

Using Metacognitive Learning Strategy to Improve Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

The learners' success in their reading comprehension depends on many factors. The learner is one of the important factors that can determine his/her success in reading comprehension. The learners may do many things and activate themselves in order that they may improve their reading comprehension; it is learning strategy. Metacognitive Learning Strategy is one of the indirect learning strategy that may influence the students in their success in their learning. Metacognitive strategies help learners to regulate their learning including planning, self-monitoring and self-evaluation. Then, metacognitive strategy sets consist of centering your learning; helps learners to converge their attention and energies on language skills, activities, skills, or materials, arranging and planning your learning; help learners to organize and plan so as to get the most out of language learning, evaluating your learning; aiding learners in checking their language performance. Since learners have an important role in his/ her success in reading comprehension, it is considered that they should aware the metacognitive learning strategy itself in order that they may apply them in their reading comprehension activity. The paper is about metacognitive learning strategy to improve Reading Comprehension. It is expected that this article can become useful information for the teachers, learners and readers who concern with the reading comprehension in general.

Key words: learning strategy, metacognitive learning strategy, reading comprehension

Introduction

Reading Comprehension is one of the compulsory subjects should be taken by students who learn language. The general objectives of the subject are to give practices in reading comprehension and take conclusion of the texts in levels of elementary, intermediate and advance. The materials as a whole are about basic skills in reading comprehension, finding topic sentences, practices on scanning and skimming, cohesive devices in discourse, summary writing, practices in analyzing various types of reading materials and book reports. To get successful in reading comprehension, there are so many efforts that can be done by the students, and the teachers.

From the learners actually, there are so many factors that influence the success of students in learning. As Slameto (1995:54) states that the students are always influenced by external and internal factors. Internal factors are such things as motivation, intelligence, interest and attitude. The external factors are school environment, family, social environment, curriculum, the teacher and some others. Based on the facts mentioned above, it can be assumed that one of the students' main problems is their lack of motivation in reading besides other causes.

To make the students motivated in reading English, they can do many things. One of them is by using language learning strategy that focusses on metacognitive learning strategy in their reading comprehension. Using metacognitive learning strategy in reading comprehension is one of the ways that can be used by learners to improve their in reading comprehension.

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 learners acquiring 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.

Based on curriculum of the Academy for Foreign Language nationally, the materials of Reading Comprehension I and II based on curriculum are practices in reading comprehension, basic skills in reading comprehension, and practices in finding the topic, topic sentence, supporting details, and transitions in paragraphs in article details sentence. The lecturers and the learners in the reading classroom activities have not used to use appropriate metacognitive learning strategy in getting meaning of unknown words as one basic ability in reading comprehension for example and other abilities in reading comprehension. It was considered that if the learners knew and realized the use of metacognitive learning strategy in reading comprehension by themselves it could be assumed that they would be motivated to read their English texts and their ability in English reading comprehension will be improved well. Metacognitive strategies are something potentially important in learning a foreign language (Larsen Freeman 1991). The paper is about using metacognitive learning strategy in English reading comprehension to improve the learners' reading comprehension ability.

Language Learning Strategy

If we talk about language learning strategies, the understanding in the terms of learning and acquisition should be taken into account first. Learning and acquisition have a light different in meaning as stated by Oxford (1990:5) that learning is conscious knowledge of language rules, does not typically lead to conversational fluency, and is derived from formal instruction, while acquisition occurs unconsciously and spontaneously, does lead to conversational fluency and arises from naturalistic knowledge use. It means whenever one gets information or knowledge about language consciously and formally, it can be said that it is caused by the process of learning. On the other hand when one gets knowledge about language unconsciously and leads to speaking activities or fluency, it is caused by the process of acquisition or acquiring the language. So getting knowledge about language or acquiring the language is through the process of learning or acquiring.

Strategy has been used to refer both to general approaches and specific actions or techniques used to learn a second or foreign language. Everybody uses different strategies in acquiring, doing and overcoming something based on his or her individual differences. Learning strategy is defined by O'Malley and Chamot (1990:1) as "special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to comprehend, learn, or retain new information".

Oxford (1990) defines them as "actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques students use, often unconsciously, to improve their progress in apprehending, internalizing, and using the second language. For example, when a baby knows new words and produces and communicates them naturally to the people around him, it is regarded as the result of the process of acquisition. But if the new words the children get after getting such training consciously, it is said to be the result of learning process. Strategy has been used to refer both to general approaches and specific actions or techniques used to learn a second or foreign language.

