

THE CORRELATION AMONG READING STRATEGIES, READING COMPREHENSION ACHIEVEMENT AND GENDER DIFFERENCES OF THE SECOND YEAR STUDENTS OF SMP NEGERI 17 PALEMBANG

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Abstract: The study was aimed at finding out (1) the reading strategies dominantly used by the second year students (2) whether or not there was significant correlation between students' reading strategies and reading comprehension achievement (3) whether or not there was any difference between male and female students in terms of reading strategies and reading comprehension achievement, (4) whether or not students' reading strategies influence reading comprehension achievement. The data were collected using Reading Strategies Questionnaire and a reading test. The findings of the study showed that: first, the students mostly used metacognitive strategies in reading activity. Second, there was a strong and positive correlation between reading comprehension achievement and reading strategies. Third, male and female of students have any significance difference in their reading strategies and their reading comprehension achievement. The last, students' reading strategies influence their reading comprehension achievement.

Key Words: *reading strategies, reading comprehension achievement, gender*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is more than word calling; it is the ability to understand or get meaning from printed symbols. Without comprehension, reading is nothing more than tracking symbols on a page with your eyes and sounding them out. Reading comprehension is essential to life. Much has been written about importance of functional literacy. With the ability to comprehend what they read, people are able to only to live safely and productively, but also to continue to develop socially, emotionally and intellectually (, 2008:1).

The importance of reading strategy is elaborated by Killen (1998:36) as an important role in understanding the reading materials. They facilitate the comprehension of the students who wants to read effectively. A student who had determined what he or she expects to gain from his or her reading should select a

reading strategy which best suits a particular purpose. If she or he is reading a novel or magazine for pleasure, she or he would obviously not use the same kind of reading strategy to use in studying science books, linguistics, mathematics, and other subject. The basic goal of the reading strategies is to improve the students' reading comprehension achievement.

However, the condition of students reading skill in Indonesia is far from being expected. According to the Program for International Students Assessment (2006) Indonesia students' reading achievement is still low. They found that Indonesia is in the 48th rank out of 56 countries participated in surveys (OECD: 2007). There is no increasing score in 2009. The Program for International Students Assessment (2009) found that Indonesian students' score was below the OECD average. They are on the 57th ran out of

65 countries. The students' ability score on the overall reading scale was 402 while OECD average score was 493. Furthermore, on the reading scale, Indonesian students' achievement is as follows. For example, the score of the students' ability to access and retrieve was 399 (OECD, 2010). Moreover, UNDP (2009) found that Indonesian adult literacy rate was 92 and in the 88th among 180 countries.

In line with some previous studies, Sudarmi (2009:37) which focused her study on junior high school students' in Palembang showed that there were over 20 students (6.11%) obtained excellent score, 46 students (14.06) obtained good score, 65 students (19.87%) had average score and 196 students (59.93%) had poor score. We can see that most of junior high school students had poor score in reading.

Stream and Thiele (2002:23) say that reading comprehension strategies are means of helping students to comprehend all things dealing with what they just read. Reading comprehension strategies are tactic that students can use to determine what they read. Wang, Haertel, and Welberg (1993) cited in Prothero and Clarke (2008:46) found that metacognitive strategy is important for students to learn. In line with that, Prothero and Clarke (2008) suggest the teachers to strengthen their students' metacognitive abilities in order to improved student learning. The strategies enable the students to interact with fiction or nonfiction, in order to answer question about what they have read.

Based on the previous explanations, the writer is interested in finding out the second year students' reading strategies and their reading comprehension achievement of SMP Negeri 17 Palembang. The writer would like to find out the correlation between students' reading strategies and their reading comprehension achievement and see

whether these three components have significant correlation each other.

Reading Strategies

Reading is one of the most important academic tasks faced by students. Strategies which are designed to improve reading comprehension may have a number of purposes. Reading Indiana in Siagian (2010:5) proposes that there are some purposes of reading comprehension strategies, they are to (1) enhance understanding of the content information presented in a text, (2) improve understanding of the organization of information in a text, (3) improve attention and concentration while reading, (4) make reading a more active process, (5) increase personal involvement in the reading materiel, (6) promote critical thinking and evaluation of reading material, (7) enhance registration and recall of text information in memory. The use and regulation of strategies can be seen as a function of individual reader characteristic (Flavell, 1979) cited in Levine and Reves (1998:1).

