

TEST TAKING STRATEGY ON STUDENTS' READING TEST

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the meaning of any passage is the aim of reading comprehension. This is one of objectives in Reading 2 class English Department at STKIP PGRI Jombang. To achieve a good score on this subject, students must take a test, they have the answers right in performing reading comprehension test, students could make use of test taking strategy. The research describe what test taking strategy used by students of STKIP PGRI Jombang in performing reading comprehension test are. This study was with Principal Component Analysis (PCA), and descriptive. This research consisted of 95 correspondent of the third-semester students of English Department STKIP PGRI Jombang. It uses questionnaire and test as its instrument. The research found there were 7 factors from 28 strategy items accounted for 69.1% cumulative of the variance. They are Option-Selecting Strategies, Question-Rereading Strategies, Option Comprehension Strategies, Answer-Checking Strategies, Option Consideration Strategies, Cognitive Strategies and Clues-Finding Strategies.

Keywords: *Test Taking Strategy, reading comprehension test*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is needed as a means of learning a variety of science, it is said that reading is the basic skill being priority to support the process of mastering other language skills and improving knowledge. Students learn their knowledgethrough reading. They get information by reading books and other printed media. Success in reading is very important to students, both for academic and vocational advancement and for the students' psychological well being (Carnine, et al., 1990: 106).In relation to the importance of reading, the teacher should develop students'

reading skill as the basic for practicing other language skills.

At STKIP PGRI Jombang especially English department, the third semester students must take Reading 2 as compulsory subject. Reading 2 has an objective to analyze reading comprehension on the texts and decide the components of text types completely and correctly on the level of intermediate. This objective brings the teacher to have a teaching strategy, material and media which is proper in the classroom.

In line with the reading 2 objective, analyzing reading comprehension, reading

comprehension depends on a reader's awareness of how discourse is structured (Grabe, 2009: 243). Discourse-structure awareness is often associated with a reading strategy or set of strategies (e.g., recognizing main ideas, inferring connections among parts of a text, recognizing organizational patterns in texts, identifying typical genre features of a text). To make students success in reading comprehension, English teacher needs to make students to be good readers. Good readers are tuned to the ways that information is organized and to the signaling mechanisms that provide the cues to this organization, are able to identify the main or topic sentences as they appear in a text to help identify when and where to find main idea. Good readers notice when new topics are introduced, how they are maintained through pronouns and other anaphoric cues, etc.

Richard and Renandya (2002: 277) state the primary goal of reading is reading for comprehension. Knowing main ideas in a text and exploring the organization of a text are essential for good comprehension. Besides, reading is proposed to: (1) search for simple information, (2) skim quickly, (3) learn from texts, (4) integrate information, (5) search for information needed for writing, (6) critique texts, and (7) to get general comprehension (Grabe & Stoller, 2002: 13). In short, the basic idea of reading is to enable the reader to

understand the text to get the information.

Koda in Grabe (2009: 14) stated that comprehension occurs when the reader extracts and integrates various information from the text and combines it with what is already known. This statement shows the complexity of reading since we can say that reading is understood as a complex combination of processes. In addition, the instruction of first language reading and second language reading instruction are different. It causes dilemma for the development of second language reading ability.

As students of reading 2, they have to participate on the class referring to Reading 2 objectives such as reading comprehension. Students need to process passing the Reading 2 class if they want to get good score. students must not be fail in this subject because they have to continue to Reading 3 class. Due to the importance of reading 2 score for the students, this forces them to get score as high as they can. For those who realize that reading 2 is really needed as they finish their study, they may prepare themselves for facing test by studying and trying to test themselves. They may read alot and do the exercise in the book and check their answer by seeing its answer key. Unfortunately, for the students who do not realize about the importance of it as they finish their study, they may doing nothing for preparing it.

In the end of the Reading 2 class, students must take test. The problem comes when some students do not understand the passage and answer the questions as well because of their lack ability to achieve full of understanding of the text on the Reading 2 test, so that they need solutions to overcome their lacks.

