

Language Learning Strategy in English Reading Comprehension Used by Successful and Unsuccessful Learners at College

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Abstract

This article is about Language Learning Strategy in English Reading Comprehension Used by Successful and Unsuccessful Learners at College. This study was aimed at finding out (1) the language learning strategy used by successful and unsuccessful learners in English reading comprehension, and (2) the factors that influenced the learners in using certain language learning strategy in English reading comprehension. The research method was qualitative by phenomenological approach. The data were collected by using test, questionnaire, and interview with the participants. There were forty-two students as participants in this study. The findings are (1) the language learning strategy used by learners in reading comprehension are memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies., and (2) the influential factors of the learners in using certain language learning strategy are motivation, gender, task, reading material, teaching media, classroom activities and management, and teacher approach and strategy.

Keywords: reading comprehension, language learning strategy, college.

Introduction

English has long been the foreign language in Indonesia. It functions to help the development of the state and nation, to build relations with other nations, and to run foreign policy (Lauder, 2008). Due to the fact that English functions as an important role in Indonesia, the government has decided that the language has been becoming a compulsory subject that should be learnt by students from secondary level to university one. Even, nowadays it has been learnt as a local subject in most elementary schools in Indonesia. It aims that the Indonesian learners in general get success in getting knowledge, abilities and skills in language especially in English to compete in all fields with other people internationally or globally.

In relation to the success of learners in learning language at schools especially in learning language of English, there are a number of influential factors that must be considered by schools, teachers and learners themselves. Harmer (1991:3) states that some students are successful at language learning while others are not successful because of some factors such as motivation; extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. They are physical conditions, method by which the students are taught, the teacher, the culture of the target language community, parents, peers, previous experience and some others.

Rubin (1982:3) and Oxford (1990:2) state that the language learner is one of the important factors in their success in acquiring the language. Moreover, it is stated that the strategies used by the learners acquire the language may determine their success in their language acquisition. It means that the learner should know many things about learning the language. In other words learning strategy is considered important for the students in acquiring, producing and comprehending the new language. The students' success might be influenced by their own efforts as Rubin and Thompson (1982) states that learners are the first factor in the success of their learning. It was considered that the students' learning process could be activated by applying the students centered learning in and out of the classroom. If the students know how to learn effectively, it could be assumed that they might also be successful in learning the subject effectively.

There are strategies that make learning more effective and strategies that improve comprehension. Singhal (2001) states that learners use a variety of strategies to assist them with the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of information. It can be said that such strategies are processes used by the learner to enhance reading comprehension, to read better, and overcome comprehension failures. Reading comprehension strategies indicate how readers conceive of a task, how they make sense of what they read, and what they do when they do not understand.

In line with this, Chamot (2004) states that the learners use learning strategies to accomplish a learning goal. Moreover, extensive research has identified the learning strategies used by students of second and foreign languages and a somewhat smaller body of research has documented the effectiveness of helping less successful language learners improve their performance through learning strategy instruction. Moreover, he states that an open discussion of reasons why students use the strategies they identify can help teachers understand cultural and contextual factors that may be influencing their students. This can lead to clarification of the task's demands where there is a mismatch with students' current learning strategies.

Based on the phenomena in teaching and learning process especially on learning Reading Comprehension especially at college, it seemed that the students were not active in the classroom, they just tend to do what the teacher asked them to do in relation to their reading comprehension without being active and creative to do more about their reading comprehension. Some students have run their reading comprehension activities by common or usual strategies while there are various strategies that the students can use in their learning reading comprehension. It made the students got low achievement in reading comprehension at their college.

Several empirical investigations have been conducted on reading strategies and their relationships to successful and unsuccessful second language reading (Hosenfeld, 1977; and Jimenez et.al, 1995). Research in second language reading has also demonstrated that strategy use is different in more and less proficient readers, and that more proficient readers use different types of strategies, and they use them in different ways. This article is aimed at finding out (1) the language learning strategy used by successful and unsuccessful learners in English reading comprehension, and (2) the factors that influence the learners in using certain language learning strategy in English reading comprehension. about the language learning

strategy in English reading comprehension used by successful and unsuccessful learners at college.

Method

This was a phenomenological research. The participants of the research were 42 students of the School for Foreign Languages (STBA) Haji AgusSalimBukittinggi who have studied Reading Comprehension III in 2011-2012 academic year.

