

English Reading Strategies and Proficiency among Senior High School Learners

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Abstract

*This study attempts to investigate: 1) kinds of reading strategies employed by Indonesian senior high school students, 2) whether there is a significant difference between poor and good readers in using reading strategies; and 3) if there is a significant relationship between students' English reading strategies and reading proficiency. Using descriptive quantitative and correlational design, this research involved 100 twelfth grade students of Madrasah Aliyah PP. Amanatul Ummah, Mojokerto, East Java. They were asked to complete a five-point Likert scale questionnaire comprising 44 reading strategy item and self-assessment rubric on their reading proficiency. To achieve the three goals, the data was analyzed using Principal Component Analysis, Independent Sample t-Test, and Pearson Correlation via SPSS 21. The result revealed eight strategy components named to be memory, elaboration, planning, organization, regulating, social, affective, and compensation. Further analysis showed the significant difference between poor and good readers in using reading strategies with *t*.value of 5.06 and sig.*t*.test of .000. The study also discovered a significant correlation between English reading strategies and reading proficiency of .394 and *p*.value is 0.00.*

Keywords: *language learning strategy, reading strategy, reading proficiency.*

1. Introduction

The differences of reading outcomes among high school learners are inevitable because some achieve better than others do. This phenomenon suggests that individual learners' variables influence learning results. In spite of researchers' controversy to identify and determine the exact variable among individual learners, Ellis (2003), Larsen-Freeman (2000), Brown (2000) and Nugraha (2013) have come into an agreement that learners' strategies play an important role in determining learners' success in English learning. Furthermore, Ellis (2003) states that learner strategies are one of the variables constructing a framework for investigating individual learner differences, in addition to personality and the learning outcomes.

In the past decades, many studies were conducted on the relationship of reading proficiency and strategy use with controversial outcomes. Some reveal the significant relationship between the two variables (Lau-Chan, 2003; Genc, 2010; and Raftari-Seyyedi-Ismail, 2012), while others find out the vice versa (Shmais, 2003; Kong, 2006;

and Shang, 2010). In terms of differences of strategy use among learners, only Faghat and Zainal (2009) showed the similarity of preference between advanced and low readers. Other studies (Lau-Chan, 2003; Anastasiou-Griva, 2009; and Raftari-Seyyedi-Ismail, 2012) report that good and poor readers have different preference and intensity in using reading strategies. Unfortunately, the issue has not been investigated in Indonesian senior high school level.

Considering the previous studies above, there is a need for research on the EFL reading strategies employed by Indonesian high school students. The present study was carried out to answer the following questions:

1. What are reading strategies employed by senior high school learners?
2. Do poor and good readers use reading strategies differently?
3. Is there any significant relationship between English reading strategy and reading proficiency?

2. Method

Using descriptive and correlational design, this study involved 100 twelfth-grade students at Madrasah Aliyah PP. Amanatul Ummah, Mojokerto, East Java. To collect the data, they were requested to fill a 44-strategy-item questionnaire and a self-assessment rubric on their reading proficiency.

Two research instruments were employed to collect the data, i.e. questionnaire and self-assessment rubric. Data of learners' reading strategy were measured by a Reading Strategy Questionnaire, a combination from the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) version 7.0 by Oxford (1990), Baker-Boonkit's English Reading Questionnaire and the researcher's personal experience. However, when it was tried out to 27 students of Class XII IPA 1, it turned out that 5 items did not significantly contribute to the measurement of reading strategies. Thus, only 44 items were used in the final version of the instrument. The internal consistency yielded an index of .922 of Cronbach Alpha, indicating that the data collected by this questionnaire were highly reliable.

Meanwhile, data of students' reading proficiency were collected using self-assessment rubric. Via this rubric, the participants were requested to assess how well they were able to perform in 10 reading acts, such as *I can comprehend written English announcement at school, I can understand the details in an English invitation, and I can get general information when reading magazine or newspaper.* This kind of self-assessment is considered valid because it correlates significantly with actual language proficiency (Bachman-Palmer, 1989; Mistar, 2011). In addition, to support the content validity, the form and content have been supervised and checked by professional experts.

3. Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection was performed in January 2015. The researcher, who is also an English teacher, requested the students to complete both reading questionnaire and self-assessment rubric during the class. It took two days to get all data collected from the participants.

