

EFL STUDENTS' READING STRATEGIES AND READING PROBLEMS WHILE WORKING ON READING TEST

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Abstract: The study aimed to investigate reading strategies implemented by EFL students and reading problems faced by EFL students while working on reading test. The research design of this study is a descriptive qualitative study in the form of interview. There were 22 freshmen of English education department participate in this study and they divided into the highest and lowest achiever categories by using reading test consisting of 30 multiple choice questions. Besides, the interview questions used to know the reading strategies used by high achiever students and the reading problems encountered by low achiever students in reading test. The result of the study showed that the high achiever students used to apply strategies while working on reading test. The other result of this study showed that the low achiever students faced some problems while working on reading test. It was proved that there were reading strategies used by high achiever students in reading test and reading problems faced by students while reading test.

Keywords: Reading strategies, reading problems, reading test

INTRODUCTION

Reading is considered as a key for learners in gaining the knowledge with strategies that used when reading. The identification of main topic is considered to be one of the basic skill in reading a text and it is critical to understand it (Tomitch, 2000). Cogmen and Saracaloglu (2009) claimed that the learning extent could be achieved when it included the supportive skills of reading comprehension. They also revealed that reading comprehension as a device to simplify and enlarge comprehension or in other words reading comprehension strategies are activities to help the learners adjust their learning. To chase up with the changing world, English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners supposed to catch up with the knowledge through reading. Reading is a timeless skill both at school and throughout life. Nordin et al. (2013) asserts reading as a primary life

skill that served a keystone for everyone's success in school, job, and throughout life. Reading efficiently and effectively is the vital ability for a successful life. Without the competence to read wisely, the chance to get a job stride will be worn off, Pourhosein Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016). Despite its essential, reading is one of the challenging subjects in the education system. According to (Küçükoğlu, 2013), the requirement for high-ranking in literacy establish reading as a means to upgrade the ability in gaining an information or knowledge.

Have a strategy in reading is a necessity to overcome the lack of knowledge especially for college students. At college, reading activities are made to understand the materials, and students are forced to read critically and comprehend the subject matters against the reading texts. Cogmen and Saracaloglu (2009) added up that reading process led to how learners read over the bounds and allow critical thoughts on their minds.

However, to master English as a Foreign Language (EFL) especially for reading skills is not a comfortable point. For success in reading, learners need some strategies. According to Cogmen and Saracaloglu (2009), the proper readers have lots of strategies before, during, and after reading. Some learners face the difficulties for they do not use the strategies while reading a text. The difficulties that students faced are because they do not have certain strategies to comprehend reading material. If learners want to gain an optimum result of the materials they are assigned, they have to adequate how to read critically and analytically because the significant point while reading a text is to understand what the writer's intention is. For that reason, learners need some strategies to become good readers who able to distinguish the explicit and implicit intent of the text.

To understand the text, learners need to identify what the main point, specific information, and inference of the text. Learners need the strategies to identify those reading skills. Reading is an extremely complex activity since an authentic reading comprehension implies deep understanding, ability to infer, analyze, apply, and evaluate, (Yurika, 2008). EFL students need to know how to read and be able to deal with a text independently. As Okasha (2004) pointed out that reading is a way of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning, and problem-solving. That is why the students actively interact with the author's ideas

in a dynamic process. The reader tries to interpret information to get messages (Brown, 2007: 79).

The decent reading strategy may assist the learners to increase their reading ability. Readers have their strategies in reading for sure. Even the college students, they also have their strategies in reading. As (Bilican & Yıldırım, 2014) claimed that students with well-developed tend to have their learning process, provide learning strategies on their own, and use their existing conversancy to achieve the learning goals. Lack of an effective reading strategy is identified as one of the significant factors affecting reading comprehension efficiency among EFL learners in higher institutions (Al-Jarrah & binti Ismail, 2018). This area has attracted lots of research into L1 and L2 language acquisition and reading fluency. Oral language also plays a significant role in learning to read as it has been observed that the development of reading is directly proportionate to the development of oral language. Proper strategies need to be followed to achieve the desired goal rather than focusing on assessment as a tool to enhance comprehension skills Al-Jarrah and binti Ismail (2018). As the previous observation proved toward the finding about the significance of the reading strategy, it is needed to figure out what strategies are used by second-semester students while working on the reading test. Based on the statement the researcher interested to probe about reading strategies utilized by students while working on the reading test.