The research instruments used in the study were test, questionnaire, interview and observation. Test was used to know the successful and unsuccessful learners in reading comprehension. Questionnaire in the study was SILL (*Strategy Inventory for Language Learning*) used to know the language learning strategies in English reading comprehension. Interview was used to know the factors that influence the learners in using language learning strategies in their reading comprehension. Observation was done to know the real activities of learning strategies in their reading comprehension subject in the classroom.

The collected data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively as follows. Quantitative Data was about reading comprehension test and questionnaire about the learners' language learning strategies in English reading comprehension. The result of reading comprehension test was scored and analyzed statistically and quantitatively by putting them into numbers. The result of the learners' respond and answer from the questionnaire was analyzed in the form of numeric data that were transferred into graphs, matric and percentage. Qualitative Data was about the learners respond and opinion from the interview about the factors of the learners in using certain language learning strategies in English reading comprehension and the reasons why the learners used certain language learner strategy in their English reading comprehension. It was put on interview guide, and observation sheet that was analyzed qualitatively.

Findings and Discussion

In this part, there were the findings and discussion about the learner language learning strategy in English reading comprehension and the influential factors of the learners in using learning strategy in reading comprehension.

1. The Language Learning Strategy Used by Successful and Unsuccessful Learners in English Reading Comprehension

There were eight learners that have been categorized as successful learners; those who got the score reading comprehension test score at the interval of 80-100 and eight learners who have been categorized as unsuccessful learners who got the score at the interval score of 0-54. Based on the answer of the questionnaire given to successful learners about their language learning strategy in English reading comprehension, it was found that the successful learners have used a number of language learning strategies in their English reading comprehension as shown at table 1 as follows.

Table 1: The average score of learning strategy sets and groups of successful learners

| No. | Strategy Groups | Average Score | Strategy Sets | Average Score |
|-----|-----------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1. | Memory | 2.81 | Creating mental linkages | 3,49 |
| | | | Applying images and sounds | 3,07 |
| | | | Reviewing well | 2,5 |

| | | | | |
|----|---------------|------|---|------|
| | | | Employing action | 2,19 |
| 2. | Cognitive | 3.52 | Practicing | 3,96 |
| | | | Receiving and sending messages | 3,32 |
| | | | Analyzing and reasoning | 3,29 |
| | | | Creating structure for input and output | 3,50 |
| 3 | Compensation | 3.07 | Guessing intelligently | 3.07 |
| 4 | Metacognitive | 3.65 | Centering your learning | 3,57 |
| | | | Arranging and planning your learning | 4.20 |
| | | | Evaluating your learning | 3,09 |
| 5 | Affective | 3.27 | Lowering your anxiety | 3.46 |
| | | | Encouraging yourself | 3,38 |
| | | | Taking your emotional temperature | 2,97 |
| 6. | Social | 3.44 | Asking questions | 3.63 |
| | | | Cooperating with others | 3.25 |

From the table above, it can be seen that in general the learners used different strategy groups and strategy sets by different category. The first strategy group point of view was memory strategy. In memory strategy, creating mental linkages was the strategy set that was at the highest category used by successful learners while the lowest one was reviewing well. Then, from cognitive strategy group, practicing was the highest category used by them, while analyzing and reasoning was the lowest category used by them. Then, the successful learners also used guessing intelligently as compensation strategy group at the medium category. Because there was only one strategy set from compensation strategy, there was no label for highest or lowest category. The strategies mentioned before belonged to direct strategy class as the first learning strategy class in reading comprehension.

Based on the second learning strategy class, indirect strategy was also used by the learners differently. From metacognitive strategy group, arranging and planning your learning was the strategy set that was the highest category used by successful learners, while the lowest one were arranging your learning and evaluating your learning in the same average score in them. Then, from affective strategy group, lowering your anxiety was the highest category of strategy set used by successful learners, while the lowest one was taking your emotional temperature. The last strategy group was social strategy. The highest category of strategy set used by successful learners was asking questions while the lowest one was cooperating with others.

Overall, from learning strategy group, metacognitive strategy was the highest average score (3.65), while the lowest average score was memory strategy at the score of 2,81. Then from the learning strategy set, the highest average score was arranging and planning your learning at the score of 4.20, while the lowest average score used by successful learners in reading comprehension was employing action at the score of 2.19.

