

# The Role of Metacognitive Strategies in English Reading Classes

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## Abstract

The following study is intended to find out which is the highest use of metacognitive reading strategies among the academic learners majoring in English Language and Culture, Bunda Mulia University Jakarta. First of all metacognition discusses the process of an individual in planning and managing oneself in order to achieve his or her goal. In the other words, metacognitive strategies are steps that learners take for improving their language performances. Based on SORS (Survey of Reading Strategies) questionnaire, there are four categories being scored in the reading metacognitive strategies. They are *global reading strategies*, *problem-solving strategies*, and *support reading strategies*. The result showed that academic learners mostly apply the *problem-solving strategies*, followed by *global reading strategies*, and *support reading strategies*.

## Keywords:

*Metacognitive, Strategies, Reading Classes*

## 1. Background of study

Since the beginning of 1970s, pioneered by Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975), research in TEFL has shifted its focus from the teacher to the learner (Mistar, 2002). The process of learning itself nowadays does not only find out *what* they learn but also put the attention on finding out *how* and *why* learners learn (Wenden 1991:11). In other words, the process of language learning has become part of the content of learning. Therefore, several researches in order to find out *how* learners deal with their language learning are called language learning strategies.

Generally, language learning strategies were elaborated into the three major classifications in the language learning strategies (henceforth: LLS) those are “cognitive strategies” which relate to how students think about their learning

(ex: I try to find pattern in English), “metacognitive strategies” which relate to how students manage their own learning (ex: I plan my English course), and “social strategies” which relate to how student interact with others through the language (ex: I practice my language with my friends). The classifications are variously elaborated by some researches like Rubin (1981), O’Malley and Chamot (1987), and Oxford (1990). However among those strategies, recent research shows that metacognitive strategies are considered as the most essential ones in developing learners’ skill (Anderson, 1991 in Coskun 2010). Goh (2002) also added that the importance of metacognitive strategies can be related to effective learning in all learning contexts.

Some research has been emerged in the area of reading that as well on the role of metacognition recently. (Mokhtari and Reichard,2002; Taraban, 2002; Xuang, 2004). These researchers agree that awareness and monitoring one’s comprehension process are critically important aspects of skilled reading. Furthermore Mokhtari and Reichard (2004) add that there are differences between the skilled and unskilled readers based on how far learners’ ability in thinking about the topic, looking forward and backward the passage, and checking their own understanding as they read. Those who are less skilled usually employ more few strategies.

Academic learners in the reading classroom are given the responsibilities for a variety of assignments from answering questions, getting information up to summarizing the topic. With the variety of reading outcome, the following research is intended to investigate the area to reading class students, examining the metacognitive awareness of reading strategy use by these students.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Regarding to the topic on the role metacognitive reading strategies in the reading class, the following section will discuss about the term of metacognition which was proposed by Flavell and followed by the metacognition strategies based on previous theorists such as Wenden, Chamot and O’Malley, Rebecca Oxford. Then the metacognitive reading strategies will be elaborated based on SORS (Survey of Reading Strategies) which was designed by Mokhtari and Sheorey.

## **2.1 Metacognition**

The term ‘metacognition’ was mentioned by Flavell (1979) as the intentional, conscious, foresighted, purposeful, and directed at accomplishing a goal or outcome. For the metacognitive strategies, it has the purpose to identify goals and sub-goals and selection of cognitive processes to use in their achievement (Flavell, 1979). In the other words language learners will try many ways in order to overcome their learning problems and to fulfill their learning goals. Furthermore Flavell classified four classes on metacognition,

- 1) Metacognitive knowledge which relates between person, task, and the strategy variables. The knowledge of a person about his or her tasks directly influences the cognitive strategies and supports the cognitive activity. Dealing with the task, the individual has the ability in the management of a task and provides information about the degree of success. The strategy on the other hand talks about how the individual can identify goals and sub-goals and select which cognitive processes to use in their achievement.
- 2) Metacognitive experience, which he mentioned as “stream of consciousness” talks about the process in which other information, memories or earlier experiences may be recalled as resources in the process of solving a current-moment cognitive problem, affective response to tasks which determine his interest of willingness to pursue similar tasks in the future. .
- 3) Metacognitive goals and tasks are the comprehension and commuting from facts to meaning of producing something such as written document, or answering several problems.
- 4) Metacognitive strategies which have the purpose to evaluate one’s work, control one’s own cognitive activities and cognitive goals and oversee one’s own learning process such as monitor ongoing process.