There are so many ways that the students can do for preparing themselves before doing reading 2 test and get the score as high as possible. One of the ways for preparing the test is by making use of test-taking strategy. The kinds of language use strategies employed by learners on the various forms of language assessment are referred to in the literature as test-taking strategies (Cohen, 1992). To be specific, test-taking strategies are techniques that test takers resort to with the aim of getting correct answers on a given test. The successful use of these strategies does not necessarily imply mastery of the testing task at hand, as Cohen (1986) explained clearly when suggesting that test takers may get their answers to a reading task right “without fully or even partially understanding the text”. In a later article, Cohen (1992) noted that test-taking strategies represent processes that test takers can have control over by selecting what they believe would help them tackle a test question, suggesting that test-taking strategies are conscious processes. He added that these strategies can either be a short move (e.g., looking for a clue

that links the information in the question to that in the reading text) or a long one (e.g., reading the whole text after reading the questions). To be specific, Assiri (2011) explained that test-taking strategies are techniques that test takers use to get correct answers on a given test as the goal. It means test-taking strategy can help test-takers to enhance their ability in order to achieve score that they wish. The strategies offer some tips and strategies about how to answer the test correctly in the time given.

In addition, Cohen (1986) explained that test takers may get their answers to a reading task correct without understanding the whole text or part of the text. In his later article, Cohen (1992) stated that test-taking strategies represent processes that test takers can manage by selecting what they believe would help them to perform a question, it can be mentioned that test-taking strategies are conscious processes. He added that these strategies can be a short move (e.g., looking for a clue that refers the information in the question to the reading text) or a long one as well (e.g., reading the whole text after reading the questions).

Based on the case above, the writer is interested to know students test taking strategy that they have when they understand and answer the questions given in Reading 2 class at STKIP PGRI Jombang.

METHOD

This study aims to find out to what test taking strategy used by the third semester students of STKIP PGRI Jombang in performing Reading 2 test. To identify what test taking strategy used by students of STKIP PGRI Jombang in performing Reading 2 test, the researcher applies descriptive design. The respondents of the study are 95 students from the third semester students of English Department STKIP PGRI Jombang.

The respondents were asked to complete three research instruments; the reading comprehension test, test-taking strategy Questionnaire and Respondent's Background Questionnaire. The reading comprehension test is taken from paper based test (Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL® Test by Deborah Philips: 2001). The questionnaires are adopted from questionnaires which were offered by Cohen and Upton in 2006 and adopted by Assiri in 2011.

The questionnaires originally consist of three types of strategies: Reading strategies, Test-taking strategies and Test-wisness strategies. However, the present study focuses on reading test, this study is going to use one of three types of strategies; Test-taking strategies which consist of 28 items. The questionnaire of Test-taking strategy is modified as "Yes" or "No" response choices. Then the respondent also completed the same questionnaire with a 5 point Likert

scale. The questionnaire was translated to Indonesian to help participants understand the questionnaire items. Before collecting data for main study, the researcher does a pilot study before the researcher goes to the main study. The pilot study is given to five students to do the test and gives checklists on the questionnaire of test taking strategy. This step is done to check the materials and the research procedures appropriate for main study. The pilot study help participants understand what they do and how they do the procedures as well. The researcher explains the questionnaires and reading sets in order to ensure that participants in doing the test. After all procedures above are done, the process of data collection in this study is completed. The researcher tests the students using reading comprehension test. After doing the test, the students give a checklist on the questionnaire of test taking strategy.

The gathered data was taken from the procedure as follows: first, the research uses Principal Component Analysis (PCA), covering 28 items strategies to analyze the classification of strategies. The gathered data were analyzed statistically using the computer software program Statistical Package for Social Science Version 17 (SPSS 17). At this stage of analysis, the correlation matrix produced cluster of factors. PCA was used in order to

have types or components of test taking strategy in performing Reading

2 test.

RESULT

The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with eigenvalue 1.0 or more, resulted 7 factors, and the cumulative variance is 69.1 %. The communalities analysis showed that all 28 strategy items were more than .3 and it indicated that each item proper well with the other items in its

Test Taking Strategy Used by Students

component. There were 7 factors, one factor obtained variance = 28 %, one factor obtained variance = 12 %, one factor obtained variance = 7 %, one factor obtained variance = 6 %, one factor obtained variance = 5 %, one factor obtained variance = 4 %, one factor obtained variance = 3 %,.

