

# STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON HELPFUL STRATEGIES IN RESOLVING READING COMPREHENSION TEST

Rita Hermida

Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author: rita.hermida@ar-raniry.ac.id

## ABSTRACT


Reading, similar to other language skills, possesses its own unique techniques and strategies to employ. Every strategy has its distinct purpose and a particular context in which it is applied. Furthermore, it is crucial to employ specific procedures in order to ensure that these techniques are user-friendly. This study specifically focuses on this topic. The objectives of this study are to investigate the reading approaches often employed by students and what strategies they apply in order to increase their reading techniques and abilities. This quantitative study used questionnaire to collect the necessary data, from a sample of 28 second-year students at a private senior high school in Banda Aceh, Aceh. The findings showed that scanning and skimming were the most common reading techniques the students used. In addition, in order to sharpen the reading techniques, most of the students tried to enrich reading material and time management as well. Most of them also joined an extra English class in the afternoon outside the class. They were enthusiastic to sharpen their ability in critical thinking and background knowledge in reading. This study hopes to add insights into strategies of reading comprehension for other learners of English.

KEYWORDS: *Reading Comprehension, Reading Strategies, Students' Perception.*

---

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is widely recognized as a meaningful interaction between the reader and the written work, involving active engagement to understand and interpret the text's meaning within a specific context (Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Somadayo, 2011). Process of comprehending a text has five essential components: identifying the main idea, identifying specific information, generating inferences from written texts, recognizing comprehensive details, and identifying references (Nuttall, 1982). To expound on the concepts in the text, readers must have comprehension skills (Nisa et al., 2020; Rusmiati et al., 2022; Sardy et al., 2023). In short, readers must be able to read, comprehend, and figure out any obvious or even hidden meanings of the words and then elaborate on them.



In the process of comprehending the text, some common strategies used namely skimming, scanning, prediction and questionings (Adams & Patterson, 2008). Preliminary observation found that these strategies have also been familiar among the school students under study. Some of the students have often used these strategies to answer reading comprehension tests. They also have already known to what type of questions each strategy should be used. For example, to obtain an overview of the text's organization as well as important ideas from a section in a book, skimming will be suitable to use. D'Angelo (1986) states that a topic sentence which contain main idea is generally noticed in the initial sentence of the opening paragraph. Likewise, the answers with a specific abbreviation or number, scanning should be used to ease the test more quickly (Abidin, 2020). In addition, making prediction is suitable to use in which allowing readers to infer the substance of the new text. By using their previous knowledge, readers use the picture and headline information to draw conclusions about the text so that they can make prediction what will be next information in the text (Kuşdemir, 2016). In the line with this, question strategy also enables the readers to assess their comprehension and interest in reading (Amalia & Devant, 2016). The method of inquiry involves readers questioning themselves in order to create meaning, enhance comprehension, locate answers, resolve issues, acquire information, and acquire novel concepts (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). While reading, the majority of students employed this method to return to the text and locate the answers to the problems.

In light of these explanations, the study posed the following research question: What are the strategies the students used to respond to the questions in the reading comprehension test? This study aimed to investigate the students' perception of the helpful strategies they have employed to complete the reading comprehension test.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading is a crucial skill for lifelong learning. The ability to incorporate background information into the reading text is the expected reading outcome (Oakley, 2011). In addition, reading comprehension is the ability to read, assimilate, and understand content. To enhance this skill requires both word reading and language understanding. (Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003). Reading is a reader-text interaction involving the reader's knowledge of the vocabulary, their thoughts whilst reading, and their appraisal of the material they have read (Alderson, 2000). Reading is an essential linguistic ability that requires contact with the words written in text (Heilman et al., 2002).

Reading what exists on the writing and understanding what it conveys are the two skills needed to comprehend written texts (Davis, 2006). Therefore, word recognition and

language comprehension are two fundamental abilities learners must possess in order to grow into effective readers (Murray, 2016). Reading comprehension is the process of gaining meaning from a passage. Rather than obtaining meaning from a single word or sentence, the primary goal is therefore to acquire a comprehensive grasp of the subject. Stoodt (1981) states that a student's reading ability is defined by how effectively they understand the content that they read. Comprehension connects the three components of excellent reading: competence, strategies for reading, and adequate understanding (Sukirah, 2000).

Nation and Norbury (2005) argue that reading comprehension difficulties might arise due to many factors. While engaging in the act of reading, learners may come across a multitude of obstacles, which may include language proficiency, background knowledge, motivation, reading skills, reading process, and strategies (Alderson, 2000). One of the solutions to overcome those problems is to know what essential skill to master in reading comprehension.