## **2.2 Metacognitive Reading Strategies**

These are the strategies that go beyond the cognitive and the way learners manage their own learning process. Wenden (1982 cited in Wenden 1987:25) listed

several planning that learners use, those are when learners “choose” what and how they want to learn the language and then they “prioritize “ which part of the language they prefer to learn first and finally they could set up their own learning “goals”. Metacognitive strategies therefore facilitates learners to make a self-control to their own learning process, if they feel that what they have planned consider as not successful they could re-organized according to what fit them best. .

Oxford, on the other hand, categorizes the metacognitive strategies as “centering your learning, arranging and planning your learning, and evaluating your learning” (Oxford 1990:138-40). The acronym is created as CAPE, that is, metacognitive strategies make language learners more CAPE-able. “Centering your learning” helps learners to keep focusing on certain language tasks, activities, skills, or materials. These strategies include activities such as overviewing and linking with already known material; paying attention to specific aspects of the language or to situational details; and delaying speech production to focus on listening. “Arranging and planning your learning” include strategies used in finding out about language learning; organizing; setting goals and objectives; identifying the purpose of language task; planning for a language task; seeking practice opportunities. “Evaluating your learning”, by applying self-monitoring such as identifying errors in understanding or producing is used the new language or by self-evaluating by checking one’ progress in a certain month or week.

Furthermore, according to Cohen (1990), reading strategies are “those mental processes that rears consciously choose to use in accomplishing reading tasks. In the reading classroom, learners often apply some set of strategies in order to have their tasks done. The learners are responsible for a variety of assignments from answering questions after the reading passages to writing summaries of the course topic. The strategies used are varies which is not only the processing skills of the reader but also with the knowledge domain and tasks involved.

### **2.3 Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS)**

Some investigations in the metacognitive reading strategies field have applied SORS (Survey of Reading Strategies) as their research instrument. SORS was designed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) and intended to measure adolescent and adult ESL students' metacognitive awareness and perceived use of reading strategies while reading academic materials such as textbook. It has been field-tested and had demonstrated reliability and validity as a dependable measure of students' metacognition and reading strategies. A brief description of each SORS category and the number of items within each category are given below:

- Global Reading Strategies (GLOB) are applied for students who tend to monitor and manage their reading. They have some purpose in mind, focused on the organizations and use the typographical aids, tables, and figures (13 items)
- Problem Solving Strategies (PROB) are applied when students use several techniques while working with the reading tasks, for example: adjusting one's speed of reading, guessing the meaning of unknown words, and rereading the text to improve comprehension (8 items)
- Support Strategies (SUP) are tools which are intended to help students comprehend the text easier, such as using dictionary, taking notes, underlining, or highlighting textual information (9 items).

### **3. Research Methodology and Data Analysis**

The following research is conducted in order to find out the research question "what is the most and least used metacognitive reading strategies among the academic students. Based on the previous section, this study applied SORS questionnaire by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). There are 30 items and separated based on its category. The participants are taken from the Reading and Vocabulary 2 class, which is presented by 15 students, majored in Bahasa dan Budaya Inggris, Universitas Bunda Mulia. The data analyzed statistically based on SORS scoring system which the result interpreted into three levels of reading strategy usage. Those are general learning strategy usage: High (mean of 3.5 or higher), moderate (mean of 2.5 to 3.4), and low (mean of 2.4 or lower). As the

