

## APPLYING LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY INSTRUCTION TO IMPROVE THE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION ABILITY

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### Abstract

*There are some factors that may influence the students' success in their reading comprehension. One of them is applying language learning strategy instruction toward the students in their reading comprehension activity in order that they can improve their reading comprehension ability. As has been known that students use learning strategies to help them understand information and solve problems in their reading comprehension. Students who do not know or use good and appropriate language learning strategies in their reading comprehension often learn passively and even they get failure at their school. Language Learning Strategy instruction focuses on making students more active learners by teaching them how to learn and how to use what they have learned to be successful learners. This article is about Applying Language Learning Strategy Instruction to improve the learners' Reading Comprehension Ability. 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:** *language learning strategy, instruction, reading comprehension*

### A. INTRODUCTION

Teaching reading comprehension is aimed atempowering the students' ability in comprehending the reading. In relation to this, good teachers have attempted to do many things in order that their students are able to comprehend the reading text. On the other hand, the teachers' efforts will be useless if there is no attempts from the students to make them successful in relation to their reading comprehension activity.

From the students point of view, there are many efforts also that can be done in order that they will get successful in their reading comprehension activity. Learning strategy is one point that can be used by the students to make them successful in reading. Learning strategy is meant that the efforts, actions and many things done by learners to make them improved their ability in reading comprehension.

In relation to this, there is old proverb (Wenden, 1985) which implies that if we give a man afish and he eats for a day. If we teach him how to fish and he eats for a lifetime. It means that if it is appliedto the language teaching and learning field, this proverb might be interpreted to meanthat if we help our students with the answer of a question or problem, it will be solved easily and immediately. Unfortunately they do not know how to answer it wisely if there is the questions comes to them.

To help the students with the problems; they will be able to face the problems in order that they are successful in managing their life in general. In accordance with the reading comprehension, learning strategy can be also used by students to make them successful in it. It

can be taught by the teachers in many ways to make them have ability in reading comprehension. This article is about applying language learning strategy instruction to improve the students reading comprehension ability.

### **Language Learning Strategy**

Strategy is defined by Chamot (2005) as procedures that facilitate a learning task. They are most often conscious and goal driven. It aims at making the learners successful in their learning. Successful can be gained by using appropriate strategy with them. Then, to get knowledge, competence and skills in their language, language learners do many efforts and actions to employ the language they learn in order they get knowledge and competence and skills in their language. Oxford (1990) states that actions the learners employ to improve the development of their language learning skills is what is called as language learning strategies. Then, language learner strategies are the actions learners employ to improve the development of their language learning skills. Moreover, 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”* (Oxford, 1990b:1).

It means the learners may have strategies to do everything in relation to their reading comprehension. The strategies may fit to them, they may feel comfortable to do it, and they get benefit by using the appropriate strategy with them. It is important because the students realized the good strategy for them and they may apply them freely. The aim is that the students may succeed in their reading comprehension.

There are classifications of language learning strategy in English reading comprehension. Oxford (1990) divides learning strategy into two major classes; direct and indirect strategy. Totally, from two classes, they are further subdivided into 6 groups. The first class consists of cognitive strategies; 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. The second class consists of metacognitive strategies that 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, (Oxford: 1990:17).

In line with the classification of learning strategy, O'Malley and Chamot (1986) classify the learning strategy into three main categories : Metacognitive; strategies that involve 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, Cognitive; strategies that are limited to specific learning tasks and involve more direct manipulation of the learning material itself and Socio-affective strategies; that have to do with social-mediating activity and interacting with others. Then, in accordance with learning strategies mentioned above, whatever the students use in their learning strategies, they are considered helpful for them to make them successful in their learning or to be good language learners. Rubin and Thompson (1982) summarized fourteen characteristics of good language learners as follows: find their own way taking charge of their learning, organize information about the language, are creative, make their own opportunities for practice inside or outside the classroom, learn to live with uncertainty, use mnemonics and other memory strategies, make errors work for them and not against them, use linguistic knowledge, use contextual cues to help them in comprehension, learn to get intelligent guesses, learn chunks of language as wholes, learn certain tricks that help to

keep conversation going, learn certain production strategies to fill the gaps in their conversations going, and learn different styles of speech and writing and learn to vary their language according to the formality of the situation.

### **Reading Comprehension**

Reading is the meaningful interpretation of printed letters into meaning. It is a mental activity in interpreting the symbols of the language, that is also called “decoding”. Duffy and Roehler (1989:38) state that the focus of reading is meaning getting, or comprehending the content of a text for practical or aesthetic purposes. Then, he defines reading as purposeful reconstruction of an author’s printed message for recreational or functional purposes.