In relation to the language, learning strategy has been defined by many researchers. Previously, Wenden and Rubin (1987:19) define learning strategies as "... any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information...". In relation to this, Richards and Platt (1992) state that learning strategies are "intentional behavior and thought used by learners during learning so as to better help them understand, learn and remember new information". Stern (1992:261) states that the concept of learning strategy is dependent on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals and learning strategies can be regarded as broadly conceived intentional directions and learning techniques. It means that the concepts learners do activities consciously to enhance certain goals and they can be thought as intentional directions and

learning techniques. All language learners use language learning strategies either consciously or unconsciously when processing new information and performing tasks in the language classroom. By the definitions above it can be said that every learner uses different learning strategy in their efforts in getting or acquiring new thing in language learning.

To employ the language the learners learn in order they get knowledge and competence and skills in their language. They do many efforts and actions to employ the language they learn in order they get knowledge and competence and skills in their language. In line with this, Oxford (1990: 30) states that actions the learners employ to improve the development of their language learning skills is what is called as language learning strategies. It is stated that *learning strategies are steps taken by the students to enhance their own learning. Strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential to develop communicative competence.* It means that language learner strategies are the actions learners employ to improve the development of their language learning skills.

Classification of language learner strategies varies somewhat, depending on the definition of the researcher in question. Oxford developed a system of classification organized around a division of two strategy groups, direct and indirect which are further subdivided into 6 groups. Direct Strategies consists of memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies consist of metacognitive, affective and social strategies. In his system, metacognitive strategies help learners to regulate their learning. Affective strategies are concerned with the learner's emotional requirements such as confidence, while social strategies lead to increase interaction with the target language. Cognitive strategies are the mental strategies learners use to make sense of their learning, memory strategies are those used for storage of information, and compensation strategies help learners to overcome knowledge gaps to continue the communication. Oxford considers the aim of language learning strategies as being oriented towards the development of communicative competence. He divides language learning strategies into two main classes, direct and indirect, which are further subdivided into six groups as taxonomy of language learning as follows:

Direct Strategies. Direct Strategies are the strategies that directly involve the target language. All direct strategies require mental processing of the language, but the three groups of direct strategies (memory; those used for storage of information, cognitive; the mental strategies learners uses to make sense of their learning, and compensation; help learners to overcome knowledge gaps to continue the communication) do the processing differently and for different purposes.

Indirect strategies. Indirect strategies are the strategies for general management of learning. All indirect strategies are made of metacognitive strategies; help learners to regulate their learning, affective strategies; concerned with the learner's emotional requirements such as confidence, while social strategies lead to increased interaction with the target language.

Metacognitive Learning Strategy

Metacognitive strategy sets consist of centering your learning; helps learners to converge their attention and energies on language skills, activities, skills, or materials, arranging and planning your learning; help learners to organize and plan so as to get the most out of language learning, evaluating your learning; aiding learners in checking their language performance.

In line with the classification of language learning strategies, O'Malley' (1985) previously divides language learning strategies into three main subcategories as follows: they are metacognitive strategy, cognitive strategy and socio-affective strategy. Metacognitive strategy is a term to express executive function, strategies which require planning for learning, thinking about the learning process as it is taking place, monitoring of one's production or comprehension, and evaluating learning after an activity is completed. Among the main metacognitive strategies, it is possible to include advance organizers, directed attention,

selective attention, self-management, functional planning, self-monitoring, delayed production, self-evaluation.

Then, O. Malley's descriptions of the strategies in their classifications (Brown: 1987:93-94) are metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and socio-affective strategies. The first subcategory; Metacognitive Strategies consisted of 1) Advance organizer: Making general but comprehensive preview of the organizing concept or principle in an anticipated learning activity, 2) Directed Attention: Deciding in advance to attend in general to a learning task and to ignore irrelevant distracters, 3) Selective Attention: One of metacognitive strategy that is deciding in advance to attend to specific aspects of language input or situational details that will cue the retention of language input, 4) Self-Management: Understanding the conditions that help one learn and arranging for the presence of those conditions, 5) Functional Planning: A planning for and rehearsing linguistic components necessary to carry out an upcoming language task functionally, 6) Self-Monitoring: To do correcting one's speech for accuracy in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, or for appropriateness related to the setting or to the people who are present. Someone can do self-monitoring to improve his or her language skill, 7) Delayed Production: It can be done consciously by deciding to postpone speaking in order to learn initially through listening comprehension. In listening and speaking activities, if someone cannot understand about others speaking or listening, he may stop for a while or postpone continuing the conversation or listening until he or she understand what it means, and 8) Self-Evaluation: Checking the outcomes of one's own language learning against an internal measure of completeness and accuracy. In this condition, the language learners evaluate themselves about their language improvement in order to make it better.