Schumaker and Deshler (2006) cited in Prothero and Clarke (2008:3) states that most of people automatically slow down when reading content that is difficult to understand. People also make use of a variety of strategies for helping them organize and remember. Wang, Haertel, and Welberg (1993) cited in Prothero and Clarke (2008:3) found that metacognitive strategy is important for students to learn.

Setyadi (2009:4) made new classification for reading strategies which suitable for Indonesian students. He modified the questionnaire from some previous studies (Rubin, 1975; Fillmore, 1979; Naiman et al., 1978; Politzer and McGroarty, 1985; and Oxford and Nyikos, 1989). In this study, the writer uses the classification of reading strategies

as cited in Setyadi (2009:4) which can be classified as follows:

- 1) Cognitive strategies enable students to repeat, recognize and use formulas and pattern, practice naturalistically, get the idea quickly, use resources for receiving and sending messages, reasoning deductively, analyze expressions, analyze contrastively, translate, transfer, take notes, summarize, and highlight.
- 2) Metacognitive strategies allow students to over view and link with already known material, pay attention, find out about language learning, organize, set goals and objectives, identify the purpose of a language task, plan for a language task, seek practice opportunities, self-monitor and self evaluating.
- 3) Social strategies help student to learn through. Ask for clarification and verification, cooperate with peers, cooperate with proficient users of the new language, developed cultural understanding, and become aware of others' thought and feeling.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a critical component of functional literacy. With the ability to comprehend what they read, people are able not only to live safely and productively, but also to continue to develop socially, emotionally and intellectually, Brummit (2008) cited in Farini (2010:8).

There are many opinions about what reading comprehension is, but more or less they are the same. One of them is defined by Royer. According to Royer (2004:1), reading comprehension is the process of understanding and constructing meaning from a piece of text. Reading difficulties become most apparent when the reader is unable to grasp the meaning from a text passage.

Moreover, he says that reading comprehension may be affected by the difficulty of the text, the vocabulary used in the text, and the reader's familiarity with the subject matter, among other factors. Generally, to see whether someone understands or grasps the meaning of a text, she/he should do a reading comprehension test. He/she can be considered to understand the text if she/he can answer most of the questions about it. Many teachers have their own way to assess their students reading comprehension. They usually arrange the score for reading comprehension before giving the reading test to the students.

It implies that reading, as one of the language skills is very important as a means for seeking knowledge. Davis (2000:22) says that if students are experiencing difficulty with reading process, then it can be said that they are also experiencing difficulty with comprehension. As reading is an intelligent process, readers of English as the target language start to learn good symbols correspondence through reading words and sentences. Then they progress for reading paragraphs and short passages. As a number of reading experiences increases, the readers are able to improve their level of reading proficiency very easy to advanced levels. This ability of reading enables the reader to get more scientific concepts on knowledge of English and get used to encountering difficulties when they are reading scientific books written in English.

Achievement

Hornsby (2003:11) states that an achievement is something that somebody has done successfully, specifically using their own effort and skill. An achievement is one important factor in considering whether or not teaching and learning activity succeeds. Brinton cited in Sari

(2010:23) defined achievement as the specifically students' progress in developing language skill. In addition, Smith and Robinson (1980:205) states that in achievement especially in reading, students should understanding, evaluating, and utilizing information and ideas gained through an interaction between the reader and the author.

Reading Comprehension Achievement

Reading comprehension is the capacity an individual has to comprehend, use and analyze written texts with a view to reach his/her own goals, develop his/her knowledge and possibilities and participate in society (OCDE cited in McKenna 1990:11). Tarigan (1989:34) adds that reading comprehension is the result of comprehending new information to what one already knows and finds the answers of cognitive questions of the written material. This means that the students must understand what they read because reading is an active thinking process that depends not only on comprehension skill, but also on the their experiences and prior knowledge.