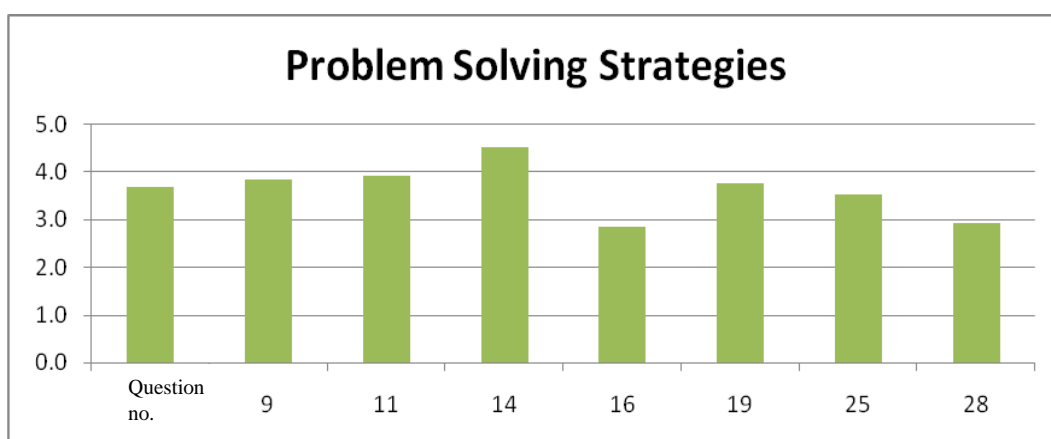
general rule, the overall score average indicates how often students believe they use the strategies in the instrument when reading academic materials.

#### 4. Findings and Suggestions

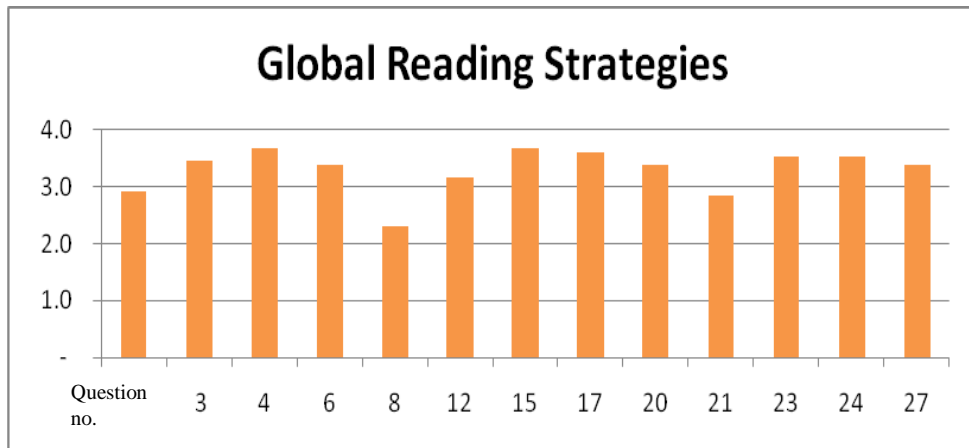
The aim of the study was to investigate the metacognitive strategy use of the student who majored in English culture and language while they were taking the subject in Reading and Vocabulary 2. Results show that the students have a high level on the metacognitive awareness while reading academic/general texts. It is interesting to find that BBI students in all text comprehension levels used problem solving strategies mostly followed by global and support strategies respectively.

The overall result showed that students mostly apply **problem solving strategies (M=3.7, STD= 0.4)** and moderate used of **global reading strategies (M= 3.3, STD= 0.5)** and the least one in **support strategies (M= 2.6, STD= 0,6)**. The following are the graph of the overall results on each of the three metacognitive reading strategies.

