

## A STUDY ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' READING STRATEGIES IN EFL CONTEXT

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**Abstract:** This study aims to investigate the reading strategies used by EFL undergraduate students and learn more about the characteristics of EFL academic reading strategies. This study's design uses a case study. To answer the questions posed by the research objectives, interviews are necessary. As a result, this study used a sample of 10 undergraduate EFL students and a qualitative methodology. There are 10 of them, 5 men and 5 women, with an average age of 19 to 20. The primary method for gathering data and learning about the subject's reading strategies will be semi-structured interviews. The research findings revealed that the participants typically used scanning, skimming, and summarizing strategies to improve their reading comprehension. Scanning involves searching for specific information by focusing on the first sentence of each paragraph and keywords. Skimming, on the other hand, involves quickly understanding the main idea of a text by first reading the title. Summarizing techniques are used to condense information and better understand the overall content of the text. These techniques work well for swiftly identifying key concepts, locating precise details, and solidifying understanding. The comments of the participants lend more credence to the strategy's success in enhancing the participants' reading comprehension. Students can become more assured and adept readers by building a repertoire of efficient reading techniques.

**Key words:** Reading strategies, undergraduate students, scanning, skimming, summarizing

### INTRODUCTION

Prior studies on L2 reading have demonstrated that reading is an interactive process for creating meaning in which students employ a range of techniques to attain the objective of reading comprehension (Alderson, 2000; Anderson, 1999; Carrell, 1998). Earlier studies found that students have diverse reading techniques, because every learner differs from one another (Tarique & Anthony, 2022). The background education, knowledge, and environment can be the factors why students

end up using a lot of different strategies. In other words, students completed their academic reading assignments in a way that was influenced by their educational level and culture. Their individual learning styles and the types of tasks they were given were also factors that could influence the use of strategies.

In recent years, research has been done on what reading strategies some people use. Alfarwan, (2021) examines how gender and proficiency relate to reading techniques. It looked into the reading strategies that 120 Saudi students taking an intense English course at a public university in Saudi Arabia reported using the most. Another study, (Feller et al., 2020) explore comparison of the use of reading strategies by first and second language (L2) readers often relies on self-report measures. In this study, they used regression and Bayesian factors to explore how L2 reader status and reading ability correlated with self-reported reading strategies. Foreign language reading comprehension and some learning-related factors can also have an effect on foreign language learners' use of reading strategies (Habók et al., 2019).

Beside some quantitative studies above, some researchers also examined the students' reading strategies topic through qualitative lens. Bippert, (2020) researched on text engagement and reading strategy use. This study explores how students do considered as successful or unsuccessful when using automatic comprehension strategies while trying interacting with difficult texts. Another qualitative research by (Kim, 2018) investigating the use of reading strategies on four novice English learners. This study explained how each English language learner applies these techniques when reading short stories, including those that are culturally close to them and those that are culturally remote.

From the previous studies above, there is little research that used qualitative method in investigating EFL students' reading strategies, especially undergraduate students. Most researchers are using quantitative data in examining the students' reading strategies (Alfarwan, 2021; Feller et al, 2020; Habok & Magyar, 2019; Lindholm & Tengberg, 2019). Even though some latest previous studies are using qualitative or mix method design, but they didn't use EFL undergraduate students as the participant or the sample (Bippert, 2020; Kim, 2018; Mzimane & Mantlana, 2017).

From the explanation above, researcher believes that a latest descriptive analysis on how EFL undergraduate students use reading strategies is needed.

Therefore, this study will try to investigate about how EFL undergraduate students use reading strategies using case study. There are two objectives in this study, those are to figure out strategies of EFL undergraduate students use in their reading activity and to figure out on how those EFL undergraduate students use the strategies.

## **METHOD**

Since the study aims to investigate reading strategies from college student, then researcher used qualitative approach with case study as the research design. This design can bring the students view and perception in details then will reveal the used strategies by students in learning reading on their class. Researcher will also know how those students implement their strategies.

The researcher is interested in learning more about the students who take the reading courses because they are provided in the first semester of the English education department at one of the private universities in Malang. The researcher was interested in the early-semester methods employed by students. This is due to the fact that those students are brand-new to the collegiate learning environment. Some pupils might continue to employ the same reading techniques they did in senior high school. Others may have learned new reading techniques once they start college. In this manner, the researcher will look into a first-semester student in the English education department of a private institution in Malang.

Due to the fact that they were in their initial semester of college, researchers included 4th semester students. Five males and five women out of 10 subjects were used by the researchers. The researcher chose subjectivity in the study because they are enrolled in a reading course and asked them to share their ideas about their use of the English reading technique. Students range in age from 19 to 20.