Table 2: The distribution of the strategy group and strategy set used by unsuccessful learners

| No | Strategy groups | % | Strategy sets | % |
|----|-----------------|------|----------------------------|------|
| 1. | Memory | 2.52 | Creating mental linkages | 3,09 |
| | | | Applying images and sounds | 2,66 |
| | | | Reviewing well | 2,18 |

| | | | | |
|----|---------------|------|---|------|
| | | | Employing action | 2,13 |
| 2. | Cognitive | 3.14 | Practicing | 3,50 |
| | | | Receiving and sending messages | 2,82 |
| | | | Analyzing and reasoning | 2,86 |
| | | | Creating structure for input and output | 3,34 |
| 3 | Compensation | 2,57 | Guessing intelligently | 2,57 |
| 4 | Metacognitive | 3.20 | Centering your learning | 3,38 |
| | | | Arranging and planning your learning | 3,09 |
| | | | Evaluating your learning | 3,13 |
| 5 | Affective | 2.90 | Lowering your anxiety | 2,64 |
| | | | Encouraging yourself | 3,17 |
| | | | Taking your emotional temperature | 2,54 |
| 6. | Social | 3.44 | Asking questions | 3 |
| | | | Cooperating with others | 2,79 |

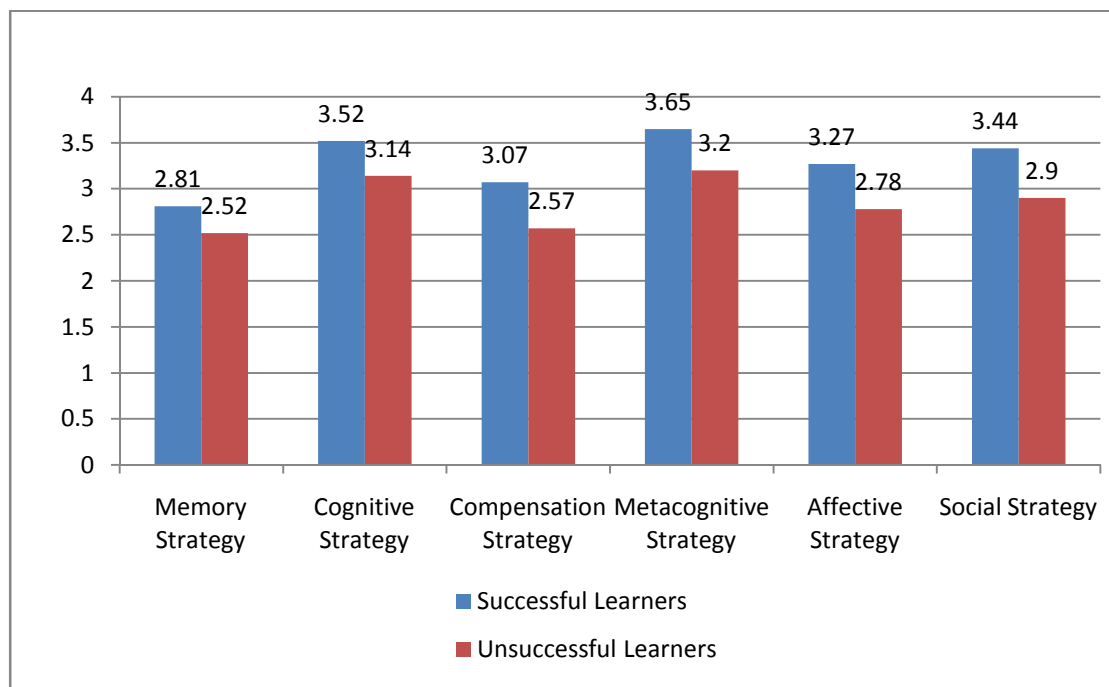
From table 2, it can be seen that in general the unsuccessful learners used different strategy groups and strategy sets by different category. The first strategy group point of view was memory strategy. In memory strategy, creating mental linkages was the strategy set that was at the highest category used by unsuccessful learners while the lowest one was employing action. Then, from cognitive strategy group, practicing was the highest category used by them, while receiving and sending messages was the lowest category used by them. Then, the successful learners also used guessing intelligently as compensation strategy group at the medium category. As has been mentioned before there was only one strategy set from compensation strategy, there was no label for highest or lowest category. The strategies mentioned before belonged to direct strategy as the first learning strategy class in reading comprehension.