There are five components that Nuttal (1982) proposes in reading comprehension in which reader needs to master, identifying the central concept, finding relevant sources, making logical deductions, extracting specific details, and comprehending lexical matters. To deal with those skills, some strategies are crucial to have such as skimming, scanning, predicting, questioning (Adams & Patterson, 2008). In skimming, the reader quickly skims over the content in a passage that summarizes the primary concept. This is very helpful to find a topic phrase that might be found in the first or second sentence of each paragraph (D'Angelo, 1986). In scanning, reader accesses specific information swiftly. It is used to gather detailed information such as abbreviation, proper name, or numbers. The next step involves prediction, where the reader utilizes the image and title details to make deductions about the narrative, allowing them to anticipate the substance of a new text and the perspectives the writer might use to support a topic as they engage in reading. The last stage involves questioning, where the reader employs pre-, during-, and post-reading inquiries. This approach requires the reader to engage in critical thinking by formulating inquiries to construct meaning, enhance comprehension, locate solutions, resolve issues, gather information, and uncover novel insights (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).

Furthermore, there are numerous suggestions to overcome reading comprehension problems. First, it is good to enrich reading material. Besides, enable reader to enrich new vocabulary acquisition, reading many texts can help in enriching background knowledge (Daskalovska, 2018). During the process of reading, it is advisable to compile a catalogue of unfamiliar vocabulary. Second, effective time management is essential for efficiently responding to inquiries and evaluating reading comprehension.

The reader can effectively select the most crucial questions, hence improving their reading comprehension abilities through the practice of speed reading (Qomariah & Efendi, 2020). Thirdly, it is important to direct one's attention towards the actual words themselves (Rayner et al., 2016). Fourth, it is about understanding the context in which students assess reading comprehension. The reader must comprehend the context in order to comprehend the meaning of a word or phrase in a text (Britt et al., 2022). Fifth, the emphasis is on differentiating facts and opinions. The overall comprehension skill is highly correlated with the ability to distinguish between facts and opinions in a text (Ghahraki & Sharifian, 2005).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a quantitative research method. The study selected the sample through purposive sampling, under the following criteria: senior high schools students and having reading comprehension tests. The sample consisted of 28 students at a private senior high school in Banda Aceh, Aceh Province. The questionnaire was disseminated to obtain information about the strategies that the students used when responding to the questions in reading comprehension tests. Percentage analysis was used to analyze by the responses in the questionnaire.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results showed the students' strategies on the reading comprehension test given by the teacher in the class. The students focused on only four common reading strategies, namely skimming, scanning, predicting, and questioning. Before data collection was carried out, a short briefing was given to the students in order to make sure that they would not misinterpret among these four terminologies.

**TABLE 1.** Reading strategies used in answering reading comprehension test

No	STRATEGY	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN
		(%)	(%)	(%)
1	Skimming	7.14	14.29	78.57
2	Scanning	7.14	14.29	78.57
3	Predicting	14.29	21.43	64.29
4	Questioning	14.29	21.43	64.29

Table 1 displays a balance between frequently used and less frequently used strategies. The students were mostly familiar with skimming and scanning strategies. The study found from a brief discussion with the students that they believed the majority of the reading question tests were appropriate for scanning or skimming. The questions might

pertain to vocabulary, synonyms, antonyms, time concepts such as date, month, or year, place, proper name, or other specific information that utilizes cues like bold, italic, or underlining. Students could answer those types of questions by scanning and skimming.


Subsequently, the students frequently employed both prediction and questioning, showing minimal variation. For the questions that required more thinking or analysis, the students often used both predicting and questioning. These two strategies were quite hard for a few students because they might be confused about what to predict or what to question in the text. From a short conversation with the students, it can be assumed that those who were not interested in reading might find it difficult due to a lack of background knowledge.

**TABLE 2.** Strategies used to support reading skills

No	STRATEGY	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN
		(%)	(%)	(%)
1	Enriching reading material	7.14	14.29	78.57
2	Time management	7.14	14.29	78.57
3	Vocabulary enrichment	14.29	21.43	64.29
4	Context understanding	14.29	21.43	64.29
5	Background knowledge	14.29	28.57	57.14

To enhance their reading skills, the students also had some activities that they did in daily learning process. Most of the students tried to enrich their reading materials. Since they did not allow to have mobile phones at school, the students used books or other printed materials to read more. They also had their own schedule to set their time in reading. Most of them put some lists of reading activities as their target. They put reading as a must-do in their daily activities so that they did not forget that they should read. They created their own limit of reading in a day. The target they made were different from each other. It depended on individual preferences to what book and to which kind of reading text they liked to read.

Some of them used the strategy in vocabulary enrichment. As they read new reading text, they would make a list of vocabulary in their vocabulary note. This helped them in reading the same topics in other reading texts. As reader is required to understand the context presented to grasp the meaning of a word or phrase, grammar also has a special case to concern. Besides vocabulary, the students tried to sharpen their grammar understanding so that they could comprehend the text better. Some of them took extra time to learn grammar and structure with their teachers. They used their free time to see their teachers to learn more about grammar.



The last one is about background knowledge. This strategy was especially used by those who felt that they had blind inferences about specific information. Since they felt confused to differentiate between facts and opinions in some texts, they read more about some topics they were interested in English and also in Indonesian. Their purpose was to enlarge their information about a particular context so that they could understand between facts and opinions.

