Applying Cultural–Based Narrative Text to Induce Metacognitive Reading Strategies of Proficient EFL Learners at English Department, Hasanuddin University Makassar

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports a six-month survey on final year students from English Department Faculty of Cultural Sciences Hasanuddin University. The purpose of this survey was to reveal the extent to which narrative text could induce metacognitive strategies of the students.. Using MARSI questionnaire to investigate their metacognitive strategies for 25 samples, the survey came up with encouraging results. The majority of the samples reported significant improvement in reading narrative texts.The students experienced improvement in all aspects of metacognitive strategies, such as Support Strategy, Global Strategy, and Problem Solving Strategy. The majority of the students declared to have the inclination of reading a variety of text using metacognitive strategies with good comprehension. The findings supports the previous research that confirms assurance of reading improvement through narrative text. The survey warrants pedagogical implication for teachers to utilize abundant of narrative text to improve learning skills especially literacy skills of tertiary EFL learners to strengthen their comprehension over the English texts..

Keywords: metacognitive strategies; induce; global strategy; tertiary.

1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) occupies an important position in the Indonesian education system, as it becomes a core content within tertiary education curricula. As an important part of curriculum content, the teaching of English has placed emphasis on the four skills, such as speaking, reading, listening, and writing. With the rapid development of science and technology, there has been a shift of teaching orientation due to the increasing demands of literacy skills with the emphasis on reading ability but still maintain the other three skills. Reading is even seen as an important process of self-empowerment. More recently, the government of Indonesia through the Department of Education and Culture has urged its people all over the country to improve their literacy skills in order to be able to challenge the dynamic development of globalization era (Abidin, et al. 2012).

At present, the Indonesian government demands its people to acquire high standard of reading ability due to necessity for bilateral cooperation. The government is constantly well aware of the need of literacy skills as a means ofstrengthening the national, academic, social and cultural identity. More recently, the Department of Education and Culture has urged learners all over the country to improve their literacy skills in order to be able to challenge the dynamic development of globalization era. Meanwhile, Whitehead (2008) confirms that this mission is relevant to the need of language proficiency as an essential condition for its people in order to gain resistant survival in this fast changing society

Although English is not the medium of instruction in Indonesian secondary and tertiary education, vitality of reading ability in English is crucial for all learners due to an increasing demand in accessing valuable information from various English texts. The Reading skill is undoubtedly urgent to Indonesian learners because they have limited sources of target language exposures outside the classroom while most of the information in English comes through reading. In such context, learners get more opportunities to read rather than to listen and speak in English (Boss 2002). In many

parts of the world a reading knowledge of a foreign language is important not only to academic studies but also for professional success and personal development (Anderson 1994).

Despite importance of reading to learners in Indonesian situation, reading is a source of difficulty for the majority of learners in most tertiary education. The nature of problems that most learners encounter involves a number of factors including lack of reading strategies, lack of strategies in using background knowledge to infer meaning from text and lack of motivation to read. The condition mentioned above may appear very discouraging and frustrating. Under this condition, it is becoming more apparent that teachers of English in Indonesia are confronted with insurmountable problems. On the other hand, they are expected to achieve the national goal of English teaching which is to enable the students to receptively and productively use the language for academic purposes as a means of international communication. Teachers were often confronted with which approaches and techniques to use in their reading classroom in order to cope with the learners' reading difficulties.

In the academic setting, these learners are expected to have skills in reading that involves distinguishing between factual and non-factual information as well as arriving at generalization and coming to the conclusion and evaluation. Meanwhile, they also need both the ability of literal and inferential comprehension. Surely, these learners need both metacognitive and cognitive strategies. However, Current perceptions of the majority of researchers in Indonesia claim that the teaching of English as a foreign language is not successful. In other words, the performance of the majority of learners is still far from expectation. Raising the issue of importance of background knowledge as well as metacognitive and cognitive reading strategies will bridge the expectation and current poor performance of learners.

Reading for academic professionalism and success has played a central role for learners regardless of their disciplines. This is because most knowledge transfer occurs through printed materials. Because reading skills play important roles among tertiary learners especially at English Department Hasanuddin University (UNHAS) then the ability to read has been the major concern of most teaching practitioners. Coleman (1998) conducted a survey at 12 faculties at this university on the main purpose of learners taking English subject revealed that the majority of students surveyed put reading skills as their main goals for learning English. Coleman's survey has resulted in the publication of reading materials entitled 'Risking Fun' (Reading Skills for UNHAS). The publication gained acclaim from the rector who later recommended revision in content due to dynamic development of the institution.

