and imagery. It indicates that cognitive strategies must be explicitly taught so the students will be able to consciously think how to answer the questions. Furthermore, people usually who use metacognitive can be said that they have owned enough a good basic in learning. The previous statement is supported by o'malley and chamot (1990) that eight metacognitive strategies are the most frequently used by students with higher language ability.

however, in line with the result above, the result shows that there is no guarantee about those students who employ metacognitive strategies must be good basic in learning language. It can be assumed that students who have low ability still have possibility to consider using metacognitive as the strategies to answer the questions. On the other word, those students who got low score knew what they should do to comprehend the text though they have limited knowledge about english.

In addition, the third strategy mostly used by the students was social strategy. In this strategy, the learners preferred to ask other people than to learn by themselves. It indicated that the students tend to learn with their peers or to consult the teacher when they found some difficulties in comprehending reading text. In

addition, they usually had a discussion with their peers (cooperation), help the others friends, and giving praise to other.

Therefore, all learning strategies are principally worthy since they could help students to overcome some problems in answering the questions in reading comprehension test. Every learner has different internal ability so in processing the information also has the differences. A good language learning strategies revealed a number of positive strategies so that many strategies could also be used by bad language learners trying to become more successful in language learning. However, there is always the possibility that unsuccessful language learners can also use the same good language learning strategies used by successful learners. Nevertheless, it should be strongly emphasized that using the same good language learning strategies does not guarantee that unsuccessful learners will also become successful in language learning since other factors may also play role in the success of reading comprehension.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION**

To conclude what has been analyzed previously, it can be said one of factors which brings students getting good score is using appropriate learning strategies. Most of students who got good score in mastering reading comprehension apply cognitive learning strategies. It is followed by metacognitive and social learning strategies. Actually, teacher can help less competence learners by supporting students' effort to learn reading more.

There is an implication for the language learning strategies in reading comprehension. It is that the learners need to be informed about the language learning strategies in reading comprehension and in using appropriate language learning strategies in reading comprehension. That is because the learning strategies are considered to be one of the ways in improving the learners' reading comprehension achievement.

In addition, it is suggested to further researcher on learning strategies should try to investigate with bigger sample size in longer- time period to get more reliable on the result of the research. Besides that, it will be interesting if the further researcher could correlate the variable in this research to other skills in english.

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