It is found in some previous research which discussed the effect of reading strategies or metacognitive strategies effect on students achievement instead of investigating the reading strategies that recalled by second language learners. Under that opportunity, the researcher has an interest to investigate the reading strategies implemented by students and problems faced by students in finding the main idea, details information, and inference of the text while working on reading tests. The researcher sees this gap as the odds to be able to examine what strategies that students use so that it can be useful for teaching reading strategies in the classroom.

Based on the background of the study, the questions of the study can be formulated as follow:

1. What are the reading strategies utilized by high achiever students in finding *the main idea, detail, and inference* while working on a reading test?
2. What are the problems faced by low achiever students in finding *the main idea, detail, and inference* while working on a reading test?

In terms of literacy requirements, reading strategies turn to be crucial. Readers need a way to find out the meaning of what they have read. The utilization of reading strategies as heuristics and aids can simplify reading comprehension and resolve comprehension interference at both the word and sentence extent (Aarnoutse & Schellings, 2003). While reading the textbook, magazine, article, and some types of reading, readers need to grasp the sense of what has been read. Readers need to find out what the meaning of the text. By the reason of understanding a reading, readers need several strategies to make them easier to comprehend the text. This matter relates to the students whether the students at the secondary school level or the university level. They need strategy while reading. It is necessary to teach the reading strategies at school level or university level for it can help students find out the text meaning.

METHODOLOGY

The research used qualitative approach in the form of interview. There were two variables in this study, including; students reading strategies and problems as independent variable and achievers (higher and lower) as dependent variable. The participants of this study was freshmen students of English education department of university of Islam Malang. The researcher took one class from six classes to conduct the reading test.

The instrument used in this study were reading test adopted from a book entitled PANORAMA BUILDING PERSPECTIVE THROUGH READING written by Kathleen, Daphne, and Latricia. The second instrument was interview sheet. The reading test consist of 30 multiple-choices questions including the question related to the main idea, detail information, and inference of the text. The interview sheets consist of six questions that were asked about the strategies and

the problems in finding the answer for main idea, details information, and inference of the text.

The researcher only interviewed three up to four-second semester students who achieved a high score and the students who get the lower score in the reading test. Due to the CORONA virus pandemic, the researcher conducted the interview via a zoom meeting because the learning system was done via online and the researcher cannot meet the students directly because of residence differences.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

The researcher initially analyzed the data that was collected from interviews. After conducting reading test and classified the higher and lower achiever, the researcher then conduct the interview. The researcher transcribed the data on the recording of the interview session. After that, the data were analyzed and categorized. Then the researcher also coded and reduced the data, and the last was interpreted the data and represented based on the research problems. The table bellow were the table of reading test items categories, follow by the table of students' high and low achiever score in reading, and table of reading strategies and reading problems that gained from data interview.

Table 4.1. Reading Test Categories

Reading Test categories		
Main Idea	Specific Detail	Inference
6 questions item	17 questions item	7 questions item

The table above contains the classification of reading test question categories that the researcher took as the test for the students. The reading test categories were classified into three types of questions such as main idea, detail, and inference. The students were interviewed concerning their strategies to finish those three types of reading test item categories. The items for main idea question are 6 questions, and followed by 17 questions about the details, and 7 questions refers to the inferences of the text. Six texts were provided in the reading test and the test item category was the same. The students were given the questions which

are asking about the main idea of the text, the details of the text, and then the inference of the text. They were some strategies used by the students to find the answer against the question about the main idea, detail, and inference. The formula to calculate students score was used formula as follow.

$$\frac{B}{N} \times 100$$

B = Number of correct answer

N = Number of questions item

Table 4.2. High Achiever Score in Reading Test.