There have been an overwhelming of studies that reveal the effectiveness of extensive reading in a range of contexts. Previous studies have reinforced the belief that extensive reading will have a positive impact on the rate at which learners acquire the target language. Additionally, some studies with relatively comprehensive assessment revealed positive effects of extensive reading on grammar. Yang (2011), for example, assigned adult EFL learners in Hong Kong to an experimental group that read two English novels for 12 weeks, or to a control group that received regular instruction, with a focus on reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Results indicated that the extensive reading group achieved significantly higher scores than the control group on a test of grammar knowledge.

2. DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS

Demographic background provides holistic understanding regarding the subjects being investigated. Although the present study does not raise the issue of gender and age perspectives, it is essential to generate information concerning these aspects to ensure the subjects' homogeneity. This investigation involved eighty three cohorts of tertiary learners at English department, Hasanuddin University, Makassar Indonesia. The students had been at the department for several years. These learners have completed several core subjects at the department and have experienced some sorts of reading test, including the TOEFL and IELTS test. Although the subjects originate from different areas in the province and with different socio-cultural backgrounds, they have the average level of language proficiency. They all have gone through the standard curriculum that provides them with similar English instructions in their previous education.

The following tables present both gender and age distribution of the total number of subjects in the investigation. Table 1 illustrates 56 (70%) of the subjects were females and 24 (30%) were males out of the total eighty students. Table 2 illustrates modes of the ages among the subjects that range from 17 to 24 where age 20 was dominant (41, 3%) out of 80 subjects. These frequency distribution clearly indicate that the subjects within this investigation are adult language learners thus having capabilities to provide legible and valid information when asked to fill the questionnaires as well as verbalize their cognitive processes in reading.

Table 1. Gender Distribution.

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	24	30
Female	56	70
Total	80	100

Table 2. Age Distribution

Age	Frequency	Percent
17	1	1.3
18	4	5.0
19	25	31.3
20	33	41.3
21	11	13.8
22	5	6.3
24	1	1.3
Total	80	100

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research interests in looking at the power of narrative text has shown tremendous evidence in the last couple of years and findings from reading research and of different context have also been prevalent as recorded in the literature review. The National Center for Education Statistics, 2015, for example notified the efficacy of supplemental, multicomponent adolescent reading intervention improved vocabulary and promote reading comprehension. Engagement as defined as greater involvement in the form of commitment to reading activities appeared to contribute to develop students 'reading skills (Gutrie & Klauda 2014).

A number of reading problems appeared in the literature of reading have gained resolution through intensification of reading culture. According to Yildirim, (2014) teachers are partly to blame for the negative attitudes held by students towards reading. This is because of their preference for intensive reading, which essentially entails subjecting learners to study short texts while requiring them to examine the content of such texts closely. The research confirmed that intensive reading exposes learners to excessive new vocabularies, and has emerged as a practical solution to the above problem from several perspectives. First, extensive reading ensures that students are given easy reading material. Teachers using the ER approach can either choose texts that match the reading competence of individual students, or allow the students themselves to choose the texts they want to read.

Improvement in specific linguistic features has also been addressed as an important research finding in the two specific context of reading. Day & Bramford (2005) found that extensive reading helps to improve students 'proficiency in spelling. Based on findings from an investigation conducted among ESL learners in the United States, they found that students who read more tend to be better spellers. Similar findings were made among Japanese students studying English: reading for pleasure exposes students to a variety of target words that help in boosting ones spelling ability. From these findings, it is accurate to conclude that extensive reading is an approach through which individuals can improve their spelling skills. Another finding that came up from similar study is that it improves learners 'linguistic competence. According to Day and Bamford (2005), all studies that have been conducted in an attempt to identify the impact of reading different text genres on learners reveal a common theme: an increase in overall proficiency in the language. In the US, for instance, research has shown that adult students who read novels for fun become more competent in terms of listening as well as speaking abilities. Similar results have been obtained in England and Hong Kong, with learners who read extensively demonstrating a notable improvement in linguistic proficiency.

4. METHODOLOGY

The samples of the study were the fresh EFL undergraduate students from three cohort (2016, 2017, 2018) of English Department. For the whole semester these students were exposed intensively to narrative text. They had to get familiar with lexical items contained in the text. In terms of English exposure, they had similar amount of English instruction before their admission to the tertiary level of education. In other words, they have almosthad identical reading exposures during secondary schools so that the subject homogenity could be ensured. A total of 96 hours of narrative text reading for the whole semester. A MARSI questionnaire consisting of 30 items developed by Mochtary (2015) was used to measure the student's metacognitive

strategies after the intervention. In depth-interview was also performed to gain responses regarding level of metacognitive awareness.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present study demonstrates that the three group of cohort students have high degree of metacognitive reading strategies. The overall findings imply that the students have better awareness of metacognitive aspects, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating in the process of meaning reconstruction over the text being read. The degree of metacognitive awareness reinforces the belief that EFL tertiary learners can also perform better reading comprehension despite limitation in the possession of lexical items. The reason for the overall high usage of reading strategies might be that reading narrative texts or similar types of text genres stimulates readers to use more strategies. It may also be due to specific reason that reading such text for EFL learners require cognitive demands. However, as far as EFL language learning is concerned, the high level of awareness is not necessarily a predictor of effective and efficient readers since EFL learners have limitation in in a range of vocabulary. The finding only partially supports earlier research claim by Israel (2007) who points out that expert readers and highly skilled readers as those who use specific metacognitive strategies before, during, and after reading to support them in their comprehension of the texts.