Reading Comprehension

Comprehension ability as Bormouth states in Harris (1994:479) is as thought to be a set of generalized knowledge-acquisition skills which permit people's information gained as a consequence of reading printed language. There are three main components of reading comprehension: decoding, lexical access (having a meaning from the printed words in one's memory) and text organization, defined as obtaining meaning from units larger than the single word. Reading comprehension needs skill by one can comprehend the reading materials effectively. According to Anderson (1989:109) :

“ In a text, knowledge of words meaning and stated facts are requested. Simultaneously, a reader should have the following abilities : (1). to identify the main theme, (2). to follow the organization of the passage, (3). to grasp causal relationship, (4). to draw inferences and (5). to see the author's purpose”.

It is suggested that the writers give clear information of the knowledge and the abilities to make the reader easy in knowing and understanding the whole content of the reading text. Herber (1970: 61-65) divides comprehension into three levels. They are:

1. Literal. The students are able to decode words, identify what the writer said, memorize and repeat without understanding what the writer meant.
2. Interpretive. The students are able to retell what the writer meant by relating to their previous knowledge and intrinsic relationships.
3. Applied. The students are able to produce the new ideas or they are able to relate the writer's ideas to other situation.

Harris (1999:58) states that the abilities in reading comprehension needed in reading a language are : Language and graphic symbols, Ideas, and Tone and style. It can be concluded that the reader in general needs ability in language and graphic symbols, ideas, tone and style of the reading text in order that the reader can comprehend it well.

The readers should know and have three aspects that are helpful for them in their reading comprehension. They are knowledge of words formulation and their meanings, ability to guess

the meaning of unknown words by finding them in context, and ability to see the main thought of the writers and general ideas of a piece of reading, (Notion in Nadrah, 2004:29). Moreover she adds that there are three components that are essential to any acts of reading comprehension. They are: a text, a reader of the text and an interpretation of the text by the reader.

Mc Whorther (1986) states that in reading, the readers pay attention on knowledge about topic, topic sentence and main idea, details and the transitional words in the paragraph. Moreover, As Zainil (2005) states that understanding paragraph includes the activities in identifying the paragraph elements such as topic, topic sentence, details of the paragraph and the transitional references, paragraph developments such as coherence and cohesion in, between and among the paragraphs. By the descriptions, after considering the theories about reading comprehension by the experts, it was concluded that the components of reading comprehension in the research were about the comprehension of the students' reading comprehension in

1. Identifying topic,
2. Identifying topic sentence or main idea,
3. Identifying the supporting ideas or details,
4. Identifying the transitional words, and
5. Getting the meaning of the words and sentences in paragraphs

Using Metacognitive Learning Strategy in Reading Comprehension

In relation to the improvement of the learners' reading comprehension, some students may have a number of metacognitive strategies in their reading comprehension but some others may not or if any, they have very limited learning strategies with them. In relation to the reading comprehension activity, the students should think and understand the appropriate metacognitive learning.

As has been mentioned before that in general, metacognitive strategy sets consist of centering your learning; helps learners to converge their attention and energies on language skills, activities, skills, or materials, arranging and planning your learning; help learners to organize and plan so as to get the most out of language learning, evaluating your learning; aiding learners in checking their language performance.

Centering your learning in reading comprehension as one metacognitive strategy means that the learners should pay attention to only the reading material, focus on the aim of their reading, helps learners to converge their attention and energies on language skills, activities, skills, or materials, arranging and planning your learning; help learners to organize and plan so as to get the most out of language learning, evaluating your learning; aiding learners in checking their language performance. In general the learners may use metacognitive learning strategy in their reading comprehension in order that they can improve their reading comprehension ability.

Conclusion

By the explanation before, it can be concluded that the learners may use various language learning strategies to make them able to comprehend the reading text. By using metacognitive learning strategy it is expected that the learners can improve their reading comprehension ability. Actually, there are so many metacognitive language learning strategy that can be used by the learners especially to improve their reading comprehension. The learners should make them familiar with the various metacognitive learning strategies in order that they may use them appropriately by considering the importance of metacognitive learning strategy for the learners, they should use them whenever and wherever they are since it has relation to the improvement of their reading comprehension ability. Then it is expected they will be successful in their reading comprehension. They can enjoy their learning process; feel comfortable in using learning strategies in their reading comprehension.

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