Reading achievement is the result of students' understanding of texts that can be affected by some factors, such as their reading strategies. Good achievement in comprehending the passage will be indicated by getting high scores or good results. Rubin (1992:194), In other words, reading comprehension is a complex intellectual process involving a number of abilities. In measure reading comprehension achievement, a researcher may give subjects a series of passages, and asking them questions intended to test different levels of understanding of the passages, Alderson (2000: 9).

According to Warncke and Shipman, (1988:12) there are some skills which should be mastered by the students. It was indicated by the students' ability to

answer question about main idea (MI), detail (D), Sequence (Sq), Inference (If), cause and effect (C/E), and vocabulary (V). The second target was intended to know the level of students' achievement in reading comprehension. It was put into 5 categories, namely: very good, good, average, poor, and very poor.

Payani et al (2003:23) found that frustrated readers differed primarily from independent readers in their ability to get main idea (MI), inference (INF) and vocabulary (VOC). Frustrated readers displayed weakness in all sub skill area investigated especially. Frustrated were disadvantaged by their poor knowledge of vocabulary. In particular, they were deficient in their understanding of the semantic relationship between words relationship which the authors exploit and create in order to make sentence cohere. Therefore, the higher scores up the level of each text, the wider the comprehension gap between frustrated and independent reader.

Gender

There have been a number of studies conducted by educational researchers as regards to the students' achievement. Some of them show that gender is also a factor which causes a gap on students' achievement. Gender is the significance of being male or female (Papalia, et. al., 1999). Gender also affects the reading skill. A number of studies Sari (2010), Dorval (2000), Oxford (1990) found that males and female are different during the process of learning. In contrast, the finding of Ras (2009:35) found that there is no significance difference in the use of strategies between male and female students. This finding supports the finding by Kim (1995), Lee (1994), and Oh (1996) cited in Ras (2009:36) that there is no significance difference in the strategy used by males and females students.

Numerous studies have been done which confirm gender differences favoring girls in terms of reading performance. Research done in the United States indicates that reading is considered a feminine activity. Maturation and development theory of gender differences are also related to reading development. However, with the quantity of research being done, no direct casual relationship has been firmly established (Pottorff, 1996). This clearly indicates a need for additional investigation in this area. The growing concern in developing a better understanding of what affects students' reading development has encouraged this study. It is the intent of this study to add to that growing body of knowledge.

Several researchers have explored the possibility that males do not succeed in reading, as well as females because of gender-role perceptions that reading is not a masculine activity (Bank, 1980). They tend to achieve more in specific cognitive skill and have more interest in gaining information from reading. They also speak more clearly, read earlier, and do consistently better than males in reading tests. Yusufardiah (2010) reported that gender is correlated significantly to pupils' achievement where girls are better than boys. This result coincided with the findings of Alomar (2006). It was also similar with the findings reported by Blatchford, et al (2002) which found that girls were about four month ahead of boys in literacy on entry to reception year.

METHOD

In this study, descriptive method was used to investigate the effect of prediction variables on the criterion variable with a correlation study. In this study, the writer used correlation research because she wanted to find out the students' reading strategies, the relationship between reading strategies and their reading comprehension

achievement, whether there was any difference between male and female students in terms of reading strategies and reading comprehension achievement of second year students of SMP Negeri 17 Palembang, and whether there was influence of reading strategies to reading comprehension achievement.

This study used two kinds of data collection techniques. There were asking for the respondents' opinions and testing the sample. There were two instruments that were used in this study: a questionnaire and a test. The questionnaire and a test were distributed in one meeting to the 140 second year students of SMPN 17 Palembang.

In analyzing the data from the questionnaire and test, the writer used SPSS 15 for computing the descriptive data of students' reading strategies and their reading comprehension achievement. To find out the reading strategies of second year students of SMPN 17 Palembang, the writer analyzed the data from the questionnaires by using data classifications and analysis of frequency. To verify the correlation between variables, the correlation analysis was applied followed by multiple regression analysis that would be applied to verify the magnitude of contribution of the predictor variables towards the criterion variables. However before conducting correlation analysis, the normality testing needs applying.