In reading a text, a reader does not only have to know the symbols of the language, but also tries to get information carried by the symbols. He should be able to get and interpret ideas from the text he reads. In relation to this, Harveys (1998: 34) states that reading is to inform the reader about something he is interested in. It means if he needs information from the text he is interested in, he has to read the written text first.

There are three phases of reading lesson that are usually divided into three stages as stated by Dubin and Bycina in Celce-Murcia (1991: 202). They are: Pre-reading Phase, While-Reading Phase, and Post-Reading Phase. In Pre-reading Phase, the teachers activate (or build, if necessary) the learners’ knowledge of the subject, provide something that might be needed for coping with the passage, and finally, motivate the learners to read the text. In While-Reading Phase, teacher helps learners understand the specific content and perceive the rhetorical structure of the text. Then, in Post-Reading Phase, the teacher review the content, work on bottom-up concerns such as grammar, vocabulary, and discourse features, and consolidate what has been read by relating new information to the learners’ knowledge, interests and opinions.

Reading comprehension is one of the main purposes of language teaching and learning. There have been a number of attempts that have been done to improve the students’ reading comprehension ability at schools by the teachers, students themselves. The teachers may teach their students by using teaching strategy. By the teaching strategy, it is hoped that the students may understand the text given to the students. Then, the students may do something, have efforts to attain the text, to understand the text and overall to be successful in reading comprehension.

## **B. DISCUSSION**

### **Applying language learning strategy instruction to improve reading comprehension ability.**

As has been mentioned before that some students may have a number of 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 strategies with their reading comprehension. Then the teachers should consider various ways to prepare to conduct strategy instruction for their classes.

There have been many researches that learning strategy instruction is important and meaningful to the students’ success in their learning. because there is growing evidence that language reading teachers can and should conduct strategy instruction in their classrooms. For some teachers it might be better to start with small strategy interventions, such as helping readers learn to analyze words and guess meanings from the context, rather than with full-scale strategies-based instruction involving a vast array of learning strategies and the four language skills, reading, writing, speaking and listening (Oxford, 1990).

The teachers may use the categories of learning strategies based on Oxford classification or O'Malley or some others. Other teachers might want to move rapidly into strategies-based instruction. Strategies-based instruction is not so much a separate "instructional method" as it is sound strategy instruction interwoven with the general communicative language teaching approach noted above. Chamot and O'Malley (1996) describe the CALLA model, a form of strategies-based instruction for ESL learners that includes explicit strategy instruction, content area instruction, and academic language development. Cohen (1996) presents a different but somewhat related version of strategies-based instruction for native English speakers learning foreign languages. In evaluating the success of any strategy instruction, teachers should look for individuals' progress toward language proficiency and for signs of increased self-efficacy or motivation. Another recent study of reading comprehension investigated the effects of strategy instruction on lower and higher proficiency levels and also assessed students' continuing use of strategies after the conclusion of instruction. The results indicated that the strategy instruction affected the frequency of students' use of the strategies only for the high proficiency level group. An encouraging finding was that students retained their use of learning strategies for reading five months after the conclusion of instruction.

Strategy-based instruction refers to explicit classroom instruction directed at learners regarding their language learning and use strategies, and provided alongside instruction in the foreign language itself, (Cohen, 1996). The goal of strategy-based instruction is to help second language students become more aware of the ways in which they learn most effectively, ways in which they can enhance their own comprehension and production of the target language, and ways in which they can continue learning after leaving the classroom.

A strategy is considered to be effective if it provides positive support to the students in their effort to learn the language or to communicate through its use. Research has shown that the degree of success in language learning depends greatly on the strategies learners use. So the role of the teacher is helping learners develop effective language learning strategies. It should become a major goal of language teaching.

The teachers ideally have two goals: teaching learners '*what to learn*' (the product), and teaching them '*how to learn*' (the process). By helping learners improve their language skills and learning skills equally we enable them to '*learn how to do for themselves what teachers typically do for them*' (Wenden, 1985: 7). Strategy instruction usually begins with assessing learners' strategy use which serves many purposes.

### C. CONCLUSION

By the explanation before, it can be concluded that the students may have various language learning strategies to make them able to comprehend the reading text. Not all of students have and apply good and appropriate learning strategies. It may be caused by not knowing the various language learning strategies. If they know them, they not know how to use them. By considering the importance of language learning strategies to the students, it is stated that the teacher should apply the language learning strategies instruction to the students in teaching them reading comprehension in order that the students get success in their reading comprehension. The teachers can teach and lead their students about good language learning strategies and let them consider the good and appropriate strategies with themselves. It is hoped that they enjoy their learning process, feel comfortable in applying learning strategies in their reading comprehension.

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