Based on the in learning strategy class, indirect strategy was also used by the learners differently. From metacognitive strategy group, centering your learning was the strategy set that was the highest category used by successful learners, while the lowest one was arranging and planning your learning used by the unsuccessful learners. Then, from affective strategy group, encouraging yourself was the highest category of strategy set used by unsuccessful learners, while the lowest one was taking your emotional temperature. The last strategy group was social strategy. The highest category of strategy set used by unsuccessful learners was asking questions while the lowest one was cooperating with others.

In conclusion, from learning strategy group used by unsuccessful learners in reading comprehension, metacognitive strategy was the highest average score (3.19) but, based on the category it was at the medium category. The lowest average score was compensation strategy at the score of 2.57; it at the medium category. From the learning strategy set, the highest average score was Practicing at the average score of 3.50, while the lowest average score used by unsuccessful learners was Employing Action at the score of 2.13 as low category. Then, from the 50 learning strategies in reading comprehension, the highest strategy category used by learners in reading comprehension was Paying Attention with the average score of 4.25 as high category. It means that as a whole, most of learners chose the options in the questionnaire that they always or almost always used the strategy and always used the strategy when they do reading comprehension activity. Then, the lowest one was Using a Checklist with the score of 1.88 as low category. It means that as a whole, the learners were rarely or never almost never the strategy in their reading comprehension activities. To

understand simply, the next graph shows the category level of the language learning strategy used by successful and unsuccessful learners.

Graph 1: The distribution of language learning strategy used by successful and unsuccessful learners



From the graph it can be seen that the use of language learning strategy in English reading comprehension of successful and unsuccessful learners are different in the use in its category and its average scores shown in table below.

In general it can be stated that the use of metacognitive strategy of both successful and unsuccessful learners was of the highest level but of the different average score, whereas the use of memory strategy was of the lowest level and of different average score. It means that the learners who were categorized as successful learners used or applied more language learning strategies with the higher score as compared with the unsuccessful learners who used or applied less language learning strategies with lower average score. Based on the result it can be said that the more successful learners used more language learning strategies in their reading comprehension. On the other hand the less successful learners used fewer language learning strategy in their reading comprehension.

2. The Factors that Influenced the Learners Learning Strategies in English Reading Comprehension

There were many factors that influenced the learners in using language learning strategy in reading comprehension. They were motivation, gender, type of task and assignment, reading material, teaching media, classroom activities and management, and teacher approach and strategy.

a. Motivation

Motivation was one of the influential factors of using language learning strategy in language skills. One of the factors that influence the choice of strategies used among students learning a

second/foreign language is Motivation. Oxford and Nyikos (1989), who studied the effect of a number of factors on strategy use, including motivation, found motivation as the single most important factor influencing strategy use. Motivation as stated by Brown (2002:17) is one of the most important factors in the success in learning English. It means having a real purpose in learning English or really wanting to learn English for a reason. Moreover, he states that to be successful in the future, you have to understand about your own motivation because it is one of the most important factors in your success especially in learning English. In line with this, Oxford (1990) states that motivated students tended to use more strategies than less motivated students, and the particular reason for studying the language (motivational orientation, especially as related to career field) was important in the choice of strategies. Then, more motivated students tend to use more strategies than less motivated students, hence, they tend to be more successful. (Oxford, 1990a). Furthermore, Hedge (2000) also asserted that "Any individual may be influenced by a variety of motivations which will affect such things as anxiety, or attitude, or willingness to try new learning strategies" It indicates that the finding of the current research is supported by the theory, that motivation influence the learners in using learning strategy in their language learning skills.

b. Gender

Gender influences the use of learners learning strategy in language comprehension (Oxford: 1991). Based on the findings, the male learners average score of using language learning strategy in reading comprehension of male learners was lower than that of female. It was in line with what Oxford (1991) and Fewell (2007) who state that female learners were more active in using learning strategy than male learners. It was also supported by the observation that found that in the learning activities of reading comprehension, the female were more active than male learners in using language learning strategies.

Studies have examined the relationship between sex and strategy use have come to mixed conclusions. Ehrman, Oxford, and Oxford in Oxford (1990) state discovered distinct gender differences in strategy use. However it was failed to discover any evidence of differing language learning strategy use between the sexes. it might be concluded, although men and women do not always demonstrate differences in language learning strategy use, where differences are found women tend to use more language learning strategies than men. In conclusion, it can be stated that the data of female learners were better in using learning strategies than male learners was supported by the theory.

c. Type of Task and Assignment

Tasks differ depending on whether the context is a second language or foreign language setting and whether the learner's goal is to acquire social or academic language or both (Chamot, 2004). A recent reading study found that perceived difficulty of the task affected use of learning strategies, which were used on more challenging tasks (Oxford et al., 2004).