No.	Students Name	Correct Answer	Score
1.	MW	28	93
2.	RIY	26	86
3.	SAM	25	83
4.	DA	23	76

The table above showed the reading test scores and the number of correct answers of four students who achieved the higher score in reading test. There were 22 students involved in the reading test, but the researcher only took the highest achiever to be interviewed. The highest score obtained was 93 and the average score was 76. Those students were interviewed about how the strategies that they applied to finish the test item. The researcher focused on the strategies used by the participants in their test.

Table 4.3. Low achiever Score in Reading Test

No.	Students' Name	Correct Answer	Scores
1.	NM	8	26
2.	RA	11	36
3.	MR	11	36
4.	LA	13	43

The table above showed the lowest grades achieved by the students in the reading test. The researcher not only took the highest score students, but also took the lowest one to find out their problems and difficulties in reading. It is aimed to answer the second research problem that was formalized to find out what the

students' problems in reading. From 22 students, the researcher took 4 lowest scores students to be interviewed related to the reading problems that the students face in finding the main idea, the specific detail of the text, and the inference of the text.

Table 4.4 Students' reading Strategies While Working on Reading Test

Reading Strategies		
Main Idea	Specific Detail	Inference
• Scanning and skimming • Identifying the topic • Looking for repetition words • Highlighting • Finding the clue • Making connection between words	• Read the question before the text • Looking for implicit or key information • Mark the important information • Cross out all incorrect choices • Make connection between question and the text	• Understand the text • Look for specific information • Guess the text intention • Find the implied clue • Put aside incorrect answer

The table above showed the strategies that used by students in finding the answer related to main idea of the text, specific detail, and inference of the text while working on reading test.

Table 4.5 Students' Reading Problems While Working on Reading Test.

Students' Problems		
Main idea	Detail information	Inference
	• Lack of vocabulary • Grammar confusion • Lack of reading strategies • Less interest in reading • Length of the text • Lose concentration	

The table above showed the reading problems faced by low achiever students in finding the answer for main idea, detail information and inference of the text while working on reading test.

Discussion

The researcher found in this study that the high achiever students in reading test applied the strategies to find the main idea, detail information, and inference of the text. The researcher also found that the low achiever students faced some problems to find main idea, detail information and inference of the text while working on reading test.

Based on the four participants answered, the researcher found the similarities between their strategies to find the main idea of the text when they used to answer the question given about texts. They provided similar answer towards the strategies that applied for each of the item test. For the main idea questions, the students tend to understand the topic of the text, to make scan and skim, to make connection among the words, to underline the key words, to look for the repetition information, and to find the clues inside the text. Based on students answer in the interview process, those strategies were the proper strategies that make them easiest in finding the main idea of the text. Finding the main idea of the text is the important part in reading a text. As Elshafie (2013) pointed out that searching the main point of the text is regarded as one of the primary skill in reading a text and it is a critical way to find the main point of the text. They often use those strategies while doing the test. To find the main point of the text, the students can apply those strategies. As Nordin et al. (2013) pointed out that reading strategies are applied as needed and can include translation of the text, use of outside materials, taking notes, underlining the key words, and listing the major ideas. The strategies that were used are required for other students who want to find the main idea of the text. They can apply those strategies while they read a text or do the reading task.

In line with the strategies to find the main idea, the details question in reading also has the strategies based on the higher achiever in reading task. To find the detail answer in reading, the students need to read the question first, and then compare the question with the text. The other strategies are to mark the important sentences and information, find the word clue, and then cross out the incorrect answer. To find the detail, the researcher found five strategies that were used by the students in reading task.