FINDINGS

Table 1 showed that 15 students (10.71%) were in very good category; 34 students (24.29%) were in good category; 69 students (42.29%) were in fair category; and 22 students (15.71%) out of students had poor and very poor category.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of the Frequency and Percentage of the Reading Comprehension Achievement

Variable	Category	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
Reading Comprehension Achievement	Very good	86-100	15	10.71
	Good	76-85	34	24.29
	Fair	56-75	69	49.29
	Poor	<55	22	15.71

Table 2 showed that the second year students of SMP Negeri 17 Palembang used all three reading strategies: metacognitive, cognitive, and social strategies. The students mostly had metacognitive strategies (4.51). They use social strategies (4.16) and cognitive strategies (3.84). It means that 91 students always used metacognitive, 40 students always used cognitive strategies and 57

students always used social strategies in their reading activity. The use of more metacognitive strategies by more proficient students could be attributed to these students' need to control their own cognition by coordinating their reading process in order to receive and produce the language. These students depend on planning, focusing and evaluating.

Table 2
The Students' Reading Strategies

No.	Reading Strategies	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank Order	Category
1.	Metacognitive	4.51	0.719	1	Almost always used
2.	Social	4.16	0.653	2	Usually used
3.	Cognitive	3.84	0.637	3	Usually used

In general the result showed that correlation coefficient between reading strategies and reading comprehension achievement was 0.730 with the probability value less than 0.000 in which it was lower than alpha level of 0.05 showing that there is a significant correlation between reading strategies and

reading comprehension achievement. It could be noticed that the students with high proficiency used more strategies than less proficient students. Such result indicated that more proficient students were aware of their needs and look for more opportunities to practice the language

Table 3
Pearson Product Moment Correlation

		Reading Achievement	Reading Strategies
Reading Achievement	Pearson Correlation	1	.730(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	24844.821	762.434
	Covariance	178.740	5.485
	N	140	140
Reading Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.730(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	762.434	43.886
	Covariance	5.485	.316
	N	140	140

Table 3 displayed that in cognitive strategy, the mean score for male students got 3.60 and female students 4.09, therefore female students had higher value in terms of their use of cognitive strategies than male students. In metacognitive strategy, the mean score for male students got 4.25 and female students 4.77. It indicates that male students had lower value than female students in terms of their use of metacognitive strategies. In social strategy the mean score for male students got 3.75 and female students

4.58.

The result indicates that there was significance difference in the use of reading strategies between male and female students. It showed that female students had more frequent in use of reading strategies. The result of the calculation indicates that at the significance level $p < 0.05$ in two tailed testing with $df = 138$, the p value was 0.000. It means the p value (Sig. (2-tailed)) < 0.05 . It is summarized in table 4.

Table 4
Students' Differences in Reading Strategies

Students		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Cognitive	female	4.0876	.50293	70
	Male	3.6004	.66668	70
	Total	3.8440	.63714	140
Metacognitive	female	4.7736	.22712	70
	Male	4.2571	.69353	70
	Total	4.5154	.57578	140
Social	female	4.5767	.33619	70
	Male	3.7520	.63400	70
	Total	4.1644	.65338	140

Table 4 displayed that in reading comprehension achievement, the mean score for male students got 65.07 and female students 79.00, therefore female students had higher score in terms of their reading comprehension achievement. The result of the calculation indicates that at

the significance level $p < 0.05$ in two tailed testing with $df = 138$, the p value was 0.000. It means the p value (Sig. (2-tailed)) < 0.05 . It indicates that there was significant gender difference in reading strategies

Table 5.
The Students' Reading Comprehension Achievement Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
male	70	65.07	12.669	1.514
female	70	79.00	10.058	1.202

There is evidence that reading strategies (global) influence significantly to prediction of the students' reading comprehension achievement in this study. The R square value is 0.581 and $p=.000$ ($p<0.05$), meaning that reading strategies (global) influences 58% of reading

comprehension achievement and the rest was influenced by other factors. Because the probability (0.000) was lower than 0.05, this regression model can be use to predict the reading comprehension achievement variable. The data can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6
The Results of Simultaneous Regression Analysis of Reading Strategies (general)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.762(a)	.581	.569	8.778	.581	46.853	4	135	.000

DISCUSSION

With regard to the first objective, the finding showed that the results revealed three categories of reading strategies used by the second year students of SMP Negeri 17 Palembang with the rank order (1) metacognitive strategies, (2) social strategies, and (3) cognitive strategies. It does appear that good language learners use strategies in effective ways in reading activity which have brought about better reading comprehension achievement. Rossi-Lee's(1989) cited in Jaya (2009:40) found that more proficient learners

employ a variety of strategies in many situations than do less proficient learners and more proficient EFL students used self-management strategies such as, evaluation and formal practice significantly more often than less proficient students. In line with this opinion, Cohen, Weaver, and Li(1996) cited in Zulkifli (2007:37) advice teachers to systematically introduce and reinforce learning strategy that help students us the target language more effectively and those improve their performance.