The data analysis was statistically performed using SPSS 21. Firstly, the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was carried out to distinguish 40 strategy items. The component matrix was rotated using the Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation Method and the result was regarded as the posteriori classification strategies. Pallant (2005) proposes three criteria of the factorability of the data, namely (1) the correlation matrix contains some coefficients of .3 or above, (2) the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, and (3) the Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin (KMO) value is more than .6. Afterwards, the researcher used descriptive statistics, focusing on the mean and standard deviation, to find the pattern of the use frequency. The frequency is regarded as high if the mean score of use is between 3.45 and 5.00, medium if it is between 2.45 and 3.44, and low if it is between 1.00 and 2.44 (Oxford, 1990).

Next, based on their reading proficiency, learners were classified into two: poor readers (with mean score between 1.0 and 2.9 of self-assessment) and good (with mean score between 3.0 and 5.0). Using Independent sample t-test, the researcher investigated the difference in strategy use among the two groups. Finally, Pearson Correlation was performed to provide the answer for the third question, i.e. whether there is a positive correlation between reading strategy use and reading proficiency. This type of product moment correlation is preferable to Spearman due to its function to evaluate linear relationship between two continuous variables, not monotonous ones.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Kinds of reading strategies employed by high school students

The PCA revealed the presence of eight strategy components with an initial eigen-value bigger than 1.5, explaining a cumulative variance of 100% (Table 1). All eight factors explain variance more than 3%. The most dominant one accounted for 35.7% of the total variance. This factor obtained high loading (more than .3) from the four strategy items that chiefly deal with the use of brain memory in reading. These include strategies for trying to remember keywords, memorizing important concepts, bearing questions in mind while reading, and reviewing text structure. This factor, thus, was described as memory strategy. Factor 2, with variance of 14.8%, includes the practice of tactical strategies that enable learners to elaborate the reading texts. It covers underlining important keywords, re-reading to get more details, reading aloud, summarizing, writing down keywords/main ideas, and concluding. Hence, this category is named as elaboration strategy. Factor 3, which explained 11.5% and got high loadings from five strategy items, includes not comprehending every single detail in finding main ideas, mind-mapping, scanning, relating to the background knowledge, and not translating every word. Therefore, it is classified as organization strategy.

Factor 4, which explained 9.9% of the learning strategy variance, is described as planning strategy since it obtains high loadings from eight strategy item that deal with the pre-reading and preparatory learning activities. Factor 5 with variance of 8.8% and high loadings from five strategy items is named after regulating strategies as it covers whilst activities done to regulate the reading process. Factor 6, which has 8.0% of

variance and high loadings from four strategy items, is called as social strategy since it includes social interaction with peers, more proficient readers, and teachers. Factor 7, with variance of 6.8% and high loadings from three strategy items, covers using affective aspect and thus, is named after affective strategy. And finally, factor 8, which has high loadings from nine strategy items and variance of 4.5% is called as compensation strategy since it helps learners to compensate their lack of vocabulary and comprehension.

Table 1. The Resulting Factors Variance & Intensity Use

No.	Category	Variance	Mean
1.	Memory strategy	35.7%	3.15
2.	Elaboration strategy	14.8%	2.94
3.	Organization	11.5%	3.06
4.	Planning	9.9%	3.74
5.	Regulating	8.8%	3.49
6.	Social	8.0%	2.64
7.	Affective	6.8%	3.14
8.	Compensation	4.5%	3.46
	Cumulative Variance	100%	3.27

The data collected via questionnaire show that students use a wide range of English reading strategies spreading over eight strategy groups. The result of intensity use of each strategy group also appears in the Table 1. The table illustrates the students' overall strategy use, which scores 3.27. The score indicates that the average of the students' responses corresponds to 'somewhat true of me', which lies in the middle of the five-point-Likert-scale used in the questionnaire. Therefore, the students' overall strategy use in this study belongs to the medium level.

4.2. The Difference of Poor and Good Readers in Using English Reading Strategy

The quantitative data collected by self-assessment rubric was used to show the students' reading proficiency. Based on their reading proficiency score, the participants were grouped into two: poor and good readers, as illustrated in Table 6. Students who obtain 1.0 – 2.9 belong to poor readers, while those scoring 3.0 – 5.0 are good readers. According to this scale, there were 47 poor readers and 53 good readers in this study. Using Independent sample t-test, the result of questionnaire and self-assessment rubric were utilized to see the comparison of reading strategy use between poor readers and good readers as summarized in Table 2. Good readers were found to use eight strategy categories more frequently than do poor readers. In overall use, good readers has more intensive use of strategies ($M= 3.35$) than poor readers ($M=3.04$).