Task difficulty and level of language proficiency have a major effect on the strategies that students use. The difficulty of the task seems to be related to whether students even try to use learning strategies. For example, if a task is relatively easy, students can perform it much as they would in their native language, without conscious attention to strategies. On the other hand, if the task is much too difficult, even effective learning strategies cannot overcome the learner's lack of knowledge and/or language proficiency. Many strategies can be used for a variety of tasks, but most students need guidance in transferring a familiar strategy to new problems. Students who expect to be successful at a learning task are generally successful, and each successful learning experience increases motivation.

d. Reading Material

Reading material was important in reading comprehension and it was one of the factors that influenced them to use language learning strategies in English reading comprehension. Eventhough there was no clear statement about the influence of reading material to the choice of learning strategy in reading, the researcher has found that whatever the reading material given to the learners, it has relation to the motivation of learners in learning, it directs them to be motivated and motivation has been one of influential factors of using learning strategy in reading comprehension. Suitable reading material is important in reading (Nuttall 1996:172). Suitability of content means that the reading material should interest the students as well as be relevant to their needs. The texts should motivate as well as. So reading material might influence the learners in reading comprehension.

Since the reading material taken from various resources, it seemed that the students were interested to study it. The lecturer gave the reading material firstly of intermediate level and up to the advance level, for the students were under-graduate students who were at the advance level of their study. The learners in this case would learn or tried to understand the text by using various learning strategies suitable with the reading material given to them. So the choice of learning strategy much depended on the material they got. In relation to this, the lecturer should be selective in deciding what kind and level of difficulties of the material would be given to the learners.

e. Teaching Media

Teaching media was a very important one in learning reading comprehension and it influenced the learners to use certain learning strategy in reading. Some others were sure that teaching media was not so important for them. The important thing was the material itself. It influenced them to use certain learning strategy in English reading comprehension. In relation to influential factor of using learning strategy in reading comprehension, based on the interview with learners it indicated that there were so many and various teaching media had been used by the teacher in relation to the reading comprehension. It also influenced the learners in using strategies appropriate with the media, materials prepared by the teacher in classroom activities.

Then media was also became influential factor for them. It was realized that media play important role in learning. It was proved by the statement (Brinton in Celce-Murcia (1991) that whatever the approach used in language teaching, language teachers seem to universally agree that the media can and do enhance language teaching and thus in the daily practice of language teaching we find the entire range of media. Media can help the teacher to motivate students by bringing a slice of real life into the classroom and presenting language in its more communicative situation

f. Classroom Management

Classroom management is one of the influential factors of the learners in using learning strategies especially in reading comprehension. Harmer (1991) states there are various aspects of class management including the role of the teacher, student groupings and disruptive behavior. The role of the teacher in managing the classroom is important especially in reading comprehension activities because the students' activities in the classroom much depend on the teacher. There are many roles of the teacher in the classroom such as facilitator, controller, assessor, organizer, prompter, participant, a resource, tutor, and investigator. They all influence the learners in using learning strategy in reading comprehension

g. Teaching Approach and Strategy

Teacher approach was really important and it influenced the learners in using learning strategy in English reading comprehension. The lecturer was having good approach in teaching. It was indicated that the students understood about the material presented to them. But sometimes, it seemed that the lecturer was relatively fast in explaining the lesson that made some students got difficulties in getting the idea of the lesson. But she always asked her students whether they understood or not yet in every end of meeting. It influenced the learning strategies used by learners in their reading comprehension.

Conclusion

There were six language learning strategies used by learners in their English reading comprehension. They are memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies. Among the strategies, the mostly used by the learners are metacognitive strategy, while the least strategy used was the affective strategy. Among the strategies the mostly used were the metacognitive strategy sets with the average score of 3,33. While the least strategies used were the affective strategy sets with the average score of 2,81.

There were some factors that influenced the learners in using learning strategies in English reading comprehension. They were motivation, gender, type of task, reading material, teaching media, classroom activities and management, and teacher approach and strategy.

In relation to the findings of the findings of the research, there is an implication for the language learning strategies in reading comprehension. It is that the students need to be informed about the language learning strategies in reading comprehension and using appropriate language learning strategies in reading comprehension was considered to be one of the ways in improving the learners' reading comprehension achievement. One of the ways is they needed to be informed about the language learning strategies in reading comprehension

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