Besides that, to find and inference in reading test also have the own way or strategies. Those achievers pointed out that to find the answer for inference question it is needed to understand the question, deducing the information that given, speculate the meaning of the statement, look for the context, seek the indirect information, and choose the specific answer. There are six strategies to find out the answer for an inference question. Students need the strategies to be able to answer an inference question since it is an explicit answer that were inside the text.

Another finding also discuss about students' problems in finding the main idea, detail information, and inference of the text while finishing reading test. There are some problems that students faced. The problems that students faced were related to the lack of vocabularies, less interest in reading, lost their concentrate while reading, confusing of grammatical forms, length of sentence, and the lack of reading strategies.

It shows that vocabulary represents one of most important component necessary for teaching and learning second language. Lack of vocabulary has caused students to get lower score in reading. It is because students with poor vocabulary knowledge face difficulties in understanding technical words such as synonyms, antonyms, or words with multiple connotations (Nuttall, 2000; Carlisle, 2000; Vilenius-Tuohimaa, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2008). AL-Qahtani (2015) claimed vocabulary learning is an essential part in foreign language learning as the meaning of new word whether in books or classroom. As it was a problem in learning foreign language, it necessary for learners to acquire more vocabulary.

Another problem was caused because the students have less attraction in reading subject. They tend to think that the subject is boring. If the students have no interest in reading whether texts or books, it might be quite difficult for the students to understand the whole text and get the intention of the text. This was accordance to (Ulfa, 2012), who claimed that there were students who have less motivation and attraction to read and they felt the text is not appealing.

It also found that the problem that students encounter is losing the concentrate while reading. Concentration is importantly, needed in reading since it can help students in finishing their test. Students' reading problem that influenced

reading comprehension skill including exposure to the text organization and concentration (Gangl et al., 2018). The researcher approved that concentration is one or other problem that encountered by students while accomplishing reading test.

Grammar confusion considered as one crucial problem that encountered by students while reading. As it was part of linguistic, it is needed for students to understand sentence structure while reading. (Jayanti, 2016) pointed that all trouble second language readers experience are inadequate linguistic knowledge. Grammar is a thorny issue mainly in reading due to the overlap between the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (Park, 2017). The researcher presented the same perception that grammar knowledge is needed for foreign or second language learning in understanding the text since it has contribution to understand a text.

Based on the finding, students frequently experience problem in reading due to the length of sentence. Students are confused in identifying main point, specific detail and inference of the text. Based on theory presented by Rahim (2006) which provided that problems in reading comprehension are caused by variety of factors such as understanding long sentences, inadequate instruction provided by teacher, difficulty in understanding vocabulary, and the environment.

The last problem found by the researcher about students' problems in finding the main point, specific detail, and inference is the lack of proper reading strategies. It has discussed before that high achiever tend to use proper reading strategies to find the main idea of the text, to find the detail of the text, and to find the inference. Lower achiever students tend to read the text without any strategies.

These sixth problems have been turn the students as the lower achiever in reading task. In order to get a high score in reading, it better if the students have their own strategies as the higher achiever applied in their reading task. Besides that, the students should have the interest in reading, knowing the vocabularies, and notice the grammatical forms carefully.

Based on the finding and discussion, it can be concluded that there were strategies applied by high achiever students and problems encountered by low achiever students in finding the main idea, specific detail, and inference of the text while working on reading test.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

As the result to answer the research questions, the researcher concluded that there are some reading strategies used by high achiever students in determining the answer for main idea, specific detail, and inference while working on reading task. Otherwise, there are some problems that students encountered in finding the answer for main idea, specific detail, and inference while finishing reading test.

It is suggested for further researchers to conduct the same research with the other instrument. The data can be completed by observation or questionnaire check list since in the current study, the learners' interview guide established by researcher. Therefore, it is suggested for future researcher to adopt the newest version of learners' interview or questionnaire checklist that can cover up this present study. This present study truly stated that there are several types of reading strategies that have implemented by the students. Next, the further researchers also suggested doing the same field of researcher with other different reading strategies.

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