The next finding showed that the

highest mean that the students mostly had reading strategies is metacognitive strategies. This indicates that the students prefer to over view and link with already known material, pay attention, find out about language learning, organize, set goals and objectives, identify the purpose of a language task, plan for a language task, seek practice opportunities, self-monitor and self evaluating. This is no surprise considering that these strategies are ones of the most frequently used strategies by Indonesian learners based on some studies, which one of them was conducted Husnayaini (2009) . The study revealed that Sriwijaya University students showed high use of metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive which was the most preferred by the students was in line with the result of other researchers like; Davis and Abas (1991), Ihsan and Diem (1997), Zulkifli (2006), Kaylani (1996), and Jaya (2009).

In general, there was strong correlation between reading strategies and reading comprehension achievement. The findings are similarly with Jaya (2009) and Husnayaini (2009) reported there was correlation between strategies and English proficiency. In contrast, the findings of Herman and Oxford (1995) learning strategies and reading skills have no significant relationship. Nevertheless, the frequency of reading strategies use is not only factor determining the level of reading comprehension achievement. The appropriateness of the strategy use with the task requirement is even more important than the frequency (Oxford, 1990).

The next finding showed that there was any significant difference in the cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies between male and female students. This finding is similar to the finding of Sari (2010), Dorval (2000), Oxford (1990) found that males and female are different during the process of

learning. In contrast, the finding of Ras (2009:35) found that there is no significance difference in the use of strategies between male and female students. This finding supports the finding by Kim (1995), Lee (1994), and Oh (1996) cited in Ras (2009:36) that there is no significance difference in the strategy used by males and females students.

The next section discussed the finding is the difference between male and female students and their reading comprehension achievement. The data showed that there is any significance difference in reading comprehension achievement between male and female students. The mean score of the students 72.03 indicates that the students are in fair or average level of reading comprehension achievement level. The finding is similarly with Yusufardiah (2010) reported that gender is correlated significantly to pupils' achievement where girls are better than boys. This result coincided with the findings of Alomar (2006). It was also similar with the findings reported by Blatchford, et al (2002) which found that girls were about four month ahead of boys in literacy on entry to reception year.

The contribution of reading strategies to reading comprehension achievement was 0.54. In other word, the contribution of reading strategies to reading comprehension achievement was 54%. Therefore, there was significant influence of reading strategies toward reading comprehension achievement. The overall mean of the strategies used fell to high level (4.09). This means that the students familiar with the reading strategies. As Oxford (1990) suggest, there must be strategy training for students on readings strategies by familiarizing them with the learning strategies and providing them with opportunities for practicing these

strategies by teacher's integrating them into the classroom instructional plans and embedding them into regular class activity.

CONCLUSIONS

In terms of the results of this study, the following conclusions are drawn. Firstly the students mostly used metacognitive strategies in reading activity. There is strong evidence that reading strategies correlate with reading comprehension achievement. Male and female of second year students of SMP Negeri 17 Palembang have any significance difference in their reading strategies and their reading comprehension achievement. It means that there was a significant influence of reading strategies toward reading comprehension achievement.

SUGGESTIONS

The students are suggested to read a lot and use all reading strategies, in order to improve their reading comprehension achievement. The students should be aware of strategies they use in reading activities and try to find the appropriate strategies for the appropriate situation.

Teachers, especially English teachers are suggested to assess their students' reading strategies before conducting teaching and learning process. The teachers need to focus on varying reading strategies and to be creative to make their students like reading and know the aspects have to consider in helping students comprehend the text well by creating a flexible, varied, encouraging, and enjoyable classroom environment built on diversifying methods of teaching and educational aids.

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