Table 3. Metacognitive reading strategies (Cohort 2016)

Metacognitive Strategy	Mean	Std	Level
Problem Solving	3.70	.54	High
Support	3.50	.55	High
Global	2.83	.87	Medium

Table 4. Metacognitive Strategies (Cohort 2017)

Metacognitive Strategy	Mean	Std	Level
Problem Solving	3.69	.54	High
Support	3.18	1.06	Medium
Global	3.50	.60	High

Table 5. Metacognitive Strategies (Cohort 2018)

Metacognitive Strategy	Mean	Std	Level
Problem Solving	3.28	1.15	Medium
Support	3.52	.55	High
Global	3.57	.60	High

The overall pattern of metacognitive awareness by the learners is presented using the mean score (M) and standard deviation (SD) of MARSI that measures the learners' metacognitive awareness in their reading of narrative text. Three sub-scales of strategy in MARSI that include Global Strategy (GLOB) with 13 items, Support Strategy (SUP) with 9 items and Problem Solving Strategy (PROB) with 8 items are used to reveal the level of metacognitive awareness of English Department students. The overall average indicates level of awareness while reading narrative reading material. The average for each sub-scale of the inventory shows, which sub-group of strategy (i.e., GLOB, SUP, PROB), gain higher tendency of reading awareness in each proficiency group. This will convey information whether learners group belongs to LOW, MEDIUM, or HIGH category in any of the three groups.

The findings from the three cohort students demonstrate a range of metacognitive awareness in the three aspects. For cohort (2016) two aspects exhibits high level of awareness for the standard deviation (.54, .55) for both PROB and SUP strategies. Cohort (2017) exhibits two level of awareness (PROB. & GLOB.) may be due to differences in learning experiences. Cohort (2018), on the other hand, performed medium level at PROB aspect. Cohort (2018) had different study duration at English department as compared to their senior counterparts. The finding could confirm whether differences in the level of awareness is due to learning experiences or partially individual. However, the trend

may be inferred that students total exposure to reading will be benefit more in terms of meaning reconstruction to the text than those with less experienced. As comparison, cohort 2016 had been at the department for 6 semesters while the other two cohort between 2 to 4 semesters. This may imply that reading awareness may increase along with maturation in the learning process.

The global strategy reflects the very universal nature of purposeful actions that can be utilized by all cohorts in reading narrative text. The global strategy consists of thirteen items that reflect about self-regulation of learning engage in reading. These items engage metacognitive process that can be very helpful for learners in performing cognitive task effectively. Examples include setting purpose for reading, activating prior knowledge, checking whether text content fits the purpose, predicting what the text is about, confirming predictions, previewing text for content, skimming to note text characteristics, making decisions in relation to what to read closely, using context clues, using text structure, and using other textual features to enhance reading comprehension.

For global strategy, the cohorts exhibits a range of 3.18 to 3.95 mean score which indicates that these strategies are used at medium and high level. The overall mean score of 3.52 shows that the strategy constructs are being used at a relatively high level. The high level of awareness implies that the proficient group are constantly aware of global strategy in their reading that includes setting a purpose, previewing and predicting a text while reading. The high mean score in the three respective constructs (M=3.78, 3.95, and 3.70) clearly indicates that the surveyed learners are constantly well aware of their metacognitive reading strategies during reading process

Support strategy is a set of reading strategy oriented toward the use of outside reference materials in order to facilitate comprehension. This strategy group is also concerned with cognitive processes, such as thinking aloud and skimming over the text to identify the text length and its organization. This sub-category of reading strategy has nine (9) items that reflect conscious use of supporting elements that learners may consider to achieve comprehension. Examples include taking notes while reading, paraphrasing text information, revisiting previously read information, asking self questions, using reference materials as aid, underlining text information, discussing reading with others, and writing summaries of reading.