Table 2. The Difference of Reading Strategy Use between Poor and Good Readers

Strategy Category	Group	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
Memory	Poor	2.92	.001*
	Good	3.35	
Elaboration	Poor	2.80	.017*
	Good	3.07	
Organization	Poor	2.96	.110
	Good	3.15	
Planning	Poor	3.60	.003*
	Good	3.87	
Regulating	Poor	3.25	.000*
	Good	3.70	
Social	Poor	2.45	.020*
	Good	2.82	
Affective	Poor	3.04	.174
	Good	3.23	
Compensation	Poor	3.27	.000*
	Good	3.63	
Overall	Poor	3.04	.000*
	Good	3.35	

* Significant at .05 level.

From eight strategy categories, six were reported to be employed differently ($p < .05$), i.e. memory strategy (.001), elaboration strategy (.017), planning strategy (.003), regulating strategy (.000), social strategy (.20), and compensation strategy (.000). The other two, namely organization and affective strategy were revealed to be used not differently (respectively with .110 and .174). Meanwhile, the statistical analysis show a significant difference in overall strategy between both groups ($p = .000$).

Despite all the differences, both poor and good readers use Planning strategy with high frequency use (respectively 3.60 and 3.87). Both groups also share the least frequent strategy category, i.e. social strategy, with only 2.45 (low use) for poor readers and 2.82 (medium use) for good readers.

4.3. Reading strategy use in relation to English reading proficiency

Using Pearson Correlation, the relationship between English reading strategies and reading proficiency were analyzed, as illustrated in Table 3. From eight strategy

categories, only five were shown having significant relationship with reading proficiency, i.e. organization, planning, regulating, social, and compensation strategy. Of these five categories, three demonstrate a significant correlation at the .05 level (i.e. organization, .218; planning, .235; and social .255). The other two, namely regulating and compensation strategy have a significant correlation at the .01 level, respectively .385 and .384. However, Pearson Correlation shows a significant relationship between overall strategy use and reading proficiency, .367 at the .01 level.

Table 3. The Correlation between Reading Strategy Use and Reading Proficiency (N=100)

Strategy Use	Reading Proficiency
Memory strategy	.196 .051
Elaboration strategy	.131 .195
Organization strategy	.218* .029
Planning strategy	.235* .019
Regulating strategy	.385** .000
Social strategy	.255* .010
Affective strategy	.030 .769
Compensation strategy	.384** .000
Overall strategy	.367** .000

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrated the use of strategies at a total number of 44, five of which were new, purely generated from the students and writer's experience. These could be claimed as a contribution to the theories on language learning strategies; particularly reading strategies. The forty-four item strategies were composed of 4 statements of memory group, 6 statements of elaboration groups, 3 statements of organization groups, 5 statements of planning groups, 5 statements of regulating groups, 4 statements of social group, 3 statements of affective group, 8 statements of compensation groups. This study also found that Indonesia senior high school learners are medium users of reading strategies, with mean score of 3.27 in overall strategy usage.

Further, this study reported that both groups showed similarity in the strategy preference (i.e. planning strategy) and dislike (i.e. social strategy). It is also found that poor and

good readers belong to the medium users of reading strategies (with respective mean score of 3.11 and 3.42). However, both groups demonstrated a significant statistical difference ($p = .000$) at the .05 level.

The present study pointed out the relationship between English reading proficiency and reading strategy use, this study revealed a significant relationship of .367 at the .01 level using Pearson Correlation. This finding brings a contribution for the controversy of the previous studies that Indonesian high school students show a significant relationship between their English reading strategies and reading proficiency.

Some suggestions are addressed for the students, teachers, curriculum developers and future researchers, particularly in reading strategy and instruction. For students, they are exposed to the knowledge that using reading strategies can be a big help in improving their reading achievement. The findings imply that both poor and good readers still belong to medium users of reading strategy and therefore, both groups need to have more frequent and more various reading strategies. For teachers, the fact that both groups of learners are still in the medium level of strategy use should raise their attention in pedagogical planning to include strategy instruction within the learning process. In addition, for curriculum developers, they are notified that senior high school learners still need the strategy instruction in their English reading class. The findings should make them consider incorporating strategy training into the English curriculum. Finally, for the future researchers, they can see that this present study is limited to the high school level in Indonesia context, with only 100 samples in East Java. Further studies should include more samples, in other education levels, and other parts of the country with different language proficiency and first languages.

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