## CONCLUSIONS

There are some points that can be taken as important consideration. Firstly, since scanning and skimming had been familiar to the students, teachers need to focus more about predicting and questioning strategies to help the students' reading strategies. It is important to give various types of texts to the students since each type of text has its own questions type requiring its own strategy. Predicting and questioning are also important to help students' critical thinking since they can sharpen their own analysis to some questions. Secondly, few students were aware about the importance of context understanding, and so teachers should give some texts related to context understanding more often. This is purposed to make the students think that in order to understand a text, readers need not only about vocabulary but also many other aspects such as background knowledge and context understanding. Thirdly, teachers should provide the students more texts that can stimulate their critical thinking so that it can help the student to differ between facts and opinions in a text. Teachers should also provide many various reading materials and reading tests that can encourage their critical thinking and sharpen their reading comprehension skills.

## REFERENCES

- Abidin, A. Z. (2020). Students reading comprehension through scanning technique. *Journal of Asian Multicultural Research for Educational Study*, 1(1), 28-35.
- Adams, W. R., & Patterson, B. (2008). *Developing reading versatility*. Thomson Learning.
- Alderson, J. C. (2000). *Assessing reading*. Cambridge University Press.
- Amalia, A. R., & Devant, Y. M. (2016). The use of questioning strategy to improve students' reading comprehension. *ELLITE: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Teaching*, 1(2), 81-88.
- Britt, M. A., Durik, A., & Rouet, J. F. (2022). Reading contexts, goals, and decisions: Text comprehension as a situated activity. *Discourse Processes*, 59(5-6), 361-378.
- Daskalovska, N. (2018). Extensive reading and vocabulary acquisition. In R. J. Ponniah & S. Venkatesan (Eds.), *The idea and practice of reading* (pp. 25-40). Springer.
- Davis, M. (2006). *Reading instruction: The two keys*. Core Knowledge Foundation.
- D'Angelo, F. (1986). The topic sentence revisited. *College Composition & Communication*, 37(4), 431-441.

- Ghahraki, S., & Sharifian, F. (2005). The relationship between overall reading comprehension and determination of fact/opinion in L2. *Reading, 5*(1), 36-46.
- Grabe, W. P., & Stoller, F. L. (2002). *Teaching and researching reading*. Pearson Education.
- Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2007). *Strategies that work: teaching comprehension for understanding and engagement*. Stenhouse Publishers.
- Heilman, A. W., Blair, T. R., & Rupley, W. H. (2002). *Principle and practice of teaching reading*. Prentice Hall.
- Kuşdemir, Y. (2016). The role of 'prediction strategy' in reading comprehension. *The Journal of Limitless Education and Research, 1*(1), 47-63.
- Murray, M. S. (2016). Language comprehension ability: One of two essential components of reading comprehension. In K. A. Mungler (Ed.), *Steps to Success: Crossing the Bridge Between Literacy Research and Practice* (pp. 41-55). Open SUNY Textbooks.
- Nation, K., & Norbury, C. F. (2005). Why reading comprehension fails: Insights from developmental disorders. *Topics in Language Disorders, 25*(1), 21-32.
- Nisa, R., Safura, S., & Kasmita, N. (2020). Student perceptions of the use of scaffolding method in reading class. *Accentia: Journal of English Language and Education, 1*(2), 90-98.
- Nuttall, C. E. (1982). *Teaching reading skill in a foreign language*. Heinemann Educational Books.
- Oakley, G. (2011). The assessment of reading comprehension cognitive strategies: practices and perceptions of Western Australian teachers. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, 34*(3), 279-293. doi:10.1007/BF03651863
- Rayner, K., Schotter, E. R., Masson, M. E., Potter, M. C., & Treiman, R. (2016). So much to read, so little time: How do we read, and can speed reading help?. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 17*(1), 4-34.
- Rusmiati, R., Maharani, P. R., & Susidamaiyanti, S. (2022). The use of SQ6R method in increasing EFL students' reading comprehension. *Accentia: Journal of English Language and Education, 2*(1), 31-39.
- Sardy, N., Trisnawati, I. K., & Fitria, R. (2023). Persepsi guru terhadap strategi pembelajaran membaca bahasa Inggris di sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Elementaria Edukasia, 6*(4), 1697-1709.
- Somadayo, S. (2011). *Strategi dan teknik pembelajaran membaca* (1st ed.). Graha Ilmu.
- Stoodt, B. D. (1981). *Reading Instruction*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Sukirah, K. (2000). *Reading techniques for college students*. Depdikbud.
- Qomariah, L., & Efendi, R. (2020). The effectiveness of speed reading as technique in teaching reading comprehension of tenth grade at MA Sunan Cendana Madura. *JEET, Journal of English Education and Technology, 1*(01), 49-61.
- Zimmermann, S., & Hutchins, C. (2003). *The seven keys to comprehension: How to help your kids read it and get it!* Three Rivers Press.