Table 1: The Result of Factors and Their Variance

Factor	Strategy Category	Variance
1.	Option-Selecting Strategies	28.03%
2.	Question-Rereading Strategies	12.81%
3.	Option Comprehension Strategies	7.62%
4.	Answer-Checking Strategies	6.98%
5.	Option Consideration Strategies	5.52%
6.	Cognitive Strategies	4.38%
7.	Clues-Finding Strategies	3.83%
Cumulative Variance		69.1%

As shown in the Table 1 above, factor 1 obtained greater loadings from 28 strategy items, 28.03 % of the variance. It covered six strategy items that deal with selecting options through elimination of other option(s) as unreasonable based on paragraph/overall passage meaning. It also includes strategies to select options through elimination of other option(s) as similar or overlapping and not as comprehensive, strategies to select options through elimination of other option(s) as unreasonable based on background knowledge, strategies to discard option(s) based on vocabulary, sentence, paragraph,

or passage overall meaning as well as discourse structure, strategies to select options through their discourse structure. Discards option(s) based on background knowledge. This factor was named as option-selecting strategies.

Factor 2, in addition, obtained 12.81% of the variance. There were seven strategy items which explain strategies to go back to the question for clarification: Paraphrases (or confirms) the question or task, strategies to go back to the question for clarification: Rereads the question, strategies to predict or produce own answer after reading the

question and then looks at the options (before returning to text), strategies to go back to the question for clarification: Wrestles with the question intent, strategies to predict or produce own answer after reading questions that require text insertion (I-it types), strategies to read the question and considers the options before going back to the passage/portion, and strategies to predict or produce own answer after reading the portion of the text referred to by the question. Due to the most of strategies rereading the question, thus, this factor was described as question-rereading strategies

Moreover, Factor 3 obtained 7.62% of the variance which consisted of four strategy items. They were considering the options and paraphrasing the meaning, selecting options through vocabulary, sentence, paragraph, or passage overall meaning (depending on item type), considering the options and defining the vocabulary option, and looking at the vocabulary item and locating the item in context. due to this category involved understanding the options, this category was called option comprehension strategies.

Factor 4 which obtained 6.98% of the variance, loaded two strategy items. This factor involved strategies that allow test takers to reconsider or double-check the response and to consider the options and wrestle with

the option meaning. Thus this factor was describes as answer-checking strategies.

Furthermore, Factor 5 was named option consideration strategies which explained 5.52% of the variance and consisted of four strategy items. They were about considering the options and dragging and considering the new sentence in context, making an educated guess (e.g., using background knowledge or extra-textual knowledge), considering the options and postponing consideration of the option, and considering the options and selecting preliminary option(s) (lack of certainty indicated).

Factor 6 obtained 4.38% of the variance was called cognitive strategies which covered three strategy items. They are strategies of considering the options and identifying an option with an unknown vocabulary, considering the options and checking the vocabulary option in context, and selecting options through background knowledge.

Factor 7 explained 3.83% of the variance. It loaded two strategy items. This factor was described as clues-finding strategies that mainly concerned with strategy to read the question and then read the passage/portion to look for clues to the answer, either before or while considering options, and considering the options and focusing on a familiar option.

DISCUSSION

It was found that students of STKIP PGRI Jombang used primarily seven strategy components. Each component represents some certain strategy items related to perform reading comprehension test. These seven components are (1) option-selecting strategies, (2) question-rereading strategies, (3) option comprehension strategies, (4) answer-checking strategies, (5) option consideration strategies, (6) cognitive strategies, and (7) clues-finding strategies.

The first component was named option-selecting strategies since it covered strategies which are related to selecting options through elimination of other option(s) as unreasonable based on paragraph/overall passage meaning, selecting options through elimination of other option(s) as similar or overlapping and not as comprehensive, selecting options through elimination of other option(s) as unreasonable based on background knowledge, selecting option through discarding option(s) based on vocabulary, sentence, paragraph, or passage overall meaning as well as discourse structure, selecting options through their discourse structure, and selecting options through discarding option(s) based on background knowledge. According to Assiri (2011) and Cohen & Upton (2006), to perform questions which focus on basic comprehension, interference and read to learn items, students can apply these strategy items on this

component such as discarding option(s) based on vocabulary, sentence, paragraph, or passage overall meaning as well as discourse structure, selecting options through their discourse structure, and discarding option(s) based on background knowledge. In addition, Cohen and Upton, (2006) explained about basic comprehension questions include vocabulary, pronoun reference, sentence simplification, factual information and not/except items; Inference includes basic inference, rhetorical purpose, and insert-text items; and read to learn questions include prose summary and schematic table items