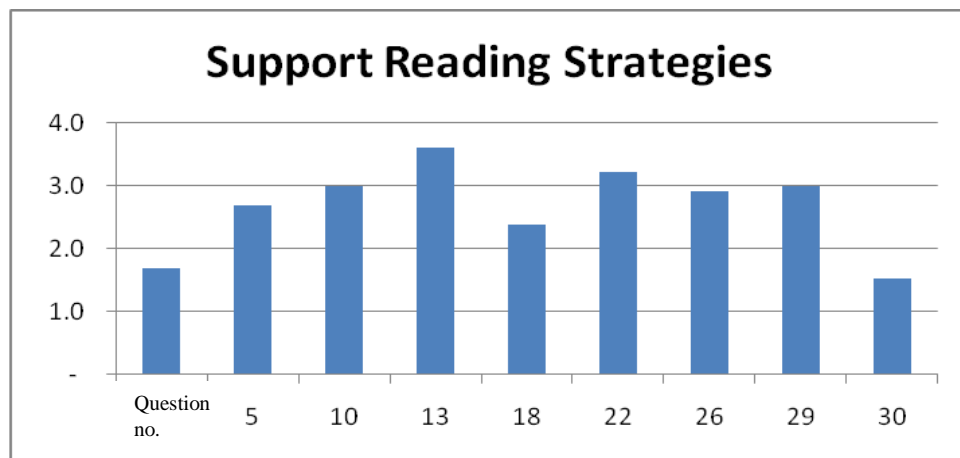
Figure 1 Problem Solving Strategies



**Figure 2. Global Reading Strategies**



**Figure 3. Support Reading Strategies**



The figure shows that problem solving strategies (figure 1) showed the highest result whereas support reading strategies (figure 3) are the least strategy used among the students. On the other hand global reading strategies (figure 2) showed the moderate level.

Furthermore the following is the result showing that paying attention and focusing their passage got the highest result (PROB 14,  $M= 4.5$ ,  $STD= 0.7$ ). The other reading strategies that have high result such as re-tracking the text (PROB 9,  $M= 3.8$ ,  $STD1.1$ ), visualizing the information (PROB 19,  $M=3.8$ ,  $SD=1.1$ ). Besides problem solving strategies, students also apply global reading strategies like taking an overview of the text (GLOB4,  $M= 3.7$ ,  $SD=1.4$ ), and reading slowly (GLOB17,  $M= 3.6$ ,  $STD=0.8$ ). For the support strategies, they most likely apply

paraphrasing (SUP18, M=3.6, SD=1.3). The following are the overall result of the most frequently used strategies.

**Table 1. The Most Used Metacognitive Reading Strategies (mean of 3.5 or higher)**

Strategies used	Mean	S.D.
PROB 14. When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading	4.5	0.7
PROB 9. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration	3.8	1.1
PROB 19. I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read	3.8	1.1
GLOB 4. I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it	3.7	1.4
PROB 7. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	3.7	1.7
GLOB 17. I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading	3.6	0.8
SUP 18. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	3.6	1.3
PROB 25. When text becomes difficult, I reread to increase my understanding	3.5	1.4
GLOB 3. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	3.5	1.1
GLOB 23. I check my understanding when I come across conflicting information.	3.5	1.0
GLOB 24. I try to guess what the material is about when I read.	3.5	1.0
PROB 25. When text becomes difficult, I reread to increase my understanding	3.5	1.4

The moderate-used strategies showed that in global reading strategies, the students apply purpose of reading (GLOB6, M=3.4, SD=1.3) paying attention to typographical aids (GLOB20, M=3.4, SD=0.8) reading closely (GLOB12, M=3.2, SD=1.1), having a spurpose (GLOB1, M= 2.9, SD..), and critically analyzing



the passage given (GLOB21, M= 2.8, SD=1.3). For the problems solving strategies, the students like to have self-evaluation on their perception (PROB27, M= 3.4, SD=1.3). In the other hand, the students also sometimes apply support materials strategies such as going back and forth in order to find the relationship among ideas (SUP22, M=3.2, SD=1.1), marking certain information (SUP10, M=3, SD=1.2) , translating into Indonesian (SUP29, M=3, SD=1.3), doing the self-questioning (SUP26, M=1.1, SD=11), and reading aloud (SUP5, M=2.7, SD=1.4).

**Table 2. The Moderate-used Metacognitive Reading Strategies (2.5-3.4)**

Strategies used	Mean	S.D.
GLOB 6. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	3.4	1.3
GLOB 20 I use typographical aids like boldface and italics to identify key information	3.4	0.8
PROB 27 I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	3.4	1.3
GLOB 12. When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore	3.2	1.1
SUP 22. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it	3.2	1.1
SUP 10. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it	3	1.2
SUP 29. When reading I translate from English into my native language	3	1.3
GLOB 1. I have a purpose in mind when I read.	2.9	1.3
SUP 26. I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text..	2.9	1.1
PROB 28. When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	2.9	1.4
GLOB 21 I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.	2.8	1.3
PROB 16. I stop from time to time and think about what I am	2.8	1.1

reading.		
SUP 5. When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read	2.7	1.4

The result of least frequency strategy used showed that students are lesser used in paraphrasing (SUP18, M=2.4, SD=1.3), reviewing by focusing to the length passage and organization (GLOB8, M=2.3, SD=1.1), note taking while reading (SUP2, M=1.7, SD=1.3) and translating into their mother tongue (SUP30, M=1.5, SD=0.9).