In this study, semi-structured interviews will be used as the main tool for collecting data, and obtaining information about the subject's reading strategies. The data collection process took place more or less in May 2023. The interview itself was conducted online via a zoom meeting or WhatsApp depending on the student's choice and was recorded with a digital audio recorder. The data will be analyzed by using step from (Widodo, 2014). The first step is preparing template. The researcher will prepare a template containing several transcript features. Researchers will design templates based on data structure, data storage and data retrieval. The next is managing information. After the researcher designs the template, the researcher will

proceed to put and manage the data in the template transcript. The third is treating the transcribed data. The data must be given verbal notations or symbols. These symbols indicate the nature of conversational speech and indicate the difference between spoken and written discourse. Fourth, Placing ethically transcribed data. Then, to ensure the researcher's interpretation of the data accurately, the researcher will use member check.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Strategies used by EFL Students in Their Reading Activity

Table 1. Reading Strategies Used by EFL Students

| Participants   | Reading Strategy |          |             |
|----------------|------------------|----------|-------------|
|                | Scanning         | Skimming | Summarizing |
| Participant 1  | ✓                |          | ✓           |
| Participant 2  | ✓                | ✓        |             |
| Participant 3  |                  |          | ✓           |
| Participant 4  |                  | ✓        | ✓           |
| Participant 5  |                  |          | ✓           |
| Participant 6  | ✓                | ✓        |             |
| Participant 7  | ✓                |          |             |
| Participant 8  | ✓                |          |             |
| Participant 9  |                  |          | ✓           |
| Participant 10 | ✓                |          |             |

One common strategy mentioned by the participants is scanning and skimming. Participant 1, for example, states that they use the skimming technique by first looking at the title of the topic to get an idea of what the text is about. This strategy allows them to quickly grasp the main idea of the text. Scanning is used by five individuals in this study. According to Sinaga, (2019), who cited Brown (2001), scanning is a method for locating specific information without reading the complete text. Obviously, scanning saves time while reading a text and is good for kids. It is highly helpful for students to locate specific information to gain answers from the questions in the assignment or exam, according to Casey (2003), as mentioned in Sinaga (2019), and to reduce their time to answer the questions in the text during Scanning.

There are three participants use skimming as a reading strategy for their daily reading learning. According to Harmer, (2001), skimming is a technique for quickly

determining the meaning of a text. Thus, skimming is required to assist students in comprehending a text, obtaining detailed information, and performing other reading tasks. According to Rusmiati & Ghafura, (2017), involves swiftly reading anything to see how it's laid out or to figure out the author's point of view. As a result, the skimming approach can help students extract significant words from a document that will enable them to deduce the text's overall meaning and comprehend it. In which case, the skimming technique is beneficial to students.

Another strategy mentioned is summarizing. Participant 10 mentions that they use the summarizing strategy to find the main idea from each paragraph and make a summary. This strategy helps them to condense the information and better understand the overall content of the text. Participant 9 states that they use the previewing strategy by reading the title and familiarizing themselves with it before attempting to summarize the text. This strategy helps them to have a better understanding of the text before delving into the details. Mikulecky and Jeffries (1996) in Qomariyah, (2020) stated that retelling the key paragraph points in a significantly shorter form called summarizing. The use of Summarizing causes a great impact for students themselves. Febriani et al. (2019) said that the process of creating summaries aids readers in connecting ideas inside a text and connecting those ideas to past knowledge.

Additionally, some participants mention the use of specific strategies for different genres of texts. Participant 7 mentions that TOEFL-like questions require a specific strategy to comprehend them. This suggests that they adapt their reading strategies based on the genre of the text they are reading.

Overall, the document extracts suggest that EFL undergraduate students use a variety of strategies in their reading activities. These strategies include scanning, skimming, summarizing, previewing, and adapting strategies based on the genre of the text. These strategies help them to quickly grasp the main ideas, extract important information, and improve their overall reading comprehension.

In participant's daily learning activities, they certainly need to learn Reading. Participants unanimously answered that Reading Strategies were needed to understand a reading text. The agreement of the participants toward Reading Strategies are not the wrong move. Because these strategies help readers solve problems while reading texts and evaluate their planning and results (Banditvilai, 2021). Reading strategies help both proficient and less proficient readers improve

their reading skills. Readers who have learned various reading strategies understand when, how, and why they should be used in their reading comprehension processes.

Reading Strategies also can be used outside the classroom. Obviously, we often find reading passage outside the classroom for example a newspaper. These reading strategies can be applied in this situation too. Participants of this research agree with this too.

Reading Strategies not only provide an easy and fast effect on finding information in a reading text, but also make students become strategic readers. According to Okasha, (2020), some strategy learning occurs through reading and writing experiences, as stated by (Harris & Sipay, 1990). Strategic readers have strategies in place to deal with a wide range of learning tasks.

### **How Students Use the Reading Strategies**

The research findings indicate that EFL undergraduate students utilize scanning, skimming, and summarizing strategies in their reading activities. Participants explained how they applied the reading strategies. Participant 8 mentioned that they use the skimming technique and summarizing to read the text. They read the title first and then summarize the contents of the reading text. This indicates that the participant utilizes skimming to quickly get an overview of the text and then summarizes the main points. Participant 6 also mentioned using skimming and summarizing strategies. They use skimming when they are in hurry and summarizing when they have more time. This suggests that the participant uses skimming to quickly grasp the main ideas and summarizing to consolidate their understanding.