The second component was described as question-rereading strategies which has seven strategy items which explain strategies to re-read the questions by paraphrasing the question, strategies to re-read the question for clarification, strategies to predict or produce own answer after reading the question and then looking at the options (before returning to text), strategies to re-read by wrestling with the question intent, strategies to predict or produce own answer after reading questions that require text insertion, strategies to read the question and considers the options before going back to the passage/portion, and strategies to predict or produce own answer after reading the portion of the text referred to by the question. According Assiri (2011) and Cohen & Upton (2006), strategies, such as predicting or producing own answer after

reading questions that require text insertion, reading the question and considering the options before going back to the passage/portion, and predicting or producing own answer after reading the portion of the text referred to by the question, help students to response questions which deal with interference and reading to learn items. Based on ETS, (2003) Interference and reading to learn items focus on students' ability to connect information and recognize the organization and purpose of the text.

The third component consists of four strategy items. The component was called option comprehension strategies. There were considering the options and paraphrasing the meaning, selecting options through vocabulary, sentence, paragraph, or passage overall meaning (depending on item type), considering the options and defining the vocabulary option, and looking at the vocabulary item and locating the item in context. These strategy items could be used by students to apply in performing questions that focus basic comprehension and inference items. According to task classification (ETS, 2003), basic comprehension and interference questions focus on lexical, synthetic and semantic ability. This finding supports the study of the Assiri (2011) and Cohen & Upton (2006) that strategies included considering the options and paraphrasing the meaning, selecting options through vocabulary, sentence, paragraph, or passage overall

meaning, considering the options and defining the vocabulary option, could be used by students in answering question about basic comprehension and inference.

The fourth component loads two strategy items. This factor involved strategies that allow test takers to reconsider or double-check the response and to consider the options and wrestle with the option meaning. This finding deals with the previous study of Assiri (2011) and Cohen & Upton (2006). The component helps student to response read to learn questions. According ETS, (2003) read to learn questions focus on understanding the major ideas and relative importance of information in text The fifth component was named option consideration strategies which consist of four strategy items. According the study of Assiri (2011) and Cohen & Upton, (2006), strategies, such as considering the options and postponing consideration of the option, and considering the options and selecting preliminary option(s) (lack of certainty indicated) are used by students to perform questions that focus basic comprehension vocabulary, sentence simplification, and factual information and inference items that focus on basic inference and rhetorical purpose.

The sixth component was described as cognitive strategies. Assiri (2011) and Cohen & Upton, (2006) stated that to perform questions which focus on basic comprehension, students can apply

these strategy items such as considering the options and identifying an option with an unknown vocabulary, considering the options and checking the vocabulary option in context, and selecting options through background knowledge. According to task classification (ETS, 2003), basic comprehension questions are used to assess lexical, syntactic and semantic ability.

The seventh component loads two strategy items that mainly concerned with strategy to read the question and then read the

passage/portion to look for clues to the answer, either before or while considering options, and considering the options and focusing on a familiar option. This component was called clues-finding strategies which could be used by students to apply in performing questions that focus basic comprehension vocabulary, pronoun reference, sentence simplification, factual information, and not/except items, and inference items that focus on basic inference, rhetorical purpose, and insert text items (Assiri, 2011; Cohen and Upton, 2006)

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The result bore some suggestions, to teachers, they are motivated to make their students know test taking strategy. Teachers can employ the strategies to be practiced by their students as frequently as possible in order to students can use the strategy authentically and achieve a better score in reading comprehension test, they are required to play their roles properly in order for test taking strategy to be optimized. Thus test takers should be more conscious about the importance of test taking strategy that they use and believe that

test taking strategy as powerful strategy to perform reading comprehension test. Future researchers are suggested to the similar research by recruiting a larger sample and using random sampling in participant selection. Future researches are also suggested to pose questions regarding to students which have higher score and lower score whether they use test taking strategy as similar frequency and pose another question regarding to the profile of test taking strategy use and to pose question how students use test taking strategy in performing reading comprehension test.

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