**Table 3. The Low-used Metacognitive Reading Strategies (2.4- lower)**

Strategies used	Mean	S.D.
SUP 18. I paraphrase to better understand what I read	2.4	1.3
GLOB 8. I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organization	2.3	1.1
SUP 2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	1.7	1.3
SUP 30. When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue.	1.5	0.9

Based on the findings, the following are some suggestions on how to apply the metacognitive reading strategies in the class. First, in the result on the problem solve strategies students in reading class shows that they apply some strategies such as paying attention closely on their passage. Such focusing is dealing with some tasks in the passage like finding the meaning of new vocabularies and linking the title to the text and pictures. Therefore it is suggested that teachers always ask them to discussing the new information as introduction before they might find those information in the passage.

Secondly, it is found that global reading strategies are most likely used strategies by the students. Such strategies like overall viewing, transferring their knowledge to the text before they read, and guessing the meaning. Here teachers could facilitate them with familiar topics or words that will occur in the passage. While they are reading, allow students to match their own understanding with the

main ideas and some supporting details in the passage. The result also shows that students read slowly, in which they are trying to understand the difficult words or phrases in the passage. By having this strategy, teachers may ask several questions that showing the details information in the paragraph in order to make students keep on their track and are not being lost in the paragraph since it sometimes occur whenever they find too many difficult phrases.

Thirdly, the result shows that students also apply a support strategy like paraphrasing the phrases in order to get a better understanding. The problem may occur whenever students find some idioms or terminology that they are not familiar with. Therefore, teachers could help them understanding the passage by transferring or defining those difficult words into more simple language. Translating the phrases into Indonesian are also recommended since some sentence patterns in English sometimes quite complicated for the students to understand.

Furthermore for the strategies which students sometimes apply, in this case by having a purpose in reading. Here, teachers may advice them to think about their purpose of reading however each topic passage usually has listed some of the purposes at the beginning of the passage, therefore this can be used in a pre-reading activity in order to motivate students to evaluate it at the end of the discussion. Making outline can also help students to find the text relationship between main ideas, even though not most students apply this frequently but teachers could teach them how to make an outline therefore they could list the main ideas and the supporting details in so that can keep tracking their own reading.

There are four strategies listed as the least used metacognitive reading strategies, such as reviewing and taking notes. Some possible reasons probably because the students are lack of interest in taking notes even though some reading materials like journals and articles, taking notes is necessary important in order to collect the new information from several sources. The other reason is that students have not enough knowledge in taking notes and selecting which information is needed to be listed. For this least strategies used teachers are advised to instruct them to students as well applying it in the classroom.

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## Appendix

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### Appendix SURVEY OF READING STRATEGIES (SORS)

The purpose of this survey is to collect information about the various techniques you use when you read **academic materials in English** (e.g., reading textbooks for homework or examinations, reading journal articles, etc.).

All the items below refer to your reading of **college-related academic materials (such as textbooks, not newspapers or magazines)**. Each statement is followed by five numbers, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, and each number means the following:

'1' means that 'I **never or almost never** do this'.

'2' means that 'I do this **only occasionally**'.

'3' means that 'I **sometimes** do this'. (About 50% of the time.)

'4' means that 'I **usually** do this'.

'5' means that 'I **always or almost always** do this'.

After reading each statement, **circle the number** (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) which applies to you. Note that there are **no right or wrong responses** to any of the items on this survey.

Category	Statement	Never				Always
GLOB	1. I have a purpose in mind when I read.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	3. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	4. I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	5. When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	6. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	7. I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	8. I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organization.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	9. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	10. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	11. I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	12. When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	13. I use reference materials (e.g., a dictionary) to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	14. When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	15. I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	16. I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	17. I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	18. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	19. I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	20. I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	21. I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	22. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	23. I check my understanding when I come across new information.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	24. I try to guess what the content of the text is about when I read.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	25. When text becomes difficult, I re-read it to increase my understanding.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	26. I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	27. I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	28. When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	29. When reading, I translate from English into my native language.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	30. When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue.	1	2	3	4	5