Participants said that by using Skimming strategy, it is really efficient that they only need to read the main idea, the title as well as the abstract if the text is Journal Article, and read the first sentence of each paragraph. These was suitable with what Gulo (2020) said that the steps of Skimming consist of reading the title, reading through the introduction, reading the paragraph completely, reading the first sentence of each remaining paragraph, diving into the text, and reading the final paragraph thoroughly.

Participant 10 stated that they use scanning, skimming, and summarizing strategies. They use scanning to read the first sentence of each paragraph and then search for keywords to find the main idea. This demonstrates the participant's use of

scanning to locate specific information. Scanning refers to reading slowly and carefully and highlighting key words or phrases (Fisher, 2016). Both Participant 2 and Participant 6 use Scanning by looking for keyword related to the text itself. Indeed, that is one of the processes of scanning. Same as Sinaga (2019) conveyed about the processes of Scanning, one of the processes of Scanning strategies is looking for key words in every section of the text, such as dates, capital letters, and words in bold type. Sinaga (2019) also said that using any headings or subheadings, as well as bold type and italicized words, to quickly locate the section of information that most likely contains the specific information is also the process of Scanning in which it is exactly what Participant 8 said about how he applies Scanning strategy.

Different with the previous participants, Participant 10 wrote the words before, and after that she looks for information based on the words she listed. It is also same line with the first process Sinaga (2019) mentioned that is making some list of all pieces of information that want to look.

In using summarizing as a reading strategy, Participant 5 said that he would like to find the main idea first and make the sentence into a summary. It's in line with that Mikuleckey and Jeffries (2004) as cited in Qomariyah (2020) that one of the processes of Summarizing Strategy is combining the sentences from the paragraphs. Another thing, they also added that the first process of Summarizing is reading the passage from beginning to end which is same with what Participant 9 said that he usually read the passage from beginning to the end first, and after that he tries to make the shorter text based on what he has read.

The participants' opinions regarding the use of these strategies are also evident in the findings. Participant 8 mentioned that reading strategies are necessary because they are lazy to read the whole text. Participant 10 stated that reading strategies are important because they help in understanding the text and make it easier to remember.

Overall, the research findings show that EFL undergraduate students use scanning, skimming, and summarizing strategies in their reading activities. These strategies are utilized to quickly grasp the main ideas, locate specific information, and consolidate understanding. The participants' opinions support the effectiveness of these strategies in enhancing their reading comprehension.

## **CONCLUSSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

This study examined the reading strategies employed by EFL undergraduate students and revealed several key findings. The participants commonly used strategies such as scanning, skimming, and summarizing to enhance their reading comprehension. Skimming involved reading the title first to quickly grasp the main idea, while scanning aided in locating specific information by focusing on the first sentence of each paragraph and keywords. Summarizing techniques were employed to condense information and better understand the overall content. These strategies were recognized as essential tools by the participants, helping them avoid misinterpretation and improve their comprehension.

The study's alignment with existing literature underscores the significance of these strategies in effective reading. Skimming and summarizing are supported as valuable techniques for gaining an overview and consolidating understanding, respectively. The participants' opinions further validate the usefulness of these strategies in enhancing comprehension, especially in managing complex or time-sensitive reading tasks.

Despite the document extracts lacking explicit details on limitations and research methodology, the implications of the findings are noteworthy. Educators can integrate these strategies into their teaching methods to empower students' reading skills, particularly in an EFL context. While the study's focus on EFL undergraduate students might limit generalizability, it provides a foundation for future research to explore the effectiveness of these strategies in diverse contexts and with different populations.

In conclusion, the study sheds light on the reading strategies of EFL undergraduate students, showcasing their reliance on scanning, skimming, and summarizing techniques. These findings underscore the importance of these strategies for improved reading comprehension and offer valuable insights for educators and researchers alike, paving the way for further exploration and application in the field of language education.

Returning to the aim of this research is to complement previous research by using qualitative research techniques and focusing on EFL undergraduate students. Most previous studies used quantitative data or focused on different groups of participants. By using a case study design and conducting interviews, this research aims to gain detailed insight into the reading strategies used by these students.



The implications of the study are that understanding the reading strategies used by undergraduate EFL students can inform the development of appropriate reading instruction and interventions. Teachers can use this knowledge to design effective reading activities and provide targeted support to students based on their individual strategies. Students can also benefit from being aware of different reading strategies and selecting the ones that work best for them. Further research can build upon this study by exploring the effectiveness of specific reading strategies in improving reading comprehension and investigating the impact of different instructional approaches on the development of reading strategies.

For teachers to incorporate reading strategies into their teaching practices. In addition, teachers can also consider previous research findings on reading strategies and EFL academic reading comprehension. Then, it is recommended that students be actively involved in using reading strategies to improve their reading comprehension skills. Additionally, students can also benefit by seeking guidance and support from their teachers. And finally for the future researchers should concentrate on examining how reading methods are used specifically by EFL undergraduate students. In addition, further research could also explore the impact of reading strategies on other factors related to EFL academic reading comprehension, such as reading ability, general English proficiency, and attitudes towards English.

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