For support strategy, the proficient learners exhibit a range of (M= 3.18 to M= 4.28) mean score which indicates that these strategies are used at both medium and high level. The overall mean score of (M=3.54) shows that Support Strategy is being used at a relatively high level of awareness. The reason for this high level of awareness is most probably due to the fact that

support strategy concerns conscious attempts for the use of other practical strategies to achieve better comprehension. The mean score in the three constructs (M=3.58, 4.28, and 4.08) that concern the use of outside reference material exhibits a slight different data compared with other constructs in the global strategy

Problem Solving Strategy is a set of reading strategy oriented towards solution of reading when text generates difficulties. Example include reading slowly and carefully, adjusting reading rate, paying close attention to reading, pausing to reflect on reading, rereading, visualizing information read, reading text out loud, and guessing meaning of unknown words.

With eight constructs within this reading strategy group, it appears to be the most significant sub-strategy performed by the proficient learners. All items in this group exhibit high level of awareness with the mean score ranging from (M=3.33) being the lowest to (M=4.18) being the highest and the overall mean score is then (M=3.79), standard deviation (SD=.54). The first item is concerned with reading slowly but carefully sure to understand what was read (M=3.98). This item indicates that the proficient learners have high preference on the slow reading of the text in order to ensure comprehension. With the standard deviation of (SD=1.10) yielding at high level of awareness, the item itself would prove if these learners are less effective in reading because they tended to generate more time on reading consolidation while reading academic materials.

Trying to get back on track and adjusting reading speed are characteristics Problem Solving strategy that were favoured by the proficient group (M=3.78, 3.63). Although these items are not the dominant items in this strategy group, they provide information that proficient learners were aware of their own obstacles when reading and then gradually provide solution to their reading problem. With the standard deviation of (SD=.97) and (SD=.93) and with high level of awareness on these items, the proficient learners were aware of available strategy use when encountering problems with regards to concentration and reading speed. In addition, proficient learners were also confronted with the problem of text difficulties as shown in the next item, 'when text becomes difficult I pay closer attention to what I am reading' with the mean score of (M=3.95).

It may be inferred that the proficient learners are well aware of strategies that concern the overall global analysis of the text. It seems, however, that Global strategy requires higher level of linguistic maturity to make it works effectively for improving comprehension. This group does not seem to be at the required level so that the strategy does not serve as an effective tool for them. Therefore, high level of awareness does not reinforce better comprehension as it does in learners with second language background. Investigation on

more factors of reading is needed in order to venture into the myriad profiles of learners with diverse cultural and language background. All of these contribute to the level of linguistic performance thus affecting the level of reading proficiency.

Reading intervention appeared to generate reading generosity where students become less eclectic in choosing text for reading. Eclecticism has been perceived as non-beneficial personal style either to the teacher in preparing their teaching materials and to the students who only favour particular genre of reading text. The responses gained from questionnaires demonstrated relatively prevalent eagerness of the samples in reading any forms of text genres after the intervention. The finding supprts the claims by Day & Bramford (1998) who asserted that extensive reading can be enjoyable for reasons. First, the students may choose numderous tewxts from different genres. Second, they can read at levels that are easy for them, and the reading is often followed by enoyable activities (e.g., reading fair, group discussion, wall display). The finding encourages pressures for ELT practitioners to constantly embark both intensive and extensive reading for students at all tertiary levels.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings reinforce the belief that teachers and researchers need to offer students more help on their use of metacognitive reading strategies when dealing with enormous types of reading texts. The three cohorts (2016/17/18) appear to perform significant degree of metacognitive awareness implying that cultural-based narrative text is a powerful tool to generate comprehension among EFL tertiary learners at Hasanuddin University. In addition, overall findings confirm that the three groups of cohort learners perform higher rate of metacognition although this rate may not ensure them become effective readers. The three cohorts require additional strategies for the reconstruction of meaning from narrative text to come up with holistic comprehension. These learners might have found the narrative reading text rather challenging and were evidently overwhelmed by the text. There is a need to generate awareness of the range of challenges the text may presents in order to help the three groups of learners learners cope with range of reading problems. Familiarity with text genre and structure as well as an increase awareness of range of challenges in reading is a possible solution to counterproductive these challenges that tend to dominate EFL learners. This finding confirms that EFL learners at English Department need more training to empower their ability in the comprehension process. The results of this study provide a promising implication to the need of suitable reading strategy training for EFL learners to make their inherent possession of metacognitive strategies become effective

Linguistic maturation as well as proficiency may gradually switch the unconscious to conscious process during reading to develop the metacognitive awareness becomes fully effective for improving cEFL learners comprehension. This proposition supports Cohen's earlier working definition who states that the element of choice (conscious selection) is what differentiates between processes which are strategic learners and which learners without strategies. Although, reading intervention encourages high cost in terms of material preparation at English department it may be confirmed that new reading program will embark the proficiency of the students as expected in its institutional mission.

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